

Honest Answers to Honest Questions

Foundational Question # 1:

“How do we know that God even exists?”

In attempting to answer that question, I would rather use my mind and go with ‘reason’ than set it aside and go with ‘faith’. Some Christian beliefs just really don’t seem ‘reasonable’ to me.”

Phrased somewhat differently ...

“Do Christians have to park their minds at the church door and abandon ‘*reason*’ for ‘*faith*’ and the ‘*rational*’ for the ‘*irrational*’ in order to believe that ‘*God*’ exists? Are ‘faith’ and ‘reason’ mutually exclusive?”

“Come now, and let us reason together” (God, Isaiah 1:18).

Author's FORWARD to the Question “Does God Exist?”

“Does God exist?” is the most important Question on our website. It is the Question on which all else hangs. It is a unique question in that neither it, nor its counterpart, “God does not exist,” can be observed or proven in a laboratory.

Since the existence or non-existence of God cannot be observed or empirically proven in a laboratory, the Question then becomes ...

“Is it rational or irrational to believe in the existence of God?”

Though there are many great physical evidences for the existence of God, the Question remains largely a philosophical Question that necessitates the use of reason. This takes us to the realm of Metaphysics, a respected branch of rational philosophy that deals with the fundamental nature of reality beyond that of physical evidence. An example of a metaphysical argument from reason for the existence of God would be Thomas Aquinas’ statement ...

“It is necessary to assume something which is necessary of itself, and has no cause of its necessity outside itself but is rather the cause of necessity in other things. And this all men call God.”

Concerning “reason”, the God of the Bible tells us to pursue reason, not flee from it

“Come now, and let us reason together” (Isaiah 1:18).

“Get wisdom! Get understanding!” (Proverbs 4:5)

“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment.” (Jesus Christ, Matthew 22:37-38)

That, my friend, is what we are asking you to do, to “reason” with us. We are certain that if you will read our Answer to “Does God exist?”, you will find that it is eminently reasonable and rational to believe in the existence of God, whether you choose to believe in Him or not.

We also urge you to read our *Appendix I*, which shows that the answer to the Question of whether God exists or not has great consequences for us, both individually and as a collective whole. We also readily admit that looking at consequences does not give us an answer to our question “Does God exist?” – but it does show the importance of asking and pursuing it.

For those of you who do not wish to go through our entire paper, though we would very much urge you to give it a shot, there is “A Recap of our Answer to Foundational Question # 1 and its Appendix” on pages 38-40.

Honest Answers to Honest Questions: Foundational Question # 1

An Outline of Our Answer

Our lead Question, Foundational Question #1, which concerns the very existence of God Himself and the relationship between faith and reason, deals with foundational issues that are complex and multidimensional, issues upon which everything else will build, issues which cannot be adequately addressed in a few short pages.

And so, we give you ...

An Outline of Our ANSWER to Fundamental Question # 1

- I. Introductory Comments (which you are now reading)
- II. The ANSWER Itself, which would include:
 - a. Definitions of our Terms and a Look at Philosophical Arguments in General
 - b. A look at whether faith or belief in the existence of God is a rational or an irrational concept, including a look at ...

The main arguments AGAINST the existence of God

The main arguments FOR the existence of God
 - c. A discussion, “If it is not ‘irrational’ to believe that God exists, then could one ‘reasonably’ believe that the God that exists could be the Christian God of the Bible?”
- III. Lastly, an APPENDIX titled ...

“Philosophical Beliefs Have Consequences: What are the Logical Consequences of the Existence or Non-Existence of God?”

As stated earlier, consequences do not prove the existence of God, but they do show the overwhelming importance of pursuing an answer to the question, especially as it relates to the meaningfulness of your life, the very existence and nature of “good” and “evil”, and the authoritativeness of “morals” and “ethics”. We would urge you to read it.

- IV. A Recap Summary of our Answer and Appendix

Again, Question # 1 is ...

How do we know that God even exists?

In attempting to answer that question, I would rather use my mind and go with “*reason*” than set it aside and go with “*faith*”. Some Christian beliefs just really don’t seem “*reasonable*” to me.

Phrased somewhat differently ...

Do Christians have to park their minds at the church door and abandon ‘*reason*’ for ‘*faith*’ and the ‘*rational*’ for the ‘*irrational*’ in order to believe that ‘*God*’ exists? Are ‘*faith*’ and ‘*reason*’ mutually exclusive?

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All good and fair questions.

These are not only “good and fair” questions. They are also very fundamental and pivotal questions. So, before proceeding to answer them we need to ...

First, define our terms and make sure that we know what we are talking about

Second, be especially sure that we know what we mean by the term “God”

Third, take a brief look at the structure of philosophical arguments in general

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First, defining our terms ...

Note: All definitions below, with the exception of “Atheism and Agnosticism” are taken from *Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*.

“Reason” is defined as “a rational ground or motive ... a sufficient ground of explanation or of logical defense ... the power of comprehending, inferring esp. in orderly rational ways”

“Reasonable” means “not conflicting with reason”

“Faith”, in the sense that we are using it, means “belief and trust in and loyalty to God”. (We note that the Bible in Hebrews 11:1 defines “faith” as “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”)

“Rational” means “having reason or understanding ... relating to, or based on, or agreeable to reason”.

“Irrational” means “not endowed with reason or understanding ... lacking usual or normal mental clarity or coherence ... not governed by or according to reason”.

“Theism” is a “belief in the existence of a god or gods; *specif*: belief in the existence of one God viewed as the creative source of man and the world who transcends yet is immanent in the world.”

The definitions for “Atheism and Agnosticism” are found in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, edited by Ted Honderich, Oxford University Press, 1995, page 63 ...

“Atheism is ostensibly the doctrine that there is no God. Some atheists support this claim by arguments. But these arguments are usually directed against the Christian concept of God, and are largely irrelevant to other possible gods. Thus much Western atheism may be better understood as the doctrine that the Christian God does not exist.”

“Agnosticism may be strictly personal and confessional – ‘I have no firm belief about God’ – or it may be the more ambitious claim that no one ought to have a positive belief for or against the divine existence.”

Second, settling on what we mean by the term “God”

Since we agree wholeheartedly with the *Oxford Companion to Philosophy* that atheism and its arguments are overwhelmingly directed against the Christian God of the Bible, that their arguments are “*largely irrelevant to other possible gods*” and that “*much Western atheism may be better understood as the doctrine that the Christian God does not exist*”, we will speak of God in a “General” sense as being much like the God of the Bible and God in a “Specific” sense as being the Christian God of the Bible.

In keeping with this, we will define “God in a General sense” to be a monotheistic Supreme Being and the Creator of all that is. He is a Spirit-Being who can, if He so chooses, act supernaturally in the physical world. He is omnipotent, loving and good. He does not inhabit His universe in the Pantheistic sense held by Far Eastern religions.

By defining God in a “General” sense in this manner, we greatly narrow the field of God-candidates by ...

Eliminating the idea that there may be an actual God, but He is not fully able to stop evil or else He would do so. Books like Rabbi Harold Kushner’s *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* and people who after a natural disaster say

something like “My God had nothing to do with this” take this position. Their God lacks the necessary power to enforce the good or stop the evil. Unlike the God of the Bible, their God is not omnipotent.

We also eliminate the idea that there may be an actual God, but He is disinterested in the workings of His world and makes no real demands on us that we know of. This would be the “God” of Deism or Agnosticism.

And, finally, we eliminate the idea that God may not really be “good” or “loving” after all.

We have already defined God in a “Specific” sense as the Christian God of the Bible.

With our “*General*” and “*specific*” definitions of “*God*” in mind, we can now break Question # 1 into two separate parts:

Question 1a: Is “faith” in the existence of God in the “General” sense a “*rational*” or an “*irrational*” concept? Are “*faith*” and “*reason*” necessary opposites?

Question 1b: If it is not “irrational” to believe that such a God, in the “General” sense, actually exists, then could one reasonably believe that this God, could, in a “Specific” sense, be the Christian God of the Bible?

We note that the answer to Question 1a determines the validity of asking Question 1b. An affirmative answer to Question 1a does not, of course, prove an affirmative answer to Question 1b, but it does allow us to reasonably ask it.

