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Comments on a Debate: Does God Exist?

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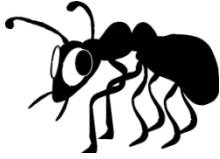
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About Ants Publications



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Check this box out on my website. It's intended to inform visitors of any new additions to the site and to keep you up-to-date on what's on the planning boards. It also keeps repeat visitors, who have surfed all the sections before, informed. Visitors can simply view any new additions. You can also subscribe to our website RSS Feed. 

A GRAND BEGINNING!

To celebrate the launching of my website I've posted my ebook *"What I Told My Son About the Bible: Things the*

Ants stands for (**A**)nswers (**N**)onsense (**T**)ruthfully and the "s" pluralize(**s**) and stands for repeatedly. Ken Koskinen is the founder of **Ants Publications** and this site is currently a vehicle to post his writings; but eventually others may also be able to contribute. Ken writes academic essays, books, poetry and some short comedy pieces. His writing is not well suited for certain individuals. He does **not** for example accept the teachings of **any** major world religion. There are many myths and teachings that are nonsense and he writes factual rebuttals. He exercises **the freedom of the press** but it isn't **his intention to offend others**. **Please do not read his material if you aren't open-minded.**

Ken primarily writes from a scientific mode of mind. This means his information processing leads with reason and observation but intuition and emotion assist. When he writes serious essays and books he uses the persona, "**Ken Koskinen**." When he writes poetry he's "**The Naked Psalmist**." When he writes comedy he takes on one of several personae such as "**Ken the Wildman**" or "**SureFoot Helms**."

People who want to discuss the issues and themes raised on this site are invited to log on to the **Ants FORUM**. It might take time to attract some traffic to the venue but "big things always grow from small beginnings." You can also post your opinions and/or questions in **Comments**.

All downloads are **free** of charge. The plan is to make all posted writings available to anyone who wants them. Even if some people are short of cash they can still learn from and enjoy them. Hopefully others will make **donations**. Keep in mind **Ants Publications** isn't a registered charity and therefore cannot send receipts for tax deduction purposes.



Clergy Doesn't Want You to Know." It's about 185 pages of entertaining and informative discussions between a scholarly Father "Dad" and his intellectually gifted son, an early teen named "Charlie." When Charlie asks Dad about the Bible the fun begins.

Dad informs him of the opposite point-of-view of the modern clergy. You will encounter scriptural contradictions, failed prophecies, historic and archaeological evidence that doesn't support the Bible. You will also learn how the clergy tries to make their religions more believable by taking verses out-of-context, ignoring modern science & reforming the data to conform to their ideas about the Bible.

In the process readers will also learn about how the Bible came into being. It's written from Dad's perceptive and he is a tenured professor, teaching Biblical studies from a rational and scientific perspective at "Forevermore College!" Down loaders be forewarned ... this ebook is a mind blower!

To stay abreast of new poetry, comedy & science articles: **Go To:** <http://antspub.com>



About the Arthur

I was born in Helsinki, Finland but immigrated with my family to Toronto, Canada when I was about 2 -1/3 years old. My Finnish given name is "Jarmo Olavi Koskinen" but I use the English nickname "Ken" Koskinen. I'm a naturalized Canadian and have lived most of my life in Ontario, Canada. I studied at Centennial & Niagara Colleges in Ontario but earned my BSc. at Ambassador College in Pasadena, California. I majored in psychology but also studied history and biblical subjects.

I love to write. As a writer my goals are to inform/educate, stimulate/challenge and inspire/entertain readers. I write serious pieces as well as some comedy. Over the last several years I have taken a great interest in science with an emphasis on physics & cosmology. I am currently writing my first science book, "The Big Vibe: Steps Towards a Theory of Everything." In this work I hope to add to the quilt of theoretical science. I do not currently plan to make it available on this site since I hope to publish with a scientific book publisher. However you can learn more about current unsolved scientific mysteries by reading my posted essays.

I enjoy working out with the 1/2" thick steel cable skipping rope I invented, "The Skip Walker/Jogger." I use it to skip walk; that is, I skip rope while walking for several miles. You can view my video of me skip walking. I've also written the lyrics to a light country/rock song "The Unemployment Line." I'm neither a musician nor a good singer but you can view me singing the song, without accompaniment. I hope somebody with some real talent, like Billy Ray Cyrus, contacts me and puts music to it and turns it into the next big hit! I've also invented a very good carpet cleaning detergent and a skin cream that helps to clear up blemishes and outbreaks. It is also a good topical dressing on burns. Both of these products are in the research and development stage.

