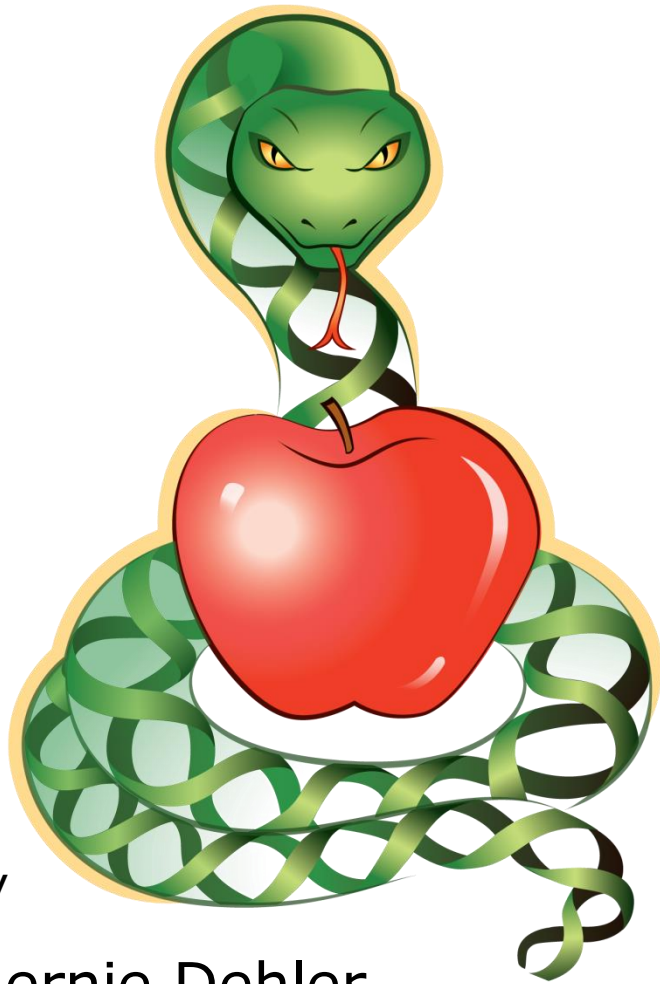


Modern Science and
Philosophy Destroys
Christian Theology
(Second Edition)



By

Bernie Dehler

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Dedication

I dedicate this to all truth seekers. You are not comfortable with believing things that run contrary to reason and modern scientific knowledge.

As Jesus said, “seek and you shall find.” I sought the truth about God, and it became apparent that all the gods of mankind throughout the ages are created in man’s image; a figment of the imagination. The Bible gods, Yahweh and Jesus, no more exist in Heaven than does Santa Claus exist at the North Pole. It is all fantasy to the same degree.

If you think you have a felt relationship with Jesus, so did I. I now understand it as a delusion.

It is a painful road to travel, when one abandons magical thinking and seeks to live a life of reality. But if one sticks with it, there is much to be gained. It is like a person converting from being a drunk to being sober. It feels very pleasant to be drunk, and a hangover can be painful. But if you can recover, sobriety is great and can make one feel as if they have a “new lease on life.” Leaving magical thinking and instead looking at reality is akin to being sober in life, realizing that there are no imaginary characters looking out for you. Yes, that is scary; but don’t forget, also very liberating! I invite you to step out of magical thinking and into reality.

To my kids, whom I constantly remind that they are free to believe anything they want. As long as they follow their heart AND mind to their fullest extent, I’m proud of them for whatever belief system they choose.

As the great existentialist philosophers have told us, “Meaning is not something to discover; it is something to create.” Once free of religion, you are set free to live life by charting your own course! Let the adventure begin.

Preliminary Notes and Changes

In response to my first edition, I'd like to clarify that this booklet is written to be very short and concise on purpose. Too many people (myself included) buy books with good intentions to read them, but never get through them. In that vein, I tried to make this as short as possible. Therefore there is a high use of footnotes, for those who want to get the gist of the thesis quickly from reading just the main text. The footnotes are for those who want more detail and justification and/or references. When I make a bold claim, I provide references for anyone to double-check.

Changes from First Edition:

1. I changed the author name from the “pen name” (Truman Ardent Smith) to my real name (Bernie Dehler). I initially used a pen name to soften the blow that friends and relatives are receiving due to my rather recent decision to leave belief in god and become an atheist. I left Christianity after being a born-again evangelical Christian for over 25 years. I earned a seminary degree in 2007, and became an atheist in 2009.
2. I clarified some text in the section “Science/Religion Conflict #2: Neurology” regarding brain scans of people when contemplating the trolley car philosophical thought experiments. I added more detail to explain the situation and what it means.
3. In the same section, I also added another example of split-brain patients to illustrate that there is no central seat of identity.
4. In the same section, I added a recent news article to illustrate how the “Watson” computer is showing signs of rudimentary sentience, by being able to “read” scientific papers and create a certain “understanding” of them.

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I thank Richard Dawkins, whom I've never met. Thank you for stepping-out and challenging Christianity in such a high-profile manner. I believe that way too many scientists are afraid to step-out and do such a thing; and who would prefer to be known only (and less significantly) for only their awesome scientific accomplishments. Without your scientific challenges to the faith, I may have never been threatened enough to respond in debate. You have helped create a movement that has totally re-shaped my life.

I thank Sam Harris, whom I recognized, even when I was an evangelical born-again Christian, to be a thoughtful and reasonable man; a great role-model for atheists, when it comes to clear thinking and respectful dialogue. There are plenty of bad role-models for atheism (rude, illogical, etc.); so thanks for being a leading light (calm, respectful, and intelligent).

I thank the leaders of the evangelical Christian-based American Scientific Association (www.asa3.org), for giving me a forum to discuss origins issues among other smart evangelical Christian seminary professors and Christian scientists, when I was still a Christian; and helping me to see the truth and giving the approval for accepting evolution, even as a Christian.

I thank Pastor Nathan Lewis, for engaging me in many local atheist/Christian debates. You are a rare bird indeed, in that you are willing to not only engage with atheists, but also to host these events at your church. Your outreach and attitude is commendable, and you are being a good role-model for your Christian leader peers.

To my wife who encouraged me to continue with my seminary education, when I was ready to quit because of the impatience of being held back from ministering due to seminary school work. I ultimately left Christianity, but the seminary training gave me good credentials to show that I really did know something about theology before dismissing it.

