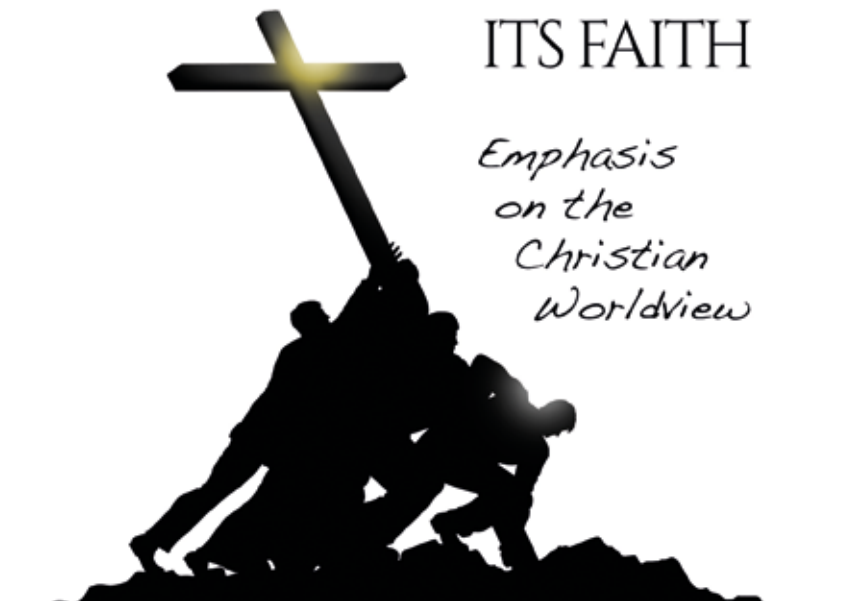
How and Why the West lost its Faith

HOW AND WHY THE WEST LOST ITS FAITH

Emphasis on the Christian Worldview



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Contents

Why this book? 9
Faith for a time such as this 13
- Secular Culture 15
- The Meaning of Family 20
- The revolution of marriage 25
- The importance of sexuality and family relationships for society 37
- The consequences of Personhood Theory 42
- Culture of Death 43
- Artificial Intelligence and Transhumanism 45
- Moralistic therapeutic deism 47
- Summary 49

What is a Worldview? 51
The Importance of the Enlightenment 55
Secular Worldviews 65
- Naturalism 65
- Atheism 71
- Relativism - when nothing is certain 78
- Postmodernism 86
- Skepticism 93
- Humanism 94
- Nihilism 98
- Existentialism 100
- Tolerance 102

Truth 104
Secularism 109
Morals and Ethics 113
The Voice of Conscience 115
Two kinds of morals 117
The Frankfurt School and Cultural Marxism 123
Marxism 123
Cultural Marxism 126
Critical theory 129
Summary 137
Human - Homo Sapiens 139
Awareness 144
Language and Communication 152
The fight for the Christian Worldview 157
Faith and science 177
The Origin of the Universe 177
The Origin of Life 187
The Diversity of Life 197
Christian Faith and Science 209
The Problem of Evil 229
The best answer to the problem of evil 237
Liberal Theology 239
God is diminished 240
Is the Bible Credible? 247
Eyewitnesses 250
The Existence of God 255
Our Image of God 261
God in the Old Testament 269
God in the Old Testament is a loving God 270
The Law of Moses 272
Godless Canaanites 276
Jesus Christ 279
The Resurrection 282
The Turin Shroud 286
Objections 287

Salvation, Atonement and Redemption 291
Islam 299
New Age Religiosity and Spirituality 305
Concluding words 309

References 313

Why this book?

During the last ten years since I retired, I have been fascinated by questions relating to creation, life and evolution, and my interest has led to me writing four books. Two of these have been translated from Norwegian to English in a revised form, and printed in Nairobi, Kenya. This will be my third book to be printed in Africa. The first two books showed that believing in Creation is rational, and that evolution, in the form of macroevolution, is very unlikely to happen. This book presents a defense of the Christian faith - it is a book about the Christian world-view. Why do I think this book should be published in Africa? The reason is that Africa is not currently de-Christianized to the same extent as the West, i.e. Europe and America. Kenya, which I am starting to get to know, has several Christian universities which have an outstanding quality of teaching and a high standard of achievement. I have met many admirable Christian individuals, who have positions of leadership in these colleges and universities, and they are undertaking admirable work. I have also been fortunate enough to get to know pastors and church leaders, whose aim is to ensure the Kenyan people are influenced by the Christian faith, and my desire is that in Africa Christianity does not become subject to the same mistakes that were made in the West.

I think it may be helpful to familiarize African Christendom with the thought systems and philosophies that led to the secularisation of the West. I also want to draw attention to the fact that we are living in a time where these changes in our mindset are occurring at such a rapid

pace, it is easy to lose track of what is happening. In my opinion, it is very important that African Christendom knows about the forces and worldviews that lie behind the de-Christianization of the West, and will thus be better prepared to resist attacks from secular forces. It is important that these counterpowers are recognized, that believers are aware they exist, and they establish a strategy to resist the ideologies these counterpowers present. If believers are not conscious that these forces exist, experience shows that these forces will prevail in this ongoing spiritual struggle. Experience also shows that these forces can become so strong and destructive over the course of such a short period of time that people will not have a chance to defend themselves if they have not prepared in advance.

A strategy for advance preparation involves acquainting as many Christians as possible with arguments that demonstrate the credibility of the Christian faith. In addition, Christians need to know and understand the weaknesses of secular and atheistic thought systems that have led to the de-Christianization of the West. It is important that Christian teachers and pastors have access to this information, so they are able to give the next generation of leaders the information they need to be able to stand against these thought-systems. Young people also need to be encouraged to have a resilient, robust Christian faith. Every Christian needs to understand that believing in the message of Christianity is completely rational. It is particularly important that the academic staff at universities and colleges resist the onslaught of secularism, as in time, what they teach as being true, becomes the worldview assumed by wider society.

I am personally convinced that the theory of evolution is one of the main factors responsible for the de-Christianization of the West. The theory of evolution made God obsolete, and natural selection became a substitute for God. The acceptance of the theory of evolution was one of the first steps on the road to the formation of secular Western society. Western society has been fed the notion that evolution is the right lens through which to understand life and its diversity, and alternatives to this concept are neither advocated nor taught. For decades, every school pupil has been taught that there is only one theory of life. We tend to believe what we learn in school, and we rarely have cause to doubt what we are taught, so it is essential that school pupils learn about the alternatives to

evolution. The best alternative to evolution is Intelligent Design, which I have described and discussed in my first two books in English. Ideally, school textbooks should do the same.

Until about 170 years ago, every country in Western society was characterized by Christian belief. People believed that God was the creator of everything – the universe, life, and life's diversity. Most people had this general understanding, not just Christian priests and believers. These days, people who say they believe in God are often seen as not being right in the head. So many ideas and beliefs have been completely turned upside down in a relatively short period of time. One of the most serious situations in modern Western society is the devaluation of the importance of family life. The price of this subversion is increasing rapidly. This book contains material that relates to thought, opinion and belief. Understanding the trends in modern society requires knowledge of the philosophers whose work has influenced the history of modern thought. We also need to understand the main philosophical worldviews that have been at the forefront of thought over the last 170 years. This book describes ideologies and avenues of thought that are incompatible with, and opposed to, the Christian faith. The concepts behind these ideologies belong to the area of philosophy, and philosophers have always had great influence. Their thoughts and ideas come to influence what every one of us believes about reality and the many existential questions we might ask ourselves over the course of a lifetime. We are familiar with some of their ideas through what we learned at school.

The philosophers who have had the greatest influence on what we believe, all lived before Albert Einstein developed his general Theory of Relativity. This theory states that the universe has a beginning and that it is not eternal. For about 100 years we have known that the universe has a beginning that we call the Big Bang. Philosophers who predate Einstein did not know the universe had a beginning; they thought the universe was eternal. We know that all things that have a beginning, require a cause for their beginning. Your cell phone did not exist fifty years ago, but now it is one of the most important things you own. Someone designed and made that phone. The same goes for the universe - there was a time when it did not exist, but now it does exist, because something or someone

created it. Those who do not believe in God, believe the universe came into being by complete chance, but that seems impossible. How can a universe come into being of its own accord from nothing? It is far more rational to believe the universe was created by God. If early philosophers had known the universe had to have had a creator, they would have had to think differently; atheism would not have had such an influence on philosophy, which might then have been more influenced by the greatness of God.

Before we proceed, I want make sure we understand what is meant by a 'worldview'. People usually talk about their 'outlook on life', which consists principally of religious beliefs. A 'worldview' is something more. What do we mean when we use this word? We could say that a worldview is our set of opinions pertaining to how we understand the totality of our reality. A worldview is a belief system that determines how we perceive the world, our purpose in the world, and our future. A worldview is a complex set of principles, assumptions, beliefs, views and values a person has compiled; it shapes her/his view of reality and determines her/his actions. We could say that a worldview is like a lens, or a pair of glasses, through which we see reality. A worldview embraces politics, economics, religion, social life, work life, family, hobbies, leisure interest, entertainment and the media – in short, our entire reality.

Faith for a time such as this

Over the course of the last century, Western society has gradually moved away from religion, especially the Christian faith. In the last twenty to twenty-five years, this change has accelerated, such much so, that modern Western society can correctly be described as 'secular'. A secular society has various different expressions. The prevailing ethos claims that all religions are equally true, and therefore, influencing the religious beliefs of others is considered to be wrong. This way of thinking means that attempting to convert someone to your own faith can be perceived as inappropriate and rude, and if we want to keep the peace, we are best not to get mixed up in what other people believe. This leads to the idea that it is better to agree to disagree, and the common belief that 'what is true for me is not necessarily true for you'.

Academics and members of the cultural elite have been at the forefront of the struggle to eradicate the Christian faith from society, and the so-called 'New Atheists' have been especially active in this respect. Members of their ranks have written many books that have been printed in large quantities. Among the New Atheists we find names such as Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris and Christopher Hitchens. They are not only atheists, but anti-theists, and have committed themselves to rid society of religious belief. The result of this is that religious faith is now perceived as inappropriate, and confessing one's Christian faith in public

is considered almost obscene, as it is not considered to be intellectually rigorous or respectable. Consequently, Christians are now often treated with disrespect. This attitude, which prevails in many universities, will eventually spread throughout the whole of society; it is unavoidable. As this secular view rejects the existence of God, having a different view of reality can cost an individual dearly. Christianity appears ill-prepared to face these challenges. If the majority of teachers and professors are atheists, society will gradually become atheistic too. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that well-trained believers serve in all aspects and levels of societies that wish to remain Christian, living according to moral values based on Christian principles.

The western world has changed due to what Christians call 'spiritual warfare', the continuous battle for people and their souls which ensues in the realm of ideas. Often times, we do not realize which powers influence our thoughts, so it is important to understand the culture of which we are a part. Secular humanists understand that the way to change a nation is to formulate thoughts which will eventually become pervasive. Everyone who lives in a secular culture will be influenced by that culture. This cannot be avoided. As Christians, we need to show there is another way. Christians are called to be in the world, but not of the world. God saved us to be complete, mature individuals who make a mark in the world. Other religions often call their members to withdraw from society. Buddhism offers meditation and mental strength; Hinduism considers the physical world to be an illusion; and New Age spirituality teaches that we can avoid stress by following an inner voice. In times of great turmoil, we may be tempted to isolate ourselves, retreat from society, and seek security in the embrace of the Church, but Christianity does not proclaim this kind of passive attitude - we are made to be in the world.

The Christian faith is based on love. We are called to love God, our 'neighbors' and our enemies. We are called to respect everyone, whatever they might believe. Even when times are tough and we meet heavy resistance, our task is to communicate our faith lovingly. Christians are called to be different, in a good, positive way. In difficult times, we need to be clear about our responsibility to be salt and light in the world. We must also be prepared for the fact that being obedient to Christ can be

very costly, but that we have a task to fulfill during our lives. As Christian we must be committed to being steadfast in our faith, rather than seeking security in a secular world. The Great Commission commands Christians to go and make disciples of all people. Today, we need to remain faithful to this command, by being trustworthy and true. When times are difficult, the danger of choosing the path of compromise is ever present, and experience shows that a small compromise is often followed by successively greater compromises. Although the pressure to conform can be overwhelming, we must not adapt to a culture that is hostile to the Christian faith. We can be tempted to measure success by our popularity rather than our faithfulness, and to avoid conflict by going with what is culturally acceptable. Our call is to live in the world as it currently stands, and our task is to advance the message of the Gospel. We must fight for what is true and not write off important issues as lost causes. Today, one of the greatest dangers is to want to be as similar as possible to everyone else. This trend is increasing, but the Bible warns us against moving in this direction: 'Do not conform to the pattern of this world' (Romans 12:2, NIV). The Christian faith has been under attack for as long as it has been in existence. These assaults have come from those who oppose the Christian faith, but these days we must be prepared for attacks on our faith to come from people who call themselves Christians. They want to make Christianity as attractive as possible for people in general by turning faith into a form of 'lite-Christianity'. They want the beliefs and views that Christians should hold to be as relevant as possible, so as not to push people away, but drawing people to Christ without compromising the Christian faith is an extremely difficult balancing act.

Secular Culture

Christians must see it as their mission to influence culture, rather than be part of it, and be a corrective to harmful influences in society. To achieve this, Christians need to make it their mission to have leading positions within different professions, so they can influence that part of reality that constitutes their everyday lives. A fish does not know it is wet, because it lives in water and does not know anything else. We are submerged

in a particular culture. Culture is to people what water is to fish. The difference is that fish do not create the water in which they live, but we do create the culture in which we live. The way we think and the way we live is largely decided by the culture to which we belong. Culture forms our comprehension of reality. The most important aspect of a culture is what it defines as 'normal'. We can quickly lose sight of the forces that shape a culture, and which thus affect our thoughts, beliefs, preferences, attitudes, habits. The state of health of any culture can be determined by its understanding of human existence, and how life is understood and valued.

Living means associating with ideas, norms, values, institutions, and community structures. Culture builds on ideas that often fly under the radar, forming the subcurrents that shape us without us being aware of it. Today, various subcurrents exist, which threaten to deprive humankind of its most important qualities. Ideas are rarely without influence, since they always lead to consequences. Ideas influence what we believe, what we consider to be truth, what we think is good, and what we like. What we believe to be true will affect our lives and how we live. Culture is conveyed by people who have a position in which they can influence others. This is true in politics, entertainment and religion. Culture is also communicated in the home and within family life, in churches, in schools and through the educational system, the media and the internet. In a pluralistic society, what is presented as truth will more likely be expressions of personal preference, rather than the objective truth. A 'pluralistic society' is one in which there are many different lifestyles, beliefs, opinions, and points of view.

We are all affected by the media. Every time we turn on the radio or the television, someone is presenting a message to us, but we do not think sufficiently about whether they are telling us the truth, or whether their story forms part of a hidden agenda. Some people have the job of selecting the news with which we are presented. Can we trust them to be objective, or do they have a predetermined aim they are keeping hidden from us? Perhaps we should all be aware of the possibility of being influenced in the wrong direction by the media, whether it comes to news and reporting, or entertainment and educational programs. Most of us have probably

reacted more than once to the clear bias of some programs. Media is a powerful instrument for influencing people, because if the same message is repeated constantly, most of us will eventually accept the message, even if it is not correct. So, we all need to learn to be critical, and not believe everything we hear. Sometimes it can be useful to look for other sources of news to get a variety of perspectives.

Information technology gives us many possibilities. A click on the keyboard can open a portal to exciting, cutting-edge information. However, there is also the chance technology will dull us by feeding us both with trivia and material that is destructive. In his book, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Neil Postman[1] writes about the banal entertainment with which we can satiate ourselves from show business's 'huge arsenal of offerings'. We can use information to improve ourselves in different ways, but it is possible that all this information will lead to many people becoming passive and selfish. This kind of inaction can cause our interest in thinking things through to diminish, and we risk becoming less concerned with what is happening in society. Watching the next episode in a series of programs can easily become more important than social activities. Aldous Huxley said that man's insatiable need for pleasure and recreation could produce a superficial culture. He believed that what we liked and loved could ruin us, because 'in a sea of indifference the truth can easily be drowned.'

While older people are more influenced by TV and the radio, young people and adults are influenced more by the internet. We need to understand that growing up today is completely different than it was even a few years ago. Young people now have computers, mobile phones, the internet, and access to social media - and information about everything. They are thus influenced by the time we live in – the 'spirit of the age' - in a completely different way to previous generations. Young people born after 1985 constitute a group ('Millennials') which many sociologists study with interest. What is special about them is that all their lives they have had access to more information than anyone has ever had in the past. Information can be useful and instructive, but information can also be destructive. Teaching young people to choose wisely from this flood of information is a mammoth task. Another danger is that young people

can spend so much time following what is going on online and can easily fall for the temptation to live parts of their lives in a 'virtual' reality, i.e. the reality that computer technology conveys to them.

Never before in human history has there been such pressure to accept conflicting values as equally valid. One effective way to get many people to accept an idea is to present it as something quite normal, which most people accept. The idea then becomes entrenched, so that something wrongly presented as a majority view is accepted, because having a different opinion can be costly. We do not know exactly how many young Christians lose their childhood faith during their twelve years of schooling, but figures from the United States show that somewhere between 60 - 80% of those who had a Christian faith when they started college, lose it during their studies. Combatting this is a real challenge and should be a top priority in the Christian community. Please read the last sentence again. It is of paramount importance that churches teach children about the questions they may face in a secular culture. Churches and believers need to ensure they are qualified to defend the faith. We could say that churches should be able to defend the faith both on evangelistic grounds and on intellectual grounds. This means that pastors must be qualified in apologetics, and that churches have at least one person who is tasked with teaching Christian apologetics, especially to the younger generation.

In about twenty years' time, those who are now eighteen years old will be in positions where their beliefs and opinions have influence in society, but more importantly, today's young people will soon be parents who will pass on to their children their outlook on life. If they are not consciously dedicated to the Christian faith, it is likely that their children grow up in a culture where it will be particularly difficult, perhaps impossible, to be a Christian. De-Christianization could then be so pronounced, that the word 'god' is completely irrelevant. The situation is urgent, and the main priority for Christian believers should be to give the next generation a 'survival pack' so they can resist the great pressures to which they will be exposed. This survival pack is essentially a Christian worldview. Young people need to be brought up to see the world though 'Christian spectacles' – the whole world, not just parts of it. Data from the USA shows that only 9% of Christian young people have this kind of

worldview; the majority have a secular worldview. If a similar survey was undertaken in other countries, the situation would probably be similar. The Christian narrative consists of four parts: creation, the fall, salvation, and restoration. A Christian worldview means having a biblical view of all four parts. Some people will always believe salvation is enough. If you are saved and say your prayers, you could think that the way is assured until the end of your life, but experience shows that those who have reflected thoroughly on all aspects of life have a much higher chance of retaining a viable faith. This is good reason why young people must be trained to have a Christian worldview that will produce a resilient faith. Modern worship is all well and good, but it cannot equip young people with the weapons they need to succeed and survive in a secular society. In my opinion, providing young people lessons as to what constitutes a Christian worldview is a first priority. Youth leaders, pastors, priests and preachers of various kinds must be so versed in what constitutes a Christian worldview that they can provide young people with the armament they need to survive in a secular culture, while retaining a living faith in the Bible, Jesus Christ and the truths of Christianity. Young people must be given a faith fit for the brain as well as the heart. This means that young people

To survive with a living Christian faith one has to be dressed in a Christian survival suit. This is necessary to be able to resist the pressure and opposition from the surrounding culture. Such a survival suit consists of the Christian worldview.

should be taught about the weaknesses in secular ideologies. Parents could be tempted to try to prevent their children from interacting with secular culture by isolating them from what could be perceived as inappropriate and potentially dangerous thoughts. However, that would do children a disservice, as they would then not have the necessary resilience to deal with secular culture at a later date, when they have to go out into world and stand on their own two feet.

Author Nancy Pearcey reports that, in nearly 100% of cases, children of atheistic parents become atheists, whereas only about 50% of the children of Christian parents choose the Christian faith[2]. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that this 50% receives guidance to help them keep the faith. Pearcey is convinced that false ideas constitute the greatest obstacle, and these cause young people to abandon Christian beliefs. Providing young people with a 'resistant reading' of the prevailing secular worldview provides the best protection of their faith. So, young people need training and education by dedicated, qualified people.

The Meaning of Family

The book, *Abandoned Faith*, discusses the situation in the USA, where a large percentage of the younger generation has turned their back on the Christian faith[3]. Without having learned the basics, millions of American teenagers have become estranged from the Christian faith. There are many reasons for this. One of the most import things is that home life has to function as well as possible, and that family life is characterized by love, care and mutual respect. If this is the case, then young people learn through their own experience what it means to be a Christian in everyday life by experiencing the love between their mother and father, and their parents' love and concern for their children. McFarland and Jimenez refer to the importance of parents being good role models, and indicate that a father's faith and attitude to life appear to have special significance. If this is the case, then there is a good chance that children will follow their parents' example. Based on their many years working with young people, McFarland and Jimenez, state that nothing is more convincing than parents who show that they love each other, and who

live out their Christian faith with pride and conviction. Parents need to be aware of their own role as spiritual directors, as the family has the greatest influence on whether children retain their faith when they grow up. A mother and father, who demonstrate in their daily life that they are authentic Christians, having a genuine faith that influences the way they live, and who are attending church regularly, are the greatest single factor in ensuring that their children retain their childhood faith when they reach adulthood. *Parents, read the last sentence again*. If you begin the day with prayer and Bible reading, and your children see this, there is a great probability they will live the same way when they become adults. It is important that parents start teaching their children early on, so that from toddlerhood onwards, children learn the Christian standpoint on various issues. Ideally, parents need to learn how to communicate a Christian worldview to their children. Parents ought to know what their children are watching on TV and on the internet. The safest thing is to teach children to tell the difference between what is good, and what is bad, so they know when to turn off a program. Having read *Abandoned Faith*, and several similar books, I want to present a plan for how Christians can influence their children in a good way:

1. Always make time for your children.
2. Begin early, with children's songs and bedtime prayers.
3. Always say grace before a meal and end with a prayer of thanks.
4. Teach children that praying makes you feel secure. Make a habit of praying before a car journey – and before other activities.
5. Be interested in what your children are doing at school, and keep an eye on what they are learning.
6. Have a daily time for family prayers, in which you children can participate.
7. Show an interest in the different activities in which your child is involved.
8. Be aware of what your children are looking at and reading on the internet.

9. Teach your children to have a Christian worldview. Both parents should be able to provide this teaching.
10. Read Bible stories to children as soon as they are able to understand them.

If you follow this advice, you will not blame yourself later on for having failed. Christians must know about the ideas and '-isms' that prevail in today's society and understand the secular way of thinking. The great apologist, Francis Schaeffer, was able to help the hippie culture, because he understood the ideas of the time so well that he could teach young people to defend themselves against them. Today, there is an even greater need for Christians with the same attitude and understanding as Schaeffer. Youth leaders need to be reliable people who young people know they can trust, and more importantly, they need to be qualified in apologetics rather than falling for the temptation to be 'cool' and popular.

Ideas form society and history. Ideas form the culture in which we live. Ideas form the manifestos and campaign tactics of political parties. Ideas have consequences. Ideas determine what we think and believe, and affect the important choices we make. If we do not master the ideas of our time, those ideas will master us. Modern songs, movies, books, and stories all have a message; they argue for something or against something. These ideas reflect the worldview held by the songwriters, scriptwriters, directors, actors and musicians. Young people must be educated to be able to evaluate what is served up to them, so that they are in a position to recognize which are secular ideas, and what is consistent with the Christian faith.

Having time to go through the questions posed by young people is essential. Everyone has struggled with doubts, and let me stress that doubt is not a sin. Doubts are best dealt with openly, and we need to cultivate a culture in which questions are welcomed. No question is stupid or unchristian. If young people do not receive satisfactory answers to their questions in the Church or at home, they will seek answers elsewhere.

It is especially important that teenagers are taught about Christianity. They should be able to describe what Christian faith involves and what it means for the individual. They should know basic theology. They should

It has great importance to grow up in a family where one during meals may share what one has experienced during the day at work places and at school. The children should learn to ask questions in this safe atmosphere.

be trained to defend their faith, and need to know the most commonly presented arguments against Christianity. They also need be trained in what it means to be a Christian in everyday life. They must be prepared to face great opposition on a regular basis. Churches should have a structured youth curriculum, and young people should learn the philosophical and scientific arguments that show believing in God is rational. In short, young people need to be taught, and the teaching needs to be well-prepared and good.

We are experiencing a revolution of new ideas, but we may not have been awake to the fact that this revolution requires total submission. If a young person is not to be ostracised by their peers, they have to take these ideas onboard. That is why it is not easy to be young today. Young people are growing up in a society that has turned many traditional ideas upside down. What is wrong is often presented as right. What is right is often presented as wrong. Words have been given new definitions. What was normal is now not normal, and what was not normal is presented as

A family devotion does not need to last long. The children ought to be learned to try to find answers in the Bible for situations they encounter in life.

normal. Views on sexuality and gender have changed radically, and forces within society seek to eliminate any hint of biblical morality. Various sectors within society are seeking to normalize immorality

A whole book could be written about what it is like to grow up in our time, but I will limit myself to a discussion about sexuality, and I choose to emphasize the biblical view. The Bible says that humankind is created in the image of God, and that applies to both man and woman. The Bible says there are two sexes: female and male, and biologically speaking, only two genders. I have read many older books about Christian apologetics, and significantly, they do not contain any discussion about sexuality, and the word 'sex' is not found in the index. This is a reflection of the fact that sexuality has only become a major concern in the last ten years. Therefore, I would like to recommend Stonestreet and Kunkle's book, *A Practical Guide to Culture*[4], to those who want to give young people healthy biblical teaching on this question.

Only two institutions can give children and young people a corrective to secular thoughts and ideas: the church and the family. The Church and families must be equipped to provide the guidance young people need.

This includes pastors, youth leaders, mothers, fathers and grandparents. Grandparents have plenty of time to contribute in this respect and they can be of great help. Make sure study groups are being created in your church! Having a well thought through strategy to resist the secular pressures of our time is a basic Christian duty. In addition, attending Christian schools may be helpful if - and only if - the teaching and education are based on a Christian worldview.

The revolution of marriage

The issue that most characterizes the West in our day is sexual freedom. This is a result of the sexual revolution that started in the 1960s. This revolution represents the most serious attack against the Christian faith ever. This revolution is not like other revolutions - it is taking place quietly and almost imperceptibly, creeping in under the radar. This revolution challenges what we believe about morality, about what is true and right, and is reshaping what people have thought about morality and human relationships for thousands of years. According to this new view, sex is not restricted to marriage. Consequently, this revolution constitutes a particular challenge to Christianity, which teaches that Holy Scripture is the inspired Word of God to humankind. The message of Scripture is in direct conflict with this revolution that redefines marriage. The intimate interaction that has characterized the marriage of one woman and one man for millennia has been transformed. Words like 'love', 'freedom' and 'responsibility' have been redefined, as has our view of what is right and wrong. The spirit of the age says that people can do what they want, the only restriction being that no one must be harmed or offended. In this context, sexuality is expressed without any kind of obligation, and getting sex is now easier than finding a steady boyfriend or girlfriend, as young people are encouraged to indulge in what is called 'free sex'.

The Church, which the community used to consider as the bastion of what was right and wrong, has been put to a difficult test, and has led to Christendom being dived in two. One part includes those who think the sexual revolution has introduced norms that breach the Christian moral code, and the other includes those who want to adjust to new

ideas and ways of thinking. Those who do not accept this revolution are condemned as immoral, which implies that the word 'immoral' now means the complete opposite of what it always used to mean. Today, in large parts of the West, conservative Christians are considered as being condemning and intolerant, and as having a completely inappropriate set of morals. Things have been turned on their heads: what was once thought to be right and proper is today considered wrong, and what was previously considered wrong is nowadays defined as morally correct. Such an upheaval of the definition of the concept of morality in such a short time is without parallel in human history.

An epidemic of confused sexual identity seems to exist in the West today. Thirty years ago, homosexuality was almost unknown and was not something that concerned most people. These days, the debate regarding homosexuality has become central, and the intense focus on the topic could, in all likelihood, lead to an increase in the number of people practicing it. Many factors affect sexual identity. In my opinion, in most cases people choose to be homosexual, as no genes predispose people to homosexuality. Therefore, homosexuality is not a tendency or orientation one is born with, and in that case, it should be very rare. Gay and lesbian organizations are adept at getting their message out and society now generally accepts that homosexuality is both natural and normal. Even children in kindergarten learn about homosexuality, and school pupils are taught that it is acceptable. Nevertheless, if gender is defined biologically as the way we were born, and not as a social product, homosexuality cannot be claimed to be natural. 'Natural' relates to how we are created by nature. Midwives receive either a girl or a boy today as they have done for millennia. They do not observe more genders. Therefore, biology indicates that heterosexuality is normal and, according to the Bible, other forms of sexuality are not. Gays organise 'gay pride' parades having a rainbow on their banners, which is now the generally accepted symbol of homosexuality.

One result of these new norms will be that the upcoming generation will not see any problem with a society characterized by homosexuality. Another result of the acceptance of homosexuality among young people is that they will become more alienated with church. This is already

happening in America. These young people are not necessarily becoming atheists; they consider themselves reflective individuals, rather than non-religious. Along with atheists and agnostics, this group represents one of the fastest growing types of spirituality in the USA, and sociologists estimate that the majority of these young people are permanently lost to the Church. This could easily lead to church leaders feeling more or less obliged to be accepting of homosexuality in order for the Church to survive, but studies show that churches that become liberal are constantly losing members. The only churches in the USA that are growing are those that preach an undiluted gospel. Philip Rieff, the late American sociologist and cultural critic, stated that the death of a culture begins when its normative institutions no longer communicate ideals in a way that makes them feel obligatory[5].

The totality of the victory of homosexuality is evident from events in USA, where several people have been convicted for a conscientious objection to providing services for same-sex marriages. They are florists who have refused to provide bridal flowers and bakers who have refused to bake wedding cakes, who have had to pay such large fines that they have lost their businesses. Secularization began later in America than in Europe and Scandinavia, but now has an equal stronghold there. What went unnoticed, however, was that the American university system became secular long before society as a whole. Today we see the result. Christian leaders reckon that the great majority of 'Millennials', those born between 1985 and 2004, will be lost to Christianity forever. These days, the oldest of these Millennials could be parents, and it is highly unlikely they will bring their children up in the Christian faith. American society could thus be de-Christianized in the space of twenty years.

The sexual pressures of our time mean that the understanding of one's own identity is linked to sexuality. We are now taught to believe we are constituted by our sexuality and that our sexual feelings define us and that is our real self. Consequently, people have a need for their sexuality to be recognized by others, and if their sexuality is rejected, then they are rejected as a person. This is the big 'unforgiveable sin' of our time. If a person 'is' their sexuality, then that sexuality must be satisfied, as only then is a person complete. The ultimate consequence being that a person

who does not obtain sexual satisfaction does not have a life worth living. This is the message of contemporary society. In this respect, Christians who refuse to accept a person's sexuality will be shunned. Correspondingly, a Christian finds their identity in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the essential part of a Christian's life and love for him gives believers power to live according to his commandments.

It cannot be easy for Christian young people to grow up in a culture that lauds sexual freedom, because Christianity has also been influenced by new times and the ideas that come with them, and its message is not clear and unadulterated anymore. There is, therefore, an urgent need for good counsellors who can educate young people in biblical morals and sexual ethics. If we believe the Bible is God's own word to us and gives us instructions how to live, then its message should be presented, however unpopular that might be. It is very important to have a form of contact with young people which ensures they listen and are willing to accept counsel. This is especially important, as the Bible states that life has two outcomes.

The Bible claims that only the 'narrow way' leads to life.(Matt. 7, 14) We all ought to think through what is demanded of us to be guaranteed eternal life. A well-known evangelist has given a cautious warning to young Christians in regard to living together and advised them to get married so that they live their lives in accordance with biblical teaching.

Christians have not quite grasped that the battle for sexual identity contains enough explosive to remove Christianity from the public sphere. Increasing secularization challenges the Christian understanding of society, family and humankind. This is why Rod Dreher[6] exhorts Christians from different confessions to stand together and form alliances against the tide of modern culture. He recommends that small groups of Christians meet regularly in homes to encourage one another and to develop a common spiritual relationship. He considers this is the only chance to prevent Christianity from being wiped out. In such a time of war, it is important to remind each other that we should always act with love, even towards those who hate us.

In recent years, Christendom in the West has been stunned by all the new ideas that have emerged in regard to sexuality. Many Christians

Three young people who are more occupied by their mobile phones and lap tops than speaking with each other.

have sympathy for the gay struggle. The leadership of several denominations has also expressed sympathy, and there is thus a struggle in those denominations where some are trying to gain acceptance for the new way of thinking about sexuality. Most churches in the West are facing this struggle. Some churches have reached the step of accepting homosexual and heterosexual marriages as equal. Other churches are split and divided. The struggle for homosexuality and same-sex marriage has been successful in many Western countries, and laws now uphold same-sex marriage. This legislation is in radical distinction to older cultural norms. Accepting same-sex marriage implies society has changed in a way that will persist going forward, and has led to a society divided between those who accept homosexuality and same-sex marriages as normal, and those who see it as a clear violation of God's moral standard for our lives. This could lead to a situation where political differences no longer draw the major distinctions between people within society, but where an individual's idea of sexuality and morality constitutes these boundaries.

Over the last few years, the West has seen an epidemic of people who have become unsure of their sexual identity. This has affected young people in particular, and an ever-increasing number feel they were born

with the 'wrong body'. This phenomenon is called 'gender dysphoria' and the condition is characterized by a lasting sense of identity with another gender, while being uncomfortable with one's current gender. The majority of cases are young girls who start to think they are actually boys. If one girl in a group of girls starts to think she is actually a boy, suddenly other members of the group begin to think the same. The situation is contagious. Many young people who struggle with sexual dysphoria also struggle with their mental health, practice self-harm, have eating disorders and indulge in substance abuse. One characteristic that came out of a large study was that these young people had never before had any thoughts pertaining to sexual dysphoria. The condition was almost acute (i.e. sudden onset). The results of this study by Lisa Littman[7] triggered a strong reaction from the transgender milieu, such that the university where the research had been undertaken withdrew the publication of the work, despite no methodological weaknesses having being demonstrated. This shows the strength of the reactions which ensue when questions are asked about sexual identity.

As this issue did not previously exist in such an order of magnitude, anyone with a medical background would naturally ask what might be the cause. When it comes to an epidemic regarding sexual identity, the obvious place to look for a trigger is in the culture in which we all live. People themselves cannot have changed so dramatically in the last ten years, so we must conclude that society itself is the cause of this sexual dysphoria. Society has changed in a very significant way in a very short time. It seems this is the price to be paid when past norms are put to one side. These norms gave people a fixed point to which to relate and engendered security. Another conclusion to be drawn will be that the proper treatment of this dysphoria should be directed at the society and not the affected youths.

An article on sexuality and gender was published in the journal *The New Atlantis*, volume 50, in autumn 2016[8]. It was based on a large piece of research undertaken by two leading psychiatrists who specialize in sexuality. The report rejected sexual orientation as an inherently biologically-determined human trait, and the survey did not support the expression 'they were born this way'. Nor did they find any scientific support

for 'transpersonality', i.e. that a man is trapped in a female body, or vice versa. They found that only a small minority of children who expressed transpersonal discrepancies continued to have such thoughts as they grew older, as the majority grew out of it. There was also no evidence that such children should be encouraged to become transgender people - and even less to suggest that they should be treated with hormones or surgery. This study also showed that non-heterosexuals and transgender people have greater mental health problems throughout their lives, and these problems cannot be ascribed purely to issues of discrimination. Those who have undergone surgery to change genders often suffer psychologically throughout their lives, and surgery seems to be of no help in that regard. This means that there is a great risk of over-diagnosing and over-treating young people. The report, and other American investigations, show that if these young people with transpersonal tendencies are followed up with talking therapies and care, between 70-80% go on to develop a sexual identity which corresponds to their biological gender. Dysphoria is something young people tend to grow out of and they go on to live happy lives. Conversely, if the medical system starts treatment early on, with a view to changing genders, many young people will become unnecessarily ill and struggle with major problems for the rest of their lives. The hospital at John Hopkins University no longer operates on these patients[9]. As far as I can see, there is also insufficient data on the long-term follow up of those who have had treatment, which calls for the utmost care when considering potential cases. One significant question thus arises: since these patients feel a mismatch between their bodies and their emotions, why is it not considered more natural to prioritise treatment of their feelings before starting drastic treatment in the form of hormone therapy and mutilating surgery? On the internet, there are reports of serious mental illness in patients who have undergone sex-change surgery, and we hear nothing about those who regret undergoing such radical treatment.[10,11,12,13]

Modern Western culture is very different from what it used to be and has some extremely unfortunate aspects. This culture is over-focussed on sex of all kinds and in all modes of expression, and we are left with a strong feeling that sexual freedom is calamitous. Maybe old-fashioned biblical sexual morality provides the best guarantee of a good life? Sexual

liberation, which lets you do anything, allows anything, and permits you to be whatever sex you feel at any time, seems to be at conflict with basic human nature. Western culture is characterized by a lack of social norms – everything is equally 'normal' – and there are no binding norms for sexuality. Heterosexuality as a norm is considered to be harmful and threatening in a landscape where sexuality is fluid and can be changed constantly. This cultural mindset is described as 'queer'. Supporters of the 'queer' mindset consider it to be a positive thing that everything floats and for there to be no clear boundaries. Although queer thinking can cause young people to question their own identity, kindergartens and schools still introduce the topic. The long-term results of such a policy could easily result in tragedy and chaos. Our time advocates no norms for gender, sexuality or family, and any sexual activity that does not suppress another individual is considered acceptable. No good can come of this, only the opposite. Queer thinking is a serious experiment – and we do not know the long-term effects of teaching children and young people that everything is equally acceptable when it comes to gender, sex and family. When pre-schoolers are brought up to think that a 'co-mother' is as good as a father, or a 'co-father' is as good as a mother, a child is robbed of all the positives a good family contributes to his or her well-being and upbringing and loses one of the most important support and guarantee for a good life. For many years, child psychology has emphasized the importance of giving children a safe family within which to grow up, and so the fact that queer thinking sees a situation where everything is floating and there are no clear boundaries as a positive, should be of serious concern.

The clearest sign of the major changes in our view of morality and the Christian faith is the revolution that has taken place in attitudes to marriage, family, and sexuality. This revolution has occurred over the course of just one generation. Moreover, we are living in the midst of this revolution. Such great changes in the course of such a short time have rarely happened in the history of humankind. Marriage has always functioned as a brake on sexual anarchy. Marriage was previously regarded as a union of a man and a woman as husband and wife. Marriage as the framework for sexual expression forms the very basis of what we call civilization.

Marriage is one of God's creation ordinances that neither politicians, bishops nor church councils have a mandate to redefine. The introduction of an ideology that states that gender differences are irrelevant, that biological relationships are irrelevant, and that a mother or a father can be exchanged with a person of the opposite sex, may eventually change the foundation of our entire civilization. The family has been considered the mainstay of society for thousands of years. Today, the secular elite has found it pertinent to change the old traditions of family and the marriage relationship, and at a pace that risks making decisions that could lead to more pain than good. In the West, governing authorities seem to find no qualms in establishing laws that pose serious attacks on the family. This will make it difficult for future generations to avoid losing the safety and security that can only be provided by growing up in a family made up of a mother, a father and their children. If the seeds of chaos are sown, then chaos will be harvested. The seeds of chaos will never lead to harmony, and there is serious reason to be concerned about children being the big losers as a result of the radical changes that are happening in society today.

Secularization is not the same as secularism. Secularization is a process that causes individuals and societies to reject Christian beliefs and results in religion occupying a lesser place in the community. Some people have described secularization as the rejection of faith in a personal God. Sociologists often quote Karl Marx's saying that 'religion is the opiate of the people', in other words, religion is the province of the lower classes and will vanish when people are educated and living in prosperity. Yet this is not correct. In Western society, the lower classes do not make up the bulk of church goers, precisely the opposite, as the wealthiest third of the population are the most faithful church-goers, and those who profess a religious belief.

The time we live has been called 'late-modernism' and is characterized by individuals being self-absorbed and deciding for themselves how to live their lives. The late-modern person is autonomic and values individualism, as that purports to bring personal freedom. The letter 'I', besides meaning 'I' in the sense of the individual, is now also short for different terms, including 'information'. There is a reason modern computer equipment emphasizes 'I', as in iPhone, iMac, iPad, and iBook. Apple

understands the spirit of the age and emphasises 'I' – the ego. Late-modern individuals set their own moral standards and free themselves from all moral authorities, such as the Christian faith, which has a message calling people to commitment. In times gone by, people considered themselves members of a greater order. When society no longer has a hierarchical structure, dependent neither on a greater order nor the will of God, people feel less obliged by external circumstances and think it is more important to do what they want than taking others into account.

In her book, *It's Dangerous to Believe*, Mary Eberstadt[14] describes a new characteristic of our time: discrimination against people who hold traditional religious beliefs, in that they are excluded from the ordinary society of militant secularists in an aggressive way. Those who maintain the importance of the classic Christian moral view on sexuality and marriage are at risk of losing their jobs and reputation, and are being cowed into silence. There have been cases where students from Christian schools have had difficulty getting their schooling accepted by other educational institutions, or by employers. There is concern that soon it might be difficult for Christians to qualify as lawyers and medical doctors in the United States. As the title of Eberstadt's book says, it can indeed be dangerous to go against the prevailing cultural view, despite the fact that all citizens are guaranteed freedom of expression and religious freedom.

Secular humanism forms the basis for the altered views on sexuality. Consequently, God is abolished and has no place in public life. When God has been sidelined, belief in God no longer characterizes the law. The belief human beings are created in God's image also vanishes and human beings become advanced animals. Then it becomes incorrect to believe there are only two sexes, male and female. The biological gender you are born with, which is part of God's creative handiwork, is rejected. The new era considers gender to be a social construction, which is also a tenet of Marxism, and that gender differences lead to repression and must be opposed. The new outlook on family and marriage is blind to the importance of the family for individuals and for society as a whole. Just as an organism is made up of cells, communities are made up of families. For thousands of years, people were convinced that a community made up of families was the best recipe for a good life, in that when

families thrive, the community thrives. Over the course of a few years, this principle has been discarded and replaced by a view that considers the individual and the satisfaction of her/his appetites and desires to be the ultimate meaning of life.

LGBT (lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender) is the abbreviation for the new view of gender and sex. Most countries have an LGBT organization for individuals who are not heterosexual. These organizations are very active in advancing LGBT rights. (Notice 'rights' – there is no mention of responsibility or duty). LGBT organizations are skilled in promoting their cause. In some countries, they have achieved significant progress, and there are now laws that uphold their sexual identity and same-sex marriage.

Not many people know that a group of gender activists gathered in the city of Yogyakarta in Indonesia in 2016. This group agreed upon a number of principles that we do not have space to discuss here, but I urge anyone who is interested to look this up for themselves[15]. The starting point for the agreement of these principles was sexual orientation and gender identity.

A Norwegian author, Kjell Skartveit, has written a book called *Normløs*[16], best translated as 'Normless', in which he presents the Yogyakarta principles[17]. Skartveit writes that according to these principles 'all people are assumed to have a free sexual orientation that is fluid, and in which no sexual preference is excluded. The belief in a normative starting point for marriage is rejected, and gender is assumed to be volatile, without being anchored in biological forms. This means that a person's gender is no longer defined on the basis of their biological sex, but by the individual's experience of himself. According to the Yogyakarta principles, sexual orientation and gender identity are an integral part of every individual's dignity and humanity. The authors of the principles argue that requiring a person to relate to one particular gender, that is, their biological gender, verifies the very suppression the human rights are meant to combat, and that all allegations of gender inequality are based on prejudice and stereotypical notions of the person.'

Skartveit continues: 'There is complete freedom for the expression of all types of sexual orientation and gender identity, and all moral restrictions

related to sexual life are to be regarded as limitations of human rights. A society therefore does not have the opportunity to pass laws that are based on what people have traditionally perceived as right and wrong in this area. Traditional human rights such as religious freedom and freedom of conscience are considered subordinate to the Yogyakarta principles. This will mean that people will no longer be allowed to preach, teach, instruct, or believe that there is a divine view to human sexuality, even though the heterosexual relationship is fundamental to any society.'

The Yogyakarta principles also state that 'everyone has the right to found a family, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Families exist in diverse forms. No family may be subjected to discrimination on the basis of the sexual orientation or gender identity of any of each members.'

In addition, the Yogyakarta principles require the state to 'take all necessary legislative, administrative, and other measures to eliminate and prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in public and private employment, including in relation to vocational training, recruitment, promotion, dismissal, conditions of employment and remuneration.'

For example, this means that the Salvation Army cannot have a regulation that says that, on grounds of principle, they can only recruit heterosexuals to any vacant positions of employment.

If we try to analyse what has happened in this area, we can over time see a pattern:

1. Living as a homosexual is accepted.
2. Homosexuals obtain social and legal equality, including the right to marry.
3. Homosexuals struggle to dominate, becoming influencers of public opinion, in the media and in the judiciary.
4. Criminalisation of anyone who opposes the thinking of the LBGT movement.

As an example of point 4: Päivi Räsänen is a highly respected female Christian doctor who has been a member of the Finnish Parliament for several years[18]. She has been a Cabinet Minister for four years. When the

Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Finland decided to accept same-sex marriage she wrote a Twitter-message quoting Paul´s letter to the Romans 1, 24-27. When she was asked about her views on homosexuality, she responded by quoting the Bible. This was perceived as being so discriminatory and intolerant, that the police decided to press criminal charges against her.

The importance of sexuality and family relationships for society

In 1934, the anthropologist, J.D Unwin, published a book called *Sex and Culture*[19], in which he discussed eighty cultures and six civilizations he had researched with the intention of examining the importance of sexuality for society. He looked back across 5,000 years of human history and gathered a large amount of material. Unwin wanted to determine if Freud's thoughts on sexuality were correct. Freud believed that unsatisfied desires could lead to an individual losing energy, which in turn, would be unfavourable for society as a whole. Unwin was a secular person who described the conditions he investigated without himself having any view on what was right or wrong.

Unwin distinguished the following categories of people:

Zoistic: The lowest ranking class, and most sexually liberated. Exclusively focussed on the problems and needs of daily life, with no interest for understanding the natural world. Urwin argues that Zoistic societies have the least amount of social and mental energy. Unwin called this a 'dead culture'.

Monistic: Believes in the supernatural and has specific rituals in connection with death.

Deistic: Believes in the existence of God, or that God is found in nature

Rationalist: Uses rational thinking to understand life and the natural world. This is the most developed class, which exercises the most sexual restraint and expresses the most energy in order

> to maintain a «rational», energetic society. Sexual drive should be controlled and shifted to more productive work, and women should enjoy the same legal rights as men.[20]

Unwin categorized sexual activity as that taking place before and that taking place after marriage.

He divided sexual activity taking place before marriage into the following categories:

- Total sexual freedom
- Periodic abstinence
- Complete chastity and honour

In addition, he divided sexual activity taking place after marriage into these categories:

- Modified monogamy: One spouse at a time, the marriage can be dissolved by both parties
- Modified polygamy: A man may have several wives, but they can choose to leave the man
- Absolute monogamy: One spouse throughout life
- Absolute polygamy: A man may have several wives, all of whom are committed to being sexually faithful to him

Unwin's findings showed that sexuality is a key factor in keeping a community together. He found that a lifelong, monogamous, heterosexual marriage, where the spouses are faithful to each other, produces a flourishing society. He interpreted this as an expression of how absolute monogamy strengthens the family unit and children, because all individuals are committed to doing their best to ensure everyone succeeds. On the other hand, he found that when families did not live this way, quality of life deteriorated for individuals as well as for society.

Unwin's results showed that a thriving society was the result of restricting sexual activity before and after getting married. Conversely, he discovered that increased sexual freedom always lead to the breakdown

of society three generations after the practice had commenced. Unwin also discovered that the single most important factor for societal development was chastity before marriage, and the most significant combination of factors for a thriving society was chastity before marriage combined with absolute monogamy. Cultures that managed to maintain this structure for three generations, i.e. for 100 years, became the most advanced in all areas, e.g. art, technology, science, architecture, and agriculture. Of the eighty-six cultures that Unwin examined, only three attained this level. A life-long monogamous marriage is therefore a guarantee for a good life and a healthy community. In societies where relationships were not based on sexual faithfulness, the result was a lower level of human character.

Cultures that allow total sexual freedom, with no chastity before marriage became 'zoistic', i.e. characterised by people concerned with ordinary things and everyday activities, who have no interest in nature or society, are irreligious and do not reflect on life or death. This led to the breakdown of the society, which was then absorbed into, or conquered by, another culture. Unwin found that this process took three generations. Over the course of 100 years, a rational attitude to life, belief in God and the idea of monogamous marriage disappeared. We should note he found no exception to this sociological development in societies that practiced sexual freedom. They all collapsed after the course of three generations.

Unwin concluded that 'every human society is free to choose either to be energetic community builders or to enjoy sexual freedom, but the facts show that they cannot do both for a longer period than one generation.'

How does our period of history relate to Unwin's discoveries? The sexual revolution introduced free sex about fifty years ago, with the result that an individual in Western society might face ridicule for being abstemious before marriage. Such a person is a rarity. Divorce has become widespread; in the USA an estimated 50% of marriages end in divorce. Western countries today are secular and belief in God is seen as unnecessary. The latter has been compounded by a naturalistic approach to science and the theory of evolution. God has also been removed from

the school curriculum, as there is no place for him in humanism or postmodernism. Rational thinking based on common sense is uncommon, and personal feelings often count more than actual visible facts. This is particularly pertinent in the realm of identity politics, which put aside the very evidence that nature demonstrates.

According to Unwin's discoveries, western countries are on course for a total breakdown of society and culture in a few years, but Unwin's findings are merely observations; they cannot be considered to be a cause. Unwin considered the liberation of women as a positive, but noted that emancipation held the possibility of increased sexual freedom for women. These days, the contraceptive pill has given women the potential to have total sexual freedom and, if Unwin's observations are applied, the pill will contribute to the collapse of our culture in that families will become smaller and eventually disappear.

Professor Pitirim Sorokin founded the Department of Sociology at Harvard University in the USA. He claimed that civilisations demand the regulation of sexuality and family relationships, and that civilisations were only possible if marriage was normative and sexual behaviour outside marriage was criticised.[21] Like Unwin, Sorokin thought that the weakening of the institution of marriage was the first sign of the pending collapse of a civilisation. According to Sorokin, civilisations were only possible if men took responsibility for their own offspring. He was convinced that this was possible only as long as marriage was considered the only valid framework for sexual intercourse and procreation, and when extramarital sexuality was considered unacceptable. For centuries, monogamous heterosexual marriage has been the glue that has kept families together, and created kinship ties that have given the growing family a secure identity through experiencing the care of both a mother and a father, who are husband and wife, man and woman. Marriage is a stabilising factor that contributes to thriving societies. Sorokin believed that duty and responsibility in a marriage had to be more important than romantic feelings. Marriage has always functioned as a restraint on sexual anarchy. When marriage no longer functions as it has done in the past, an inevitable variety of problems arise.

Mary Eberstadt has written books on the sociological changes that

have taken place in the USA over the last few decades[22]. She claims that the increase in sexual freedom that characterizes Western society today leads to the breakdown of the family. Growing up in a family with a mother, father, aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces and grandparents gives in-built security, which improves the health of the individual as well as the society. Strong forces have fought to eradicate the nuclear family. The father is no longer seen as a necessary member of the family, according to feminists. The cost will probably be very high, as the marriage and mother-father-child relationship are thwarted. This trend is likely to produce significant social problems in the future. When children and young people are deprived of the consistent security of being part of a family, they become insecure, restless, and struggle with mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. The fact that the loss of family identity leads to mental health issues should not be neglected, and the long-term effects are still not known. Eberstadt has discovered there is a connection between family life and church life[23]. In modern society, there are more divorces, more broken families and single mothers, and more cohabiting couples living together. These are societal changes that lead to secularisation. When people stop living in families, they stop going to church, and it is probable this could lead to significant social problems in the future. When families do not have a father, most people find it more difficult to see God as a loving father who is always there for them. Many people today do not have a father in their lives, and God has become irrelevant to the modern individual. The concept of the family has been redefined completely, and the security of belonging to a thriving family is unknown to many. When the heterosexual norm is rejected, the anarchy of cohabitation arises.

One thing that has deprived Christianity of its credibility is that Christians live very much like everyone else. They are equally big materialists and have adapted to a modern consumer culture in which people must have at least as much as their neighbor. They are concerned with themselves and their own well-being. They have also forgotten the commandment that says we MUST love our neighbour as ourselves. In other words, Christians have not always been the role models the world needs.

The consequences of Personhood Theory

In her latest book, *Love Thy Body*, Nancy Pearcey describes how so-called Personhood Theory forms the basis for euthanasia and abortion[24]. Personhood theory states that to be biologically human is a scientific fact, but to be a person is an ethical concept, defined by what we value. This theory defines a human being as consisting of two parts: a body and a personality[25]. The body is a person's physical being, while the personality consists of their mental and cognitive abilities. These abilities are not present in the foetus; they are still to be developed, therefore, in the case of an abortion, Personhood Theory considers that only the physical is removed. An individual with a personality is not removed, so abortion cannot be defined as murder, and the act is not considered illegal. On the other hand, abortion has become a right for women, but as the foetus does not have a personality, it has no rights and is without legal protection. A person is only assigned rights when they are a complete individual with a body and a personality. In the final phase of life, when mental abilities may be impaired by dementia, ending a life with poison from a syringe would also not be considered as killing a person, since the abilities that make up what one calls the personality are no longer working adequately.

Personhood Theory states that the body is separated from the personality, and therefore it follows that what an individual does with their body ought to have no effect on their personhood. Sex can thus be considered as purely a physical act, separated from emotions like love. In the USA there are settings that encourage young people to have sex without being emotionally engaged. Media sources, such as the *Washington Post*[26] and teachers, appear to think it is not only beneficial, but also necessary, to keep love separate from sex. If that is the case, then the theory is that no one is disappointed or hurt. Nevertheless, emotional wounds can rise to the surface later on, and be quite painful.

Pearcey thinks that Darwinian evolutionary theory has, in many ways, laid the foundation for this dehumanization of the person. According to this theory, there is no sign of God in nature; what looks like design is now seen as accidental rather than actual design; and there is no plan or deeper purpose in life. Pearcy says that when God is absent in nature,

there is no basis for moral truths; nothing in the cosmos displays the will of God; everything is now seen as the result of a series of coincidences; human beings then become autonomous, and each person decides for themselves their own morality; and finally, that autonomy leads to people doing whatever they want.

Culture of Death

Before I finish this chapter, I want to mention Wesley J. Smith, a writer and and social debater who is concerned with the dehumanization that characterizes culture today, i.e. the degradation of human beings which is a natural consequence of the prevailing consensus that the human being is merely a developed animal, according to evolutionary theory and naturalism. Smith cautions us of what he calls a 'culture of death'[27]. This pertains to several countries having now legalized euthanasia, which is simply a sophisticated word for the active assistance of death. The evolutionist, Jerry Coyne, believes that children with severe handicaps should not be given the opportunity to grow up[28]. He says it can be brutal not to allow euthanasia in such cases. He also believes that euthanasia may be applicable in cases of severe depression. Richard Dawkins is of the same opinion, as are other like-minded atheist scientists. Peter Singer who is professor in bioethics at Princeton University is the most famous infanticide advocate. In his book "Rethinking Life and Death"[29] he explicitly compares human non-persons to mackerel: "Since neither a newborn infant nor a fish is a person, the wrongness of killing such beings is not as great as the wrongness of killing a person." Singer has repeatedly argued that infanticide should be permitted under the same circumstances in which society permits the abortion of viable fetuses. He states that killing an infant with hemophilia to be right if it has no adverse effect on others[30]. Joe Carter says in his article " The Dangerous Mind of Peter Singer" that Singer has spent a lifetime justifying the unjustifiable.[31]

Canada, the Netherlands and some states in the United States have legalized euthanasia. In Canada, an association has been formed for doctors who want to be able to offer active death assistance. In the Netherlands, more than 400 elderly people have been victims of active death assistance

In the Netherlands more than 400 elderly persons are each year victimized to euthanasia even without having uttered any request for such an action.

without having expressed they wanted that option. In the Netherlands, active death assistance is also carried out on patients with mental illnesses. A case of euthanasia has been recorded in which a person who had lost her lust for life and was bitter after being abandoned by her sister. Active death assistance was also given to a cancer patient who had developed a depression, but the subsequent autopsy showed no signs of cancer.[32-35]

In a column in the *Wall Street Journal* (July 20, 2017), a Dutch MP gave a warning about euthanasia activists' wish to expand their action to include seniors who believed they had nothing more to live for and that their life was completed. Smith accuses the *New York Times* of being a mouthpiece of euthanasia[36] and is of the opinion that active assisted death corrupts everything it comes into contact with – especially the medical profession. He claims to know of American doctors who put a poison syringe for $2.000 in fees. In an article in *National Review Online*[37] he makes the point that as soon as we reject that human beings are unique and exceptional, it becomes impossible to maintain universal human rights, and we move in a direction where individuals can be considered

possible candidates for euthanasia, and the moral view of those in power makes the decisions.

