
Subject: Top Ten Atheist Arguments

Posted by [Mark L](#) on Sun, 31 May 2015 15:17:06 GMT

[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

I found this on another forum. (one where some of them believe in the "Flying Spaghetti Monster" as their deity. Apologies if it has been posted before. I found it very interesting.

Top 10 Most Common Atheist Arguments, and Why They Fail

I write very little in the area of Christian vs. atheist apologetics, and for good reason.

It was in atheist chat-rooms and blogs that I first cut my teeth in theology many years ago. Since those days I have not heard anything new from atheists.

It seems that many atheists today (some like to use the title "New Atheists"™ to distinguish them from the more profound philosophical atheists of yesteryear) have very little to add to the discussion. To be fair, the same goes with most Christian apologists.

However, I thought it would be fun to comment on the ten arguments I hear the most. My hope is that it will help expose some of the more obvious problems with them and maybe help both sides "atheists and Christians alike" to move on to more interesting debate material.

One additional note: another reason I do not enter into the atheist-Christian debate world much anymore is because of the sheer discourtesy that both sides tend to show the other. I will not delete any comments, no matter how uncivil or juvenile they become, because, for me, it is an important part of the article. The responses (if there are any) will demonstrate the current state of atheist vs. Christian banter. Also, I will not respond to rude posts. This is advanced warning so please don't think me rude as well if I ignore them.

Okay, here we go:

1. There is no evidence for God's existence.

There are a couple of problems with this line. Starting with the idea of "evidence," what exactly does one mean by evidence? What is sufficient evidence for one person is often not sufficient evidence for another. A court of law provides innumerable examples of how two parties can possess the same collection of data, the same power of logic and reasoning, yet argue for completely different interpretations of the data. The old saying is true: the facts do not determine the argument, the argument determines the facts.

When confronted with the charge that there is no evidence for God the Christian often does not know where to start with a rebuttal. It's as G.K. Chesterton once said, asking a Christian to prove God's existence is like asking someone to prove the existence of civilization. What is one to do but point and say, "look, there's a chair, and there's a building," etc. How can one prove civilization by merely selecting a piece here and a piece there as sufficient proofs rather than having an experience of civilization as a whole?

Nearly everything the Christian lays eyes on is proof of God's existence because he sees the

“handiwork” of God all around him in creation. But this is hardly sufficient evidence in the court of atheist opinion, a court which presupposes that only what can be apprehended by the senses rightly qualifies as evidence. For the Christian who believes in a transcendent God, he can offer no such evidence; to produce material evidence for God is, ironically, to disprove a transcendent God and cast out faith.

The second part of the line is equally short-sighted. What does one mean by “existence”? If one means, “that which has come into existence,” then surely God does not exist because God never came into existence. He always was; He is eternal. This was a famous assessment of the matter by Soren Kierkegaard (dealing with the incarnation of Christ). The argument is a bit involved, so for times sake I’ll just have to state it and leave it there.

2. If God created the universe, who created God?

This is one of the more peculiar arguments I’ve ever come across. Those who use this charge as some sort of intellectual checkmate have simply failed to grasp what Christians understand as “eternal.” It is an argument usually levied once a theist posits that a “first cause” or an “unmoved mover” is required for the existence of the universe (a “necessary” Being upon which all other things exist by way of contingency). Some atheists then shift the weight over to the theist saying, “Well then who created God?” What is a Christian to do but smile at such a question? God is the antecedent of all things in creation and is eternal. If God had a Creator then His Creator would be God. God is God precisely because He does not have a creator.

3. God is not all-powerful if there is something He cannot do. God cannot lie, therefore God is not all-powerful.

Bang! Owned.

Not so fast. This argument would be fantastic “devastating maybe” if God was more of the ancient Greek god persuasion, where the gods themselves were subject to fate and limited to their specific roles in the cosmos. The Orthodox doctrine of God is much different. Christians (at least Orthodox Christians) view God’s ontology as subject to His perfect free-will. Why is He good? Because He wills to be good. Why does He not lie? Because He wills to be honest. Why does God exist as Trinity? Because He wills it. He could just as easily will to not exist. And yes, He could just as easily will to lie. The fact that He doesn’t is no commentary on whether He could.

(Note: Due to the immense amount of discussion that this point has raised, one clarifying statement is worth noting. An argument based on strict logical word games can render the idea “all-powerful” or “omnipotent” self-defeating. When one considers the juvenile question, “Can God create a rock so big that He can’t lift it?” this point becomes clear. But in reality, such an argument winds up further solidifying what Christianity means by calling God all-powerful. For the Christian it simply means that all power and authority are God’s. Following the logical word game above forces the believer to make a redundant proclamation in order to remain consistent: “God cannot overpower Himself.” But this fact is anything but confounding, it merely stresses the point that there is no power greater than God, so much so that

one is forced to pit God against Himself in order to find His equal.)