There are so many others I could thank, too numerous to name.

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Executive Summary

Mainstream Christian theology can no longer survive in light of modern science and philosophy. This is because the Bible is a primary source for Christianity, and it was written in a time of scientific ignorance (for example, they thought the entire universe revolved around the Earth). If one tries to build a modern theology upon an ancient book that contains ancient (and wrong) scientific ideas and myths (such as Adam and Eve), then there will obviously be contention when trying to understand that theology in light of modern knowledge.

There are two clashes with science (biological evolution and neurology), which are then further followed by a clash in philosophy (“the problem of evil” and moral reasoning). **All of this is fatal to Christian theology!** That is the heart of this booklet, but then I give two more philosophical reasons for rejecting Christian theology: the “immorality of God,” and “the heart of the gospel is nonsense.”

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Science/Religion Conflict #1: Biological Evolution

The first serious science/religion conflict is with biological evolution. According to modern science, there was no original “first human” parents from which we all descended. In evolution, there is no “first” anything, when it comes to species (no first seagull, no first goldfish, no first cat, no first human, etc.). This is because evolution works over time and within a population. This wipes out any Christian sect that has a belief in a literal Adam and Eve as parents of all living humanity; such as the largest Christian sect of all, Roman Catholicism.¹ This also

¹ Catholic.com explains how Roman Catholicism teaches the requirement of a literal “first human” male/female couple for all humans alive today (contrary to modern biological evolution science):

“Adam and Eve: Real People. It is equally impermissible to dismiss the story of Adam and Eve and the fall (Gen. 2–3) as a fiction. A question often raised in this context is whether the human race descended from an original pair of two human beings (a teaching known as monogenism) or a pool of early human couples (a teaching known as polygenism). In this regard, Pope Pius XII stated: “When, however, there is question of another conjectural opinion, namely polygenism, the children of the Church by no means enjoy such liberty. For the faithful cannot embrace that opinion which maintains either that after Adam there existed on this earth true men who did not take their origin through natural generation from him as from the first parents of all, or that Adam represents a certain number of first parents. Now, it is in no way

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wipes out most evangelical Christian sects because they usually ascribe to Young Earth Creationism or Old Earth Creationism², both of which reject the idea that humans descended from other animals (rather, they believe in a special miracle “creation from scratch” for humans). The fact that humans evolved from other animals is starting to slowly get acceptance among some of the Christian academics (those in science and seminary).³

Since we can be sure the story of the creation of the first two humans is a myth, then the rest of the story is also false. There was no “first sin” from

apparent how such an opinion can be reconciled that which the sources of revealed truth and the documents of the teaching authority of the Church proposed with regard to original sin which proceeds from a sin actually committed by an individual Adam in which through generation is passed onto all and is in everyone as his own" (Humani Generis 37)." Source: <http://tinyurl.com/72f6db4> .

² An example of Young Earth Creationism is the ministry of Ken Ham called “Answers in Genesis.” An example of Old Earth Creationism is the ministry of Hugh Ross called “Reasons to Believe.” Both deny that humans evolved from other animals. They both believe that humans were created by God by a miracle from scratch.

³ Here’s an example video of an evangelical biological scientist, Dennis Venema, explaining the evidence of evolution to fellow evangelical Christian believers: <http://tinyurl.com/6lbr4wy> . An example ministry website would be Biologos: <http://www.biologos.org> .

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“first humans.” Humans and nature were *not* originally created as “good” (Genesis 1:31) then later cursed by God (Genesis 3:16-17) because of original sin (since there was no original sin). Christ is said to have come into the world to undo the curse brought on by Adam and Eve, but how could someone undo a curse that never really happened? Jesus is even called “the second Adam,” but there was never really a “first Adam.”⁴ This is why most evangelical Christians oppose evolution: because it shreds the traditional theology, and there’s no good replacement theology that can accommodate modern science and reason.

Science/Religion Conflict #2: Neurology

The next serious science/religion conflict is with neurology. With modern neurology, we now know that the brain processes information in different areas and also in parallel. The ancient idea is that there is something like a “little man” inside of our head that puts everything together (visions, senses,

⁴ Romans 5:18-19 “Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and / life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.”

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ideas, etc.), and that is the real “you.” It was called “the Homunculus” (or even “the soul”). Now that we know how the brain functions, there is no Homunculus. There is no “master controller” overlooking everything and making decisions.

For example, with neurological experiments on patients that are contemplating the classic philosophical trolley car scenarios, it can be seen that different parts of the brain light-up when making moral decisions, corresponding to parts of the brain that make emotional or rational decisions.⁵ In a nutshell, one can see how it would be morally correct to kill a few people on purpose to save many lives. But why would people be willing to flip a switch to kill a few people but refuse to do it if it required a more “hands on” way of killing, such as pushing them in front of a trolley car? Researchers have found that even though it is really the same act of killing, contemplating **how** one does the killing involves different parts of the brain, which conflict with each other. So it isn’t just one part of the brain considering all things and making a decision; it is many parts working in parallel. So logically, a person should make the same choice of saving many lives

⁵ For more information, see “Brain imaging study sheds light on moral decision-making: <http://tinyurl.com/lqqp76r> .

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by sacrificing a very few, but it turns out that the details about how the few are sacrificed can flip the decision of whether or not a few should be sacrificed (killing via a switch or via pushing someone in front of a trolley). It isn't because of logic, but because of emotion and how the different parts of the brain analyze the situation.

Another interesting and relevant scientific experiment is the case of people who have had their brains operated upon, to cut their communication transmission line (corpus callosum) from the left and right brains.⁶ If there's a central person/identity, would they be in the left or right half? As it is with these patients, their left brain literally doesn't know what their right brain is doing. And they both go on

⁶ See "The Split Brain Experiments: <http://tinyurl.com/o2pabtv> . Excerpt: *"Each hemisphere is still able to learn after the split brain operation but one hemisphere has no idea about what the other hemisphere has experienced or learned. ... What Came Out of the Split Brain Experiments? The studies demonstrated that the left and right hemispheres are specialized in different tasks. The left side of the brain is normally specialized in taking care of the analytical and verbal tasks. The left side speaks much better than the right side, while the right half takes care of the space perception tasks and music, for example. The right hemisphere is involved when you are making a map or giving directions on how to get to your home from the bus station. The right hemisphere can only produce rudimentary words and phrases, but contributes emotional context to language. Without the help from the right hemisphere, you would be able to read the word "pig" for instance, but you wouldn't be able to imagine what it is."*

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to learn independently.