Lastly, before delving more deeply into our two-part question, let’s take a brief look at

The structure of Philosophical Arguments in general

Generally speaking, there are two types of philosophical arguments:

There are what are called *a priori* arguments (arguments which are purely conceptual, which arise from reason and logic alone)

And there are *a posteriori* arguments (arguments which are held from evidences alone).

We turn to the *Oxford Companion to Philosophy* to help us distinguish between the two:

“Knowledge is said to be *a priori* (literally: prior to experience) when it does not depend for its authority upon the evidence of experience, and *a posteriori* when it does so depend.” (*The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Honderich, page 42).

[We note here that The Oxford Companion to Philosophy fully recognizes that valid and rational philosophical argument can exist without “the evidence of experience”.]

These two types of philosophical arguments can also be referred to as being representative of Rationalistic thought (thought which is *a priori* and derived from reason) and Empirical thought (thought which is *a posteriori* and derived from evidence). Milton Hunnex in his very helpful work *Chronological and Thematic Charts of Philosophies and Philosophers*, page 3, explains the distinction between the two:

“Rationalism believes that some ideas or concepts are independent of experience and that some truth is known by reason alone.

Empiricism believes that all ideas or concepts derive from experience and that truth must be established by reference to experience alone.”

In sum, we can classify philosophical arguments as being either ...

A priori ... Rationalistic ... derived from Reason alone

A posteriori ... Empirical ... derived from Evidences alone

OK, let’s take a look at Question 1a, which is ...

Is “faith” in the existence of a God, as we have defined Him, a “rational” or an “irrational” concept? Are “faith” and “reason” necessary opposites?

Do theists have to park their minds at the church door and abandon “reason” for “faith” and the “rational” for the “irrational”?

As you might suspect, both sides use *a priori* arguments (arguments derived from reason and conceptual necessity) and *a posteriori* arguments (arguments derived from evidences alone) for their respective positions.

We will look first at the two main arguments AGAINST the Existence of God and then the three main arguments FOR the Existence of God.

The two main arguments put forth AGAINST the existence of God are

1. The existence of evil ... and ...
2. The naturalistic (empirical) argument that God's existence is incompatible with observed reality – i.e., we cannot see or touch Him

First let's look at ...

1. The existence of evil as an argument against the existence of God

For starters, one might rightly ask how we know that the existence of evil is the number one argument against the existence of God? We defer again to our *Oxford Companion to Philosophy* which states on page 315 that “*The most popular line of argument against God's existence involves the problem of evil.*”

This would, of course, be an *a posteriori* argument from evidence that usually runs something like this ...

Major Premise: If God exists, there would be no evil in the world.

Minor Premise: Evil exists.

Conclusion: There is no God.

In the strict sense of logical construction, this is a valid argument.

But the fact that it is a validly constructed argument does not mean that it necessarily is a true or correct argument. For instance, I might make the argument ...

Major Premise: If atheists exist, there would be no evil in the world.

Minor Premise: Evil exists.

Conclusion: There are no atheists.

This too is a validly constructed argument. But it is not a true argument, because the Major Premise is simply untrue.

We would submit that the Major Premise “If God exists, there would be no evil in the world” is also untrue.

Since we are in full agreement with the *Oxford Companion to Philosophy* statement that ...

... atheistic arguments are “*usually directed against the Christian concept of God*”, “*are largely irrelevant to other possible gods*”, and that “*much Western atheism may be better understood as the doctrine that the Christian God does not exist*” ...

... we will consider Question 1a to concern ...

... the rationality or irrationality of belief in the existence of the Christian God of the Bible

and will reframe the atheist’s main argument against God’s existence as follows ...

Major Premise: If a good, loving and omnipotent God exists, there would be no evil in the world.

Minor Premise: Evil exists.

Conclusion: There is, therefore, no good, loving and omnipotent God.

Perhaps John Stuart Mill states this argument the best ...

“If God desires there to be evil in the world, then He is not good. If He does not desire there to be evil, yet evil exists, then He is not omnipotent. Thus, if evil exists God is either not loving or not all-powerful. Evil casts a shadow over God’s love and power. This is no small dilemma, and answers to it are exceedingly difficult.”

As Christians, we would make three points in response to the argument against the existence of a good, loving and omnipotent God based on the existence of evil

First, we hold that the Major Premise “*If a good, loving and omnipotent God exists, there would be no evil in the world*” is not a provable statement, but a mere opinion that must itself be taken (dare we say it?) on ‘faith’.

Second, we would also hold, concerning the Major Premise, that there is no inherent contradiction or logically demanded mutual exclusivity between the temporary existence of evil and the existence a good, loving and omnipotent God at the same time.

Third, concerning both the Major and Minor Premises, we would ask how, in an Epistemological sense, absent God, can the atheist even know that there is such a thing as “evil” per se in the first place. (Note: Epistemology is the study of the theory of knowledge and how we can know things.)

This third argument is very important ... So let's think it through ...

If God does not exist, it is axiomatic that there can be no "Higher Law", in the traditional sense of the term, for there is no "Higher Authority" to give it. Likewise, there can be no "Natural Law", as there is no "Natural-Law Giver" to give it.

Thus, we ask, if there is no authoritative Law-Giving Supreme Being, no Divine Provider of moral and ethical imperatives, no stone tablets from 'On High' telling us what is right and what is wrong, then where are we to go to learn what is 'good' and what is 'evil', what is 'right' and what is 'wrong', and what the imperative ethical 'oughts' (or demands) of our existence are?

No problem.

Absent a Supreme Being, the next highest authority is, by natural default, the State, or, if there is no formal state, the culture (which is really only a looser form of the State) in which one lives. The State must fulfill the role once held by God.

[It is true that the individual could consider himself or herself the highest authority and ultimate determiner of ethical rights and wrongs, but the individual is a subject of the State or culture in which he or she lives and must, therefore, yield himself or herself to the laws of that culture or state or risk imprisonment or execution. So, by default, the State or culture is the higher authority and ultimate determiner of ethical rights or wrongs over the individual.]

And, this, my friend, has tremendous implications and consequences for us all.

For instance, one of the chief consequences of the State becoming the highest authority in existence is that all concepts of "right" and "wrong", of "good" and "evil", along with all the ethical "oughts" of our existence, by necessity become matters of State policy ... which is to say that they come to be defined and determined by the ever-changing and ever-shifting opinions of men.

"But, wait just a minute" someone might object, "Even if that is so, the opinions of men on basic moral and ethical issues have changed very little over very long periods of time ... Everybody's still against murder and theft."

Good point. But ... we would counter ...

First, that this has been the case for Western Civilization largely because the Christian church has for hundreds of years set and maintained Western Civilization's standards of 'good' and 'evil', based on the Bible.

Second, that one has only to look to Nazi Germany and Communist Russia, the two great atheistic states of the twentieth century, to see just how quickly "State-sanctioned" murder and theft can become commonplace when the influence of the Church on society is greatly stifled or outlawed.

Third, that even within Western societies that have remained at least nominally Christian, there have been great cultural shifts in rather short periods of time as the influence of the Christian church has greatly diminished.

[One might consider, for example, the great cultural shifts in our own "nominally" Christian America over the last fifty years on the "rightness" or "wrongness" of such fundamental issues as abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality, and the use of the death penalty ... not to mention the precipitous instability and decline of the once highly revered institution of marriage ... and, concurrent with it, and perhaps a contributing cause of it, the massive ready availability of hard-core pornography, internet or otherwise, which would not have been tolerated just a few decades ago.]

But, let's get back to our main point, which is ...

... the all-important question of whether man even can, in the absence of God, legitimately and authoritatively presume to call any act 'good' or 'evil' in the first place.

Here the words "*legitimately*" and "*authoritatively*" are key. For ... IF there is no God ... IF man really is "just another animal" that somehow emerged from the primordial ooze and eventually learned to walk upright ... IF, as held by Marx, all of men's thoughts, desires, loves and aspirations can be fully explained in terms of physical and chemical reactions emanating from more highly evolved cerebral cortexes ... THEN just who are these animals called "men" to proclaim anything to be authoritatively "good" or "evil" in the first place, much less presume to tell other men that they "ought" to do this or "ought" to do that?