I love nature, comedy, good food and beer. I also love to learn and enjoy the mystical awareness and feeling of being alive while exploring & experiencing life within "All That Is!" It is the "everything" in which we have our being!



Comments on a Debate: Does God Exist?

This paper contains my comments and feedback on a debate held on April 4, 2009 at Biola University located in the southern Californian community of La Mirada. Biola is a private Christian university and its educational efforts have roots going back over 100 years. The university and its programs are accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges and numerous other organizations. The debate was captioned “*Does God Exist?*” and the debaters were William Lane Craig and Christopher Hitchens. To understand this essay you do *not* have to have pre-viewed the 2 hour plus length video of the debate. However it is recommended & here is the main link to the entire video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4KBx4vvlbZ8&feature=related> You will also find the video has been cut up into viewable snippets and posted on YouTube.



Since 1994 Dr. William Lane Craig (his initials “WLC” will be used in this essay) has been Research Professor of Philosophy at Talbot School of Theology which is a school within Biola University. He has authored or edited over 30 pro-biblical and Christian books, written or contributed to numerous articles and has had several debates with people of other & differing persuasions. One of his books was recommended during introduction to the debate. It is: “*Reasonable Faith*”. 3rd ed. rev. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2008, 415pp. To read more about him visit this website:

http://www.reasonablefaith.org/site/PageServer?pagename=publications_main



Christopher Hitchens (his initials “CH” will be used in this essay) is a writer, editor, debater and social and historical commentator. He has been a columnist and literary critic at Vanity Fair, Slate, The Atlantic, World Affairs, The Nation, Free Inquiry and a variety of other media outlets. He was named one of the world's "Top 100 Public Intellectuals" by *Foreign Policy* and Britain's *Prospect*. He is an atheist and an outspoken critic of religions including Christianity. He has appeared regularly on the media making his vivid and

thought-provoking comments. He is known for his off-the-cuff cutting one-liners. Unfortunately he is currently (May 2011) battling throat cancer. I hope his treatments are successful and that his cancer goes into remission. One of his books was recommended during introduction to the debate. It is: “*god is not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything.*” Twelve/Hachette Book Group USA/Warner Books, 2007. To read more about him visit this website: <http://www.dailyhitchens.com/>

The Preamble & Audience

The public commentary during the preamble to the debate was very much like that to a championship boxing or MMA match. People were excited and couldn't wait for the intellectual heavy weights to start throwing words. This was a fairly large press event, of special interest to the Evangelical Christian community. To the students in the Biola Apologetics program it was watching a live event where a Christian apologist was defending the basics of the faith once

delivered against a convicted atheist. It should be clarified that an apologist is not someone who says they are sorry for a wrong act. In this context it means someone who defends their position with reason and evidence. The almost 3,000 people who had assembled in the converted basketball court an estimated 2/3's of them were Evangelical Christians and hence admittedly pro-WLC. It included many Biola students, graduates, faculty, and church members. Individuals from the atheistic & agnostic community also attended and some wore Tee shirts with printed slogans in support of CH. There were overflow video venues in other campus locations and elsewhere. People watched the debate in some 30 states and 4 different countries.

The Purpose of this Essay

This essay was written for open- minded, thinking-type readers. It is just like the debate's topic, intended to be a philosophical work based on reason, logic and evidence. This essay is *not* about faith! Anyone can believe whatever they like but a belief is a creative act of the mind where one's mind fills in the blanks between things known and unknown. If you believe something perhaps it is true but you can't really know it before there is a preponderance of the evidence or evidence beyond a reasonable doubt. The only way to find out is to look at all the available evidence and its interpretations. Sometimes there isn't enough available information to make a determination and strangely some people continue to believe things even when the known evidence renders their conclusions impossible. In any case *this essay is not intended for religious faith-oriented readers!* There is a lot of other literature such readers would enjoy & should prefer over this essay. *I've clearly given fair warning to such readers against reading on!*

I didn't attend the live debate. I've merely summarized and paraphrased statements and topics from an on-line YouTube video of the debate, captioned "*Does God Exist?*" I viewed it several times and my essay is not about anything else. I have only selected some of the material that interests me for commentary purposes. Some of my criticism/questions may well have been addressed or answered within other forms/sources by both or either debater(s). However as of the time of this writing, I haven't read a single book written by either author. I have made an effort to be fair but I also have to admit to a bias that is usually pro-CH. The reasons for this will become apparent from my comments.