There's really no "you" that exists as some entity. "You" are simply a mental model that you have built to identify yourself as a unit (your thoughts, dreams, feeling, fears, etc.; all wrapped-up in a mental model as a single representation). So after death, there really is no monolithic "thing" that is "you" to resurrect.

It is also helpful to consider how everyone knows that robots have no soul. They are just hardware and software; nothing but a machine. The difference is that the machine that we are, is biologically-based; whereas the robot is silicon-based. Robotic machines will one day have a computer silicone-based sentience, compared to our biologically-based sentience. But neither us, nor them, have a soul. But they seem so lifelike, either as mimicking humans or other animals (many examples are on YouTube), that I wouldn't be surprised if some Christians claim that these robots also have a soul.⁷

⁷ A person can even believe they have a meaningful relationship with robots (as some also do with pets, treating them as virtual family members). The use of robots in the sex industry is another interesting topic, beyond the scope of this booklet; but note how sex is one of the most intimate personal relationships that humans have.

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To illustrate how computers are starting to show a rudimentary awareness (consciousness), recently there was a news story reporting that the Watson computer (the one that beat a person at the Jeopardy game show) is now re-purposed to read scientific papers and sort through them with some understanding.⁸ So it won't be too long that computers will start making new scientific breakthroughs. It will be sentience, but a machine-based sentience rather than a biological-based sentience. Computers also don't have some major problems that plague humans; such as limited memory, tiredness, and emotional issues (it is speculated that the chess champion, Kasparov, lost to the "Deep Blue" computer because of Kasparov's

⁸ "'Jeopardy!'-winning computer now using its brain for science" <http://tinyurl.com/kx5ve4x> . Excerpt: *"Watson's computing ability has four dimensions. First there's perception: Watson is capable of reading and understanding English, like it did for 'Jeopardy!', but the computer can also understand visual information, such as molecular structures or MRI scans. 'We're teaching Watson to see,' Merkel said. Next, Watson relates that information. On 'Jeopardy!', when Watson was asked a question, the machine would figure out an appropriate answer. Now, Watson is capable of understanding what a user wants, and is able to ask even deeper questions in response to a query. Then there's reasoning. A typical human brain, when asked a question, immediately develops an initial hypothesis before pursuing others, Merkel said. But Watson explores all options at the same time, and determines the best answer. Finally, Watson employs sophisticated mathematical models known as machine learning. As the system answers more and more questions, it learns and gets better over time."*

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emotional state and reaction to the game⁹).

To further illustrate the idea of how “you” develop, consider the profound scientific concept called “emergence.”¹⁰ “You” would be a different person if your family would have moved when you were an infant and raised you in a different country with a different language and culture. This is because “you” emerge as your brain grows and develops. At the point of conception, there is not one neuron, so there is zero thinking nor awareness. Then later at birth, you have many neurons, but they aren’t yet configured and working together well, so consciousness is very limited. As one grows and attends school, they learn new things, and are training their brain according to how they use it (for school work, video games, music, art, etc.). If they live to a ripe old age, they might experience dementia, where the brain is now “degrading” rather than “emerging.”

For those who think there is a certain soul given to people, there are many questions that can be

⁹ “Kasparov vs Deep Blue” <http://tinyurl.com/l9aeory> .

¹⁰ For more on “emergence,” see this written by biology Professor Ursula Goodenough “The Sacred Emergence of Nature” <http://tinyurl.com/6wh9714> .

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asked to show that it is nonsense. For example, what will it be like in heaven for children that died in childbirth; are they always a baby in heaven? What about those who died while senile (forever senile in heaven)? Are mentally retarded people going to be retarded for all eternity in heaven? If souls are given at conception, then there are additional problems with the cases of identical twins and chimeras.¹¹ With the idea of emergence, it is obvious how we emerge as natural beings and then go back to where we came from, from nothing. Like a blade of grass, we come into existence, live our temporary life according to the circumstances in which we find ourselves, then leave. But considering the idea of a soul, we can see it is nonsense by asking the previous questions, which point out the folly of such a hypothesis.

Given the idea of emergence, we can see the foolishness of thinking that “the soul is the real you”

¹¹ For identical twins, an egg is fertilized by one sperm, and the cell then undergoes cell multiplication as one organism. At some early stage, the organism breaks into two, and there are then two separate organisms, containing identical DNA. In the opposite direction, a Chimera starts out as two fertilized eggs, being two distinct organisms. Then at some early stage they fuse into one organism; therefore containing mixed DNA. An example telltale sign of a chimera is a creature with two different eye colors (it happens to humans too).

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as if you are defined at conception or at some other point. It is like asking when the nose first appears on a baby in the womb. Is it that little bump? Even if that little bump will become the nose; it isn't yet the nose, because it can't function as a nose. The brain emerges just like any other body part; and the mind emerges from this brain.

The New Testament Contains Myth, so It Is Untrustworthy

The gospel stories contain well-known myths and are not to be trusted; as does Acts, the first so-called historical account of the early church. These are New Testament stories, so it is usually more difficult to get Christians to recognize these as myths than it is to get them to recognize the creation myths of the Old Testament. This is because the New Testament myths aren't as old as the Old Testament myths, and also because the New Testament myths have more of a direct bearing upon the gospel message. The more they are regarded as myth, the more difficult it is to try to accept these stories as literal history, as the Bible tries to present them. From my Christian experience, these passages are usually avoided in sermons and Bible Studies, because of their troublesome nature.