In the United States, current law states that women have the right to abortion. The word abortion thus provides a kind of protection and led to the word being used in contexts where it does not belong. If a child is killed during childbirth, but before it's been born and come out of the mother's body, this is called pre-birth abortion. If a child is killed immediately after birth, thus is called post-natal abortion, but the correct term is actually child murder or infanticide. Nevertheless, when the word 'abortion' is used, the limits of the law as currently exercised have not been breached. In some places, the argument exists that health professionals should not be able to opt out of participating in interventions where one takes life, such as abortion. In such cases, expressing reservation about participating is considered tantamount to a health professional resigning from her job.

I have read that in 2019 more people died of abortions than for any other reason. According to www.worldometers.info, 42.3 million abortions were conducted worldwide that year. As I write, on 10 January 2020, this site indicates that 1.139.660 abortions have already been performed in 2020. It is probably no mistake to say that loss of respect for human life is the greatest factor that characterizes humanity today.

Our time is characterized by a downgraded meaning of life, and the prevailing philosophies in part emphasize resolutely that life is meaningless. Young people can find these thoughts heavy and difficult to cope with, and this may relate to increasing incidence of suicide among younger people, especially among young men. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, the suicide rate in the United States increased by 56% for adolescents aged 10-24 over the 10-year period 2007-2017[38].

Artificial Intelligence and Transhumanism

Artificial intelligence has become a fashionable word. The term embraces computers and robots that program themselves and are not managed or controlled by humans. The most ardent advocates of artificial intelligence envision that we stand at the threshold of the development of machines

that can serve humanity in many ways. An article in the *Nature* argues that these machines will constitute a new breed, and that 'digital population' must be protected by laws and regulations[39]. The promotion of such proposals is an expression of a lessened view of humankind and its value. People are moral beings; something intelligent machines can never be. Human beings also have free will, whereas machines with artificial intelligence can only follow their algorithms. The promotion of artificial intelligence is a struggle against the unique position of human beings in creation. The more people think a computer can be like a person, then the more people will think they are not created in God's image. The more artificial intelligence, the less theism – that is the name of the game.

The main purpose of artificial intelligence is to advance humankind, with the ultimate goal of 'humans' being able to live forever. This concept is called transhumanism and embraces the idea that development of artificial intelligence will produce what could be called a 'posthuman race'. This idea is called posthumanism. Human beings as we know them will die out and be replaced by new 'trans-humans', whose bodies and mental abilities have been changed in such a way that further scientific development cannot be stopped. This new breed will be as unlike humankind as a person is from a chisel. Transhumanism seeks to take control of evolution in order to change the essence of humankind so it becomes a new and different breed. It promulgates the belief that human beings have the ability and knowledge to make themselves something bigger and better, especially in regard to intelligence. This heretical dream of continued evolution has its basis in the notion that human beings consist only of material parts, and therefore, human beings can take control of this evolution. The correct word for this is absurdity; its adherents live in dreamland. The fact that transhumanists do not value humankind for what we are, is exceptional and not normal. Wesley J. Smith states that transhumanism has become the world's newest religion, promising eternal life, and that we will all become like God, except there is no longer belief in a God to whom we are answerable[40, 41]. The Tower of Babel was built because people wanted to be like God, and transhumanism seems to be a new Tower of Babel. In November 2017, the renowned physicist Stephen Hawking said that humanity is at risk of wiping itself out, and

that if humans can create computer viruses, then they could, at some point, design an intelligence that can improve and reproduce itself.[43] He was concerned this would produce a new life form that would oust humanity as its competitor. Hawking also suggested that the development of artificial intelligence has come so far it cannot be stopped. This is probably an unachievable flight of fancy, but it is good to be aware that such development has been tabled by people of influence. Simply the knowledge these thoughts and ideas exist is terrifying in itself.

Moralistic therapeutic deism

In a time that is so unlike earlier times, a concept called 'moralistic therapeutic deism' (MTD) can easily gain a foothold. This term was introduced by Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, two researchers who conducted an extensive survey of the religious and spiritual lives of American teenagers.[44] They described MTD as a worldview having the following tenets:

- A God exists who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth.
- God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
- The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
- God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.
- Good people go to heaven when they die.

These five points make up the religious belief system of possibly the majority of contemporary American teenagers and Americans adults. There is reason to assume that teenagers have often inherited this view from their parents, so teenage understanding is a symptom of the parent generation not having a classical understanding of Christian faith. The researchers called this view of God 'deism', because it differs too much from a theistic view. The survey showed that the vast majority of teenagers

were unable to express their religious opinions and feelings. They had no information about the religious tradition of the culture of which they themselves were a part, and were indifferent as to what they ought to believe. This implies they have not been taught to have a religious understanding of their lives, either in their family, at church or at school. A consistent view among the sampled population was that one belief was as good as another, which indicates they have a relativistic view of life.

The study also showed that American teenagers are individualists and think that each person can believe in a way that suits them best. Many of those interviewed had the view that there is no 'right' answer to moral and theological questions, but thought that in order to live a good and happy life, you had to be a person with good morals. 'Good morals' meant being kind, good, friendly, respectful, responsible, taking care of their own health, and doing their best to succeed. The interviewees emphasized that religion must be 'kind' – something many might think is incompatible with religious belief. To them the things that really mattered were to be well, be happy, safe, and have peace with yourself, i.e. subjective well-being is central. They also think problems can be solved, and people should interact with others in a friendly way. The interviewees were also found to believe in the existence of a God who created the world and set everything in motion, and to believe that this God has made moral commandments according to which we should live. Nevertheless, they do not think this God is personally interested in people's personal affairs, and that he prefers to stay at a safe distance from humankind. In contrast to a classical deistic view this distant God is selectively available for taking care of needs. This God only wants to solve people's problems and make them happy, as opposed to being a judge. MTD is tolerant and requires nothing from the individual. It does not represent a religion which demands repentance from sin, or that adherents read sacred books or pray to God. Words such as sin, grace, sanctification, justification and damnation do not exist in MTD.

During the study, the researchers gained the understanding that MTD is a worldview that has been adopted by millions of Americans, and is dominant among adolescents. The researchers also concluded that this way of thinking has infiltrated Christian thought, which is thus in danger

of being transformed into a religious system that deviates significantly from classical Christian faith. It may be worth asking what proportion of believers in our own nation are affected by the MTD mindset.

MTD can be summarized as follows:

Moralistic – God wants us to behave in a good way.
Therapeutic – God wants us to be healthy, happy and well adapted.
Deistic – an impersonal God created the world, and has left it to itself. This God does not want to have close contact with us.

We must understand that MTD is not Christian faith, but, according to Christian teaching, it is a heresy. MTD is a form of happy religiosity. Only Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and Life, and only faith in him gives the believer the guarantee of eternal life in the heaven to which the Bible refers.

Michael Horton has written a book called *Christless Christianity*, which discusses the message of MTD, or a Christianity without Christ[45]. Horton believes churches are changing their theology at a great pace. Some pastors speak only of God and do not mention Jesus. When Jesus is mentioned, he is often presented as having a different meaning than that given him in the Bible. What is comfortable and feels good is emphasized; discipleship expressed in terms of service and obligations is toned down; and preaching about the cross, sin, and repentance is more or less absent. Their preaching is more influenced by mental health, in that the message appeals to the emotions and is attractive to those who want to love themselves rather than loving God.

Summary

In this chapter, I have tried to draw out the major changes that have occurred in western attitudes to traditional norms relating to life and human relationships. These changes have occurred in a very short time and are the result of new secular thoughts and ideas gaining a foothold throughout Western civilization. This way of thinking is in direct

opposition to Christian faith and ethics. In this respect, the Christian worldview bears close examination, and this will be the focus of the following chapter.

The prevailing culture in a society or a nation will manifest itself in education, arts, worldview, politics, but also in how people behave and in the values they want to express. In the Western world there has for some years been popular and - 'in' - to make holes in the jeans. Instead of taking care of the clothes, one does the opposite. You may ask yourself 'why' - and I let you find the answer(s) to that question.

What is a Worldview?

We all have an opinion, conviction or belief about life. Philosophers are fascinated by why things are the way they are, whereas scientists concentrate more on what it is that makes things the way they are. Few of us have a comprehensive philosophical view of life we have thought through, and perhaps even fewer of us have given thorough thought as to what a theistic outlook of life entails. Nevertheless, we all have an opinion or a point of view, even if it is not based on profound philosophy or theology. This is called a 'worldview'.

What is meant by a 'worldview'? It is a term that it is almost impossible to define concisely. James W. Sire's book, *The Universe Next Door*[46], discusses the nine most important worldviews. A worldview is a foundation of faith that determines how we think about the world, our mission and our future here. A worldview is more than an outlook on life that revolves basically around religious belief. We all have a worldview, but we may not have a conscious view of reality upon which we have reflected. A worldview is the set of opinions we have about our reality. We could also say that our worldview is the lens, pair of spectacles, through which we see the whole of our reality. It may often be the case that we have not thought through why we think what we think. Religious and philosophical ideas are only part of a worldview. A worldview also encompasses our view of politics,

economics, working life, business, family, morality, ethics, science. In short: our total reality.

Nancy Pearcey puts it this way: 'Each of us has a model of the universe inside our heads that tells us what the world looks like and how we're going to live in it. We all try to have an opinion with our lives. Some convictions are deliberate, others more unconscious, but together they form a uniform view of reality' [47]. A worldview is a complex composite set of principles, preconceptions, beliefs, opinions and values person hold, which shapes how they perceive reality, and determines how they will act. It concerns the fundamental convictions a person holds, upon which they base their choices and thus, their life. A worldview is therefore a kind of commitment which influences our heart, mind, and soul. If a person has a true understanding of what a Christian worldview includes, then they will be very resilient to being influenced by secular thoughts. A Christian worldview is like an immunization against everything that different belief systems throw at us, and it also provides protection against all the influences that are so subtle as to be imperceptible. Peter says in his first letter (3,15) that we should always be ready to defend the reason for the hope we have as Christians. By having a conscious Christian worldview, a person strengthens her personal belief, and becomes better qualified to share that faith to others. *How Now Shall We Live?* is a book I would recommend, as it throws light on the most important aspects of a Christian worldview[48].

A worldview has four important components. The first relates to our view of creation: Where do we come from, does God exist, what constitutes the basis of our values, what forms the basis of authority? The second relates to morality and ethics: What is the basis for assessing whether something is right or wrong, how do I distinguish between good and evil, what is wrong with our world? The third is about knowledge: Can we know what is true? The fourth component is about destiny and purpose: Does life have any meaning, is death the end of it all, can I do something to make the world a better place? A Christian worldview has God as the basis for all four components.

The usual way to evaluate a worldview is as follows:

1. Is it coherent? In other words, is it logical, and does it hold together?
2. Does it correspond to reality?
3. Does it work in practice? What conclusions does it lead to?

We live in a time when two competing worldviews are fighting for people's minds in Western civilization: the Christian faith and Naturalism. On the whole, the academic world rejects Christianity, which as a result has lost its position as the dominant western worldview. All worldviews are based on faith - although naturalists and atheists might contest that. People either believe that the world was created by God, or that the world came into being by its own accord. People either believe that our moral standards are a consequence of us being created in God's image, or that morality depends on your personal preferences. People either think that life has a purpose, or that everything is a result of pure coincidence. Finally, people either believe in an eternal life, or that everything is over when you die.

An intense battle currently ensues between these two worldviews. Some people describe it as a spiritual battle. All Christians need to have a view of life that is well thought through. If we are to be able to help others who may be struggling with doubt and uncertainty, we need to have the necessary background and knowledge to be able to defend the Christian faith. Defending the Christian faith in this way is called apologetics, and in this book, the word is used only with that meaning. Teaching apologetics is particularly appropriate for young people. Surveys from the United States show that most Christian teenagers have the same worldview as non-Christians. If we do not have a clear understanding of this problem, we are in danger of losing our young people to the secular world in which we all live. Teenagers today grow up in a culture that does not have fixed boundaries for right and wrong, unlike in the past. A Christian worldview works on the basis that God is the creator of all things, that he created heaven and earth. In other words, he created everything in the realm of human reality. Secular worldviews have a different starting point than God. It is important that we learn to analyze secular thoughts to find out what they consider as the supreme authority. Our

lives have a purpose; we were born for a reason and have a task to fulfill. In particular, Christians should see themselves as here to serve others. A humanistic outlook on life prioritizes the individual, and satisfying the diverse needs of the individual is important. Conversely, our lives should be characterized by Christian ethics as defined in the Bible.

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In the next chapter, I want to discuss reasons why Christianity is no longer a dominant worldview in western countries. When one worldview is rejected, it is always replaced by a new one, because human beings depend on having a system of beliefs they perceive as true. Some people have voiced the desire for a 'life neutral' society, but that is a utopian idea. Life-neutrality is an impossibility and does not exist - it is a word without substance. These exponents of 'life neutral society' are actually calling atheism to be considered a 'value-neutral' outlook on life, but this is impossible, because every worldview has foundational thoughts and ideas, and thus cannot be value-neutral. Various philosophers stand behind these concepts and ideas. Christianity has always had opponents. The decisive struggle which led to the current situation started a long time ago, in the time called the Enlightenment, and we are reaping the fruits of Enlightenment philosophy today. We will look at this in more depth in the next chapter.

The Importance of the Enlightenment

The Enlightenment was a socially critical philosophical movement that came to prominence in Europe in the 18th century. It marks the distinction between an earlier view with God as the highest authority, and the modern view, in which human reason came to the fore. Individuals who have doubted Christianity and God have always existed, but the Enlightenment made it possible for everyone to pose critical questions in regard to the doctrines of the Church. The Enlightenment marks a time when people became critical of previously accepted truths, and elements within the political sphere wanted to bring an end to absolute monarchy. The growing bourgeoisie revolted against the privileges of the nobility, and questions were raised as to whether the Church's dogmas were able to explain science. Intellectuals began to understand there were different ways to consider reality, and the Church no longer had a monopoly on asserting what was true and right. In this chapter we will touch on some of the main emphases of the Enlightenment.

One of the more famous individuals from this period was **René Descartes** (1596-1650), the French philosopher and mathematician, who focused on what could be known with certainty and whether there was an absolutely truth upon which we could build. Descartes concluded that the human reason was the tool that provided certain knowledge, and thus reason was

brought to the fore and became the highest authority. This point of view is called Rationalism, and led to the authority of God diminishing in many aspects of society. Descartes is known for the saying 'I think, therefore I am', or, in Latin, '*Cogito, ergo sum*'. Knowing, or what we call 'cognition', became important. Nevertheless, Descartes made one mistake: we must exist in order to think and know; therefore, rationalism builds on a wrong premise. Existence must come before knowledge and reason.

Since consciousness forms the basis for being able to think rationally, Descartes looked at the awareness of the human spirit. He regarded the body as purely physical, as a machine that ran by itself. He regarded the human being as being like a watch, wound up in advance, and which ran according to the laws of nature; thus, he considered himself to be a 'thing that thought'. Descartes understood reality to be divided in two: a part that he called spirit, and a part that was matter. This division of reality, which we call dualism, has had a devastating effect on the Christian faith, in that it led to human reason and consciousness becoming the ultimate authority. Put in another way: human thoughts became greater than God's thoughts, and God was demoted.

Voltaire (1694-1778), whose real name was Francois-Marie Arouet, was another French writer and philosopher who gained great standing. He was the great philosopher of the Enlightenment and Rationalism, who fought for the establishment of secular society through human reason. He rejected all divine and supernatural explanations and believed that the human mind was blinded by centuries of erroneous ideas, including an accumulation of lies promulgated by the Church. Consequently, he argued that human beings could only rely on themselves, and that they should be their own god and prophet. Thus, he became the founder of secular humanistic philosophy. Voltaire's ideas laid the foundation for the French Revolution, which took place after he had died, in response to the subjugation of the people by the Church and the King. Voltaire led an aggressive battle against the Church and Bible that was tantamount to rage. He said of himself that he was filled with the devil. He wrote books that contained a forceful attack on morality, religion and authority. Nevertheless, Voltaire became a popular author. His thoughts gained a

foothold among intellectuals and his philosophy became widely known. Voltaire believed in reason and enlightenment, i.e. that societal problems could be solved and progress and prosperity achieved only if human beings were sufficiently enlightened.

David Hume (1711-1776) was an Anglo-Saxon philosopher who had great influence, and his ideas are still discussed. Hume was a so-called empiricist. He believed human beings can only trust what they can prove by using their senses, i.e. what they can see, hear, feel, register, taste, smell and touch. He believed that what our senses told us was the truth, and that anything we cannot register with our senses should be doubted. Nevertheless, many conditions in our reality cannot be registered by empirical means, e.g. love, kindness, care, and conscientiousness. We also cannot physically register our thoughts and opinions; they belong to the mental side of our reality – they are 'metaphysical', i.e. beyond the physical.

Besides being skeptical of anything that could not be registered with our senses, Hume also thought we should be skeptical about whether we could know anything with any certainty at all. A skeptic says we should be skeptical of any claim or allegation. This means that we must also be skeptical of the claim that says we must be skeptical of all claims. We can test this claim, however. Hume was the great skeptic, but he was not skeptical of his own skepticism; he believed firmly in his own thesis.

A serious issue with Hume's message was that he wrote off the possibility we could know anything about religion, God and Christianity. Religion cannot be examined purely scientifically, as there is no scientific method for investigating whether religion is about truth. Religion is not about the physical, but about the metaphysical. Hume also believed that morality and ethics were phenomena we decided for ourselves and he denied the existence of objective morality. Hume was so radical that he said all books written about religion could be thrown on a fire since religion cannot be registered with our senses. Nonetheless, we cannot examine or test Hume's thoughts with our senses, as there is no scientific method to prove that empiricism is true. The same holds for skepticism. So, we could equally throw all the books Hume wrote on a fire, because his ideas cannot be confirmed with our senses.

Hume understood that he could not live according to his thoughts and his skepticism. In order to live a normal life in society and in a family, he had to trust that thoughts and ideas were real, even if they do not satisfy scientific demands. Communication with your wife and children would be difficult if you are skeptical of everything they say and do, as life together would be impossible. In order to disconnect from his work, Hume played backgammon with his friends and acquaintances.

Another man who left an enduring intellectual legacy was **Jean Jacques Rousseau** (1712-1778), a French-Swiss philosopher. Rousseau thought that human beings were good by nature, and that their natural condition was to have good morals. He is famous for saying that 'Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains' – the links created by civilization and by society. He also believed there should be a contract between the individual and society, so that the individual's freedom was ensured. This was one of the factors that played a role in sparking the French Revolution, which advocated that the will of the people should be the supreme law. Rousseau believed that the State was legitimate only as a result of following the will of its inhabitants. He also advocated that the individual should abandon his own will and submit to common will, and that everyone should do their best to make sure everyone was alright. Rousseau believed that as long as private property rights and laws existed, people could not achieve the freedom offered by the 'state of nature'. These ideas were later adopted and developed by Marx and other communists.

Rousseau also thought that in order to get everyone to follow a common legislation, children required indoctrination from a very early age. He therefore thought it necessary that the State had overall responsibility for children's upbringing and for their schooling. He proposed that the school system should be a State issue, giving the State the opportunity to influence children and adolescents during a period of life that has a major impact on an individual's development as a socially conscious person.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) was a German philosopher who also influenced the history of ideas. He believed that the qualities things seem to have are due to human consciousness, and not the things themselves.

Kant believed that our sensory impressions are processed by our consciousness, so that what we observe is not the real physical object, but the image of the object given to us by our consciousness. Therefore, Kant believed that we cannot be sure if our senses give us a true and correct picture of reality. He postulated that we cannot know whether what we recognize is the truth, or whether it is a result of what our consciousness does with our sensory experiences. We cannot know how sensory impressions are affected, and perhaps altered, by our consciousness, which is why our perception of them is unreliable and it is impossible for a human being to know what is certain and true. Our own subjective feelings become important. As a result, Kant believed we cannot know with certainty whether God exists. In this way, Kant's philosophy led to his rejecting the possibility of knowing what is truth. In his mind, we cannot know about our reality with any certainty and we are unable to know anything about God.

Kant thus concluded that no one can really know anything for certain and that the truth about our world is that there are no truths about it. At the same time, he stated that he knew something about the world, i.e. that one cannot know anything about it. Kant's thoughts are thus illogical; he sets out a theory, but has to make exceptions for himself to claim that his thoughts are right.

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) was a German philosopher who also influenced other thinkers who came after him, particularly Marx. Hegel was a pantheist, and thought there was a 'World Spirit' ('Weltgeist' in German, 'anima mundi' in Latin) that governs the development of history and governs all our ideas of religion, morality, law, order and politics. This process happens by what is called dialectics: a thought develops through different levels by creating an opposite thought, which leads to a change in the original thought. We can say that a thought is met by a counterargument that is then met by a new argument, and happens when two people are in discussion. One says something, and then the other can disagree and make a counterargument. This is how thoughts are tested by rubbing up against each other. According to Hegel, this leads to a forward development that moves upwards to an end result.

A thesis creates an antithesis that results in synthesis. In philosophy this is called dialectics. All ideas and thoughts are thus a result of historical forces. As a result, what was right and true at one point in history will not remain true, but will change over time. We can say that Hegel had an evolutionary view of ideas. The course of history was thus given great importance. This led to the concept of God being pushed aside, as God was not considered to be the one who controlled the development of history, but rather history controlled itself.

Historicism entails a firm belief in the development of history according to a set of rules, and does not depend on the existence of the Truth. Rather truth is something that is sought, and the dialectic method is the means by which it is sought. Ideas are developed and tested, but then we inevitably encounter the following problem: if a timeless and unchanging Truth does not exist, then this must also apply to the historical approach to truth. Or in other words: one cannot claim as a timeless philosophical truth that a timeless philosophical truth does not exist, as this is a contradiction. Hegel emphasized the importance of history on meaning and truth and diminished the influence of God. This process is called 'reductionism', in which God is replaced with the created, something that is lower than God. By doing this, an idol is created. The historical view is thus contradictory, but Hegel makes an exception for himself, as did Hume and Kant, but if a philosophy is assumed to apply to everyone except oneself, that is proof that it is untrue.

Karl Marx (1818-1883) considered philosophy as a means to change society. Marx was influenced by Hegel, but while Hegel had a nonviolent philosophy, Marx believed that progress depended on conflict between groups. He thought that it is not human beings who shape society, but rather society that shapes human beings. He thought social classes caused historical development, and classes were the inevitable result of economic structures, and that economy was largely controlled by technology. He was also of the opinion that the conditions of life are constantly changing and evolving, that a particular condition is challenged by its contradiction. This leads to struggle that provides the basis for a new conflict, which in turn is met by opposition. The consequence is a battle between

social classes. Marx believed that war in which the poor fought against the rich was inevitable, that war was the means to achieve a classless society. He also believed that if the poor (the proletariat) united against the rich (the capitalists) the result would eventually be a classless communist society in which all were equal and all conflicts resolved. This has proven to be a utopian dream. Experience shows that constant war and conflict leads to more war and more conflicts, rather than the opposite. A major flaw in Marx's philosophy was that he did not understand that Marxism could not make all people communists. There are aspects of human nature that culture and environment cannot change.

Marx is famous for the saying 'religion is the opiate of the people'. By this, Marx meant that religion made the great masses dull, so that they could not see their problematic situation and thus did what the upper class wanted. Marx therefore saw religion as the greatest hindrance to changing society, and was of the opinion it must be fought against and completely wiped out. However, William Wilberforce did not fight for the abolition of slavery due to the 'dulling effect' of Christianity, but quite the reverse. Wilberforce was obedient to the Christian commandments that gave him an obligation towards society and his neighbors.

Marxism has had a major impact on social development, not only in the West, but also in large parts of the world, spreading widely in a very short time. Marxism reasons that all history is class struggle. Many young people were captivated by Marx's thoughts and saw Marxism as a means of levelling the difference between rich and poor, and overcoming the injustice in the world. Marxism's atheism and secular humanism also infected young minds. Marxism fought for individual freedom, and sought to reduce the importance of family and home. Marx considered the strong ties between family members to be undesirable. Marxism and socialism are concerned with groups, and far less with individuals, and view Christianity as its greatest enemy.

Marxism has, under leaders such as Stalin, Lenin, Mao and Pol Pot, been responsible for the death of millions of people. An estimated 61 million people lost their lives under Communism in the former Soviet Union. Stalin alone was responsible for the loss of 43 million lives. R.J. Rummel[49], in a web article estimates that "In sum, the communists

probably have murdered something like 110.000.000, or near two-thirds of all those killed by all governments, quasi-governments, and guerrillas from 1900 to 1987 … [Also] it is not by chance that the greatest famines have occurred within the Soviet Union (about 5.000.000 dead during 1921-23 and 7.000.000 from 1932-3) and in communist China (about 27.000.000 dead from 1959-61). In total almost 55.000.000 people died in various communist famines and associated diseases, a little over 10,000,000 of them from democidal famine.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) We cannot ignore Sigmund Freud in an analysis of social development over the last 100 years, as he has had a tremendous influence on modern psychology. He over-focused on sexuality and believed human beings are motivated by 'the pleasure principle', the source of basic impulses and drives that seeks immediate gratification. We could almost say that everything was about sex for Freud. He even claimed that mothers cuddling with their babies was a substitute for their sexual desires. He reduced the human being to its body, the body to the needs and urges of animals, and drives to sexual desires. Freud laid the foundation for the sexual revolution and the sexual liberation that characterises our time, and which gained an even greater foothold once the birth control pill became easily available. Freud believed that an individual's failure to meet their sexual needs led to psychological disturbances. He was a true materialist, and denied the existence of God. He was adamant that only science could provide information about the external world, denied that human beings have free will, and that human life had an ultimate purpose. Freud also advocated that we should follow our instincts and do what pleased us. He thought that we should not love everyone, as Jesus said, but keep strangers at a distance and only love those who deserved it. In his opinion, there was no universal moral law, but people could do as they pleased and society created its own rules of life. He believed that thoughts about religion and God were delusions, and that God was a figure invented to compensate for the many hardships in human life. Religious faith was, therefore, an illusion. As he thought that illusions are the expression of people's dreams, he concluded that religion was an expression of superstition. He also thought that religion

was neurotic and did not provide society or individuals with the mental strength required for life. Freud laid the foundation for our time's attack on family and marriage, and some commentators believe he has done more harm to humanity than any war. Freud did not understand that one of the most important things in life, selfless love, is best learned in stable families.

The philosophies of Marx and Freud have always been almost dominant in modern academic environments, all of which seem to be characterized by secular humanism. From colleges and universities, these thoughts and ideas have been levied on the rest of society. It has been said that communism would give a person a new coat, whereas Christianity would produce a new person in the coat. The basic problem is human selfishness and sinful nature. In spite of the fact that Marxism has proved to be an unsustainable worldview that has led to totalitarian governments that have misused power, it remains popular in academia.

All these new philosophical thoughts and ideas that came about in the Enlightenment caused the theistic view to be weakened. Theism is the belief in a God who is active in the world and who wants a personal relationship with human beings. God makes himself known in our reality in two ways: general revelation and special revelation. Special revelation happens through the Bible, through the life of Christ, through miracles and the gifts of grace, and implies that God communicates directly with human beings. General revelation is the manifestation of the creative power of God in nature.

Theism reckons on a God who is active and interested in our lives. Deism, on the other hand, believes that God withdrew after creating the world, because he brought order and regularity to creation by the laws of nature, which means he does not have to be there to keep it all going. In other words, deism believes that the universe runs by itself and is only about general revelation i.e. creation. Deism rejects special revelation, and emphasizes science at the expense of scripture, which thus has less significance. Reason becomes not only necessary, but is eventually found to be sufficient for our understanding of the world and of life, meaning there is little need for God. The authority for human recognition and comprehension i.e. what we believe, is transferred from Scripture to human reason.

From this we see that deism is not compatible with Christian faith, as faith is contingent on a God who oversees his creation and who wants to have a close relationship with his finest creation, humankind.

Secular Worldviews

Naturalism

We all have thoughts about life and our world. We create our own worldview. In our secular society, few people have a conscious Christian worldview. Most people have what we can call a secular worldview in which God means little or nothing. It is natural for those with a secular worldview to put emphasis on science as giving us certain knowledge, while believing that religion cannot tell us the truth about our reality. Scientific knowledge has taken God's place and becomes a new form of faith. In the Western world, Naturalism is considered to be the correct way to interpret the natural sciences, meaning it is exempt from criticism, and implying we should accept its tenets. Naturalism is a worldview that assumes everything that exists has a completely natural explanation. Naturalism adopts the premise that everything can be explained by two causal mechanisms:

- coincidence in the form of random chemical and physical reactions between the matter and energy in the universe
- regularity relying on nature's built-in order formulated by the Laws of Nature.

Naturalism claims that everything can be explained by random reactions between matter and energy, determined by the innate rules that constrain

the Laws of Nature. This means that Naturalism holds that the whole world came into being by pure coincidence without a plan. Naturalism also rejects the idea that nature has a built-in intentionality and advocates that the causes of Naturalism are blind and cannot intentionally achieve a specific goal. In other words, everything happens, and has happened, by accident. Naturalism also cannot learn from experience. This book you are reading intends to show that our reality, our world, is difficult to explain if we do not reckon on intelligent causes in nature. It is important you understand that Naturalism excludes the possibility of intelligent causes and does not consider our world to be the work of God's hand.

Before the Enlightenment, most people believed that God had created everything. The Enlightenment led to God's significance being lessened and human reason became the supreme authority. Naturalism goes a step further, and demotes God totally. As Naturalism claims that everything that happens in our physical universe takes place by nature's own mechanisms, God is not necessary to explain our reality.

Naturalism believes that our world is the result of a completely random gamble, yet the Laws of Nature indicate that our universe has a distinct order. This adherence to prescribed rules is the very foundation of science. Without this order, it would be impossible to undertake research and systematic studies. Naturalism has no explanation for how the Laws of Nature came into being, but every law requires a legislator, i.e. someone who writes the laws. One thing that has puzzled the wisest brains is that the Laws of Nature can be described in mathematical formulas. One Nobel Prize winner, Eugene Wigner, who was a theoretical physicist, said this was bordering on mystery and seems incomprehensible. Albert Einstein is known for the statement that 'The only incomprehensible thing about the universe is that it is comprehensible'. An explosive event with a temperature many millions of degrees Celsius led to the formation of a universe that is strongly characterized by order, but chaos might have been a more expected outcome of the Big Bang, because that is what explosions usually cause. Galileo believed that mathematics is God's language of the universe. Mathematics is the result of human wisdom and knowledge. In other words, some scientists find it peculiar and incomprehensible that the human brain is made in such a way that it can

understand nature and its processes. It is rather like being able to think God's thoughts in retrospect. Another thought that comes to mind, is whether God actually wants people to be able to understand creation, and that the universe behaves according to understandable laws.

The word Materialism is also used about science and means much the same as Naturalism, but it emphasizes the idea that matter forms the basis of our whole reality. In other words, everything we know about comes from the matter, and even abstract concepts such as our thoughts, opinions, love, kindness, and concern have their origins in the physical part of our universe. These ideas are pure assumption for which there is no evidence, but those who deny God is a reality have to believe that matter is the cause of everything in our world.

Naturalism dramatically alters the view of humankind, and people are seen as machines without moral responsibility that feel neither obligation nor shame. Consequently, the word 'sin' has no meaning, neither do concepts like dignity, respect, love, or goodness. 'Sin', 'soul' and 'eternity' are words not found in the vocabulary of naturalists, as they assume we cease to exist when we die. On this basis, Julien Offray de La Mettrie (1709 –1751), a French physician and philosopher and the originator of Materialism, thought evil could be considered an illusion and the wickedness of human beings could be dismissed. For de la Mettrie, the idea that man is a machine became an 'antidote to misanthropy'[50], and thus people are dehumanized and become like other animals, and life has no purpose or meaning. In this respect Richard Dawkins has commented that 'There is at bottom no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pointless indifference […] We are machines for propagating DNA'[51]. George Gaylord Simpson famously put it: 'Man is the result of a purposeless and natural process that did not have him in mind.'

Another author has put it this way: 'The contributions of the scientist to the advance of human knowledge, the researches of the doctor to alleviate pain and suffering, the efforts of the diplomat to secure peace in the world, the sacrifices of good people everywhere to better the lot of the human race – all these come to nothing. In the end they don't make one bit of difference, not one bit. Each person's life is therefore without ultimate significance. And because our lives are ultimately meaningless,

the activities we fill our lives with are also meaningless. The long hours spent in study at the university, our jobs, our interests, our friendships – all these are, in the final analysis, utterly meaningless'[53].

In Naturalism, the ultimate reality is physical and material. It provides an impersonal universe without a moral and rational being. Nature then becomes non-moral, non-rational and non-personal. The universe has no meaning or purpose. There is no reason why something exists or something happens. Naturalists will usually believe that objective truth exists, but limit such truth to scientific data only. If what you believe cannot be scientifically confirmed, then it is not certain knowledge. If goodness exists, such goodness cannot be given a metaphysical explanation. Nevertheless, naturalists face an insoluble problem in terms of values and morals, since science cannot explain the verb 'ought'. Naturalism has two answers to what may constitute goodness:

- *Subjectivism:* everything that I like, want, or prefer is defined as goodness.
- *Utilitarianism:* the thing(s) that give(s) the most pleasure to most people.

Scientism is a radical form of Naturalism, which states that only the science can reveal the truth about our reality. Scientism also claims that ethics, morals, theology, and philosophy are based solely on personal feelings, blind faith, or a particular cultural upbringing, even if these have been regarded as truth and a source of wisdom for hundreds of years. Scientism asserts that no truth can be discovered by a non-scientific method. Every culture has a sphere within which exists the perceptions about which most people agree, both rationally and emotionally. Anything that exists outside this sphere cannot be considered reasonable or true. Since Scientism defines Christianity as being on the outside of this sphere, it cannot therefore be taken seriously.

Most people believe in science quite naturally, because they can hardly grasp all the important things that science has given them that affect their lives and our welfare. Machines make possible vibrant industries that have all the things that make life easier for us, like cookers, refrigerators and

the many other things powered by electricity. Recently there has been a revolution of items that make all forms of communication possible.

Human wisdom has produced cars, planes, and boats to carry people and goods. Science has given us advanced equipment for the diagnosis and treatment of the sick. Science is credited with all these things, so much so that you will not be taken seriously if you allow yourself to doubt science. Science has demonstrated its worthiness, and therefore, Scientism has become a dominant view in Western culture.

Since Scientism believes everything we know stems from matter, it rejects that God is the creator of everything. Therefore, it is important that you, as a reader, familiarize yourself with Scientism, and that you understand the arguments that show Scientism does not tell us the whole truth.

Scientism embraces the following points:

1. A belief that religion and ethics are based on blind faith rather than knowledge. Religious claims are not based on actual knowledge and are thus not subject to a rational assessment or approach.
2. Our way of life. Since science says that there is no purpose or deeper meaning in life, that there is no difference between right and wrong, it rejects both God and an eternity. Its message is that the purpose of life is to satisfy our wishes and desires. Thus, truth dies and is replaced by an individual's need to satisfy her needs. Progress becomes more important than truth.
3. Ethical behavior moves away from positive attributes such as duty, responsibility, and an effort not to harm others, to being able to behave the way you want as long as you do not hurt anyone. The impact of ethics is thereby minimized, and thoughts about religion and ethics become neither true nor false.
4. The concept of freedom is redefined from 'doing what on oughts' to 'doing what one wants'. Some people believe this way of living will inevitably lead to chaos and lawlessness.
5. Redefines tolerance. A classic view of ethics assumes that individuals have knowledge of what forms the very basis for ethics and morality. The modern perception of tolerance states that

one should tolerate all views. No meanings are more truthful or veracious than other meanings, leading to people being considered intolerant if they disagree with someone else's view of morality.

6. Scientism has led to increased hostility towards the Christian faith.

The first natural question to ask is whether there are conditions in the world that science cannot explain. Science cannot explain mathematics. Science assumes mathematics and is based on mathematics. Likewise, science cannot explain the laws of logic, which are often called the First Principles. The First Principles are not based on science, but quite the opposite. Science rests on these principles, and if it did not, we would not be able to perform science. Science denies what we call a metaphysical reality, as opposed to the physical reality we can feel and touch. What we can register with our senses is called empirical knowledge, but we have no empirical knowledge of the origins of the universe. Science cannot currently prove by scientific methods that our universe came into being of its own accord. Because nature was made by the Big Bang, natural mechanisms cannot explain the origin of the universe, since nature is the result of the Big Bang. Therefore, there were no natural causes until our universe came into being.

The same applies to the origins of life. I go into more depth about this in my other books, specifically *The Little Book of Creation*, which is suitable for most readers, and which I would therefore recommend. Science has searched in depth for more than sixty years to find a naturalistic explanation for the origins of life, but all this research which has probably cost billions of dollars, has not met with success. What this research has shown is that life is far more complex than science has assumed. Even the simplest cell is far more advanced than anything humans have ever made. Life consists of four of the following basic substances: Proteins, nucleic acids, carbohydrates (sugars) and lipids (fats). There are no scientific facts that show these substances could have been created on the primitive Earth before life existed. Professor James Tour, who has a channel on YouTube, specializes in synthesizing the substances that form the building blocks of life. All his research has convinced him that the

foundational substances of life could not have come into being as a result of nature's own mechanisms.

If humans are the result of blind natural forces without any plan, meaning or purpose, as science says, then we can ask the question as to where morality comes from? All people are born with a conviction of right and wrong, it is not something we learn. We were born with this ability. When we do something that we know is wrong, our conscience tells us, and we get a bad conscience. We feel guilty. All people are born with the understanding that it is wrong to lie, steal and murder. All people think it is wrong to abuse young children and scare others for fun. Science has no explanation for this 'ought to be' - that lies outside the domain of science.

Science also fails to explain human consciousness. Our awareness enables us to record everything that is happening around us.

Scientism claims that science alone can give us the truth about our reality. If we study this sentence more closely, we will find that the sentence is not scientific. The sentence is not the result of a scientific examination. Nothing has been weighed or measured, and nothing has been recorded to indicate this sentence is correct. The sentence does not describe a scientific result, it tells us something ABOUT science. That means the sentence is a statement about science, and that the sentence is not scientific, but philosophical. It is about our thoughts on science. That is what we call philosophy. So, the sentence expresses an opinion on science. Scientism says that a phrase that does not build on science, cannot be true. Therefore, Scientism disproves or denies itself, and is thereby contradictory.

Spend the time you need to understand this, as it is of great importance when considering the different views that you will come across in life.

Atheism

It is difficult to get a man to understand something,
when his salary depends on his not understanding
- Upton Sinclair

What do we mean by atheism? Atheism is the denial that God exists and it tries to explain our reality without taking into account that God is the

reason behind everything. Atheism as a worldview should really have died a death 100 years ago, since then several scientists proved the universe had come into existence and that it was not eternal and unchanging. Albert Einstein, Arthur Eddington, Alexander Friedmann, Edwin Hubble and Georges LeMâitre showed that the universe had a beginning, and that it is constantly expanding. Thus, the universe was not eternal, nor was it static, but dynamic. Sir Fred Hoyle called the beginning of the universe the 'Big Bang'. The 'best'explanation for the Big Bang is creation. The most rational thing, indeed the only rational thing, is to believe that the universe was created, as it is impossible to believe it may have come into being on its own. Therefore, we can rightly say that the Big Bang is the name given to the act of Creation itself - the beginning of everything. For many centuries, philosophers have had a principle, which states that every relationship in nature requires a cause beyond itself as explanation (the Principle of Sufficient Reason). It is self-evident to most people that everything must have a cause. Nothing can happen without an external cause. Atheism denies the validity of this principle, and some people think denying this, borders on insanity, as it contradicts our inherent belief that nature does not function on its own accord. Most people realize that an intelligent force is needed to create a universe that is controlled and governed by very complex, yet elegant laws of nature.

Some people probably still believe the universe has always existed, even though this contradicts the findings of science. Their desire for God not to exist is so strong that they disregard what are considered to be scientific facts. While God is supreme for a believer, the universe is supreme for atheists. They believe in nature and that everything is explained by natural and naturalistic causes.

An argument against God that crops up on a regular basis comes in the form of the question: Who created God? Since everything that exists requires a cause for its existence, it is natural to assume that God, too, requires a cause, but this proposition is wrong. Logic argues that everything that has a beginning requires a reason for its beginning, but God has no beginning. God is eternal and unchanging. Besides, God is not created. God is immaterial and does not consist of matter. God is not part of nature. God is the origin of everything. He is what the philosophers

call The First Cause. He is the very cause of all existence, all being. God has not created himself. The prerequisite for creating is that one exists. Consequently, if God were to create himself, he had to exist. Therefore, the argument that God had a beginning is meaningless.

Many atheists, including renowned scientists, have made statements saying that atheism is the worldview by which they interpret their entire reality. They have a preconceived atheism on which they build their lives, and they do not want to let go of it. Atheism is a form of belief, as it cannot be proven to be true. There is even a church devoted to atheism, but while Christians worship God, atheists are preoccupied with nature, and the universe becomes the ultimate existence. Some atheists find that the greatness of nature gives them strong, affirmative feelings, and they feel the same as Christians do when they see the evening sky and the myriads of stars. While a Christian sees a God behind this magnificent creation, atheists see only nature itself.

The well-known American philosopher, Thomas Nagel, says his desire is that no God exists. He describes himself as lacking the *sensus divinitatus* - a sense of the divine.[54] The sense of sight allows us to see, and sense of hearing to hear. Nagel thinks he lacks such a sense of the sacred, and of God, but Nagel says something more: that he fears religion. He is afraid it is true, and said, 'I myself suffer from such fear. I want atheism to be true, but I have been troubled by the fact that some of the most intelligent and educated people I know are religious believers'[55]. Some atheists are what we might call 'anti-theists'. They want to eliminate God from society and from our consciousness, and eradicate any kind of religion. They have taken up the battle against God, but they are doomed to lose. The keynote speaker for these New Atheists is Richard Dawkins. Dawkins is so radical that he says the religious upbringing of children is far worse than them being sexually abused. In his opinion, children should be taken away from parents with a religious belief. Dawkins is the 'high priest' of the New Atheists.

While atheists believe there is no God, agnostics say that people cannot know if God exists. The convinced agnostic believes it is impossible to have certain knowledge of our reality. But then we also cannot know for sure whether a statement that says we cannot know anything with

certainty is true. Such strong agnosticism thus becomes contradictory. The skeptic, on the other hand, says we should doubt whether we can know anything for sure. The skeptic doubts that God exists, but if we are to be skeptical of everything, then we must also be skeptical of the statement that states this, which is then also not true. Therefore, extreme skepticism is also contradictory, and can be rejected. Both agnostics and skeptics have the same worldviews as atheists: Naturalism, materialism, secular humanism, scientism and postmodernism.

At this point it is worth remembering that Richard Dawkins says that Darwin made it possible to be a fulfilled atheist. Dawkins founds his atheism on the Theory of Evolution. It is important to be aware that there are many people who do the same as Dawkins. They believe God does not exist in our physical universe, nor in biology. Evolution is the atheism's view of biology, as atheism has no other options. The Theory of Evolution spread widely in a short time. Today it is the only accepted explanation of the origin of life and biological diversity in the western world. The Theory of Evolution has thus communicated the atheistic outlook on life to the world. Without the Theory of Evolution, the situation would have been completely different. Before Darwin, there were very few atheists. Western civilization today is secular. Before Darwin, the West was characterized by a theistic worldview. The point in time of the great divide corresponds to the publication of Darwin's book on the origins of species. Many atheists think that science confirms atheism, and they believe that all truth comes from science. This view is called Scientism (see page 68).

What is the main message of atheism? What does it mean that God is absent? When God is lost from our understanding of reality, our understanding of life changes. The very purpose of life is gone, and we cannot find any meaning. Steven Weinberg, a physicist and Nobel laureate, said the more you know about the cosmos, the more pointless it seems[56]. Sigmund Freud wrote, 'The moment a man asks for the value and meaning of life, he is sick, since neither value nor meaning can exist', and William Provine, a respected professor of philosophy said, 'There is no hope that there is deeper meaning in human life. Today you're here, tomorrow you're gone, and that's all that was'[57]. In other words, the atheistic view leads to the conclusion life has no purpose, no meaning, and no value.

If the universe is without purpose, meaning or value, human life also has no purpose, meaning or value, but living in such a depressive state would be unsustainable. Data shows that the suicide rate for younger people has increased[38]. Nothing else is to expected in societies where college and university students are fed a diet of philosophies that broadcast the absurdity of life. People search for meaning and purpose, and it is precisely the search for meaning which demonstrates that existence without God is self-contradictory. The emptiness of atheism becomes, *de facto*, an argument for God. Jean-Paul Sartre was a noteworthy French philosopher who died in 1980. He was an atheist and a Marxist, and very well-known in the latter half of the last century. In the end, even Sartre realized the futility and emptiness of his own vision, and repented of his atheism. He wrote, 'I do not feel that I am a product of chance, a dust spot in the universe, but one that was expected, prepared and designed in advance. In short, a creature that only a Creator could place here'[58]. Sartre accepted Christianity as his personal faith. Albert Camus was another well-known French philosopher and writer who lived at the same time as Sartre. They were good, long-time friends and had the same opinions. Eventually, Camus also realized the hopelessness of an atheistic vision. He had conversations with the pastor of the American Church in Paris. Camus asked what it meant to be born again, and whether he could be baptized. The priest thought he should spend sufficient time on such a decision[59]. Before his baptism, Camus died in a traffic accident. Atheism strongly characterized both Sartre and Camus; that is what they were known for and what gave them such influence on young people. Therefore, the fact they both eventually said goodbye to atheism leaves a lasting impression.

Atheists deny objective morality. Their worldview forces them to do so. They believe that morality has its origins in human beings themselves, and that nothing is really wrong if it does not inflict harm on anyone else. Since atheists consider that our moral qualities - or lack of such - are the result of evolution, Richard Dawkins advocates that there is no moral basis for claiming rape is immoral. In an interview he admitted that his view that rape is immoral is a random product of natural processes. He agreed that his view that rape is wrong is as arbitrary as the fact that we

have evolved five fingers rather than six[60]. Dan Barker, an American atheist activist, argued that if the choice consisted of opting out of rape or religion, he would choose religion. Barker claims that there is no moral absolutes and no universal ought[61]. Religion is the highest evil for some atheists.

The philosopher Alex Rosenberg says that reality is completely different from what most of us think[62]. He also believes we know enough about reality to be able to exclude God, all forms of expediency, and even the conscious experience of being independent beings, our self. A consequence of such a materialistic view is that one denies that people have a consciousness, free will and an experience of being a person with their own personality. Our perception of ourselves as people with a personality of our own is one of the most certain things we can know about reality, but some atheists describe all this as an illusion.

A worldview that regards all our observations about reality as illusions is not a worldview based on science — nor on common sense. As so many people in the West choose to live with a materialistic worldview, they cannot be following atheism to its end result, namely that our whole reality is a great illusion. They understand that they cannot be consistent materialists, but must make exceptions for themselves in order to live as ordinary citizens. In thus doing, they prove atheism is an erroneous worldview.

If Albert Einstein did not have free will, in a meaningful understanding of the term, then he could not himself have been responsible for the Theory of Relativity. It would have had to have been the result of processes occurring at a lower level, and not due to an intelligence that had to weigh up different alternatives in order to come to the right conclusion. Take this as an example: If the brain is considered to be a machine, writing a poem becomes an involuntary act, and no more intelligent than having an epileptic fit or a headache, but then it also becomes completely impossible to understand the nature of consciousness. Consciousness becomes a huge mystery. It would not be possible to say that I wrote an email, or that I opened the door - both would be the consequence of physics.

Atheism cannot explain:

1. The origin of the universe.
2. The origin of life.

3. The diversity of life.
4. The origin of the human mind with reason and rationality.
5. The origin of morality.

Nor the biggest question of all: Why do things exist, as opposed to nothing?
Or put it a little different: Why does anything exist at all?

In a serious debate with an atheist, he will probably argue that a believer has no evidence for the existence of God. Then the believer can do the same and ask for proof that atheism is true. What are the facts and evidence that atheism is true?

Pascal's wager is well known in the history of philosophy, and it is appropriate to mention it here. There are various logical arguments for the existence of God. Some people think these arguments are incomplete and that their conclusions are ambiguous. Pascal's wager is aimed at such skeptics. This wager itself is not proof of God's existence, but presents a completely different way of thinking, and has a completely different approach.

The question of God's existence is exceedingly important to us; perhaps the most important of all questions. And if the right answer is hard to find, then perhaps we should rather wager than try to be completely convinced? Then comes the question: What should I wager? If you wager God is the creator, you lose nothing, even if you are wrong. If you are wrong, then there is no life after death. But if you bet that God does not exist, and you then are wrong and God actually does exist, then you lose everything. You lose God, eternity, heaven and eternal bliss.

Pascal said there are three types of people: Those who have sought God and found him; those who seek and have not yet found him; and those who have never sought him, or will never do so, and therefore will never find him.

Before we leave this chapter, it is necessary to say a few words about Objectivism. Some people cannot believe in a God, but do not dismiss that nature contains intentionality. The most famous of these is Ayn Rand, a Russian-American writer and philosopher, who is considered

the founder of Objectivism[63,64]. Objectivism is a secular outlook on life that emphasizes reason and individualism, and considers the existence of self-evident truths. It is self-evident that things exist, regardless of our consciousness - reality is the primary thing. Objectivity rejects belief in the supernatural, but advocates that people can trust their senses and that they give us a proper picture of reality. Being objective means drawing logical conclusions based on what our senses register. Human beings are rational beings, and Rand believed that people have free will, contrary to the usual atheist vision. Nevertheless, Rand rejected Christianity, and was of the opinion that to have faith is akin to rejecting common sense. She rejected metaphysical reality and God, because Objectivism holds human sense to be the supreme authority.

Relativism - when nothing is certain

Relativism is a widespread view in modern Western culture, so it is important to know what relativism is, the influence it has on faith, morals and ethics. Relativism is the idea that nothing is certain, and this viewpoint can easily lead to people losing their footing. The opposite having a relative point of view is having a point of view that is absolute and objective. A few definitions are in order to understand what relativism is about. First, we need to understand the meaning of *objective*, *absolute* and *subjective.* If we say that a claim is 'objective', then it is independent of the person who states it. The phrase 'this car is black in colour' tells an objective truth about the car in question. Everyone with normal vision will agree that this car is black. The phrase 'I think black is the best colour for cars' is an example of a subjective claim. The phrase expresses the opinion of the person who says it. Another person may disagree and think grey is the best colour for cars. Some people may think the orange they are eating is sweet, while others may think theirs is sour. They are expressing subjective opinions. Objectivity does not express personal feelings or opinions; an objective statement is independent of the person making the statement. 'Absolute' is a word that means the same as 'objective'. To say that something is 'absolutely' certain or true is the same as to say it is 100% certain and true.

Pope Benedict XVI issued a warning about the dangers of relativism.

He said that, 'We are moving toward a dictatorship of relativism which does not recognize anything as for certain and which has as its highest goal one's own ego and one's own desires.' [65]

*

If we say a statement is relative, it means that the statement is not absolute or objective. There are various factors that may have an impact on meaning: a particular statement may be true for me, but not for you. It may be true in relation to Norwegian conditions, but not in relation to a country in Africa. In addition to being dependent on person and place, a statement can also depend on time. What the phrase says may have been true a while back, but does not apply today, for example, 'King Haakon is the King of Norway' was true during World War II, but it is not true today.

Often there can be little difference between what is relative and what is subjective. Subjectivism undermines the basis of knowing something with certainty.[66] People choose to be subjective for various reasons. Maybe they may want to be accepted, in which case they need to have the 'right' opinions, i.e. what they 'should' think, depending on the time in which they live, and these new, subjective opinions often contradict long-standing opinions that are cultural norms. People sometimes choose a subjective point of view for fear of admitting mistakes, or due to greed or lust.

Over the last 50-60 years there has been a revolution in what people think and believe, a process that has steadily eroded truth. Francis Schaeffer used the term of 'true truth'[67], and it is this kind of truth that no longer exists. Nowadays, even statements about absolute facts can be perceived as subjective expressions of personal opinions. The word 'truth' has lost its original connotation and been diminished to a person-focused concept meaning 'what is true for me'. This kind of 'relative truth' gives rise to people exhibiting a marked form of skepticism about many aspects of life.

There are three forms of relativism:

1. 'Society does' relativism: We could call this 'cultural relativism', i.e. different cultures can have different views about what is right and wrong. Cultural relativism is also an expression of

moral relativism, and in theory, one culture cannot criticize another culture's moral point of view.

2. 'Society says' relativism: While the first point pertains to a culture, this point pertains to a society's own injunctions and rules of conduct. This view is called 'normative ethical relativism', i.e. people must do what society says they must do. However, even if laws are legal - we must question whether they are moral.
3. 'I say' relativism: This is also called 'individual ethical relativism', i.e. individuals act as they see fit based on their own moral beliefs. This means that one individual may behave quite differently from others in the same society. Morality then becomes personal and relative, all moral choices being up to the individual.

If we think about it more closely, we will find that relativism presupposes something absolute to which it is relative. We cannot believe something is wrong without having a standard for what is right. For many centuries, most people in the West have been believed in the existence of objective truth. They could disagree on what was objective truth, but they did not disagree that objective truth was a reality. Now we live in a culture that espouses that objective truth does not exist, and this attitude is an expression of relativism. The prevailing opinion in the Western world today is that we cannot know what is true about religion, morality or ethics.

Commentators have suggested that young people feel safer and more comfortable as doubters, that they prefer to be searching, continually on the hunt, rather than knowing the answer. Some young people think it costs too much to have a definite opinion, as then they risk the possibility of someone disagreeing and find it easier not to have to take a stand.

In relativism, ethics and morality pertain to what is useful and practical. Relativistic ethics gives no rules or embargos on how we should live. Relativistic ethics are not normative, to use a professional term, i.e. relativism does not provide any norms according to which we should live. Moral relativism makes it difficult to define what is right or wrong. Moral relativism is a theory that states that moral truths are not absolute, and that they change over time because society and life conditions

also change. We cannot say that someone else's lifestyle or opinions are wrong. Morality becomes subjective. Morality becomes something that society finds useful. Most people define what is right and wrong. When morality is reduced to personal taste, the question changes from what is right, to what feels right. However, morality is not about what you want, but about what is right and proper. Moral relativism becomes a form of subjectivism. What I like becomes moral. Instead of morality limiting enjoyment, enjoyment may define morality. Things become bad if pleasure constitutes ethics. Then what you like becomes decisive, but there is a difference between not liking something and believing something is morally wrong.

Relativism leads to egoism

Relativism is an idea that excludes concepts such as justice and integrity. These concepts dictate how we should and ought to act. They tell us what we are obliged to do, but relativism dismisses binding moral attitudes, as morality is defined by the individual. Encouraging people to live out their relativism will bring out the worst in people and lead to complete and utter egoism. In principle, there is no difference between a person who is a moral relativist and a person who has no morals at all. Therefore, moral relativism does not qualify as a moral point of view, since it is identical to not having any morality at all.

We could ask whether our moral vision has any impact on us as human beings? Mahatma Gandhi practiced a moral of passive non-violence. Mother Teresa gave everything for those in need, even her own life. The need for morality is established by the heroes it produces and is thus completely different with moral relativism. Relativists are concerned about themselves and what is theirs; they assert their rights, often at the expense of others. Relativists can often have a way of life which is remarkably similar to that of a psychopath.

We do not live in a world without absolutes. Most people have opinions about what is right and wrong. Murder, rape, abuse, child abuse, and terrorism are considered to be objective evil and not simply social constructs. If ordinary people's evaluation of this kind of incidence is actually true, the assumptions of relativism and postmodernism have to

be false. Relativism necessitates a vacuum in which value does not exist, since objective moral truths are explained away as being interpretations of various points of views. The final stage of moral relativism is despair. A moral relativist cannot object to genocide, and without absolute truth, we cannot make moral judgments. Either an action is moral, or it is immoral. It cannot be slightly moral or slightly immoral.

Incredible as it may be, some people think the Nazis were not in the wrong when they exterminated six million Jews during the Holocaust. It is incredible that a cultural nation like Germany could not see this was an act of pure evil, and today we hear young people say, 'Who am I to judge the Germans?' Relativism leads to us being tolerant, as relativism has no space for absolutes. People cannot cope with being labeled intolerant, so much so that they dare not criticize the crimes of the Nazis. One form of relativism is that each society determines what is right for that society. There are no external moral standards to follow. This leads to there being no common moral standards across borders. Having a moral law that transcends the laws of society is necessary for us to argue that certain laws are immoral and need to be changed. One characteristic of modern times is the existence of powers that seek for moral laws to be subordinate to what society holds to be good and true. In that case, what society says will then be crucial in terms of what is seen as morally right. An example of this is an Afghan teenager who was married to a Taliban fighter.[68] She suffered so much violence from him that she fled. Her family caught her, cut off her nose and both ears, and left her in the mountains to die, but the girl found her way to an American hospital. This story was told to young people in an American school. They were shown photos of the girl's face, but none of them thought that what had been done to her was wrong. They were not willing to criticize behaviour deemed acceptable in another culture. The furthest they were able to go was to say that they did not like what had happened to her, but that this was probably acceptable in Afghanistan. These young people had no understanding of the existence of absolutes in relation to what is right and wrong. Consequently, the acceptance of violence seems in order to young people from Western culture, depending on the context in which it occurs. We all know that a clear understanding that some things are

absolutely wrong is of greatest importance to society. If we lack this kind of understanding, living together in a community becomes almost impossible.