In short, by what legitimate authority, other than their own mere opinion, can they, absent God, assert such things?

That is the overarching and all-important question.

And the inexorable and only logical answer to that question is that they can do so by no other authority than "their own mere opinion" ... whether that opinion is held

autonomously or is culturally reflected in State legal policy ... for the simple fact that there is no higher authority than themselves, or the State to which they belong, to which they can appeal to assert or prove the authority and legitimacy of their claim.

So, then – and this is extremely important

– by logical necessity, *absent God*, men cannot authoritatively and legitimately (in an Epistemological sense) prove anything to be ‘good’ or ‘evil’, or ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, above “their own mere opinion” of it. They can most definitely ASSERT that something is ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ ... but they can’t legitimately and authoritatively PROVE that it is so.

This truth is perhaps best summed up by the great French existentialist and atheist, Jean Paul Sartre, who said ...

“If there is no infinite reference point, then all finite points are absurd.”

... which brings us squarely back to our very important assertion that the State’s (or even the individual’s) assuming the former duties of God has tremendous ethical and moral implications and consequences for us all.

Let’s consider some of them ...

We can, for instance, legitimately ask “If the State is the highest authority in existence”, then ...

What can we say to the cannibal whose State or culture, the highest recognized authority in which he exists, says that killing and eating your enemies is a ‘good’ thing to do?

Even more to the point, what could we legitimately and authoritatively say if a major sovereign State should decide that they don’t like a despised minority, say, the Jews, and want to rid themselves of them? What could we say to them? To what legitimate moral or ethical authority could we appeal to prove to them that they are wrong?

In truth, to both the cannibal and the genocidal state, absent God, we could only assert that it is our ‘mere opinion’ that they are wrong.

We may, of course, by force of arms put an end to their objectionable (in our eyes) acts, and replace their governments with ones we like better, but we can’t prove their previous acts to have been “evil” or wrong beyond our own mere opinion because absent God that is all that we have to go on. [Unless, of course, one assumes that

“might” really does “make right” ... but, even then, they would still be “right” until we defeated them by our “might”].

The point is that in both of the above cases, and all others beside, whether dealing with states, societies, or individuals, in the absence of God we can offer no definitive, legitimate and authoritative proof above that of “our own opinion” to show that the actions of any other state, society or individual are wrong [though we should probably leave off telling them that our own opinions on right and wrong shift rather frequently and can likewise only be asserted and not proven].

And so, my friend, we are led to conclude that Sartre is right, that absent God, i.e., absent an “*infinite reference point*”, there remain only ‘*absurdities*’. There is no provable ‘*right*’ and no provable ‘*wrong*’ ... no provable ‘*good*’ and no provable ‘*bad*’ ... no provable binding ethical imperatives ... No, there are only ‘*absurdities*’.

Perhaps Dostoevsky summed it up the best when he wrote ...

“If there is no God, everything is permitted.”

**For a more extended discussion on Dostoevsky’s point,
we refer you to our Appendix:**

*“Philosophical Beliefs Have Consequences: What are the Logical Consequences
of the Existence or Non-Existence of God?”*

As stated earlier, consequences do not prove the existence of God, but they do show the overwhelming importance of pursuing an answer to the question of His existence, especially as it relates to the meaningfulness of your life and the very existence and nature of “good” and “evil” and of “morals” and “ethics”. We would urge you to read it.

In summary ... to the atheist’s argument of the existence of evil as proof of the non-existence of a good, loving and omnipotent God, we would reply ...

First ... that such a statement, on the face of it, is nothing more than an unprovable opinion which must itself be accepted with a great deal of “faith”

Second ... that there is nothing inherently contradictory about the temporary existence of evil and the existence of a good, loving and omnipotent God at the same time (more will be said on this later) ... and ...

Third ... that their argument is self-invalidating because, absent God, there is no provable ‘evil’ in the first place.

Thus do we see that the existence of evil as a valid and legitimate argument against the existence of God is not a substantial one.

Let us now turn to atheist's second main argument against the existence of God, which is ...

2. The naturalistic (empirical) argument that God's existence is incompatible with observed reality, i.e., God does not exist because we cannot see or touch Him.

To say that God does not exist simply because we cannot see or touch Him is an *a posteriori* assumption of those who hold to a purely empirical and naturalistic philosophy. It is an assumption that makes the rather bold assertion that man's mind and sensory perceptions are the only valid measurers and determiners of the truth, reality and the existence of all things – i.e., unless I can see, touch and feel it, it simply does not exist. There can be no metaphysical reality without my say so.

In response, we would note ...

First, that just like the argument from “evil”, this argument itself also has to be taken on a great deal of “faith”. It can only be asserted, not proven. Statements like Carl Sagan's “*The cosmos is all that is or was or ever will be*” might sound really ‘deep’ on television, but in the end, they are only unprovable opinions that have to be accepted by ‘faith’.

Second, we would note the existence of “*metaphysics*” as a universally held and intellectually sound branch of philosophy that recognizes the possibility of something's existence apart from our direct physical experience of it.

[“Metaphysics”, according to Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, is a “division of philosophy that is concerned with the fundamental nature of reality and being”.]

In sum, to state that God does not exist simply because we can't see or touch Him is to not only to turn one's back on a respected branch of philosophical thought, that of metaphysics, but is also to express an opinion that must itself be accepted on “faith”. We note again that the existence of metaphysical philosophy does not definitively and conclusively prove that “God” actually does exist, but it does go a very long way toward proving that belief in the existence of God is not in and of itself an irrational concept.

Our intent in this first section of our answer to HATHQ # 1a

... has been to honestly challenge the atheist's main arguments for the non-existence of God and to show the hollow and superficial ground on which they stand.

Before proceeding to the main arguments "FOR" God's existence, we would make two additional points:

First, that the Atheist's assertion that there is no God, rather than bringing rational clarity or simplicity to the major questions of our existence, actually raises more questions than it answers ...

Second, that the Atheist's assertion that there is no God is self-destructive, in that it renders itself and everything else to be pointless and futile (or as Sartre would say, "*absurd*").

Our first point, that Atheism gives no intellectually satisfying answers as to how we or the material universe got to be here in the first place, but only raises more questions is very important. To attribute the material universe to some kind of an unexplained "big bang" that "just happened" only removes our basic Questions one step back and raises major new one such as – What caused the big bang? How can something (physical matter) come from nothing? Or, if something didn't come from nothing, then where did the pre-existing something (physical matter) come from?

In short, to the question "*How did we and the universe come to be?*", we have seen no intellectually-satisfying answers from those that deny the existence of God. We have only more questions.

As to the validity of point number two, that the Atheist's assertion that there is no God is self-destructive in that it renders itself and everything else to be pointless and futile, or, as Satre would say, "*Absurd*", let's consult the great twentieth century English atheist, mathematician, and philosopher Bertrand Russell, who wrote ...

"The world is purposeless, void of meaning. Man is the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system. Only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair can the soul's habitation be safely built. From evolution no ultimately optimistic philosophy can be validly inferred."

Russell seems to agree with us on point number two, for it was him, and not us, who declared "*unyielding despair*" to be the atheist's "*only ... firm foundation*". We applaud his honesty and candor.

In our next section, we hope to lay a “rational” and “reasonable” foundation for the claims that a good, loving and omnipotent God that we cannot see or touch does, in fact, exist, and that He can, at least temporarily, co-exist with definable evil.

The three main arguments FOR the existence of God are ...

- 1. The Cosmological Argument**
 - 2. The Ontological Argument**
 - 3. The widespread belief in God throughout history and the testimony of many of the great thinkers and scientists of history to His existence**
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1. The Cosmological Argument for the existence of God

Why is there something rather than nothing? The atheist says that ‘it just is’ – without offering any intellectually-satisfying rational explanation as to why ‘it just is’ or how it just came to be. The theist, including non-Christian philosophers like Aristotle and Plato, holds that such a universe as ours demands a Creator God that is both separate from and above it.