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Before we discuss the myths, it is important to recognize that the four gospels are anonymously written. Imagine if a Pastor said “Turn to Anonymous Gospel #1” rather than “turn to the Gospel of Matthew.” Obviously that would have a greatly diminished impact on the congregation (but Christians claim to strive to be honest and represent the truth fairly). It is a form of subtle lying to misrepresent the gospels as if scholars knew who wrote them, when no one really does. As Bible scholar and former Christian Bart Ehrman says it: *“There were some books, such as the Gospels, that had been written anonymously, only later to be ascribed to certain authors who probably did not write them (apostles and friends of the apostles). Other books were written by authors who flat out claimed to be someone they weren't.”*¹²

First, for the myths, there’s the story of some of the holy dead people coming back to life (arising from their graves) after Jesus died on the cross (only reported in “Matthew” 27:52, and not the other gospel accounts). This is a huge problem for

¹² To read more about this, see the NPR article “The Gospel Truth: Sometimes A Little Hazy”

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=101389895>

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Pastors, and from my experience, they skip over this in Bible studies and sermons. However, it is impossible for Christian academics to dismiss the passage as a later addition (and therefore not a part of the original inerrant Word of God), because this passage appears in the earliest manuscripts.

Second, there's the passage of Jesus claiming that getting bit by a poisonous snake won't hurt the believer ("Mark" 16:18). Obviously that's not true. There's a news article about a Pastor, who died after trying that experiment (later, his son became a pastor, did the same thing, and also died).¹³ Christian academics might try to dismiss this as a later edition to the original manuscript; but then the question arises, if it is a later added myth, why is it still in the Bible? Probably because they want to say that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God, so to delete a passage and admit it was a later addition would cast doubt on all the rest too, causing a scandal in the Church.

¹³ An ABC News story called "'Serpent-Handling' West Virginia Pastor Dies From Snake Bite," located here: <http://tinyurl.com/9srsqxf> . Excerpt: *"Wolford said watched his own father die at the age of 39 after a rattlesnake bit him during a similar service."*

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Third, Acts 1:9-11 records Jesus literally ascending up to heaven, past the clouds. Those who wrote the story thought that Heaven was literally located up there, somewhere. Now, with modern cosmology, no one thinks Heaven is located literally up in the sky (theologians might rather say that Heaven is in a different dimension). This is a case of a writer getting caught telling a lie! Why would Jesus literally ascend up to Heaven as if it was located above the clouds, but it isn't? In addition, the story says that an angel appears and declares that Jesus will one day return to Earth, from heaven; again suggesting that Heaven is located in the sky. (The Sunni Muslims also have their prophet Mohammad ascending into Heaven as if it is literally up in the sky, and even having a visit with Adam while he was there.¹⁴)

Therefore, it can be seen that the hope of eternal life relies upon a Bible that clearly contains myths and false eye-witness accounts. If the Bible is not

¹⁴ Sunni Hadith: Sahih al-Bukhari, volume 4, Book 54, Hadith number 429. For more introductory material on the topic of "Heavens located in the sky" regarding Judaism, Islam, etc., see the Wikipedia article "Seven Heavens" here: <http://tinyurl.com/8a59sou> .

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trustworthy in its reporting of history, then its promises of eternal life should also be dismissed. Furthermore, with a modern scientific view on neurology, there's nothing that is "us" that could be resurrected. (By the way, some atheists think and hope that one day they can live forever if they can download their consciousness to an advanced computer. For the same reasons explained earlier, regarding how the brain operates, this will never happen either. There is no "you" to download. "You" are just the mental image that you have created to model yourself (hopes, dreams, feelings, etc.).)

Philosophy/Religion Conflict: "The Problem of Evil"

Everything I wrote is sufficient to show that Christian theology no longer survives in light of modern science. To argue otherwise shows some kind of ignorance in science, either in biological evolution or neurology. Ultimately Christian theology has the hope of eternal life, but as I've explained, there's no justification for believing in the existence of a soul nor spirit to be resurrected. All there is, is the mind, which emerges from the brain, and dies with the brain. It makes no sense to have a

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mind without a brain, but a mind without a brain is core to the Christian theology/mythology (even god himself is said to be a mind without a physical brain).

But if that's not enough (because there is a group of evangelical Christians called "Evolutionary Creationists" that **do** accept all modern science), there's another huge remaining problem with Christian theology regarding philosophy, traditionally called "the problem of evil." If one is an atheist, and claims that nature is all there is, then the tremendous pain and evil we see is easy to explain: it is just nature. But there's a big problem if there is thought to be an all-loving, all-powerful, all-good God overlooking (and in some cases even **causing!**) all of this misery.

There are two categories of what is commonly referred to "evil": Moral evil and natural evil. More evil is illustrated by Hitler killing 6 million Jews. If God is in control, why would he allow that? Is it because 2 million wouldn't be enough, but 10 million would be overkill? For natural evil, one example would be the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami that killed many hundreds of thousands of people, and displaced millions of others.

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Even worse than saying God sees this, and allows it, is the claim that God is actually **doing** all of these natural evils. The Bible says that God upholds nature and holds everything together (Colossians 1:17). So then, God is upholding and sustaining the killer tsunami waves that are killing hundreds of thousands of people indiscriminately (unless one believes this is a targeted killing by God; which also would hardly soothe the accusation against such a God).

And for those Christians who accept evolution, one must note how “red in tooth and claw” it is, and how it is inconceivable that this would be the design of an all-good, all-loving, all-knowing God. The “problem of evil” has been a traditional problem for theology for centuries, but now the problem is greatly magnified since evolution is known to be the process for how animals developed more complexity. To put it poetically, one might say “the teeth and claws of the cheetah have sculpted the grace and speed of the antelope.” Additionally, random mutation brings not only more complexity to life, but also has a downside, such as cancer. For a Christian to praise God for evolution would be for them to praise God for all the good things that resulted from it, and totally ignore all the bad things;

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the logical fallacy of cherry-picking (this is when one appeals to part of the data but not the whole dataset; just the part that supports their hypothesis). That is intellectually dishonest.

Some theologians state that God gave us freewill, and it is very important to God that we have freewill. Humans do evil things, and God must allow it so they can experience freewill. There are two major problems with that defense. Firstly, it is only an explanation for “moral evil” and not “natural evil.” Secondly, and most importantly, the Bible says freewill isn’t important to God (Romans 9:19-21). It says that God can make people good or bad depending on his own whim, and doesn’t need to justify it any more than a Potter has to justify why he made a pot for something lovely (like a vase) or something ignoble (like a toilet). The pot can’t speak back to the Potter. So here the Christian is seen to offer up a defense that is actually repudiated by the Bible.

Some theologians blame the moral evil on the sin of Adam and Eve, our first biological parents, from whom we’ve inherited original sin. As mentioned previously, belief in a literal Adam and Eve is scientific nonsense.