The debate included the presentation of prepared comments and material by both debaters. These comments were well thought out but during the rebuttals these were on-the-spot; as were the later answers to questions from the audience. When I critique these impromptu statements I acknowledge I have the advantage of preparation. Since I wasn't one of the debaters I didn't have to think on-the-fly. It isn't my purpose to defame either debater by using this edge. Mainly, I want people to think about what was said in the debate, read my comments and then come to their own conclusions.

I have not strictly presented information in the order of its occurrence in the debate but have chosen to use more of a topical presentation. Some points & their challenges were repeated in the debate and over time new information was added to the same topic. I've taken the liberty to paraphrase and summarize what was said and occasionally added some complimentary information for the sake of coherence and simplicity. You should be aware my summaries are far from complete and are at times admittedly biased. In other words I have to admit at times I ignored many comments made in the debate and the only way to hear everything said is to listen to the entire video tape.

I have also used a color code in type. **Green** type is used for captions. **Black** is used for general information and occasionally for emphasis in other color type sections. **Red** type is used for the

paraphrased & summarized debate material and *blue* type is used for my comments. *Purple* type is used throughout for emphasis.

A Fuzzy Beginning

In the early part of the video mention was made about a printed debate program that was handed out to the live audience. Unfortunately I don't have access to it and so I don't know what it says. However, it is surprising how many different debate defining statements were contained in the early part of the video. Firstly recall the caption of the debate is: *"Does God Exist?"* Dr. Craig J. Hazen, Director of the Master of Arts Christian Apologetics program at Biola University acted as the event's host, and made the introductory comments. He said the idea for the debate had originated among Biola Associated Students. The President of Biola Associated Students, Eric Weaver was asked to come up and make some comments. Weaver said he and his student colleague, Mark Heath, came up with the idea to put on a block buster debate about the biggest question of all: *"Is it reasonable to believe God exists?"* Later and/or earlier for that matter, Dr. Hazen didn't comment on or clarify the purpose of the debate. However he shared some humor and put out a commercial announcement for the Apologetics program taught at Biola.

Hugh Hewitt J.D. is a law professor at Chapman Law School and a broadcast journalist of a nationally syndicated radio show heard in over 120 cities in the U.S.A. He was the moderator of the debate. In his opening comments he implied the recent rise of atheists like Mr. Hitchens, Richard Dawkins & others, have put the question *"Whether or not God exists & whether or not Jesus Christ is his Son?"* into the public limelight. He said it was time for WLC to enter into that conversation in as persuasive and winsome manner as possible.

WLC in his opening statements said he was going to defend two basic contentions (1) there is no good argument that atheism is true (2) there are good arguments that theism is true. He also stated the circumscribed limits to the debate didn't include the social impact of religion, Old Testament ethics or biblical inerrancy. He said, *"The subject of tonight's debate is the existence of God."*

Comments: No Verbally Expressed Specific Purpose Statement

The early introductory period to the debate lacked a verbally expressed, specific purpose statement. The question I asked is what were they going to debate? Was it simply does God exist? Was it: is it reasonable to *believe* God exists? Did it also include *whether Jesus Christ is God's son?* One couldn't tell from what was verbally presented in the beginning sections of the video. However, it was clear that "god" was included in some sense in the subject. The term "god" is one people think they understand but has great variations in meaning. It means different things in various religions and to people in general. Were they supposed to debate whether an anthropomorphic god exists; meaning a god with human like appearance and shape? Is "god" an essence, an idea or a supernatural engineer who walked away after setting the universe in motion? "Or is god a loving being who plans to directly intervene in human affairs by sending Jesus Christ back as a supernatural being to rule the world? Is god an ancient astronaut from a more advanced planet who sprinkled primitive life forms on earth and then left? Is god a plurality of beings? Was the agreed upon god of the debate the one or ones expressed in the literature of the Bible? I could go on and on. It was a very fuzzy start to a so-called block buster debate organized by the staff of a creditable university.