4. Believing in God is the same as believing in the Tooth Fairy, Santa Clause, and the Flying Spaghetti Monster.

What I love about this well-worn atheist "argument"™ is that it actually serves to demonstrate how vastly different a belief in God is to these myths and imaginations. When one honestly assesses the Judeo- Christian doctrine of God he will find multiple thousands of years of human testimony and religious development; he will find martyrs enduring the most horrific trauma in defense of the faith; he will find accounts in religious texts with historical and geographical corroboration; etc (these fact are of course not "proofs,"™ but rather "evidences"™ that elicit strong consideration). Pit this against tales of the Tooth Fairy, Santa, and Spaghetti Monsters and one finds the exact opposite: no testimony or religious refinement, no martyrs, no historical and geographical corroboration, etc. Instead, one finds myths created intentionally for children, for point making, or for whatever. It's™ strawman argumentation at its worst.

5. Christianity arose from an ancient and ignorant people who didn't™ have science.

Indeed, those ancient, ignorant people who believed in the virgin birth of Christ must have believed it because they did not possess the knowledge of how babies were born. Goodness. The virgin birth of Christ was profound and of paramount concern to the ancients precisely because they understood that conception was impossible without intercourse. Ancient man considered the virgin birth miraculous, i.e., impossible without divine action (and at the time most people scorned the idea), and the same could be said with every miraculous story in Scripture.

Indeed ancient people did not have the Hubble telescope, but they were able to see the night sky in full array, something almost no modern person can claim (thanks to modern lighting which distorts our ability to see the full night sky). On average, ancient people lived much closer to nature and to the realities of life and death than many of us moderners.

In terms of a living relationship with these things the ancients were far more advanced than we are today, and this relationship is essentially the nature of religious inquiry. If people lack religious speculation today, maybe it is because they spend more time with their iphones and Macs then with nature. Maybe.

But the claim that Christianity was viable in the ancient world because it was endorsed by wide spread ignorance is a profoundly ignorant idea. Christianity arose in one of the most highly advanced civilizations in human history. The Roman Empire was not known for its stupidity. It was the epicenter of innovation and philosophical giants. I would wager that if a common person of today found himself in a philosophical debate with a common person of first century Alexandria, the moderner would be utterly humiliated in the exchange.

6. Christian's™ only believe in Christianity because they were born in a Christian culture. If they'd™ been born in India they would have been Hindu instead.

This argument is appealing because it pretends to wholly dismiss people's™ reasoning capabilities based on their environmental influences in childhood. The idea is that people in general are so intellectually near- sighted that they can't™ see past their own upbringing, which,

it would follow, would be an equally condemning commentary on atheism. But, this is a spurious claim.

Take the history of the Jewish people for example. Let us say that to "be" Jewish, in the religious sense, is much more than a matter of cultural adherence. To be a Jewish believer is to have Judaism permeate one's thinking and believing and interaction with the world. But is this the state of affairs with the majority of the Jewish people, whether in America, Europe, Israel, or wherever? One would have to be seriously out of touch to believe so. The same phenomenon is found within so-called Christian communities. Indeed, being born in a Jewish or Christian centric home today is more often a precursor that the child will grow up to abandon the faith of his or her family.

7. The gospel doesn't make sense: God was mad at mankind because of sin so he decided to torture and kill his own Son so that he could appease his own pathological anger. God is the weirdo, not me.

This is actually a really good argument against certain Protestant sects (I've used it myself on numerous occasions), but it has no traction with the Orthodox Christian faith. The Orthodox have no concept of a God who needed appeasement in order to love His creation. The Father sacrificed His own Son in order to destroy death with His life; not to assuage His wrath, but to heal; not to protect mankind from His fury, but to unite mankind to His love. If the reader is interested to hear more on this topic follow this link for a fuller discussion.

8. History is full of mother-child messiah cults, trinity godheads, and the like. Thus the Christian story is a myth like the rest.

This argument seems insurmountable on the surface, but is really a slow-pitch across the plate (if you don't mind a baseball analogy). There is no arguing the fact that history is full of similar stories found in the Bible, and I won't take the time to recount them here. But this fact should not be surprising in the least, indeed if history had no similar stories it would be reason for concern. Anything beautiful always has replicas. A counterfeit coin does not prove the non-existence of the authentic coin, it proves the exact opposite. A thousand U2 cover bands is not evidence that U2 is a myth.

Ah, but that doesn't address the fact that some of these stories were told before the Biblical accounts. True. But imagine if the only story of a messianic virgin birth, death, and resurrection were contained in the New Testament. That, to me, would be odd. It would be odd because if all people everywhere had God as their Creator, yet the central event of human history—the game changing event of all the ages—the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ had never occurred to them, in at least some hazy form, they would have been completely cut off from the prime mysteries of human existence. It seems only natural that if the advent of Christ was real it would permeate through the consciousness of mankind on some level regardless of their place in history. One should expect to find mankind replicating these stories, found in their own visions and dreams, again and again throughout history. And indeed, that is what we find.

9. The God of the Bible is evil. A God who allows so much suffering and death can be nothing but

evil.