The Cosmological Argument is an *a posteriori* argument from evidences. When we take a close look at all that surrounds us and all that is within us and see how it is governed by orderliness, complexity and precision, rather than by confusion and randomness, we feel that it reasonably demands design by an intelligent Creator. Indeed, it was no less a mind than John Locke’s that said ...

“The visible marks of extraordinary wisdom and power appear so plainly in all the works of the creation that a rational creature who will but seriously reflect on them, cannot miss the discovery of a deity.”

From the astonishing complexity of sub-atomic quantum physics to the broad expanse of space with its untold clusters of whirling galaxies, we ask which seems the more rational choice – that it all came about by random accidents or that it all came about, and sustains itself, by intelligent and rational design? Theists hold that the cosmological evidence all about us and within us are conclusive evidence for the existence of a Supreme Being.

One interesting variation of the Cosmological Argument that most of us are familiar with is the watch in the sand argument: You are walking on the beach. You spot something in the sand. You go over and pick it up. It is a watch. It is amazingly complex. Could you *reasonably* think that the watch just happened, that its parts just

randomly came together, that such interworking complexity came about by mere chance?

Theists hold that the same is true for both the watch and the universe – that they both demand an intelligent Creator.

In response to the Cosmological argument, many atheists assert that given enough time anything can, and ultimately will, happen. For example, some have lightheartedly, and some rather seriously, suggested that given an inexhaustible supply of typewriters, monkeys and time, one of the monkeys, randomly punching at the typewriter, would ultimately punch out a copy of the complete works of Shakespeare.

But, that, of course, is not rationality. That is absurdity and a complete overthrowing of a correct understanding of the laws of probability.

Yet, the improbability of either life itself, or the intricacies of quantum physics, or the vast interworking complexity of the universe randomly coming about through chance is infinitely greater than the improbabilities of a monkey typing out the complete works of Shakespeare.

But, monkeys aside, we simply ask, along with John Locke, which is the more intellectually satisfying belief: that a universe of quantum physics, DNA double-helices and spinning galaxies came together by intelligent design or by mere chance? The theist would hold that belief in a Creator God is the more rational of the two.

Next, we turn to ...

2. The Ontological Argument for the existence of God

Without being too tedious, the Ontological Argument for the existence of God is an *a priori* argument which holds that human reason can, without physical evidence, set forth the necessary existence of God. Among those who taught this are Anslem, Rene Descartes, and Thomas Aquinas who stated it thusly ...

“It is necessary to assume something which is necessary of itself, and has no cause of its necessity outside itself but is rather the cause of necessity in other things. And this all men call God.”

We mention again that there is a whole branch of rational philosophy, i.e., metaphysics, that deals with the fundamental nature of reality beyond that of physical evidence. We can thus see that belief in the existence of God in a “general” sense is a well-recognized and rational philosophical concept.

The third argument for the existence of God is ...

3. The argument from the widespread belief in God throughout history and the testimony of many of the great thinkers of history to His existence

We readily admit that neither widespread belief in the existence of God nor the testimony of many of the great thinkers and scientists of history to His existence proves the actual existence of God – for it is possible that they could all be wrong. But these points do go a long way toward showing that the existence of God is a reasonable thing to hold. To hold otherwise one would have to assume that virtually all of mankind itself, including most of its greatest thinkers, are naturally delusional and hopelessly irrational.

In support of holding widespread belief in God as an argument for the existence of God, and to show the opinion of no less a philosophical giant than Immanuel Kant, we quote from *A World of Ideas: A Dictionary of Important Theories, Concepts, Beliefs, and Thinkers* by Chris Rohmann, which states on page 164 ...

“Two further approaches find the proof of God’s existence in universal human traits. The argument from common consent maintains that the worldwide belief in God, found in all ages and cultures, demonstrates its validity. The moral postulation of God, originated by KANT, holds that our sense of what is right and wrong is innate, not learned, and that therefore a superhuman source of that conviction must exist.”

In this context, it is noteworthy that the great religions of the Western and Near Eastern World – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – have long held to belief in the existence of a God. And not only Christians, Jews and Muslims, but also many of the great pagan Greek philosophers postulated the necessary existence of a ‘higher power’ – whether it was Plato’s ‘Demiurge’ or Aristotle’s ‘Prime Mover’ – though their ‘Gods’ did not play as big a role in the believer’s life as do the ‘Gods’ of Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

We would likewise note, regarding Judaism and Christianity in particular, that Moses, the author of the first five books of the Old Testament (*Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers* and *Deuteronomy*) wrote long before the ancient Greek philosophers wrote, giving both Judaism and Christianity the endorsement of antiquity, while atheism as a philosophy is in the scheme of things a relatively new development and one with a relatively small following.

Again, we readily admit that the widespread and long-held belief in the existence of God and the testimony of many of the great thinkers and scientists of Western history to His existence are not in and of themselves sure proof that God actually does exist, but they do go a long way toward helping to remove the idea of faith in God’s existence from the realm of the irrational and illogical.

A Summary of our answer to Question 1a

To refresh our memories, Question 1a was ...

**Is “faith” in the existence of a God, as we have defined Him,
a “rational” or an “irrational” concept?
Are “faith” and “reason” necessary opposites?**

... or, again, stated somewhat differently ...

**“Do Theists in general and Christians in particular have to park their
minds at the church door and abandon ‘reason’ for ‘faith’
and the ‘rational’ for the ‘irrational’”?**

We have tried to fairly present the main arguments both FOR and AGAINST the existence of God as we have defined Him in the ‘general’ sense’.

Atheists assert that God does not exist because evil exists, though they cannot prove the point to be anything more than a mere opinion, or even prove that ‘evil’ itself actually exists as such. Many atheists also hold that God does not exist because they can’t observe the reality of His existence. They boldly make their own sensory perceptions to be the only worthy determiner of metaphysical reality and hold that both we and our amazingly complex material universe just somehow came into existence on our own, though they cannot say how or why – and quite often offer up the most ridiculous of explanations.

On the other hand, theists assert that both philosophical reason and the evidential complexity of the universe, with its rotating galaxies and sub-atomic quantum particles all acting together in coherent, rational and orderly ways, are firm evidences of the likely existence of God. We also noted the widespread belief in the existence of God and the fact that many of our greatest thinkers and scientists throughout history have believed in His existence, while the existence of a meaningful number of atheists, if indeed there actually is a meaningful number of them, is a relatively new development.

As stated, many times before, we theists readily admit that one cannot conclusively and definitively prove the existence of God to a skeptic from the rules of logic and physical evidences alone. But, then, neither can the atheist offer conclusive and definitive proof of the non-existence of God.

However, though neither side can definitively and conclusively prove the existence or non-existence of God by physical evidences or philosophical arguments, we theists do hold that the physical evidences and philosophical rationales for His existence are much weightier than anything the “non-existence” side of the argument has to offer from

either a rationalistic or empirical viewpoint, leaving the existence of God a very rational and very philosophically reasonable concept.

**In summarizing our answer, let's recall our earlier definitions
of "rational" and "irrational" ...**

"Rational" means "having reason or understanding ... relating to, or based on, or agreeable to reason".

"Irrational" means "not endowed with reason or understanding ... lacking usual or normal mental clarity or coherence ... not governed by or according to reason".

With these definitions in mind, in answering HATHQ Question 1a, the question of the existence of God, we have attempted to show ...

That the arguments for the existence of God are much more rational, logically sound, and intellectually satisfying than are the arguments for atheism.

That the arguments for the existence of God have had far greater support from the great scientists, thinkers and philosophers of history than have the arguments of atheism.

In short, when comparing the main arguments for each side, we would submit that both reason and evidences cry out that belief or faith in the existence of God is a much more rational concept than belief or faith in the non-existence of God.

[We also note that the theistic viewpoint gives much better, more meaningful and much more hopeful answers to the great questions of life – Who am I? Why am I here? Where did I come from? Is there life after death? Is there a God and what does He require of me? – than the atheistic viewpoint.]

You, of course, must decide for yourself which set of arguments are more intellectually satisfying to you.

We again urge you to see our Appendix, titled ...

