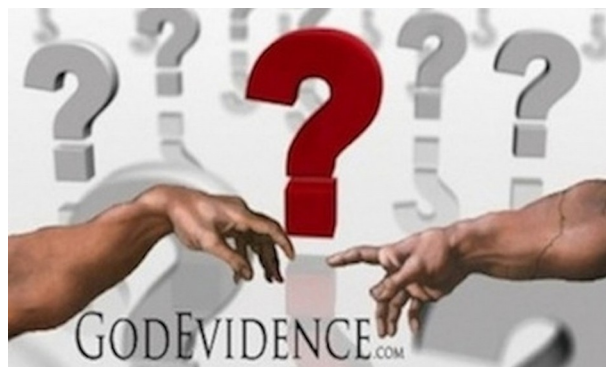
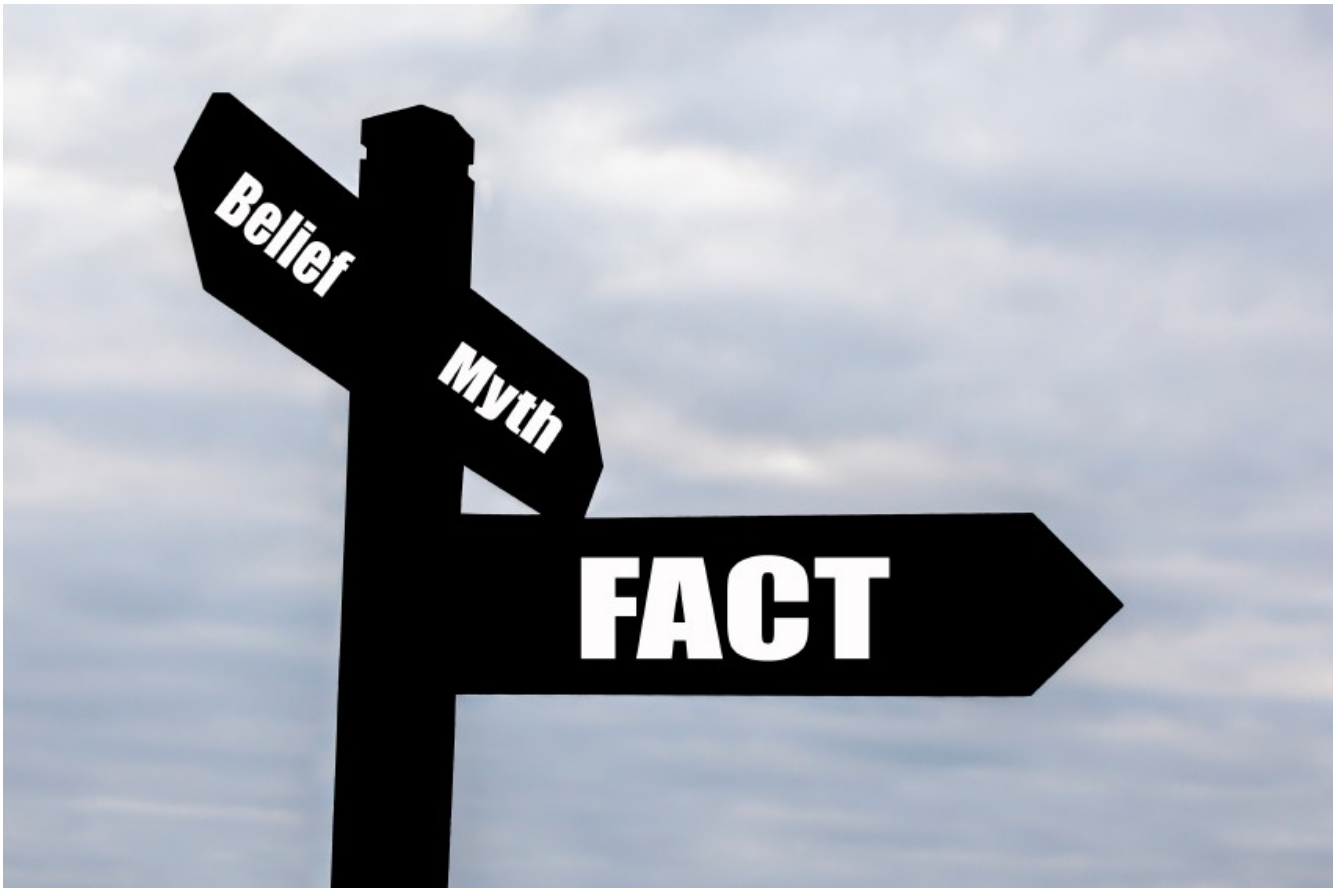


# Seven Secular Myths



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## About the author

Scott Youngren is an avid reader and blogger who founded [GodEvidence.com](http://GodEvidence.com) in 2010 in order to help educate the public about the powerful arguments for the existence of the God of the Bible. After spending many years as an agnostic, he began reading deeply into the logical arguments for the existence of God. As a result, he became ever more fascinated and impressed with the soundness of these arguments, and has more than five years of experience debating atheists and agnostics online.