According to WLC his intention was to advance on the philosophical or reason-oriented front but his unproven assumptions were seeded early into the discussion. As the debate progressed it appears from comments made from both participants, they were debating the existence of the god of the Bible. CH challenged the thinking on several points. In any case there isn't any reason

to assume the superiority of WLC's concept of god. In fact, as we will see, he leaned on a very questionable interpretation of Genesis to bolster one of his arguments and the Bible also crept into the discussion. At least the stage was gradually set for some kind of debate about god but its purpose wasn't crystal clear. To re-cap: was the debate about whether you can *prove* god exists? Or was it about whether it is reasonable to *believe* god exists?

Positive Atheism

WLC claimed that atheists and CH in particular had to prove atheism is the "true worldview." In other words if atheism is true CH had to prove that god doesn't exist. He called this "positive atheism." Over the course of the debate he repeatedly criticized CH for not providing any such proofs. At one point CH claimed that he didn't need to disprove god's existence any more than he needed to disprove the existence of Santa Claus or the Tooth Fairy. In other words he didn't have to prove a-Santa Claus-ism and a-Tooth Fairy-ism. He *implied* the responsibility of proof lays with the claimers i.e. theists. CH said he is an atheist because the evidence/arguments theists present isn't convincing. He bolstered this with this saying: "extraordinary claims require extraordinary proof." In his mind and that of other atheists there are better naturalistic explanations for the phenomena theists present as evidence. They simply disagreed.

Comments: On Positive Atheism

I think CH is correct about the "positive atheism." At the turn of the 20th century the reality of atoms and molecules were being questioned and debated by scientists. They couldn't be seen and hadn't been detected and many scientists doubted they exist. The atomists had to show proof for their existence. Albert Einstein was first to provide convincing evidence/argument for their existence in his study of Brownian motion. Dust particles suspended in liquids, for example, are seen moving about in tiny random jerky motions. No one could explain why the particles moved like that. Einstein showed they were being suddenly and repeatedly bombarded by atoms/molecules in the liquid. Today, there are so many proofs for the existence of atoms/molecules that practically no educated person is an anti-atomist.

Theists are in a similar situation. They have to tell us what "god" is and then show convincing evidence/argument for it's/her/his existence. Atheists do not need to prove god doesn't exist anymore than anti-atomists needed to prove atoms didn't exist. Such a request amounts to being asked to prove a negative; that is, something that doesn't exist or something that didn't happen. The later can be negated by time and location discrepancies. If one can prove they weren't at the scene of the crime, for example, they can't be held directly responsible. The only possible avenue to foul play is they may have ordered, influenced and/or initiated the actions that led to others acting out of the crime. This is what happens in cases of gang/crime bosses ordering "hits" on enemies or when one hires a hit man. Nevertheless, even if one cannot prove their whereabouts, it is the responsibility of law enforcement personnel or investigators to prove the positive case of placing a suspect at the crime scene.

Negatives of the earlier sort are even more pertinent to our discussion. They are not only more difficult but impossible since these lack direct evidence. In other words, how can you directly prove something that doesn't exist? If god doesn't exist, there can't be any evidence. One thing you can do is to advance other arguments/explanations to those advanced by theists. This is what atheists primarily do and CH pointed this out. In other words atheists do not need the god hypothesis as the system or phenomena in question can be shown to work via natural factors. To them the claim for a supernatural engineer is superlative or isn't needed to explain our universe. So-called "positive atheism" is based on the false premise of thinking one must or should prove a negative. The existence of god does not need to be negated; it needs to be proven. *The shoe is really on the other foot.*

Opening Themes

During his opening statements WLC argued convincingly the universe is finite. He included ideas from science and mathematical reasoning. If you, for example, subtract infinity from infinity the answer is absurd. The upshot of it is that infinity is absurd and doesn't exist in reality and therefore the universe must have had a beginning. WLC presented 5 arguments for god's existence. I will explain them shortly but they are: (1) The Cosmological Argument (2) The Teleological Argument (3) The Morality Argument (4) The Resurrection of Jesus (5) The Immediate Experience of God.