***"Philosophical Beliefs Have Consequences: What are the Logical Consequences
of the Existence or Non-Existence of God?"***

We now move on to the second part of our Question, Question 1b, which is ...

If it is not “irrational” to believe that such a God, in the General sense, actually exists, then could one also “reasonably” believe that this God, in a Specific sense, is the Christian God of the Bible?

Again, one of the reasons that we look to the Christian God of the Bible in a ‘*Specific*’ sense, is because the *Oxford Companion to Philosophy* states that atheistic arguments are ... “usually directed against the Christian concept of God” ... “are largely irrelevant to other possible gods” ... and that ... “much Western atheism may be better understood as the doctrine that the Christian God does not exist”.

And so, Question 1b is concerned with the “reasonableness” and “rationality” of specifically believing in the Christian God of the Bible.

In answering Question 1b, we would start by pointing out that all three members of the Christian Trinity tell us that that we are to use, not set aside, our “reason” and our “minds”:

We see God the Father, through the prophet Isaiah, bidding us

“Come now, and let us reason together” (Isaiah 1:18).

We see many individual Proverbs, of whom God the Holy Spirit is the ultimate Author, commanding us to ...

“Get wisdom! Get understanding!” (Proverbs 4:5)

Indeed, the book of Proverbs personifies “*Wisdom*” itself as a woman calling “*simple ones*” unto herself for instruction and tells us that it was specifically written to help us

*“To know wisdom and instruction,
To perceive the words of understanding,
To receive the instruction of wisdom,
Justice, judgment, and equity” (Proverbs 1:2-3)*

We note that God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, responded to a question about which was the greatest commandment with ...

“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment.” (Matthew 22:37-38)

Thus, according to the Lord Jesus Christ, among the requirements of “*the first and great commandment*” is that the Christian is to love God “*with all your mind*”.

In fact, the Apostle John in the introductory chapter of his gospel uses the Greek word “*Logos*”, a word which can itself be translated as ‘*logic*’ or ‘*reason*’, to describe Jesus Christ as “*the Word*” ...

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.” (John 1:1-5)

So, far from conflicting with wisdom or reason or rationality, all three members of the Christian Trinity call us unto it.

We would also note that the Bible itself contains a large section of what is commonly referred to as “Wisdom Literature” –

... the books of *Job*, *Psalms*, *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes*, and the *Song of Solomon* – all of which are majestic in their scope, and which, along with the grand and eloquent exhortations of the great Prophets of Israel and the uplifting and awe-inspiring sayings and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, stand far above the great literature of the world and very far above other so-called “holy books”.

In finalizing our answer to Question 1b, let’s again review a few of our original definitions ...

“Reason” is defined as “a rational ground or motive ... a sufficient ground of explanation or of logical defense ... the power of comprehending, inferring esp. in orderly rational ways”

“Reasonable” means “not conflicting with reason”

“Rational” means “having reason or understanding ... relating to, or based on, or agreeable to reason”.

“Irrational” means “not endowed with reason or understanding ... lacking usual or normal mental clarity or coherence ... not governed by or according to reason”.

As to the “reasonableness” or “rationality” of believing in the Christian God of the Bible ...

We would submit that if one accepts the metaphysical reality of a Higher Being capable of creating the heavens and the earth in all of their intricate beauty and complexity, then there is nothing in the beliefs of the Christian religion that directly or inherently

conflicts with the principles of logic or reason. There is nothing inherently illogical or irrational in the thought that ...

God originally created a perfect creation in which there was no corruption or sin

That God created an upright and holy man and woman in His own image to enjoy His creation and have fellowship with Him

That this man and woman, having been given free wills by God, deliberately chose to rebel and sin against Him

That the man and woman's once perfect and holy natures became marred and stained by their sinful and rebellious acts against God

That all the descendants of this man and woman inherit their parent's now-fallen sinful and rebellious natures and are consequently and unwaveringly predisposed from conception to sin and rejection of God ...

That this God is a holy God ... a God who must by His very nature judge and punish sin and sinners

That this God, in His grace and mercy, rather than righteously and justly condemning the man and woman and all their offspring to hell as a just punishment for their rebellion against Him, chose instead to redeem some of them by sending His Son to die in atonement for their sins so that they could be with Him forever in eternity

That He should cause all of this to be written in a book for our understanding

Again, if one accepts the metaphysical reality of a Higher Being capable of creating the heavens and the earth in all of their intricate beauty and complexity, then, according to generally accepted definitions of the words, none of the above is inherently "irrational" or "unreasonable" in any way.

We think that Dr. R. C. Sproul of Ligonier Ministries says it best ...

"The God of Christianity addresses people's minds. He speaks to us. We have a Book that is written for our understanding.

"When I say that Christianity is rational, I do not mean that the truth of Christianity in all of its majesty can be deduced from a few logical principles by a speculative philosopher. There is much information about the nature of God that we can find only because God himself chooses to reveal it to us. He reveals these things through his prophets, through history, through the Bible, and through his only begotten Son, Jesus.

“But what he reveals is intelligible; we can understand it with our intellect. He doesn't ask us to throw away our minds in order to become Christians. There are people who think that to become a Christian, one must leave one's brain somewhere in the parking lot. The only leap that the New Testament calls us to make is not into the darkness but out of the darkness into the light, into that which we can indeed understand. Now, that is not to say that everything the Christian faith speaks of is manifestly clear with respect to rational categories. I can't understand, for example, how a person can have a divine nature and a human nature at the same time, which is what we believe about Jesus. That's a mystery – but mysterious is not the same as irrational.

“Mystery doesn't apply only to religion. Scientists don't understand the ultimate force of gravity. These things are mysterious to us, but they're not irrational. It's one thing to say, ‘I don't understand from my finite mind how these things work out,’ and it's another thing to say, ‘They're blatantly contradictory and irrational, but I'm going to believe them anyway.’ That's not what Christianity does. Christianity says that there are mysteries, but those mysteries cannot be articulated in terms of the irrational; if that were so, then we have moved away from Christian truth.”¹

¹ Taken from *Now, That's a Good Question*, R. C. Sproul, pp 311-312

[Let's note that the sequencing above also shows us how a loving and merciful God can at least temporarily allow the existence of evil in His once perfect world.]

Our Conclusion to Fundamental Question # 1

Though our rather lengthy answer to HATHQ # 1 will not definitively “prove” the Christian God's existence to the skeptical atheist, we hope that we have given adequate reason and sufficient proof that no one can legitimately claim that belief in the existence of God or belief that that God could well be the Christian God of the Bible are “irrational” or “unreasonable” thoughts.

Indeed, as we have pointed out above, the Christian God of the Bible commands us to love him with all our “minds”, bids us “Come now, and let us reason together” with Him, and commands us to “Get wisdom! Get understanding!” Throughout history and up through today, countless men and women with great intellects have believed in the Christian God of the Bible.

We would submit rather that it is men who so audaciously proclaim that there is no God ... men who so adamantly deny the existence of a spiritual or metaphysical realm, unless they can see or touch it ... men like Carl Sagan who so boldly assert unprovable

statements like “*The cosmos is all that is, or ever was, or ever will be*” ... that it is men like these who are in reality the ones making irrational claims.

Final Notes

If you would like to read more about the God of the Bible, and more about the Lord Jesus Christ, the “*Word*” of John 1:1, and what He actually said and did, we would suggest that you read the Biblical book of John (the fourth gospel, and the fourth book in the New Testament) ...

If you believe only in God in the “General” sense, then we would suggest that you pray to Him and ask Him for wisdom and guidance in pointing you to the “Truth” as you read the book of John and consider the teachings and sayings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, we would again urge you to read our “*Appendix to Question 1*” titled ...

“Philosophical Beliefs Have Consequences: What are the Logical Consequences of the Existence or Non-Existence of God?”

... which immediately follows.

APPENDIX to HATHQ.com – Question # 1

“Philosophical Beliefs Have Consequences: What are the Logical Consequences of the Existence or Non-Existence of God?”

Core beliefs don't just exist in a vacuum. No, core beliefs have real implications and real consequences. We really are what we think.