Unfortunately, these arguments fail to reach mass circulation due in part to the anti-God bias within the media and academia, as well as our culture as a whole. GodEvidence.com is the culmination of Scott's vision to clearly communicate these arguments and to bring them into more widespread circulation.



**Secular myth #1:** “Science and God are competing explanations for such things as the origin of life and the origin of the universe. There is no need to cite God as an explanation, since science explains such things without the need for God.”

**Reality:** This commonplace atheist reasoning commits what is known in philosophy as a *category error* because it confuses different categories (or levels) of causation. The following two statements commit the same category error:

“Living things are not caused by God, but rather, by natural processes.”

“Aircraft are not caused by people, but rather, by manufacturing processes.”

Put another way, it does not follow that merely *describing how something was made* amounts to an *explanation of the cause* for that something. Atheists here confuse scientific *description* with *explanation*. Bold declarations from atheists that “science explains things without the need for God” therefore amount to a *category error*. Bo Jinn writes in [Illogical Atheism](#):

“In no way does it logically follow that something was not designed and built from the mere fact alone that that something could be understood scientifically. The law of gravity and Newton’s laws of motion are to God and the universe what binary strings and electronics are to Alan Turing and the computer processor. Function and agency account for two entirely different explanations as to how and why something exists. Aristotle explained this over two thousand years ago... Aristotle stated that everything in the universe could be understood in terms of:

A formal cause, a material cause, an efficient cause and a final cause.

Science accounts for only two of those causes; the formal and the material. If we were to apply Aristotle’s theory to the Harrier jump jet...:

-The Harrier’s material causes are the components from which it was constructed.

-Its formal causes are the laws of mechanics, aerodynamics and internal combustion.

-Its efficient causes are Ralph Hooper, Sir Sydney Camm and Sir Stanley Hooker [the designers of the jet].

-Its final cause is to be flown in dogfights.

Only the first of those categories of causes were open to the scientists in the story. Only the first two of those categories are open to science in the study of the universe.”

Atheism is a belief system which requires one to frequently ignore questions of efficient and final causation.

As a further example of the *category confusion* which permeates atheist thought, atheists frequently cite natural laws as an alternative to God for explaining natural phenomena. But citing natural laws leaves us with the question of who or what enforces natural laws. In the theistic model, it is immediately obvious why matter follows natural laws: The same mind that creates matter (God’s mind) also directs it. As Robert Boyle, the founder of modern chemistry, put it:

“The nature of this or that body is but the law of God prescribed to it [and] to speak properly, a law [is] but a *notional* rule of acting according to the declared will of a superior.” [italics added]

Or, as James Joule, the propounder of the first law of thermodynamics, for whom the thermal unit of the “Joule” was named, put it:

“It is evident that an acquaintance with natural laws means no less than an acquaintance with the mind of God therein expressed.”

Or, as the knighted mathematician, physicist and astronomer Sir James Jeans put it in his book *The Mysterious Universe*:

“There is a wide measure of agreement which, on the physical side of science *approaches almost unanimity*, that the stream of knowledge is heading towards a non-mechanical reality; the universe begins to look more like a great thought than a great machine. Mind no longer appears as an accidental intruder into the realm of matter. We are beginning to suspect that we ought rather to hail mind as the creator and governor of the realm of matter.” (italics added)

Atheism, however, is stuck with an *it just does* answer to the question of why matter so consistently follows natural laws such as the laws of physics and chemistry. But, *it just does* is not an explanation. Rather, it is an avoidance of a question which atheism can never coherently answer.

**Secular myth #2:** “Atheism is merely a lack of a faith. Christians are believers, whereas atheists and agnostics are just skeptics.”

**Reality:** Many atheists and agnostics would have you believe that they hold no beliefs which are not the product of scientific inquiry. But, unfortunately for those who believe this, such a state of affairs is actually impossible. The person who disbelieves in God can only do so from the vantage point of *some other belief* which precedes and therefore underlies scientific inquiry...not from the vantage point of a “skeptical” lack of any belief.