CH in his opening comments claimed the apologists who argue for god's existence fall into two categories: (1) pre-suppositional-ists who accept the existence of god on faith and only endeavor to rationally understand god's will &/or labors in the world (2) evidential-ists are believers like WLC; they endeavor to find evidence for their faith. In any case it amounts to a blend of faith and evidence and CH went on to show the distinction between the types is arbitrary. To the theists of all sorts faith is always at the forefront. CH even quoted from WLC's book (presumably *“Reasonable Faith”*): *“Should a conflict arise between the witness of the Holy Spirit to the fundamental truth of the Christian faith and beliefs based on argument and evidence, then it is the former that must take precedent over the later.”* It showed that WLC during any conflict between faith i.e. the Holy Spirit and evidence via reason/observation, faith must be given preference. WLC didn't reply.

CH briefly mentioned William Paley's 19th century Watchmaker argument. If one finds a watch on a beach its mechanisms, advanced structure & function require there had been a watchmaker. Since things in our universe are also incredibly complex and organized it requires a designer, or so goes the argument. This had been commonly asserted up and into the 20th century but we weren't deliberately designed like watches. CH showed the nature of arguments for god's existence has changed over time in step with progress in scientific thinking.

CH specifically claimed that life forms that had evolved over long periods of time aren't like human designed mechanisms or machines. However true believers sometimes argue from design and claim the products of evolution are also designed. CH concluded that if one claims everything including evolution, which isn't a design, is part of a divine design then they are having it both ways. The argument is weakly constructed since it is not falsifiable. It is really an uncontested premise of faith and therefore not a valid philosophical argument. It is one in which there isn't any way for the opposition to win. It is a little bit like being challenged to play one-on-one basketball and when you shoot at the opponents hoop there's a board on it so the ball can't go through the net. WLC didn't comment.

CH pointed out even if theists' could prove a deity exists, they still had their work cut out for them to prove she/he/it cared which church we attend, or if we attended one at all. In short how could you prove this god cared anything for humanity? CH illustrated the absurdity of various theist/Christian beliefs such as us having to accept that god suspends natural law in cases of so-called miracles. The obvious question is why in one case and not in thousands or millions of other similar ones? He went on to show the absurdity of the big picture Christianity presents. Here, we are asked to imagine a god who created the universe, and eventually human beings while letting time, chance and circumstance play out its sometimes evil course. Homo sapiens have been around for some 100,000 to 250,000 years but about 16,000 years ago, humans just barely escaped extinction during a then major global warming crisis. Luckily a remnant of some 30 to 40 thousand made it out of Africa into the northern cooler climates. We are asked to accept that Heaven watched on indifferently during this crisis and over the millions of previous years when & while 99% of all species that have ever existed went extinct. Then about 2,000 years ago we are

asked to accept god finally made a move and sent Jesus Christ into the world. It was not to aid physical life forms but to save human souls from their sins that would otherwise condemn them to Hell. Of course none of this so-called soul saving can be reasonably ascertained.

WLC countered by saying only 2% of humans existed before the time of Jesus. The Roman Empire was up and running with its central government, interconnected road ways, higher education, urban centers, large armies etc. There was lots of trade going on and people moved more or less safely about the huge united empire. People learned Latin & Greek and shared information about their cultures and religions. He concluded it was the ideal time for the Savior's arrival and for the later propagation of Christianity. He also at one point even read from the New Testament; citing Paul's speech, as he stood in the Areopagus, to some citizens of Athens (Acts 17:22- 34). WLC used the text to show how everyone, even those of the pre-Christian era, would in "the fullness of times" have a chance at salvation according to one's prior awareness of the revelation of god.

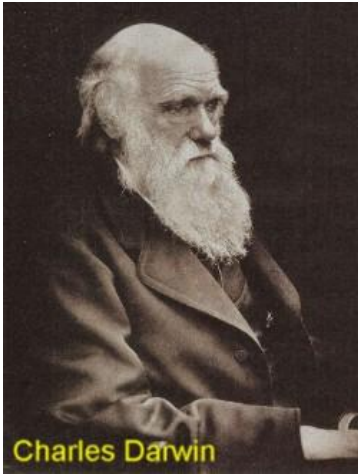
Some of what WLC said by quoting Act 17 and his other and later comments were in response to CH's statement that there were and are still vast numbers of people who have never heard the Christian message. Some people also have been reached by others who WLC doesn't think are real Christians.