This being the case, let's take a look at some of the logical implications and consequences of the existence or non-existence of God. More specifically, let's compare and contrast the logical consequences of Naturalistic Atheism's belief in the non-existence of God with Christianity's belief in the God of the Bible in two “Key Areas” ...

1. The Meaningfulness of Your Life
2. The Existence of Morals and Ethics, of Good and Evil

It is true, of course, that looking at the logical implications and consequences of whether there is a God or not does not determine whether there actually is a God or not, but it does show us the importance of pursuing the question.

We would also note that all those who hold to the tenets of naturalistic atheism do not necessarily accept or subscribe to all the logical implications of their philosophy. But many of them do, and the logical implications remain as such whether they subscribe to them or not.

So let's turn to our first Key Area

Key Area # 1: The Meaningfulness of Your Life

We will look first at ...

Naturalistic Atheism and the Meaningfulness of Your Life

Under the assumptions of Naturalistic Atheism, you really are nothing more than just another animal on the evolutionary tree. By some as yet inexplicable process, life began, your ancestors somehow managed their way out of the primordial sludge, evolved a little, eventually stumbled into walking upright, and here you are.

And that's it. In the great scheme of things, you simply “are” – you will exist for a while, and soon you will no longer exist. Your body is nothing but an accidental

composition of molecules, electrical impulses and energy that will soon decompose and rot back into the nothingness from which it came. Your thoughts, your hopes and your dreams are meaningless. They, along with such things as your love for your children, are nothing more than chemical and physical responses brought about by your more highly evolved cerebral cortex. You, your life, life itself, and everything you do are all equally meaningless and of no value.

“But”, one might object, “wait just a minute!” “That’s not so! You infer too much!”

Do we?

Let’s consult the great twentieth century English atheist, mathematician, and philosopher Bertrand Russell, who wrote ...

“The world is purposeless, void of meaning. Man is the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system. Only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair can the soul’s habitation be safely built. From evolution no ultimately optimistic philosophy can be validly inferred.”

Russell doesn’t seem to think that we infer too much. It was him, not us, who declared “unyielding despair” to be the atheist’s “only ... firm foundation”. We applaud his honesty and candor.

Or, let’s take Carl Sagan, host of the very popular TV series *Cosmos*, who put it a little more nicely ... but it amounts to the same thing ...

“Who are we? We find that we live on an insignificant planet of a humdrum star lost in a galaxy tucked away in some forgotten corner of a universe in which there are far more galaxies than people.”

So, like it or not, after all is said and done, if atheistic naturalism is right, you really are ‘just another animal’ of no more provable intrinsic ‘value’ or worth than any other animal. That’s it. You might claim that you have value, but simply wanting or claiming to have value doesn’t make you have value. If dung beetles could think and talk, they too would claim value for themselves and their claim to value would be just as valid, and just as meaningless, as your claim to value.

But, again, you don’t need to take our word, or even Russell’s or Sagan’s word, for it. Go read the works of the great atheistic Nihilist, Nietzsche or the great atheistic Existentialist, Sartre. They will tell you.

Or, if you could, you could ask the victims of the great atheistic states of the 20th century – victims of Hitler’s Germany, Stalin’s Russia, Chairman Mao’s China, and Pol Pot’s

Cambodia, among others – you could ask them just how much worth and value their lives had in an atheistic world.

But, don't feel too downcast, because no one else has any real value either. Just as you have no real reason to place value or worth on your own life, neither do they. They too came out of the primordial sludge and will soon dissolve back into its nothingness. You owe them nothing and they owe you nothing.

Christianity and the Meaningfulness of Your Life

According to Christianity, you were created, formed in, and bear the *Imago Dei*, the "Image of God". As such, your life is of infinite worth and infinite value.

You also have a purpose – which is to know, worship, obey and enjoy your Creator, to "love your neighbor as yourself", and to subdue the earth and rule over it as His stewards.

Under the Christian viewpoint, not only do both you and your neighbor have infinite intrinsic worth and value, but everything you do here on earth has great and eternal consequences. Nothing you do is meaningless.

An additional area in which your philosophical viewpoint on the meaningfulness of life has tremendous implications is in the nature of your relationship with other people

Let's look first at ...

Naturalistic Atheism and your Relationships with Others

As stated above, according to the teachings of Naturalistic Atheism, you currently have what is called "life", but, you will soon die and your "life form", your "being", your "essence", whatever you choose to call it, will come to an abrupt end. You will die, and when you are dead, you are really and fully dead. Your soulless physical body will simply rot back into the physical nothingness from which you came. You have nothing to look forward to but the total blackness of endless non-existence.

In short, this, your life right here and right now, is "it". For you, this is all there is, so, as the old beer commercial said, you better grab all you can and do whatever you want to do right now because you only live once. Above all, you should not let yourself be stifled in what you want to do by someone else's falsely imposed sense of guilt – for there is no such thing. So, follow your inclinations and enjoy yourself to the max, because, as we have said, this is "it" and, after this, "it" is all over.

As for your fellow “human beings”, they are only animals like you. Just like you, they also have no real, definable value, meaning or purpose. You owe them nothing and they owe you nothing. So, take and get what you need and want here and now because, when you boil it all down, “it” really is “all about you”.

[We note again that Atheists may claim not to feel this way, but this is the logical consequence of their philosophy nonetheless.]

Let’s now turn to ...

Christianity and your Relationships with Others here and now...

As stated above, you were created in and bear the image of God. Because of this, your life has limitless meaning and value. As a “life form”, you will never cease to be. You have an immortal soul that will continue to exist after the physical death of your body – and which will ultimately be reunited with your body.

And you don’t just have fellow “animals” around you. No, your fellow human beings were also created in and bear the image of God, and you are thereby to render the greatest respect and help unto them. The God who created you has set spiritual and moral laws within which you are to operate and live while on this earth – the greatest of them being to love Him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and the second greatest being to love your neighbor as yourself. It most definitely is not ‘all about you’.

Our second “Key Area” in which to explore the ramifications of the existence or non-existence of God is ...

Key Area # 2: The Very Existence of Morals and Ethics, of Good and Evil

One of the most basic parts of any philosophical discussion is the question “*How do you know?*” In fact, *Epistemology*, which studies the theory of knowledge and how we can know things, is itself a well-recognized branch of philosophy.

So, when someone claims that one thing is ‘*evil*’ and that another thing is ‘*good*’ or when someone says that we ‘*ought*’ to do this or that, we should rightfully ask them ...

“How do you know?” ... “By what authority do you say that?” ... “What authority do you have for telling me how I should act?”

The Christian has no problem with these questions.

But problems do arise when we ask the atheist how, in an Epistemological sense, absent God, they can even know that there is such a thing as “evil” in the first place, much less presume to tell us how we should or *ought* to act in a given situation.

Lest you again think that we infer too much, the following quotes are from two very prominent and well know atheists ...

“Life has no higher purpose than to perpetuate the survival of DNA ... life has no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind pitiless indifference.”

Richard Dawkins

“There are no gods, no purposes, and no goal-directed forces of any kind. There is no life after death ... There is no ultimate foundation for ethics, no ultimate meaning in life, and no free will for humans.”

William Provine

And so, let’s take a closer look at the possibility of having authoritatively definable good and evil and morals and ethics with and without the existence of God.

We will look first at

Naturalistic Atheism and the Existence of Authoritatively Definable Good and Evil, Morals and Ethics

We agree with Dawkins and Provine and would hold that it is an inescapable and logically inevitable conclusion of the tenets of Naturalistic Atheism that there can be no authoritatively definable and provable “good or evil”, no “morals”, and no “binding ethical imperatives”.

It’s really very simple, if you just think about it.

If there is no “Higher Authority”, there can be no “Higher Law”. If there is no “Natural Law-Giver”, there can be no “Natural Law”. In sum, IF there is no authoritative Law-Giving Supreme Being, no Divine Provider of ethical imperatives, no stone tablets from ‘On High’ telling us right from wrong, no ‘Word of God’ to which we can refer or appeal for direction, THEN there can be no provable ethical imperatives, no “unalienable Rights” and no indisputable “oughts” by which we are required to live.