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Again, all of these examples of “the problem of evil” (as philosophical inconsistencies in a particular worldview) go away if one has an atheistic naturalistic worldview. These “evils” are simply how nature operates. What more could you expect from nature?

That concludes the heart of this booklet. As a supplementary, I’d like to now mention two other very serious philosophical issues with Christian theology, as “icing on the cake.”

Supplementary Philosophical Conflict #1: The Bible-God Character Is Evil

It is said that “God” is needed for a correct moral understanding. However, the Bible shows that God can be known as a “moral monster” by judging some of his works and the moral code that he supposedly commanded. And let it be known that just as one can judge a powerful dictator, like Hitler, to be evil by judging his actions; one can do the same for the God-character mentioned in the Bible:

Genesis Ch. 6, the Noah’s ark story, shows God actively and personally committing genocide on both humans and “air breathing” animals (God only

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intended to save only a representation of “air-breathing” land animal species on an ark). This could probably be called biocide or ecocide, since it is way beyond “just” genocide. (Hitler killed six million Jews, but this act of God dwarfs anything Hitler did.) And supposedly this didn’t accomplish anything, as it didn’t seem to affect human behavior. What was the point, to serve as a warning that Hell will be even worse for sinners if they don’t straighten-up? Have people changed as a result of it? Was it worth it? Obviously not. Thank goodness it is only a myth.

Deuteronomy 22:13-21 is a very disturbing passage, especially so because it is supposed to be direct moral code handed down by God (a supposed Bible-based “honor killing”). Essentially it says that if a man discovers that his new bride is not a virgin on his wedding night, he is to take her to her father and have her killed. This brings up several moral objections.

First, even if the woman was promiscuous, death is way too harsh of a penalty. There is also no punishment for the male for the same crime of promiscuity, so there’s a double standard being presented.

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Second, it is impossible to tell if a woman is a virgin. The Bible writer supposes that a virgin will get a torn hymen from her first sexual encounter, and that there will be a bloody rag for evidence if she was a virgin. This has two problems. It is very possible for a woman to have sex and not break the hymen. In addition, a woman may have a broken hymen from other non-sexual activities (such as exercise).

This should provide a moral conundrum for Bible believers today. If it was a good moral law for believers back then, is it still applicable today? When did things change? Did God change his mind about killing promiscuous unmarried women? If a religious group wants to follow this passage today, could Christians oppose them on the grounds of morality?

Supplementary Philosophical Conflict #2: The Heart of the Gospel Is Nonsense

Even if there were none of the previously mentioned scientific/philosophical conflicts, there's probably even a bigger problem with the Christian Gospel. And that is that the heart of the gospel is...

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nonsense!

Here's the gospel in a nutshell (maybe this is stated in a silly way, but it is actually factual):

God, who knows all things past and present, made humans. But it turns out that humans are sinners, and this stirs up God's wrath (even though he knew it would happen before it did). How can this situation be fixed? God, who is all-knowing, decided to come to Earth and sacrifice himself to appease himself (because Jesus is God's son, and also God, the same being; because there's only one God in monotheism). In summary, God sacrificed himself to appease his own wrath. And God, who is immortal, died on a cross and came back to life.

And here's the icing on the cake: If you know and reject this message (for example, because the message is nonsense), you will be tortured in hell for eternity.

Obviously this is nonsense on many levels. How did this idea ever even emerge? It's actually quite

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simple. The Jews adopted animal sacrifice from their pagan neighbors. The Jews were later occupied by the Roman government, so they looked for a savior to free them, as a nation. A number of false Messiah's emerged, but nothing panned-out. Jesus was one of them, but a message about him caught on. Mixing a political savior with a salvation savior allows one to say that Jesus died on the cross for sin, like the animal sacrifices previously made. This also explains why Jesus is no longer around (supposedly just wait, he'll come back soon).

By the way, **the “soon return of Christ” is the most famous failed prophecy of the entire Bible; almost 2,000 years and we're still waiting.** Even the early Christians were ridiculed for this false prophecy, back in their day when the New Testament was written (2 Peter 3:4).

In addition, God supposedly said (Jeremiah 32:35) that child sacrifice is detestable, something that “never entered his mind.” Then later in the New Testament it is said that God sacrificed his own son. That's an internal philosophical inconsistency, a contradiction. It's like claiming that Harry Potter (the famous fictional wizard) would never lower himself to ride on a broom, but then he rides a

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broom playing Quidditch. The writers of the Harry Potter movies are smart enough not to contradict themselves; but the Bible has these kinds of problems because it was written over a long span of time by various authors. So when the books of the Bible (Old Testament and New Testament) are assembled and interpreted as one monolithic story, the contradictions become enormous.

Special Application: A Devastating Debate Technique Against Christians

Here's an interesting way to deal with a Christian in a debate and destroy their arguments with science: bring up "Adam and Eve" and "Noah's Ark." Can the creationist admit these are myths? They are "damned if they do, damned if they don't." If they don't admit it, they prove themselves to be scientifically ignorant. If they do admit it, they will alienate most of their Christian supporters. Also be prepared to spell-out the consequences of accepting it as a myth. (No "Adam and Eve" means no "original sin" since there was no original humans to cause it. No flood means the heart of the gospel, as

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preached in the Bible, is ripped-out, per 1 Peter 3:20-22.)¹⁵

They will attempt to avoid these topics, like the plague; by saying it is irrelevant to the debate. **But it is very relevant.** For example, a debate on morality could use the flood story to show how God is a genocidal killer. A debate on “origins” can use the Adam and Eve story to illustrate the conflict with science.

Summary

The science of biological evolution and neurology is enough to disprove Christian theology, because the majority of Christian theology is based on the Bible which was written from a perspective of ancient (and wrong) science (written in a pre-

¹⁵ The Roman Catholic Catechism, for example, teaches that the Church saves people, just like the ark did. Excerpt: “845 To reunite all his children, scattered and led astray by sin, the Father willed to call the whole of humanity together into his Son's Church. The Church is the place where humanity must rediscover its unity and salvation. The Church is “the world reconciled.” She is that bark which “in the full sail of the Lord's cross, by the breath of the Holy Spirit, navigates safely in this world.” According to another image dear to the Church Fathers, she is prefigured by Noah's ark, which alone saves from the flood.” Source: Catechism of the Catholic Church, Paragraph 845: <http://tinyurl.com/yokoer> .