Claiming that atheism is merely a *lack of belief in God* is nothing but clever rhetorical sleight-of-hand. If atheism is simply a negative claim, and atheism is merely a lack of belief, then atheists can just sit back and criticize everyone else’s beliefs without having to defend their own beliefs. But Andy Bannister reveals the falsehood of the statement “atheism is merely lack of belief” in *The Atheist Who Didn’t Exist*:

If [the atheist] is correct and it [atheism] is not a belief, then, sure, I guess he doesn’t need to defend it. But, at the same time, if he is correct then something else follows too: namely that his statement cannot be true or false. Like many philosophical ideas, this can take a moment to get your head around, but when you grasp it, it’s obvious. The problem is that only beliefs or claims can be true or false. For example, it makes perfect sense to ask whether a statement such as “It is raining today” or “The Maple Leafs lost at hockey again” are true.

Those are claims, they are beliefs, and they have what philosophers call a “truth value”. They are either true or false. On the other hand, it is utterly meaningless to ask whether the color blue, a small off-duty Slovakian traffic warden, or Richard Dawkins’s left foot is “true”. That would be a bizarre category error. These things are not claims or beliefs and thus do not possess any kind of truth value. They simply are.

So what about atheism? Well, as far as I can make out, I think my atheist friends are claiming that their belief is true; that they really, really believe it to be true that there is no God. Well, if that’s the case, then it makes atheism a positive claim and claims must be defended, evidence marshalled, and reasons given. Otherwise, if atheism is not a claim, it cannot be true or false. It simply is, and to say “I am an atheist” is up there with saying “Wibble, wibble, wibble”.

It is impossible to be a complete skeptic since to be skeptical of all beliefs would entail having no beliefs.

Timothy Keller deftly points out that even the most hardened “skeptic” has a *faith*, in [The Reason for God](#):

“But even as believers should learn to look for reasons behind their faith, skeptics must learn to look for a type of faith hidden within their reasoning. All doubts, however skeptical and cynical they may seem, are really a set of alternate beliefs. You cannot doubt Belief A except from a position of faith in Belief B. For example, if you doubt Christianity because, ‘There can’t be just one true religion,’ you must recognize that this statement is itself an act of faith. No one can prove it empirically, and it is not a universal truth that everyone accepts. If you went to the Middle East and said, ‘There can’t be just one true religion,’ nearly everyone would say, ‘Why not?’

The reason you doubt Christianity's Belief A is because you hold unprovable Belief B. Every doubt, therefore is based on a leap of faith."

Atheists are skeptical of Christianity (etc.), but are very rarely skeptical of the belief system known as *materialism* or *naturalism*. This belief system says that the material world is all that exists, and that therefore all natural phenomena will eventually be explainable in materialistic terms. The eminent philosopher of science Karl Popper contemptuously refers to this belief as "promissory materialism," since it promises to *eventually* explain everything (including consciousness, the origin of life, the origin of the universe, etc.) as the result of particles of matter randomly bumping into one another.

Many of the beliefs which stem from the materialist/naturalist belief system are very difficult to rectify with our experience of the world. For example, if materialism/naturalism is true, and nothing exists but various arrangements of elementary material particles, then it follows that life is *meaningless* and *purposeless* because we would ourselves be nothing but collections of material particles. Material particles do not have meaning or purpose. The most prominent of current day atheists, the biologist Richard Dawkins, describes his meaningless and purposeless concept of human existence in *The Blind Watchmaker*: "We are survival machines – robot vehicles blindly programmed to preserve the selfish molecules known as genes. This is a truth which still fills me with astonishment."

Regarding such bizarre beliefs which stem from materialism/naturalism, Nancy Pearcey notes in her book *Finding Truth*:

In *What Science Offers the Humanities*, Edward Slingerland, identifies himself as an unabashed materialist and reductionist. A reviewer for the journal *Science* expressed hope that the book will "initiate conversion experiences" to a materialist worldview. (Conversion experiences? And you wondered whether materialism could really be labeled a religion?)

Slingerland argues that Darwinian materialism leads logically to the conclusion that humans are robots—that our sense of having a will or self or consciousness is an illusion. Yet, he admits, it is an illusion we find impossible to shake. No one "can help acting like and at some level really feeling that he or she is free." We are "constitutionally incapable of experiencing ourselves and other conspecifics [humans] as robots." One section in his book is even titled "We Are Robots Designed Not to Believe That We Are Robots."