This criticism is voice in many different ways. For me, this is one of the most legitimate arguments against the existence of a good God. The fact that there is suffering and death is the strongest argument against the belief in an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving God. If suffering and death exist it seems to suggest one of two things: (1) either God is love, but He is not all-powerful and cannot stop suffering and death, or (2) God is all-powerful, but He does not care for us.

I devoted a separate article addressing this problem, but let me deal here with the problem inherent in the criticism itself. The argument takes as its presupposition that good and evil are real; that there is an ultimate standard of good and evil that supersedes mere fanciful "ideas" about what is good and evil at a given time in our ethical evolution, as it were. If there is not a real existence "an ontological reality" of good and evil, then the charge that God is evil because of this or that is really to say nothing more than, "I personally don't like what I see in the world and therefore a good God cannot exist." I like what C.S. Lewis said on a similar matter: "There is no sense in talking of 'becoming better' if better means simply 'what we are becoming' it is like congratulating yourself on reaching your destination and defining destination as 'the place you have reached'."

What is tricky for the atheist in these sorts of debates is to steer clear of words loaded with religious overtones. It's weird for someone who does not believe in ultimate good and evil to condemn God as evil because He did not achieve their personal vision of good. So, the initial criticism is sound, but it is subversive to the atheist's staging ground. If one is going to accept good and evil as realities, he is not in a position to fully reject God. Instead, he is more in a position to wrestle with the idea that God is good. This struggle is applauded in the Orthodox Church. After all, the very word God used for his people in the Old Testament "Israel" means to struggle with God.

10. Evolution has answered the question of where we came from. There is no need for ignorant ancient myths anymore.

This might be the most popular attempted smack-downs of religion in general today. It is found in many variations but the concept is fairly consistent and goes something like this: Science has brought us to a point where we no longer need mythology to understand the world, and any questions which remain will eventually be answered through future scientific breakthroughs. The main battle-ground where this criticism is seen today is in evolution vs. creationism debates. Let me say upfront that there is perhaps no other subject that bores me more than evolution vs. creationism debates. I would rather watch paint dry. And when I'm not falling asleep through such debates I'm frustrated because usually both sides of the debate use large amounts of dishonesty in order to gain points rather than to gain the truth. The evolutionist has no commentary whatsoever on the existence of God, and the creationist usually suffers from profound confusion in their understanding of the first few chapters of Genesis.

So, without entering into the most pathetic debate of the ages, bereft of all intellectual profundity, I'll only comment on the underlining idea that science has put Christianity out of the answer business. Science is fantastic if you want to know what gauge wire is compatible with a 20 amp electric charge, how agriculture works, what causes disease and how to cure it, and a million

other things. But where the physical sciences are completely lacking is in those issues most important to human beings—the truly existential issues: what does it mean to be human, why are we here, what is valuable, what does it mean to love, to hate, what am I to do with guilt, grief, sorrow, what does it mean to succeed, is there any meaning and what does “meaning” mean, and, of course, is there a God? etc, ad infinitum.

As far as where we come from, evolution has barely scratched the purely scientific surface of the matter. Even if the whole project of evolution as an account of our history was without serious objection, it would still not answer the problem of the origin of life, since the option of natural selection as an explanation is not available when considering how dead or inorganic matter becomes organic. Even more complicated is the matter of where matter came from. The “Big Bang” is not an answer to origins but rather a description of the event by which everything came into being; i.e., it’s the description of a smoking gun, not the shooter

Subject: Re: Top Ten Atheist Arguments
Posted by [Gary](#) on Mon, 01 Jun 2015 10:45:11 GMT
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

Mark,

Good article with some interesting points.

One thing the Atheist will never understand is when God reveals Himself to a man. I was not raised in a christian home but one day the Lord came to me and gave me salvation, then I knew God was real.

I was not seeking Him but He sought me out. I'll be forever grateful that he chose me to be a part of His Kingdom.

Hope that makes sense.

Gary

Subject: Re: Top Ten Atheist Arguments
Posted by [Mark L](#) on Tue, 02 Jun 2015 00:37:08 GMT
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

One thing the Atheist will never understand is when God reveals Himself to a man.

Thats it in a nutshell. I have thought so many times reading stuff they just don't understand. We have to believe it but its revelation.

Subject: Re: Top Ten Atheist Arguments
Posted by [william](#) on Tue, 02 Jun 2015 14:24:58 GMT
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

Mark L wrote on Mon, 01 June 2015 19:37One thing the Atheist will never understand is when God reveals Himself to a man.

Thats it in a nutshell. I have thought so many times reading stuff they just don't understand. We have to believe it but its revelation.

I agree, it is the aspect of revelation that makes the most sense regarding God's interaction with his creation.

If there is a God and if it is his goal to make himself known to his creation, especially if he wants mankind to understand his attributes, then what better way to do this than the method that he outlines in Scripture? We're limited, because we are only human beings, but it seems impossible for me to think of a better vehicle for him to convey his nature than the one he chose to use.

Blessings,
William