If you think such an assertion is nothing more that the prattling of overwrought Christians who can’t deal with the absence of their God, then don’t take our word for

it, or even Dawkin's or Provine's. Take instead the word of the great French Existentialist and atheist, Jean Paul Sartre, who said

"If there is no infinite reference point, then all finite points are absurd."

This brings up the very crucial question of ...

WHERE, then, absent God, should we go to find out what, in any sense, is 'right' and what is 'wrong'?"

Good question. Easy answer.

Absent a Supreme Being, the highest ethical authority, by default, becomes the rule of the existing State or culture in which one lives. And this has tremendous implications for us all!

NOTE: We do acknowledge that the individual can, absent God, claim autonomy unto himself to act as he sees fit. But, in truth, all such free and autonomous individuals, whether living in Athens during the Golden Age of Pericles or in Paris during the golden days of the Enlightenment, remain subject to the legal restraints set up by their own cultures or states. Whatever one may think of their own personal autonomy, they still must operate within the confines of the acceptable standards of conduct set up by their own state or culture. They may, of course, choose to autonomously venture beyond the confines of their state or culture's existing law, but they do so at the risk of punishment by the State.

What kind of "tremendous implications" do you mean?

Well, one of the "tremendous implications" of the State or culture in which one lives becoming the highest ethical authority in existence at that place and time is that "good" and "evil", "right" and "wrong", and all the "ethical imperatives" or "oughts" of our existence by necessity become nothing more than matters of State policy (or autonomous individual choice acting within the confines of state policy) – which is really to say that "good" and "evil" and "ethics" and "morals" become nothing more than the ever-shifting and ever-changing opinions of mere men who make up or control the particular State or culture of which one is a part at a given time.

"But", one might object ...

... "I don't think that the opinions of men change very much or very quickly on basic moral issues! Even if the State did replace God as the main determiner of good and evil, what difference would it make since the opinions of men on basic moral and ethical issues have changed very little over very long periods of time. We're all still pretty

much against what our grandparents were against, aren't we? Everyone's still against murder and theft."

Really?

We would ask, first, if it is true that morals and ethics change very little over very long periods of time, then how does one explain the major cultural and ethical shifts that have occurred in our own supposedly "Christian" America over just the last forty or fifty years as the influence of the Christian church has diminished. Some of the changes that come to mind would be shifting cultural views on the rightness or wrongness of ... abortion ... euthanasia ... homosexuality ... the use of the death penalty ... and the general decline of the once foundational and revered institution of marriage.

NOTE: To cite just one specific case of the great extent of a culture's ethical change in a very short period of time, American law now holds that delivering a full-term child outside its mother's body, except for its head, and then cutting its head open and sucking out its brains, is morally permissible – a procedure which would have been held to be a totally abhorrent, unthinkable and monstrously criminal act just forty years ago. (We also note that the Supreme Court struck down the partial birth abortion ban in 2000, but upheld the federal one in 2007 – further proof of just how rapidly and decisively the "opinions of men" can change on a major ethical issue within a short period of time.)

Second, if additional proof is wanted as to just how swiftly entire cultures can change when Christian values are replaced, suppressed, or outlawed as the dominant cultural standard for a society, one has only to look to the two great atheistic Western states of the twentieth century, Nazi Germany and Communist Russia, where state-sanctioned mass murder and theft became quite legal and quite commonplace in very short periods of time.

So, it would seem that recent American and European history both lend conclusive proof to the assertion that in the absence of God, "good" and "evil" and "ethics" and "morals" can quite rapidly become nothing more than "the ever-shifting and ever-changing opinions of mere men who make up or control the particular State or culture of which one is a part".

We would lastly note that consistency in basic moral and ethical viewpoints in Western Civilization for hundreds of years has been largely due to the fact that the Christian church has for centuries set and maintained Western Civilization's standards of 'good' and 'evil', based on the authority of the Bible.

**Another "tremendous implication" of the opinions of men replacing
God as the highest ethical authority in existence**

... would include the enormous **RELATIONAL** consequences to be faced both at home and abroad:

For “relational” consequences ‘at home’, you might consider:

Just what you could legitimately and convincingly say to ...

your young son starting on drugs who says ‘I fully recognize that drugs may be bad for me and may even do great harm to my body, but it’s my body and my choice to do whatever I want to with it. It’s my risk to take and I choose to take it. This is followed with ...

“Besides ... Who are you to tell me that I can’t do this, that it is wrong? By what authority do you seek to force your baseless morality on me if I choose not to accept it? My opinion on the matter is just as good and right as yours!”

Just what you could legitimately and convincingly say to ...

your young daughter who has been told that she should not engage in promiscuous sex because of the risk of cervical cancer and diseases (‘risk of pregnancy’ is no longer a meaningful deterrent), who says back to you ‘It’s my body and I freely accept the risk of disease. I enjoy having sex’ ... Again, this is followed by ...

“Besides ... Who are you to tell me that I can’t do this, that it is wrong? By what authority do you seek to force your baseless morality on me if I choose not to accept it? My opinion on the matter is just as good and right as yours!”

(NOTE: Recent studies show that one in four girls age 14-19 have or have had at least one sexually transmitted disease.)

Just what you could legitimately and convincingly say to ...

the husband or wife who feels sexually attracted to a person other than his or her spouse who says ‘Why shouldn’t I have an affair with him or her? Some say that it might actually improve my relationship with my spouse.’ I see nothing wrong with this ...

“Besides ... Who are you to tell me that I can’t do this, that it is wrong? By what authority do you seek to force your baseless morality on me if I choose not to accept it? My opinion on the matter is just as good and right as yours!”

Just what you could legitimately and convincingly say ...

to male friends who want to immerse themselves in internet pornography ... or to men who hold women as having no real value beyond their own personal sexual gratification, and as being worth no more than the sum of their sexual parts

For, they also can very legitimately ask you ...

“Who are you to tell me that I can’t do this, that it is wrong? By what authority do you seek to force your baseless morality on me if I choose not to accept it? My opinion on the matter is just as good and right as yours!”

... and, in all honesty, absent God

... about all that we can legitimately say back to these people is that ‘it is our opinion’ that you are making a bad choice that will lead to a bad end. Nothing more can authoritatively be said, for, absent God, there is no authority higher than the State or the individual choosing to act, or not act, within the confines of the State’s authority.

And that’s precisely the point. All of the above questions are very valid and legitimate if there is no God. Just who are we ... mere bipedal animals ... naked apes ... “tucked away in some forgotten corner of a universe” ... to sit back and proclaim that they are wrong and that they must conform to ethical standards that we arbitrarily set for them?

Each of the above people can correctly claim that they are only making different “choices” among competing alternatives ... “choices” that we cannot authoritatively and definitively prove to be ‘bad’ or ‘evil’ above our own mere opinion. We can most certainly claim that they are making ‘bad’ or ‘evil’ or ‘wrong’ choices and lecture them about it ... BUT we cannot prove it!

In short, Sartre was right ...

“If there is no infinite reference point, then all finite points are absurd.”

It is just as recorded in the Old Testament ...

“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” (Judges 17:6)

The same “relational” consequences would be present in our State’s dealings with “other States and Societies”.

Philosophically and relationally, the absence of God changes nearly everything in our understanding of and approach to dealing with other states and societies ...

For instance, we would have to admit that cannibalism is permissible – for the cannibal. The society in which the cannibal lives is for him the highest recognized authority in existence, and that society proclaims the killing and eating of enemies to be morally and ethically acceptable. It may be distasteful to us (pardon the pun), but in the final analysis cannibalism is just another choice, one approved of by their society, which for them is the highest recognized moral and ethical authority around.

Similarly, what could we legitimately and convincingly say to citizens of...

... misogynistic Islamic nations that hold women in general to be inferior objects that should be treated to the horrors of female circumcision and honor killings and be otherwise overtly discriminated against

... to the Hindu state of India, which still maintains a harsh and repressive *de facto* caste system (though they have for the most part, at our insistence and by our force of arms, ceased burning wives to death on husbands' funeral pyres).