The passages in Act 17:31 merely speak of an appointed day on which the resurrected Jesus Christ will judge the world in righteousness. It doesn't contain any of the details WLC suggested. It doesn't say anything about when it will occur and what the specific criteria of judgment will be, or who was going to be judged per sec. It certainly does *not* say anything about resurrecting all of the dead 2%ers to this judgment. WLC was trying to show the god he argued for is a good and fair chap after all and therefore wanted to take the sting out of CH's historic and rational criticism. Some of what he said could have been gleamed from the general Jewish belief that at the end of the world there would be a resurrection of all of the dead to the judgment but he didn't cite this and neither does Acts 17. WLC's comments were based on his religious beliefs about the uncertain future. At this point the philosophical discussion was in danger of becoming a Bible study. **CH didn't reply.**

Recall CH earlier quoted from WLC's book (presumably) "Reasonable Faith". It is clear that WLC would when pushed lean on his faith even when and if against all evidence. This isn't a surprise, but such stances shouldn't appear in a philosophical debate that is supposedly based on reason, logic and evidence.

Comments: On the Genesis

WLC's comments about the universe having had a beginning in time are fair enough but his contention that infinity of anything can't exist and therefore doesn't exist is questionable. After all he argues his god is an infinite being and herein sits a logical contradiction. *What struck me is WLC does accept a form of evolution of life that includes the intelligent design of god. He objects to evolution of the godless sort on the grounds that it is incredibly improbable and cited some academics and their enormously improbable calculations of 10 sign posts on the road of evolution. If it happened as the Neo-Darwinists claim then WLC said it was a miracle and supports the actions of god. The audience laughed and even CH smiled! He made it clear it was possible to be a Christian and accept a gradual appearance of life over a long period of time.* The problem is the processes of how life arose and evolved is an incomplete story. When we more fully understand the dynamics of these processes the improbabilities expressed will drop like stones. Initial calculations of how the sun shines showed it should have burnt out a long time ago. We didn't understand the process of nuclear fusion and hence the early calculations were



flawed. *Just because some people publish assumptive statistics doesn't mean they are conclusive.*

WLC went on to cite St. Augustine's commentary on Genesis written in AD 300's, to show the days in Genesis need not be taken literally. The idea is God had made the world with certain potencies that would unfold over time. WLC made a point to say Augustine's interpretation was written about 1500 years before Darwin! His main point is to say the additional time cited was not just a response to the advance of modern science as many assert. He didn't elaborate, but one wonders how he got to this conclusion.

Although it is true St. Augustine was open to a spiritual or symbolic interpretation of the days in Genesis in his commentary but in his "The City of God" he also wrote:

Let us, then, omit the conjectures of men who know not what they say, when they speak of the nature and origin of the human race. For some hold the same opinion regarding men that they hold regarding the world itself that they have always been... They are deceived, too, by those highly mendacious documents which profess to give the history of many thousand years, though, reckoning by the sacred writings, we find that not 6000 years have yet passed.

— Augustine, [Of the Falseness of the History Which Allots Many Thousand Years to the World's Past](#), *The City of God*, Book 12: Chapt. 10 [419].

The fact is, in St. Augustine's day the information that could be gleaned from the biblical writings would have implied something closer to 4,000 than to 6,000 years. In the 17th century the Irish Anglican Archbishop Ussher used the genealogy in Genesis and some other sources and placed the creation on Oct. 23, 4004 B.C. (adjusted Julian calendar). One can argue some details such as the translation of the calendar date and some of his data but Genesis doesn't support a creation date of the Earth/universe to anything much earlier. In any case, this is splitting hairs since neither ball park figure is close to Darwin's much longer time-line. He could see evidence of gradual changes over many millions of years but his vision was much shorter than that of modern scientific reckoning. In other words scientists since his time have extended back the dates of various milestones such as: the origin of the earth, the appearance of life and points along its gradual evolution, by many orders of magnitude. Much of this was achieved by newly discovered high tech methods such as radiometric dating. The added time has been a welcome addition that aided the advancement of Neo-Darwinism.