Influential educational institutions have become mouthpieces for moral relativism, and this has social consequences. If students are trained to believe that truth and morality do not exist, that God does not exist, and that life has no meaning, then they hear this message: *Live as you like. Do not worry about moral boundaries, corporate social responsibility, or your own obligations. Find satisfaction in pleasure and self-realization, not in service to others, nor in building a good and just society*. A psychopath would thrive in a society like this, because there would be no rules that apply to them. However, a society based on moral relativism does not work, as it does not induce the self-discipline, wisdom and moral character individuals and societies need to flourish. Ethics, which are an essential foundation stone for a society, presume a genuine understanding of what is right and wrong. John Lennox, a professor of mathematics and a Christian, has said that he fears relativism will weaken our intellectual and moral resistance to totalitarian forms of government, facilitating manipulation and fraud, so that truth can be defined by those who hold power[69].

The Declaration of Human Rights

On 10th December 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. How is it possible that so many different people from a variety of different cultures can agree to join forces and adopt such declaration? The reason must be the existence of a universal truth and absolute moral truths. If we believe that truth and moral values are relative, then we cannot argue that these common human rights are universal and apply to all cultures and all people at all times. The Declaration of Human Rights cannot be defended using a postmodern point of view, as we cannot argue that certain human rights are universal if we do not believe in a universal truth. Accepting universal human rights means accepting that certain actions are wrong in all societies at all times. No nation can deny that universal human rights apply to their population. The totalitarian nations that violate these

human rights should be condemned for their actions and penalized by the instigation of sanctions.

Our discussion gives me the opportunity to refer to an article on a website called 'Stand to Reason[70] that throws light on an interesting dilemma. It involves a conversation between a student and Tim Barnett (TB), who is associated with this website. The student said he was an atheist and did not believe in objective morality.

The student: You believe in objective morality?
TB: Yes, I do.
Student: Prove to me that objective morality exists.
TB: I am happy to give you some reasons for why I believe in objective morality, but before I do, I want you to answer a couple of questions for me.
Student: He agreed.

A moral relativist believes there are no objective moral answers that apply forever, everywhere and to all people. Moreover, such a relativist believes that moral opinions are related to people. A moral objectivist, on the other hand, believes that moral truths are independent of what people think. Therefore, TB said the following to the student:

TB: Last week, Stephen Paddock opened fire on a crowd of 20.000 concertgoers from his Las Vegas hotel room. As a result, he killed 58 people and injured over 500. This was one of the most deadly mass shootings in American history. Was it evil?
Student: Do you mean, do I personally believe it´s evil?
TB: No, I'm not merely asking for your personal moral opinion, or if it´s wrong for you. In fact, I am not interested in your personal preferences. I´m asking if the action itself was evil.
The student *(having taken a long time to think)***:** Well, I don't think I can answer that.
The problem for the student is that he cannot admit that the Las Vegas killings were malicious, without rejecting his atheism and his moral relativism.

Then TB said the following:

> **TB:** You know that if you were to call the Las Vegas shooting an evil act in itself, then you would be affirming objective morality. In fact, if even one objective moral truth exists (e.g. regarding the Las Vegas shooting, or molesting a little girl, or torturing a baby for fun), then objective morality exists and relativism is false. Furthermore, if there are objective moral laws, then there is an objective moral Lawgiver.

The student agreed with this, but he did not want to give up his atheism, even though he probably knew deep down the intellectual high price he was willing to pay to keep his atheism.

*

It is really easy to be a moral relativist. If you are, then you can do anything you feel is right, and no one can tell you what you should and should not do. Nevertheless, there are some things relativists cannot do. Here is a list:

They cannot accuse others of doing anything wrong, since relativism denies wrong actions exist. Everything is equally permissible. If you think morality is something you define yourself, you can never judge others for what they do, no matter what they do. Relativism accepts all personal choices, regardless of the consequences of these choices. A relativist can never say that the Holocaust was wrong.

Relativism makes it impossible to praise anyone for doing something that is good. Since relativists deny that there is anything that is absolutely true and absolutely correct, they have no basis for praising anyone for doing what is good.

Relativists also cannot say that anything is unfair, since rights and justice are two concepts without meaning in a relativistic world. Neither does blame exist. No one can be guilty of anything. No one can be blamed.

Relativists cannot improve their morals. Without a moral standard, there is no incentive for a relativist to better their behavior. Moral reform

has to be based on a moral standard, so relativists repudiate moral reform too. Relatives also cannot debate morality. They see no purpose in trying to consider whether one action is morally better than another. To them, this is merely futile, since all statements and opinions about morality are equal.

It is easy to believe that tolerance is one of the virtues of relativism. However, that is in reality impossible. Relativism has no inherent tolerance, as this goes against the foundational tenets of relativism, which say that everything is equally 'good'. If there are no moral rules, then there is no rule that requires tolerance as a moral principle. If there are no moral rules, then why should anyone be tolerant anyway? Relativists also cannot use the problem of evil as an argument against God, since relativism argues there is nothing evil.

Summary

Our discussion of relativism should have convinced us that this worldview is not a viable basis for a society's view of morality[71]. If relativism were true, then true statements do not exist, and we are left only with opinions and views. In this respect, relativism is contradictory, because if something is true, then it cannot be true, since relativism says that true statements are not possible. In principle, there are only two views on morality: relativism and objectivity. If relativism is not viable or true, then objectivity and absolute moral norms must exist.

Postmodernism

Postmodernism is a widespread contemporary worldview and has radically shaped modern thinking. What then is postmodernism? First of all, a brief background:

Up until the Enlightenment, western society believed God was the origin of all things, including our reason. The Enlightenment completely changed this way of seeing things by giving rise to two new philosophical systems we mentioned earlier. David Hume gave us *Empiricism,* and Descartes gave us *Rationalism.* Empiricism supposed that we could only trust what our senses established. Kant dismissed the possibility we might know anything certain about our reality, because all our sensory

impressions are determined by our minds, and we cannot know for sure whether things exist independently of our minds. In other words, we cannot know with certainty if our senses are giving us an accurate picture of the world. Descartes believed that reason was the only thing we could trust. The period of history before Descartes introduced Rationalism is called Pre-modernism, or the pre-modern era. With Rationalism, we saw the birth of Modernism, or the Modern Era. Rationalism made God superfluous, and elevated human reason to the highest authority, making it central to our reality. Modernism emphasized concepts that could lead to technological advances and improvements in society through new discoveries. Human beings had become independent, autonomous, and had thrown off the cloak of darkness that was the Dark Ages. People could decide for themselves what was beautiful, good and true, regardless of God and his revelation. Practically speaking, human beings deposed God, and sought to determine objective and universal truth using reason alone. Modernism was skeptical of special revelation, the supernatural and the authority of religion.

Modernism was eventually replaced by postmodernism, but the timing of its emergence is imprecise. Friedrich Nietzsche, a German philosopher, put forward the notion that God was not only meaningless, but said 'God is dead'[72]. Nietzsche used the phrase to express his idea that the Enlightenment had eliminated the possibility of the existence of God. However, proponents of the strongest form of the Death of God theology have used the phrase in a literal sense, meaning that the Christian God, who existed at one point, has ceased to exist', in 'God is Dead'. Friedrich Nietzsche's statement 'God is Dead' lead to him posing the question as to whether our existence mattered at all, thus, laying the foundation for both nihilism and postmodernism. However, postmodernism did not emerge as a worldview until almost 100 years after Nietzsche. Modernism promised to liberate people from religious dogmas, and to give them reason and the scientific method in its place, but did not keep its promise. Rationalism and science did not make the world a better place, but, as demonstrated by two world wars, all they gave people were more effective ways to kill one another. Modernist philosophers and theologians had failed to show people what was truth, and postmodernism emerged from the ensuing disillusionment.

Modernism had shown it could not answer life's important questions: What is noble? What is good? What is true? And since Modernism could not answer these questions, it was concluded there was no answer.

At this point, I need to add some words about 'knowledge'. Having knowledge means we know something about a relationship, situation, or actual conditions. Simply put, we can know about something, i.e. we can *know what*; we can also know people, i.e. we can *know whom*; and we can know about our own or other's skills, i.e. we can *know how*. When we say we know something and have knowledge of something, it means we *believe* in what we say, and that we believe what we are saying is *the truth.* Knowledge assumes that we know the facts and that we believe these facts correspond to the truth. Today, many people believe that statements about facts should be taken as subjective. They believe we cannot know what is objective truth, and that we can only express personal points of view. Such an outlook leads to a skeptical basic attitude, which can cause us to lose the critical ability to control our own opinions. Postmodernists were also occupied with the idea that knowledge gives power, and that power can easily be used to control others.[73]

Knowledge is involved in forming our moral point of view. We need to know what can correct, improve and, if necessary, counter our moral, or immoral, traditions and practices. Today there seems to be a lack of this kind of knowledge. People do not agree on what is knowledge of good and evil, about right and wrong, or about what should be encouraged and what should be opposed. Every society must have knowledge of what should be the basis for its moral stances. The Christian worldview says that God must be the starting point for what we hold as truth and as morality.

Since the philosopher Michel Foucault is one of the pioneers of post-modernism, we need to know a bit about Foucault the person.[74] Foucault was a French philosopher, historian of ideas and social theorist. He was obsessed with suicide and tried several times to take his own life. Foucault also tried to formulate a morality for suicide. It seemed as if he wanted elevate suicide into a praiseworthy act. He used to fantasize about how he could help others commit suicide. He denied the existence of objective truth and objective morality. Foucault believed that truth is something

a person creates, not something a person discovers. He also believed that workers ought to make war against the elite, not because this would lead to justice, but to power. He saw nothing wrong with the possibility, that after a potential victory, the proletariat might misuse their power and cause violent bloodshed. From this we conclude that Foucault had no respect for human life. Foucault lived a homosexual lifestyle and died from HIV-AIDS related complications in 1984.

While Modernism placed pivotal emphasis on reason, postmodernism rejected reason, even considering it to be an illusion. In its radical form, postmodernism denies the existence of any reality at all. Thus, nothing of what we think we know and have knowledge of can be checked against reality. Since postmodernism rejects truth, people may as well lie, because if the truth is rejected, untruth does not exist either.

The philosopher Charles Taylor has said[75]:

'In the premodern era of antiquity, it was impossible not to believe.
In the modern era, it became possible not to believe.
In our day, it is impossible to believe.'

While Naturalism has a depressingly low image of human beings, comparing them to a highly developed animal, postmodernism believes that human beings create meaning and that they are the ultimate authors of reality. In other words, the world has the meaning we ascribe it. Nevertheless, both of these worldviews are atheistic, claiming that human beings are autonomous and can decide for themselves. Both of these worldviews reject an objective basis for truth, morality, values, and purpose, and they try to create meaning out of an ultimate meaninglessness.

Postmodernism is concerned with how we create meaning; therefore, language and the theory of language are considered to be of great importance. Postmodernism is also characterized by the concept of *deconstructionism.* This means that the usual meaning of words is changed and given a new meaning. Deconstructing means 'tearing down', and, for example, pertains to the word 'truth'. Postmodernism rejects the idea that our subjective opinions about faith and morality can be true and espouses that no meanings are any truer than any other meanings, and

that no religion is better than another religion, but that all moral views are equally valid, and one way of living is just as good as any other, even if it is completely egoistic. Deconstructionism also applies to the postmodern view of human beings. Postmodernism does not see human beings as rational beings, but as products of society, and society decides how human beings are to be regarded and valued. Human beings are not considered to have an individual personality, because they are all products of their culture. Postmodernism does not see any inherent value by being human, so individual value, identity and civil rights have their roots in culture, and not in any qualities or characteristics that make human beings unique.

Deconstructionism also advocates the idea that words and concepts are conferred a different meaning in the context of the secularization of society. Some words become politically correct, while other words may lose their true meaning. Examples of the latter include truth, morality, conscience, husband, wife, sin, and justice. The change in meaning of words has led to the emergence of what is known as 'political correctness'. Political correctness developed with postmodernism.[76] Political correctness gives the word 'tolerance' a whole new connotation, in that it means we should accept everything that is defined as politically correct. This has led to people being anxious about saying what they mean, because there is a cost to saying something that is perceived as politically incorrect. This might pertain to subject areas such as abortion, homosexuality, views on gender, or multiculturalism. This, in turn, has led to an emphasis on 'rights', while people choose to disregard their obligations as citizens.

Postmodernists belief that what we express orally or in writing cannot have one particular meaning. Our knowledge about society cannot be objective. Such knowledge is characterized by the language we use to describe reality. No one can be objective. Personal experience with a text gives the text its sense and its significance. What matters is what the reader invests in the words and text. The reader's own interpretation of the text is what becomes important, and the text has the meaning the reader gives it during reading.

Every community has a common history, a narrative, which is true and important to most of its members. This kind of larger, or summative,

story is also called metanarrative. Postmodernism rejects the existence of metanarratives, because it advocates that language and narratives can be interpreted in different ways, depending on various factors. Words can have different meanings, and be perceived differently. This leads to the fact that everything that purports to be truth can be twisted, so the great common story no longer exists as was previously thought. Postmodernism believes that there is no factual truth, and that everything that purports to be truth is characterized by bias. Christianity is rejected by postmodernism because the Christian meta-narrative presents a story that applies to all people at all times, and this notion is incompatible with the ideas of postmodernism.

Postmodernism bases its view of nature and science on naturalism and therefore rejects the existence of God; matter is eternal, and God is dead. Postmodernism rejects the existence of God in a very specific way by arguing that human beings are biological machines, and that nothing about them is sacred or divine. The primary question that occupies postmodernists is not related to what exists and how we can know about what exists, but how language can form meaning. Interest has shifted from existence to knowledge and to how we create meaning. We have moved from Pre-modernism, to Modernism and now to postmodernism. One philosopher has said that postmodernism is an expression of despair at not having a universal standard of justice and righteousness[77].

Postmodernism is based on Relativism. We have already had a look at Relativism (see page 78). Relativism leads to a vacuum of value, since objective moral truths are denied and explained away as interpretations of various points of view. The final developmental stage of moral relativism is despair. Without absolute truth, moral decisions cannot be made. Ordinary people understand that absolute evil exists, they see it in the daily newspapers and on television. Contemporary society is characterized by the existence of powers that want moral laws to succumb to what society thinks, in which case, what society says becomes crucial.

The main thesis of postmodernism is that it denies the existence of absolute truth and rejects moral absolutes. Postmodernism claims truth is relative, in terms of time, place and people, i.e. was it true then and there, and not now? Truth is redefined as being subjective, i.e. what is true for me need not be true for you. Subjective belief cannot lead us

to the truth and has little value. If absolute truth exists, then so will answers that are right and wrong. If absolute truth does not exist, all answers will be equally correct, regardless or not of whether they are actually false.

Postmodernist thinkers have postulated that individuals and groups create the truth themselves, and so truth has been redefined as a social construction, i.e. truth is what society thinks is correct or that on which we all agree. We all know that society influences our opinions and helps form our worldview, but postmodernist thought suggests that if numerous people in a society believe that something is true, then by definition, that will be the truth. Postmodernism rejects the ideas of the Enlightenment in that it claims the truth cannot be found using reason, as reason is considered to be a social construct. In addition, knowledge is not considered to be absolute, but characterized by society. Different societies may have different opinions, and societies change over time, therefore what they believe is right and true can change, making truth relative. If absolute truth exists, then right and wrong also exist. The freedom of expression disappears if nothing is true.

Relativism and postmodernism do not survive our test of worldviews. If relativism is true, then there are no true statements, there are only opinions and views. When someone believes that truth is relative, that also applies to what they themselves say. So then, the statement of a relativist is also relative, and not absolute. That means a relativist can never say 'this is absolutely true for me'. The statement 'there is no absolute truth' is consistent with postmodernist belief, but this statement also applies to the statement itself, so the statement 'there is no absolute truth' cannot be true, since there are no true statements. Thus, postmodernism is contradictory and deconstructs itself.

In short, we can say that postmodernism is a worldview which states that individuals and groups create the truth themselves. The individual is seen as central and creates her own view of existence. Postmodernist thought states there are no values in our world, nor any ideals, the universe is chaotic and everything is relative. James Sire[78] has stated that postmodernism leads to despair and desperation, and that chaos and anarchy seem to be an inevitable consequence.

A small piece of advice: if you meet someone who says that truth does not exist, he tells you not to believe him – then don't!

Skepticism

Until the heart is open, the ears remain closed.

A godly life is the best argument one can give a skeptic.
- Alex McFarland

Skepticism is an inherent aspect of postmodernism. Being skeptical means not knowing anything with certainty and that no matter how much you investigate a matter, you will not be able to conclude anything with 100% certainty. Skeptics require 100% certainty to accept the truth of a claim, but when it comes to matters of truth, morality and religion, very rarely can we be sure. Skepticism asserts that it is impossible to have true knowledge and that all knowledge is uncertain. In other words, no facts or truths can be established purely philosophically, and universal knowledge is not attainable. Basically, skepticism says we cannot know anything for sure, so the only reasonable thing is to doubt.

Skepticism about religion and God is widespread in our society. Religious skepticism claims that there is no objective truth about religion and morality, even if there is objective truth about non-religious matters, such as natural science. This can lead to an attitude that 'religion may be true for you, but not for me'.

We trust and depend on certain things being true, but Skepticism is selective. For example, A characteristic feature of skeptics is that they are not skeptical of their own skepticism. They do nothing to change their skepticism; they seem to have chosen to be skeptics and to remain skeptics, rather than doubting their own doubts.

There is an important difference between asking questions and being skeptical. Asking honest questions is important, as it shows we want to learn and understand. Skeptics do not really ask questions, but they can pretend as if they are, even if they refute someone else's point of view. A skeptic will always say that if you do not know for sure, there is always

a possibility you are wrong. That is correct, but just because there is a possibility of being wrong, does not mean that the reasonable thing to do is to believe we are wrong. This is the skeptic's big mistake!

In a conversation with a skeptic, you might say something like, 'That is an interesting question. Just because it is possible that I am wrong, does not mean that I am. Please tell me why you think I am wrong.' This way you can have a fruitful conversation. Then the skeptic is not controlling the conversation, and it becomes a dialogue with an exchange of meaning. Here is one example: 'I admit it is possible that Christianity is not true, but can you give me some reasons why you think it is not true?' Here is another example: 'I admit it is possible God does not exist, but can you give me some reasons why you think God does not exist?'

Humanism

Humanism involves putting human beings foremost. Many prominent Christians in the 16th and 17th centuries considered themselves to be humanists, not because they put themselves above God, but because they felt they were created in God's image and had a God-given value. This understanding of the Humanism no longer exists.

Human beings are put foremost

Humanism brings human thought and reason to the fore. The philosophers of the Enlightenment era emphasized knowledge and enlightenment, and considered belief in a higher power to be superstition which would cease when people gained knowledge and enlightenment. As a result, naturalism and materialism became influential ideologies, so much so, that today they constitute the prevailing worldview in the western world. Secular humanism has accepted naturalism as its stance on the natural sciences, in other words, it is considered scientifically correct to attribute everything in our reality to natural causes, and it is unscientific to believe in a metaphysical reality. Two things characterize humanism: people are preoccupied with the time in which they live rather than eternity, and with humanity rather than God. Humanists are concerned about the *here* and *now* - they live for this world and not the next. They

are materialists, and so they think anything immaterial does not exist. They are also evolutionists. One result of the predominance of materialism is that the prevailing scientific view is that life has arisen by itself, and that the diversity of life is solely due to natural causes. Since the laws of nature and chance constitute natural causes, coincidence is seen as the dominant mechanism for the origin of life and its evolution. As such, life is considered to have no over-arching plan and to be without a higher meaning and purpose.

Secular humanists usually have great disdain for Christianity and often express this in writing. The first humanist manifesto introduced a new 'religious' movement based on science, intended to replace the dogmatic attitudes of theistic religions. This new religion intended to afford personal satisfaction by being vital, fearless, and sincere. The initial manifesto has subsequently been revised twice, but the content has always been intended to emphasize a philosophy and value system that excludes belief in God and the practice of traditional religion. This gave rise to secular humanism as a worldview. In this worldview, humanity ultimately determines truth and values. This, in turn, promotes human reason, evolution, naturalism and secular theories of ethics, while rebuffing religion for being metaphysical. The manifesto also states that 'no deity will save us; we must save ourselves'[79]. For the secular humanist, everything is about human beings. i.e. about 'me'. Secular humanism is more than not believing in God, it is an active belief in other ways of considering life and reality and has become an integral part of the cultural system in many countries today.

We can safely say that these manifestos expressed an overly great belief in the ability of science to solve the problems of humankind. They also expressed an idealized picture of a secular reality. The views articulated in these manifestos have gradually been accepted as the official view in the West, and now characterize the culture, science, legislation, and the educational system – in fact, all institutions with power and influence. Many church communities have also been influenced by these anti-Christian, secular thoughts. Since secular humanists usually express great confidence in science, the distance between secular humanism and scientism is minimal, and the belief that only science can give us the truth becomes only a breath away.

Humanism also has implications for how people understand the

image of God, and forms the basis for liberal theology. If we believe that human beings cannot express anything other than what human reason accepts, this materialistic way of thinking will have an influence on our faith. Materialism is incompatible with several of the fundamental truths of Christianity. Materialism holds that anything unnatural or supernatural cannot happen, so miracles do not happen, because they breach the laws of nature. When humanism puts human beings foremost, the needs, wishes and desires of human beings cannot be neglected. Satisfaction of human needs becomes directive, and when applied to a large group of people, this directive has political consequences that become reflected in the legislature. This is the reason many western countries have given women the right to abortion, the right to terminate an unwanted pregnancy, but the embryo's rights to life are completely disregarded. Secular humanism does not see abortion as a moral problem. Putting human beings foremost also means that human reason ranks highest, and God's thoughts become subject to human reason. In this regard, it then no longer matters to the secular humanist that God puts high value on the life of an individual, including that of an embryo.

We have seen the same development in relation to homosexuality. The claim is that everyone has the right to live out their sexuality. Anything else is completely incompatible with humanism. In some countries a Marriage Act has been introduced that makes it legal for two people of the same sex to marry. These couples want children like all other couples, but their children will grow up with either two women or two men as parents. No one knows what results this will have for society. No one knows what this big societal experiment will cause. I fear that children of same-sex marriages might have big problems. Most people think it is important to know their family, their grandparents and their parents; it is something lodged deep down in us all. These days, self-realization, doing what we want, is an increasing trend. Self-realization is an aspect of humanism, but there is a disregard for the fact that self-realization can lead to selfishness and greed.

Humanism has different emphases. *Secular* humanism bases its philosophy on naturalism and seems more concerned with combating Christianity than working for humanism. Then there is *religious*

humanism. What makes this different from secular humanism? Religious humanism accepts the existence of a deity and a creator, but has turned God into an ever-loving being who makes no demands on us, allowing us to live as we desire. Rituals bolster our well-being on the great occasions of life, e.g. they make it easier to bear grief when someone dies. Warm feelings are important, and if needed, religious humanism permits 'neo-religiosity' to be included in such rituals. Myriads of candles are sometimes lit to create feelings of unity and togetherness, but at these events, religious humanism discourages mentioning the name Jesus Christ. People avoid mentioning that Jesus says he is the way, the truth, and the life (Jn. 14:16). Religious humanism leads no one to heaven, only the gospel can do that. Religious humanism is encompassed by liberal theology. Paul Kurtz says that 'Christian' humanism is only possible for those willing to admit they are atheist humanists and that God is a human invention.[80]

Christian humanism is different to secular humanism. While secular humanism puts itself at the center, Christian humanism puts others at the center, and is practiced by Christian's who have a faith that categorizes them as 'everyday' Christians. Christian humanism has its basis in the Great Commandment, you shall love your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22:35-40). No other religion has such a clear call to love others. Christian humanism puts God foremost. Living according to Christian faith and teaching becomes a duty, as does living in such a way as to be a benefit to others and the society. Christianity takes the credit for the fact that human rights, solidarity, and concern for our neighbor are integrated into our Western societies. The Great Commandment consists of two parts. The second part states that 'you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and of all your mind'. A Christian should love God as well as their neighbor. This first part is not cited very often, but these words characterize the Christian humanist. Christian humanism has manifested itself in all forms of Christian mission in different countries, especially for women and children. The Christian faith has been the reason behind the establishment of numerous health centers and hospitals, orphanages, schools, colleges and universities in many places in the world.

Nihilism

Nihilism derives from the Latin word *nihil*, which means 'nothing'. Nihilism is the final developmental stage of the naturalistic worldview that would kick in after collapse of the value systems of the western world. Radical pessimism and skepticism also lead to nihilism; in fact nihilism is a form of extreme skepticism. As nihilism has rationalism and materialism as its starting point, the existence of God is rejected, as is the tenet that God has created the universe and everything that exists. Nihilism is completely incompatible with Christian faith. In short, we can say that nihilism is the view that the world and humanity are without meaning, purpose, and value, and in which objective truth does not exist.

There are different forms of nihilism:

- No basis for certain knowledge exists, i.e. what we call 'recognition' or epistemology, so we cannot know what is true, and no universal truth exists.
- There is no basis for objective morality and ethical values, and no possibility of absolute morality. Nothing is right nor wrong, and no one has any responsibility or obligation to anyone or anything. The existence of anything of value is denied.
- Life has no inherent purpose or meaning, and this leads to pessimism and extreme skepticism.
- There is no point trying to find meaning or purpose in our world. All our efforts to find meaning and value are futile and useless.

James Sire[46] has provided justification as to why nihilism is the natural child of Naturalism. The main causal mechanism in Naturalism is chance, and chance has no purpose or direction, and is without creative ability. Naturalism considers people to be complex machines without self-awareness or self-determination. Naturalism therefore rejects the notion that people can perform meaningful actions. Naturalism also claims that people are the result of impersonal forces, therefore, they cannot know with certainty whether the knowledge they have is true or an illusion. Since human consciousness is considered to come from dead

matter, and brain activity depends on random neurophysiological reactions, people can never know what is actual truth and what is illusion. Sire remarks that Naturalism has no basis for morality. Naturalism tells us what things *are* like, but is unable to say how things *should* be, therefore it cannot prove a standard of morality and leads to ethical nihilism. In conclusion, Naturalism inevitably leads to loss of meaning, which is the same as nihilism.

Friedrich Nietzsche is the philosopher whose name is associated with nihilism. He is also known as 'the ultimate anti-Christian philosopher'. The Enlightenment had taught people rational thinking that rejected religious truths. They no longer had an ethical compass, and had to reorient themselves. Nietzsche believed that morals were invented by those in power to keep others down. He also alleged there is no order and meaning in the world other than what people themselves create, and if there is no overarching meaning or purpose that binds us, then we have the freedom to do what we choose. One of the goals of nihilism is personal freedom, which means a person living out all their quirks and idiosyncrasies, and resisting everything that prevents them reaching their personal goals. Nietzsche considered that strong people had the necessary resilience to accomplish this. He understood individuals who had a 'will to power'[81] to be the strong people others must obey, and that a person's will for power was the driving force of life. Nietzsche was influenced by Darwin, who had introduced the term 'survival of the fittest' and believed some people could develop into 'super-humans' (*Übermensch*)[82] who would fulfill a need in society. Nihilistic freedom provides the individual with an opportunity to change their opinion on the purpose of life, but egoism and self-centeredness make such freedom open to abuse. Nihilism advocates that people must create their own meaning and purpose in life. Extreme nihilism states that there are no values in our world, that truth does not exist, there is no basis for morality or purpose, and when God is gone, there is no sure foundation for meaning, morality or truth. These are hallmarks of the collapse of a civilization. Nihilism can therefore lead to anxiety and despair and such a philosophy provided the basis for the Holocaust and other horrors committed by mankind. Nietzsche saw nihilism as a corrosive acid that would destroy all moral concepts, religious

beliefs and all our ideas about the metaphysical. Nietzsche said nihilism was the most powerful destructive force in history, which would create a crisis for the structure of society as a whole.

Nietzsche is perhaps best known for the statement 'God is dead', but Nietzsche did not see this as something positive that would lead to freedom and happiness for people. The new atheists of our time consider the claim that 'God is dead' to be solely positive, as people can then do whatever they want and not be bound by religious norms and obligations. Nietzsche was concerned about the negative consequences, as the death of God impinges not only on the religious sphere, but has major metaphysical consequences. For Nietzsche, death of God also meant the end of the truth. If God was dead, then people would have nothing to which to resort, which is the meaning of nihilism. Nietzsche saw nihilism as a crisis that would provide opportunities to create a new society in which all values are re-evaluated and which would be achieved by the liberation of the freedom hidden in our lives.[83]

Existentialism

Existentialism is a direction of philosophical thought that was prevalent in Europe in the middle of the last century. There are two names that stand out in this respect: Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. Sartre was a philosopher, while Camus was a writer, and they were both atheists. Existentialism emerged in a period of depression and great despair. Mankind had endured two world wars, and Great Depression in the 1930s. Existentialism remains a robust ideology, and attempts to respond to the emptiness of nihilism.

Existentialism is concerned with our existence as human beings, and the view that suffering is inevitable. There are two types of existentialism: a theistic type and an atheistic type. The theist type has its origins in the mind of Søren Kirkegaard, who became known as 'the ultimate non-Christian Christian philosopher'. We will discuss the atheistic type in this chapter, as it has affected people's mindsets the most. Atheistic existentialism rejects the existence of an overarching meaning, purpose or value in life, claiming that people must create meaning, purpose and values themselves.

Jean-Paul Sartre saw human beings as beings that had matured and developed due to the choices they had made. He was of the opinion that people themselves shape their identity, i.e. what philosophers call 'essence'. Sartre was an atheist, and for him there was thus no God who could shape human beings. Sartre therefore believed that existence precedes, and is the condition for essence, hence existentialism – in which our existence is the ultimate reality. Essence is a product of an individual's will and personal choice. He considered the subjective experience of being oneself to be the very starting point for life, and our choices as the factors that shape us, and we spend the majority of our lives designing our essence.

For existentialism, how we experience the world becomes the most important. The subjective takes precedence over what is scientific and objective. People must find their own opinion, and know themselves; they are born with free will, and must therefore use this freedom to make the right choices in life. Existentialism stresses that individuals themselves make their own choices, and that these personal choices must not be influenced by external bodies, such as traditions or religious norms, as following rules will make us 'unfree'. Existentialism asserts that people find their own truth by acting according to their own convictions.

In existentialist thought, being a human being means being free. Nature does not decide who and what we are; the individual is the very starting point, irrespective of nature, and people are responsible for their own lives. People are encouraged to choose the norms and rules they will follow. This responsibility can produce anxiety and despair, but people are encouraged to fight this anxiety to the best of their ability in order to rise above the absurdity of the world. Freedom must be used to make the right choices in life. Human rationality is put forward as the means of combating this existential anxiety. People cannot depend on others to remove this anxiety. They have to do that themselves. This is called being authentic. In existentialism, authenticity means using our will to choose what is meaningful for ourselves.

What does it mean to be human? This is a complex question to answer in a world of moral chaos, a world without an overarching purpose. When God is gone, the very meaning of life disappears, our moral compass crumbles, there are no goals, and our world lacks real order and seems

absurd. Camus was preoccupied with the absurdity of our world, and the topic reoccurs in his books, most clearly in *The Myth of Sisyfus*. Camus compared the human situation to the classical Greek story of Sisyfus. Sisyfus had sinned against the gods and was condemned to forever pushing a stone to the top of a slope, but once the stone was almost at the top, it always rolled back down. As Sisyfus would spend eternity doing this, he only had two choices: suicide or accepting his situation and making the best of it. In the same way, each of us must construct meaning for what we do. Although the world is chaotic and difficult to understand, and therefore seems meaningless, each of us must try to find meaning. Sisyfus only finds peace when he accepts his situation. Camus thus indicates that the absurdity of the world should be met with acceptance, and that we should do our best to counter this absurdity by embracing what life offers us.

Sartre was a communist and was a proponent of the actions of the communist regime in the Soviet Union, including its wrongdoings. Camus was more of a humanist than Sartre, and criticized communism's misuse of power. This divergence of opinions destroyed their friendship. Camus saw the importance of clarifying that humanism can never become totalitarian, and that morality has more value than political opinion.

The difference between nihilism and existentialism is that, while existentialism believes we can add meaning and values to life, nihilism believes our world is completely meaningless and nothing that can give it meaning. While existentialism believes that an individual has the freedom to shape her own life, nihilists believe our lives are reduced to a fundamental nothingness. Nihilists find no meaning in the concept of morality, which thus produces a moral vacuum. Existentialism on the other hand, believes that the choices we make ourselves are morally right. The great similarity between nihilism and existentialism is that they are both based on the concept that 'God is dead'.

Tolerance

Tolerance is a word that has been redefined by postmodernists and thus lost its original meaning. Dictionaries define tolerance as a form of

indulgence, that it means the right of others to think something other than what you or the majority think, and that it is the recognition of the right of others to live in accordance with their own opinions. In this sense, tolerance is a form of respect, and relates to how we treat people who may have opinions that differ from our own, rather than being about our attitude to opinions we dislike. It is important to see this difference. Tolerance means treating those with whom we disagree with respect and common courtesy, and that applies no matter what view the person has — as long as the implications are not harmful or dangerous to another person or society. There is a difference between respecting a person's right to have a specific opinion, and to approving of this opinion. In other words, tolerance is only required when one disagrees with a statement. If we agree, we do not need tolerance, therefore tolerance is an attribute we reserve for relating to those we think are wrong.

A new definition of tolerance

While the classic understanding of tolerance focused on our attitude towards a person, postmodernism has turned this on its head, and the new understanding of tolerance is directed at their ideas and opinions. Statements that go against common belief are characterized by postmodernism as intolerant, while the correct thing would be simply to say that one disagrees. This form of tolerance is based on the assumption that certain statements are correct, while others are unacceptable. This is especially true in relation to religion, morality and politics. Such a situation could easily result in everything becoming equal, i.e. all religions are equally just as valid and there is no difference between them. A person is labelled as intolerant if she argues that one statement is more correct than another, and then results in the person being labelled as intolerant to those they disagree with. In this respect, Christians are often labelled as intolerant due to the opinions they hold, even when they put forward their opinions carefully in a friendly way. This is especially true in discussions about homosexuality and abortion.

A good description of postmodernist tolerance is to call it intolerant, as it actually makes it impossible to have a specific meaning. This new definition of tolerance is the result of the relativism inherent in postmodernism.

Neutrality is required, without taking a position, or meaning or believing anything specific. Herbert Marcuse, a German-American philosopher, sociologist, and political theorist,[84] invented the concept of 'Repressive tolerance', which is basically a situation in which people only permit non-dominant ideas to develop. According to Marcuse, real tolerance only comes into play when non-dominant ideas flourish and dominant ideas are actively opposed. Repressive tolerance is the passive acceptance of social and governmental practices, policies and actions which restrict freedom in an absolute sense. The Frankfurt School theorist Herbert Marcuse coined the term in an essay of that title for a book co-written with Robert Wolff and Barrington Moore, Critique of Pure Tolerance (1965). Repressive tolerance, Marcuse argues, takes two main forms: (i) the unthinking acceptance of entrenched attitudes and ideas, even when these are obviously damaging to other people, or indeed the environment; and (ii) the vocal endorsement of actions that are manifestly aggressive towards other people. Genuine tolerance, Marcuse argues, can only exist and flourish when the dominant ideas are opposed and rejected.[85]

Today, a person is referred to as intolerant if they think someone is wrong. This creates an insoluble problem: saying that someone is wrong makes you intolerant – but you must first think that someone is wrong in order to be tolerant. Think about this carefully, and you will see what I mean!

A good guide to tolerance is: Always tolerate people by showing them respect and reverence. Tolerate behavior that is moral and consistent with good manners and behavior. Tolerate ideas and opinions that are good and sensible.

Truth

If you look for truth, you may find comfort in the end;
if you look for comfort you will not get either comfort or truth only
soft soap and wishful thinking to begin, and in the end, despair.

C.S. Lewis[86]

In our discussion of postmodernism, relativism and skepticism, one thing is clear, and we have come back to it repeatedly: we live in a time in which

it is popular to deny truth. Throughout history, people have believed in the Truth with capital 'T', and have been convinced of its existence. Although they could disagree about the nature of truth, they were in no doubt it existed. Today we live in a time when the existence of truth is denied, but if we reckon on the non-existence of absolute truth, there is no untruth either. In reality, this means believing everything is right and true. In the physical world, there are few problems in regard to understanding what is true and what is false, but in the modern era, thinkers try to abolish moral and religious truths, so much so, that many people today believe there are no religious or moral truths.

Essentially there are two forms of truth:

- Objective truth
- Subjective truth

Truth has great significance for our views on the origins of the universe and life, our opinions, our ethics and morality, and our ultimate destiny. Even 2,000 years ago, Pontius Pilatus asked the question: What is truth? Just like Pilate, people throughout the ages have wondered about the nature of truth.

Any thought, meaning and idea originates from somewhere. They cannot have come out of thin air. They must have a starting point. Then we come to logic and the laws of logic, which are called the first principles. These are assumptions we intuitively feel are correct, although we cannot prove them either philosophically or scientifically; they are things we assume to be true even if we cannot prove it. These first principles form the foundation of our cognition, what we can know, and how we can know what we know. In science, these first principles are called axioms. These principles apply to our whole reality, not just part of it. These first principles are self-evident, and they cannot be rejected, since any attempt to reject them depends on the same principles. Truth is based on these logical principles. We can say that truth is logic.

The laws of logic are immutable, eternal and metaphysical. We cannot prove them, they are self-evident. They cannot originate from matter, because the laws of logic are non-material. There is no disagreement as to the existence of the laws of logic or to the fact they are universal. These laws are

not sociological constructions, but laws for thought, which are interpreted by people. They do not originate from man, nor are they conventions; these first principles existed before man came into being. The laws of logic do not appear by reasoning to them, on the contrary: we reason from them and our arguments are based on these laws. Without these laws, we are not able to have meaningful debates. Debates have, as a premise, the existence of an absolute truth for which the debaters argue. These laws are necessary for all thinking, all forms of communication, all science, they are the starting point of all truth and form the basis for all thinking. Science is based on the laws of logic, and therefore cannot be the reason for the existence of the laws. The Principle of Causality forms the basis for all science.

Where do these laws and principles come from? There is a question on the same line as the question as to asking where the laws of nature come from? Science cannot give us the answer to these two questions, since science has its basis in these laws. Science cannot explain these laws, since science can only work by using them. Nor can we use reason to confirm or reject them, since reason presumes them. And all laws need a lawmaker, which bolsters our Christian faith, because we understand that even in this area of thought, there are traces of the Creator - God himself – as God is the origin of reason.

There are seven first principles. Here we will only mention three of them.

1. Law of Noncontradiction.[87] One of the most important principles states that self-contradiction cannot occur. That is, two opposite claims about a situation cannot both be true at the same time and under the same conditions. Things cannot be what they are not. A cannot be identical with -A. Nothing can exist and not exist at the same time. Macroevolution cannot be true and not true in a concrete biological relationship. It cannot be a little bit true. Either macroevolution is possible, or it is not possible.

2. The Principle of Causality. Causality has to do with the cause of things - why things have come into being. The Principle

states that something that does not exist cannot create anything else. A creative force must exist in order for something new to be created. Only something/somebody that exists can produce something.

3. Principle of Bivalence[88] states that any allegation must be either true or false. Take the sentence: Earth rotates around the sun once in a year. This claim must be either true or false. Thus, neither true nor false, nor both true and false. When you have sentences with several meanings, this law applies only when you have decided which meaning is being analyzed. It cannot apply to any meanings whatsoever.

As Christians, we assume there is absolute truth. Absolute truth means that what is true once and in one place will be true forever and everywhere. Likewise, that what is true for one person is true for everyone. Therefore, a Christian can never say: 'It is true for me, but does not have to be true for you'. We need to understand that if we want to evaluate the truth of something, it must be meaningful. The statement must have meaning, and be grammatically correct. If not, it is impossible to distinguish between what is true and what is false, e.g. we cannot evaluate statements about a four-sided circle. Believing in, and reckoning on, absolute truth is natural for someone who believes in God. Believing that God exists is an expression of an absolute truth. Since we live in a culture where the cultural elite tries as best it can to remove God, this will characterize their view of truth. The next section gives a few examples of this.

There are various forms of truth.[89] When truth corresponds to facts or to the conditions as they are, we use the designation "The Correspondence Theory of Truth". The truth is based on facts and robust reason. Truth is actual. The truth is factual. Truth is that which is realistic, that which corresponds to our reality. Such fact-based truth is absolute. In other words, it complies with reality. The Theory of Correspondence is true, not because it fits some of reality, but our whole reality. Another relationship that characterizes a true assertion is that it has a purpose, that it is about something - it has what we call intentionality. Truth does

not have a sell-by date. Society, living conditions, meanings, and different external conditions can vary over time, and from place to place, but the truth is and remains the same. Thinking logically means applying the Correspondence Theory of Truth.

Pragmatic truth denotes what functions, what works, or what is advantageous in the long run.[90] Consequently, there is a great temptation to hold to pragmatic truth these days, because then you cannot be subject to criticism for saying something unpopular. Pragmatic truth claims something is true because it produces useful and desired results, but if we reduce truth to what works, what is effective or practical, it means that the truth becomes both subjective and relative – and then it is not absolute. The meaning of truth cannot be what has usefulness. The meaning must match the facts. What is practical, is not always true. And what is true, is not always practical. Pragmatists do not believe there is anything absolute, nor do they believe in the existence of absolute truth, but the concept of absolute truth is a necessity for thought. Pragmatic results do not determine the truthfulness of a faith. Christian postmodernists may find it easy to adopt pragmatism, and this results in churches where the essential thing is to experience companionship in a peaceful atmosphere with mutual respect, comfort and enriching conversations, rather than preach Christian truths.

Before David Hume, truth had been seen as a comprehensive whole that included both the natural and the moral order. Hume's empirical approach divided truth in two: A part that included what we could confirm with our senses, and a part that he believed were only personal opinions and preferences. Hume's philosophy introduced a distinction between facts and what we can call values. Values are purely subjective, with no objective basis. Facts represent the truth. This is a completely secular view of truth, and is completely incompatible with a biblical point of view. The Bible says there is only one truth. The truth is one and universal. The secular way of seeing truth has influenced Western society, including parts of the Church. A common view today is that religion is not about truth, and many Christians are of this point of view and have Hume's two-part view of truth: one for personal values, and one for facts.

You can philosophize over the sentence: 'There is no truth'. The person

who utters this sentence and believes it, must then mean that it is true. However, to make such a statement, one must be convinced that something is true. So, if the statement is true, then it is actually false. If that is false, then the original sentence is also false. It's like saying, 'I don't know a word of English', but you actually have to understand some English to say the sentence! The above implies that we cannot reject truth purely by logic.

In a Christian context, you often hear the word 'value', and it is often qualified with the adjective 'Christian' – Christian values. We need to realize that the secular world does not regard these values as true. To them, they do not reflect the truth; they are not objective; they only express personal opinions; and are therefore not reliable. Values may vary from time to time, and from country to country. The truth, however, is the same at all times, and everywhere. Often the word 'value' is used when what is meant is 'morality'. Then misunderstandings easily arise. There is no universal scale for assessing and measuring values.

We must all be clear that we live in a culture that believes religion is not about actual knowledge, and thinks, therefore, that Christianity cannot be true and is nothing more than personal views and opinions. If we are to be able to arm young people against secularism, it is essential we understand this. If we do not have a genuine understanding of the time we live in, we cannot help those who are at risk of losing their faith due of secular culture. Francis Schaeffer said that this division of truth in two is the most critical problem facing Christianity[91] The secular world we live in dislikes hearing that the Bible contains actual truths, because that breaks the rules of the current philosophical game.

Secularism

We also need to examine secularism, which is a natural consequence of the development of society and is defined as 'indifference to, or rejection or exclusion of, religion and religious considerations.' [92] Christian philosophers, like John Locke, stressed that the state should facilitate religion, but without favouring any religion in particular. Secularism means two things: First, that state and religion/church are completely separate. Second, that there is no legal difference between people based

on their religious affiliation. In other words, we are all equal before the law and the state, no matter what faith we have. This means that religion should have no influence on the apparatus of state - and that the state should not interfere with religious activity. Besides, there should not be any difference between those who have a faith and those who do not have a religious belief. All this sounds good, but experience shows that secularism in Western civilization quickly leads to the secular elite to overruling believers.

Secularism is often defined to include three conditions:

- Religious institutions shall be separate from State institutions, and the political sphere should not be dominated by religious institutions.
- All people should have freedom of thought, freedom of conscience and freedom of religion. An individual should be able to exercise their faith without offending others. Everyone should have the right to change their faith, and everyone should have the right to exercise their faith according to public rules and the rights of others.
- No one should be discriminated against, or benefit, because of their religion or non-religious worldview. Everyone has the same rights.

By respecting these three points, a democratic society can be created in which everyone becomes equal, with the opportunity to live together in peace and tolerance.

Secularism claims to guarantee freedom of expression, this can sometimes be far from the truth. Secularism also claims that it is not atheistic, but in practice, it seems like it has an atheistic agenda. Our time is increasingly characterized by a secular way of thinking that promotes atheism and which is intolerant in nature. Some people are actively fighting for an atheistic state and for all religious activity to be removed from the public arena. They are pressing for faith to be a private matter, preferably expressed only at home, in which case promoting a Christian worldview may be prohibited. Nor is it unimaginable that laws could be introduced

that Christians cannot respect, e.g. the European Union's decision to prohibit teaching alternatives to evolutionary theory. In actual terms, this means it is a criminal offence to teach Intelligent Design in Europe. In addition, I have read that the Swedish Prime Minister wants to introduce a law that forbids priests from refusing to marry gay and lesbian couples[93]. The aversion to Christianity and Christians in Scandinavia could conceivably become so strong that life could become very difficult for those who, for ethical reasons, have to follow their conscience.

Secularism has led to public culture becoming secular. Many people who would once have been called 'nominal' Christians, i.e. those who might have a Christian faith, but who rarely or never joined in with Christian activities, now define themselves as secular. This means that the overall number of Christians in any population is falling significantly. However, the number of Christians who practice their faith seems to be far more stable. In the future, there could be a clearer distinction between committed Christians and nominal Christians. The proportion of a population who have a strong belief may become relatively small, in which the culture of that population then becomes what is called post-Christian.

Secularism has major similarities to humanism, together they form a worldview called secular humanism. This is discussed in detail on page 94.

Morals and Ethics

How then shall we live? This is one of life's big questions. Where can we find the answer? That is another big question. Ethics is about how we should live. Morality is more about how we actually live. Ethics is thus an unchangeable standard, while morality - how we behave - can change. All societies and all cultures believe that certain things are wrong. Everyone thinks it is wrong to commit murder, abuse children, commit incest and steal what does not belong to you, because people are born knowing there are certain things we do not do. For most of us, wanting to help others who are struggling with life also comes naturally. People in Norway are very good at helping poor people in the Third World. Every year, Norway has a national fundraiser to support specific causes. Most people think it is appropriate to participate in the collection and they contribute. According to C.S. Lewis, people have always agreed that they should not put themselves first[94]. Selfishness has never been a trait that others admire.

Morality means the following:

- An authoritative guide to our actions regardless of our personal taste, habits, desires and self-interests.
- A code of rules for how we should live.
- Morality is universal. The same rules apply everywhere.

Ethics and morals tell us how we *ought* to live. Science tells us about the way things *are*. Science can never tell us how we ought to behave and

how we ought to act. That is outside science's area of expertise. Science can never be a guideline for life. We can say that there are two 'oughts':

- A moralistic 'ought' – e.g. we ought not to steal
- A realistic 'ought' - e.g. we ought to think Oslo is the capital of Norway (fact)

The word 'ought' or 'should' has no meaning for relativists in its moral sense.

We can make a mistake in two different ways:

- By being immoral
- By being irrational

A moral error is deserving of punishment.
An irrational error needs correction.

Most of us will not only feel uncomfortable, but will also feel a sense of guilt and shame when we do something perceived as wrong. Then a problem arises: how can we know that something is wrong? We can only know this by assuming a moral standard that says something is right and something is wrong. In order to say that something is wrong, we must know that something is right. Good parents teach their children early on to distinguish between what they can and should do, and what they are forbidden to do. The culture to which we all belong is an important source of good morals. However, belonging to one particular culture is not enough, because different cultures may have different views. Every society needs an objective standard of meaning and morality. Objective morality is about what is right or wrong regardless of our own subjective understanding. The question is then whether there are any moral facts that we can think are right or wrong - or do we simply have opinions about our world without any of them being right or wrong. Without such an objective standard, everyone is the architect of their own fortune, and has the right to do whatever they see fit. Everything is then determined by one's own opinions and preferences, and society will go into melt down if there is no clear definition of what is absolute wrong and absolute right.

Even atheists and naturalists can have a tendency to believe that objective moral values exist, even though these views are incompatible with their scientific point of view. The latter does not mean that naturalists have worse morality than other people. Often, quite the contrary. They often lead exemplary lives. The problem is that naturalism lacks a basis for morality. The humanist manifesto states that morality stems from human experience. However, human experience is not absolute and unchanging; it can vary from place to place, and from time to time. For ethics to be possible there must be an awareness that knows the difference between good and evil, and which also has the possibility to choose. This actually infers the existence of a personality, and thus shows that naturalism cannot explain morality since it denies both consciousness and free will.

The Voice of Conscience

The voice of conscience is a built-in intuition of right and wrong that is common to all people regardless of heritage, environment and geography, which cannot be culturally conditioned. We all know subconsciously that doing certain things is completely wrong. To put it another way: We all have an inherent moral law which tells us how to behave as human beings - it is written in our hearts. This law is universal, and our conscience is the instrument that makes us follow this law. When we do something wrong, we get a bad conscience. We know when we have done something we should not have done. No one needs to say that to us. We feel guilty. We know it ourselves. Conscience is a fragile trait. If we choose to ignore it too often, we could eventually become so unaware of it, that we might stop following it. We have to take care of the traits we were born with, otherwise they will simply disappear. This is especially true of our innate ability to distinguish between right and wrong.

At this point, we also need to mention guilt. We all have a guilty feeling when we have done something that is not right. This means that, deep down, people know what is right and wrong. The same goes for atheists, even if they publicly deny objective morality and truth. This sense of guilt is best explained by the very fact that we are guilty, that we have done something that is not right. The solution to the guilty feeling is

not to ignore it, the solution is forgiveness. Nevertheless, we only receive forgiveness when we acknowledge we have done something wrong. We live at a time when people believe that the cause of human problems and difficulties lies in society. People believe that the reason people commit criminal acts is due to differing social conditions, so some argue vociferously that larger financial grants are needed to solve social problems. Christianity says otherwise, Christianity says that sin is the main cause of life's problems and difficulties. Society is not the only thing that has something wrong with it, the main fault lies in our hearts, and we should own up and admit it. More financial grants will not always be the right answer or the best solution. Christianity has the solution - namely, to receive the gospel, repent of evil, and receive the power to live decently.

Certain things in life are self-evident. We just have to assume they are true. The men who wrote the American Constitution used the expression 'self-evident' in respect to all people being born equal, with the right to life, freedom and happiness.[95] It is also self-evident that there is a moral law. This law entails a moral *obligation* that applies to everyone, at all times and in all places. The moral intuition common to mankind must have a source; it does not come out of thin air. There is nothing that does. This moral law, that is highlighted by our conscience, must have a cause; just as every known law has a lawgiver. Nowadays we live in a civilization that wants to have a natural explanation for every phenomenon, but can conscience have a natural explanation? By natural in this regard, we mean matter, coincidence and pertaining to natural laws. Science cannot explain where this moral law comes from. This moral law has no basis in science, but in morality - and morality is not a material trait. Morality is an abstract, non-material concept.

In logic, there is a relationship called a syllogism[96], and which can be expressed as follows:

1. Every law has a legislator (lawgiver)
2. A moral law exists.
3. The moral law must therefore also have a legislator (lawgiver).

God the Creator is the best explanation of the identity of this lawgiver. Theists believe that God is the source of our morals and values.

Naturalism, on the other hand, believes that values are a product of human reason, but then we could ask where reason comes from. We need to distinguish between what we personally like and do not like, i.e. our preferences, and what is purely morally right or wrong.

Moral relativism is the prevailing view today. Moral relativism becomes a form of subjectivism. Relativism is a philosophy that claims each of us has the right to create our own morals, and that we can live by the rules about what is right and wrong that we create ourselves. A consistent relativism could lead to moral anarchy, with a large number of people who, regardless of time and place, do what they prefer without any regard for others. The inevitable result would be moral chaos, and this is how relativism commits a philosophical suicide. A relativist is deprived of the opportunity to discuss what moral view is the best, as they consider all views are equal. It will also be impossible for them to give children a moral upbringing. If one denies objective morality, moral facts will disappear. When moral facts disappear, you also lose the right to say that something is right and something is wrong, because what is right and wrong is meaningful only in a culture that has a moral standard that exists outside oneself. If the culture defines ethics, things can get really bad, as moral norms disappear.

Two kinds of morals

When it comes to morality, there are only two possibilities: either there are absolute moral truths (an objective morality that is not dependent on any one), or morality is relative. A third possibility does not exist. It is difficult, if not impossible, to deny that there are objective values. If someone claims objective values do not exist, and says that everything is about personal taste and pleasure, they should bear this comment in mind: 'The possibility you have of pronouncing this sentence is an objective value'. Even the person who refutes all values, values their right to refute them. A relativistic view of morality does not stand the practical test of living real life, e.g. a relativist will not put up with their spouse having a relativistic view of their marriage vows, and behaving like a sexual relativist. Even relativists expect their spouse to believe infidelity is

absolutely wrong. A relativist will also defend themselves against whoever believes they has the moral right to harm them. Relativism cannot be the plumb line against which life is measured, as the fact a moral law exists proves moral relativism is wrong. Likewise, apologizing for something we have done, also proves a moral law exists. When we break this law, we feel bad. We do not always use the moral law as a standard in the way we treat other people, but it will always be the standard by which we expect other people to treat us. What people should do is unchangeable, because the moral law exists even if we do not live by it, and even if we deny it exists. This law constitutes the very premise of being able to say that something is right and something wrong.

In order to think something is wrong, we need to understand what is right. We cannot say something is evil if we do not have the right understanding of what is good. Without a moral law, we would not be able to define what is evil. Without this law, we also cannot argue for anything or against anything, as everything then has the same value. A consequence of such a relativistic attitude is that it becomes impossible to implement social reforms. A reform means working for something that is better for society. If everything is equal, then there are no goals for which to aim. Social reforms assume that there is a universal standard that defines what is better. We could turn our thoughts to Wilberforce's efforts to abolish slavery, and Martin Luther King Jr.'s work to establish equal rights for black Americans.

We also need to discuss morality and evolution. The first thing to highlight is that naturalistic evolution cannot discern between 'ought' and 'is'. Science tells us what things are like, and nothing about how they 'ought' to be. The verb 'ought' cannot be explained by science. Normative rules cannot stem from scientific facts. One of philosophy's biggest problems is related to the relationship between what we know and what constitutes our values. This problem arises from attempting to deduce a moral duty from a scientific description. This problem is insoluble. Evolution can never answer the question as to why we should behave morally. Science can never decide whether we should or should not harm anyone. It cannot give us the answer. According to evolution, morals will evolve constantly. Evolution does not form a stable basis for the further evolution

of morality. Since evolution brings change, morals will also change. This could lead to chaos if morals change so that what we currently consider immoral, will later be considered moral. It is therefore completely pointless to validate morals by using naturalistic evolution. Evolution can never justify moral choices, nor be the motive for making the moral choices we make. Evolution revolves around 'fitness'. 'Fitness' ensures survival and reproduction. According to evolution, morals will be associated with fitness, and not with truth. This means that we will consider what ensures survival and reproduction, as moral — and not necessarily what is good and right. This relationship can cause evolutionists to regard morality and ethics as illusions, in which case morals become something we simply imagine, i.e. they do not exist. This means that naturalistic evolution rejects the notion that ethics and morality are actual concepts that have great impact on human life.

Theism says that good comes from God. Naturalism has a very different explanation. Naturalists may think that man has an intuition of what is right and wrong. Such intuition can come from the environment, i.e. our surroundings, and what we learned when we were growing up. Since these conditions can vary for different people, this means that naturalism does not have a firm and unwavering basis for ethics.

Our understanding of morality is influenced significantly by the society we live in. We expect people have the same moral understanding as society. We expect people to act the way society says we should, and if there is a law that relates to the situation, that we must do as the law prescribes. No other way of seeing things is allowed, which means that society and its laws become the highest moral authority. But laws are not about what is good and right and true. Laws are about what is legal. Martin Luther King Jr. was arrested and imprisoned for violating the existing law. His own understanding of racial discrimination conflicted with what society advocated. He felt more committed to following his own inner morals than the demands of society. The same dilemma applies in societies which have an abortion law that entitles women to an abortion. If a health worker feels more committed to their own convictions than the law, difficulties can ensue, and at worst they can lose their job. A classic example of this issue is found in the court proceedings after World

War II. At the Court of Nuremberg, Nazi leaders tried to walk free by claiming that they were just following the laws that applied in Germany. They just followed orders, and did what German society had expected of them. Nevertheless, they were all convicted, because their wrongdoing was of such a terrible kind that global society could not accept that they should not be punished. There is a Law above the law, and this inherent law, which all people possess, must be the highest authority.