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scientific age). But there are some “evolutionary creationists” that fully accept modern science. For those, an additional refutation of Christian theology comes from the field of philosophy, traditionally called “the problem of evil.” Although this is enough to discredit Christian theology, I go on to bring-up two more severe philosophical problems with Christianity: “the immorality of the Bible-God character” and “the heart of the gospel is nonsense.” To be sure, there are many more philosophical issues that could be raised (one example being the logical inconsistencies of the idea of an eternal (infinite) Hell for finite sinners).

Once one sees that there is no good evidence for accepting the idea that there is a supernatural world, but rather, just a natural world; the philosophical outlook for such a person changes dramatically. Included in the appendix is a diagram that I created to show the difference between an atheistic (metaphysical naturalism) philosophy and a Christian philosophy. For the atheistic metaphysical naturalist, “nature is all there is.”

After one reads this and rejects Christianity, they are correct to become an atheist. However, let me suggest to move beyond atheism, into the positive

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belief system of Secular Humanism. By “positive” I mean statements of things which one *does* believe, rather than a diatribe about things one *doesn't* believe; I do not mean “positive” in the sense of an emotion. Here's my personal (pithy) definition for what Secular Humanism is:

Secular Humanism is a naturalistic belief system that promotes critical thinking and morality by way of modern science and reason.

I welcome you all into the world of Secular Humanism. It is still a relatively new and developing “belief system,” so the contributions of others is greatly appreciated. There is an increasing trend of Christian pastors and preachers leaving the faith, and they will have a great opportunity to continue to shape and mold the unfolding Secular Humanism movement. I myself am a former evangelical Christian that once preached the gospel on the internet and local TV for many years. I was led out of the church by learning more science and philosophy. I seriously thought I was in the truth, but I could only do as well as my limited scientific and philosophical knowledgebase would allow. Learning more science and philosophy, to learn the

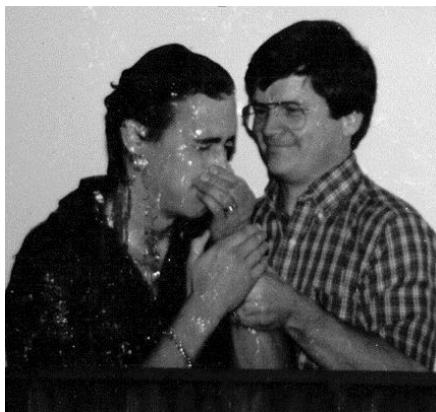
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truth, was the key to escaping religious (magical) thinking.

About Bernie Dehler

Bernie Dehler is a pseudonym, used for two reasons. Some people are hostile when discussing science/religion conflicts, so this adds a small additional layer of security. In addition, Bernie's relatives are still primarily Christian, so writing under this name affords some peace in the family. (*In this photo, Bernie is re-baptized as a born-again believer in 1985.*)

Bernie Dehler received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Electronics Engineering Technology from Oregon Institute of Technology in 1984 (that same year, he became a born-again evangelical Christian; after being raised and confirmed as a Roman Catholic). Since then, and continuing, he has been working in the computer industry.



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While working full-time, Bernie also ran a 501c3 ministry to preach the gospel on the internet and local community cable TV. In 2007 he earned a Masters in Ministry Degree from Luther Rice Seminary in Lithonia Georgia. In 2009, he left the Christian faith and became an atheist (for the reasons in this booklet). Since then he has been an activist for secular humanism. He is a certified Humanist Minister that teaches various classes in the secular community, participates in Christian/atheist debates, and helps set-up atheist communities in prison and the workplace.

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Appendix A: Metaphysical Naturalism¹⁶ Philosophy vs. Christian Philosophy

The following points illustrate the huge difference between a natural and supernatural worldview/philosophy. Notice these attributes:

- Scholars from both philosophies agree that “science” is “methodological naturalism.” This means that “science” entertains only natural hypotheses because these are the only ones that can be tested and are reasonable (using deductive and inductive logic).
- The difference is in considering *all* of reality, which is the philosophical field called “metaphysics.” The Metaphysical Naturalist says “nature is all there is.” The Christian thinks this is short-sighted, to wrongly understand all of reality in only what can be determined by science and naturalistic thinking. (By the way, the atheist has a good reason why they reject the hypothesis of a supernatural world: there’s no good evidence

¹⁶ For a good book on explaining everything (from A to Z) about the philosophy of Metaphysical Naturalism, see Richard Carrier’s book “Sense and Goodness Without God: A Defense of Metaphysical Naturalism.”

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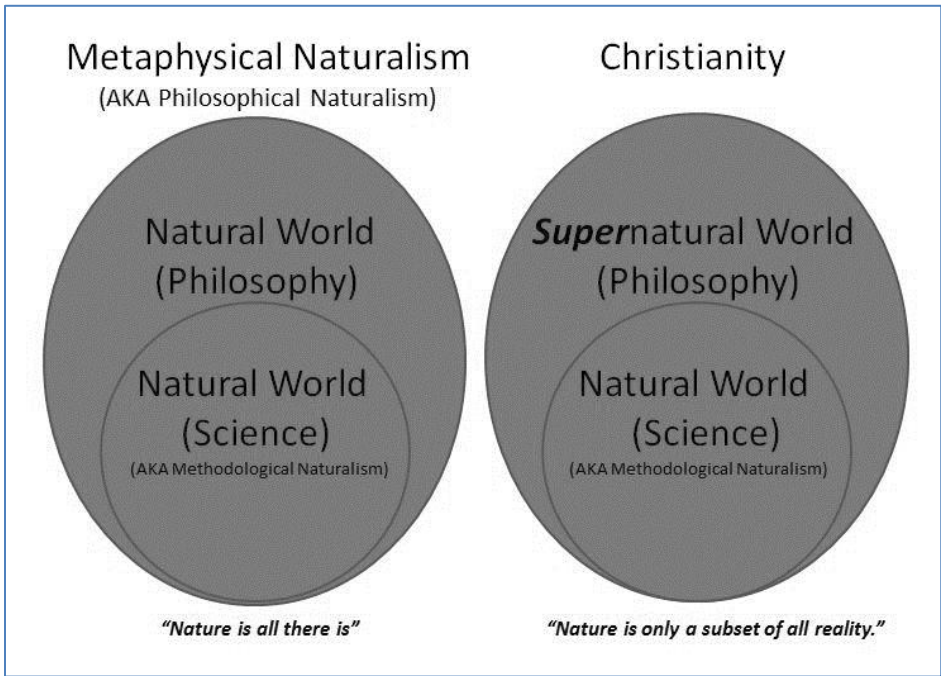
for it. As Carl Sagan famously said, “Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence.”¹⁷ It seems like the best evidence for the supernatural world is nothing more than ghost stories and the logical fallacy called “appeal to ignorance”.)