Considering Slingerland's materialist belief that consciousness is an illusion, one is inclined to wonder: How can one experience an illusion of consciousness without consciousness? Doesn't experiencing an illusion require consciousness?

And if we are merely mindless and purposeless robots, why do outspoken atheists such as Dawkins commit themselves to the *purpose* of convincing people that there is no God, by writing books such as *The God Delusion*? As the English mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead put it, "Those who devote themselves to the purpose of proving that there is no purpose constitute an interesting subject for study."



**Secular myth #3:** “There is no evidence that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. This is just a story that Christians made up, but which has no historical support.”

**Reality:** A majority of experts who publish on the topic of Christ's resurrection accept certain key facts surrounding this topic. As the New Testament scholar Gary Habermas reveals,

“Today, the majority of New Testament scholars, theologians, historians, and philosophers who publish in the area [including atheist and agnostic academics...not just Christians] believe in the empty tomb.”

“In the 70’s, if you talked about bodily [post-resurrection] appearances of Jesus, they’d say, ‘Yeah, that’s nice. Go back to your church and talk about it, but don’t do it on a university campus.’”

Today, however, belief in Jesus’ bodily resurrection is the predominant view within New Testament scholarship. As Habermas puts it,

“Today, bodily resurrection is the predominant view in the academy.”

Habermas also notes that:

“Raymond Brown (probably the most prominent New Testament scholar in America), shortly before his death, said that the majority of contemporary theologians are conservative today.”

Habermas titles his argument for the resurrection of Jesus the “minimal facts argument” since it is based only upon the data that is granted, in his words, “by virtually **all** scholars on the subject, even the skeptical ones” (such as atheist and agnostic scholars). These five “minimal facts” are as follows (as detailed in his book [The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus](#)):

- 1) Jesus died by crucifixion.
- 2) Jesus’ disciples believed that he rose and appeared to them.
- 3) The church persecutor Paul was suddenly changed.
- 4) The skeptic James, brother of Jesus, was suddenly changed.
- 5) The tomb was empty.

So how do atheist and agnostic scholars who accept the truth of the above statement make sense of it in light of their disbelief in Jesus’ resurrection? [This article](#) provides a good example of an atheist New Testament scholar who struggles to explain the historical facts surrounding Jesus’ resurrection through the lens of his belief system:

“...Atheist New Testament scholar Gerd Lüdemann maintains a priori rejection of the supernatural and yet he says, ‘It may be taken as historically certain that Peter and the disciples had experiences after Jesus’ death in which Jesus appeared to them as the risen Christ.’ Although he accepts the historical evidence he concludes that the best explanation for it is that everybody who thought they saw the resurrected Jesus actually hallucinated.”

“Peter hallucinated because he was overcome by grief for denying Jesus, Paul hallucinated on the road to Damascus, James the skeptical brother of Jesus hallucinated, and all the five hundred who saw Jesus at one time hallucinated.”

Since hallucinations are private experiences (unique to each individual), it is immediately clear why the hallucination hypothesis fails to explain post-resurrection experiences of Jesus. There is no such thing as a shared hallucination.

Please see my essay titled [\*The Ancient Fable Behind Disbelief in Christ's Resurrection\*](#) to explore this subject in more depth.

**Secular Myth #4:** “Darwinian evolution has shown that the biblical account of the origin of life is wrong.”

**Reality:** Darwinian evolution does not even attempt to answer the question of the origin of life from nonliving matter. The Darwinian mechanism of the random mutation of genes and the natural selection of offspring, quite obviously, only applies to *that which has genes to mutate and offspring to naturally select*....namely, things which are already alive.

Further, Darwinian evolution predicts slow and gradual change, but this is the opposite of what the fossil record actually shows. As *Science* magazine (which is probably the most respected, peer-reviewed science journal) states in a 1995 article titled [Did Darwin Get It All Right?](#),

“The most thorough study yet of species formation in the fossil record confirms that new species appear with the most un-Darwinian abruptness after long periods of stability.”

[The Altenberg 16: An Expose of the Evolution Industry](#), describes a secret meeting (the public and media were barred) of 16 elite biologists and geneticists in Altenburg, Austria, held in 2008. The purpose of this secret meeting was to discuss setting up a framework for “post-Darwinian” research, since scientists are acutely aware that Darwinism has failed as an explanatory model. In this book, University of Massachusetts-Amherst Professor of Biology Lynn Margulis (winner of the U.S. Presidential Medal for Science) discusses the persistence of neo-Darwinian theory, despite its deteriorating scientific basis, with journalist Susan Mazur:

Margulis: “If enough favorable mutations occur, was the erroneous extrapolation, a change from one species to another would concurrently occur.”