Relativists argue they have a neutral view of morality. They claim that everyone does their thing without judging - I do my thing, you do yours - but moral neutrality does not exist. If we face a moral problem, it is wrong to argue there are no moral principles. There is no middle point between having a moral obligation and being a moral relativist. Peter Singer is a professor of bioethics at Princeton University[97]. He has very extreme views. His target is biblical morality. Singer is an evolutionist, and believes that humans only are more advanced animals. Therefore, he finds it natural that humans may have sexual relationship with animals.[98] He is infamous for saying that "the life of a newborn is of less value than the life of a pig, a dog, or a chimpanzee".[99] He believes morality is determined primarily by intellectual skills, so individuals with an intellectual handicap have less value than other people, and in some cases also less value than animals. Singer also says that an assessment whether a newborn is worthy to live, or whether it should be set aside to die, could be left until 28 days after birth. If Singer's thoughts, which he expresses freely to his students, were to gain broad acceptance in society, universal human rights would vanish and society would be free to get rid of those who were defined as inferior individuals. People would then be assessed on their usefulness to society, and not as equally valuable people created in God's image. In a world without God, nothing can be condemned, everything is equally as good, and it would be impossible to judge the most brutal behaviour. If people follow atheism to its inevitable consequences, they need to realize that the consequences will be dramatic. The door might be open to strong, cynical leaders. Experience shows this inevitably leads to significant consequences, producing leaders such as Stalin, Lenin, Hitler and Mao.

Morality is one of God's attributes. Moral standards do not exist without God, but are part of his immutable nature and being. God is the

ultimate goodness, and the moral law originates in his goodness. God is not created; he is from eternity. The same applies to morality. Morality has always been part of God's being and nature.

The Frankfurt School and Cultural Marxism

Marxism

Karl Marx was influenced by the philosophy of George F. Hegel and Feuerbach early in his career. Hegel was a pantheist and saw God as a spirit present in everything in our world (see page 59). In this way of thinking, God is not separated from the world, but is a reality that evolved with the course of history, leaving his footprints in its development. Hegel introduced the concept of dialectics, i.e. the idea that history and development bring with it changes that are resisted, so that thought grinds against thought. This is often expressed as a thesis creating an antithesis that leads to synthesis. According to Hegel, matter depended on a mind; the spirit that he believed took part in history. Hegel believed that conflict could make the world a better place. Ludwig Feuerbach was a materialist who believed God was a human invention, an expression of our unrealized ideals. He thus thought religion was harmful, since as soon as people had invented God, they used their abilities to worship and cultivate this constructed deity, instead of rectifying the societal problems that were primarily responsible for causing people to invent God. Feuerbach, unlike Hegel, believed that matter was the primary, and that everything else originated from matter. His influence on Marx was such that atheism became a pillar of all forms of Marxism.

Karl Marx's thoughts on revolution were likely inspired by the French Revolution. Marx believed human nature was a product of the society to which one belonged. If human nature were to change, it could only happen by society breaking down, i.e. it was not possible to change people unless the society in which they lived was also drastically changed. Marx introduced dialectical materialism, a vision that values matter uppermost, and viewed changes as an inherent part of nature. This came to constitute what is called dialectical atheism. This view was the opposite view to that held by Hegel. Marx saw battle between the classes of society as the primary issue in history. Marx had a lifelong friendship with Friedrich Engels. Together they wrote the Communist Manifesto which stirred up workers to rebellion and taking political power. Marx and Engels believed workers needed to understand they should take their share of the benefits. At the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, workers had difficult lives. Working situations could be dangerous, and salaries were very poor. Many employers exploited their workers and treated them like slaves. Workers thus constituted an oppressed group. Marx believed this injustice was so great that it should be abolished, and a society established in which everyone was equal. Revolutionary terror was employed as an acceptable way to achieve this. Marx was convinced that a humane society would thereby be achieved. Marxism is an atheist and materialistic worldview based on Marx's thoughts on abolishing private property rights, and that society should have a right to a voice with regards to the means of production. In this way, Marxism would create the communist state. In this kind of state, all property would be public property, private property rights would be abolished, and the motto would be 'from each one according to his skills, to everyone according to his needs'. Marx and Engels were convinced that the family also had to be abolished to achieve the best kind of society.

This utopian society was never created. Marx did not understand that abolishing private property rights and replacing them with state control of the economy would automatically cause the motivation for work to disappear and lead to stagnation. In addition, most people would feel it was wrong that the state owned everything, rather than the individual. Some believe that Marx was driven not by love for the proletariat, but

by hatred of the bourgeoisie. The first settlers in the United States tried to build a society in which everyone would have the same rights, but the project had to be abandoned, because many people did not understand that rights come with liability and obligations.

Marxism is also evolutionary. Marx adopted Darwin's ideas and saw reality as a result of evolution. For him, reality was about life, human beings and civilization – and human beings were a product of evolution, the only animals that had advanced to the top of the chain of evolution. Marx laid much store on being able to use evolution as a scientific means of denigrating God. While philosophy had previously been concerned with what things and societies are like, Marx was keen to change what it encompassed. Philosophy became for him a means of changing the structures of society, which Marxists regard as 'progression', and economic conflict would cause the further development of society.

Wherever Marxism has been introduced, it has led to non-functioning totalitarian societies in which individuals had no significance. Workers were to be helped as a class, not as individuals. Even asserting an opinion that went against what was accepted could have disastrous consequences, with the perpetrator ending up in a mental hospital or a Gulag camp. In such societies, psychopaths more or less have free reign. Marxism is believed to have led to the loss of more than 100 million lives in countries such as Russia, Cambodia, China, North Korea, and Cuba.[100] No other ideology in the history of mankind has led to so much suffering and death. Despite this, Marx is still respected, especially in academic environments.

After the Communists took power in Russia during the revolution in l917, they wanted to introduce communism into other countries in Europe, but the Red Army's attempt to take Europe by force was halted by a battle in Poland. Rosa Luxemburg, a naturalized German revolutionary socialist, and Béla Kun, a Hungarian Communist revolutionary, fought for the Bolsheviks, a far-left Marxist faction, but ordinary people opposed Marx's ideas. The intellectual communist elite blamed the workers for the lost victory, but they did not give up their theories. They believed these theories were flawless and promised everyone the best society in which oppressors would be deposed.

Cultural Marxism

The Frankfurt school was a group of younger people, mainly psychologists and sociologists, with communist views who joined forces in Europe in the 1920s. As communism, and the revolution in Russia in 1917, had not won over the European workers, they realized they had to work in a different way to continue the revolution. The working class had to be won and convinced by ideology and a whole new way of thinking. These Marxists wanted complete social change. Although Marx's ideology suffered defeat, and the Soviet Union killed millions of its own citizens, these intellectual Marxists did not give up their dream of a world-wide revolution. Their gathering place was the Institute for Social Research, at Goethe University in Frankfurt. This institute was known as the Frankfurt School and its declared goal was to undermine western culture. After Hitler came to power, the Frankfurt School found it impossible to continue operating in Europe and most of its followers emigrated to the United States, where they took positions at universities, including Columbia University in New York. They continued their work there, and it had a tremendous effect on the United States, in terms of school system, law, religion and Christian faith, and could best be described as 'destructive'.

The thinkers who belonged to the Frankfurt School emphasized the cultural structure of society as a means of winning the final victory. They synthesized Marx's and Freud's thoughts. Karl Marx had made the mistake of unilaterally emphasizing economic conditions, and Freud emphasized the importance of sex, both for personal and social development.

Gramsci was an Italian socialist who saw the need to break down the existing order and promote world revolution. He was not himself a member of the Frankfurt School, but they adopted his thoughts. Gramsci is known for his thoughts on cultural and ideological hegemony, which would be achieved through a 'long march through the corridors' [101], which means that, slowly but surely, people worked to gain influence in all the places of power, and thus would be able to exert their influence. He argued for a long, patient work in civil society oriented to combating established hegemony. Antonio Gramsci developed the concept of

cultural hegemony. Those who have the cultural power, will also have the power to change society.

He concluded that as long as workers were influenced by the Christian faith, went to church and raised their children according to Christian faith, they could not be reached with the Marxist message. Gramsci considered breaking the cultural hegemony of Christianity as a necessary condition for destroying capitalism and thus achieving the communist revolution. He believed that culture determined the economy, rather than the economy determining culture. This was the opposite of what Marx had claimed. In order to transform a society, Gramsci believed the cultural institutions that shape what people think and believe must be transformed first. Control then needed to be gained over political institutions such as the police, the law, the judiciary and the military. The recipe was to undermine society by changing its culture, and changing culture by infiltrating its institutions. Gramsci's ideas were well received by those in academia, and in this way, they gained great influence and Cultural Marxism became a means of breaking society's ties with traditional culture.

György Lukács is regarded as the leading Marxist theorist since Karl Marx. His thoughts laid the foundation for the Frankfurt School. He saw the revolutionary breakdown of society as the only solution to cultural conflict. Lukács had sold his heart to the hateful and destructive forces that aimed to break down the family. Lukács hated both God and the family. He said that the worldwide change in values for which Bolshevism was working could not take place without destroying old values and the revolutionists creating new values. He wanted to create a cultural pessimism that would have the effect of giving people a sense of resignation and hopelessness, thus preparing the ground for revolution. In 1919, he was a minister in Bela Kun's Marxist cabinet in Hungary and there he brought his thoughts to life. His ideas were known as 'cultural terrorism'. He introduced a very radical view of sexuality, by rejecting Christian norms for sexual expression. Special lectures about sexuality and free love were arranged for young people. Their parents' attitude to family was characterized as old-fashioned, monogamy as past its sell-by-date, and religion - which forbade all joy and pleasure - as completely irrelevant.

Lukács introduced a very radical view on sexuality that continues to mark our culture. On the Internet I read about a young girl who unconcealed and unashamed spoke about having sex with two boys. This is usually called "triangle-sex".

Judeo-Christian morality was rejected, because its tenets deprived people of joy and satisfaction. Children were encouraged to despise and reject the authority of their parents and the church. Thus, young people were transformed into criminals, and only the police were able to deal with them. Hungarian women were also encouraged to revolt. Lukács put it this way: 'I see the revolutionary destruction of society as the only way' [102]. Lukács regarded capitalism as the root of all evil. Capitalism was to be hated and fought against, and in this fight, all means were permitted.

In the book *The Rage Against God*, Peter Hitchens, brother of the well-known atheist Christopher Hitchens, quotes a statement by Lukács: 'Communist ethics make it the highest duty to accept the necessity of acting wickedly. That is the greatest sacrifice the revolution asks from us. The conviction of the true Communist belief is that evil transforms itself into good through the dialectics of historical evolution'.[103] This quote shows how a total acceptance of an atheistic view of life can cause the complete degeneration of a person. As an afterthought, it is interesting to know that when Peter Hitchens was sent to Moscow as a communist journalist, what he saw of communism and its execution in practice made him reconsider his worldview. His experience led to a long thought process which eventually caused him to regain his faith and become a Christian.

Critical theory

Based on the work of Max Horkheimer, The Frankfurt School's entire ideology became known as 'critical theory'. This theory was, in its essence, a destructive critique of everything the West stood for. People were encouraged to criticize everyone, everything and everywhere. This applied to all aspects of society, including Christianity, capitalism, the concept of authority, the family, morality, tradition, sexual morality, loyalty, nationalism, and patriotism. Critical theory consisted of a number of sub-theories of personality, family, authority, patriarchy, matriarchy, androgyny (transgenderism), race, law, and sexuality. The Frankfurt School also undertook linguistic research. All these sub-theories gave the Marxists a tool by which they could redefine many concepts and values, which were then turned on end. This is what postmodernism calls deconstructionism - by changing language, you can manipulate it so that you always achieve what you have predetermined. In doing this, the Marxists were given a weapon by which they could transform society, not by violence and armed revolution, but by a peaceful means in which language was of great importance. They reshaped society by reshaping culture. We need to be aware that critical theory is just another name for the term 'political correctness'. Those who are not politically correct face many obstacles and much resistance, but it is a Marxist concept that requires full submission. This means that political correctness in its essence is totalitarian. Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm and Theodor Adorno were all supporters of critical theory. Some have said that the end-point of critical theory is barbarism. This message, which was proclaimed as *politically correct*, was anti-God, anti-Christianity, anti-nationalist, anti-patriot, anti-conservative, anti-masculine, anti-tradition and anti-moral.

A special feature of the Frankfurt School was that they fought against the concept of patriarchy and promoted matriarchy, believing matriarchy to be the solution to society's problems. The patriarchal societal structure was to be replaced by the matriarchate. The patriarchy had to be overthrown, because it was the root cause of the oppression of women. The notion that human beings were created as man or woman was combated. Critical theory has no room for well-defined gender, instead it emphasized

what is called androgyny, i.e. which means that a human being is neither specifically male nor female. The Frankfurt School no longer wanted normalcy to be represented by heterosexuality, but for homosexuality to be just as normal. Radical feminism was also encouraged, as was the concept that the family should preferably consist of only one parent, and this laid the foundation for many children today being at a distance from their father. A well-defined gender does not belong in the critical theory. Critical theory also argued for lesbian feminism.

In his book, *Righteous Indignation*, Andrew Breitbart[104] writes about the influence of the Frankfurt School in the United States. Its proponents aimed to gain a foothold and have influence in Hollywood, the academia, media and politics. Being a freedom-loving nation, the United States welcomed its advocates warmly. Breitbart wrote: 'We always feel that our incredible traditions of freedom will transform those who come here, that they will appreciate the life we have created – isn't that why they have come here? We cannot imagine that anyone who comes here and who experiences the wonder of living in this country would want to destroy it. But that's exactly what the Frankfurt School wanted to do'. He reported that Max Horkheimer, Adorno and Bertolt Brecht had moved to Santa Monica, California, from Nazi Germany to a heaven on earth, and they did not manage the transition to the good life offered to them. In America, they soon found their place in academia, and were present in every corner of American culture. In no time, Horkheimer's critical theory became the pillar of philosophy, history and English across the United States.

Breitbart studied at Tulane University. He wrote that he was glad that he spent his study time partying as much as possible. In retrospect, he realized it protected him from the cultural-Marxist ideas that prevailed there. After a while, he realized that similar ideas had infiltrated all university environments in the United States. Critical theory is not designed to create something new or to transform, but is intended solely to break down what exists. Breitbart said that the curriculum at Tulane contained more about Adorno, Gramsci, Horkheimer and Marcuse than about Twain, Jefferson and Lincoln. The thoughts of the Frankfurt School had taken over the academia and society would thus be transformed by reshaping culture.

Breitbart observed that Marxism entered the United States in such a way that it went 'under the radar'. He believed it had a great influence on transforming the Democratic Party, which has become a party on the left, different from the original Democratic Party which worked for the well-being of ordinary people.

Over time, critical theory has changed somewhat. It is no longer a pure Marxist theory of how society should change. The ideologues at the Frankfurt School broadened classical Marxism, and showed that workers were not only slaves due to economic exploitation, but that they suffered under the prevailing social system. This laid the foundation for the New Left, which emphasizes emotional and sexual freedom. They advocate that people must be liberated, not only from physical and economic oppression, but from repressive cultural ideas and values. Critical theory today is composed of a number of elements. It divides society into groups. The main groups consist of the oppressed and the oppressors.

Group identity plays a crucial role in critical theory. It claims our feelings, thoughts, moral points of view, and truth are largely determined by our group affiliation. Our experiences, our assessments of reality, and our moral choices are influenced by the group to which we belong. Suppression is determined by hegemonic power, which means a particular group's ability to impose its view of norms, rules and values on the rest of society. The dominant group decides, and therefore constitutes a group to be opposed and fought. Today's critical theory relates oppression to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, financial situation, age, and physical and mental disabilities. Belonging to the wrong group is considered oppressive. 'White, older man' is a term that expresses discrimination and oppression. 'Privilege' becomes a burdensome word. 'Intersectionality' is a new word that encompasses overlapping categories of discrimination. One definition of intersectionality is 'a new caste where non-whites and non-heterosexuals are placed at the top'.

Another prominent feature of critical theory is its emphasis on liberation in the sense of eliminating oppression and promoting justice. Discrimination is the main concept in critical theory, which claims its solution requires the reshaping of society. However, critical theory is not concerned with the morals each individual should have; it is concerned

with the liberation of discriminated groups and thus apparently blind to ordinary virtues such as honesty, kindness, forgiveness.

Critical theory constitutes a worldview which differs greatly from a Christian worldview. A worldview pertains to the major issues in life, such as morality, meaning, truth, right and wrong, and asks questions such as: What is a human being, what is wrong with our world, how should we live, what is the purpose of life, and what happens when we die? Critical theory has quite a different outlook than Christianity, and considers human beings to be members of social groups locked in a struggle for power, that our identity comes from our relationship with other groups, that suffering and injustice are the result of oppression, and that our purpose is to fight against oppression so we can achieve equality.

Erich Fromm introduced critical theory into the teaching of psychology, believing that psychological problems were essentially the result of the suppression of sexuality, and that sexual liberation from social norms could cure people. He believed that sexual orientation was a social construct, that there was no innate difference between woman and man, and that sexuality and gender were determined by society. Fromm believed that children should be raised to become more independent and that parents' authority over the children should be reduced. He worked on adapting Freud's ideas to Marxism. His two books, *The Dogma of Christ* and *Positive Freedom* both argue for critical theory. Fromm emphasizes that human beings are the centre of the universe and its sole purpose. Horkheimer and Fromm helped lay the foundations for modern feminism.

Herbert Marcuse belonged to the Frankfurt School and was probably its most famous name. He was a former student of the philosopher Martin Heidegger, who founded the concept of 'deconstruction', a process that would rip apart every idea from earlier times. Heidegger was a composed person, who longed for the time when the spiritual strength of the West would disappear, and in which people would be suffocated by madness. Marcuse's arguments were similar to those of Trotsky. He wanted the West to be destroyed by anarchy, and disaster to facilitate revolution. He emphasized feminism as being significant in relation to this purpose, and preached a message of sexual freedom. He was a prophet of

critical theory, and worked towards words having a different meaning (deconstructionism) to advance the cause of the revolution. His name became known for the phrase 'make love, not war', which was adopted avidly by young people in the 1960s and 1970s. He was one of the great leaders of young people in the United States in the 1960s and became their guru. He regarded sex and drugs as weapons in the fight against bourgeoisie, and that existing culture and sexual morality were to be fought. Marcuse wanted a perverse society with rampant sexual freedom. Young people were taught that their parents' morals were evil and repressive. During the student revolt in Paris in 1968, students carried banners with the inscription Marx, Mao and Marcuse. Marcuse taught at Columbia University, Harvard, University of San Diego and Brandeis University.

Herbert Marcuse will always be remembered for the slogan; "Make love, not war".

Theodor Adorno was behind the book, *The Authoritarian Personality*, which had a major impact on sociology and psychology in the United States. It defines a human type that was called the authoritarian personality, which he described as being the result of capitalism, Christianity and sexual oppression. The main message of the book was that Christianity,

capitalism and the patriarchal authoritarian family had characteristics that made them fertile ground for racial prejudice and fascism. If these prejudices and this discrimination were not eradicated, the worst possible thing could happen.

Relativism was the philosophical system on which the Frankfurt School built. Relativism also constitutes the ideological view of political correctness. The Frankfurt era had many thoughts about breaking down and razing our culture, but had no well-thought out suggestions for what might fill the void. Voids do not last, that they are always filled with something is the order of nature. Filling voids with godlessness hardly brings with it good. Students have almost always protested against the way things are, but when they reach senior positions in society, they moderate their most radical views. The student revolution of the 1960s differed from this pattern. The radical students from the 1960s have maintained their radical views, therefore state administrative bureaucrats may now also be influenced by the same ideas.

Cultural Marxism nurtures multiculturalism, and this leads to everything becoming equal, as it is considered wrong to draw differences between people, as they are all equals, including their faith and opinions. Thus, no one faith or opinion can be emphasized over another, and Christianity is not considered to be the Truth, as all religions are considered to be equally right and true. Cultural Marxism is a strong factor in our time, and is characterized by the belief that the nuclear family, traditional morality, and a traditional view of gender and sexual identity must be fought. There is a struggle in the Western world against marriage, family and the parent-child relationship. The inevitable result will be chaos. With eyes wide open, people are working to break down culture as we know it by steering it onto the rocks.

As early as 2009, Horowitz and Laksin wrote the book *One-Party Classroom*[105], outlining how the Frankfurt School has had a major impact on American schools and universities. The book is a systematic examination of the influence to which students are subjected. The authors use the word 'indoctrination' about what goes on at the highest-ranked and most respected teaching institutions in the United States, where Marxism is presented as a solution to society's social problems, without the shadowy

side of Marxism being discussed. The white people are accused of racism, and blamed for the oppression of black people, in particular. Gender is portrayed as a social phenomenon by repudiating biological sex. Without the influence of the Frankfurt School, the United States would still be a Christian nation.

Ben Shapiro is a young conservative American writer. He has written the book *Brainwashed*: *how universities indoctrinate American youth*.[106] This book provides such a detailed description of statements made by named professors and teachers, that the editor explains in a separate foreword why the publishing house has deviated from its usual policy. They have done this solely to ensure that everyone can get information about what is going on in universities and other schools. The book shows how the left in the United States, represented by the Democratic Party, has taken over the hegemony of just about every university and school. The vast majority of professors belong to the Democratic Party. The few professors who have sympathy with the Republican Party often dare not publicly defend their political views (page 6). Doing so can cost them both their career and academic position, and lead to a witch hunt from which they would not emerge unscathed. Shapiro documents that professors advocate that objective truth and objective morality do not exist. Some of them are advocates of free sex. Shapiro also writes that the liberal media hate Republicans, the military and Israel (page 12); that Conservatives are considered extreme and blamed for the economic depression of the 1930s; that capitalism is evil incarnate and increases the chasm between the poor and the rich, creating poverty. Shapiro also documents that university students are told the West exploits and destroys peoples and ecosystems; that the teaching staff at universities wage a war against God; and that since God does not exist (page 84), there is also no right or wrong, everyone can do as they please as there are no overarching rules to follow. Teaching staff also advocate the concepts that life has no meaning and that human beings set themselves in the place of God.

Some has claimed that abortion is "the most powerful weapon in the arsenal of Cultural Marxism" [107]. Planned Parenthood is a public American institution which has the task of performing safe abortions. They also carry out pregnancy checks, but this business is modest and they did

only 8.000 consultations in 2017. They have more than 600 clinics in the United States. In 2017 they performed 321.384 abortions. Between 1 October 2017 and 30 September 2018, the institution performed 332.757 abortions. Over the years in which abortion has been a right for women, over 60 million abortions have been performed in the United States. That means abortion is a multi-dollar industry. Planned Parenthood gained notoriety because they ran what might be called foetal trade, selling parts of aborted foetuses. This is illegal under US law, and therefore a criminal act. President Donald Trump reduced the grants to Planned Parenthood, and this led to strong protests from feminists around the world.

Christianity is regarded as the main enemy of cultural Marxism. In the United States today, forces exist that have such a hostile attitude to Christian belief that traditional Christmas celebrations are being sabotaged. The word 'Christmas' can no longer be used. People have to use neutral concepts, such as 'holidays' and 'winter feasts', and the term 'Christmas' should preferably be avoided. All decoration, music and food should be neutral, and not specific to a particular religion.

In his book *Prime Time Propaganda*, Ben Shapiro talks about how the Left has taken over TV[109]. Even entertainment programs often have a political undertone in which the views of the Left are emphasized, often with great cunning, so that they cannot be blamed for spreading propaganda. Hollywood has also become a center of the Left's views, and these views characterize a lot of the media produced there. Large parts of the world are affected by what Hollywood produces and creates. A separate chapter in the book is about how the left uses TV to indoctrinate children and adolescents.

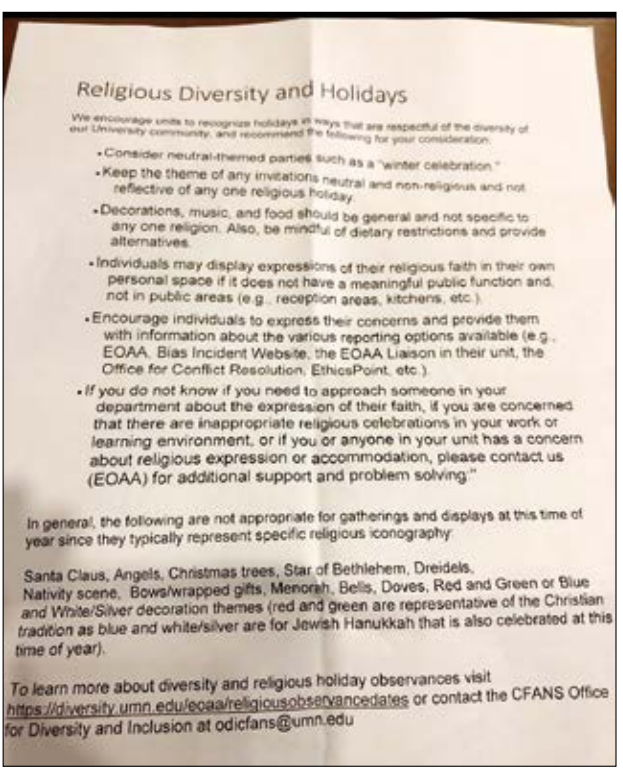
The book *Bullies*, also by Ben Shapiro[110] describes the culture of fear and scaremongering created by the Left to silence the Conservatives. Ben Shapiro claims that the Frankfurt School has had a huge influence on American culture, and is one of the main reasons for the development of secularism that has progressed so far that the USA must now be considered a post-Christian Continent. America was secularized long after Europe. The nation had a well-established Christian culture, but the leadership was blind to what was happening at the universities. They were not aware that teachers and professors were strongly influenced by

multiculturalism, and that students were influenced by new thoughts incompatible with the Christian faith.

Summary

Cultural Marxism was birthed by the Frankfurt School and has had a devastating social influence. Its aims and basic ideology are:

1. To abolish moral absolutes. Asserts that morality is relative.
2. To promote that there are no sexual norms. Anything is permitted and equally normal. Gender is not a biological term.
3. To promote the fight against the concept of God by all means. Naturalistic Neo-Darwinism is used as a weapon in this fight.



Religious Diversity and Holidays

We encourage units to recognize holidays in ways that are respectful of the diversity of our University community, and recommend the following for your consideration:

- Consider neutral-themed parties such as a "winter celebration."
- Keep the theme of any invitations neutral and non-religious and not reflective of any one religious holiday.
- Decorations, music, and food should be general and not specific to any one religion. Also, be mindful of dietary restrictions and provide alternatives.
- Individuals may display expressions of their religious faith in their own personal space if it does not have a meaningful public function and, not in public areas (e.g., reception areas, kitchens, etc.).
- Encourage individuals to express their concerns and provide them with information about the various reporting options available (e.g., EOAA, Bias Incident Website, the EOAA Liaison in their unit, the Office for Conflict Resolution, EthicsPoint, etc.).
- If you do not know if you need to approach someone in your department about the expression of their faith, if you are concerned that there are inappropriate religious celebrations in your work or learning environment, or if you or anyone in your unit has a concern about religious expression or accommodation, please contact us (EOAA) for additional support and problem solving."

In general, the following are not appropriate for gatherings and displays at this time of year since they typically represent specific religious iconography:

Santa Claus, Angels, Christmas trees, Star of Bethlehem, Dreidels, Nativity scene, Bows/wrapped gifts, Menorah, Bells, Doves, Red and Green or Blue and White/Silver decoration themes (red and green are representative of the Christian tradition as blue and white/silver are for Jewish Hanukkah that is also celebrated at this time of year).

To learn more about diversity and religious holiday observances visit https://diversity.umn.edu/eoaa/religiousobservancedates or contact the CFANS Office for Diversity and Inclusion at odicfans@umn.edu

Facsimile of the circular with the heading "Religious Diversity and Holidays" from the University of Minnesota, USA.

4. To wage war on marriage and family. The nuclear family (mother, a father and children) is undesirable even though we know it provides the best kind of life both for the individual and for society.
5. To dominate the media, schools and universities.
6. To infiltrate and infect TV and all kinds of entertainment.
7. To increase the power of the state, while reducing the importance of the family.

*

After reading this chapter, you should find it easier to understand what is happening in our part of the world right now. Most countries in the West are largely influenced by cultural Marxism, which considers Christianity to be its greatest enemy. Christianity asserts that all people will one day be accountable for their lives, but Cultural Marxists do not tolerate this belief, neither do they accept Christian moral norms. They advocate that human beings are free to do what they themselves desire.

Cultural Marxism is the main reason contemporary USA is practically split in two. The entire Left and most of the American universities today are steeped in the ideas of Cultural Marxism. The Frankfurt School has spawned the strongest and most successful attack on the Christian faith in the United States so far. Therefore, as Christians, wherever you live, we need to be well-informed, so we can resist these negative influences.

Additional references regarding the Frankfurt school are found on page 328.

Human - Homo Sapiens

The western world has a naturalistic and evolutionary view of human beings and their origin.

This view has been taught for so many years that very few people probably remain unaffected by it. The main message is that human beings are related to animals, that we come from animals, and so we are not particularly special. Naturalism degrades human beings. Another word for this is 'dehumanization'. This process is based on the idea that people consist only of matter; that we are just a part of the cosmos, like all other animals. Some views exist that are not so absolute and say that human beings are unique among the animals. In this respect, human beings are considered to be an advanced animal, and our humanity consists only of the character traits given us by evolution. Naturalism denies we have an eternal soul. We have all seen the drawing that shows how an ape gradually evolves into human being, but these drawings are not based on factual evidence – they are an expression of a materialistic worldview. Since the ape is our closest evolutionary relative, the message is that we resemble apes. However, a visit to a zoo, especially with children, will provide us with an experience that will make the vast majority of people realize the huge difference between animals and humans. Human beings are completely different to animals. Substantial areas of modern psychology have evolution as their starting point, meaning that human beings, and the way they think, are explained by their evolutionary prehistory.

Human descent from apes is part of the prevailing paradigm, and therefore a theme people are not expected to doubt. However, if we are on an honest quest for truth, then we need to be allowed to ask questions. Some scientists do their research so well that they follow the truth wherever the truth is heading. However, when this road is on a collision course with what others teach and what is accepted, the truth often has to give way – and this happens more often than not. One admirable exception is Professor Antony Flew, an atheist professor of philosophy, who wrote several books arguing for atheism. He was considered an icon of atheism. However, when he was presented with newer data on the universe and biological information, he realized there had to be a designer behind it all. Flew lived by Socrates' statement that one must follow the evidence wherever it points the way, and consistent with this, at quite an old age, he admitted he had been wrong to be an atheist.

I want to introduce you to a different view of human origin based on the following three books: *Science and Human Origins*[111], *More Than a Monkey*[112] and *Debunking Human Evolution*[113]. I would recommend these books to anyone who wants to know about human origin, especially teachers, youth workers and preachers. The most recent was published in 2016 and is quite up to date. The discussion that follows is based mainly on that book. Recently, I also received the book *Theistic Evolution*[114], which discusses the origin and possible evolution of human beings, and gives the latest information on this topic. The most exciting about this book is that it concludes that science cannot rule out the fact that humanity originates from one primary parental couple, and that no fossil evidence exists that verifies human beings evolved from apes, so fossils cannot be used as an argument for human evolution. No species have been identified to be intermediate stages between apes and humans. Apes give birth to apes, and humans give birth to humans. To quote Henry Gee, editor-in-chief of *Nature*: 'Fossils related to human evolutionary history are fragmentary and open to different interpretations. Fossils related to the evolutionary development of chimpanzees do not exist at all.' [115] So, there are no fossils that show that we have evolved from apes. The most recent article om human origins written by professor Wolf-Ekkehard Lönnig gives an excellent overview of the subject.[116]

Evolutionists are mainly concerned with similarities between ape and man, and have not focused on differences in the same way. When comparing apes and humans, it is important to show all the differences. Ann Gauger, one of the authors of *Science and Human Origins*, writes that these differences are so great that the time that would have been needed to convert an ape to human by evolution is far too long for it to have been possible. What are the main differences between ape and human? Firstly, humans have a much larger skull and a much larger brain than apes. The human skull is shaped for an individual that stands on two feet, unlike apes, which have a skull shaped for an animal that leans forward as it moves. The human brain is three and a half times larger than that of an ape. In addition to size, a number of other differences are found in the brain. DNA methylation may be one of the most important, since it is important for gene activation. Methylation means that a methyl group (-CH3) binds to DNA (this is an example of epigenetics).[117] Looking at the skeleton of apes and humans, there are very big differences. The arms of apes are long and reach far down to the calf, which is not the case in humans. The human spine is made to walk on two legs, but the spine of an ape is made to live in trees. Apes can grip branches with their toes so they can move from tree to tree using both their hands and feet. Human beings cannot use their feet in this way, but the human hand is a precision instrument superior to that of apes. The human has a number of muscles that control fine motor skills that apes lack.

The literature in this field deals mainly with DNA similarities between chimpanzees and human beings, which are interpreted as evidence of evolutionary kinship. Notice this is an interpretation of data, and an interpretation will inevitably be influenced by the worldview of the researcher in question. The human genome consists of 3.2 billion nucleotide bases ('DNA letters'). Even a 1% difference would mean a difference of 32 million nucleotide bases. If the difference is 1.5%, that would be a difference of 50 million bases. This represents a lot of information. Human beings have approximately 45 million nucleotide bases that apes do not have. Similarly, apes have 45 million nucleotide bases that human beings do not have. We now know that the similarity between the human and chimpanzee DNA is 84.5 %. That means a 15 % difference.[116] There

has been much debate in the literature about chromosomes. Human beings have twenty three chromosomes, whereas apes have twenty four. Scientists claim that humans have one less chromosome, because two ape chromosomes fused to make one. We can reject this assumption on scientific grounds, as modern research does not provide a strong enough basis to demonstrate this fusion has taken place.

In my other two book[118,119] I have discussed mutations. Mutations are changes in DNA, and DNA is the language of life. DNA is made up of nucleotide bases that act like letters in the DNA's informational language. Mutations are thus like typos in a text.

Evolutionists believe mutations provide the information needed to form new organisms. The 'waiting time' is the time it takes for a sufficient number of so-called coordinated mutations to take place in the germ cells, i.e. the time it would take for sufficient mutations to occur for an ape to become a human. Calculations show it is very unlikely humans could be derived from apes, as even after 16 billion years, enough mutations could not have taken place. Both Neanderthals and Cro-Magnon 'man' have previously been put forward as possible human precursors. Today, there is almost complete agreement that they are both representatives of modern human beings and their role as precursors, or intermediate stages, has been rejected.

Debunking Human Evolution contains a separate chapter[113] on how false intermediaries have been presented in schoolbooks. I do not want to discuss this in detail, because people might think that I am of the opinion that deceitfulness is common characteristics of palaeontologists. I have no reason to think that, but we need to know that over the years some palaeontologists have come up with so-called 'ape-men' that were deliberate hoaxes, e.g. Java Man, Piltdown Man and Nebraska Man. The fossil called 'Lucy' is also fraught with such great uncertainty that we cannot conclude it represents an intermediate form between apes and humans. To date, no fossils can be considered an intermediate form, and there is no scientific evidence to suggest that humans have gradually developed from apes. The naturalistic worldview assumes that such development has taken place, and therefore a serious conflict exists between a theistic and an atheistic view of life, especially when it comes to human origin. I have personally experienced the enormous technological developments

that have taken place since World War II. Human creativity is formidable and shows we are essentially different from animals. I have come to the conclusion that if humanity is a few hundred thousand years old, then based on human beings' inherent urge to research and progress, this development from ape to human must have taken place a long time ago. However, we humans have a short history - Columbus discovered America only about 450 years ago.

Hardly any palaeontologists, i.e. fossil scientists, are not evolutionists, and this becomes very clear in relation to the subject of human descent and development. These palaeontologists tend to interpret all findings based on their belief that evolution has taken place. Only evolution counts. Evolution is simply assumed, and a deliberate policy is in place to get people to believe this message.

Following this discussion of human origin, we need to clarify some matters that are important in relation to the image we have of human beings. I want to emphasize that we are born in the image of God. Human beings are unique. No other creatures are created in God's image. The secular culture we live in has a completely different view of humanity and does not see human beings as unique. According to naturalism, we are here by coincidence - the universe has no plan, purpose, meaning, nor have the life forms that live on our planet. Prominent evolutionists and atheists have repeatedly expressed such views since Darwin's time. I would like to mention William Provine,[120] a famous American professor who was a Christian in his youth and who died in 2015. He lost faith in design in nature due to studying biology and became an atheist. He said "Let me summarize my views on what modern evolutionary biology tells us loud and clear, and I must say that these are basically Darwin's views. There are no gods, no purposeful forces of any kind, no life after death. When I die, I am absolutely certain that I am going to be completely dead. That's just all—that's gonna be the end of me. There is no ultimate foundation for ethics»

Conclusion

Human beings are unique and created in the image of God. They have not been created by evolution. Human beings are unlike animals. Human beings have personalities, free will, moral understanding, and a

consciousness. Consciousness makes it possible to have intentionality, to learn from experience, to remember, and to communicate. Unlike any animal, human beings are preoccupied with the search for truth and can master abstract thinking.

Awareness

The fact human beings have consciousness is an unsolved problem for naturalism. What characterizes us human beings is that we are constantly aware of what is happening around us, and this helps us shape our consciousness. This ability for conscious attention is something we do not understand and about which we can only wonder. This is what makes us human. We can also think, reflect and remember, have opinions, plan, argue, look ahead, learn from our experiences, and so on. These abilities constitute our cognitive skills and these make us human and unlike all other creatures. Consciousness has its seat in the brain. Recent studies indicate that human beings have approximately 86 billion nerve cells (neurons). Each nerve cell can have connections with an average of 10,000 other nerve cells. These connections are called synapses and the number of synapses in a human brain is many thousands of billions. Each synapse has a multitude of switches that switch the connections on and off. All this must happen correctly for the brain to function. No wonder the physical complexity of the brain surpasses anything we can imagine. On top of this comes our consciousness, will and emotions, all of which characterize human life. Recent studies show that neurons form an almost ideal network of connections, which implies that the anatomy and physiology of the brain seem to surpass anything blind naturalistic mechanisms could create.

The nature of consciousness is a modern question. No one wondered about it before Descartes. Earlier philosophers considered consciousness to be a natural relationship with the human soul. It was part of human biology. Descartes divided human beings into two substances: a part that was the body, and a part that was the soul (dualism). The part that was the body was considered to be a machine, while the personality was considered to be the soul. Descartes described the human being as a 'spirit in

a machine'. However, after Descartes came new times and new thoughts. Metaphysical materialism denied that human beings have a soul, and as a result, human beings were assumed to consist only of the body, the physical. This materialistic view leads to the demotion of human beings into a purely physical being without a soul. This view thus implies that human beings are like all other beings in the cosmos: advanced animals with the qualities given us by evolution. It also implies that our cognitive and mental abilities derive from matter. Even our thoughts and ideas are considered to have a materialistic cause, and a metaphysical reality is denied. However, if atheism were true, we would not have any way of thinking rationally; we would simply be moist robots determined by random physical reactions.

Thus, this dualism is the main difference between animals and humans – man consists of both a mind and a body. The well-known atheist, Richard Dawkins believes our consciousness is an illusion. However, our intellect - our ability to think abstractly - is non-physical and belongs to the mental part of our reality.

The most difficult question in modern neuroscience and philosophy is 'what is consciousness?' Our consciousness consists of subjective sensations and personal experiences. We have the ability to see, hear, feel, smell, and taste. Moreover, human beings have the ability to experience themselves as a person - an 'ego' or 'I'. I have dreams and my dreams are mine; no one else knows them. The headache is mine; no one else has it. Those who see a beautiful sunset have an experience that is personal to them and which others cannot share at precisely the same level. No one else knows exactly what you experience in any situation. Many emotions we experience are simply our own, like beautiful music, or the sight and smell of a beautiful flower. Naturalism cannot explain these personal feelings we all have; they belong to the non-physical part of us. If human beings are defined solely as a physical objects, subjective experiences and other aspects of human thought become impossible to explain. This view, that human beings are purely physical, has been around so long we are all conditioned to believe it. The mental part of human beings is denied, as if it no longer exists. However, if mental attributes are no longer reckoned as part of human experience, then the possibility of explaining mental

experiences no longer exists. Materialism has no explanation for human consciousness. There is no consciousness in the universe or in dead matter, but consciousness is characteristic of animals and humans. Consciousness is a characteristic of life.

The dismissal of personality

A completely naturalistic view of life dismisses the existence of a first person, an "I". Nevertheless, I have a brain, even though I am not a brain. I have feelings, but I am not a feeling. I have thoughts, but I am not a thought. I have an opinion, but I am not an opinion. Who is thinking? Who is it that feels? Who has an opinion? We have to understand that we cannot escape a first person, an ego. We consist of physics and chemistry, but physics and chemistry have no identity. A personality does have identity, and that identity is constituted by the soul. I am the same as the soul. The soul is thus non-physical. Atheists do not accept a non-physical reality, but they are unable to reject 'I'. In response to this, they choose to say that our consciousness and our sense of being an 'I' are illusions. But when a worldview requires common sense to be set aside, and our reality is described as illusion, I construe this to indicate that atheism and naturalism are bankrupt philosophies. The thing that sets human beings apart is that they can set specific goals. We can plan to carry out a project, and we can think through all the details that need to be in place so that we can implement our plan. Then we run into another problem: What causes our thoughts to revolve around something? A thought is about a particular thing,

The famous atheist Richard Dawkins is one of those who claim our consciousness is an illusion.

but if a thought is just a product of what is happening in the brain, how can a thought in our brain be about a car that is not in the brain? This phenomenon, that thoughts are about something, is what philosophers call 'intent', and intentionality constitutes the very essence of thinking.

What distinguishes thoughts from physical things is that thoughts are always about something, whereas a physical thing like a stone, just exists. Naturalism is totally devoid of intention and has no convincing scientific explanation why we are equipped with the ability to plan to achieve a concrete goal. We know that intentionality exists, and that it can construct completely unique phenomena that cannot be expected to exist without such intentionality. These phenomena also bear the touch of expediency, unlike anything purely natural causes can accomplish. Intentionality is thus a massive stumbling block for materialism.

We might wonder how can nerve cells decide on one thing rather than another. For more than 100 years, materialists have struggled to explain how a thought in the physical brain can be about something specific. But then, human consciousness cannot be explained if the soul is defined out of existence. No mental relationship can be explained when mental aspects are removed from our understanding of human beings. We all have the ability to make choices. Everyday life would be completely impossible to navigate if we could not make choices. Naturalism struggles to explain that we have free will to make our own conscious choices, since it believes that completely random central nervous processes determine our behavior. Naturalism must deny we have free will, because it claims humans are predetermined to act in one particular way, but it would be impossible to live in our society if we were not responsible for the choices we make. Our legal system would collapse if we could blame our genes if we committed a crime. A logical consequence of naturalism is that human beings are determined and therefore have no free will. Materialism also rejects the existence of free will, but if we have no free will, then there are no moral arguments against any kind of human behavior.

Naturalism believes our consciousness and our senses are products of brain activity and are thus purely physical phenomena, i.e the explanation for a thought in our head is purely naturalistic. But how can nerve cells decide one thing rather than another? Nerve cells cannot make decisions,

only a personality can do that. There are no known natural laws that can cause a nerve impulse. Then, according to naturalism, they must rely on random physical-chemical processes. A philosopher, Alvin Plantinga, has studied this issue. His conclusion is concise and clear – that naturalism is contradictory and self-destructive. Naturalism argues that human beings are the result of an unguided evolutionary process lacking any plan. Evolution leads to increased fitness, which means that only changes that lead to increased survival count. Evolution does not take into account matters that have implications for truth and logic, and leads to us not knowing if what we believe at any moment is the truth. Naturalism is not able to form nerve impulses that we can know with certainty are the truth. Therefore, we also cannot know if naturalism is true.

It is also difficult to offer a naturalistic explanation for reason, our ability to act rationally. C.S. Lewis puts it this way:[121] 'If reason is entirely dependent on the brain, and the brain on biochemistry, and biochemistry on a meaningless stream of atoms, then I can't understand how the thoughts of such reason should mean more than the sound of wind blowing through the trees'. Reason assumes that we understand logic, mathematics and causal mechanisms. Reason also assumes that we can distinguish between sensible and unreasonable thoughts, but naturalists believe that human reason derives from human nature, and that human nature stems from matter.

Atheism cannot explain a logical series of thought

When we talk, think or write down our thoughts, there must be a continuous series of thoughts in our minds. If we analyze this situation from a naturalistic perspective, we will find that naturalism has no tenable explanation why we can have a persistent series of thoughts. Our consciousness is always busy with something. When our mind is in wakeful state, there is not a second when it is not active. Any thought in a series of thoughts is related to the thought we have just had, and to the thought that follows. Such thoughts are able to initiate new inventions, they are creative in one way or another. They are the reason why books are written, works of art are created, and why humanity has increased its knowledge and insight.

What does naturalism say about the cause of such thoughts? We do

not know how thoughts can occur in our brains, nor how our consciousness can distinguish our thoughts. Naturalism advocates that our thoughts are the result of random physical-chemical reactions in nerve cells. Nevertheless, in order for these reactions to make a logical sense, they must be specified so that they give this precise meaning, and nothing else. Then in order for the next thought not to be identical to the previous one, the molecular reaction that gives a new thought must differ from the previous reaction. To get a new thought, the physical-chemical nerve reactions cannot be identical, they have to be different. Naturalism is totally devoid of explanations for how this can happen. The strange thing is that the cultural elite of the western world accepts that this view represents the truth. This elite believes that our thoughts are the result of the physical brain and that they do not have a metaphysical cause. If we deny that we are conscious creatures, the materialist must deny the existence of abstract concepts. Materialism as an ideology does not have enough strong points to be able to explain non-physical abstract concepts, in fact materialism is in itself an abstract concept. Apes do not seem to be able to produce abstract thoughts or create anything new. Our consciousness has no bearing on reproduction and is therefore difficult to explain using ideas pertaining to naturalistic evolution.

An atheist philosopher[122] once said that 'We never have direct access to our thoughts. There is no first-person point of view. Our access to our own thoughts is as indirect and erroneous as our access to other people's thoughts. We have no privileged access to our own consciousness. If our thoughts make the right sense of our actions, our words, our lives, then we can never be completely sure of what we say or do, or for that matter, what we think and why we think so. Not only do we not have souls, but I think that contemporary, cognitive neuroscience suggests that we don't even have selves'. Nonetheless, it is clear that we do have access to our own thoughts. Our thoughts are our own, and one person can never know what another person is thinking. My thoughts may be erroneous, I may be wrong, but that does not mean that I do not have access to my own thoughts. It is something I myself experience in the first person. While this philosopher rejects that 'I' as an individual exists, he rejects what we all learned at school, that the first person is 'I'. A point of view expresses

a person's opinion, and is thus a confirmation that a first person exists. We do not always know if our thoughts are right, but we know we are thinking about something.

If a person went to her doctor and complained that she did not have access to her own thoughts, she would be referred to a psychiatrist for treatment. But if you are an academic researcher who thinks such things, you are likely to be granted a professorship! Even entrenched naturalists realize that the moment they leave their office, they cannot live according to their philosophy. When they return home to their partner and children, they must make a number of conscious choices to be able to lead a normal social life. This means their philosophy is on a collision course with actual reality. This proves their philosophy and worldview are erroneous. It makes no sense at all to have a worldview we cannot live by.

Recently, there has been a lot of talk about gender and personality. We see people on TV who believe they were born in the wrong body. They perceive their 'I' as located in the wrong place. Such people prove that our 'I' is not physical. The 'I' is separate from the physical. These statements are best suited to the fact that we consist of a physical part and a non-physical part. Jerry Coyne, a well-known atheist scientist and writer, says that our sense of being ourselves is a neuronal illusion.[123-125] The late Francis Crick, a molecular biologist, said[126], 'You, your joys and your sorrows, your memories and ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules. You are no more than the collection of some neurons.' Thus, for many people, faith, ambition and will become illusions. If our reason is a byproduct of evolution, then we cannot trust it. However, our will, with the freedom to choose, is something we ourselves experience every waking minute a day.

A highly-respected atheist professor of philosophy, Thomas Nagel, stated that modern evolutionary biology, a physical theory, cannot account for consciousness[127]. This represents a major setback for evolutionary theory. According to Nagel, evolution provides a justification for human characteristics and capacities that is not reliable or trustworthy, thereby undermining itself. Evolutionary theory weakens the authority of our senses, and means that we should not take any of our convictions

seriously, nor the scientific worldview on which evolution itself depends. Therefore, reason cannot be used to demonstrate that Darwinism is true. Nagel declares we have to rely more on common sense and what we cannot explain, than on what Darwinian theory entails. Therefore, we see that a highly recognized atheist professor of philosophy rejects the notion that evolution can explain our consciousness and personality.

Thinking starts in the human mind. Where does this mind come from? Why can we trust the human mind? The Christian faith says that since we are created in God's image, we can trust our minds and our senses. But then again, if our thinking denies its basis in creation, the basis for rational thinking disappears. Modern people believe they show wisdom by rejecting God. Instead, they assume naturalistic evolution can explain human beings, the human mind and the ability to think logically. Evolution excludes the idea that a Creator played any role in creation. According to evolution, human beings are the result of a blind and aimless naturalistic process, and that human existence was not planned, but is solely the consequence of a series of coincidences. This is what modern human beings define as a scientific view of existence. This represents the modern view of rationality and reason, and the price for not accepting this definition of science can be exclusion from 'good company'.

The dominant view of our time is that only secular thinking can be considered rational. Nevertheless, avoiding religious conviction can be hard, especially in relation to the major questions pertaining to the beginning of everything, but also in relation to ethical issues. When God is considered to be an idea in a person's thoughts, rather than a reality, God suddenly has no place in the public domain. When such a view constitutes a basal principle in a society, common sense and science become the source of the rational construct on which society is built, and the secular philosophies which rest on these principles become the standards for ethics and justice.

Summary

- Naturalism cannot demonstrate that our consciousness stems from the matter. Matter is not personal, moral, subjective or mental.

- Evolution cannot explain consciousness.
- The brain, which consists of matter, cannot produce thoughts. Thoughts are different from physical objects. We cannot locate, weigh, measure or color thoughts, as we can physical objects.
- Our reality does not consist solely of physical conditions. We cannot deny subjective experiences. Naturalism cannot explain why we find a rose beautiful or why we think it smells wonderful. Naturalism cannot refute that we are people with an 'I'.
- Free will is an aspect of our reality that cannot be denied. Naturalism, however, cannot explain free will. Staunch naturalists then say that free will is an illusion.

Language and Communication

Human beings have the ability to communicate using language. This is unique to man. No animals have anything like it. Language and understanding of language separate us from animals in a crucial way. Language is the very essence of the concept of intelligence. Many animals have the physiological structures for making words, but they lack speech. They can express feelings, but not words. We can teach a dog to obey the word 'sit', but it cannot understand the same word used in another context, such as 'we can sit for a while'. Animals think only in concrete terms. They cannot think abstractly. A dog can communicate by barking, wagging its tail, kissing you. However, they cannot express anything abstract. Language is needed to express abstract thoughts. This ability is unique to man.

Truth is one of the most important ingredients in any language. It is not possible to have a language that lacks a real understanding of truth. Language is universal for *homo sapiens*. All ethnic groups, tribes and peoples have languages. Apes lack language, nor can they be trained to understand language even with intensive training. This also applies to dolphins. From what I've read, it seems that scientists are now investigating whether the elephant might be able to learn language. Language and understanding of language represent a very big problem for naturalism.

Human beings are born with the ability to learn and understand

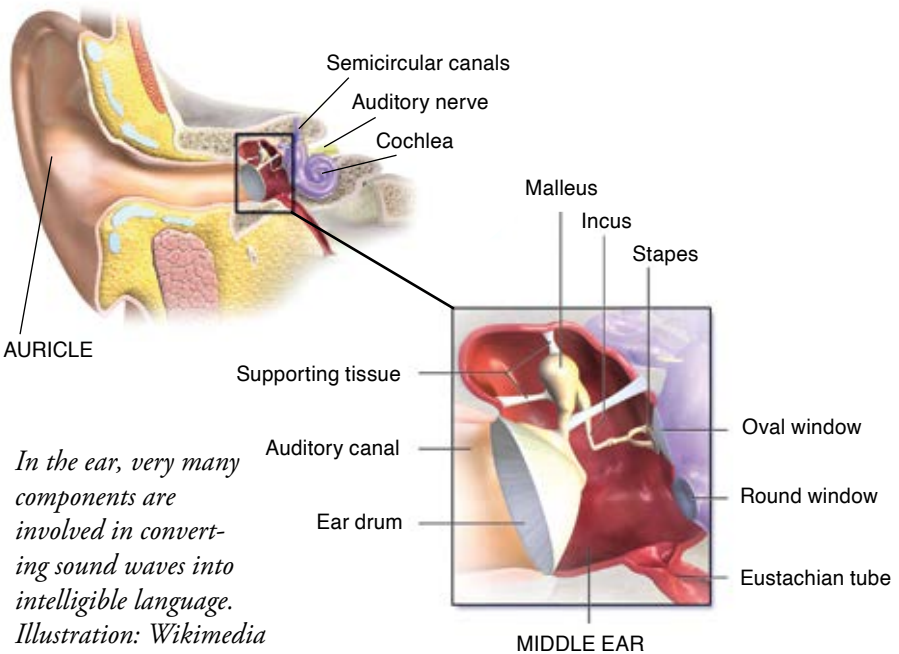
language. The human brain has a part called Broca's Area, which controls speech production. Even by the age two to three years, children start to understand language. The toddler learns words, such as 'mom' and 'dad', one after another. No matter how difficult the grammar of its mother tongue, a child has no difficulty learning it. By the age of five, a child has mastered most of the grammatical rules of its mother tongue, and teenagers learn new words at an amazing rate.

Human beings are characterized by the ability to learn a language and communicate verbally. We can also think philosophically, investigate scientifically, undertake mathematics, perform music, and have the ability for abstract thinking.

The human language consists of both symbols and codes. People are able to understand that similar words — such as 'bat' — can have different meanings depending on the context (a flying mammal or a wooden implement used for ball games). This is a unique human trait. While animals can run faster, be stronger, smell better, see more, we are superior to all animals, due to our intellect, thinking and language. Even prominent evolutionists admit there is no evolutionary explanation for how language has come into being.

The many stages of a thought

What is communication? It is exchange of thoughts, ideas and meaning. When two people communicate, what one of them is thinking is transferred to the other. In other words, a thought or meaning arises in one person's mind or consciousness, this thought is then transferred to the center for speech in the brain. Once there, the idea is transformed into a *nerve impulse* and sent to the speech organs, which consist of the lips, teeth, alveolar ridge, hard palate, velum (soft palate), uvula, glottis and various parts of the tongue. The thought is then turned into a multitude of *muscle contractions*. Air from the lungs flows past the vocal cords and forms sound waves that are molded by the oral cavity and lips and make the sounds characteristic of language, sounds that no monkey can mimic. In other words, the speech organ turns the thought into *airwaves*. These sound waves pass through the ear canal of the person with whom the speaker is communicating and hit the tympanic membrane, which then



In the ear, very many components are involved in converting sound waves into intelligible language. Illustration: Wikimedia

begins to vibrate. The thought is now transformed into *vibrations*. These vibrations are transferred to three small bones in the middle ear, and the thought is transformed into *mechanistic movement* in these small bones. The innermost bone is associated with an opening in a snail-like formation (called the cochlea) which contains fluid. This changes the thought once more, turning it into *waves and currents* in this liquid. Inside the cochlea are thin hairs that make up the nerve receptors for hearing. Different hair cells respond to the specific sound frequencies, and are stimulated so that the *hair cells move* in a certain way depending on the frequency of sound. Signals from these hair cells are converted into *nerve impulses* that run along in the vestibulocochlear nerve (auditory vestibular nerve) to the brain. The nerve impulses end up in the brain's hearing center, which interprets the signals it receives. In debates, for example, about evolution versus creation, thoughts and opinions will be formed continuously and rapidly, and the brain, speech organ and hearing organs will be activated continually. In a debate, you cannot hesitate, because that is interpreted as uncertainty.

I am sure you agree that the system that causes a thought in the brain

of one human being to be transferred to the brain in another human in such a way that the recipient understands what the sender wants to convey is a very well-developed and very advanced system. Personally, I cannot understand how a system consisting of such advanced engineering could have been made by materialistic mechanisms, since materialism denies that there are intelligent causes in our reality. Such a system simply cannot be made by a series of random events, but must be the result of what Sir Fred Hoyle called a 'super intellect'[128]. The system carries all signs of being constructed. And that it would have required an intelligence to have constructed it. A system with such advanced engineering simply cannot create itself, that would be impossible.