As an example, when observing the following graphic, consider the creation of the universe.

Most Christians will say that before the world existed, God existed in the supernatural realm. He then created the natural world, and permeates both. Therefore the supernatural world encompasses everything. The Metaphysical Naturalist says that there is no such thing as a supernatural world. Where did everything come from? No one knows; not even the Christian that claims to know that it comes from God.

¹⁷ Some say that this idea originated with Pierre-Simon Laplace (1749–1827), a famous French mathematician and astronomer who said, “*The weight of evidence for an extraordinary claim must be proportioned to its strangeness.*”

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Therefore, the “big picture” questions for you to answer for yourself are these:

1. Is the natural world all there is? Are all supernatural beliefs really nothing more than superstition? (My answer is “yes” to both.)
2. Does a supernatural world exist? And if so, is the atheist self-limiting and naïve/ignorant for not recognizing this other reality? (My answer is “no” to both.)

Appendix B: Can You Disprove God?

Probably the most frequent criticism I hear is “You can’t disprove the existence of god.” After all, what if god is hiding behind that rock over there, where you haven’t checked yet? Since you don’t know everything, you can’t be sure god doesn’t exist... or so they say.

It is true that you can’t disprove the kind of god that likes to hide behind a rock and play the children’s game called hide-and-seek. But I don’t know of anyone that worships that kind of god.

In my booklet I talk only about the Christian god. Why? Here are the main reasons:

1. ***Christianity is the largest religion in the world***, and in the USA where I live.

2. ***I have a lot of experience with Christianity***. Up through college I was raised (and confirmed) as a Roman Catholic. After college I became a born-again evangelical Christian and progressed in the faith for over 25 years, and even earned a conservative Baptist seminary degree (in the hopes of being a pastor and starting a church). I’m now over

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50 years of age, with the vast majority of that time wasted in the Christian worldview.

3. The next biggest religion is Islam, but their religion is famous for killing (physically) the opposition. Since the religion is so violent, I don't care to engage it. In addition, I think their religion is even easier to falsify; so ***if one can rid themselves of Christianity with logic and modern science, it is very likely they won't fall for any other superstitious religion*** such as Islam, Hinduism, Mormonism, etc.

Now back to Christianity, which I assert can be falsified. The procedure is:

1. Define the god.
2. Show how the definition of a particular god conflicts with modern knowledge and reason. Falsifying the existence of Zeus is different than falsifying the existence of Thor; and likewise, falsifying the god of Young Earth Creationists is different than falsifying the god of Evolutionary Creationists.

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Essentially the main idea is to treat “the god hypothesis” just like any other hypothesis. For a popular book on this topic, see Dr. Stenger’s book “God: The Failed Hypothesis. How Science Shows That God Does Not Exist.” (Note, my booklet contains my own ideas and is not a summary of anyone else’s book.)

The previous text in this book explained how to falsify Christian theology, because the ancient writings conflict with modern science. (The especially lethal killer is the falsification of “soul theology” with modern neurology; since there’s no soul, there’s nothing really to resurrect; and it makes no sense to think of a mind without a body, as god himself is said to be a mind without a physical body/brain.) And for those who accept both modern science and the Bible, I go on to show how the theology conflicts with philosophy (reason and logic).

But now I will recap how to falsify Christian theology by another sequence, going through the Christian theologies as they move from sect to sect, from a more **literal** interpretation of the Bible to more **liberal** interpretations (see the following summary chart).

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| | Biblical Interpretation | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| | Most literal | ←-----→ | Most liberal | |
| | Young Earth | Old Earth | Evolutionary | Modern |
| | <u>Creationist</u> | <u>Creationist</u> | <u>Creationist</u> | Science |
| Age of Universe | 6,000 | 13,800,000,000 | 13,800,000,000 | 13,800,000,000 |
| Adam Creation Story | True | True | Myth | Myth |
| Noah's Flood | Worldwide | Local | Myth | Myth |

Let's start with Young Earth Creationists¹⁸. Typically they accept the Bible book of Genesis in the most literal way possible, which include hypotheses such as 1) Adam is the first human, 2) Noah's worldwide flood, and 3) the Earth (and universe) is only about 6,000 years old.

With modern science, biological evolution, we now know there's no such thing as a "first human" nor first of any species.¹⁹

In addition, there is much evidence to know, for sure, there was no worldwide flood (which they say killed all land-based air-breathing animals except the few saved on the ark). There are many reasons why the worldwide flood can't be true, and I'll give just one major example: biodiversity. How did the polar bears get to and from the ark from the North Pole

¹⁸ A large Young Earth Ministry is "Answers in Genesis" led by Ken Ham <https://answersingenesis.org/>.

¹⁹ See "There was no first human,: a 4 minute YouTube video <http://tinyurl.com/kpey4nb>. This is based on Richard Dawkins' book "The Magic of Reality: How We Know What's Really True"

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(they aren't at the South Pole)? And the same question for the Penguins found at the South Pole (they aren't at the North Pole). Of course the believer can always say that god solved all these problems with his magical powers, but then you have to wonder why he had Noah go through all the work of building a boat and collecting animals in the first place? God should have just snapped his fingers from the very start and saved so much time and energy, and saved all the animals from their torturous deaths in the flood, etc.

As for the Earth, Sun, and entire universe being only 6,000 years old; that contradicts many fields of science: geology, biology, cosmology, etc. With modern science, the best estimates, based on evidence, is for a universe of about 13.8 billion years, and the Earth at about 4.5 billion years old. Because the conflict with science is so obvious and gross, these creationists have created their own kind of science called "creation science." With their own version of science, they wrongly think the whole world is only about 6,000 years old and that the fossils are best explained by the worldwide flood myth of the Bible.