Mazur: “So a certain dishonesty set in?”

Margulis: “No. It was not dishonesty. I think it was wish-fulfillment and social momentum. Assumptions, made but not verified, were taught as fact.”

Mazur: “But a whole industry grew up.”

Margulis: “Yes, but people are always more loyal to their tribal group than to any abstract notion of ‘truth’ – scientists especially. If not they are unemployable. It is professional suicide to continually contradict one’s teachers or social leaders.”

Margulis comments that history will ultimately judge neo-Darwinism as “a minor twentieth-century religious sect within the sprawling religious persuasion of Anglo-Saxon biology.”

**Secular Myth #5:** “Atheists and agnostics do not believe in anything which has not been scientifically verified. The only kind of knowledge we can have is scientific knowledge. We can only know as true what science tells us.”

**Reality:** The problem with this belief is that, like many atheistic beliefs, it is self-refuting. How would one scientifically verify the belief that, “We can only know as true what science tells us?” With a chemistry experiment involving a bunsen burner and test tubes? With a biology experiment involving a microscope and a petri dish?

Because this statement cannot *itself* be scientifically verified, it refutes itself.

Or take the premise, “No belief can be accepted as true and rational unless it can be known by science or quantified and tested empirically.” How can *that* belief be known by science or quantified and tested empirically? It can’t, and therefore this premise is self-refuting. Such claims which defeat themselves (or “commit suicide”) are very commonplace within atheist thought, and therefore, Christians should be very alert to recognize them as such.

Einstein surely understood that scientific knowledge cannot be the only kind of knowledge, and that it must necessarily interact with religious/philosophical reasoning...which is why he said, “Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.” So did many other crucial contributors to modern science...such as Max Planck (the Nobel Prize winning physicist who founded quantum theory), which is why he said, “There can never be any real opposition between religion and science; for the one is the complement of the other.”

The God debate is a conflict of religion versus religion, or philosophy versus philosophy...not of science versus religion. “The so-called warfare between science and religion,” writes the eminent historian Jacques Barzun, should actually “be seen as the warfare between two philosophies and perhaps two faiths.”

What sort of religious beliefs do atheists hold? A common religious belief held by atheists and agnostics is the above mentioned belief that the only kind of knowledge which humans can have is *scientific* knowledge. This belief is known by philosophers and psychologists as “scientism,” and, as I have demonstrated, it is self-refuting.

I delve into this topic in more detail in my essay titled [\*I Believe in Science. Why Do I Need Religion?\*](#)

**Secular Myth #6:** “Science shows that God does not exist.”

**Reality:** Science shows that God DOES exist. The universe (which includes time, space, matter, and energy) began to exist at the cosmological event known as “the Big Bang.” Since it is logically absurd to suggest that something can cause itself, and since everything with a beginning requires a cause, the cause of the universe must be timeless, spaceless, immaterial, and energy-less.

If this sounds like God to you, then you are in good company. In fact, the case for the view that the universe is the product of a *conscious and intelligent creator* has become so compelling that astrophysicist Hugh Ross, a former post-doctoral fellow at the California Institute of Technology, observes (in his book [The Creator and the Cosmos: How the Greatest Scientific Discoveries of the Century Reveal God](#)) that:

“Astronomers who do not draw theistic or deistic conclusions are becoming rare, and even the few dissenters hint that the tide is against them. Geoffrey Burbidge, of the University of California at San Diego, complains that his fellow astronomers are rushing off to join ‘The First Church of Christ of the Big Bang.’”

An excellent example of a scientist who came to belief in God as a result of Big Bang science is the astronomer Allan Sandage, winner of the Crafoord Prize in astronomy (which is equivalent to the Nobel Prize). Sandage is one of the founders of modern astronomy, and was considered the greatest living cosmologist until his death in 2010. He came to belief in God as a result of his science, as he announced to a conference on the origin of the universe in 1985. He also became a Christian. Sandage wrote:

“I find it quite improbable that such order came out of chaos. There has to be some organizing principle. God to me is a mystery but is the explanation for the miracle of existence, why there is something instead of nothing.”