The fight for the Christian Worldview

We have discussed and defined the term 'worldview' on page 51. To understand what we call a Christian worldview, we need to have a specific historical overview and specific knowledge. Greek philosophy has had a very big influence on our thinking. The vast majority of us have heard of names such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. The Greek philosophers believed that the universe was eternal, that it consisted of matter, and that this matter was given form by the gods. This form consisted of the True, the Beautiful and the Good. Therefore, Plato believed that form was superior to matter, since matter was characterized by evil and of chaos. The Greek philosophers thus divided our reality into two spheres, one for matter and one for the form - the spiritual. Augustine, one of the Church Fathers, adopted Plato's view, and he believed God created in two phases. First, he created the exalted forms, then he created matter.

Augustine also set form higher than matter. Nancy Pearcey writes that this division of creation has had a devastating effect on the way we think[129], by giving the impression that the contemplative was most important, and that the material meant less. This led to the view that an ascetic way of life was considered significant and should be preferred, and this laid the foundation for monastic life.

In the 13th century, these thoughts were revised by another of the Church Fathers, Thomas of Aquinas. He considered matter or nature to

have been created by God, and therefore, was not the origin of evil Plato had considered it to be. On the other hand, Thomas of Aquinas considered physical nature to be purposeful and that what happened within nature followed a built-in plan and order. However, this was a dangerous thought, since it implied that nature had the ability to function by itself without God's intervention and that, in a way, nature was not dependent on God. Aquinas retained the concept of the duality of reality: the supernatural contained God's grace and blessing, and in the natural, the world worked more or less autonomously.

This duality of reality has persisted as a concept. The great apologist, Francis Schaeffer, compared this duality to a two-story house. On the ground floor, things are safe and tangible, i.e. scientific. On the second floor, we find faith, religion, values and preferences. The challenge to Christian faith is that secular culture has removed God from 'the ground floor'. If we divide our reality in two, and say that science and facts exist in one part, and that religious beliefs are in the other part, the implication

The main result of the Enlightment was that scientific truth was located in the ground floor of Schaeffers's house. God was relegated to the second floor.

In the present time there is little place for God even in the second floor. God is then translocated to a small place in the attic.

is that we assume religion has nothing to do with factual knowledge, and that factual knowledge and religious beliefs belong in different spheres. This makes it difficult to preach Christian faith as a truth, at least not as the Truth with a capital 'T'. When faith confronts science in the media and in other debates in this way, then faith, by definition, will lose. The truth appeals to people. When Truth is set up in opposition to the Christian faith, which is considered more like superstition, then most people will not find assuming a Christian view of life as particularly attractive. In our culture, truth, by definition, is only found on the 'ground floor'. Religious faith is not presented as objective truth. This is how the whole Western world thinks today.

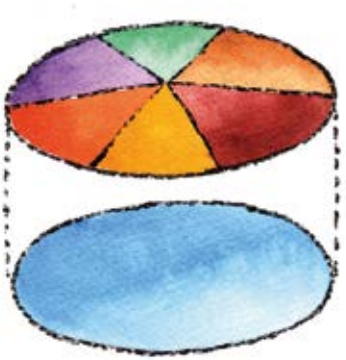
In our discussion of naturalism, we explained that the prevailing view of science excludes God from having anything to do with science. God, by definition, has been removed from science. We need to be aware there is no scientific evidence that disproves the existence of God. Let me say this in another way: the powerful ideologies of atheism and naturalism require God to be rejected and his existence denied.

The serious aspect of this issue is that Christendom voluntarily agreed that God be removed from the 'ground floor'. Christendom did not put up a fight to keep God in science, it simply surrendered its weapons. The main reason this happened was that Christians considered the doctrine of evolution to be true science. Consequently, this has led to us living in a secular culture. Those who are younger and born at a time when the secular outlook on life prevails, do not know what it was like before secular thoughts were as strong as they are today. Ordinary Christian people may have difficulty understanding they live in a secular culture, which makes it difficult to avoid being characterized and influenced by this culture. This not only applies to individuals, but also churches and denominations.

If we imagine reality as a circle, this circle will be divided into segments: A segment for work, one for education, one for family and child rearing, one for hobbies, one for various social activities, one for political activity, one for entertainment, and so on. The size of the segment for Christian faith and church life will vary due to various factors. In a secular world, this segment could reduce in size quickly, and, worst

The circle in the middle has a homogenous blue color, symbolizing that the Christian faith influences a person's entire reality. The circle to the left symbolizes the situation when science and politics are defined to be secular. The illustration to the right indicates the situation when faith is restricted to two hours on Sundays. In the remaining part of the week one lives as all other people, there being no difference between a Christian and a non-Christian.

case scenario, represent only a couple of hours on a Sunday. Ideally, the whole circle would be a basic color that we could call 'Christian', and that 'Christian color' would thus characterize all our activities. The danger is that when we live in a secular culture this 'Christian color' can be confined to a very small segment of our lives. Christianity is something far more than a private personal belief. Some Christians even argue that Christian faith should not characterize the segment designated to politics. That must be fundamentally wrong. Politics do not determine what we believe and prioritize. On the contrary, our opinions characterize politics, and if our opinions are influenced by a secular culture, politics will be too. We need to have a genuine understanding that being a Christian applies 24/7/365. That means 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year.



This illustration aims to demonstrate that for a Christian all segments of reality, all life, have to be founded on a Christian worldview. All activities are marked by the Christian faith.

Christian faith should not only affect our hearts, but also our

minds. Modern Christianity places a lot of emphasis on emotions. Contemporary Christian music is loud, and similar in style to contemporary secular music. If we do not give the next generation of believers a faith that affects the mind– their thought and intellect - it could lead to a large part of Christian youth losing faith in the face of secular culture when they leave home and live independently. If young people have a Christian faith that is essentially emotional, they will probably keep their faith only as long as it makes them happy. As soon as they face a serious crisis, their faith will easily dissipate. We must equip our young people with an understanding of apologetics, which will give them a chance of surviving in a culture steeped in secularism, atheism, relativism and postmodern thoughts. Facing modern culture can easily destroy a person´s faith. From an early age, our education system aims to teach students what matters in life. Knowledge is cumulative, and the young are taught by schools and through the influence of adults. Education today takes many years. Many people are in full time education until the age of 25, and sometimes longer. How can we then think that, in a few hours, debate, articles, and books can get people to change a view that they have developed over many years via enormous external influences? By the time they are 18 years old, young people have been trained to understand what consensus requires. If school neglects their mission to teach students critical thinking, most of them will automatically believe what they are taught. Schools must teach students how to think, and not just what to think. This would give them the necessary equipment to distinguish a good argument from a bad argument.

A large part of schooling is spent on teaching young people what the world is like and why it is the way it is. Schools spend 12 years teaching students facts and theories, the history of their nation, about people who have excelled in one way or another, and about what is right and wrong. Nevertheless, students hardly learn how knowledge is formed, how to seek truth, or make a critical assessment. Therefore, it may seem impossible to create an environment where they can discuss matters based on philosophical principles. Students become influenced by a view of life that most of them will have difficulty relinquishing. A mind that has been subjected to one particular influence for years will

find difficulty in accommodating opposing views. Discussing statements about metaphysical truth is no longer in fashion, and people are not convinced by philosophical claims. Only science seems to count. People are not taught adequately in the areas of philosophy and logic, and they may lack the ability to think critically and assess an argument. What challenges does the Christian faith face today? The main challenge is presented by powerful forces that want to rid society of the Christian faith. These forces assert themselves in the media, i.e. in newspapers, on TV and on the radio. Many websites have been set up by people with an agenda to discredit God and the Christian faith. We need to oppose these destructive forces by knowing what it means to be a Christian. We must present a Christian worldview, because Christianity is more than a religious belief. Christianity is the whole Truth.

How can we make Christians be aware of their own worldview? How can young people be taught to assess what is true and right? The first step consists of making young people aware of what makes up a Christian worldview. They need to be trained to understand the elements that constitute a worldview, and they need to know about the most common secular worldviews, so that they are able to make their own assessments. They also need to be trained to assess the truthfulness of various statements. When they have been trained to analyze and assess the thoughts and ideas to which they are exposed, then they will be able to assess whether a film or a book has an underlying agenda. They must learn to discern truth from untruth, and right from wrong. This is teaching that young people should get at home, in church and at various youth meetings. Experience shows that by reading good literature, young people can equip themselves to resist the pressures of secular culture. Discussing new thoughts and ideas to see if they build up or negate to a Christian view is also a good habit to cultivate. Moreover, it is important to learn to ask the right questions in a discussion, or when talking to others. Such questions include: What do you mean by that? How do you know that's true? What if you are wrong? Besides, it is always important to ensure we know what certain words and expressions actually mean. Finding definitions will help avoid misunderstandings.

A worldview contains the following elements:

1. Origin. Where does everything come from?
2. Identity. What does it mean to be human?
3. Opinion. What is the purpose of being a human being?
4. Morality and ethics. Who defines what is right and wrong?
5. What is wrong in the world, and how can it be healed?
6. Fate. What happens when we die?

A brief summary: Our culture has removed God from the 'ground floor' of our house and relegated him to the 'second floor'. However, if we fill the second floor with different constructions of thought, such as skepticism, relativism, secular humanism, postmodernism, atheism – then there will not be much room left for God on the second floor either. Our task will then be to reintroduce God on both floors of our house. This is a spiritual struggle, and a spiritual struggle must be fought by spiritual means. Nonetheless, this is also a battle for the mind that must be fought by intellectual means. According to Paul's Letter to the Ephesians spiritual means are: truth, righteousness, the Christian gospel, faith, salvation, the Word of God, perseverance in prayer and intercession. Our intellectual struggle consists of tearing down all the constructions of thought that have been raised against the knowledge of God. We are to take every thought to captive in obedience to Christ. (2 Cor. 10:5). 'Knowledge of God' implies that we must also use our mental and intellectual faculties in this struggle. It means that our thoughts should give us authentic, true knowledge of God. This is called 'working on your salvation', so we need to spend time and effort to gain a robust and durable Christian faith. The powerful spiritual struggle we face in our time also makes it necessary for congregations to have a healthy grasp of Christian apologetics.

One strategy for Christianizing society - if one can use such an expression - is to have dedicated Christians in positions of leadership. A Christian nation needs highly qualified Christians at all levels of society and in all professions. We need Christian politicians, economists, lawyers, doctors, scientists, and philosophers, but also ordinary workers in the various key roles in society. Contemporary society needs people who understand in their hearts and in their heads that God has created both

the first and second floors in Schaeffer's house. God is the center. This means following God´s will for life and learning, and standing firm in opposition to the secular humanist's atheistic worldview and their understanding of the world.

Christian young people may have been advised to study theology to qualify to serve in the church and undertake parish work. Or they may have been encouraged to study politics so they can work towards ensuring faith changes society. We have been blind to the fact that universities and higher education institutions give birth to, and develop and foster the ideas and thoughts that will shape society and politics. We need Christians to be those who create concepts and ideas. It is a misconception to think politics shape ideas. It's the opposite. Ideas determine the program and election promises of political parties. The social structures that have authority present the ideas we listen to, the ideas that have impact. The real power belongs to those who have the power to decide what is right and best. Therefore, dedicated Christians need to obtain academic qualifications. Not so many years ago, many teachers in the public schools had a Christian outlook on life. Today, a large proportion of teachers have a secular outlook on life. Regaining what has been lost seems like an insurmountable task, however, if you have a clear understanding that a Christian worldview is the right view, and the best view, you will be able to gain the strength to fight in this spiritual battle.

The society consists of seven main areas:

- Religion/Faith
- Family
- Politics/Legislation
- Education
- Arts/Entertainment
- Business/Economy
- Media

We live in a culture where religion and faith are marginalized, and have little or no influence on the six other spheres of interest. What happens

Through centuries the Christian faith has influenced all parts of life. (The upper line of the illustration). In our time faith has been isolated, so its possibility to influence the other sectors of life has been marginalized. (The lower part of the figure).

in these spheres shapes our culture, and this culture in turn shapes us. It is important to have qualified Christians within all these sectors, so that the Christian faith can influence the entire society. The forces that control media, entertainment and education get the possibility to significantly influence the youth.

The school system needs to be changed and textbooks need to be rewritten, so that students are not indoctrinated in a materialistic outlook of life. Alternative theories need to be presented when it comes to difficult and sensitive topics, such as evolution. If several theories exist with regard to an issue, students must be able to hear about them all, so they have the freedom and opportunity to consider and evaluate the different views before they make up their own minds. The church and the family home are the two most important institutions when it comes to equipping the young against the many secular worldviews that exist today. This is a formidable task requiring great effort. Pastors and preachers need to set aside time to learn basic apologetics. This ought to be a high priority. Individual congregations should have their own study groups so that people can be trained to understand the nature of Christianity, so that as many as possible are trained to be able to defend their faith.

Those growing up today face an evolutionary view of life, presented in a cunning and compelling way, at almost every turn. Some call this

imperialist Darwinism. Therefore, homes and churches must be equipped to offer young people knowledge of the alternatives to evolution. Everyone — not just the young ones —need to understand that hardline Darwinism leads to the following conclusions:

- There is no life after death
- There is no foundation for ethics and morality
- There is no higher meaning in life
- Human beings have no free will

We must understand that evolution as it is taught today is an ideology that takes the liberty of dressing its arguments in a scientific language to make it sound convincing.

*

One of the most serious things of our time is that truth is denied. Oxford Dictionaries chose the adjective 'post-truth' as the word that characterized 2016. After 2016, we have no truth. This raises the need for serious scrutiny. We now live in a culture characterized by confusion, which is why some people also call it 'the culture of confusion'. The word 'fake news' is also a new thing. It means that much information is presented as truth by various media although they are aware that they are presenting an untruth. When an issue has multiple sides, only one side is presented. Usually the side that is politically correct is preferred, even if it is not always the truth. As we live in a time when autonomy is emphasized, personal preferences can also override the truth. This autonomy is one of the main pillars of today's culture in that people listen to their own 'I'. Postmodernism rejects objective truth, while people today may reject the truth, even though they acknowledge that actual truth exists. This means that modern human beings tend to deny facts and evidence if these do not fit with the view they hold. Facts and evidence are then rejected by using words such as 'intolerance', 'insult', 'discrimination' and 'oppression'. When this happens, people lose the ability to be rational individuals, because reason is lost when more emphasis is placed on emotions than facts. Autonomy is also the basis for rejecting moral rules, since morality is also something

people now define for themselves. Some use this new mind-set to free themselves from the limitations tradition and morality can impose on us. The danger is that this mind-set can infect large sections of society. If this mind-set influences pastors and others with whom we associate integrity and honesty, this can be bad, as Christians should be 'in the world, but not of the world'. However, these days this distinction is easily erased.

A special feature of a culture characterized by confusion is that it speaks little about responsibility and duties, rather we hear a lot about peoples' rights. The word freedom can be abused in different ways. Some people think that freedom allows them to do what they want. Freedom is then likened to autonomy, but freedom has its limitations and must be properly defined. The more powerful the engine in a car, the better the brakes required. The same goes for society. The greater the freedom, the clearer the responsibility and the obligation required from its members. We need to distinguish between 'freedom from' and 'freedom to', but if we define 'freedom from' entirely as freedom from limitations and interference from others, then this is the same as autonomy. 'Freedom to' is all we can do to make life better for others rather than ourselves. When more people come together for a good cause, there is almost no limit to what they can accomplish. As Christians, we must always realize that freedom from sin is the ultimate freedom.

Human beings are created in the image of God, and as such, have an inherent value. Those who authored the American Declaration of Independence used the words: '… all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness'.[130] This ideal of freedom goes against the prevailing cultural elite. Today, there are forces that want to grade the importance and value of individuals, grading people on a scale relating to their utility. As a result, some people will be considered useless to society, and such 'useless people' do not have the same right to life as the useful ones. People do not recognize that we are all equal and valuable, and according to Christian belief, we are all equal before God. Professor Singer is known for his statement: 'The notion that human life is sacred just because it is human is medieval'.[131] 'Giving preference to the life of a being simply because that belongs to our own race will put us in

the same position as racists who give benefits to those who are members of their race'.[132] Singer thus puts human beings in the same category as animals, and he has set a 28-day period within which to decide if new-born babies should be considered as a person. He suggests that during these four weeks, parents can decide whether their new-born child will live. He also said that a foetus or child with Down Syndrome has no more right to live than a pig and that they are 'human-refuse'. He believes that such a child will be a burden to the parents and that they should be freed from it. People put themselves in the place of God when they weigh up another person's right to live. Singer is not alone in having an important position in society and having such dehumanizing thoughts.

When we talk about the human situation in our time, it is natural to focus our attention on the image of human beings presented to us by the prevailing culture. A suitable description for this culture is 'culture of confusion' This confusion is so pronounced that it cannot be the front-runner for a long time to come, but needs to be replaced by a culture that is based on the fact we are rational individuals, that we are either man or woman, and that not all forms of cohabitation are equal. We need to put an emphasis on the care of children, ensuring all the factors pertaining to their healthy development, both physical and mental, are in place. There needs to be a ban on exposing children and young people to Queer Theory. A culture of chaos and confusion regarding essential aspects of life must be replaced by a worldview characterized by Christian values. Knowing that the number of young people struggling with their sexual identity is increasing drastically is incredibly painful. These young people are unlikely to have an easy life and the blame for this must be borne by the human race itself. The Creator has embedded certain rules of life in the human heart, and we do not break those rules without consequences. There is nothing wrong with human nature, but the time we live in is pathogenic. The cultural elite will not be willing to admit this, because the implications would involve giving up their relativism, nihilism, naturalism and atheism. At this time of confusion, Christians need to be warm-hearted people who can help those who are struggling, while remaining true to their convictions.

Being a Christian in a chaotic culture can be difficult and places great

demands on the believer. We need to make sure we do not become like this culture, but we are all influenced by it to some degree since we cannot avoid being influenced by the culture we are living in. One hazard is that Christians adapt to avoid conflict, and we see this expressed by the Bible being interpreted in a way that accommodates this adaptation. For the sake of tolerance, believers can fall prey to avoiding the clarification of what Christian doctrine and Christian morals say about various issues. The desire to be tolerant can be so strong that believers often giving up a Christian understanding in a specific situation e.g. abortion, homosexuality, gender identity, cohabitation and sexuality. The other danger is that believers risk describing those they disagree with in a negative way. Love - *agape* - then disappears, as does human compassion. However, we never win people to Christian faith by being harsh, because then we become unsympathetic. As a rule, we need to try not to discuss other people negatively. The new moral code of our time says that everyone should be able to think and believe what they think is right, even if it is not compatible with the Bible. In other words, modern human beings have no external rules or norms to which they need comply. In such a situation, a Christian may react negatively and possibly condemningly towards people who believe something with which they disagree. Christians often make angry intransigent statements on various social media platforms, but a Christian should always disagree in a friendly and educated way. We need to remember that we are all sinners in the eyes of God, and that means no one can consider themselves superior to other people. We even need to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. Solomon says in the Proverbs (29:11) that 'Fools give full vent to their rage, but the wise bring calm in the end'. These words apply to each of us, not just everyone else.

I need to repeat the seriousness of the situation in which we have arrived, because we now have a revolution on our hands that threatens all the basic values upon which western civilization has been based for 2,000 years. This moral revolution is the strongest attack the Christian faith has experienced in its history, and concerns the very authority of the Bible, and its clear statements about the moral structure of a society. The Pride movement has a destructive view of gender, sexual identity, family and cohabitation, and it has great political influence. Community

leaders have no rational reason to embrace their message. As no rational reasons exist, we need to realize that their motives are irrational. This is part of a spiritual struggle. This is a rebellion against Christian moral norms, and therefore, a rebellion against the Bible and against the God of the Bible. This struggle aims to rid society of the Christian faith and is a campaign against the Christian faith. We are facing a radical redefinition of marriage and family that includes a redefinition of love, freedom, and what is right and wrong. Life itself is being redefined. Over the course of a few years, governments of many countries have capitulated to this revolution. It can be compared to a tsunami, in that we hardly notice a tsunami before it reaches land, and then it quickly destroys everything in its path. The attack on the family is particularly serious and will deprive many children of the prospect of living in a family that includes a mother and a father, and likely cause many mental health problems for children and adolescents.

The norms pertaining to basic values are being turned on their heads. In the near future, we could expect that those who stand for the old, classic view of morality, marriage, cohabitation and gender will be regarded as intolerant, abusive, judgmental and unloving. Being considered oppressive is one of the most serious crimes of our time, and maybe the time will come when people who have a traditional understanding of morality and cohabitation actually violate the law. Even now, some people have found it hard to get a job because they do not have a 'modern view'.

This new age will confront ordinary Christians with problems they will have trouble meeting, because the situation will be completely new to them. You can already become unpopular just by being a Christian. Many believers may feel it is too difficult to say what they think and believe, and conclude that the best thing is to be silent and anonymous. Then we are faced with two choices: either to be true to the Christian faith whatever the cost, or to adapt to the new times. That means choosing either the broad or the narrow way. Christians need to prepare for this kind of situation, and in this regard, it is particularly important to take care of our young generation.

Rod Dreher is an American conservative Christian author and societal debater who envisions the collapse of Western civilization. He is

alarmed by the major changes that have taken place in a very short time. The culture we live in could easily end up knowing nothing of Christian moral norms and in which biblical sexual morality is considered oppressive. Dreher believes that preaching moral commandments will lead to strong opposition to Christian beliefs and to the Christians who advocate these commandments. He envisions that Christians who remain true to their faith and argue for Christian morality may face great difficulties. Dreher believes Christians must build a 'Noah's ark' to get through the dark times he believes will come. He has written the book, *The Benedict Option*,[133] which derives its title from St. Benedict, who left the city of Rome and went out into the woods to seek God when the Roman Empire was about to perish. He became the founder of the Benedictine Order, a monastic order which was of great importance in the Dark Ages. The Benedictines spread the gospel to many European countries. Today we live in a culture that is opposed to Christian beliefs and ethics. We should not do as Benedict and isolate ourselves in monasteries, because we are created to live in the world and to be there as Christians. Dreher believes that our mission is to be a counterculture to the secular culture, but in order to survive with our faith intact in a culture of chaos and animosity towards Christianity, he argues that Christians must come together across confessional boundaries and build Christian communities. Dreher believes Christians must form associations and small groups that gather in homes, and that these groups will act as a 'Noah's ark'. There need to be Christian schools that teach young people about the Christian faith, its history and traditions. Dreher believes that educating young people in true Christianity is of the utmost importance. Today, young people in America are abandoning the Christian faith in greater numbers than ever before, and we need to demonstrate Christian unity that acts as a light in the darkness and be visible to the secular world. Christians must be a subculture in society, and this requires Christians to be different. If it becomes difficult to preach the gospel, Christians must preach it by being 'light and salt' (Matt. 5:13-14). They must see the needs of people in their neighbourhood. They must be friendly, kind, helpful and reach out to help. Such Christian goodness contributes far to making faith appear attractive

The best way to protect and maintain the Christian faith is to give the children a healthy, secure and Christian upbringing from early in life.

than do theoretical arguments. Our way of living needs to demonstrate our faith. We must 'walk the talk'.[134]

Dreher believes Christians must choose to be separate from the world so that they can still go out into the world and be that which Christ called them to be. He believes secular culture is so toxic and anti-Christian, that Christians will not be able to survive if they open their minds and thoughts to it, but that through prayer and devotion, faith can be maintained despite difficult times. Dreher believes this is a strategic retreat for those who are determined to be faithful to Christianity. He thinks Christians should, first and foremost, see it as their mission to work to preserve

faith, not the nation, and believes that Christian fellowship is more important than political activity. He also thinks that Christians must be willing to sacrifice something of themselves to help others, and that it is important to have close ties to friends, neighbors, and the congregation.

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In her book, *Finding Truth*,[135] Nancy Pearcey has provided us with a recipe for evaluating the various worldviews. Christianity is a worldview that faces competition from a number of other worldviews today. What they have in common is that they do not put God uppermost, but something in the created order. This created idol could be science, reason, or a political system etc. The main competitor to Christian faith today is secular humanism. The most significant choice we make in life revolves around what we define as the highest authority, and this choice determines all the personal choices each of us makes throughout our lives.

Pearcey has derived her ideas from the first chapter of the Romans, where Paul describes what happens when a person turns away from God. She gives us four threads to follow up when evaluating a worldview:

The first point deals with identifying the idol in the worldview. What is the surrogate for God? When we want to analyse life, we must have a starting point. If it is not God, it will be something in the created realm. Something in creation takes God's place. We should also note that the Bible sees idols as God's main adversaries, not atheism.

The second point deals with the reductionism related to the idol of the worldview. When we remove something, we perform a reduction. Idolatry always leads to something about people being reduced. People are characterized by a soul, free will, ability to think and choose. We all have consciousness. When these qualities are refuted and described as illusions, we have reductionism, a typical feature of secular worldviews.

In the third point, Pearcey advices us to investigate if the worldview in question can explain our reality. Is it true? Is it possible to live a normal life with the view of reality this idol has? If this view contradicts what we can recognize from God's general revelation, Creation itself, then the worldview is secular. Materialism, which is the prevailing view in science, denies we have free will. Materialism reduces man to a complex

biochemical machine. No machines have free will or can make choices. However, we could not live as human beings without free will or the ability to make personal choices. If materialists would acknowledge that human beings have free will, they would realize that human individuals are a personality that can only have been derived from another and higher personality.

The last point is about whether the statements made by a secular worldview also apply to that worldview itself. If this worldview cannot live up to the claim of truth it presents, that is proof that the worldview in question is wrong. Materialism believes that our thoughts and opinions are the product of random neurochemical processes in the brain, but we can never know if such random processes can tell us the truth. Therefore, we can never know if our thoughts are true - including the thoughts materialists have about materialism. Believing in materialism is therefore intellectual suicide, as it cannot justify its own statements.

Eliminative materialism is an extreme form of materialism. This view does not stop at denying certain aspects of our mental reality, but rejects the existence of mental reality at all. Eliminative materialism says our thoughts, beliefs, desires and wills, and our ability to choose, do not exist. They are merely expressions of illusions. Non-material things are denied, even consciousness is precluded, but eliminative materialism repudiates itself, as even an illusion is an experience in someone's consciousness.

Eliminative materialism also argues that free will is an illusion, and that all our actions are caused by unconscious physical conditions. Nevertheless, denying we have free will is contrary to ordinary people's common sense, consciousness and experience of their own personality. It is totally impossible for consciousness to come from dead matter. Physical conditions can all be experienced: we see that a rose has a particular colour, but the experience of recognizing the rose as beautiful and as smelling delightful is personal. Our personal subjective feelings are not accessible to others. Throughout history, all cultures have recognized the fact that human beings have free will, and are responsible for their own actions. A society would collapse if its population departed from this basic principle. Therefore, to deny free will is to oppose all human experience.

If we cannot live according to what a worldview considers a fact, then this proves the worldview is false. Materialists may find that their scientific views are incompatible with life in a family. People cannot regard their children as autonomous beings without consciousness and free will. Such a situation, when a person cannot live by their scientific principles, is called cognitive dissonance. The best example of cognitive dissonance is the conflict between free will and determinism. A consistent materialistic view of life means being of the opinion that random neurochemical processes in the brain determine all our thoughts, feelings and opinions. That means we are all destined, at all times, to do what random processes in the brain might decide. This is called determinism, which means that we are not masters of our own actions, but processes over which we ourselves have no control determine them. The natural sciences - naturalism, materialism, evolutionary theory - and materialistic philosophy repudiate that our thoughts, feelings and opinions are our own, and that the idea of having our own opinions is an illusion. Therefore, it is easy to agree with the philosopher, Thomas Johnson, who says that human life is a continuous struggle between God and Creation[136].

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After discussing many different worldviews and philosophical systems, there is one thing that strikes me: I feel that all these secular thought systems lack an understanding of wisdom. Wisdom is the ability to think and act on good judgment. The Proverbs of King Solomon refer to the wisdom that can give us a good life. Our reason has its origins in mind, and our knowledge comes from there too. Wisdom, however, includes both the brain and the heart; it is far more than human thoughts. The Book of Proverbs book recommends we seek wisdom. Wisdom adopts humility when dealing with big questions, and a mind that will receive correction and guidance. Wisdom adopts a religious perspective on life. The Book of Proverbs says that wisdom comes from God.

This chapter may seem alien to those with a non-European background, but what is discussed here could quickly become a reality in large urban areas of other cultures. There are now many cities with several million inhabitants across the globe, and here this way of life could

quickly become a reality. Rural cultures may, however, have an in-built protection against this development.

This book aims to defend a Christian worldview. So far, we have presented many ideas and thought systems that are on a collision course with Christian faith. When we discussed naturalism and materialism, we saw that that these two philosophical systems reject that nature has an intelligent cause. Naturalism believes that our whole reality can be explained in a physical way by naturalistic mechanisms that cause random reactions between matter and energy which are regulated by of the consistency of the laws of nature. So, now I would like to demonstrate that the conditions pertaining to our reality are best explained by intelligent causation.

Faith and science

The Origin of the Universe

The heavens declare the glory of God.
Psalm 19:1

Where does everything come from? We all wonder about that. Everything must have a cause; none of us know about anything that has come into being by itself. Even a paper clip has a maker. Other small things, like matches, pin sticks, dressmaking pins and drawing pins, must also have been made by someone. What about the universe we live in? Did someone make that? Right up until the late 20th century, science, and consequently, most people, believed that the universe was eternal and immutable; that it had always been there, and would exist forever without changing. Today we know that the universe was created at a distinct point in the distant past – scientists reckon that was about 13.8 billion years ago. The beginning of the universe has been named the 'Big Bang'. It is difficult to know the reason for a universe that has lasted for ever. A universe that has a beginning, an origin, is different. One of the laws of logic deals with cause - or rather, the correct term is 'causality'. The Law of Causality states that everything that has a beginning must have a cause for its beginning. So, things do not come into being of their own accord - a cause is required.

We could set up the following logical argument:

1. The universe has a beginning
2. All that has a beginning has a cause
3. The beginning of the universe must have a cause

In 1915, Albert Einstein, a very famous scientist, gave a series of lectures in which he presented his Theory of General Relativity for the first time. This theory is generally accepted as a proper theory, and it is arguing that nothing of a physical nature existed before the Big Bang. No matter, no space, no energy existed. Even time did not exist. What we call nature was made in the Big Bang. So, before the Big Bang, there was no nature. Therefore, the universe cannot have a natural cause, since nature did not exist; some kind of creative power was needed, as a universe simply cannot be made by itself. Therefore, the cause of the universe must be outside the universe. This cause or power was there before the universe came into being, and therefore, it cannot be limited by space, time or matter. In other words, this cause is intangible and supernatural. The late Sir Arthur Eddington, a British astronomer[137] said the beginning represents prohibitive problems if we do not agree it actually seems to be supernatural. So, it is rational, indeed sensible, to reckon on there being a supernatural dimension and a supernatural force in our reality.

Belgian priest, Georges Lemäitre,[138] was the first to understand that Einstein's theory indicated the universe has a beginning and was not eternal. Einstein's theory has been confirmed and is now considered a scientific fact. For nearly 100 years, we have known that the universe has a beginning. This gives rise to two possibilities: either the universe is created, or it came into being by itself for unknown reasons. The latter option implies that the universe came into being of its own accord completely at random. Atheists MUST believe this. Scientific facts forced even the most entrenched opponents of the Big Bang to accept that the universe actually has a beginning, to the despair of those who consider the advances of science to be tantamount to advances for atheism. Famous scientists can end up saying some strange things in their fight for atheism. In 1989, John Maddox[139], editor of the world-renowned journal, *Nature*, wrote: 'Apart from being philosophically unacceptable, the

Big Bang is an over-simple view of how the Universe began, and it is unlikely to survive the decade ahead'. The late Stephen Hawking, another well-known astrophysicist, seemed happy with complete nihilism. He said: 'I'm a positivist. I don't require a theory to correspond to reality, because I don't know what reality is.'[140] So, the beginning of the universe represents atheism with a big headache, as it is a completely insoluble problem.

The universe is unimaginably large; over 90 billion light years in diameter.[141] Light travels about 300.000 km per second, so during 1 minute it will have gone 18 million kilometers. In an hour, it will have travelled more than 1 billion kilometers. The distance light can move within 1 year is daunting, never mind 90 billion years. The beginning of the universe itself – the Big Bang – was a tiny point, smaller in size than the core of a hydrogen atom. A collection and concentration of everything in the universe in one small point is called a singularity. So when we are talking about the whole universe, the adjective 'cosmic' is used in this respect, so we talk about 'the cosmic singularity'. How can our universe originate from such a small point? This is way beyond our comprehension, and it is difficult, if not impossible, to avoid contemplating the existence of an almighty Creator.

In addition to Einstein's Theory of Relativity, there are other factors that show that the universe has a beginning. As early as the 1920s, Edwin Hubble proved that the universe is expanding and getting bigger and bigger. If we reverse this observation, then the further back in time we look, the smaller the universe would have been, right back until a beginning point is reached. Furthermore, cosmic background radiation has been detected. Radiation usually comes from one source, but cosmic background radiation is different, being evenly distributed throughout the universe. It is thought this radiation originates from the Big Bang itself. The presence of radioactive elements also proves that the Earth cannot have been in existence for ever, as if it had, all radioactivity would have disappeared and decayed.

The cause behind the universe seems to be personal; there must be a decision to create the universe, and a decision requires a consciousness. Creating a universe is a formidable task, and requires foresight, insight and knowledge that only consciousness possesses. Besides, the universe seems to have come into being for a purpose. Some people believe that the main purpose is that man could be created. That is a wonderful thought.

The Laws of Nature point to a lawmaker, who must also be personal. An impersonal force, such as gravity, follows a certain pattern from which it cannot deviate. A natural cause lacks the flexibility necessary to create the diversity that the universe possesses. Moreover, every natural event take time. Although that time can be very modest, it is impossible to achieve anything without having time available. Time came into being with the Big Bang, and so there was no time before that. Some use this reasoning to dismiss the possibility of a natural cause.

The first cause

Philosophers have always been occupied by the idea of a First Cause. If we follow things backwards in time, we always get to a starting point. A fish originates from another fish that in turn originates from an even earlier fish. This is how we can continue backwards — not forever, but to a starting point. This is called 'regress' or 'regression'. Even early philosophers like Aristotle were interested in the First Cause – the origins of all things. A First Cause must be:

1. One and indivisible
2. Beyond time and space
3. Immaterial
4. Not created

I have personally chosen to believe that the First Cause is the Judeo-Christian God. The God of Creation was outside the universe, outside of nature, in the moment of creation. God is thus above the universe and nature. God is not created. He has always existed. Many people have a strong aversion to talking about the supernatural. In most people's minds, the supernatural pertains to things about which we know nothing, about things that are myths and legends and have nothing to do with indisputable knowledge. Nonetheless, the Creator God is such a supernatural force. These days, we live in a culture where those called the 'power and cultural elite' believe God does not exist. They may be trying to make us think that science has the answer to everything, but that is completely wrong. When scientists say there is no God, we need to understand that

they are not speaking as scientists, but as atheists. Scientists are good at science, but that does not mean they know more than us about faith, religion and metaphysics. We need to know that a Christian scientist can face major problems at work if he or she were to say that science seems to produce results that are best explained by creation. In the United States, it is probable that they would lose their job. A similar situation may well develop in other countries, as, throughout the Western world, there is now the notion that God, and a concept of God, do not belong in science, despite the fact that God is the best explanation that anything exists at all.

Since atheists reject the idea that the universe was created by God, we need to know about their arguments. Their main proposition is that there is not just the one universe in which we live, but that there is a large number of universes. This is termed the 'multiverse'. The problem for atheists is that we cannot use science to find out if anything exists on the outside of our universe. Every aspect of science at our disposal is about studying our own universe. Cosmologists have constructed a number of theories about multiverses. These theories do not build on observable facts, but are the result of mathematical calculations. It turns out that a multiverse also requires a first beginning and may not have existed forever, so this knowledge has not really got us much further. In this regard, multiverse also requires a cause. One of the main theories about the multiverse argues there are 10^{500} universes, which is the same as a 1 followed by 500 zeroes.[142, 143] It's a number so big none of us can understand what that means. It is beyond our comprehension. Atheist cosmologists and scientists find it easier to believe that there are 10^{500} universes than one single universe created by God. This helps us understand that a concept of God is totally alien to these scientists. God is a word that is completely without content and meaning to them. All their thinking is based on a naturalistic worldview. We also need to know that there are scientists who think that multiverse theories are so perfect and appealing that they are calling for these to be adopted as true, even though they cannot be verified. If that were to happen, this would be, in effect, the collapse of science, as scientific facts would no longer determine what we believe, and 'knowledge' would be determined by atheist ideology. At the moment, however, when presented these ideas, most people would still think that the First Cause must be God.

Fine tuning

Atheists know that the Big Bang is shaking their worldview, but another relationship at the beginning of the universe alarms them even more – something called the fine tuning of the universe. Fine-tuning refers to the surprising precision of nature's physical constants and the early conditions of the universe. To explain how a habitable planet like Earth could even exist, these fundamental constants have to be set to just the right values from the very beginning. There are many numerical values that we call natural constants, which have a major impact on what happens in the universe. Many of these natural constants must have exactly the value and size they have in order for our universe to exist, and for it to remain in existence. And these values had to be set within fragments of a second after the Big Bang. For example, the gravitational force is absolutely necessary for stars and planets to be formed. If the gravitational force changes, either our universe will collapse into a small point, or the universe will expand so fast that it will disintegrate. How much can gravity change without drastic consequences? Calculations show that if the gravitational force changes more than 1 in 10^{40}, our universe would not be able to exist. (10^{40} is the number 1 followed by 40 zeroes). What is one possibility out of 10^{40} possibilities? The cosmologist Hugh Ross has worked it out.[144] He says that if you cover all of North America with coins, and allow each coin to form a stack of coins that reach the moon, and you do the same on 1 billion more continents, you would have a horrendous amount of coins. If one of these coins is gold, then a probability of 1 in 10^{40} (which may be written10^{-40}) is equivalent of a blindfolded person finding that gold coin among all the others in a fraction of a second. There are many such natural constants that have a numerical value that cannot be changed the smallest from their current value without disastrous consequences. Again, we find ourselves having to make a choice: Is this fine-tuning of the constants of the universe a result of blind coincidence, or is it proof of an intelligent creative power behind it all? Explosions are chaotic. But the Big Bang was not that kind of an explosion. It's much better understood as a "finely tuned expansion event," where all the matter and energy in the universe were expanding from an unimaginably high energy state.

Consider some of the finely tuned factors that make our universe possible:

If the strong nuclear force were slightly more powerful, then there would be no hydrogen, an essential element of life. If it was slightly weaker, then hydrogen would be the only element in existence. If the weak nuclear force were slightly different, then either there would not be enough helium to generate heavy elements in stars, or stars would burn out too quickly and supernova explosions could not scatter heavy elements across the universe. If the electromagnetic force were slightly stronger or weaker, atomic bonds, and thus complex molecules, could not form. If the value of the gravitational constant were slightly larger, one consequence would be that stars would become too hot and burn out too quickly. If it were smaller, stars would never burn at all and heavy elements would not be produced. The finely tuned laws and constants of the universe are an example of specified complexity in nature. They are complex in that their values and settings are highly unlikely. They are specified in that they match the specific requirements needed for life. (for references see ref.143)

The following gives a sense of the degree of fine-tuning that is necessary to give a life-friendly universe:

Gravitational constant: 1 part in 10^{40}
Electromagnetic force versus force of gravity: 1 part in 10^{37}
Cosmological constant: 1 part in 10^{120}
Mass density of universe: 1 part in 10^{59}
Expansion rate of universe: 1 part in 10^{55}
Initial entropy: 1 part in $10^{10^{exp123}}$

The Christian Nobel Prize winner Charles Townes says it this way:[145]

'Intelligent design, as one sees it from a scientific point of view, seems to be quite real. This is a very special universe: it's remarkable that it came out just this way. If the laws of physics weren't just the way they are, we couldn't be here at all. The sun couldn't be there, the laws of gravity and nuclear laws and magnetic theory, quantum mechanics, and so on have to be just the way they are for us to be here.'

At the Big Bang, two gases were formed: hydrogen and helium. Our

sun consists almost only of hydrogen and helium. These two gases can form stars at a temperature of many millions of degrees Celsius, just like during the Big Bang. In these stars – which have different temperature and size – hydrogen and helium are transformed into other elements, but these processes require a great degree of accuracy. A well-known English scientist called Sir Fred Hoyle examined how carbon could be formed. Carbon is a very important element being absolutely necessary for life. That is why we use the term 'the carbon based life.' When his calculations showed that the chance that a carbon atom could be made by chemical reactions in stars was improbably small, his atheism was so shaken that he claimed only a supernatural power could achieve such a thing. A large quantity of improbable chemical reactions had to happen in precisely the right way for the known elements to come into being. We could say that process needs a long series of miracles.

There are also a number of conditions for life to exist. This is often called the Anthropic Principle. Some of them are listed below, but will not be discussed in detail:

1. The electromagnetic coupling constant binds electrons to protons in atoms. If it were smaller, few electrons would be bound. If larger, electrons would be bound so tight they would not bind to other atoms.
2. The ratio of electrons to proton mass is 1:1836. If the ratio changed one way or the other, molecules could not be formed.
3. Carbon and oxygen nuclei have finely tuned energy levels.
4. Electromagnetic and gravitational forces are fine-tuned in such a way that stars are stable.
5. Our solar spectrum has the right color. If the color was more into the blue or more into the red, plants would have difficulties with photosynthesis.
6. Our sun has the right size and mass. If it was bigger or smaller, there would be drastic consequences.
7. The Earth's distance from the sun ensures that water does not totally evaporate or totally freeze.
8. Planets have an intact surface, but the Earth is an exception.

The Earth's surface consists of tectonic plates that can move relative to each other. These plates are necessary for the carbonate-silicate cycle that binds carbon dioxide and prevents the greenhouse effect. Plate tectonics has a great impact on the climate. Without plate tectonics, the Earth would be completely covered in water.

9. The relationship between Earth and the moon has a major impact on Earth's tilt and has implications for the stability of the earth's climate. A changed in tilt would predispose the Earth to another ice age.

Many other factors need to be correct. Altogether, there are more than 200 different values that must remain constant.

Other conditions that affect our Earth include its age. Earth is far younger than other planets, and this means Earth more easily provides a basis for Life. The vast majority of galaxies are elliptical, but the Milky Way is spiral-shaped, which is compatible with life. Moreover, the Earth is in a 'good neighborhood' in the sense that there are no dark holes, no dangerous radiation, nothing that can cause eruptions of gamma particles, and no supernova. Modern cosmology gives us ever greater knowledge of the universe. Our galaxy, The Milky Way, contains 100-200 billion planets. It is now reckoned that there are two trillion galaxies in the visible universe. That means there are about 200 galaxies for every human on Earth! Zackrisson, a Swedish astrophysicist, has conducted simulation studies showing that our Earth is absolutely exceptional, and statistically speaking, should not really exist[146].

Habitability

Our universe is special in many ways - we could say absolutely amazing. The most amazing thing is that it is created so it can sustain life. Our globe is very special, and possibly unique. It not only supports life, but intelligent life. There is a big difference between having conditions that will support a single-celled creature in a puddle of water, and conditions that support intelligent beings like humans. The Earth is also described as 'habitable' which means it can support plants, animals and humans.

Many requirements need to be met for a planet to be habitable. Water must exist, so must the right atmosphere, the right temperature, the right distance to the sun and moon, and much, much more. There must be no dangerous irradiation from radioactivity or ultraviolet light. There are very few planets surrounded by a habitable zone like this. There are scientists who suggest that life may not exist elsewhere in the observable universe. Many spaceships have been sent out to search for life. The only thing they have found is water. This means that humans could be the only intelligent creatures in the universe. That is also a special thought. Our earth is so special that it could be seen as a message to us - a personal greeting from the Creator who has created it all for us.

Naturalists know that the multiverse theory and the idea that something existed before the Big Bang are based on ideology and not science. What, then, are they doing to try to weaken the prospect that creation actually happened?

The main theme now seems to be to downplay the Earth and human beings. They present the Earth as an insignificant planet among many billions of others, as a mere spot in the universe. They find no reason for our Earth to stand out in any way. Human beings are referred to as a small insignificant spot in the great cosmos, who stem from matter, like all other life. They seek to reduce the importance of human beings, to make it appear that there is no difference between human beings and animals. This is the theme of the movie, *Cosmos*, which came out in 2014 and in new edition in 2019.[147]

Conclusion

Modern cosmological science shows that the universe has a beginning and is consistent with the first verse of the Bible that says, 'In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth'.

Life consists of many situations in which we have to make a choice. Each one of us makes a wide variety of choices every single day. Which shirt should I wear today? Should I have coffee for breakfast, or tea, or maybe have it with a glass of juice? Do I pack myself a lunch, or buy food in the canteen? And so on. When it comes to the origin of the universe, we only have two choices: Either we believe God created the universe,

or we believe that, somehow, the universe came into being by itself. This means that atheists really believe that nothing can give rise to anything since even the universe comes from nothing. New-atheists seem to have a strong belief in such nothing!

The Origin of Life

Many readers will probably find it complicated if I discuss the biochemistry related to the origin of life in the depth, so I will only touch on the main points. Anyone who does not believe in a creator of life must believe that life has come into being by itself. Atheists, naturalists, materialists and evolutionists all rule out the existence of an intelligent creator God. However, can life possibly have arisen spontaneously?

Biological information

To consider the above question, we need to know about the concept of biological information, since information is a condition for life.

1. Life is characterized in that all life- all living beings- contain DNA (**d**eoxyribo**n**ucleic **a**cid). Lifeless natural objects, like a rock or a piece of metal, do not contain DNA. The first thing we can thus ascertain is that in order to explain how life has come about, we must be able to explain how DNA has come into being. DNA contains information, and this information is vital. Without information, there is no life. DNA is the information center of life, and contains all the recipes, messages, instructions life requires. The information in DNA is targeted and specified.

2. The DNA molecule is in the shape of a ladder. DNA contains information in the form of chemical substances that are equivalent to letters in an alphabet. The English alphabet has twenty-six letters. The DNA alphabet has only four letters. These letters are A, C, G, and T, which are abbreviations of the names of the four nitrogenous bases that make up the DNA chain (Adenine, Cytosine, Guanine and Thymine).

Alphabetical letters are abstract. We cannot go to a store or pharmacy to buy 1 kg of the letter A or B. DNA 'letters' are physical, and because

During the past 60 years thousands of highly qualified scientists have spent billions of dollars on research aimed at creating artificial life without success. There are no indications that life may arise spontaneously.

DNA letters are chemical compounds, we can store them, e.g. on glass. These letters make up the strings of DNA (see illustration on page 191), and in order for letters to form meaningful words, they must follow one another in a specific way. If we switch two letters in the word 'bean', we get 'bane'. Each word has the same four letters, but because they have a different order, we get two similar words that have vastly different meanings. Order or sequence is important. The same goes for the sequence in DNA chains, and the right sequence is obtained only by selecting the right DNA letters or nucleotides.

3. Since the letters of DNA are chemical substances, they must be synthesized, and since DNA is necessary for life, DNA had to have come into existence before, or while, life came into being. Is it possible, however, that the letters of DNA could have been created before life existed? James Tour, a research scientist at Rice University in the United States, says that none of the substances that make up the letters of DNA could have occurred spontaneously on the primeval earth, and could not have been created by purely physical chemical reactions.. Professor Tour says that the sugars in DNA could also not be created by purely physical-chemical reactions So, life could not have arisen by itself, since DNA could not have occurred spontaneously.[148, 149]

4. DNA contains meaningful information specified for explicit tasks. How can such detailed information originate? Those who reject the existence of a Creator believe this information is purely coincidental, but that is very unlikely. Information can only be formed by an intelligence, it never comes into being on its own. Since the information in DNA is specified for very particular tasks, we can disregard the possibility this information may have occurred by chance. Generating such meaningful information requires an intelligence.

5. There are four main substances that form life and build the cells that make up organisms: Proteins, fats, sugars and nucleic acids. Professor Tour says that none of these four substances can come into being on their own. They could not have come into existence until life existed.

Therefore, there is no reason whatsoever to believe that life could have arisen by chance.

6. Science does not know how the first living cell could have come into being. The first life had to be a cell. All cells are surrounded by a fatty membrane. Science cannot even explain how cellular membranes could have evolved, nor provide a satisfactory explanation for the origin of all the life processes that make up an organism's metabolism. Science also has no explanation for how the first cell could have divided and become two cells. If the first cell could not divide, then it could not have been the origin of new life.

Preliminary conclusion

- Science has no explanation for how the DNA molecule could have been created.
- Science cannot explain how DNA can contain specified information.
- Science has no explanation for where this information comes from.
- Science cannot explain how DNA contains 'correct' sequences.

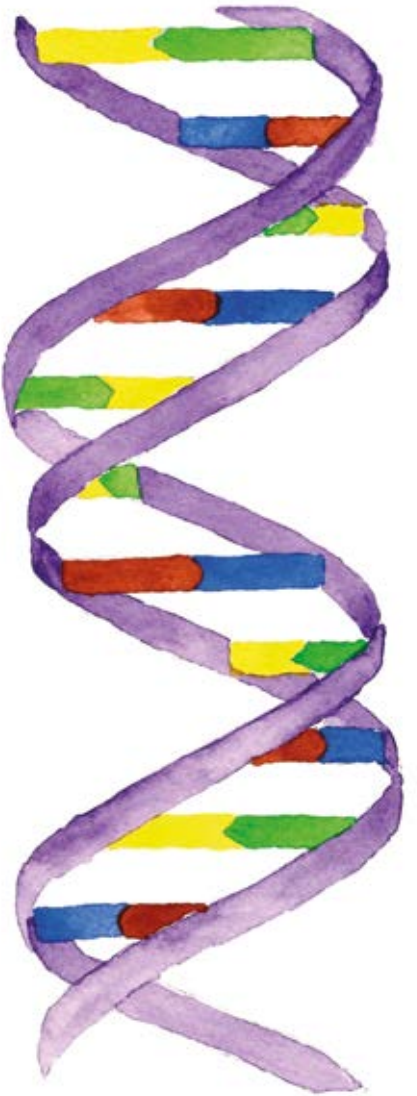
7. We also need to know a little about protein synthesis. Proteins are essential substances that make up the cells of the body of an organism. They could not have arisen by themselves on the primordial earth. All biological proteins are produced in small factories inside the cells. One single liver cell may have about one million of these factories. These factories are called ribosomes and themselves consist of about fifty proteins. Try to understand the implications of the following: When the first protein on this earth was going to be made, it had to be made by a ribosome consisting of fifty proteins. In this situation we have every reason to wonder how could the ribosome made up of proteins come into existence before there was a single protein? Besides, the ribosome is located in a cell consisting of several hundred thousand proteins. You will never find this problem discussed in biological textbooks, but if we

take into account the existence of an almighty Creator, this problem vanishes quite easily.

8. Laboratories around the world have spent more than sixty years researching the possibility of creating artificial life. The best researchers have used all their knowledge, having no financial constraints, and used the best possible equipment. What was the result? No one has managed to make life. The research has only made it clearer that life is incredibly complex. Even a single bacterial cell is far more complex than anything humans have ever created.

9. We also need to be familiar with what is called the 'RNA world', because some biologists still claim the theory of the RNA world can explain the origin of life. However, leading scientists on the origin of life have rejected this theory. Even Eugene V. Koonin, a recognized expert in the area of evolutionary biology, rejects such a possibility[151, 152]. Other well-known scientists have also rejected the theory of the RNA world.

Professor Craig Venter[153], a leading biotechnologist, says that DNA is



DNA has form of a ladder with rungs. DNA is the information central of the cell. The DNA language consists of four letters that make up the rungs. We usually call these letters in abbreviated form A, C, G and T.

like software, like a computer program that software engineers write. Accordingly, DNA is a computer program that random natural processes cannot create.

Conclusion

The best explanation for the existence and creation of DNA, and thus the origin of life, is a creation event. In fact, there are no other possibilities. Only an intelligence could form and program DNA, but since the possibility of creation is rejected by the most determined of naturalists, we have a confrontation between a theistic and an atheistic view of life.

Irreducible Complexity and the Nano-machinery of Life

Michael Behe, a professor of biochemistry introduced the world to the concept of irreducible complexity, in 1995 in a book called *Darwin's Black Box*[155].

What is irreducible complexity? We are all surrounded by different things that would not be usable if we removed some of the parts they consist of. Removing the front wheel of a bicycle will render it useless, as would removing the chain or the brakes. If you remove the SIM card from a mobile phone, it will no longer work. In other words, all the parts of a thing must be in place at the same time in order for the thing to fulfil its intended task. The same is true for biochemical and molecular biological life. Evolution teaches that things have gradually evolved over millions of years. Thus, it must also have taken a very long time for a particular biological structure or biochemical process to be developed. If this structure or process is essential for life, it cannot have evolved over a long period, it would have had to be in place right from the beginning.

Many processes of different kinds exist in the body, e.g. the coagulation of blood. When we injure ourselves and lose blood, a number of reactions come into play to coagulate the blood and stop the bleeding. The coagulation process involves sixteen steps, all of which must follow the other in a set order. This kind of process is what is termed an algorithm. Coagulation is also what is known as a cascade reaction, which is a bit like what happens when a row of dominoes standing on end goes down one after the other once the first one is pushed. For this to happen, all dominoes must be set up on end with the correct spacing between them.

The same goes for a cascade reaction; everything must be set up properly for each step to work. If one of the steps in the coagulation cascade does not work properly, the individual concerned will have a bleeding disorder, e.g. haemophilia. For the coagulation to proceed normally, every step needs to be fully developed from day one. We all end up getting hurt and bleeding several times in our lives. Without a well-functioning coagulation process, we would all bleed to death. If the coagulation process had evolved over a long period, humans and animals would not have been able to survive. Numerous biochemical processes are constantly taking place in the body in order to maintain life, and it is impossible that any of them could have come into being as the result of a long developmental process. The coagulation cascade must have been there from Day One, and that is just one example.

Modern biological research has shown us that the cells that make up the body's tissues and organs contain a host of engines and machines, which we call life's nano-machinery. 'Nano' is a unit prefix meaning 'one billionth'.[156] One millimeter is 1 million nanometers, so one nanometer is really small! Many of these nano-machines measure only 20-30 nanometres across. Some are even smaller. Now we are actually at microcosmos! Every cell in our body contains a few thousand nano-machines! The recipe - or schematics - for this machinery is contained in the organism's DNA. This DNA also contains all the information each nano-machine needs to perform its tasks properly.

Naturalistic and evolutionary mechanisms are completely unable to form all this detailed, specific information. When these motors need to be replaced, the cell makes new ones by itself, based on the schematic found in DNA. No machines made by humans can replace themselves. Therefore, in this area too, life is unique. Without the cell's nano-machinery, the information held in the DNA would be useless, as the nano-machines need this information for their tasks essential for life. Conversely, without the information held in DNA, the nano-machines would not be able to work. The information and the machinery are mutually dependent and constantly interact with each other. Naturalism is unable to explain how this interaction is possible.

It is exciting that so many components in the cell can be compared

to computers. The cell's ribosomes, or protein factories, are also little computers. All the nano-machines that help a cell divide to form two daughter cells are computers that perform according to what the DNA tells them to do. In the biological systems that make up life we find 'software', 'hardware' and 'robots'. This amazing set up can only be satisfactorily explained as the result of an intelligent cause. Neither evolution nor naturalism can explain such advanced systems that work together for specific purposes.

One example of a nano-engine is the ATP generator, which produces the energy upon which all life processes depend. This generator consists of two rotary engines that generate adenosine triphosphate (ATP), the fuel of life. Each of us has at least 100.000 billions of ATP generators in our bodies. Each generator consists of about 30 proteins, and none of these proteins can have come into being by evolution. Typically, these generators turn at 3,000 revolutions per minute and produce as much ATP as an individual's body weight in a day. That means I produce approximately 90kg ATP per day, but the great thing is that if I exert myself and use my body so that it needs more energy, the generators will automatically rotate faster and produce more ATP. Hence, the body has sensors that control ATP production according to need. In 2008, the top speed of an ATP generator was estimated at 130 revolutions per second.

If we had been discussing a machine in a factory, we would all have assumed it must have been made by very skilled designers and engineers, but in biology, current thinking does not permit us to consider the possibility of an intelligent designer. Naturalists and evolutionists claim that an advanced engine like the ATP generator must have come into being of its own accord quite by chance. That, however, is a biological impossibility. The worrying thing is that the upcoming generation, our youth, are led to believe that such a view represents the scientific truth, whereas it only expresses an atheistic view of life and a naturalistic worldview.

When scientific facts cannot be explained by the prevailing naturalistic view, the facts must be altered to fit that ideology. Adherents of the naturalistic view defend it by every conceivable means, including the reinterpretation of facts.

Quality control systems

Modern research has shown that life has advanced quality control systems, which we will only briefly mention here, as they are outside the scope of the book. Life is so complex that it requires control systems that are effective from birth to death to guarantee that the processes of metabolism go smoothly. Such control systems need to be linked to systems that correct errors, and must exist at both micro and macro levels. For example, before a gene is copied an enzyme proofreads the gene, and if an error is detected, it is corrected. At the macro level, control systems ensure that the concentration of hormones is under constant monitoring. The lungs and kidneys ensure that the levels of sodium, potassium, and chloride ions, acidity (pH) and carbon dioxide levels are all are normal. The number of platelets and erythrocytes (red blood cells) also needs be kept in an optimum range. If we have too small or too high a concentration of these values, we will become ill. A large number of actions and values must be within their 'normal' range for the body to operate optimally, and it is impossible to grasp how the blind forces of naturalism can create such control systems. Besides, how does the body know, for example, what is the normal value for sodium, and where does that information come from?