To the later Protestants St. Augustine's ideas were largely ignored or thought to belong amongst the rest of the Catholic apostasy. In any case, it is science & not St. Augustine that primarily pushed many modern clerics and writers to dissect and re-interpret the accounts in

Genesis. It is evidence of a breach in the damn of origins that had held back the waters for centuries. The bombardment that caused the demise of the old world's biblical model of creation was fired mainly by scientific theory and advancement but was also aided by modern era scholarly biblical textual criticism. *CH had commented that the early information framing schemes such as the biblical pattern was fine for its day but it was clearly time to move on according to new discoveries.*

The problem with all of the modern meddling with Genesis is the text and other biblical references do not allow these “stretched time-line” interpretations. The creation stories are an attempt to describe the arrival of the common global ecosystem (not the ones of much earlier times i.e. long before the arrival of Homo sapiens) with its varied types of flora & fauna. In fact insects, which were obviously well known in antiquity, are not given a *specific mention* and they are the second most abundant forms of life. Some might say they are included amongst the “creeping thing and beasts of the earth” (Gen. 1:24) but there’s a huge difference between mammals, for example, and insects. Many insects fly and they are not birds. It also doesn’t *specifically mention* microbes (which weren’t known until the 19th century AD) and they are the most abundant and varied of life forms.

The omission of microbial life isn’t too surprising since the biblical literature has never mentioned anything that could be said to have been unknown and later confirmed by scientific discovery. In fact we see impossible and scientifically absurd ideas clearly assumed in biblical texts, such as; the Earth doesn’t move, that during Joshua’s conquest of Canaan the Sun & Moon stood still & there was a worldwide flood in Noah’s time (download my free essays: “*The Day the Sun & Moon Stood Still*” and “*Rainbows & other Catastrophes*” via <http://antspub.com>).



CH pointed out how the early church’s cosmology was clearly wrong in its acceptance of the Ptolemaic or Geocentric theory. The clergy, in that period, even used scripture to help bolster the absurd idea the earth was the center of the universe. The earth didn’t move and that was clear

from common everyday appearances and confirmed by scriptures such as Psalms 93:1, 96:10 & 119:90. The new Copernican model published in 1543 requires earth has a double motion i.e. it orbits about the sun as it revolves on its axis. Some within the clergy reasoned it had to be wrong but anyone who promoted the Copernican hypothesis as opposed to the geocentric model via divine fiat could be placed under examination by the dreaded Inquisition.



On February 17th 1600 the Holy Inquisitors succeeded in having a theoretical heretic burned while alive at the stake. He was a former monk named Giordano Bruno who had claimed that the universe was infinite and the hundreds of visible stars were suns and had unseen orbiting planets. This was also against church doctrine in that it raised many disturbing questions about the universal centrality of humans on earth. If there were other earths, did that mean Jesus had to go to those planets and be crucified over and over again? Bruno’s execution showed the church was serious in dealing with those who questioned its authority. The protestant reformation was in swing and they didn’t want any

more complications. Unfortunately it led to Galileo Galilei's forced recantation of the Copernican model and his heartless house arrest that began in 1634 and continued until his death in 1642.

The Book of Genesis

Then there are many problems when you analyze activities cited on specific creation days in Genesis 1. The account of these days is full of confusing concepts. On the first day we are told that light was created to divide day from night. Okay but there isn't any mention of the source of light. We know that light is a radiation that stems from an electromagnetically active source such as a star or even reflected via a body like a planet or moon. On earth the reason there is a day and night is due to the Sun shining while our planet rotates on its axis. These points are important to keep in mind when we get to the fourth day.

On the second day there is a discussion of the creation of a firmament in the midst of the waters that divides waters from waters. This is another very unclear & vague statement but we are told "the firmament" is called Heaven. On the third day land appeared and god made the grass, herbs and trees. *Never mind the fossil record; it shows trees appeared long before grasses.*

On the fourth day he made lights in the firmament to divide the day from the night. However, the light created on the first day supposedly did the same thing i.e. divide the day from the night. Why the repetition? Then it gets even more confusing since the text goes on to say god made two great lights; one is to rule the day and the other to rule the night. Also he made the stars. We know our Sun which supposedly is the body that rules the day is a star. It is a mid-aged main sequence star i.e. its nuclear fuel is hydrogen. The stars in our universe were most certainly *not* all created at the same time. We know there are billions of stars that are of differing ages compared to the Sun. Some are much older and others are younger. In some cases the difference in comparative ages of stars is up into the billions of years. Further the Moon, supposedly the body that rules the night, does not always appear in the night sky and can sometimes be seen in daylight. Of course the plants that appeared on the third day could not have existed very long without and before sunlight appeared. It means, you cannot interject a long period of time between the third and fourth day (Gen. 1:11–19).