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These Young Earth Creations are very vocal, but they are a minority of Christians. For those who want to “level-up,” there’s Old Earth Creationism²⁰. In this view, they accept modern cosmology (the ancient age of the universe and Earth). However, they still reject biological evolution (that humans evolved from other animals) and they think Noah’s flood was local in scope (wiping-out all the humans who were gathered only locally at one time, as if humans were all gathered at one local spot in time).

Good for the Old Earth Creationists for accepting modern cosmology! However, they still haven’t learned (like the Young Earth Creationists haven’t learned) that there is no “first human,” and the local flood hypothesis is also easy to falsify. The Noah’s Ark myth states that birds were saved, along with many other sorts of animals. Why would birds be saved? They can easily fly to higher ground in a local flood. And it is hard to see how a local area could flood (for over a year, according to the Bible) when it is constantly being drained by major rivers. And is Noah the only human that knew how to make a boat? Weren’t there fisherman and other boaters?

²⁰ A large Old Earth Creationist ministry is “Reasons to Believe” led by Hugh Ross <http://www.reasons.org/>.

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Some evangelical Christians know enough science to know these are myths. They are ready to “level up” and are now called “Evolutionary Creationists.”²¹ They will claim that the Bible is not a scientific text, but rather a holy book to teach spiritual principles. So these Christians have no problem accepting modern science (cosmological evolution as well as biological evolution). By the very definition of their faith, they have no conflict with science. If the Bible seems to conflict with science, they will choose to go with science. So how can the belief in the existence of god for these Evolutionary Creationist Christians be falsified?

The answer is that their faith can be falsified with philosophy. There is no conflict with science and their belief; but there’s a **HUGE** conflict with philosophy (reason) and their belief. This is because their belief is highly illogical.

I will give just one example repeated from earlier in this booklet, but in a different way. By definition, their god is all-powerful and all-loving. And they

²¹ Denis Lamoureux is a good example of an “evolutionary creationist” and in fact has literally wrote the book on the subject: “Evolutionary Creation: A Christian Approach to Evolution.” You can read his major thesis online, for free, here: “Evolutionary Creation: Moving Beyond the Evolution Versus Creation Debate” <http://tinyurl.com/pwy69an> .

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also say that Jesus holds all things together (nothing would exist, nor continue to exist, without Jesus holding all things together; Col. 1:17). **That would mean that the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami was brought to us by Jesus** (think about that!). The killer tsunami wouldn't have existed without him, if he holds all things together ("all things" would include tsunami waves). But it killed hundreds of thousands of people and displaced millions of people... **SO MUCH SUFFERING!!!** How could a loving god do this? This is traditionally called "the problem of evil." **The problem isn't that evil exists; it is that evil exists in light of a so-called all-knowing and all-loving creator/overseer... and this overseer is also BRINGING all the pain himself** (in the tsunami example).

This (Jesus brings it) "problem of evil" is on top of the usual "problem of evil" which notes that evolutionary history is "red in tooth and claw" (as if that wasn't already bad enough!) The Evolutionary Creationist fully accepts the evolutionary process as a design process of god, yet they don't know how to deal with the fact that the process is pretty much the **opposite** of what you'd expect from an all-loving god.

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So how does a Christian accept evolution (such as an evolutionary creationist or even a Roman Catholic), and yet explain how god is all-loving? They can't, and they don't. They think their best argument is that somehow this all leads to glorifying god, such as how being able to overcome a difficulty can make a person stronger in character. But that is obviously nonsense when you consider the hundreds of thousands that are killed by a single tsunami. And on top of that, consider all the evolutionary violence that was necessary to bring about the survival of the fittest (there's a reason why the cheetah and the antelope are both so fast, being in a predator-prey relationship, a sort of arm's race developing tools of offense and defense).²²

I was a Christian that went through all these stages, from taking the Bible most literally (as a Young Earth Creationist) to taking science seriously (as an Evolutionary Creationist). **In the end, being intellectually honest with myself, and summoning the courage to live in the truth, I had to admit that a naturalistic philosophy of**

²² For more info about the arm's race bin the predator-prey relationship, see "Predator-Prey Relationships"
<http://tinyurl.com/lkm7mxg> .

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**the world made the best sense of all the facts
that we see.**

Since I've left the faith in 2009, I've intellectually bloomed as I've stopped wasting time studying the Bible and other religious texts; and starting learning more science, philosophy, and history. The more you know... the easier it is to leave the god delusion. It is a paradox, but it seems that the more one knows about theology, the easier it is to leave the faith (because they know the theological answers are weak and fail). More and more educated Christian pastors are leaving the faith every day.²³

I only wish I knew smart atheists when I was in high school, and I wouldn't have had to waste so much of my life living for a delusion. I really thought I was born-again and had a relationship with Jesus; but I now see it as a delusion. It is like sobering-up after having been drunk (with superstition). The best antidote to superstition is education.

If you'd like to meet me, I'm currently very active in the Portland Oregon community doing

²³ To learn more about seminary-trained preachers leaving the faith in droves, see "The Clergy Project" at this link: <http://www.clergyproject.org/>.

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Christian/atheist debates. These are also usually freely posted online at this YouTube channel:

<http://tinyurl.com/pcz2ak5> .

I'm also very active in a couple of meetup groups. Here are two of them which host my debates and secular gatherings:

1. "The Center for Philosophical Naturalism"
<http://tinyurl.com/15j52kc> .
2. "Westside Science and Religion Discussion Group"
<http://tinyurl.com/q51fu63> .

For those leaving religion, and would still like to be involved in some sort of secular community, I would recommend the following national groups that have local assemblies:

1. Sunday Assembly. This has also been called "Church without the god-bits." They are about celebrating life and building community without any mention of supernatural superstitions.
2. American Humanist Association (AHA). They primarily promote Secular Humanism.

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3. Center for Inquiry (CFI). They promote secular Humanism as well as skepticism in general.

In closing, I wish you well in your discovery for truth. **I advise people to search for truth with reckless abandon.** In the short run, a delusion can be quite delightful; but in the long run, it can really hurt when reality sets in. So I always advocate to seek truth in order to live the best life possible.