My view of life corresponds generally to that of Intelligent Design. Some people have attacked Intelligent Design, because they believe its advocates think that information is only necessary for certain examples cited in the literature, such as the engine that causes bacterial flagella to rotate. Nevertheless, that is wrong. Information is needed to explain all of the metabolic processes that take place in any cell at any given time. Life's nano-machinery, complex structures and regulatory mechanisms are subject to, and governed by, a higher information system. However, many evolutionists, including biologists who are proponents of theistic evolution[157], contest this. Unswerving theistic evolutionists are naturalists and deny that our physical reality has an intelligent cause.

Modern research has shown that information is important at a number of levels in life. 'Homeostasis' is a term that describes 'the state of steady internal, physical, and chemical conditions maintained by living systems'.[158] The human body becomes ill if this equilibrium is disrupted, so advanced regulatory networks that ensure homeostasis is maintained.

Information makes this possible, as only information can form the basis of control systems. Random mutations cannot create control systems. These systems ensure that body temperature, electrolytes, hormones, pH, blood sugar, etc. are at the right level. When an egg cell and a sperm fuse to form a new life, many billions of reactions will subsequently occur. If you were born healthy and without deformities, all these billions of reactions must have occurred in the necessary way. This is not just the result of a miracle; it is a host of miracles! Foetal development requires a pronounced degree of accurate control based on accurate information. The slightest deviation could result in malformations, or lead to miscarriage.

An article I read recently reported that scientists have discovered that hummingbirds have a built-in anti-collision system so they do not collide with other hummingbirds. Hummingbirds can fly in any direction, forwards, backwards, up and down, back upwards or belly upwards. Humming birds can also hover at stand still like a helicopter and their wings move at a tremendous speed. Newspapers report that Volvo plans to equip its cars with anti-collision systems. I am sure many different specialists and engineers at Volvo have been working to develop this system, but the hummingbird is born with one. An almighty Creator is interested in his entire creation, and he does not want small birds like hummingbirds to injure themselves unnecessarily. Isn't this fantastic?

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If you are particularly interested in some of the work on cellular quality control mechanisms, you can refer to references 159-165. If you are interested in the nano-mechanics of life, please refer to references 166-170. All of these articles, and many more, show compelling evidence of intelligent design. Life works intentionally in a way that exceeds what we can imagine. The processes that take place at the nano-level in the cell are so advanced and sophisticated that they resemble the systems developed by civil engineers and systems designers.

The big question is how life could have come about?
Evolutionism and naturalism have no answers.
The best answer is that 'In the beginning God created heaven and earth'.

The Diversity of Life

We have all heard of Charles Darwin and his theory of the evolution of life. Darwin assumed that all life had a common origin in a small primordial cell, and that the culmination of evolution is the human being. Today Darwin's theory, the theory of evolution, is considered the Truth about life, with a capital 'T'. The entire Western world has come to believe the doctrine of evolution is the proper view of the development of life's diversity. The term for that is 'consensus'. Therefore, there is no disagreement about the truth of evolution, so much so that the European Union has decided that evolution will be the only theory of development taught in the public school system. In the United States, those who are skeptical of Darwin's ideas are referred to as 'science deniers'.

With regard to evolutionary theory, it is important we know the difference between microevolution and macroevolution. Microevolution is a change in an animal species without changing the species. Macroevolution is a change within a species that results in a whole new species, the new species being completely different from the species from which it originated. There is no disagreement over microevolution. Most books and magazines that discuss evolution are actually discussing microevolution. Microevolution is a prerequisite for species to survive when external conditions change. Conversely, there is no consensus that macroevolution takes place in reality. An example of macroevolution is the evolution of human beings from apes.

What does evolution teach? Its most important message is that organisms have the ability to adapt to new life conditions. This is called adaptation. If the environment, access to food, or another environmental factor changes, life has a great adaptability. This kind of adaptation is the same as microevolution. The most frequently cited example in the literature on evolution is changes in the beaks of a species of finch living on the Galapagos Islands. When there are periods of drought with little rainfall, available food becomes quite hard for the birds to crack. The birds with the most powerful beaks will find it easier to survive, and thus becoming the majority. However, when the rain returns and the texture of their food changes, birds with smaller beaks will get adequate nutrition,

so that the population of birds will return to the composition it had before the drought, with birds with beaks of different sizes, and the differences even out. Changes in the size of the beaks of finches are a good example of microevolution in which there is evolution forward and evolution backwards. The problem is that this has been presented as an example of macroevolution, even though the finches remain finches. They have not changed to a new species of bird. Not distinguishing between the two forms of evolution can cause significant misunderstandings. Therefore, to avoid misunderstanding, we are best not to talk or write about 'evolution' per se, but rather make it clear if we are discussing micro- or macro- evolution. This will avoid potential misunderstandings.

No proof for Macroevolution

Macroevolution means something far more than changes within one particular species. Macroevolution means that an animal can evolve into a completely new animal species. There are no convincing scientific facts proving that macroevolution happens in reality. However, since naturalists and atheists do not reckon on the existence a creator, they MUST assume that macroevolution actually happens, despite what any results show. Please read that sentence again! Since evolutionists believe that life came into being in water, life in water must have developed into life on land. To say that more simply, a fish- like being must have evolved into a reptile. On the Internet, we can find a lot of information about Tiktaalik, a fish believed to be a precursor to terrestrial animals.[171] There are many pictures of this fish. Tiktaalik has large anterior fins, thought to be the beginning of the development of the front legs of reptiles. However, traces of terrestrial animals 24 million years older than Tiktaalik have now been found, so on a scientific basis, Tiktaalik can be excluded as the ancestor of life on land. None of us can be the parents of our grandparents! The Coelacanth, a fish thought to have become extinct 30 million years ago, was also considered a possible precursor to reptiles. A few years ago, some anglers caught a Coelacanth. It turned out that the Coelacanth is a fish that lived in such deep water that nobody had previously known about it[172]. Coelacanth is an example of what is called a living fossil. The living fish is no different from the Coelacanth fossils, believed to be many millions of years old.

The whale is often used as an example of macroevolution, but there is no evidence for this. The whale is a well-equipped animal, mammal that lives in water. Whales have lungs and must come to the surface to draw fresh air. Some species have echolocation organs.[173] None of the animals proposed as the progenitor of the whale have echolocation organs. Echolocation is very advanced. The sound emitted goes through a structure called the 'melon'. This structure consists of different layers of fat that have a special design and composition that allows them to emit long-range sound waves. The sound also needs to be reflected and sent back to the whale. The reflected sound is much weaker than the emitted sound, so the whale needs a very sensitive receiver device to be able to recognize and interpret the reflected sound waves. This fact alone is enough to repudiate any suggestion the whale is a result of evolution. Besides, the time available for the whale to develop from another animal is far too short. A development like this would require so many mutations that the available time would not suffice for these to occur.

Fossils do not Demonstrate Evolution

Textbooks in biology tell us that fossils prove evolution. This is not correct, as fossils actually show the opposite. According to Darwin, a new species is created by many small modifications over a very long time. Thus, new species develop gradually over a long period. Therefore, fossils of intermediate forms at various stages of development should be apparent in the fossil record. Some fossils should resemble the original species, while others should resemble the new animal, and there should be a huge array of transitional forms. However, this is not what palaeontologists (fossil scientists) have found. In reality, new animals appear suddenly in the fossil layer, and they are fully developed from the very beginning. The animals also remain unchanged in form throughout the period of geological time in which they are found in the fossil record. All of this is contrary to evolutionary theory, but hardly any palaeontologists believe in Creation. Therefore, all their findings are interpreted in the light of evolutionary theory, although preconceptions are not part of rigorous scientific method.

Evolution can demonstrate credibly how existing life can be changed.

The problem is that it cannot explain how new life forms come into being. Evolution has no mechanism for explaining how micro-evolutionary innovations can in turn lead to the great diversity of life. More and more biologists are appreciating this problem. Some of them have joined forces and set up a website for those looking for a new explanatory model. This website is called 'The Third Way of Evolution'[174].

Evolution has two causal mechanisms: natural selection and changes in an organism's genetic material. To create new life new information needs to be added to an organism's DNA. Natural selection acts on the organism that already exists and has no effect on its DNA at the genetic level. Therefore, there is no reason to expect natural selection to explain the origin of new species. Natural selection's most important task is to prevent species from being extinct by ensuring the survival of the most robust individuals. Natural selection is a mechanism for 'survival of the fittest', not 'arrival of the fittest'.

The other evolutionary mechanism is to change an organism's genetic material. Every animal cell contains DNA. Every cell in the body of a human being contains a DNA strand measuring almost two meters long, and which consists of 3.2 billion DNA 'letters' (nucleotides). These nucleotides sit next to each other like a string of pearls. Each time a cell divides, it replicates its DNA so that the two daughter cells have exactly the same DNA as the parent cell. We might think that while copying so many letters, errors might occur, e.g. the letter A may have been replaced with the letter C in a particular stretch of the DNA. This kind of error in DNA replication is called a mutation. A mutation that involves only a single letter, one nucleotide, is called a point mutation. Other times, larger areas of DNA can change and mutations occur in the gene itself. Accordingly, mutations take place in the hereditary material, and there are only changes in the hereditary material that have the potential to create something new. Therefore, we need to discuss mutations more thoroughly, as they represent an important causal mechanism in the theory of evolution.

Mutations

As I have already mentioned, biological information is made up of DNA and consists of a chain of nucleotides represented by four different 'letters'

- A, C, G and T - after the first letter of their chemical name: A stands for adenosine, C for cytosine, G for guanine and T for thymine. In a language meaning is constructed by ordering letters one after the other in a specific way - just like the sentence you are now reading is made up of letters and words in a particular order for the sentence to be meaningful. Mutations lead to changes in the letter sequences in the DNA, and can therefore change the information it contains. We can compare mutation with a typo or a spelling mistake in a text. Evolutionists believe that, over millions of years, random mutations can add new and beneficial information to DNA. This is extremely unlikely, but as mutations are the most important explanation available to naturalists and evolutionists with regard to new information, there is no reason to believe that they will relinquish their view of mutations. If the DNA sequence changes due to mutation, the body perceives this as a disruption that could be destructive and automatically activates repair mechanisms to correct the error. These repair systems are very sophisticated and consist of a selection of motors that are activated when a mutation occurs.

The academic press received a lot of correspondence in 2019 when Professor David Gelernter, a computer scientist at Yale University, announced publicly that he could no longer accept Darwin's teachings after reading the book, *Darwin's Doubt*, by Stephen Meyer.[175] The following quote is taken from that book:

'The new science of DNA proves mathematically that the odds of a random mutation leading to an improvement in the adaptability of a living organism are effectively zero. Even a small protein molecule has a chain of 150 amino acids. If we rearrange them at random we mostly obtain gibberish. In fact, of all 150-link amino acid sequences, 1 in 10^{74} will be capable of folding into a stable protein. To say that your chances are 1 in 10^{74} is no different, in practice, from saying that they are zero. It's not surprising that your chances of hitting a stable protein that performs some useful function, and might therefore play a part in evolution, are even smaller'. [176,177]

Gelernter is honest enough to allow scientific facts to determine his view of biology, and he thus rejects the possibility that mutations can cause the creation of a single functional protein.

An organism consists of proteins in the same way that a brick house

consists of bricks. In fact, the human body consists of more than 100,000 different proteins. If an animal species is to evolve into a completely different animal species, a very large number of new proteins need to be formed. A new structure, such as a new limb, consists of proteins. The recipe for proteins lies in the DNA, and the stretch of DNA that codes for a protein is called a gene. Human beings have about twenty-one thousand genes. A very big problem in regard to macro evolution is that no new proteins are formed if there are no genes in the DNA containing the exact recipe for the new proteins. The recipe must be there first; information is a prerequisite for the formation of new proteins. This relationship between DNA and the new protein is what made me skeptical of evolution. I had thought that new structures could come into being of their own accord by a series of small modifications, as Darwin thought, but if there are no genes with the specific information, then new proteins simply cannot be created, and without new proteins, there will be no macroevolution.

Personally, I firmly believe that only the Creator himself can make the detailed, specific, targeted information required to produce life's great complexity. Only He knows all the details of life's advanced machinery, and that is why I regard information in DNA as God's work. In that respect, mutations then become something that destroys the exact information God has prescribed for creation. Any accidental information, which computer specialists would describe as 'noise', will destroy the correct information and sometimes cause sequences incompatible with maintaining life. I am convinced that genes could not have come into being by complete chance. Science has no explanation for how the first gene could have come into being! I know of no scientific facts that demonstrate mutations are able to create new life. Mutations are random. We all know that if we are to create something new, which has never existed before, we must first see a need and define it. Recognizing and realizing the need for the new is the first step in the design and construction process. Then we plan all the stages required for production. Random mutations cannot plan, a random mutation can see no benefit in planning, being blind to purpose and practicality. Besides, mutations are usually harmful to an organism, because they change the sequence of the letters of DNA. We know that mutations cause disease and malformations; the

list of diseases caused by mutations is very long. Mutations break down the exact information contained in DNA. Moreover, calculations show that evolutionary mechanisms are unable to synthesize the large amount of proteins that macroevolution requires. Michael Behe claims that evolution could form three proteins at most, but organisms are made up of thousands of proteins[178].

If mutations are to lead to the formation of a new species, this could happen in two ways: One way would be via mutations in the germ cells. It is the DNA information in germ cells that determines the offspring. However, mutations in the germ cells must be coordinated, i.e. they must work together. For example, a random mutation that will affect the foot of an organism has no bearing on the development of a different structure such as the heart. If mutations are to create a lung, there will need to be many of them, and they must all coordinate to make a lung. Population geneticists who specialize in this field have performed the calculations that show it takes a very long time to obtain the sufficient number of such necessary coordinated mutations. The term 'waiting time' is used to describe this process. Waiting time is thus the time it takes to obtain the sufficient number of coordinated mutations to become part of the genetic material in such a way that they may constitute specified genes. Calculations like these show that the whale cannot have developed by evolutionary mechanisms. The amount of time available to obtain the number of coordinated mutations required for the whale to evolve is simply too short. In the literature, this is also called 'Haldanes dilemma'[179]. The problem of waiting time is relevant in terms of human evolutionary evolution, and John Sanford, a geneticist[180] has studied this closely. He concludes it is impossible for humans to have a common lineage with the chimpanzees. Even the course of 18 billion years would not be long enough for a sufficient number of coordinated mutations to be possible. Sanford therefore concludes that man could not have evolved from apes.

The other way mutations can affect offspring is when they occur during pregnancy. If mutations occur late in foetal life, they will cause various types of malformation, without changing the species. For example, late-term mutations in a sparrow can lead to a sparrow with deformities. For mutations to lead to the formation of a completely new species e.g. a

sparrow becoming a crow, mutations must occur very early in foetal life, as the buds for different organs are formed early in foetal life. However, early mutations are incompatible with life and lead to foetal death. Early mutations in the incubation of chicken eggs lead to dead chicks. Late mutations produce either a normal chick, or chicks with malformations. A review article from 2016 shows that, over time, mutations lead to loss of genes, which backs up the thesis that mutations are harmful[181].

We conclude this chapter with a brief overview of the major problems pertaining to evolutionary theory:

1. Mutations. Evolutionary biologists believe mutations are a leading cause of naturalistic evolution, but as we have seen, there are two major problems related to mutations that make it highly unlikely mutations can cause the effects attributed to them.

2. Fossils. School students are taught that the fossil record demonstrates evolution, but it does not.

3. The information in DNA. There are two major problems related to DNA that naturalism cannot explain in a credible way. One is how the DNA molecule itself could be formed spontaneously on the prebiotic Earth. (Prebiotic means before life existed). The second problem with DNA is even greater, and concerns the origin of the information DNA contains. How can DNA contain detailed, specified, purposeful information? Where does this information come from? No one can explain how random chemical reactions could have created the language that contains all the information that is a prerequisite for life. Life simply cannot be explained if we reject intelligent activity.

4. Protein synthesis. Proteins consist of amino acids. Amino acids occur in two types, called D and L forms. When polarized light is shone through a solution of a particular amino acid solution, the light will be reflected either to the right or to the left. This property is called 'chirality'. Amino acids that deflect light to the right are called 'D' forms, and those that deflect light to the left are called 'L' forms. Biological proteins

consist solely of L-amino acids. D-amino acids do not exist in life. A mixture of D- and L-amino acids is also incompatible with life. Science has no explanation how L-amino acids were selected over D-amino acids. According to Wikipedia, more than 500 amino acids occur naturally, but the proteins found in living organisms consist of only 20 amino acids, all in L-shape.[182] So, these 20 amino acids have somehow been selected. Blind naturalistic mechanisms are based on chance, and cannot make selections, whereas deliberate selection requires intelligent activity. The amino acids in proteins are arranged sequentially, like beads on a string. The order in which they are arranged forms a sequence, and this sequence is not indifferent. It has to be correct. The amino acids in proteins have to follow each other in a particular order to equip the protein with the capacity to perform specific biological functions.

Once the necessary information became available in the 1960s, mathematicians could calculate the probability that proteins could be generated by themselves. It was found that the probability of one protein consisting of 150 amino acids coming into being spontaneously was one out of 10^{164} possibilities. (We remember that 10^{164} is the number 1 followed by 164 zeroes). This probability corresponds to the chance of finding one marked grain of sand in the Sahara Desert blindfolded, not once, but three times over! These mathematicians also investigated the statistical probability that Darwinian mechanisms, in the form of natural selection and random mutations, could form functional proteins. Their calculations made them skeptical as to whether the Darwinian mechanisms could explain evolution, but the peculiar thing is that these mathematicians just disappeared. They no longer attended conferences, and they stopped publishing their findings. If the experience of others who have had opinions that differ from the general consensus is anything to go by, one possible explanation is that they were forced to quit, because their results were not what was desired. Stanislaw M. Ulam, a Polish mathematician nuclear physicist, believed that the development of the eye could not be explained by evolution, because the number of mutations required was so large that there was not sufficiently available time. Ulam was a highly regarded mathematician who was involved in the so-called Manhattan project that led to the creation of the first atomic bomb[183].

All this means that there is no reason to think that proteins can come into being by themselves by purely physical-chemical processes. There is every reason to think that only life can produce proteins; that life must exist before proteins can be made.

Some additional information: Sugar is also needed for life to proceed. The complex sugars we find in living organisms are called polysaccharides. These molecules are 'right' orientated, i.e. they exist in the D-form. The sugars in the DNA molecule are all in the D-form, i.e. it has homogenous chirality. Deviations from this form cannot be tolerated and are incompatible with sustaining life. 'Correct' chirality is a relationship that science and the theory of evolution cannot explain.

5. Non-reducible complexity and life's nano-machinery (see page 193). There are many complex processes in living organisms that are not able to function unless all the required components are present at the same time. These components cannot have been created by evolutionary processes over a long period of time, they had to be present from day one. The blue-print for life's nano-machinery is in an organism's DNA. The DNA also contains the blue print for how these machines should work. Personally, I cannot understand how DNA could have acquired its high degree of intentionality and accuracy, or amassed such detailed information by pure coincidence.

6. Epigenetics. Epigenetics is a subject area that has come into being quite recently[184]. If you remember, DNA contains four different 'letters' or nucleotides. A well-known example of epigenetics concerns some of the C (cytosine) nucleotides having a methyl group added to them. (A methyl group is basically a carbon atom with three hydrogen atoms attached to it: CH_3). This not only alters the structure of the C nucleotide, but also enormously increases how much information can be held in the DNA. It is hard to understand how blind naturalistic mechanisms, which do not have the ability to evaluate or anticipate, can select which cytosine molecules need to be methylated, i.e. have a methyl group added to them. Again, we find that the best explanation is intelligent activity.

In cosmology, there is a concept called 'the fine tuning of the universe'.

I have become convinced that we can use a similar term for life itself, i.e. 'the fine tuning of life and biology'. For example, by using laser spectroscopy, scientists have managed to measure the vibration spectrum of a protein called lysozyme, which is an enzyme. The enzyme rings like a bell at a frequency of a few terahertz or a trillion hertz. The whole protein vibrates. These vibrations are extremely short-lived, but sufficient for the protein to react with other proteins. The vibrations last only a picosecond, which is one million of a millionth of a second, but that is crucial. If the vibrations lasted a shorter time, biochemical reactions would not be able to take place. These vibrations enable the proteins to bind to other molecules, and this vibration must be completely accurate and correct in order for critical biological functions to be performed. Science has demonstrated that even a single protein molecule is extremely fine-tuned for life. We might wonder who or what is responsible for such accurate fine tuning? Nature could not have done that all on its own by pure chance, could it?

For decades, all students who have studied biology and evolution have been taught about the work of Ronald A. Fisher, the founder of modern statistical and population genetics[185]. In 1930 he published his basal theorem about natural selection, and laid down one of the cornerstones of neo-Darwinism by linking Mendel's genetics[186] with natural selection. This led to a revision of the theory of evolution that was called 'the new synthesis'. However, recent work by Basener and Sanford[187] has challenged what was previously considered to be the mathematical proof of evolution. According to this article, Fisher's theorem built on inaccurate suppositions, and is therefore not valid. The theorem has now been rejected.

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We will end this chapter by asking what might be the fundamental factor in the universe, the factor that explains everything and what it has come from. Most of us probably think there must have been some kind of elementary particles. Today there are scientists who believe that the fundamental factor in the entire universe is information. John Archibald Wheeler[188], a physicist, put it this way: "It from bit" - where 'it' means 'matter', and 'bit' means 'information'. The physicist Paul Davies and Sara Walker[189], present arguments that information and processing of

information is the primary factor in the universe, and matter as such is a secondary factor. Walker and Davies put it this way: 'There is growing interest, at least among a small group of physicists, to turn things on their heads, and assume that information and processing of information is the primary factor in the universe, and matter as such is a secondary factor.' Professor Seth Lloyd, a quantum physicist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, said that "The universe is a physical system that contains and processes information in a systematic fashion and that can do everything a computer can do."[190]. According to Lloyd the universe is like a computer that processes information. Another theoretical physicist says that information is the primary factor in our reality[191]. Without information, our reality would not hold together. Some researchers believe quantum mechanics is essentially information theory[191].

Christian Faith and Science

Many see a conflict between faith and science, and think that religious belief cannot be reconciled with a scientific view of life. A common view may be that Christianity has so many myths and dogmas that it seems to disqualify itself from being taken seriously. How can we go about meeting the needs of modern people who are genuinely seeking an answer? I want to emphasize that when the question of faith and science comes up, this always tends to confine itself to Christian faith versus evolution. That is what the conflict tends to boil down to, but before we address this issue in more detail, there are a few points we need to address.

In this book, we have been concerned with the consequences of the division of the truth, which came about through David Hume's philosophy. This dualism is also important in defining faith in relation to science. We live in a culture that only accepts what science tells us is truth.

Religion is about values, and they are often just expressions of personal preferences. Today, there is a widespread assumption that religion cannot contain any form of truth, i.e. Christianity is not rational and reasonable. Science is presented as the only sensible option, so it is important we understand that science must also have a starting point. Christianity has as its starting point that an almighty God created the universe and

all that is in it. The prevailing scientific view is that everything has come into being by itself by chance.

The problem of faith versus science is important, because science is used as an argument to disprove the existence of God. This is the province of the so-called new-atheists. Dawkins clearly states that Darwin made it possible to be a fulfilled atheist[192]. There is reason to believe that Dawkins' statements have caused many to think like him, and turn their backs on religious belief. Therefore, we need good arguments for the existence of God in our current day and age. Naturally, we could ask whether the relationships seen in nature are best explained as traces only God could leave behind? Christian philosophers think that God cannot be regarded as a being that is part of our universe. God is the Creator. He is its creator and everything has its origin in him. He is the ultimate existence from which everything comes, and therefore his existence cannot be proved by science. Whether the universe consists of green cheese, atoms, elemental particles or strings does not matter. Whatever science may find, the universe is completely dependent on the God who created it. This is a philosophical and theological approach based on a personal conviction that we cannot avoid the existence of a First Cause. This First Cause is God.

There is a tendency to view Christianity as a 'science stopper' - a view of life that does not look for natural causes, but is concerned with the supernatural. However, modern science originated in the Middle Ages, in a culture strongly influenced by Christian faith and thought. Science does not have its roots in China, India, Africa or South or North America. In the East, they were capable of developing technology, but they did not develop experimental science based on theories that could be tested and experiments that could be repeated. The overwhelming majority of scientists who helped to establish modern science were Christians. Therefore, it is more correct to say that Christianity is a 'science starter'. So, we could have a quick look at some great scientists who had a Christian view of life.

Nikolaus Copernicus (1473–1543)

Copernicus was a Polish cleric and astronomer. He demonstrated the heliocentric system, i.e. the earth goes around the sun, rather than the other way

around. No one who reads Copernicus' famous work, *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*[193], would doubt that he believed in God. On the first page of Book I, he wrote, 'Who will not, as he contemplates the glorious order of the created world, which is guided by divine wisdom, be led to admire the glorious builder of the world, in whom is the greatest bliss and in whom all good is done perfectly? For it was not without a deeper meaning that the God-inspired psalmist said, 'I will sing of the works of your hands' (Psalm 92: 5), and the idea was that by these works we are carried as if on wings upward to the contemplation of the Most High good'.

Johannes Kepler (1571–1630)

Kepler was a German astronomer and mathematician[194]. He is particularly known for his three laws of planetary motion. Kepler considered it his task to 'think God's thoughts after him'. His book, *Harmonices Mundi* (*The Harmony of the World*, 1619)[195], is full of praise of the Creator. The final words of the book are, 'To Him be thanks and praise and honour for all eternity. Amen'.

Galileo Galilei (1564–1642

Galilei was an Italian physicist and astronomer[196]. He improved the telescope and made observations that confirmed Copernicus' view of the world, arguing that the heliocentric view should be accepted as the correct one. Galilei discovered Jupiter's moons and laid an important foundation for experimental research into physical nature. Galilei wrote several very important books, the most famous being *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems* (1632)[197]. In a letter to his student, Castelli, on 21 December 1613 he wrote[198], 'Holy Scripture and nature both derive from the divine Word, one because it is instituted by the Holy Spirit, and secondly, because it performs the divine commands'.

Blaise Pascal (1623–1662)

Pascal was a genius who undertook exceptional work in the fields of physics, mathematics, statistics, logic and philosophy[199]. He developed a theory of hydrostatics[200] that has been of fundamental importance in many areas, such as the construction of submarines. Pascal was a devout Christian.

Isaac Newton (1642–1727)

Many people consider Isaac Newton to be the greatest scientist ever to have lived[201]. We are all familiar with Newton's 'Three Laws of Motion' from school.[201, 201, 203] He was a great mathematician, who developed the binomial formula, differentials, and integral calculus. He did systematic studies on gravity and developed the Law of Universal Gravitation. He also conducted pioneering studies on light, and his work in systematic studies founded the field of classical physics. However, Newton published more on the topic of theology than about science. He believed strongly in God as Creator and that the Bible revealed the truth about God, however, opinions differ as to whether he considered Jesus Christ to be part of the Holy Trinity.

Michael Faraday (1791–1867)

Faraday was a true pioneer of scientific discoveries[204]. Many people view him as the world's greatest experimental scientist. He began as a chemist and discovered new organic compounds, such as benzene, but his main contribution was in the field of electricity and magnetism. He was the first to produce electricity from a magnetic field, and designed the electric motor and alternator. His discoveries have helped transform society; the list of objects powered by electric motors is innumerable. Faraday was a humble and unassuming man. Although his discoveries may have made him very rich, he chose a simple life. Throughout his life, Faraday was a devoted, Bible-believing Christian who thought it was a calling to explore nature, and viewed this as God's gift to man.

James Clerk Maxwell (1831–1879)

Maxwell was a brilliant, multi-talented researcher[205]. He was trained in Latin, Greek and classical literature, and he wrote beautiful poems. Maxwell is best known for his development of four equations that describe electromagnetism, that summarize everything that scientists, such as Faraday, Ohm, Volta and Ampere, had discovered about electricity and magnetism[206]. Maxwell showed that light is an electromagnetic wave and that by manipulating such waves it is possible to transmit information through space. This laid the foundation for the information-based society

we have today. His assumptions about the rings of Saturn were verified 124 years later when Voyager 1 and Voyager 2 studied this planet. Maxwell and Faraday have given us our modern world of motors, radio, radar, television, mobile phones and telecommunications. Maxwell worked very hard throughout the week, but he devoted Sunday to worship and contemplation. He was a devoted Christian all his life.

Louis Pasteur (1822–1895)

Pasteur was a chemist.[207] One of his first discoveries is still unsolved and represents a real headache for evolutionists. He discovered that when crystals were irradiated with polarized light that certain substances appeared in two forms: one which reflected light to the right, and another that reflected light to the left, and thus constituted mirror images of each other. This is called molecular asymmetry[208]. This is also called chirality. Most natural substances occur in both right- and left-handed forms, there being usually 50% of each, but for reasons that are still unknown, when these substances are found in living organisms, they occur only in one form, either right or left. Sugars occur in the right-form, while amino acids occur in the left-form in living organisms. We know that if a protein consists of a mixture of right- and left-handed amino acids, it cannot have any biological function. Pasteur discovered this characteristic of life processes. We could ask how life could have come about when nature has a mixture of both forms, and yet life requires either right- or left-forms of these substances, as only a 100% homogeneous concentration is compatible with life. Pasteur is famous for the saying, 'life comes exclusively from pre-existing life', which is also not popular with evolutionists, who believe life arose from dead matter on its own accord. Pasteur is also known for a number of other discoveries. One of his most important discoveries was that microbes cause infectious diseases. He showed that *bacillus anthracis*, the anthrax bacterium, is the cause of anthrax, and that a weakened form of the bacterium gave animals immunity without giving them disease[209]. This important discovery laid the foundation for the modern understanding of how to treat infectious diseases. In this context, we also need to mention pasteurization, a process that has probably saved the lives of a large number of people. When

food products are heated to a certain temperature, microbes in the food are killed. These microbes would otherwise have resulted in dangerous cases of food poisoning in people who were exposed for contaminated food. Pasteurization is now an established part of food hygiene protocols, especially the treatment of milk.

Pasteur was Catholic. He started every day with prayer and Bible reading, and understood the message of the gospel. When he died, it is said he held his wife in one arm, and a crucifix in the other.

Max Planck (1858–1947)

Planck is the founder of quantum physics[210]. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1918. Various physical laws and constants have been named after him, e.g. Planck's Time, Planck's Radiation Law and Planck's Constant. His strong faith in God is not often mentioned in encyclopedias. His grandfather and great-grandfather had been professors of theology. Various quotes show his faith of God:

'As a man who has devoted his whole life to the most clear-headed science, to the study of matter, I can tell you as a result of my research about atoms this much: There is no matter as such. All matter originates and exists only by virtue of a force which brings the particle of an atom to vibration and holds this most minute solar system of the atom together. We must assume behind this force the existence of a conscious and intelligent mind. This mind is the matrix of all matter'.[211]

"I regard consciousness as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness. We cannot get behind consciousness. Everything that we talk about, everything that we regard as existing, postulates consciousness.'[212]

'Both religion and science require a belief in God. For believers, God is in the beginning, and for physicists He is at the end of all considerations… To the former He is the foundation, to the latter, the crown of the edifice of every generalized world view'[213].

We can finish with a natural scientist from our own time:

Raymond Vahan Damadian (1936 -)

Damadian is a physicist who invented the diagnostic imaging system called MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imagining), which has revolutionized

modern imaging in the field of medicine.[214] In 2003, the Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine went to two other scientists who had worked to improve Damadian's invention. Damadian was bypassed despite being the undisputed originator of this technique. The only reason that has been suggested for this is that Damadian is a 'young earth creationist'[215]. One might get the feeling that in our days scientists that believe in a Creator do not deserve an award, no matter what they have contributed to help humanity. Both *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* call this a disgrace. It makes us wonder what is the agenda of the people entrusted to pick out Nobel laureates.

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These scientists prove that there is no conflict between faith and science. Until the 1600s-1700s, the great scientists were often also great philosophers, theologians and political thinkers. The idea that faith and science are adversaries or incompatible is therefore relatively recent. As someone has said, 'Rumors of God's death are exaggerated'.[216] To say God is dead does not mean that he has gone, but that he is deemed unnecessary.

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Science is about examining our physical universe. The universe consists of billions of galaxies all made up of billions of stars and planets. One of these planets stands out, namely the Earth on which we live. The Earth is the starting point for our studies. For such studies, we use scientific methods. Science approaches its conclusions in two ways, one good and one bad. The good way is when results are interpreted based on the findings, and a scientist does not let their outlook on life to affect the conclusion. The bad way is when results are interpreted in the light that naturalism is a fact. The latter is an atheist assumption, not based on science. There are no scientific methods to study faith and religion, which is one reason for the apparent conflict. Another reason is that some scientists have said that we can only trust and reckon with what we can measure and record physically. This view too readily side steps the fact there is no evidence that empirical measurements alone can give us the right answer. There is no scientific evidence that demonstrates empiricism is true. Empiricism is

an assumption, i.e. a kind of faith. So, even science cannot move beyond faith. We also see this when we consider the Big Bang. Atheists believe that the Big Bang has happened spontaneously by itself. A Christian believes that only God can create something as enormous as a universe. Then, let me be bold enough to say that I think a Christian seems far more rational than an atheist.

The Order of Nature

A prerequisite for science is that what happens in nature is characterized by order and regularity. Without such order, science would not be possible. The inherent order in nature is the reason Albert Einstein said, 'The most incomprehensible thing about the universe is that it is comprehensible'. Scientists have discovered and demonstrated many kinds of laws of nature. These laws tell us that a physical event that occurs today will act similarly another time if the conditions of the incident are identical. The one thing I find strange when dealing with laws of nature is that atheists believe this regularity is an inherent feature of nature. They seem to have no idea how it is possible that an event like the Big Bang, which had a temperature of many millions of degrees Celsius, can create a universe characterized by order and predictability. Order and recurrence require a cause, and this cause must exist outside of the universe. Put another way: all laws require a legislator. Human laws do not come about by themselves, nor do natural laws. The laws of nature are designed in a highly intelligent way, and cannot have come into being by chance. Therefore, an intelligent cause is the best explanation for natural laws. We could say that natural laws are traces the Creator has left behind. Another condition for conducting science is that we can rely on our senses and our reasoning when we examine nature. If our senses were not reliable, science would not be possible, and it would not be possible to draw a single scientific conclusion.

It is special and fascinating that the language of mathematics makes it possible to record the laws of nature in clear mathematical formulas. Mathematics is the result of human intelligence. Some scientists see the act of human beings studying nature and creation is akin to them looking into God's world - or as Kepler put it: 'It is to think God's thoughts after Him'.

The question of faith and science can really be divided into three:

1. Has science rejected the possibility of God's existence?
2. Why does something rather than nothing exists?
3. Are there reasons to believe God exists

With regard to the first question, we can say that science does not repudiate God. On the contrary, science makes God very likely. We have repeatedly mentioned Big Bang. It is an event that clearly shows the Creator is almighty. We have also discussed the fine tuning of the universe, i.e. that a large number of natural constants and values must have exactly the values they have, in order for the universe to exist at all. Even the slightest deviation cannot be tolerated, and would have disastrous consequences. Deep down, atheists probably know that this fine-tuning of the universe is a powerful proof of the existence of God, since they are so eager to find alternatives to the Big Bang. Today, over 200 such constants of nature have been detected, which must have exactly the size they have in order for our universe to have come into existence and to continue to exist the way it is. Of these constants, about twenty are absolutely critical, and the slightest deviation in their value would be catastrophic.

Naturalism excludes God from nature

What we must be aware of, however, is that the modern definition of science excludes God. This view is called philosophical or ontological naturalism and materialism. According to methodological naturalism, an individual may have a private religious belief, but this belief should be completely separate from science. Science should be explained without reckoning on the existence of God, and the interpretation of results cannot imply the existence of God or of a Creator, or an intelligent cause. Philosophical naturalism is based on the understanding that nature is self-existent, and can be explained without having to resort to any supernatural power. This is a statement of faith, and an expression of an ideology, which cannot be justified at all by science.

The main reason why naturalism has such a dominant position today, is that modern human beings will not be subject to a God who makes

injunctions on what they can and cannot do. The modern human being wants freedom and to be able to do what she thinks is best. If you ask a modern person if they would want to believe in God if the evidence was overwhelming, many are honest enough to admit that this would not make them people of faith. Therefore, it is very important every time we hear science has proven one thing or another, that we are aware that science has rejected God beforehand. As Christians, we must be extremely cautious about accepting statements promoted by an atheist ideology.

Alvin Plantinga, a Christian philosopher[217] argues that the real conflict is between science and naturalism – and not between religion and science. Plantinga believes naturalism is not able to provide any explanation for human reason and how we can think logically. The reason is that naturalism advocates that our thoughts and opinions are the result of purely random neurophysiological reactions in our brain. Therefore, naturalism cannot differentiate between truth and untruth. We can never know if a statement is true or not. Naturalism is thus not able to provide a basis for rationality. On the other hand, Plantinga finds no contradiction between theism and science. He argues that there is no contradiction between Christian faith and science[218] Philosophical naturalism, as we all know, is completely incompatible with a religious faith. Science answers questions about *what* and *how*. Faith answers *who* and *why*. The scientific method cannot provide answers to the latter.

Question 2 is also easy to answer. Anything that exists requires a cause for its existence. Even the smallest thing, such as a paper clip, does not come into being by itself. Someone saw a need to be able to hold a few sheets of paper together, and then made a simple and purposeful product, the paper clip. Some of the issues dealt with in the chapter on the origins of life bear repeating, as it is important that we understand life cannot come into being by itself. Naturalism claims and teaches that the power of nature can transform the non-living material into living material. Uunfortunately, government schools teach this, which is of serious concern. Professor James M. Tour has a video on YouTube that is worth watching and hearing[219]. He also has several posts on the website 'Inference: International Review of Science'[220]. Tour specifically rejects

the idea that life can arise by itself by purely naturalistic mechanisms, and that on paper, life should not really exist, as it is highly unlikely that something with such high complexity at the molecular level could come into being of its own accord. The first cell had to have at least 256 protein-coding genes, and yet naturalism cannot explain the emergence of one single gene. Even the cell membrane that envelops all cells and consists of a double lipid layer cannot be constructed artificially in a laboratory. The cell membrane is composed of a large amount of different phospholipids, and a selection procedure is necessary to ensure the right choice of lipids. All cells are covered by a thick layer of glycan. Several hundred enzymes need to work together to form glycan. Tour's online articles and his YouTube lectures are scientific, based on scientific research, and do not make references to theology. We would do well to spend some time reading what he has written and listening to what he has to say.

In addition, professor Tour also says that, based on his knowledge of molecular biology and basal protein chemistry, he is not able to understand how macroevolution may be possible.

Question 3. The conditions under which the universe has come into being and under which life has originated, testify to an almighty Creator. Our universe has actually come into being out of nothing, which goes against all reason and the laws of logic. This is not only amazing, but a miracle. In order for our universe to be formed by two basic elements, hydrogen and helium, a large number of highly improbable conditions had to be satisfied, This is part of what is termed 'the fine tuning of the universe' (see page 182). Furthermore, the fine tuning of the universe, permits intelligent life to exist, not just any kind of life. There is a huge difference between a bacterium and a human being. Nevertheless, as Professor Tour says, even the simplest life cannot come into being by itself simply due to the mechanisms of nature. The intensive research in order to create life in the lab has not succeeded. There is therefore no scientific evidence for assuming that life could arise from dead matter. Life is simply best explained by intelligent design. In the chapter 'The Existence of God' (Page 255), we will discuss this from a somewhat different angle.

Christians have three different views on the origins and diversity of life:

A. The prevailing view of Christendom in the West is evolutionary. Evolutionary theory teaches that the first, simple forms of life could develop into more complex life by random changes in DNA and by natural selection, which is the two mechanisms of evolution. An evolutionary view depends solely on natural causal mechanisms. It does not reckon on God as having actively intervened in the world since it was created. Nevertheless, there are no scientific facts that demonstrate unambiguously how lower-ranking species can develop into higher-ranking species by natural mechanisms, i.e. by macroevolution. If macroevolution cannot be proven, in my view, the entire theory of evolution unravels and it is impossible for me to be an evolutionist, since I cannot find evidence for macroevolution as a fact. However, people who have eliminated the idea of a Creator HAVE to believe macroevolution is possible. They simply have no other alternative.

We need to be aware that science and evolution are one of the six main reasons why young people turn away from the Christian faith[221]. The following points underscore my skepticism towards evolution:

1. Macroevolution is not proven. There is no evidence that a species can develop into a new and different species.

2. The Cambrian explosion[222, 223] The earth's crust is made up of many layers, each of which has a specific name. The Cambrian layer is one of the deepest and oldest, being 495 - 545 million years old. The Cambrian period gives us information about the origins of life, and so this sedimentary layer is important. The layers older than the Cambrian period only contain single-celled organisms. Multicellular organisms appear in the Cambrian period, and over the course of a relatively short time. This phenomenon is called the Cambrian explosion. The most famous animal is the trilobite, an arthropod with a tough exoskeleton. These animals could measure up to 1 meter long, but most of the fossils are about 30- 40 cm long. The Cambrian explosion shows that new multicellular animal species appeared without precursors or intermediate forms appearing in

the fossil layers. These species were fully developed from the time they appeared, and their appearance remained unchanged for as long as they appeared in the fossil record, which for some animals may be several million years. This seems to be incompatible with naturalistic evolution theory. The Cambrian explosion thus repudiates the diversification of life by evolutionary mechanisms.

3. Life is different from non-living natural objects. Life contains DNA, in contrast to non-living material. DNA is the information center of life. We know that all complex information can only come from an intelligence. Therefore, the question of the source of the information in DNA is essential to our views on life. Evolutionists and naturalists believe that the complex information in DNA is the result of random natural processes over a long period of time. Their ideology compels them to believe this, although it is a total impossibility as far as I am able to see. All Christians should regard the information in DNA as God's word - his Logos. This Logos has power to create. In John's gospel we read that this Logos existed 'in the beginning'[224]

Murray Eden was a professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. When he became acquainted with Crick´s and Watson's results, which demonstrated biological information was contained in DNA, he realized that the information necessary for life could not be created by random naturalistic mechanisms. He said that 'no currently existing formal language can tolerate random changes in the symbol sequences which express its sentences. Meaning is almost invariably destroyed.'[225]. This statement indicates that mutations will only destroy existing information, not cause viable changes.

4. Life's nano-machinery. Modern research has demonstrated the existence of an advanced nano-level machinery in living cells. Every year, scientists publish increasingly more information about the 'engines', 'machines' and 'robots' that perform vital tasks in the cell. This machinery far exceeds anything human engineers can shape and create. One of the most amazing things is that when these engines need to be replaced with new ones, an information system is activated, which ensures a

new engine forms as a substitute for the old one. Every living cell has thousands of such engines. No machines made by humans are able to reproduce itself.

5. Evolution has two main mechanisms - mutations and natural selection. Evolutionists believe that random mutations can lead to new, exact information that is an absolute prerequisite for any biological innovations. On page 201 I have argued that random mutations cannot explain macroevolution or the development of one organism into another. The main task of natural selection is to ensure a species does not die out. Natural selection only works on what already exists and cannot create anything new. A Christian evolutionist accepts that mutations and natural selection do explain the development of life, as taught by naturalistic evolutionary theory. In that respect, the main center for Christian evolution, BioLogos[226], rejects the idea that there are intelligent causes in our physical reality. A Christian evolutionist reckons that God is present in the process of creation in a way that leaves no traces, so that God becomes inconspicuous. There are three possibilities:

a) A common opinion is that God gave the universe creational abilities, so that life could emerge by itself. I have two objections to such a view: firstly, if we attribute part of creation with creational abilities, we make the universe into an idol. That idea is heresy, as only God has the ability to create. Secondly, DNA, and the information it contains, is a prerequisite for life, but DNA does not exist when life does not exist. DNA had to be present before life or when life came into being. It is difficult to understand where DNA could have existed in the cosmos before life existed. According to professor James Tour (see pages 189, 219) there is no scientific evidence for the spontaneous origin of DNA. It is a too complex molecule to be the result of randomness.

b) The second view argues that God may steer evolution and control mutations, but Darwinism refutes the notion that evolution is controlled, preferring the view that evolution is random and without any plan or purpose. Moreover, we know mutations are almost always

harmful and cause disease and malformations. If we believe God is responsible for mutations, we make Him responsible for these disorders. According to the prevailing view, evolution is a non-governed process, and even God cannot control a non-governed process. Christian evolutionists, e.g. John Polkinghorne[227], believe that God has controlled mutations. I prefer to think that God has governed development by supplying intentional information in the form of, among other things, orphan genes.

c) The third option is that God has intervened in history few times. The first time, when human beings were given cognitive skills and souls. This implies God has been absent from the time of the Big Bang until human beings came into existence, which is a few billion years. The second intervention is considered to be at the incarnation of Christ, when the Virgin Mary became pregnant. Later, God has intervened in the form of Jesus' resurrection from the dead and his ascension. After the ascension, God again absented himself from our physical reality.

When we know less about conditions regarding the development of life, we have a gap in our knowledge. Some people may have resorted to God as an explanation for phenomena we cannot explain. If new knowledge at a later date allows us to find a natural explanation, then God has to be replaced with this new knowledge. This phenomenon is called 'God of the gaps' and is very unscientific. In reality, this means God can never be used as an explanation for anything in life, because we do not know if we will find a natural explanation later[228]. The fear of resorting to using 'God of the gaps' as an explanation has led some Christian Darwinists to refuse to explain even the origins of life as a creation act of God. Furthermore, room for God in the development of the diversity of life is removed completely in the theory of evolution. God is then no longer relevant to modern people, as they have no need for him.

Evolution is considered to be random. Consequently, it has no goals, plan or purpose. It is a blind process that cannot choose or steer towards a goal. If human beings are also a random product of evolution, then human beings have no deeper purpose for life.

We have to choose!

Some, perhaps many, Christians believe in both creation and evolution. Something in life is created, while some other thing is caused by evolution. There may be different reasons for that. Nevertheless, we actually have to choose between evolution and creation. Either macroevolution is possible, or macroevolution is not possible. There cannot be 'a little' macroevolution. The law of logic that states that contradictions cannot occur says that we must choose between one of two possibilities. (The law of non-contradiction). If macroevolution is not possible, there is no reason to believe that evolution explains the diversity life. We have to emphasize once more that microevolution is not able to create new life forms.

In November 2017, a monumental work on theistic evolution was published, a book of 1.007 pages written by many authors. The book is called *Theistic Evolution*, and the editor-in-chief is J.P. Moreland, a professor of philosophy. This book tackles the subject of theistic evolution using scientific, philosophical and theological arguments. I recommend that anyone in Christian leadership, and anyone who teaches creation in Christian schools and educational institutions, familiarizes themselves with the content of this book. This book aims to argue against the teaching of BioLogos, the world's leading center for Christian evolution. BioLogos has had a very significant effect on Christianity in many countries. Since I am a proponent of Intelligent Design I fear that BioLogos 'acceptance of naturalistic evolution may be harmful. We know for some Christian evolutionists, their embrace of evolutionary theory will end with them becoming atheists. This happens most frequently among academics, who lose faith in objective morality, and that life has some meaning or purpose. The well-known professor Bill Provine tried to combine Christian faith and evolution, but without success, as he could find no signs of a designer in evolution. He also lost faith that human beings have free will, and finally rejected the existence of an afterlife.

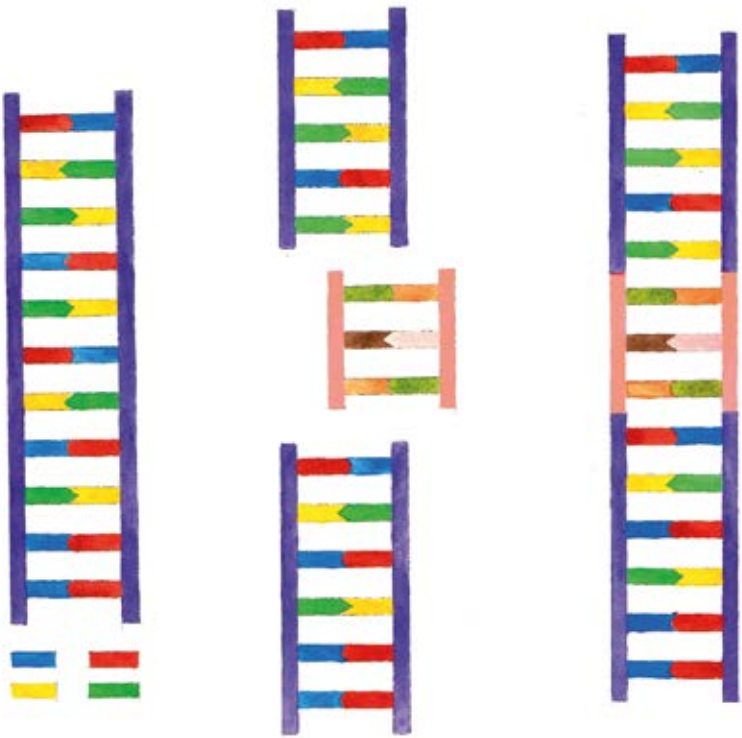
B. The second view that Christians can have about the origin of life is called young earth creationism. Adherents of this view believe that the Earth is 'young', i.e. less than 10.000 years old, while science says it is

some billion years old. Personally, I have found that arguing for Young Earth Creationism among non-Christians is unsuccessful. In my opinion, arguments for Young Earth Creationism are best presented to people with a well-founded Christian faith. Norman Geisler, an American classical Christian apologist[229], has said in an online article that he has struggled with arguments for and against Young Earth Creationism for fifty years and has concluded the following[230]:

1. Accepting Young Earth Creationism is not of fundamental importance to faith.
2. Young Earth Creationism is not a test of orthodox classical Christian understanding.
3. Young Earth Creationism is not a condition of salvation.
4. Young Earth Creationism is not a test of Christian brotherhood.
5. Young Earth Creationism should not be a topic that leads to division in churches.
6. Creation as fact is more important than the time of creation.
7. There are other doctrines that are more important than the age of the earth.

And I agree with Geisler's conclusion.

C. The third view of creation that Christians have, was previously called Old Earth Creationism. Today, this term is little used and has been replaced by Intelligent Design. Intelligent Design is a purely scientific line of thought that does not include theology and so does not address the question of who/what is this intelligent designer, even though the majority of followers of Intelligent Design are Christians. Progressive Creation is a line of thought that combines Intelligent Design with Christian faith. I have found that Progressive Creation fits best with my personal views. In the book, *The Majesty and Mystery of Life*[231], I present arguments for Progressive Creation. Hugh Ross[232], an American astrophysicist, has a website dedicated to Progressive Creation called *Reasons to Believe*[233]. Ross has also written several books.



ORPHAN-GENE. A schematic drawing that shows how an orphan-gene is added to DNA. To the left there is an ordinary DNA strand. The DNA in the middle of the illustration is divided in two pieces. In the gap a new piece of DNA (with different colors), is inserted. The three parts are then spliced. To the right we see the final DNA which is different from the original, containing new information in the form of an orphan gene. (An ordinary gene contains on average of about 1000 DNA letters).

Orphan genes

My medical background has made it natural for me to be more interested in biological issues than cosmological ones. When I heard about orphan genes, I felt they fitted well with Progressive Creation. Orphan genes are genes specific to one species and are not found in other animal species. So, they are unique to a particular species and cannot have originated from other species. This means they have no evolutionary kinship with other genes. My interpretation of this is that the best explanation for orphan genes is an Intelligent Cause. To put it clearly, I have no problem with seeing orphan genes as an expression of God's Logos. Orphan genes are

A nucleoside strand with 22 letters is called micro-RNA. Micro-RNA may also be specific for one specific species. They have various functions; an important task is to regulate gene activity. Species-specific micro-RNAs are hardly produced by evolutionary mechanisms.

part of an organism's DNA and contain information. The addition of new information to an organism's DNA in the form of orphan genes could lead to the existing species being transformed into a whole new species, and a new organism would result. In this way God could use some of the raw material he has already created to create a new species. There is also a group of substances called micro-RNA, which are also specific to one species. We know these RNAs have an important role in gene regulation and also have an impact on the formation of new proteins.

Progressive Creation

Those who think our reality cannot be explained without reference to intelligent causes in nature obviously see orphan-genes as a result of intelligent cause, i.e. orphan genes are fully compatible with a controlled development of life. For those Christians who do not rule out the Earth may be old, orphan genes are seen as a way God adds new information to existing life so that a new species can arise. The latter view is called progressive creation[235]. Some people may have the opinion that creating a species means creating something of nothing, but it can also mean creating something new by using part of what already exists as raw material. Adam was created from earth, not from nothing. The same goes for Eve. She was created from Adam's rib.

Recent research has discovered other substances unique to particular species. All animal species have proteins that are unique to their species. These proteins make up a very large percentage of the protein in some species. It is safe to assume that these proteins, which we could call 'singletons', as since they are not found anywhere else in the animal kingdom, come from orphan genes. These findings point to a unique act of creation and do not seem to be compatible with the theory of evolution. So progressive creation embraces the idea that the development of life is controlled by an

intelligence and that life is the way this governing intelligence wanted it to be. Progressive creation of planets and solar systems can be explained by the laws of physics, while orphan genes can justify the progressive creation of life. This means that Christians who have difficulty grasping that the earth is a few thousand years old today can explain the origins of life and the diversity of life as a result of intelligent cause, an intelligence that was there before life existed and which we usually call God. Up until now, people have accepted the idea that if the Earth is old, life must have evolved, and evolutionary theory is true. Over the past 150 years, millions of people have lost their Christian faith precisely for this reason. Pastors, teachers, preachers, youth workers, and counselors now have the opportunity to demonstrate to people that a Creator is present no matter the age of the Earth. This is the best explanation for the existence of a Creator that modern science can provide, and this is valuable knowledge for all theists.

Summary

Natural Science is divided into two areas: the physical sciences and the biological sciences. The physical sciences study nonliving matter and include fields such as meteorology, geology, oceanography, electricity, magnetism, astronomy and cosmology. The biological sciences study living matter. Biology and the study of life is very different from the physical sciences. Living organisms contain DNA, nonliving organisms do not contain DNA. Life requires biological information and consists of a nano-machinery that has thousands of different machines and motors in every cell. Life begins, life is lived, and life dies. Life needs nourishment. Life can reproduce itself, while nonliving matter cannot. Reproduction occurs all the time in biological matter. Life requires governance, regulation and control. Life requires cybernetic processes. Life is algorithmic. Therefore, I am convinced that the conflict between biology and faith will disappear when we acknowledge that biology has almost nothing in common with the other disciplines in the natural sciences. There are few metaphysical issues in the part of science that studies nonliving matter - what we also call non-life. In biology, on the other hand, we cannot sidestep metaphysical considerations. For this reason, it does not seem appropriate to use the same scientific reasoning for the biological sciences

as for the physical sciences. The simplest solution to this problem is to understand that the natural science consists of two parts: one part for 'hard' science, i.e. the physical sciences, and another for 'soft' science, i.e. the biological sciences.

The Problem of Evil

There are many indications God exists and many means of proof. While some may question this evidence, no one can prove that God does *not* exist. Atheists have one issue they cannot reconcile with the existence of an almighty God who is also loving and good: the problem of evil. Suffering and evil are the strongest arguments against the existence of God. The problem is universal, and each of us must try to find an answer.

For some, the problem of evil may be of little significance and not cause their faith any problems. They may be more concerned with what we might call 'the problem of good', i.e. where does all the good come from? The vast majority of us experience so much beauty and goodness, and it is natural to be grateful for that. We are all rather spoiled, because so many of us just take it for granted that we are healthy and well. Bizarrely, we find it so easy to blame God for all the evils in the world, but we do not find it so natural to thank and praise him for all the beautiful things in life. 'If God does not exist, whom shall we go to?' asked C. K. Chesterton. We may also wonder what kind of world we would have without God. Not all atheists are equally consistent; they do not believe in God, but still some of them blame God for the 2004 tsunami and other disasters. They are not only angry with God, but also with Christianity. The problem of evil exists only in the Judeo-Christian worldview. Hindus and Buddhists seek comfort and resignation in karma, and the suffering in the world does not seem to pose a problem for Islam, while atheism has no explanation or solution to the problem of evil.

It is common to divide the problem of evil into three categories:

1. Metaphysical evil. Where does evil come from?
2. Moral evil. Why do people do bad things?
3. Physical evil. Why do accidents and natural disasters happen?

Alvin Plantinga, a professor of philosophy, has dismissed the problem of evil as a valid argument for repudiating the existence of God and solved the intellectual side of the problem. His proof is so well known that there are hardly American philosophers, not even those of an atheist persuasion, who will counter Plantinga's argument, which is analytically and philosophically clear and unambiguous. So, the problem of evil cannot be used to prove that God does not exist. We need to be very clear about that. Plantinga's argument is called 'Plantinga's free-will defense'.[236, 237] The argument is basically as follows: Since God has given men free will, it is not possible for him to control the choices people make, which thus created an opening for the possibility of evil. Plantinga's argument does not intend to defend either the existence of God of free will, but to show that the argument against theism is ineffective.