... to a state that decides, as a matter of state policy, to rid itself of a hated minority, say the Jews, in order to 'purify' or better itself

... or to a State that decides, as a matter of State policy, to kill millions of land-owning citizens in order to usher in a workers' paradise

We can only give them the same answer given above, "It is our opinion that you are making a bad choice." Once again, nothing more can legitimately be said, for there is no recognized authority higher than the independent State.

It is true, of course, that we can band together with other states, invade the particular offending State and by force of arms bring an end to the policies that we don't like. But that does not prove that the former State's choices were "wrong" or "evil" per se, for, again, their State operated within and acted under its own legitimate power as the highest recognized authority in existence at that time in that place.

[And, even if one accepts that 'might' really does 'make right', we could not proclaim our way to be 'right' over theirs until we had conquered them by our 'might', and even then, would still have to concede that the offending state's policies were in fact "right" until overthrown by our "might"].

As before, absent a Higher Authority to back us up, we can only say to the cannibal, to the misogynistic Muslim, to the Hindu and to any murderous States or Societies whose practices we find to be objectionable or repugnant, that 'it is our opinion that you are

making a bad choice'. Nothing more can legitimately be said, for there is no authority higher than the State (or the individual operating within the confines of State policy). Once again, we may claim that these things are "bad", but we cannot definitively prove them to be "bad" beyond our own mere opinion.

**In sum, under the beliefs of Naturalistic Atheism
we are driven to conclude ...**

First: That absent God there is no authoritatively provable "good" or "evil" per se and no absolute and binding "ethical imperatives" to which we can point for authoritatively proclaiming "This is right and this is wrong".

Second: That absent God, "right", by natural default, becomes whatever the State, the next highest recognized authority in existence, says it is – or at least whatever the strongest State says it is – though in both cases we cannot prove its 'rightness', but can only assert it.

So, whether dealing with family members at home or with other nations abroad, there is only the individual or collective "opinion" of men or states as to what we happen to think is right for us, or them, at any given point and place in time. Morally and ethically, we are left with nothing but choices between competing, but equally valid, alternatives.

Perhaps Dostoevsky summed it up best ...

"If there is no God, everything is permitted."

Note that well, for it is true.

Let us now look to ...

Christianity and the Existence of Morals and Ethics, Good and Evil

The Christian has no philosophical problem with asserting the existence of "evil" per se, or with asserting the existence of ethical and moral "good". The God who has made us has told us what is "good" and what is "evil" and how we should or "ought" to live and act. He is the supreme ethical Authority and His is the "Higher" or "Natural" Law to which we can appeal.

The God of Christianity has summarized our ethical duties to Himself and to our fellow man in His Ten Commandments. His law gives us a clear and authoritative basis for telling the young man starting on drugs, the young girl engaging in promiscuous sex, the husband or wife who feels a sexual attraction for someone other than his or her spouse, the man immersing himself in internet porn, the misogynistic man or State that demeans women, the cannibal, the Hindu, and States run by men like Hitler, Stalin,

Mao, Pol Pot and others, that there is an authoritatively definable “good” and “evil”, and that they would do well to pay heed to it.

In conclusion, as we stated at the beginning of our Appendix ...

“Core beliefs don’t just exist in a vacuum. No, core beliefs have real implications and real consequences. We really are what we think.”

We have tried using two “Key Areas” to show you that pursuing the question of God’s existence is of monumental importance on both a personal level at home and a relational level with other states and cultures ‘abroad’.

It is not without good cause that the God who created us has said to us ...

“Come now, and let us reason together” (Isaiah 1:18).

[If you would like to pursue some more in-depth study on the topic of philosophical beliefs having consequences, we would recommend *The Consequences of Ideas: An Overview of Philosophy* by R. C. Sproul.]

A short “Recap” of our Answer to Question 1 follows ...

A Recap of our Answer to Foundational Question # 1 and its Appendix

How do we know that God even exists? In attempting to answer that question, I would rather use my mind and go with “reason” than set it aside and go with “faith”. Some Christian beliefs just really don’t seem “reasonable” to me.

The two main arguments for the non-existence of a good, loving, omnipotent God are first, the existence of evil and second, the naturalistic argument that God’s existence is incompatible with observed reality, i.e., we cannot see or touch Him. To the argument that a good, loving, omnipotent God and evil cannot exist at the same time, we would reply first that such a statement is nothing more than an unprovable opinion which itself must be accepted by faith, and second, that there is nothing inherently contradictory about the temporary existence of evil and the existence of a good, loving and omnipotent God at the same time. We would also point out that if there is no God, the atheist cannot authoritatively and definitively prove the existence of “evil” per se in the first place, for without God, “evil” becomes nothing more than the mere opinion of fallible men, which can and does vary from culture to culture and from time to time.

The atheist’s other argument, that God does not exist because we can’t observe the reality of His existence, makes the unprovable, and rather bold, assertion that man’s mind and sensory perceptions are the only valid and worthy determiners of the truth, reality and existence of all things – i.e., unless I can see it and touch it, it simply does not exist. To make such a statement not only turns one’s back on a valid, rational, and respected branch of philosophical thought, that of metaphysics, but, again, states nothing more than a mere unprovable opinion.

The three main arguments for the existence of God are ...

First, the Cosmological Argument, which is an argument from evidences. When we take a close look at the complexity of the universe around us, with its billions of whirling galaxies and sub-atomic quantum particles, and see it all governed by orderliness, irreducible complexity and precision, rather than by confusion or randomness, we feel that it reasonably demands design by an intelligent Creator. It was no less a mind than John Locke’s that said ...

“The visible marks of extraordinary wisdom and power appear so plainly in all the works of the creation that a rational creature who will but seriously reflect on them, cannot miss the discovery of a deity.”

The second argument for the existence of God is called the Ontological Argument. Trying not to be too tedious, the Ontological Argument is a philosophical argument which holds that human reason itself can, without physical evidences, affirm the necessary existence of God. Among those who taught this were great thinkers like Rene Descartes and Thomas Aquinas, who said ...

“It is necessary to assume something which is necessary of itself, and has no cause of its necessity outside itself but is rather the cause of necessity in other things. And this all men call God.”

The third argument for the existence of God concerns the widespread belief in and testimony of many of the greatest thinkers of history to His existence. Such a belief is true not only of the great religions of the Western and Near Eastern World – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – but was also true of many of the ancient Greek philosophers. [We note here that Moses, the author of the first five books of the Old Testament wrote long before the ancient Greek philosophers, thereby giving both Judaism and Christianity the support of antiquity, while atheism as an accepted philosophy with a sizeable number of adherents is in the broad scheme of things a relatively new development.]

While these three arguments do not conclusively prove that there is a God, they do at least serve to remove the idea of faith in God’s existence from the realm of the irrational and illogical.

Respecting Christianity itself, we would submit that if one accepts the metaphysical reality of a Higher Being capable of creating the heavens and the earth in all of their intricate beauty and complexity, then there is nothing in the beliefs or teachings of the Christian religion that inherently conflicts with the principles of logic or reason.

Indeed, we would point out that God Himself expressly tells us to use, not set aside, our “minds” and bids us to *“Come now, and let us reason together” (Isaiah 1:18)*. Jesus Christ Himself in response to a question as to which was the greatest commandment, replied in Matthew 22:37-38, *“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment.”*

In conclusion, we would hold ...

1. That the arguments for the existence of God, arguments from both physical evidences and philosophical reason, are much more rational, logically sound, and intellectually satisfying than are the arguments for atheism.
2. That arguments for the existence of God have had far greater support from the great scientists, thinkers and philosophers of history than have the arguments of atheism – which, again, does not conclusively prove that there is a God, but which does serve to remove the idea of faith in God’s existence from the realm of the irrational and illogical.
3. That the Atheist’s assertion that there is no God, rather than bringing rational clarity or simplicity to the thoughts and questions concerning the nature of our life and existence, actually raises more questions than it answers. It is as the great French Existentialist and atheist, Jean Paul Sartre, said ...

“If there is no infinite reference point, then all finite points are absurd.”

4. That the tenets of the Christian faith itself are neither irrational nor unreasonable.

You, of course, must decide for yourself which set of arguments is more intellectually satisfying to you. We pray that our answer and website will encourage you to want to read and study the Bible and learn more of the God it presents.