Similarly, Arno Penzias, the 1978 Nobel Prize recipient in physics, stated to the *New York Times* on March 12, 1978:

“The best data we have (concerning the Big Bang) are exactly what I would have predicted, had I nothing to go on but the five books of Moses, the Psalms, the Bible as a whole.”

Robert Jastrow (the astronomer, physicist and founder of NASA’s Goddard Institute for Space Studies) despite being a self-described agnostic, admits:

“Now we see how the astronomical evidence leads to a biblical view of the origin of the world. The details differ, but the essential elements in the astronomical and biblical accounts of Genesis are the same: the chain of events leading to man commenced suddenly and sharply at a definite moment of time, in a flash of light and energy.”

Please read my essay titled [Is There A God? What is the chance that our world is the result of chance?](#) to explore this topic further.

**Secular Myth #7:** “Belief in God is delusional.”

**Reality: *Disbelief*** in God is delusional. In order to classify belief in God as “delusional,” it must be demonstrated that belief in God is indicative of mental illness, or at least poor mental health. Andrew Sims is a former President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. In his book, *Is Faith Delusion? Why Religion is Good For Your Health*, he comments on the psychiatric definition of *delusion*:

“Although in the past, the word delusion could refer to being fooled or cheated, in modern speech it always implies the possibility of psychiatric illness. It has been appropriated by psychiatry and invariably implies at least the suspicion of a psychiatric diagnosis. If I am deluded, then I am necessarily mentally ill. In English law, delusion has been the cardinal feature of insanity for the last 200 years.”

“Posed as a statement, ‘faith is delusional,’ not only implies that faith is false, but that the believer is mad to believe it.”

But, unfortunately for atheists, it is actually DISBELIEF in God which correlates with negative mental health consequences. Sims cites the *Handbook of Religion and Health*:

“Correlations between religious belief and greater well-being ‘typically equal or exceed correlations between well-being and other psychological variables, such as social support.’ This is a massive assertion, comprehensively attested to by a large amount of evidence.”

A *Telegraph* article by Sean Thomas titled [Are Atheists Mentally Ill?](#) describes the vast amount of research supporting the physical and mental health benefits of theistic belief:

“A vast body of research, amassed over recent decades, shows that religious belief is physically and psychologically beneficial – to a remarkable degree.”

“In 2004, scholars at UCLA revealed that college students involved in religious activities are likely to have better mental health. In 2006, population researchers at the University of Texas discovered that the more often you go to church, the longer you live. In the same year researchers at Duke University in America discovered that religious people have stronger immune systems than the irreligious. They also established that churchgoers have lower blood pressure.”

“Meanwhile in 2009 a team of Harvard psychologists discovered that believers who checked into hospital with broken hips reported less depression, had shorter hospital stays, and could hobble further when they left hospital – as compared to their similarly crippled but heathen fellow-sufferers.”

“The list goes on. In the last few years scientists have revealed that believers, compared to non-believers, have better outcomes from breast cancer, coronary disease, mental illness, Aids, and rheumatoid arthritis. Believers even get better results from IVF. Likewise, believers also report greater levels of happiness, are less likely to commit suicide, and cope with stressful events much better.”

Could it be that Christian belief is good for you **because Christianity is true**? Please read my essay titled [The No-God Delusion](#) to explore this topic in more depth.

## Conclusion

The plentiful evidence for the God of the Bible is available, but fails to reach a broad audience for a variety of reasons:

- 1) It is often distorted as a result of commonplace, but fallacious reasoning.
- 2) The secular media and academia are motivated to disregard this evidence because of the psychological need to be free from the perceived burden of having to answer to a *higher moral authority* for one's actions. This is entirely consistent with the Biblical concept of humankind's rebellion from God.

New York University Professor of Philosophy, and leading atheist philosopher, Thomas Nagel admits to this widespread psychological motivation within academia:

“I want atheism to be true and am made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn't just that I don't believe in God and, naturally, hope that I'm right in my belief. It's that I hope there is no God! I don't want there to be a God; I don't want the universe to be like that... My guess is that this cosmic authority problem is not a rare condition and that it is responsible for much of the scientism and reductionism of our time. One of the tendencies it supports is the ludicrous overuse of evolutionary biology to explain everything about life, including everything about the human mind.”

Similarly, in 1997, the Harvard University geneticist Richard C. Lewontin admitted that a *cosmic authority problem* motivates many distortions of truth in favor of the materialist belief system (in which atheism is grounded):

“We take the side of science in spite of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, in spite of its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, in spite of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our a priori adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is an absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door.”