We need to note that whoever uses the problem of evil to reject a loving God, accepts the existence of evil. However, to say something is evil, we must have a frame of reference with which to define evil. Evil is the opposite of good. Evil has good as its reference point. Evil is evil in relation to, or compared to, good. So, when we accept that evil exists, we accept that the good also exists. C. S. Lewis was a great apologist. In his youth, he was an atheist. Lewis wrote a total of twenty-five Christian books. In *Mere Christianity*, which is one of his most famous books, Lewis rejects the idea that the existence of evil is incompatible with the existence of God. If we are to assess whether something is good or evil, we must have an objective standard to which to refer. Without such a standard, it is impossible to characterize anything as good or evil, which means that an action, person or situation can only be described as unjust in relation to a standard of perfect justice, from which it deviates. Then, if evil cannot be defined as evil except in relation to the good that is its opposite, then this question

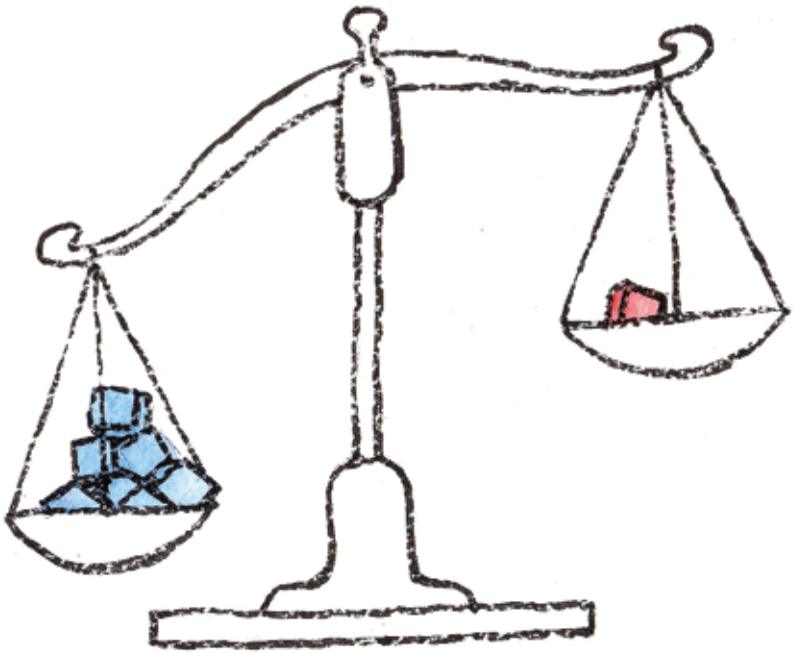
emerges: Where does this standard that helps us to know what is true, good and fair come from?

Many people believe that such a standard is subjective, something we ourselves define, but in that case, we write off this standard being objective and absolute. We humans have an innate understanding of what is right and wrong, true and false, just and unjust. We all have an inherent moral code, or a moral compass. This comes into direct conflict with the view of atheism that claims our existence is meaningless and without a purpose. Naturalism argues that all our thoughts and opinions are due to random reactions in our nerve cells. This also applies to our thoughts and opinions on morality, which therefore cannot serve as a moral standard. The best conclusion is that the moral standard we all have within us is objective and put there by the Creator himself, by God. Therefore, the problem of evil becomes a confirmation of God's existence.

Atheists define the 'good' as anything that makes life richer and better. Morality then revolves around what enriches human life, or what makes life poorer. Since evil presupposes good, atheists may feel compelled to reject evil. This also includes Richard Dawkins, who says that there is no purpose, nor any good or evil in our universe. He believes evil does not exist, but if so, then the problem of evil also disappears!

The emotional side of the problem of evil will always be there. How can an almighty God allow so much suffering and evil in the world? All the suffering in the world seems to indicate that God does not have the power or desire to eliminate evil. We would not want to believe in a God like that, and we would find it difficult or impossible to believe in a God who could not prove his omnipotence by eliminating evil. If believing in God proves difficult, we have a tendency to turn away from him, but what will we turn to? That's the big question.

We might as well admit that there is no apposite solution to the problem of evil. We will never get rid of it. We can process it rationally and analyze it so that we understand it in depth, but we will never get rid of it. Nevertheless, we can gain an understanding of the problem in such a way that our faith is not broken. Even those who use the problem of evil to reject the existence of God will not be able to get rid of evil in our reality. Evil is always there, even if we deny the existence of God.



The significance of the problem of evil is never able to outweigh all the facts that show God's omnipotence.

There is no sense in evil, therefore, we should not try to understand it. Instead, we should use our cunning and our powers to fight it.

As a Christian, a person loves God and trusts him, even when it can be difficult to understand him. The fact that we do not understand everything God does should not lead to loss of faith, devotion, or love for him. We do not always get answers to these questions: 'Why, God?' or 'How long, God?' The Bible brings us hope, but it does not explain evil. People mentioned to in the Bible were more concerned with how long evil would last than why evil exists. Evil lies beyond our comprehension. We do not have a perfect answer to what evil is. Some say that since God has created everything, he must also have created evil. Evil is not a substance that exists, evil is the absence of good. When goodness is lacking, we have evil in its place. The same can be said of darkness. Darkness as such does not exist. Darkness is the absence of light. On this basis, Norman Geisler rejects the notion that evil comes from God[238]. The Bible says that evil comes from the Evil One, whom we call the devil or Satan. According to Christian

faith, the evil of the world is due to man disobeying God. The first human beings listened to the voice of the Evil One and did not take God's Word seriously. Christianity calls this act 'The Fall'. This is the second point in the Christian worldview. No other religion has this view of the evil we see in the world. The Fall implies that the disobedience of the first two human beings is the cause of evil. As a result of the Fall, human beings developed a sinful nature, while God is loving. That is a trait of part of God's nature.

One way to describe the situation is as follows:

1. God created everything perfectly.
2. God created human beings with free will.
3. Free will is the cause of evil. So evil can arise from the perfect because of the effects of free will.

Alvin Plantinga grants that the most common explanation for the problem of evil is that humans have free will. We are created in God's image, with the freedom to make conscious choices. We are born with the ability to choose. We can choose good or evil. We can choose right or wrong. We make choices ourselves; we are not forced to make choices. This also means that we can choose to love God, or to reject him. The Creator has given us this freedom. Our personal choices are the main cause of evil in the world. Why, then, has the Creator equipped us with the ability to choose if this is the cause of evil? Could he not have created us without free will? That would have made us robots. God could control what he wanted us to do, but then we would not have been independent people with a consciousness. If we believe in eternal life and that we shall be there forever, we believe that God has actually decided that only those who voluntarily choose to have him as Lord in this life will be with him in the life to come. It is guaranteed there will be no evil in eternity. People who do not want God as a master in this life are also expressing the fact they do not want him as a master in the one to come.

Imagine a love affair between two people. If they were like robots and did not have free will, an independent and deliberate choice would not be behind the decision to live with another human being. Warm feelings would not have brought them together; they would just be doing what

they were programmed to do. The ability to choose makes us morally conscious people and elevates the quality of our lives. Without this ability, we would not be able to choose to do what we want.

Another way to describe the problem of evil is as follows:

1. If God is perfect love, he would defeat evil.
2. If God is almighty, he could have defeated evil.
3. Evil is not defeated.
4. Therefore, there is no such God.

The answer to this argument is that evil cannot be defeated without human beings losing their freedom. Love is the greatest good, but love presupposes freedom, as described in the previous paragraph. So, the only way to destroy evil is to take away free will and thus the ability to do good from love. Consequently, we then find ourselves in the situation where removing evil is in itself an evil deed, since it deprives us of the opportunity to choose to love.

The last question can be written in a different way that gives us a good answer:

1. If God is perfect love, he would defeat evil.
2. If God is almighty, he could have defeated evil.
3. Evil is not yet defeated.
4. One day God will defeat evil.

This rationale shows that while evil has not yet been defeated, evil will not always exist. The Christian hope declares that one day evil will be defeated forever.

There is one more way to analyze this issue:

1. Evil exists.
2. If evil exists, then good must also exist.
3. If both evil and good exist, there must be a moral law.
4. A moral law requires a legislator.
5. Therefore, God exists.

The first thing we can agree on is that almost all evil is caused by human beings. We are very good at hurting each other, destroying for each other, and making life difficult for each other in many different ways. Human beings are skilled, creative and innovative, yet with every advance we make, we also become better at hurting each other. The war industry is quick to tap into technological advances. We are so good at killing each other that we can now do this at a distance with drones. An operator can sit in a room on one continent and let drones drop bombs on targets on another continent. When we distance ourselves from an event, it becomes less personal and does not concern us so much. We can have a strong reaction when we witness a tragedy, e.g. a lethal car accident. This can make a deep impact on us, because we see it directly. The experience causes us mental struggles and sleepless nights. If we see a similar incident on the TV news, we experience it differently, because the incident happened so far away that it does not affect us the same way. In the deluge of news to which we are exposed, we might even forget about the event. While humanism believes that we humans are basically good, and that various external circumstances can make us behave badly, the Christian faith, on the other hand, sees human sin and rebellion against God as the basal cause of evil. Hence, we face two completely opposite views on the evil in the world.

There is another aspect of the problem of evil we also have to mention. The problem of evil can seem to be enormous and challenging for those who are healthy and have little to complain about. Most atheists who use the problem of evil as a reason to reject God live in the West and enjoy life without experiencing much trouble. Nevertheless, those who live in a poor country, and who really do have much to complain about, God is their greatest comfort when faced with sickness, adversity, and hardship. This kind of faith has been a support for millions of people over the centuries. Poor people are often deeply thankful for being able to turn to God and are happy to have the security of being able to ask for help in difficult situations. Sometimes it can seem that debating the problem of evil is a luxury available only to those who do not want God to exist.

Personally, I feel it is a help to think of this life as a waiting room. We are only here for a short time. We're waiting for something that is far better. This waiting room has three doors: one entrance and two exits. I think that

one of the most important things we can do while we are in this waiting room is to choose which exit to use when we leave the room. The most certain thing we know is that we are all going to leave the room; it is not somewhere we can stay. To me, this means we cannot tackle the problem of evil without bringing God and eternity into the picture. The Christian faith tells us there is an eternal and perfect heaven waiting for us if we choose the correct exit. In this heaven, there will be no more death, tears will be wiped away, and there will be no sorrow - only perfect joy.[239] The believer will be in this heaven forever. Eternity is a term we cannot understand - after spending a year in heaven, we will have an eternity left. After a thousand years, we still have an eternity left. After a billion years, we still have an eternity left. Eternity never ends. In eternity, there is no time, so we lose the concept of time. Time will be no more. In any case, no one will be bored and not know what to do! Forever not only means time, but also the quality of time. Everything will be perfect. Those who have this kind of hope experience extra power to endure the suffering this life throws at them.

For those who choose not to close their eyes to the afflictions of their neighbor, there is one good side of suffering. Knowing that a fellow human being is suffering can lead you to ask yourself if there is anything you can do to ease the situation. Most often, there is little we can contribute practically, but being there, stretching out a hand, giving a smile, showing consideration - none of this is in vain. In this way we can encourage a fellow human being while growing ourselves. As a doctor, I learned a great term that I have thought about a lot: 'atrophy due to inactivity'. Muscle atrophy happens when a person becomes inactive. Inactive is the opposite of active - it means being passive, doing nothing. Atrophy is a medical term that means 'wastage'. So, muscle atrophy means wastage and decay because a person is being inactive. Medically speaking, it means that unused muscles become weak and slack. What we do not use, we lose. This also pertains to the spiritual part of a human being. People who frequently offer comfort and kind words automatically become very adept at offering comforting and saying kind words. They gain an increased understanding of the well-being of others and are on the lookout for those who need a helping hand. Conversely, people who are constantly sour and grumpy easily become very good at being sour and grumpy.

Another good thing is that if people have a good life without too much difficulty, it can lead to them being grateful for what they have and that they have been spared from the difficulties afflicting other people. This can make people less demanding. Grateful, undemanding people spread light and joy around them.

Is evil always something negative, or are there situations in life where doing evil can be beneficial? What about a group of hostages being held captive and whose lives are in such unknown danger that the only way to save them is to kill the hostage-taker? So, you kill one person in order to save a lot of people. We let the doctor vaccinate our children even if it hurts and leads to crying, because not vaccinating can lead to a greater evil. Over the course of a life time, many such situations can occur where we have to do things we would rather not do to avert something that could turn out to be even worse.

When it comes to natural disasters, we must accept that nature is the way it is and that disasters will occur, but it is wrong to view natural disasters as God's judgment on human evil. We must never say that those injured or killed in a natural disaster died because of sin. We are all sinners. The Bible gives no answer as to why natural disasters happen, but the evil behaviour of human beings - greed, pride and selfishness - often amplifies the problems natural disasters cause.

We are allowed to complain and protest. We can shout to God in anger and despair. The Bible is full of people who exhibit these emotions, even though they were devout people. The book of Psalms contains more psalms of lamentation than of joy. Suffering is part of our fate, and the Bible allows us to complain. Complaint is the way we voice the pain, for ourselves, for all people, often as an expression of the pain that weighs down the whole world. Complaint is the voice of faith as it struggles to live with unanswered questions and incomprehensible suffering.

The best answer to the problem of evil

What is the solution to the problem of evil? Naturalism and atheism lack a good explanation for evil. Atheists do not believe the universe has been created, but has come into being by itself and has evolved over billions

of years. According to naturalism, this development should move from the simple to the complex, and end with something perfect. By the end of the process, evil would have long since been eradicated. Nevertheless, the opposite is the case. Evil is as great as ever before. The Bible says that evil entered our world when the first people disobeyed and broke God's commandments. Since then, evil has been a part of our personality.

If we are to provide the Christian answer to the evil in the world in three words, they would be Jesus, the Cross, and Calvary. Jesus Christ came to Earth to be a mediator between God and human beings. Since God is holy and human beings are sinful, none other than the Son of God had to step in to reconcile humankind with the Creator. This happened by his atoning death on the Cross that had been erected on the hill called Calvary. The road back to God was opened when Jesus said, 'It is finished'. This is the message of victory, with hope for this life and the one to come. The Christian faith believes that God himself, through the suffering of his own Son, was willing to take on the punishment for us all.

Peter Kreeft is a Catholic philosopher who has written many books on Christian faith and apologetics.[240] For him, the Eucharist is a meal of remembrance that always reminds us that Jesus Christ has defeated evil and the Evil One. The Eucharist is, for Kreeft, the Christian answer to the evil in the world, testifying that God himself was willing to suffer so that human beings can walk free.

Liberal Theology

Liberal theology is an attempt to adapt religious thoughts to a modern culture, and is a way of thinking that rejects the conviction that God has revealed himself to people through the Bible. Liberal theology construes God, not as a person separated from the world, but as the unity that permeates the world. After discarding God, liberal theology constructs its own 'God' that is visible, understandable and acceptable. Liberal theology encompasses a wide range of views, so providing a complete overview in a short chapter is not possible. I will content myself with introducing you to the basics.

The Enlightenment formed the basis for a change in the Christian faith. In this respect, Kant's claim that human beings cannot have a sure knowledge of God was of greatest importance[241]. Reason was elevated to be the highest authority, and any statement of faith and truth had to concur with reason to be accepted. Theology had to be based on reason, not on any external authorities, as reason and science were now considered as being the means of showing the way to the truth. God was considered to be an inherent part of nature, the God of evolution, and much greater than the God of the old form of theology, who did some occasional miracles. The God of Christianity had roots in the supernatural, while God of liberal theology has its roots in naturalism. The Enlightenment also ushered in a different view of human beings. Less weight was placed on the idea that human beings are sinful and need a savior, and the concept of sin itself was toned down. It was thought a better understanding of

God could be gained by studying human personality, and emphasis was placed on human freedom and its capacity to do what God wanted.

The view of Jesus Christ also changed, in that greater emphasis was placed on Jesus' humanity. Many people rebutted the divinity of Jesus, the claim that he was the Son of God, and that he suffered a vicarious death. In doing this, the doctrines of the incarnation and the atonement were also repudiated. Sin is an alien word in the vocabulary of liberal theology and the tendency is to avoid its mention. If humankind is not beset by sin, no savior is needed. Thus, it follows there was no reason for Jesus to have come here, and so liberal theology also firmly rejects the virgin birth. Jesus was recast as the perfect man of God who had no qualitative differences from the rest of humanity. Basically, Jesus was reduced to a role model. As Jesus himself said he did not know when he would return to Earth, he was no longer considered omniscient. Liberal theology effectively reduced Christianity to a theory, or as some have uttered, to a hobby.

Liberal theology also radically changed the view of the Bible. Previously, the Bible had served as the absolute authority within Christian faith. Now this authority became subjective and was based on the reader's own spiritual experience with the text. Absolute authority no longer existed in any external sources, such as the Bible, the Church or tradition, but rather in human reason, conscience and intuition. The Bible was no longer considered to have been written under the inspiration of the triune God, and its authors were thought to have been influenced by their historical context and by the religious beliefs of neighboring countries. Liberal theologians also refute that the first eleven chapters of the Bible can be perceived as words inspired by God, but consider them to be myths. Liberal theology does not regard the Bible as a book of revelation, but deliberates it should be approached and analyzed in the same way as all other ancient literature, and each book of the Bible understood within its own context.

God is diminished

Liberal theology does not consider God to be the ultimate authority, but rather human beings themselves. Human beings can ask the questions such as: Who decides what I can and cannot do? Who has the last word

- the Bible or the fluctuating ideas of human beings? The liberal Christian puts their own thoughts ahead of the message of the Bible. The liberal Christian is allowed to question, and possibly reject, anything in the Bible they find unreasonable and incomprehensible, and in rejecting the Bible, they also reject the God of the Bible.

Liberal theology may reject the idea that God created by his Word, his Logos, and thereby, also disagrees with the Gospel of John, the first verse of which indicates that Christ was present at creation: *Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made*. John indicated that Jesus had his being from eternity and that he was there when everything was created.

Jesus not only created the universe, but also all forms of life, but liberal theists may also reject the pre-existence of Jesus. Liberal theology has two views on the origins of the universe: that it was created by God, or that it came into being of its own accord. Liberal theology thus resembles deism more than theism. Some liberal theologians think that the stories about Jesus in the New Testament give us rules for a Christian way of life, but that none of the other books in the New Testament are relevant for Christian doctrine or Christian living.

Liberal theology has a secular view of the truth, and some of its adherents think Christianity is not the only truth about God. For its adherents, the most important thing about religion is not that it is true, but that it satisfies us emotionally and intellectually. One of the foundations of classical Christianity is that that the Christian God is the creator of everything: the universe, our life, our earth, and human beings. Classical Christian faith therefore tells the total truth concerning our reality. It means that the Christian faith is not confined to a cramped room on the second floor of our house, but that it belongs on both floors (see page 158), and that it provides us with the Truth.

Liberal theology's most powerful weapon is ambiguity, and it uses this to abuse sacral words and phrases to satisfy people's religious feelings. Instead of letting words and phrases have their usual meaning, liberal theologians may add another meaning that neither listeners nor readers of a book or an article perceive. Liberal theologians might mean something completely different to a classical theistic view when they mention

God. God does not mean an almighty and sovereign creator, but rather refers to that which is the basis of our existence, that which represents the human essence. For a liberal theologian, God can mean an impersonal power of creation. When they say the Creed, 'I believe in God the Father, the creator of heaven, and the earth', it may mean something completely different to them than to an ordinary churchgoer.

One aspect of liberal theology is that it is syncretistic. Syncretism is the worship of a god, or several other gods, alongside the one Judeo-Christian God. God is not abolished, but his character is altered so that there is room to include other things the liberal considers important to hold in reverence. Attempts to unify Christianity and Islam into a common religion is an example of syncretism.

Liberal theology led to liberation theology, which embraces the struggle for national liberation and the fight against poverty and oppression. Radical feminism has also found an avenue of expression in liberal theology. The Church of Sweden has recently moved away from seeing God as a father, and sees God now an asexual entity.[242] In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus has taught us to say 'Our Father', but it seems that a humanistic approach is more attractive to the modern liberal Swedish church.

Open Theism[243] and Process Theology[244] are more recent expressions of liberal theology. Open Theology believes the future is uncertain and unknown, even to God. God cannot thus act as a guarantor of his promises, as the autonomy of the universe means that it follows the rules of nature and therefore can override God. The God of Open Theism is a well-meaning God who does not have power over everything. Reducing the omnipotence of God is an important item on the agenda of Open Theism, whereas the classical Christian faith has always taught that God has full knowledge of all aspects of the future. Process Theology believes that everything develops, including the universe and God, so that the commandments and rules God once gave to human beings do not apply to all people and at all times.

For many, liberal theology represents a spiritual home, a community for friendship, and an opportunity to live out their ideals. Others see liberal theology as a 'third way' that lies between classical Orthodox Christian faith and secular humanism. One particular branch of liberal

theology emphasizes social justice, e.g. fighting poverty, as the most important aspect of the gospel. Preaching the gospel about the need for personal repentance from sin then slips into the background. Individuals are considered to have sinned, but sin is seen as an aspect of society, and society must thus be reformed. Politics is considered to be the means for this transformation. Supporters of this theological direction believe that this life is the primary and the only reality, so they are not concerned with the importance the classic Christian message places on the afterlife. Classic Christian faith believes that the kingdoms of this world will come to an end, but that the Kingdom of God (the afterlife) is eternal.

From reading various newspapers and watching debates on TV and the internet, it seems to me that liberal theology has gained a significant foothold in a large part of the western world. Liberal theology seems to start with human reason, i.e. something created, as opposed to God the Creator himself. Its approach is different from the simple, trusting faith that leads to a personal relationship with God and Jesus Christ; conversely, it is a pragmatic form of Christianity which lacks an eternal dimension.

Speaking personally, I believe God is the starting point for all the information associated with our reality. All information requires an intelligent source, and so I have no trouble believing God is the author of all the information contained in nature. He created DNA in such a way that it could be a central hub that contains all the information necessary for life. I think of DNA as God's Logos, the living Word. If the main purpose behind the creation of everything is human beings, and that human beings should live forever with the triune God, I have no logical difficulty believing that this God wants to have close contact with us so he can communicate his will and give us clear rules for how we should live. I believe the Bible is God's voice to us. I do not know of any other book that can be compared to the Bible. The Bible gives us accurate information about how we can relate with God and live with him forever. I have no difficulty believing that an almighty and omniscient God can reveal himself to people and give them the prophetic messages recorded in the Holy Scripture, which are his special revelation.

The Bible tells us about another serious state of affairs: The Bible being the basis on which our lives will be assessed and judged on the last day. On that day, learned works written by intelligent people, faculties and bishop-councils will count for nothing.

To summarize:

- Christianity is a religion of revelation whose source is God.
- Liberalism is a human philosophy whose source is human thought.

- Christianity is eternal and immutable, as is God.
- Liberalism is changing and is open to alterations due to new insights.

- Christianity sees human nature as sinful and that people need salvation.
- Liberalism views human beings with unrealistic optimism and believes that people can save themselves.

- Christianity tells of Christ's grace and salvation.
- Liberalism has transformed Christianity into an ethical code consistent with both secular and religious humanism that has no power to transform human nature.

- Christianity is based on the Bible and offers the power of God to help us live our lives.
- Liberalism reduces the Bible to what is acceptable to reason and does not understand that God's power works in people's lives.

- Christianity is based on the fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead in bodily form.
- Liberalism may have different views and interpretations of the resurrection.

Summary of tenets of liberal theology:

1. Scripture.
Liberal theology believes that the Bible is not God's inspired word to humankind. The Bible is considered the work of people, and its commandments and injunctions are therefore not binding. The Bible should be interpreted using human reason.

2. Creation.
Some liberal theologians may have a deistic view, i.e. they believe God created the universe, but that he has subsequently stayed in the background and has been passive. Others have a theistic view and believe that God is involved in the world and human affairs. Many liberals are followers of 'methodological naturalism'. They believe that our physical universe is perpetuating the laws God has laid down in nature, but that God does not intervene in the processes of nature. They believe God does not exist in our physical reality, but he can be found in our metaphysical reality, where he has an impact on our view of values, morality, and religious beliefs. Most people with a liberal view of Christian faith are advocates of theistic evolution and believe that humankind is descended from apes.

3. Family Life
The Bible is clear about the importance of the family. The family is a pillar of, and prerequisite for, a good life both for the individual and for society as a whole. Just as our body consists of cells, society consists of families, and a family consists of a mother, a father, and children. The Bible proclaims that sexuality is limited to the marriage of one woman and one man. The Bible pronounces that all other forms of sexuality are sinful. Few people preach Christian sexual morality today. The Old Testament recommends monogamy, but this commandment was broken quite often.

4. Truth
The Bible proclaims that Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Christianity acknowledges that Truth exists, that it constitutes the Christian faith, and that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who came to

Earth to show us the Truth. Liberal theology is influenced by modern ideas that deny truth.

5. Zion.
Liberal theology prefers a view of Jews and the state of Israel compatible with replacement theology[245], i.e. they do not see the Jews as God's chosen people. This view argues that the Christian Church has taken over all the promises God has made to the Jews, and that the Jews no longer have any special God-given role in the over-arching plan of history.

6. Sin
Liberal theology is not concerned with sin. If there is no sin, there is no need of a savior. At that juncture, the Christian faith unravels, as its main message is that Jesus Christ has paid for the sin and guilt of all mankind by his death on the cross and his resurrection. That is why he was incarnated.

H. Richard Neibuhr has described liberal theology as follows:

A God without wrath
brought men without sin
into a kingdom without judgment
through the ministrations of
a Christ without a cross.[246]

Is the Bible Credible?

The Bible is the world's best-selling book. It has been printed in 2,800 languages and has shaped cultures and civilizations. The first English-language Bible published in the United States contained a recommendation from Congress, which demonstrates how important the Bible was seen to be as a guarantee of a free society. The views expressed in the Bible were formative in ending slavery, preventing the abuse of children, establishing freedom and dignity for women, founding hospitals and schools, and ensuring freedom and equality for all. The Bible has also been a guideline for Christian scientists. Besides this, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights would never have been possible without the Bible. Other religions have some form of the 'golden rule' that says we should treat our neighbor the way we would want them to treat us, but no other religion has the equivalent of the Great Commandment, the second part of which states we should love our neighbor as ourselves.[247]

The Bible has many messages, including rules for living. If these were followed, humankind would thrive. These rules are not designed to prevent us from being happy or to reduce our well-being, as is often thought. The rules were given to help us on the path of life, so we can avoid difficulties. The Bible contains exciting stories about many different people, words of wisdom, and psalms about many of the aspects of being human in different life situations. Nevertheless, the most important thing about the Bible is that it is a book of revelation. It is not about God's word to us; it is God's Word. All worldviews have some written text that forms their

theoretical basis. Islam has the Qur'an, naturalists have the Humanist Manifesto,[248] communists the Communist Manifesto. Christianity has the Bible as the supreme authority.

When we say that the Bible is a book of revelation, it means that it gives us knowledge that would otherwise be hidden from us. Christians believe the Bible shows us God's character and personality, that it shows us an almighty Creator, but the main message of the Bible is to show us Jesus Christ as the only savior of the world. The Bible is composed of two sections: The Old Testament, which is about the relationship between God and the Jewish nation, and the New Testament, which contains the message of Jesus Christ. In this chapter, I will focus on discussing the credibility of the New Testament.

One common position is to regard the Bible as an ordinary historic text, i.e. that it had human authors and only expresses what these people thought and believed. This stance rejects the idea that people can be directly inspired by God to write down the message they believe they have received. Peter, who had been with Jesus for three years and had experienced the pain of denying him, writes in his second letter that 'the men of the Holy God spoke driven by the Holy Ghost'.[249]

The Christian faith has as its basis the New Testament stories about Jesus Christ. The credibility of Christianity stands or falls on whether we can count on the Bible telling the truth about Jesus and early Christianity. The question is thus: How likely is it that the New Testament is true?

When considering old texts, there are certain factors of decisive importance: the number of manuscripts available, how much time has passed between what is described and when the text was written, and whether the distribution of the manuscript was over a large or small area. Furthermore, emphasis is placed on whether conformity exists between texts about the same topic. If a text is complete, it is easier to make a pronouncement about its authenticity and historicity. The New Testament (NT) consists of twenty-seven books and letters written by nine authors over a period of 20-50 years. The New Testament is the most authoritative and best -authenticated work of antiquity, much more so than other famous works from ancient times.

There are no original copies of the New Testament. Copies of the

original text exist, and these are called manuscripts. In cases where many copies exist, there are very insignificant discrepancies between them, which is a sign that they differ little from the original. What is of great importance is whether manuscripts from across a large area, e.g. such as various places in the Middle East, North Africa and Europe, match each other. On the other hand, if there are many manuscripts that diverge significantly, and especially about important matters, they cannot be relied upon in the same way as sets that match. The existing manuscripts of the NT are distinguished by having few errors. No errors are such that they will diminish the credibility and reliability of the text, which always concur exactly with historical and academic facts. There are 5,700 handwritten manuscripts of the New Testament in Greek, and more than 10,000 manuscripts in other languages, e.g. Syrian, Coptic, Latin, Arabic, Georgian, and Armenian.[250] Latin is distinguished by the fact that nearly 10,000 manuscripts exist in this language. In other words, there are approximately 15,000 manuscripts of the New Testament. Some of these are complete editions of the New Testament, others are individual books or pages, while a few are simply fragments. In Greek, there are more than a hundred thousand quotes and written comments from the New testament in the writings of the church fathers. If these are combined, the whole of the New Testament could be reproduced, apart from a few verses.

When it comes to secular literature from antiquity, 643 manuscripts of Homer's *Iliad* exist, but there are only seven manuscripts of Plato's writings. In comparison, the volume of New Testament manuscripts is overwhelming. Old classical works often have fewer than ten existing manuscripts. All the books and letters in the NT were written shortly after the actual events, most before the year 70 CE, the year Jerusalem and the temple there were razed to the ground by the Romans. This event is not mentioned in any of the Gospels, nor in the Acts of the Apostles, nor in any of the letters. The most likely explanation is therefore that the books of the New Testament were written before this happened. The Acts of the Apostles do not mention the deaths of Peter or Paul, which took place in about 65 CE. The four Gospels do not mention these either, so it is very likely the Gospels and Acts are written before 65 CE. Professor Craig Blomberg of Denver Seminary wrote to me in an email, in which

he said that Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians can be dated to 50-51 CE, and is the oldest text in the New Testament. Prof Blomberg also mentioned that scholars also think that the Letter of James was written at the end of the 40s, but this cannot be known for certain. So, it is likely that NT books were written within twenty-five years of the events they describe. On the other hand, there is a time gap of 700 years between the original work and later manuscripts of old classical works, and for some of the main works of Plato and Aristotle, this gap is 1.400-1.500 years.

Eyewitnesses

The four Gospels and Acts were written by people who were eye witnesses and who also drew on the testimony of other eye witnesses. In addition, the text in each of the four Gospels is very consistent and in concordance, and it is believed that more than 99% of the manuscripts are homogeneous. This fact is used to substantiate the claim that they originate from a very early text. Few people could read in Jesus' day, so the oral transmission of the message of Jesus' life and doctrine was important. It is commonly accepted that oral transmission was accurate. Among other things, it was easy for the listeners to control what was said. Several places in the New Testament we can get the impression that the text is like a creed, e.g. Jesus' descent from David, his birthplace in Bethlehem, his adolescence in Nazareth, and John's baptism at Jordan are regular traces. Such creeds stem from the earliest times and are of great importance in assessing the authenticity of the texts. In relation to eyewitnesses, it is generally agreed that myths cannot arise as long as the eye-witnesses are alive. If that had happened, they would have repudiated the narrative as false. It takes several generations for a legend to come into being, as it takes a long time for all memories of the person or event to disappear from cultural memory. If there are written records of the event, it is easy to reject legendary stories, and for this reason, historians reject the idea that the New Testament narratives are myths.

Paul's letters are valuable in relation to certain aspects of the historical Jesus. Even liberal theologians accept that seven or eight of Paul's letters are genuine. Many scholars believe Paul wrote his letters before

the Gospels were written down. Their narrative initially existed as oral tradition, especially in the form of creeds and hymns. Paul's letters contain several creeds that scholars date to between year 33 and year 48 after Christ. So, Paul drew on an oral tradition that he wrote down in his letters. This indicates that the first generation of Christians believed Jesus had risen from the dead, that he was God, and that he could bring salvation to humankind. These people had come to know Jesus personally. The Church Fathers were leaders of the first congregations, and they had known the Apostles and their faith. They thus constitute an important testimony to the truthfulness of the Christian faith. Most of their writings date from the years 95 to 150. Clement, who was Bishop of Rome,[251] uses the term 'The Lord' about Jesus, and used the definitive form of the noun, which is best explained by Clement believing Jesus was divine. Clement wrote that the Apostles received the gospel directly from Jesus. Polycarp was a bishop of Smyrna,[252] and he was a disciple of the Apostle John, who was his teacher and mentor. He therefore had first-hand knowledge of the Christian faith. He thought and taught essentially the same as Clement. The first Church Fathers had a doctrine consistent with the New Testament. Ignatius, who was Bishop of Antioch[253] was a disciple of Polycarp. Ignatius wrote about Jesus' deity, his atoning death, and his resurrection. Polycarp also refers to the virgin birth as a fact. He died as a martyr, supposedly thrown to the lions in the Colosseum at Rome.

There are ten known non-Christian texts about Jesus written within 150 years of his death. The three most famous of these were written by Flavius Josephus, Cornelius Tacitus, and Pliny the Younger. Scholars consider these manuscripts to be reliable. Their message can be summed up as follows: Jesus lived while Tiberius was Emperor of Rome; he was a pious man who did wonders; he had a brother named James; he was considered to be the Messiah; he fulfilled ancient prophecies; he was crucified under Pontius Pilate for blasphemy; when he died, darkness fell and an earthquake ensued; the disciples taught that he was risen from the dead; and they were willing to die for their faith. Christianity spread to Rome quickly. The disciples refused to believe in the Roman gods and they worshipped Jesus as their God.

Despite such documentation, people still claim that Jesus was not a historical person, or at least not the kind of person described in the

Gospels. A fairly common notion assumes that the story of Jesus is merely a repetition of ancient stories of people and beings who are supposed to save the world, e.g. Osiris and Mithras, but historians who have studied this idea say that the history of Jesus is not a mythological construct. The story of Jesus does not build on myths from surrounding countries about gods who died and arose. It is more likely that these mythical stories sprung from the stories of the Gospels, rather than that the Gospels being based on these ancient legends. There is great consensus among historians, both liberal and conservative, that Jesus was a historical person, and that the Gospels tell a truthful story about him. This website mentions a number of experts in history, archaeology and theology who confirm the credibility of the New Testament: see Reference 254.

There is one very important thing to consider: the people who wrote down the texts now in the New Testament considered that what they wrote was the word of God. They were meticulous about every word they wrote, and other literate people often checked they had not made any errors. Hans Johan Sagrusten[255] has written a fascinating book called *Det store puslespillet* (*The Great Puzzle*)[256] which gives an overview of how the Bible came into being. Sagrusten writes in a way that makes his book read like an exciting detective novel. The process by which the Bible became the authoritative book of Christian faith has been long and has been studied meticulously by conscientious scholars and language experts. Sagrusten quotes Bart Ehrman, a foremost critic of the Bible and of Christian faith.[258] Bart Ehrman started out as a young Christian and had the same background as William Lane Craig, one of the most prominent Christian apologists of our time,[258] but their beliefs evolved in different directions. Ehrman became an agnostic and then an atheist. Today Ehrman writes books that aim to make it intelligently impossible to be a Christian. Lane Craig has stated on the website *Reasonable Faith*,[259] that Ehrman's books are hugely destructive and have caused great problems for many Christians. Bart Ehrman is an expert on the New Testament and says there is no disagreement about the oldest texts. Lane Craig has said, that as far as he knows, the reliability of the New Testament texts has been confirmed with 99% certainty. So only 1% of the text is disputable. As a professional, Bart Ehrman agrees with this, but in his books, which are

intended for a mainstream audience, this 1%, is distorted and presented as a major problem. Nevertheless, the consensus among Bible interpreters is that this 1% is not of any academic significance. The doctrine of Christianity is clearly evident from the text available. In his famous apologetic masterwork McDowell[260]. has an eighteen-page section devoted to Bart Ehrman. Clearly, apologists think it is important to treat the problem of Ehrman's opinions very thoroughly, and they conclude Ehrman's criticism does not disrupt the central tenets of Christian belief. [261]

All this indicates that the New Testament is the best-preserved religious text from antiquity. The amount of preserved manuscripts, and their concordance, permits the conclusion that the text currently used as a basis for modern translations does not contain significant deviations from the original text.

The Existence of God

In this chapter, I will start by discussing the likelihood of the existence of an almighty Creator based on what we know from science, and conclude with looking at what the Christian faith can tell us about the image of God.

First of all, I need to establish that there is no 100% certain evidence for the existence of God. On the other hand, there is no evidence that God does not exist. All we have to deal with are the indications, probabilities, arguments and the results of modern science. For many people, significant personal experiences have brought them to a living faith in God. I choose to number what is popularly called 'proof of God', nevertheless I myself would call it strong circumstantial evidence. Science has a term called 'abductive reasoning'[262], which is particularly applicable when processing circumstances related to the origin of the universe and life itself. Abductive reasoning introduces what is called 'the best explanation'. We have no possibility for studying the origin of the universe itself, for it constitutes a one-time event that cannot be repeated, and therefore cannot be studied in the same way as ordinary science. We cannot recreate life, nor the universe. In such cases, we concede that we try to find the best and most likely explanation for the event, and conclude that this explanation is probably the correct one.

Arguments for the existence of God are of two kinds. I want to

concentrate on what are called empirical arguments. These are based on what nature can show us in terms of conditions best explained by the existence of God. The second type of argument is based on certain logical criteria and leads to the assumption that a First Cause must exist.

The following are what I find to be strong indications of the existence of a Creator God.

1. Why does anything exist at all? Where does everything come from if we exclude God? God is the origin of everything. Nothing cannot create anything. The fact that anything exists requires a cause. That pertains to everything, big or small. The Law of Casualty requires a reason why our universe was made. For me, God then becomes the only possible cause. God is the best explanation. God is eternal and un-created. He is spirit. This is a fundamental point in the Christian worldview.

2. The origin of the universe, which science calls the Big Bang. Science says that before the Big Bang, there was no matter, energy, time or space. Our universe of billions of galaxies, and an energy that sustains it all, came into being in fractions of a second. Our universe was made from nothing. The power that created it had to be outside the universe. That power was thus supernatural. It was outside nature, outside the cosmos. It was transcendental. Therefore, I have no difficulty believing in a supernatural power that created our universe from nothing. I am also somewhat amazed at the way some people can be so disparaging towards those who believe in such a power, as if it were more scientific to believe that the universe created itself out of nothing. That's like believing in the world's greatest miracle! I find it odd that atheists and materialists can believe in such a miracle, when they otherwise reject quite vehemently the idea that miracles can happen.

3. The fine tuning of the universe is dealt with at pages 182. A large number of constants of nature had to be set correctly almost at the moment of Big Bang. Big Bang gave rise to the two gases hydrogen and helium. Personally, I am very fascinated by these two gases being the primordial substances for all known elements due to reactions taking place in stars.

These processes had to be extremely accurate, and are best explained by intelligent activity.

4. Where do the Natural Laws come from? Our reality is characterized by a distinct order that demonstrates an inherent purpose and a plan. But dead nature, which lacks intelligence, can only be purposefully directed by an intelligence. The existence of the Natural Laws points to a legislator.

5. The Anthropic Principle is the Law of Human Existence[263], and as far as we know, it applies only to Earth. There are a number of conditions that need to be satisfied in order for a planet to have life. There is no proven life elsewhere in the cosmos. The Earth seems to be the big exception. The best explanation for life being found on Earth is an intelligent Power of Creation.

6. The origin of life. Materialists believe that life has come into being of its own accord. This is the prevailing scientific view, although there is no evidence to support it. Since life is impossible without DNA, a theory of the origins of life must be able to explain how DNA has come into being, but no such naturalistic theory exists. Another issue is the information contained in DNA. DNA contains all the specified information that living things need in order to live and reproduce. This information must have an intelligent source – no matter how much atheist scientists object to the idea.

7. The nano-machinery of life. The biology of the future will largely focus on this machinery, as it opens the door to a whole new area of biology. The ATP generator, kinesin, dynein and myosin are examples of such engines. Every single protein molecule may be regarded as a machine that undertakes vibrating movements.

8. Protein synthesis. I have tried to familiarize myself with all the processes needed to synthesize new proteins, and have been overwhelmed by the complexity and all the substances necessary. I cannot understand how such a system, which assumes the presence of a very large number

of chemical compounds with a very specific construction, design and structure, should be able to be created by random naturalistic processes. It seems impossible to me. As far as I am concerned, the correct conclusion is that the complexity of protein synthesis requires an intelligent designer.

I want to repeat the following: *Proteins could not come into being of their own accord until life existed.* Proteins are only produced in the protein factories called ribosomes. The ribosome, which would be needed to form the first protein on Earth, itself consists of about fifty proteins. Where did all these proteins come from if we exclude a Creator? As if that is not enough, ribosomes are located inside a cell, which consists of more than one million proteins. If a ribosome was to produce the first active protein, a large amount of proteins already had to exist for that to happen …

9. Human reason - our minds. Materialists say that humans are just advanced animals that are simply further along the evolutionary process. Nevertheless, there is qualitative difference between human beings and animals. Our consciousness allows us the occasion to register our reality. Our cognitive abilities allow us to interpret sensory impressions, to assess, plan, think, reason, look ahead and take advantage of past experience. Animals have none of this. Human beings can create and make new things, including all the different tools that make everyday life easier. Human beings are not only creative, but are also equipped with different degrees of artistic skill that beautify our existence and life.

People experience themselves as independent individuals with thoughts, opinions, dreams, will and reason. We experience something very personal when we see beautiful sunset, hear music, and experience love or sorrow. All these are meta-physical qualities that are incompatible with a materialistic outlook on life. Materialism cannot explain our personality, and cannot thus be a correct understanding of our reality.

10. The moral law characteristic of human beings cannot be explained by naturalistic causes. It can only be explained by God. We cannot deny that objective morality exists. There are things we find absolutely wrong regardless of geography, race, time, gender, place of residence, feelings and culture. If moral relativism is true, there would be nothing that is right or

wrong, nothing to praise or blame. The world would be a place in which justice and accountability were meaningless concepts. We would have a world without responsibility, without opportunities for better morality, and one in which people cannot discuss morality and ethics.

11. Nature and life are characterized by a pronounced purposefulness that requires the existence of an Intelligent Designer.

*

The second category of arguments for the existence of God is based on logic and theology. A Christian perspective on creation is expressed in the first chapter of the Romans:

> '... what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.' (Romans 1: 19-20, NIV)

In other words, the Bible clearly states that creation is such a great proof of God that there is no excuse not to believe in a Creator. This is a description of the general revelation of God, his revelation in nature.

*

A proof of God built on logic and rationality takes many pages to explain thoroughly and falls outside the confines of this book. If you want to read about this, I would refer you to books by Geisler[264], Craig Lane 265,266), Groothuis (267), Kreeft 268, 269, 270), and McDowell[260].

Geisler sets up ten points in such evidence and for now we will have to be satisfied with these five[270]:

1. We cannot deny that anything exists. I cannot deny my own existence.
2. Anything that has the ability not to exist must have a cause.
3. We can follow such a reason backwards in time – but not

forever. This is called 'regression'. Everything must have a first cause and such an uncreated cause must be the reason I have come into being.
4. This first cause must be eternal, infinite, immutable, omnipotent, omniscient, and perfect. This description only fits God.
5. Therefore, God must exist.

Our Image of God

To have a correct Christian worldview, we need to have a correct image of God. In the time we live in, people do not seem to be concerned about what kind of image and understanding we have of God. I believe having a correct view of God is of fundamental significance to our Christian faith. If our image of God is diminished, our Christian faith changes accordingly. The Bible tells us that God is a merciful and loving God. We must be thankful for that, because that is exactly the kind of God we need in our weakness. He is our refuge and our strength, our protection, our rock and our fortress. He is the Creator of heaven and earth.

I shall now touch on a series of attributes that describe God. I think it would be a shame if you read through this section too quickly. Meditate on these attributes one by one. Personally speaking, it took me a number of years to come to a deeper understanding of God being 'almighty'.

God is spirit

God is non-physical. He has no physical body. He is therefore not bounded by time or space.

God is a person

God is a person with a personality. He is not a cosmic force. He is a person with feelings, will, and self-awareness, who can choose, and who

can have a mutual relationship with other people. This means that we can each have a personal relationship with God. We can open our hearts to him and share how we are doing and what we need help with. We are created in his image precisely for the reason of having this personal relationship with him.

God is eternal

This means that God has always existed, and that he will exist forever. He will never be absent. He is always present and available. He is Alpha and Omega.

God is immutable

God is the same yesterday, today and forever. He cannot lie. He does not change His mind. The commandments he made long ago still apply today, as they are expressions of his will. The promises he has made cannot be changed either. They apply at all times.

The wisdom of God

Since God is omniscient, he will always know what is most appropriate. His assessment will always be the best and he knows the best answer to our prayers. He uses wisdom to sustain his creation.

God is triune

The almighty God exists as three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is one God who exists as three people, and the three people in the deity are not identical. The Trinity is the attribute of God that is the hardest to understand, and we need to have faith to accept it.

Almighty

The God we believe in is almighty. Almighty is a powerful word. This attribute is so deep that none of us are really able to grasp its true meaning.

God is the ruler of all. He can accomplish everything. When I discussed the problem of evil, I clarified the fact that God has given us free will so that we ourselves are responsible for our actions. God does not choose for us. So, although God is omnipotent, there are certain things he cannot do, e.g. God cannot cease to exist, he cannot turn good into evil, and he cannot make mistakes.

God created our universe out of nothing. We have not got the capacity to fathom that concept, nor can we begin to understand an event that used more energy than we could ever imagine. We have to take it on faith. Our reasoning capacity is insufficient to grasp certain things in life and we then have to lean on our faith. The creation of the universe is one such event. The universe is controlled by laws of nature that are so precise they can be described by concise mathematical formulas. These formulas help make the universe understandable to us. Various scientists have referred to these relationships as something of a mystery. God maintains the universe - he has it in the hollow of his hand!

Books about Christian apologetics tend to include a chapter on miracles. Miracles are violations of the Laws of Nature, and therefore, in principle, naturalists believe they cannot occur. I see things from a different aspect, in that miracles are not impossible for a God who is almighty. If a person finds that miracles constitute an obstacle to having a Christian faith, they probably do not have a right understanding of the word 'almighty'. God created a universe out of nothing, a universe that is absolutely amazing. Such a God can, of course, perform miracles.

Omniscient

God is also omniscient (Isaiah 46:10).[272] If we imagine the entire universe is like a very large egg, then God's eyes are watching it all, and he has everything under continuous scrutiny. God is in control of everything that happens. God's omniscience not only applies to the physical aspects of nature, God is also in control of life. Human beings are the ultimate creation. God is omniscient, and therefore knows about evil and all forms of suffering. We are imperfect people who cannot possibly assess the long-term effects of everything that happens to us during our lives, but

God can, so that he knows how to handle evil and make something good come out of it for all those who are his children.[273] For us, that takes a total surrender to him. The Bible says that God counts the number of hairs we have on our head[274] and that a sparrow does not fall to the earth without his knowledge[275]. If he knows these things, then he knows about the things that matter to us too.

Omnipresent

The Bible makes it clear that God is spirit. He is not physically tied to one place (1 King 8:27).[276] Therefore he knows everything that is going on in the cosmos and has everything under control. God's omnipresence also means that he is invisible to our eye. The adjective 'transcendent' means being 'above and outside or beyond'. The adjective 'immanent' means 'present', and is the opposite of 'transcendent'. God is both immanent and transcendent; he dwells in his creation while being over and beyond it. Pantheism claims that God is immanent, but not transcendent, and that everything in the cosmos is divine. Deism claims that God is transcendent, but not immanent.

Loving

God says, 'I have loved you with an everlasting love (Jer 31:3)[277] The adjective 'loving' is the one most commonly used in relation to God these days, but it is often used in the sense that God is like a kind, harmless grandfather who wants the best for everyone and who is just as amenable when we do something he does not like. The toughest expression of God's love relates to the fact that we all have an eternal soul and that life has two exits. God does not want the death of any sinner, says the Bible.[278] God's love was manifested through the incarnation when Jesus came to our Earth to reconcile a sinful humanity with God.[279] The message of grace is an expression of God's love. We have no rights, since we are all sinners who have broken God's commandments. The promise of eternal life on a new earth is not something we have earned; it is the gift of grace.[280] The Bible uses many images to describe God's love and care for human

beings. God has also made many promises that have been of comfort and encouragement to people for thousands of years. Nevertheless, we easily forget that all his promises have a prerequisite and an obligation, and they apply only if we follow his commandments.

When we refer to God as loving, we have mental associations with the word 'love'. Greek, the language of the New Testament, has four words for love: *agape*, *phileo*, *storge* and *eros*. *Agape* is the highest expression of love. *Agape* can withstand everything, endures everything, and does not hold grudges.[281] *Agape* forgives even those who use all their power to destroy us, those who hates us, persecutes us, and who may kill us. *Agape* is completely free of selfishness and self-interest, and is the love we express when we show unconditional love to those around us.

In our secular times, the word 'loving' is misused, as the difference between *agape* and *eros* is not understood. The latter is the expression of sexual love or desire, but the word *eros* is not found in the New Testament, so the word 'love' can never be interpreted as *eros* in a biblical context.

Just

We can be absolutely confident that God does differentiate between people. No particular group gets preference. 'He does not leave the guilty unpunished' (Ex. 34:7).

Perfect

God is perfect, without flaws, deficits, or weaknesses. Nothing about him needs to be changed or should have been different.

Holy

God is not only holy, but thrice holy (Is. 6:3).[282] Modern people have great difficulty grasping God's holiness. Maybe people do not really want to understand what it means. The word holy means to be separate from everything unclean. When 'holy' is emphasized by the expression 'three times holy', we are receiving a message with a deeper meaning we would do well to try to understand. One meaning is that God

cannot be infringed. He is the creator of everything, the supreme boss, so if we can use the expression 'thrice holy', we should see him in that light. When God gives us commands - you shall do this, you shall not do that – we should take them seriously. If we do not take his commandments seriously, we infringe on his holiness, in which case we are deserving of punishment for resisting him. We should also not misuse his name, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name (Ex. 20:7). I have done a simple calculation that indicates Gods name can be misused a few billion times a year in Norway, the country where I live, i.e. if four million people swear five times a day for a year, that will be seven billion misuses of God's name. Swearing using the name of God is very prevalent these days, even on the TV and the radio. This kind of profanity has increased significantly in a fairly short space of time. The reverence and respect for what is holy is very shallow and often absent in my country and other western countries nowadays. God's holiness means that violations of his law must be punished. We cannot pay the penalty ourselves. No animal sacrifice can pay for us either. Only the Son of God could pay the ransom, and he has paid the price for all people at all times. Christianity describes this as 'undeserved grace'.

Wrath

This is an attribute of God that many people want to sidestep without mention, but God's holiness means there is a limit to how long and how many times people can break his commandments and laws without him getting angry. When this limit is transgressed, God's holiness forces him to react. You can read more about this in the book of the prophet Nahum.

God's Glory

Creation reveals the glory of God. The psalmist declares that the heavens tell of his glory, and the firmament preaches the work of his hands. Over a hundred billion galaxies reveal part of God's glory (Psalm 19:1)[283]

God's Power

Creation reveals the power of God. Our entire universe came about because God spoke his word - his Logos. David says, 'By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth … For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.' (Ps. 33:6 & 9, NIV).

God's Majesty

Majesty is probably the word that most clearly describes God. 'Majesty' means the highest authority. The Psalmist says, 'Great are the works of the Lord; they are pondered by all who delight in them. Glorious and majestic are his deeds, and his righteousness endures forever.' (Psalm 111:2–3, NIV).

God's Wisdom

The prophet Jeremiah says, 'But God made the earth by his power; he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding.' (Jer. 10:12, NIV).

God in the Old Testament

People who are looking for arguments to reject the Judeo-Christian God often make the claim that God in the Old Testament (GT) is a distant, violent figure. Richard Dawkins is one academic who has used strong words in this regard. He refers to a vindictive and extremely unsympathetic figure of God. In his book, *The God Delusion*, he stated that 'The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.'[284]

The famous inventor, Thomas Edison, called human beings 'incurably religious'.[285] Christians believe this trait comes from the fact that we are all created in God's image. In his *Confessions*, the Church Father, Augustine, said about humans' relationship with God that, 'Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee.'[286] Dawkins, on the other hand, thinks God is a delusion. Daniel Dennett,[287] an American philosopher, writer, and cognitive scientist, is of the opinion that many people are under the influence of 'religious sorcery' and that they must be protected from it. The fact humans are so taken up with religious issues is cause for reflection. Some people think this is an indication that we were created by God. The writer of the book

of Ecclesiastes puts it this way: 'He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end' (Ecc. 3:11, NIV).[289]

The Old Testament contains many exacting statements we have difficulty understanding and find hard to accept due to our own cultural backgrounds. We might also criticize the fact these things were written, and we should not take these statements lightly, but try to understand them better by looking at them against the right background. Some people try to get around this problem by saying that the New Testament is all we need to know about, because the Old Testament was written for Jews. Other people say that the God in the New Testament is gentler and more loving than the God in the Old Testament, but this is not correct, and gives an erroneous approach to the issue. Jesus himself often quoted from the Old Testament and made no attempt to adjust what it says there, other than to emphasize some aspects to a greater extreme (Matt.5). People may also see Old Testament as allegorical and think that the stories should be understood spiritually, as symbols of our struggle against evil. Throughout history, Christians in numerous leadership positions have justified their misdeeds by referring to the Old Testament, saying they believe to have found justification for their actions in its pages. In this respect we could list the Crusades against Islam, the wars against the indigenous people of North America and Australia, apartheid in South Africa, and the Ku Klux Klan's persecution of African Americans.

God in the Old Testament is a loving God

The first thing to emphasize is that God in the Old Testament is not the violent despot Dawkins describes. Dawkins, and those like-minded, have no desire to understand the God they so strongly dislike and in whom they do not believe. The Old Testament repeats consistently that God is love, and of all God's attributes, this is the one the Old Testament mentions most often. Ordinary people do not seem to realize that the Old Testament refers to God so positively, but in Exodus 34:6–7, we find following: 'The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to

thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation' (NIV).

God's blessing and love thus last for a thousand generations, while punishment for sin and mis-deed only for three to four. We should not get stuck on a single verse, but look at the wider context. If we do, we see that 'God is patient and slow to anger'[289]. He gives people a long time to change before he has to punish them. David T. Lamb is eager to stress that the outstanding trait of God in the Old Testament is his love. While the God of the Old Testament does get angry, what characterizes him is love. The Amorites were a godless people who made trouble for Abraham and for the Israelites in all the subsequent years, but they were not punished and driven out until 430 years later. Then, they had fulfilled their evil doings, and they had to be punished. They had much time to regret their actions and repent. The Law of Moses was never considered to be something that would be valid forever. It was temporary and would last until the advent of the Messiah. The Law of Moses did not apply to all people at all times; it only applied to a very small population, the Israelites, for a limited time. The Old Covenant was to be replaced by a New Covenant. However, the Law of Moses also contained laws and rules that are universal and are valid for all time, e.g. the prohibition of theft, murder, idolatry, adultery and bestiality. The important commandment that we shall 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength is, of course, universal. The Law of Moses also imposed monogamy, although this commandment was commonly broken.

The Law of Moses is probably best not judged by the standards of our time, but it was far more developed than the laws of the surrounding nations. Compared to them, the Law of Moses was a great advance, having clear moral rules and instructions. The Law of Moses contained purity regulations, victim laws, criminal laws and moral laws. The first three were about the Jews. The moral laws that apply to us are those repeated in the New Testament.

The alternative to having laws is that powerful people decide what is allowed and what is not, in which case despotism and terror are not far

behind. The Law of Moses was revolutionary in that it introduced a principle of equality into society. Everyone was equal under the law - there was no difference between male or female, and rich or poor. In Moses' day, society was not at what we might call a cultural level; living conditions were primitive and simple. Experience has taught us that all changes must come gradually, otherwise, people will turn away from what they do not understand. We could say that God met the people at the level they found themselves. Compared to a Christian understanding, the Israelites were morally immature, but they still had a moral standard and legislation that far surpassed other nations in the Middle East.

Sentencing in Israel was far more modest than in neighboring countries. There was a far more humane view of slaves and servants. In other countries, slaves who escaped from their owners lost their lives, but they were protected by the Law of Moses. The Babylonian Code of Hammurabi[290] was far more brutal than the Law of Moses. Israel also underwent a development in terms of governance, from being a nation of clans and tribes, to a theocracy[291] and eventually a kingdom. In fact, no other people have ever had a theocracy. This theocracy was time-limited, and looked forward to the new era that would be ushered in by the Messiah. Socially, Israel consisted of clans, tribes and large families. In neighboring countries, a more feudal form of government existed, having a power elite at the top and poor farmers at a lower level. In Canaan, the kings owned all land, but in Israel, the landowners were large families.

The Law of Moses

The Old Testament clearly emphasizes the great value and importance of human beings. Psalm 139.16 indicates that a foetus also has value.[292] Some, e.g. Dawkins, have the opinion that women had a much lower status than men, which is incorrect. According to the Bible, woman is also created in God's image, deserving of dignity and full rights as a human being. All mankind is created in God's image, and this makes us unique. Human beings are not animals. The Creation narrative says four times that we are created in God's image. The Law of Moses also accepts that marriage is based on equality, and it is worth noting that Jesus' genealogy

contains the names of four women. This tells us that women have intrinsic value. Even today, Middle Eastern societies are patriarchal, and the conditions under which women live are not acceptable by western standards. Early Israel was also a patriarchal society. The man spoke for the family, and he was responsible for assessing situations and making decisions on their behalf. The Law of Moses did not introduce oppression of women. The Law of Moses actually made a difference between men, as only men from Aaron's family line and the tribe of Levi could become priests, but as far as I know, no Israelis have ever found that discriminatory.

Some people think that the God of the Old Testament approves of child sacrifice, but if they do, they have misunderstood. The Law of Moses prohibits the sacrifice of children. However, in the other countries of the Middle East, there was a widespread custom of offering toddlers as burned offerings to idols, especially to the idol called Moloch.[293] When Israelis sacrificed children, it was never to Yahweh, but to Canaanite idols. Even Israeli kings sacrificed children to the idol Moloch by committing them to the fire. Moloch had a human body with a bull's head and stood with arms outstretched to receive children that were to be thrown into the fire. Flutes and drums were played loudly to deafen the screams of the children. The fact Israelites offered children to idols indicates they had been influenced by paganism and fallen from faith in their God (Yahweh). God punished harshly Israelites who carried out child sacrifices.[294] The Old Testament is very clear that God did not want child sacrifices and we must not misunderstand this.

One of the biggest problems many people have concerning God in the Old Testament is related to the Israelites' annexation of the land of Canaan. They had lived as slaves in Egypt under oppression for over 400 years. Then they became refugees who needed a place to live. Abraham had been promised that the Israelites would live in Canaan. Other people already lived there. They were collectively called Canaanites and were distinguished by their pronounced licentiousness. They worshipped dissolute pagan gods and goddesses and this promoted the practice of incest, adultery, homosexuality, sacred prostitution,[295] bestiality, the practice of sorcery and witchcraft, and child sacrifices.

The Canaanites, like other pagans, had a death cult, which included

the practice of trying to contact the dead, sorcery, and magic rituals associated with death. The Bible tells us that human beings became subservient to evil very early in history. By the time of Noah, evil had proliferated. 'The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time,' (Genesis 6:5). Evil had become so great that the Bible says God regretted having created human beings. He could not find even ten righteous men in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and so he destroyed those cities (Genesis 19).

Sacred prostitution was part of religious life. It was thought that the more people engaged in sacred prostitution, the more the god Baal would have intercourse with his goddess, Anath. People believed that this activity by the gods would ensure that the soil received sufficient rain for people, cattle and vegetation to thrive. The Canaanite gods and goddesses were bloodthirsty and violent. The goddess Anath is described as being up to her neck in blood. She is also depicted as adorned with human heads, and with human heads under her feet - and enjoying the situation. The idolatry of the Canaanites was part of their worldview and affected the whole of their society. There was a great danger that this paganism would spill over into Israelite culture, so marrying a pagan was forbidden. The intention was that the Israelites should be preserved as an ethnically pure race in order to reduce the possibility of the influence of pagan idolatry. If Israel was to be able to accomplish the work for which it had been chosen, i.e. to give birth to the savior of the world, Jesus Christ, this wickedness had to be eradicated from the land.

The Amalekites were another people group who caused the Israelites great trouble. They tried many ways to defeat the Israelites and were determined to expel them from the land in which they had settled. This struggle went on a long time, and the Amalekites never gave up. Haman, who we read about in the book of Esther, was an Amalekite, and he had the king issue an order that all Jews in the Great Kingdom should be exterminated. Although the Bible says that King Saul exterminated Amalekites in a battle, they still existed 250 years later. Bible interpreters therefore believe that the word 'extinct' should be interpreted as 'displaced',

as genocide had not occurred. Several texts use the word 'displaced', meaning that the Amalekites lost the war as opposed to having been totally eradicated.

The Judeo-Christian God is holy, and there is a limit to what he can allow before he must react and punish evil and wickedness. Human evil can become so entrenched that it becomes irreversible, i.e. it cannot be healed, in which case some kind of punishment might be just. The Canaanites had been warned repeatedly by the prophets, who issued warnings to both Jews and non-Jews, but they showed no signs of changing their way of life.

A theme often repeated in the Old Testament is that the Israelites should remember they had lived as slaves in bondage for four hundred years in Egypt, and that they knew what it was like to be strangers in a foreign land. The Israelites regarded taking care of strangers as a duty, and they were reminded of this repeatedly, usually in conjunction with their duty of care towards widows, orphans and the poor. These obligations are mentioned continually throughout the Old Testament. In addition, strangers were to be protected from oppression. They were also entitled to fair treatment under the judicial system. Kindness was to be shown to strangers, not only by individuals, but by Israel as a nation. This led to the fact that the original inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Jebusites, were not exterminated. Even the Philistines, who were Israel's arch enemies, were included in Israelite society.

The rhetoric in the Old Testament texts reflects the way important events were described at the time and used formulations that should not necessarily be perceived as literal, e.g. 'everyone' does not necessarily mean 100% of the people, the language is pictorial. In several places in the Bible, we read that Canaanites existed, even after the conquest of the land, despite the fact that other parts of the text say they were 'eradicated'. The word 'eradicated' is used figuratively, which was very common at the time. On the other hand, the Israelites were also unable to expel all Canaanites, who often carried out unprovoked attacks on the Israelites. We must also bear in mind that the Israelites were refugees who had few weapons, and poor ones at that. It is interesting to note there are no descriptions of women and children being displaced.

Godless Canaanites

The Canaanites were not a problem in themselves, the problem was their godlessness. The Israelites did not have to fight against the people, but their godlessness. God primarily punishes sin and evil, not people. Since God is righteous, he showed pity on Canaanites who took care of strangers. Naaman, a Syrian, is an example of a foreigner God helped. Naaman, was a warrior and had fought against the Israelites. Then he developed leprosy, but Elisha, the prophet, helped him and he was healed of his illness (2 Kings 5, NIV). The Canaanites were not wiped out in a great and bloody war. Battles occurred every now and then, but the land was assimilated gradually by infiltration as time went by. Archaeologists reckon that fortified enclosures were subjugated, as opposed to populous areas. It is thought that Jericho was such a fortification, as opposed to a city with a civilian population. Based on archaeological findings, the number of soldiers garrisoned at Jericho is estimated to have been about one hundred. The Israelites walked around the city wall daily for a week, so the garrison had ample opportunity to surrender and could have avoided being killed.

The conquest must be viewed in the right context, based on the culture of the then Middle East, as opposed to our modern democratic outlook. The conflict lasted for a very short time, for one generation, and in a small, limited area of land. Had the Canaanites lived in a morally acceptable way, God would not have allowed them to be displaced. In Hebrews 11:31, we read that the Canaanites were disobedient.[297] This implies they must have been warned and were aware that they were living amorally. The Israelites did not gain the land due their own righteousness, but due to the wickedness and godlessness of the Canaanites (Deut. 9: 4–6). Later in history, the Jews were sent into exile in Babylon and Assyria because of their moral decay, sin and apostasy. Many generations of Israelites were punished that way, while only one generation of Canaanites were affected. It appears that a holy God must punish people when the sin reaches a certain degree.

Perhaps we should touch on a few examples of God's judgment that are difficult for us to understand today. One example can be found in

2 Samuel 6. The Ark of the Covenant contained the stone tablets on which were written the Ten Commandments. Very specific regulations dictated how the Ark should be handled. When it was to be moved, two rods were inserted through a ring in each of the four corners. The priests would then carry the Ark by raising the rods onto their shoulders. In 2 Samuel 6, we read that this regulation was broken and the Ark was transported on a wagon pulled by oxen. At one point in the journey, the oxen stumbled, and a man called Uzzah put out his hand to steady the Ark so that it would not be damaged. God struck Uzzah down dead for breaking the regulations by touching the Ark. Intuitively, we will all feel that this was an overly high penalty, not only incomprehensible, but repugnant. David Lamb explains that God showed his anger for three reasons.[298] Firstly, the Ark was not being transported as prescribed in Genesis, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The detailed instructions were not followed. God had issued a warning that anyone who touched the ark should die. All these people had been clearly told that obeying to God's commandments was essential, and a signal had to be sent to all these people that the commandments had to be followed. Second, the Ark was carried on a cart, driven by oxen. We living today in a different culture, find it hard to understand how this could be a serious disobedience. However, this behavior was both offending and an insult to God. Thirdly, the Ark symbolized the covenantal relationship between Yahweh and Israel, containing a copy of the Ten Commandments. The Ark therefore had to be carried on the shoulders of servants, something reserved kings and high-ranking individuals. A royal palanquin exuded power and splendor and was fitting for the Ark being a symbol of the covenant between God and Israel. A consequence of Uzzah's death was that the Ark was always transported properly on all subsequent occasions. Ordinary goods were transported in carriages, never royalty. The Philistines, who were always enemies of Israel, were those who suggested the Ark be transported on a wagon (1 Sam. 6:8). The Ark was often called the Ark of the Covenant precisely because it symbolized the special relationship between God and the people of Israel. This relationship was supposed to be mutual, but was often characterized by lethargy and stubbornness on the part of the Israelites. On one occasion, the

Philistines actually took the Ark. The story of Uzza was thus a powerful reminder that God is holy.

Another story that we could interprete as an overreaction by God can be found in 2 Kings 2:23. The prophet Elisha was on his way from Jericho to Bethel. Along the way, he met a group of boys or young men. A large gathering of young men on a deserted stretch of road might indicate they were a gang out for no good. They mocked Elisha and called him 'baldy'. Maybe they threatened him and threw stones at him, potentially putting his life in danger. Bullying an older man of God suggested that these young men had not had a good upbringing. Elisha was known for all his good works - he had healed a stranger, provided food for the hungry, and purified toxic drinking water - so he must have had a good reason for cursing these young men and causing forty-two of them to be killed by bears. Since Elisha had a message for the nation, it was important that he was stayed alive and in good health.[299]

Due to constraints of space, two examples will have to suffice in this context, but we should always think carefully about whether there might be special circumstances that provide a plausible explanation for an event we think is unreasonably violent We might be able to understand those circumstances by putting ourselves into the situation of people living several thousand years ago.

Jesus Christ

We live in a time when some people argue that Jesus never lived and say he is not a historical figure. So, it is really important we are conversant with the arguments that Jesus actually lived.

What do we know about his person? We have many Christian works from ancient times. The most famous of them can be found in the New Testament. The first four books in the New Testament are called the Gospels. They are accounts of Jesus' life and work, and constitute the greatest source of historical information about him. The Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of John are written by men who were disciples of Jesus. They had followed him for three years, and had shared many experiences with him. Luke was doctor and probably one of Paul's disciples. He had firsthand knowledge of Jesus' life and the first Christian church.[300] Luke had set himself the task of recording the story of Jesus precisely – all the events, every detail. From the Acts of the Apostles, we know that Mark was a young boy who left Paul and Barnabas while they were on their first missionary journey. It is unlikely he would have had his name attached to the Gospel of Mark if he were not the author, since he was known as one who had left Paul. In reality, Mark was Peter's interpreter and secretary, so we could consider the Gospel of Mark to be the Gospel of Peter. The Gospels were not written until the year 60 AD, while the letters of Paul are about 10 years older. Therefore Paul's letters do not build on the Gospels, but reproduce what constituted the oral tradition of the early Christian church. The letters confirm the

Gospels that were written later and show that Paul had great knowledge of Jesus' life.

Paul knew that Jesus was a man born of a Jewish woman; that he belonged to the line of David; that he had brothers, one of whom was named James; that he had a meal with his disciples in the evening before he was betrayed; that he died on a cross, was buried, rose to life after three days; and that he was later seen by Peter, his disciples and by others. John the Disciple became Bishop of Ephesus, and one of his students there, Polycarp, became bishop of Smyrna. Irenaeus from Lyon studied under Polycarp. In all the writings written by these men, Jesus was portrayed as the Christ, the Messiah. Justin Martyr[301] was born of gentile parents about 100 years after Christ in the Jewish city of Nablus. He tried to find answers to the existential questions of life by studying various philosophies, but only found peace when he became a Christian. He wrote about places with which Jesus was associated, and refers to him as a carpenter, who, with his stepfather, produced yokes for oxen and buckets, among other things.

Modern biblical research suggests that the three so-called synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, are historically reliable. Non-Christian sources confirming Jesus' life, death and resurrection are also of great importance. More than twelve references to Jesus can be found in Jewish, Greek and Roman literature written in the first century after Christ. Flavius Josephus[302] mentions Jesus in several places in his writings. He referred to Jesus as a wise teacher who did wonders. In one place he wrote: 'At this time there was a wise man named Jesus who was pious and righteous. He made many disciples both among Jews and among those from other nations. Pilate sentenced him to death by crucifixion, but his disciples remained faithful and did not give up their faith. They said that he had appeared to them three days after the crucifixion, and that he was alive. He was therefore possibly the Messiah that the prophets had written about.'[303]. Josephus was quite clear that Jesus was the founder of Christianity. He recorded the fact that the clergy of the day both judged and condemned him. Jesus is also referred to in several places in the Talmud as one who did miracles.[304, 305]

Tacitus (56–120) is considered to be one of the most reliable historians

of his time. Early in the second century, he wrote about how Emperor Nero persecuted the Christians, explaining that the founder of this faith, Christ, was executed under the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate. Tacitus was not a Christian, quite the contrary. He saw Christianity as a disease, which is why what he writes is so significant, for it cannot be rejected by skeptics. Tacitus confirms the New Testament stories of Jesus, which say he was crucified when Tiberius was Emperor and Pontius Pilate governor of Judea. Tacitus confirms that Christianity grew and was spread to other regions after Jesus had died. His writings are of great importance in verifying Jesus as a historical person. Paul L. Maier writes that neither analysis of manuscripts nor computer studies have shaken the authenticity of Tacitus' manuscript[306].

Ancient non-Christian literature testifies that Jesus was a Jew who lived in the first third of the first century; that he was born out of wedlock; that he had connections with John the Baptist; attracted large crowds because he did great wonders; was followed by his disciples; had a controversial message; and was condemned by Pontius Pilatus, governor of Judea, as a blasphemous heretic. Many of his followers saw him as the Messiah about whom the prophets of the Old Testament had written. Faith in him as the Messiah continued after his death, because many of his disciples testified that they had met the resurrected Christ.

Several secular writers mention Jesus and support the truthfulness of the gospels: Tacitus, Suetonius and Thallus. The Talmud and Josephus are important Jewish sources. Roman works that describe early Christian faith and activity include those of Pliny the Younger, Emperor Trajan and Hadrian. The Greek historian, Lucian and the Syrian historian, Mara bar Serapion[307] also provide details of the first Christians. To sum up: In all, there are seventeen non-Christian texts that provide more than fifty details related to the life of Jesus and the circumstances of the early Christian Church. Of these, ten stand out as having more comprehensive information and their content can be summarized as follows: Jesus lived while Tiberius was emperor. He was a pious man who did wonders. He had a brother named James; he was considered to be the Messiah; he fulfilled old prophecies; he was crucified under Pontius Pilate due to blasphemy. When he died, a darkness fell and there was an earthquake. The

disciples taught that he was risen from the dead, and they were willing to die for their faith. Christianity reached as far as Rome very rapidly. The disciples refused to believe in the Roman gods, and worshipped Jesus as their God. Therefore, we can safely conclude that Jesus Christ of Nazareth is not a myth, but a historical person.

The Resurrection

The Christian faith has three pillars: Jesus Christ is divine- he is the son of God; Jesus Christ died for our sins so that we can walk free from judgment by believing in him; and Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Jesus himself foretold his resurrection.

Modern human beings have difficulty believing someone can rise from the dead, as this deviates completely from everything we are trained to believe as rational people. The majority of people would say that such an event is impossible. For this reason, it is necessary we can present compelling arguments for the resurrection being a historical event. All of Christianity stands or falls on whether Jesus is actually risen from the dead. A full discussion of the Resurrection would fill an entire book, so I will only touch on the main issues here.

The first thing we can establish is that it is well-documented that Jesus was crucified and that he died on the cross. In addition to all four Gospels in the New Testament mentioning the crucifixion, it is also recorded by non-Christian writers. The Jewish historian Josephus, who lived in the first century, recorded that Pontius Pilate sentenced Jesus to death by crucifixion. Even the Talmud chronicles the crucifixion. The most important evidence of the Resurrection is the changed personality that occurred in the disciples. Habermas and Licona write that there seems to be great consensus among scholars that, early after Jesus' death, the disciples were convinced that they had met him and seen him alive.[305]. The disciples were keen to preach what they had witnessed. From being scared, cowardly and fearful, they became fearless. Even when they were persecuted and subjected to torture, imprisonment and martyrdom, they preached their faith in the resurrected Christ. Preaching Jesus' resurrection became the most important thing to them, and they were willing to suffer anything to

spread this message. There are nine independent early sources that assert the disciples were firmly convinced of Jesus' resurrection.

In this way, a small group of uneducated people, most of them simple fishermen, acquired a historical significance that is unprecedented in human history. The Early Church was met with massive opposition from both Jews and Romans. Despite that, the Church grew, and the blood of the martyrs hastened that growth. Without the disciples' unshakeable conviction in the truth of the Resurrection, Christianity would not have come into being. Paul writes about the Resurrection in many of his letters. He tells how the disciples had a strong belief that Jesus was risen from the dead. Paul himself was convinced he had personally met Jesus on the road to Damascus. Paul had been on his way there to arrest Jews who had converted to the Christian faith. Paul was a very orthodox Jew, who saw it as a divine duty to fight against the new faith he considered a threat to Judaism. He had a very thorough grounding in the Jewish faith and tradition, and he knew what was true Judaism, and what was false. He saw the new doctrine as something that had to be fought using all possible means. Paul had been present when Stephen, the first Christian martyr, had been stoned to death in Jerusalem. We do not know if Paul was one of the people responsible for Stephen's death, but Paul's conversion and transformation into a committed Christian is well-documented. After his experience on the Damascus road, the feared persecutor of Christians became one of Christendom's strongest advocates and defenders. Paul fully understood the significance of the Resurrection, and stated that if Christ has not risen from the dead, then the Christian faith is futile, and we are still in our sins (1 Cor. 15:12-19).

James was one of Jesus' brothers. Like Paul, he was a very dutiful Jew who closely followed Jewish tradition. He had the best testimony. He doubted that his brother, Jesus, was the Messiah. However, James had a personal meeting with Jesus after his death. This made him a faithful believer. He became head of the first Christian church in Jerusalem. James was transformed from being a skeptic to becoming an avid follower of Jesus and was eventually martyred for his faith. James can thus be considered an important witness of the resurrected Christ.

At that time, few people could read and write, so the oral tradition was

very important. Short, concise summaries of stories about Jesus' life were easy to learn and memorise. Such 'creeds' were important to the Early Church. Creeds are still important when learning the most basic things in Christian faith. In addition, songs and hymns told a clear message about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. This oral tradition has been of great importance and also constitutes some of the material on which the Gospels are based. In 1 Cor. 15:3-5, Paul says that he himself has received such a creed, which he has passed on to other believers.

Clement, the Church Father who was Bishop of Rome, wrote about the disciples' total conviction with regard to the veracity of the Resurrection. Polycarp, who was appointed Bishop of Smyrna by the Apostle John, wrote and preached about the Resurrection. Manuscripts written by Irenaeus, Tertullian and Eusebius attest that the early Church Fathers had received the message of Jesus' resurrection from his disciples.

Ignatius, who was bishop of Antioch, wrote that since the disciples had seen and personally met the resurrected Jesus, they did not even fear dying for their faith. Paul was beheaded. During the rule of the Emperor Nero, Rome suffered an extensive fire, which Nero blamed on the Christians. Great persecution followed and Peter was crucified. Origen recorded the fact that Peter asked to be crucified with his head down, as he believed he was not worthy to die in the same way as his Lord and Master. Public documents testify to the fact the disciples were willing to suffer martyrdom for what they believed. Only the Apostle John did not suffer martyrdom. He was exiled on the island of Patmos and died of natural causes.[309]

The empty tomb is a powerful proof of the Resurrection. Jesus' body was not found. No body was found in the tomb. If it had been, that would have been devastating to the Christian faith. Justin Martyr and Tertullian record that the Jews were accused of stealing the body of Jesus. This accusation is in fact a strong evidence for the empty tomb. Lane Craig writes that since Jesus' burial is a historical fact, this supports the claim that the tomb was empty. Everyone in Jerusalem knew the location of the tomb, and there had been a large crowd shouting 'Crucify! Crucify!' It would have been impossible for the disciples to start proclaiming that Jesus was physically risen from the dead, if his body was still in the tomb. Everyone could have checked that. Preaching the

Resurrection began in Jerusalem, where Jesus had been buried, and the message spread rapidly. This would have been completely improbable if the tomb had not been empty.

We can quote what Paul writes in 1 Cor. 15:3–8: 'For what I received, I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.' Paul would have found it impossible to write like this if what he had written was not true, because the witnesses Paul mentions were still alive at the time of writing. If it were a lie, Paul's words would have been repudiated immediately.

Something worth noting is that women were important witnesses to the Resurrection. Luke writes in his Gospel: 'I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught' (Luke 1:3-4, NIV). Luke noted that the women who had accompanied them from Galilee saw where Jesus was buried. They prepared sweet-smelling herbs and ointments. As it was the Sabbath, any no work was permitted, they returned to the tomb early the day after the Sabbath to anoint Jesus' body. They were first on the scene and found the tomb empty. At that time in the history of the culture of the Middle East, women were disparaged and not considered reliable witnesses. This applied to both Jews and non-Jews. Thus, it is striking that the Gospels emphasize that women were the first to confirm the tomb was empty. This mention of the women at the tomb is a sign that the story is not a fabrication, and that their narrative is true. A made-up story would never have used women as witnesses of the truth, as that would only weaken its credibility. As the women's experience is highlighted so emphatically, the best explanation is that what they said was true and that they were giving an accurate description of what they had experienced.

The Turin Shroud

In the cathedral in Turin in northern Italy, there is a length of cloth bearing an enigmatic image of a man who appears to have been whipped, crowned with thorns and crucified. This cloth is called the Turin Shroud and many people believe it is the cloth in which Jesus was wrapped after he was taken down from the cross.

The Apostle John came to believe in the Resurrection when he saw the grave clothes folded where Jesus had been lain. Until then, he had not understood what Scriptures meant when it said that the Messiah had to rise from the dead (Jn. 20:8-9). We might wonder how it was that as soon as John entered the tomb, with Mary Magdalene's notion of an alleged grave robbery in his head, that he immediately realized this was not what had occurred, but that the man who had been lying in the grave clothes had risen? Maybe it was because he saw that the knots on the linen strips wrapped around the shroud were not tied up and that the man who had been inside the shroud had vanished. There is every reason to believe that, in ancient Israel, the linen grave clothes were not just laid neatly over the corpse, but were bound to the corpse from the neck to the ankles with ropes. The practice still occurs in the Middle East today. We can see another example of this when Jesus raised Lazarus. The New Testament tells us that 'The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face', and that Jesus said to them, 'Take off the grave clothes and let him go' (Jn. 11:44).

The man who was wrapped in the shroud of Turin had a lot of wounds, and blood and serum were drawn into the fabric. All the blood stains on the shroud are intact and the cloth is not torn, which it would have been if the man was taken out of it, because the cloth would have been stuck to the body by the dry blood. The man who was wrapped in this shroud got out of it in a completely incomprehensible way. Scientists still ponder over what they might have discovered when examining the shroud, and the facts pertaining to the shroud in Turin have led many to a personal belief in the Resurrection.

Jesus' resurrection is a miracle. Dead people just do not come alive again. As for Jesus' death, there are some facts we cannot avoid: that he

was buried; that the tomb was demonstrably empty; that Jesus appeared to his disciples after his death; and the disciples' firm belief in the Resurrection. Each of us needs to know the arguments for the Resurrection, in case we meet people who are skeptical.

Objections

Ever since Jesus' death, there have been many attempts over the centuries to disprove his bodily resurrection. This line of argument had a strong resurgence during the Enlightenment. Skeptics, deists and liberal theologians alike participated in the debate by producing numerous articles, letters and books. The German theologian, Karl Barth[310] demonstrated weaknesses in all the theories that questioned the Resurrection[311]. Almost all the scholars who have studied the circumstances surrounding the Resurrection are convinced that the disciples had experienced something definite that affected them for the rest of their lives. Today, there seems to be a general agreement that it is not possible to reject the historicity of the Resurrection.

A leading critical approach assumes that the Resurrection is a legend that has been embellished over time to make a fascinating story infused with history to make it appealing to people who are religiously inclined, but all the available written evidence is incompatible with this explanation.

The same goes for Paul's experience on the road to Damascus. A legend or imaginative story would hardly have convinced an educated man like Paul. In Matthew's Gospel, the author mentions a theory that could have been widespread – that the disciples had stolen Jesus' body, and lied about the Resurrection[312]. David Hume was the great skeptic. He rejected miraculous events, as he considered them to be violations of nature's regularity. Hume would call something a proof, if a particular circumstance repeated itself continually without any deviation from regularity, even if there was not 100% certainty the circumstance would happen again, but that the probability of it happening again was great enough to count on it. A miracle is thus, in Hume's opinion, a violation of the Laws of Nature. In Hume's mind, a miracle was something that happens with

the slightest degree of probability, and a person would be wise only to state the existence of causal relationship between specific factors based on the highest degree of probability - therefore, a wise person would never believe in miracles.

This way of seeing the Resurrection suffers from not taking into account that the disciples had walked with Jesus and become acquainted with his highly moral commandments. This makes it less likely they could had brought themselves to lie. It would be hard to keep something a secret in a conspiracy which involved so many people. How could so many people agree to lie, and to keep quiet about it? How could the person who first had the idea dare to ask the others if they would to be part of such a fabrication? It would have been impossible for the disciples to testify to the crowd a few weeks later, saying that Jesus was resurrected, if they did not believe it themselves. Furthermore, the disciples showed by the way they behaved later in their lives that they not only reckoned on the Resurrection being God's work, but that they were convinced of it. The tomb was heavily guarded, and although some of the Roman soldiers might have wanted to fall asleep on duty, they would not have done, as that would have been punishable by death. How could they possibly know anything about what happened if they had been asleep? The disciples also had nothing to gain from concocting a story. The historian Eusebius commented that if these men could not be trusted, then nothing else in history could be trusted, including things that had been written down.

Scholarship today is such that it is very difficult to disprove that the Gospels are written by Jesus' own disciples, as generally accepted historical methods confirm their authenticity. Attempts to disprove the tomb was empty have not been successful. Jesus' burial is described so precisely in so many places that it is not possible to refute it. So, we know Jesus was buried. Everyone in Jerusalem knew that. Many people also had to have known that Jesus was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection occurred at a time when there were very many people in Jerusalem, and they would have been well-acquainted with what had happened, as it would not have been possible to keep things hidden from all the people who had come to celebrate Passover there. When generally accepted historical methods are applied to the

situation, all attempts to disprove the Resurrection fail. Anyone interested in reading more about this topic could refer to the book by Habermas and Licona[305], and the book by William Lane Craig[313].

The strongest evidence that the bodily resurrection of Jesus is a historical event is as follows:

1. The total change in the disciples, who subsequently preached the message of crucifixion in the face of adversity, persecution, imprisonment, torture, and martyrdom. They were convinced they had personally met the resurrected Jesus Christ after his death. Historical research confirms the disciples had an experience that was totally life-changing.

2. Paul had an experience that transformed him from being an intrepid opponent of the Christian faith to becoming one of its strongest and most fearless advocates.

3. Jesus' brother, James, had a meeting with the resurrected Christ, which dispelled his skepticism and uncertainty. James became a bishop in the Early Church and died a martyr's death.

4. After a short time, the story of Jesus became an oral tradition that summarised succinctly the essentials of the Christian faith, ensuring that later generations received a correct rendition of what they believed.

Salvation, Atonement and Redemption

The basis of Christianity is a belief in the Judeo-Christian God, so it is important that we present this God in the right way so that we have an appropriate image of God. If our image of God is not accurate, neither will our understanding of Christianity and its message.

A main foundation stone of a Christian worldview concerns the beginning of all things; everything began with Creation. Here I can refer you to other chapters in this book which argue that the universe has been created (page 177). The Christian creation narrative is different from other narratives. These often start with 'Once upon a time …', but the Christian narrative begins with 'In the beginning, God created heaven and earth'. And that is what modern science has shown us - that the cosmos came into being at a specific point in pre-history and that everything has a beginning. The Christian creation narrative is not a myth or a fairy tale, as are other stories. It does not start by telling us about objects and things, it is about one person – and that person is God. The Christian creed begins with 'I believe in God, the creator of heaven and earth'. The entire Christian story is about this God; he is central to the whole of history. Human beings find it so easy to put ourselves in the center of everything, but since we are all created by God, we belong to him. God himself is eternal, and he is not created. God is therefore unlike anything or anyone else in our history.

Atheists often pose the question as to who or what created God. As our universe has been made, everything in the universe must also have been made. Since everything in our reality has been made, atheists reckon that God has also been made. A logical approach to this issue leads to the fact that there must be a first cause (see page 180), and that this first cause had to be there before anything else existed. This first cause is God. Without such a first cause, nothing could have come into being. So, then we realize that God had to already be in existence when our reality came into being. Christianity states that God is eternal, that he has always existed, and will always exist in the future.

The Christian narrative claims to tell the Truth - the truth about our reality. Christianity therefore says that other religions are not true. If Christianity is right, then its message is for all people always. The message in our culture today is that all religions are equally valid, but that cannot be true, because they have different views on many things pertaining to our lives. No other religion besides Christianity says God has a son. The main message of this book is that God is the source of everything, the Creator of all things. This means that the Christian God is almighty. Creating a universe from nothing testifies to One for whom nothing is impossible. Our thoughts cannot grasp this; we can barely understand what it means to be almighty and for nothing to be impossible. He who is almighty is the Master of both the micro- and macrocosmos. The Bible also says that God has made laws for stars and our earth; he has created the laws of nature that govern the natural world.

The Christian faith says that we humans are created. We have a physical body, but we are something much more - we are created in God's image, which means we are the ultimate creation. In fact, we might wonder if this could be the main purpose of creation, that everything was made for us. Being created in God's image means that we have an eternal soul, that we are spiritual creatures with will, reason, and consciousness. We have a conscience, which means we can distinguish between right and wrong. We are personalities with the ability to assess and make reasonable choices. We are also creative. We see needs and can figure out how needs can be met. All these characteristics come from the fact that in addition to our physical body, we also have a non-physical side. Human

beings each have a personality. As a cause cannot be less than its effect, the Creator must also be a conscious person. Dead matter without an awareness cannot create individuals with consciousness; that goes against the laws of logic. When we envision a universe of billions of galaxies, and many billions of celestial bodies in each galaxy, we realise we are imperceptibly small compared to the Creator. It is healthy to understand that a deity exists who is infinitely greater than we are. That knowledge protects against arrogance, selfishness, self-interest and an inappropriate self-image. Being created in God's image also means human beings are unlike any other creature. No matter what we are like, whether we have disabilities or a perfect body, whether we have a high or low IQ, whether we were born with a silver spoon in our mouths or we have had to struggle to get anywhere in life, we all have something in common - we are precious in God's eyes. We are all loved by God. Since we are all equally valuable, we all have a commitment as part of human kind to love our neighbor as ourselves. This obligation forms the basis for all human rights. If we did not have Christianity's view of humankind, hardly any of the universal human rights we have today would even exist.

Human rights have their foundation in the Christian view of humankind. No other religion would be able to provide a similar basis for universal human rights, but this also means that the moment human beings are not considered unique and unlike any other creature, the foundational reasoning on which universal human rights are based crumbles. This can lead to what happened under the rule of Stalin, Hitler and Mao.

God reveals himself to human beings in two ways: by general revelation through nature and creation, and by special revelation through the word of God - the Bible. The history of the human race tells us that human beings do not take on board what nature tells us about God. People seem to find every way possible to dismiss God. We could say, albeit somewhat simplistically, that philosophy is essentially human attempts to describe reality without bringing God into the equation. All children, even those who have atheist parents, have an innate ability to see design and intentionality in nature, and it is a sobering thought that school systems in the West are trying to remove this sense of appreciation from children's minds.

The second foundational belief in the Christian worldview deals with something going wrong in God's perfect creation. Evil came into the world. The Bible says little about the cause and rise of evil. Many of us have no difficulty knowing that evil exists, as we are witness to evil in the world around us every day. So maybe we think that we just have to accept evil exists without wondering too much about its ultimate cause. The Bible says that the first people opened themselves up to evil by doing what they had been told not to do. That act brought sin into the world, and into the history of humankind. Sin has become part of human nature. Theologians call it hereditary sin. Sin goes against God's commandments and has created a division between human beings and God. Since God is both holy and righteous, sin must be punished. This punishment depends on the severity of the crime, so a serious crime deserves a more severe punishment than a crime that is less serious. We are all well aware of the principle that we must be punished for the wrong things we do, and the same goes when we break the commandments God has given us. In the time of the Old Testament, the Israelites had to make various sacrifices to make restitution for their sins. People today see the act of sacrifice as incomprehensible. All the sacrifices referred to in the Old Testament pertained only to that time in history and only to the Israelites. The sacrifices were temporary and not universal. We live in a culture where secular humanism is the primary worldview. In this kind of culture, people are not concerned with the nature of sin, and therefore not concerned with what might be a solution for the problem of sin. But if, in the minds of contemporary culture, sin does not exist, then people see no need for a Savior. This point of view is very widespread these days. Christianity presents a permanent solution to the problem of sin. God loves human beings. He wants everyone to be saved, and for no one to be lost. The Bible says God is patient with us, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). The New Testament tells of one sacrifice that lasts for all time - the atoning death of Jesus Christ. The verse often called 'The Gospel in a nutshell' we read that '… God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life' (Jn. 3:16).

The Bible says that human beings have an eternal soul, and this means

that life does not end when we die. Then eternal life begins. So, there is an eternity waiting for us. By accepting Jesus Christ as Lord of our life, we are guaranteed an eternal bliss. If we do not accept this offer and turn our backs on God and Jesus Christ, we choose for ourselves what the Bible calls perdition or hell. According to Christian faith, there is no other path to eternal life than to accept Jesus Christ as Lord. Since it was necessary that Jesus Christ came to our earth to save us from hell, it is reasonable to assume that hell is a place we would rather not go to and a condition we would rather not experience.

We call the message of the New Testament the 'Gospel', which means 'good news'. This message can set people free. What we believe affects our personality. Every person has the potential to live a life filled with God's well-being and blessing, and understanding that we are born in God's image can release that potential. The Bible says that a faith that does not lead to good works is a dead faith (James 2:14-26, NIV). The gospel has the power to compel people to live selflessly for others. In fact, the gospel is the opposite of the message of today's culture, which encourages us to realise ourselves by pursuing egotism and self-centeredness.

Today it is hard to talk about hell. A hospital chaplain told me that people who have a disease and know they are going to die are mainly concerned about being able to end their lives without pain, and being well cared for at the end. They are not very concerned about the possibility of an afterlife. This lack of understanding of eternity is probably inevitable after living a lifetime in a secular culture. The Bible says that God has set eternity in the human heart (Ecc. 3.11, NIV). This is a consequence of being born in God's image. The great hope of Christian faith is tied to the promise of eternal bliss in the Kingdom of God on a newly created earth. As one hymn so beautifully puts it: 'In His glory, I shall see the King'[314]. A favorite Norwegian hymn says: 'At home in heaven, no one shall mourn again. That is where all the tears dry'[315].

A Christian has chosen to have Jesus Christ as Lord of her life. This means following Jesus' commandments and rules of living. This means taking everything Jesus said seriously. Jesus is highest and supreme. This is a natural consequence of having Jesus as our Lord. It means living according to biblical moral commandments, even when it comes to

sexuality. It also means not having a critical and judgmental attitude to Christian faith. Faith is accepted. The Bible uses strong words about being a Christian: the old, worldly person is renewed and sees things differently. Jesus told Nicodemus he had to be born again to be a child of God. New birth should lead to a new and different life. Then it will not be onerous to follow God's commandments, but natural and obvious. The Bible uses the word 'fruit' to describe the attributes that should characterize a Christian (Luke 6:43-45). A fruit tree does not decide to bear fruit, but it bears fruit because it is in its nature. For a Christian, bearing good fruit ought to be part of their new nature.

The special thing about Christian faith is that it is about a relationship with God and Jesus Christ. Christian faith is therefore a personal matter between an individual and God. This personal relationship is mutual: we love Jesus Christ, and Jesus loves us. Christian faith is not primarily religious, but personal. A Christian communicates with God in prayer, asking for help to live humbly in a right way. A Christian brings their problems before God in prayer for guidance so they can choose the right way to live. The Bible promises that God hears prayer, and that we can put our lives in his hands, has been a message of comfort to people for nearly two thousand years (1 Pet. 5:7, 1 Jn. 5:14). Many have experienced help and comfort by knowing God as their Father and that we humans are his children. We trust our Father. Having a heavenly Father to turn to gives Christians a sense of security. Sometimes we do forget that a father-child relationship is reciprocal: parents expect something from their children. God also expects something from us - that we will keep his commandments. Christian faith is binding, but we should obey God's commandments, not out of a sense of duty, but because we love him. Right living will then become natural, not something we force, and faith is accepted.

In 1948, the UN instituted the Declaration of Universal Human Rights, which consisted of thirty articles. Representatives from all areas of the world participated in designing this charter. The Great Commandment that says we shall love our neighbor as ourselves, and the Golden Rule that says 'do unto others what you would have others do unto you' greatly influenced the content. Human beings have the injunction to 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and

with all your mind … [and] Love your neighbor as yourself' (Matt. 22:37-40, NIV). Many verses in the Bible tell us that on the last day, God will treat us the way we have treated our neighbor (e.g. Matt. 7:12). This principle infers that all people are valuable. More than any other religion and worldview, Christianity is characterized by altruistic activities in the form of mission stations with hospitals, vaccination programs, school activities, and education and training specifically for women. Christian missions have established universities and hospitals in many countries. Christianity is far more than a religious faith; it aims to help people have the best life possible, and to show them the way to eternal bliss when this life ends. In this respect, Christianity is a comprehensive and complete worldview.

Islam

Over the past few years, a large number of Muslim refugees and migrants have arrived in the West, so it seems appropriate to include a short chapter about their religion. The founder of Islam was the Prophet Muhammad[316] and it is based on the Qur'an, its holy book.[317] Muhammed was born in Mecca about the year 570. He began to receive messages from Allah when he was 40 years old, and this led to the establishment of Islam as a religion. The classical understanding is that the Qur'an was sent down to Earth in one night, but Muhammad received the message in portions over the course of twenty-two years. Muhammad did not receive a complete book, but messages from the Archangel Gabriel. Muhammad dictated this message from memory to his companions, who then wrote it down. Sunni Muslims believe the Qur'an is from eternity, as is Allah. They believe the Qur'an is Allah's word, error free, and is an exact copy of a Qur'an found in heaven. This means that the Qur'an is considered to be an authentic text that should not be interpreted or analyzed and it is a matter of faith that the Qur'an is flawless, with validity that holds for all time. When the Qur'an is used in mosques, it is always written in Arabic, and all public prayers are also held in Arabic. The Qur'an says that the Jewish Torah and the Christian Gospel are scriptures in which people can find guidance, but that only the Qur'an contains the infallible truth. Christian faith and Islam come into conflict in the following areas:

1. Islam proclaims that Allah is one. The Islamic creed says that there is only one God worthy of worship, and Muhammad is his prophet. Allah is a creator, a legislator and a judge. Christianity proclaims that God is triune: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In Islam, idolatry is the greatest sin and it is unforgivable to pray to anyone but Allah. A triune God is seen as a false God, an idol. Islam considers Jesus to be a prophet, but not a God to be worshipped. Worshipping Jesus is seen to be a sin. For Muslims, the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, i.e. God becoming human flesh, are banned outright, because they are considered to reduce God's greatness by thinking what is perceived as unthinkable. For Muslims, just thinking that God exists in a different form, or that he might share a bodily form with human beings, is to make God imperfect. For this reason, Muslim theologians put much effort into demonstrating that Jesus Christ is not the Son of God. Christianity clearly proclaims that Jesus Christ is the only way to eternal life. In Islam, only God is great, which is the essence of the proclamation 'Allahu Akbar' (Arabic: اللهُ أكبر) which means 'God is greater' or 'God is [the] greatest'. Muslims believe that only adherents of Islam are accepted by Allah. Christians and Jews are perceived as rebels against Allah.

2. Islam rejects both Jesus' incarnation and his resurrection and holds that Jesus is not God incarnated in human form. The divinity of Jesus is also denied. The Qur'an teaches that Jesus' life began when he was conceived by Mary, but Bible says that Jesus is from eternity. Muslims find it impossible to believe that a prophet like Jesus could be treated in such a humiliating way as to be whipped, condemned to death, and crucified. Therefore, they cannot understand that he suffered and died. The Qur'an repudiates the notion that Jesus was crucified, despite the historical evidence, and that he rose from the dead. Muslims believe that Allah somehow took care of him. The name 'Jesus' is mentioned twenty-five times in the Qur'an, and refers to him as an Islamic prophet, who preached the message of the Old Testament. Islam teaches that all prophets have preached the same message, but Muhammad is the last and greatest prophet.

The books of the New Testament teach that Jesus is God. This message

had been preached for more than 550 years before Islam came into being. We discussed earlier the reasons why the New Testament can be considered historically reliable (see page 247). The Christian Church preached the message of the New Testament from the very time of Jesus, so the Qur'an's depiction of Jesus deviates from that account. There is no reason to believe that the Qur'an, which was written a few hundred years after Jesus, is a more reliable source than the Gospels and letters of the Apostles, which were authored shortly after Jesus' death.

3. A third issue is that the Qur'an claims that the Bible contains many errors. We do not have space to discuss this in detail, but will have to be content with knowing the Qur'an has a different view of Jesus. The Qur'an rejects the belief that Jesus is the Son of God and the only savior of the world, and rejects that he is the way, the truth and the life. According to Islam, Jesus is only a human being. Islam does not regard man as sinful. Christianity teaches that human beings are created in God's image, but were corrupted by evil by disobeying God's commandments in such a way that only a divine Savior could reconcile them with God. Christianity teaches that forgiveness is a personal act of undeserved grace, which everyone can receive in gratitude. In Islam, there are no such personal relationships.

As Jews and Christians do not accept the authority of the Qur'an, Muslims will interpret this as blasphemy. The difference between Christian and Islamic theology is so great that it is pointless considering a possible fusion of these two religions. If what the Bible says is true, worshipping Allah is either an expression of erroneous worship of the one true God, or it is the worship of a totally different god altogether.

We face two different views when considering Islam. On one hand we have an Islam that wants peace and accord. Moderate Muslims are advocates of this stance. They live in neighborhoods with people of other faiths without any trouble. They do their work, and behave like most people. They identify with Muslim culture, take their faith seriously, and raise their children in the Muslim faith and traditions. On the other hand, we have radical Muslims who, on the basis of a holy calling, work

towards establishing a global Islamic caliphate. They make up what are often known as 'Islamists[318]. Islamists see Westerners as a threat to their values and way of life.

Islamic scholars who adhere to Islamism teach about a caliphate and a great era of rule under Muhammad, and this message is very attractive to Muslim young people today. Islamists follow the Sharia Laws, which are moral codes laid out in the Qur'an. Many Sharia principles are incompatible with a Western democratic government, e.g. the legalization regarding slavery, permitting physical punishment of wives, the levying of special taxes for Jews and Christians living in Muslim countries, and the execution of Muslims who convert to another faith.

Islam has a term called 'Jihad' which, according to the Qur'an, all Muslims are obliged to follow. Jihad means 'struggle' and can refer to 'almost any effort to make personal and social life conform with God's guidance'[319] and is often associated with war. Jihad has two aspects. One focusses on defending against attacks on Islam and Islamic States. Most Muslims living in the West view Jihad as a system of defense. Some interpret Jihad to mean a form of personal spiritual awakening with increased awareness of what it means to be a Muslim in a peaceful context. These are cultural Muslims. The other aspect of Jihad is to fight against infidel states and conquer them with a view to establishing a Muslim caliphate. Islamists who work towards this aim are called Jihadists. Their goal is to make Islam a global civilization. In this struggle, all means are allowed, including violence and terrorism. In our time, there has been an awakening of a jihadist mindset, which is why we read and hear about so much violence and terrorism. Not all terrorism is committed by Muslims, but the bulk is linked to Islam.[320,321]

One reason for the current situation is that the Qur'an proclaims that Jews and Christians are enemies of Islam and should be driven out. The tragic thing is that the rise of IS and similar Islamic groups is probably catalyzed by the actions of the Western world and its interference in the internal relations of Islamic countries. The Muslim view assumes that the whole world was once Muslim, and therefore must be won back to Islam.

A blogger with a Muslim background who has lived in the West for a long time wrote in 2017 that Islam is a comprehensive political and legal

system that regulates the lives of all Muslims from cradle to grave.[322, 323] Islam is far more than a religion, and shapes and structures everyday life both inside and outside the home. Through this system, a common Muslim identity is formed, and loyalty is not related to ethnicity, geography, language or clan, but only to Islam. This sense of identity is strong. If a Muslim is violated somewhere in the world, the violation is universal violation and applies to all Muslims. Islam is a community, an 'ummah'[324]. This community prevents Muslims integrating into the wider communities in which they live. The sanctions against apostates and converts are strong. Only recently has the West understood that Islam is a political ideology that, when it gains power, completely erases the individual. Therefore, this blogger is concerned about Europe, as a few million Muslims live there now and this could bring about the kind of problems that arise when two such different societies live cheek by jowl. She fears that where Muslims become a majority, the Western democratic model of society will be replaced by Islam.

If Muslims convert to Christianity, they will automatically lose contact with their family, and the community or 'ummah'. Converts can become lonely and feel abandoned. They are therefore in a vulnerable situation. It is very important that other Christians, neighbors or church members are aware of this and show Christian charity in practice. That means inviting converts to their own home and serving good food and drink.

Islamic culture is characterized by three circumstances that make peaceful coexistence with other cultures difficult. Islam requires society conforms to a certain way of life. Everyone has to think the same thing, as deviations from this rule will cause the foundation of Islam to become weaker. Disagreement is not tolerated. Everyone agrees, and there is nothing to discuss. Critical thinking is not allowed, so Muhammad's thoughts cannot be interpreted in a new way. The nature and uniqueness of Islam do not permit comparison with other religions, and by definition, Islam cannot coexist peacefully with other religions.

The rise of Islam is a tense situation that cannot not be solved by weapons or power. The best remedy in such a situation is genuine charity.

New Age Religiosity and Spirituality

I have decided to give brief mention to the New Age Movement, as many people have taken its main beliefs onboard. Today, the word 'spirituality' has largely replaced the term 'New Age'. This form of religiosity has become trendy and is especially popular among women. Many well-known female TV personalities and movie actresses are associated with this movement, e.g. Oprah Winfrey. This promotes New Age religious thought, gives it legitimacy and makes it acceptable.

The New Age is influenced by religious views from the East and is characterized by Eastern metaphysics. The human being is central and divine, the center of the universe, eternal, and neither good nor evil. Each individual is God. I am God, you are God, everyone is God. Every individual therefore has divine qualities. The answer to the question, 'Who am I', can only be 'I am God'. This thinking considers every individual to be part of a universal energy. Therefore, people can create their own reality through their own consciousness. Freedom is achieved by an individual realizing her inner potential. This is an alluring message with great appeal, as by finding the divine in oneself, an individual can obtain perfect knowledge and perfect health.

A prominent thought in the New Age Movement is that the problems we experience in our world are spiritual by nature. People are tormented by emptiness and longing, and this vacuum needs to be filled. New

Age religiosity teaches that this emptiness will only be overcome when people are given hope, and that this hope arises when people put aside traditional religion, and open themselves to the divine and become like god. The idea is that people can find a map by which to navigate life by incorporating traits from all the world's religions and traditions. The New Age Movement warns its followers against religions and ideologies that limit the limitless possibilities open to them and teaches that the source of salvation is found within each of us. Ostensibly, the fundamental human problem is not sin against a holy God, but being blind to our own true state of inner wealth. New spirituality is based on a different view of nature, God's being, and the purpose of life. The physical world is perceived as an illusion, A person's own mental abilities and mental capacity are all that is considered to be real. Everything else is considered to be an illusion. A key thought in New Age spirituality is that humans are good beings, and that nature is divine, but that we are troubled and destroyed by society. In addition, New Age spirituality teaches that modern science has shown that traditional religions do not contain the truth, that they are only primitive superstitions, and that the dilemma this produces can only be solved by spirituality. New Age spirituality teaches that God is not the source of our religions, but our consciousness; that consciousness makes up everything and that people are themselves god. This message is attractive to many modern people, because it does not contain dogmatic teachings, and for that reason they find it more acceptable to be spiritual than religious.

New Age spirituality also teaches that by introspection, people can experience a transcendental reality. This practice is known as transcendental meditation, and claims to aid people to know the silence and peace of their consciousness. Meditation aims to help people achieve a higher form of consciousness that allows them to discover a hidden inner deity. The human mind and consciousness are said to develop, opening a door to inner spiritual realities. The new religiosity claims human consciousness is part of the cosmos, but that we do not know where it comes from other than that God and consciousness can be equated. Not understanding consciousness is the great sin of new religiosity.

Consequent to the above, the New Age Movement is in direct

opposition to Christian faith. Christianity proclaims that Jesus Christ is the only way to God. Christianity also teaches that morality is objective. The New Age Movement believes neither good nor evil exists, but it is impossible to live with a vision of life that equates good and evil, as this leads to absurdity. However, we cannot live normally if we refute the existence of objective morality. The difference between good and evil can easily be demonstrated by boiling a kettle of water and offering to pour the kettle over the head of a New Ager. Boiling water causes burns, cold water does not. There's a difference, just as there is a difference between good and evil.

Alice Bailey (1880–1949) was an important figure in the New Age Movement. She was a very prolific writer and wrote many books on white magic and theosophical subjects. A charter called "The Plan", which outlines a ten-point strategy for annihilating Christianity and causing Jews and Christians to abandon their faith, is probably written by Bailey. This was not to be implemented via a frontal attack, but by infiltrating and controlling congregations, and thus stifling faith in Jesus and the Bible.

The Plan has the following points:

1. Take God and prayer out of the education system
2. Reduce parental authority over the children
3. Destroy the Judeo-Christian family structure
4. If sex is free, then make abortion legal and make it easy
5. Make divorce easy and legal, free people from the concept of life-long marriage
6. Make homosexuality an alternative lifestyle
7. Distort and transform the art so it seems hideous and repulsive
8. Use media to promote and change mindsets
9. Create an interfaith movement
10. Get governments to make all these laws and get the church to endorse these changes.

We are witnessing a protracted process to annihilate Christianity by making laws that are contrary to the Bible and by influencing the Church to

compromise in relation to God's Word. We are witnessing a fifty-year strategy to attain the ultimate goal of establishing a world government, a world-economic system and a world religion, just as the Bible prophesied would happen. As Christians, we must confront this ten-point plan to remove Christianity from society by following an action plan with Christian tenets:

1. Ensuring God's Word and Christian prayer remain in the public domain and in the education system.
2. Parents, i.e. a mother and a father, have the natural authority over their children and their upbringing and development.
3. Christian family structure as the basis for a good society.
4. Sex needs the security provided by a good marriage. Abortion can be performed only in case of emergency. Human life is sacred.
5. A man and woman who promise each other lifelong marriage provide the best frame for the children. Divorce must be the last resort.
6. A faithful marriage between one man and one woman is considered to be the best foundational unit of society.
7. Let all expressions of art promote what is good and beautiful, what is true, and the purity in God's wonderful creation.
8. All media has a social responsibility to provide true enlightenment so that human mindsets are characterized by righteousness, compassion, forgiveness, and gratitude.
9. Reveal the deception inherent in multi-religious confusion. There is only one true God. He is the One who creates, saves, and sanctifies, who gives meaning in life and hope for eternity.
10. Governing bodies at all levels must have God's creation ordinances at the basis of their work. The church's mission is to preach God's Word to individuals and communities, as obedience against God brings his blessing.

Concluding words

This book has presented a defense of the Christian faith. For many centuries the Christian faith has constituted the very foundation of Western civilization, and being Christian was natural to most people. Today, Christianity is subject to the strongest attack in 2,000 years. In this time of spiritual battle, it has been important for me to present facts that point powerfully to the fact that Christianity is the truth of our reality.

The forces that threaten Christianity and Christian faith are Atheism, Naturalism, Materialism, the Theory of Evolution, Secular Humanism, Liberal Theology, Relativism, Postmodernism, Marxism, the New Age Movement, and Islam. In our time, a singular attack is aimed at a biblical understanding of morality, forms of cohabitation, and the importance of the family to society. We do not know if this struggle will result in increased frequency of various forms of unhappiness, social problems, mental disorders and depression, but it is probable. In this regard, I feel the need to clarify the following:

Only God could have created our universe. That is why he is almighty in a way that we do not understand. He is bigger than anything we can imagine, so we should all be in holy awe of an almighty Creator. At the Big Bang, two gases, hydrogen and helium were created, but they do not contain any information, they are inanimate substances, yet everything in our reality comes from these two gases. Only the one almighty Creator could do that.

God has created life. Life could not have come into being by itself.

Even life in the smallest bacterium is far more complex than anything humans have ever made.

God has created us humans. We are created by God and do not originate from apes. The differences between apes and humans are far too great for us to have descended from them.

Biological information is found in DNA. This information is specific, has a purpose, and is a prerequisite for life to come into being and for life to continue to live. Information can never come into being by chance. Only an intelligence can create targeted information, so it is natural to see DNA as God's Logos— words with creative power.

The nano-machinery of life. Every single cell in our body has thousands of motors and machines that only measure a few nanometers in length. The instructions for their construction and how they work lies in the DNA. This nano-machinery is vital. Without functioning nano-machinery, life would end. Evolutionary mechanisms cannot produce this machinery.

We may wonder if the main purpose of the creation of the universe is so that humans could come into being. It does look this way. Since God wants to have a relationship with us, we would expect he would want to convey messages to us about how to live - messages we must follow to inherit eternal life. The Bible gives us this information. It should not be harder to believe the Bible is God's word to us, than to believe God created the information stored in our DNA.

I have tried to argue that a Christian worldview represents the total truth of our reality. Secular worldviews have replaced God with something created, and therefore cannot provide a comprehensive description of reality.

I have presented information that demonstrates the Bible is credible and that there is every reason to believe the New Testament stories about Jesus. Strong circumstantial evidence supports the belief that Jesus rose from the dead.

The Bible says that God created everything perfectly, but evil came into existence. This evil infected humankind and caused each one of us to go against God's will. We have all sinned, and the only person who could reconcile us to God so that we can live with him forever is his own

son, Jesus Christ. He took the punishment for all human evil, and when he died, he said, 'It is finished'. Jesus opened the way into heaven for all those who receive him into their lives, but there is one condition: when we welcome Jesu into our lives, we accept him as Lord of our life. If we turn our back on him and the commandments he has given us, then he will turn his back on us.

I have tried to point out that a naturalistic and atheist view of life reckons on two causal mechanisms, namely:

1. Random naturalistic reactions
2. Regularity in the form of natural laws

A theistic view of life reckons on three causal mechanisms:

1. Random natural processes
2. Regularity in the form of natural laws
3. Intelligent cause. According to Christian faith, this intelligence cause is the Creator God.

*

I have read a lot of books and articles to find the material I needed to write this book. This reading has opened my eyes to all the powers that seek to prevent us receiving what God offers us. The Bible says that 'Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour' (1Peter 5:8, NIV). I am sure you will face doubts. We all do, but if you learn the points that I have listed here, you will be able to stand stronger when your faith is attacked. The most important point is that no one but God could have created our universe. Never let go of that anchor point!

*

In the time in which we live, every Christian needs to have a knowledge of apologetics, i.e. they need to know how to defend their faith. Apologetics are necessary, but not all we need. Living the Christian life is the most important thing. That involves praying every day, reading God's Word every day, and being an active member of a church.

You may have heard of the term 'committed Christian'. A committed Christian tries to live the right way in all the situations they meet in the course of everyday life. All Christians should be taught the ability to defend their faith. If we want the rising generation to have a resilient Christian faith, we must provide them with a survival kit that enables them to resist the secular culture of our time and keep their faith strong. This is the responsibility of Christian family homes and churches. If we neglect this, there is reason to believe the young people of today will be lost to the Christian faith. This should be priority number one for Christianity. Believe me, it is urgent.

Finally, I hope that you, the reader, choose to have this life motto:

I am a Christian and always will be so,
'Til sun and moon wax and wane no more.
I am a Christian, and am proud to be tho',
E'en if the world makes me sore.
I am a Christian, and would yet have you know,
All heaven's glory for me is in store.[1]

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1 Translated from a Norwegian hymn and adjusted to scan and rhyme in English.

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