It gets even more interesting but just as confusing as on the fifth day an abundance of living creatures was created to inhabit the waters. *The fossil records shows evidence of sea life long before the appearance of land plants/vegetation but here the order is reversed.* On this same day birds were created *and this is further at odds with the fossil record; they appeared much later than early sea life.* On the sixth day humans were created in the image of the plurality of beings known as "Elohim," translated as "God" [i.e. "let us make man in Our image (Gen. 1:26)]. The problems continue as humans and every beast, bird and things that creeps on earth was given every green herb for food (Gen. 1:29, 30). *Some green plants, such as hemlock, are poisonous. The perfectly edible parts of many plants aren't green. Also most people are omnivores and some animals are carnivores! Many microbes and insects also don't eat plants of any color or kind.*

No doubt, there are some who claim to be able to interpret all of this so it reconciles. It can't be done without reading some vane suppositions into the irrational text. It is clearly a mixed muddle of general imaginings pasted together by pre-scientific minds whose purpose was to say their god created everything. It stands beside dozens of other creation myths from different times and found all around the world. There isn't anything that proves any one is much better than another. Yet in all of this nonsense, the days of Genesis 1 are presented like those we experience; each has an evening and a morning. Even in the book of Exodus' account of the Ten Commandments, the literal days of the creation are preserved. On the commandment to rest on the Sabbath day, it says: "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them,

and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. (Exodus 20:11).

Further, in any New Testament (NT) reference to the creation or to Adam and/or Eve no attempt is made to change the common meaning. There is, for example, the genealogy of Jesus in Luke which literally traces Jesus' ancestry back to Adam (Luke 4:23 – 38). There isn't anything to suggest this isn't to be understood as it's written and the time-line implied doesn't jell at all with arrival of Homo sapiens according to modern evolutionary theory. I could go on, but in short there isn't a single NT stretched time-line account. All of them follow the lead of the Old Testament sources and are presented at face value. Any modern attempt to re-interpret Genesis with a longer time-line is futile.

There are other difficulties. Genesis really contains two creation accounts. Firstly in Genesis 1 we have the 7 day creation account by "Elohim," that we just looked at. After this account the writer/editor of Genesis retells the creation story. Scholars refer to such redundant retellings as dualities and these often include contradictory details. Here are the contradictions in the second or Garden of Eden creation account:

(1) The creator is now Yahweh-Elohim i.e. translated as "Lord God" who acts as a singular being & even speaks to created beings (Gen 2:16-18; Gen. 3:9-19). In chapter 3 the term Elohim by itself is reintroduced but only used in the account of the serpent taking to Eve (Gen. 3:1- 5).

(2) The creation is not over 7 days but rather the day of creation (Gen. 2:4).

(3) The order of creation events in Gen. 2 does not match those in Gen. 1. In Gen 1:26-28 a plurality of human beings male and female were created but after plants and animals. However Adam is created before plants & animals (Gen. 2:5-8). Adam even names the animals before Eve arrives & her creation was an after-thought. She is a being that the Lord God forgot to initially create.



(4) This last point doesn't show a contraction between Genesis 1 & 2. It shows another kind of contradiction, one related to the nature of god. In Gen 2 *the serpent tells the truth and god lies*. God told Eve if she eats or *even touches* the fruit she will die. The serpent tells Eve you will not die but in that day your eyes will be opened. You will be like God

knowing good & evil. Turns out the human couple didn't die and their eyes were opened. However the serpent was punished as were Adam & Eve yet Yahweh Elohim created the forbidden fruit to be appealing and therefore tempting. Yet Eve is guilty of tempting Adam by offering the fruit to him after she ate it. Go figure!

All of this is difficult to believe but it is clear that a literal interpretation of the contradictory accounts simply can't work. This causes some people to unconsciously blend or assume the two accounts are one and ignore or rationalize the differences. The NT authors also either didn't see the two accounts or didn't comment on it, but they accepted *Genesis 1 & 2 as the unified stories of creation*. In the NT Jesus used Adam & Eve as the prime example to sanctify the institution of marriage (Gen. 2:24; Mat. 19:2-12; Mk. 10:2-12). All of this fails or comes into question when you slice and dice and/or stretch the days of creation in Genesis. The reason is if evolutionary theory is correct or some longer time-line facsimile of it; such as, any deistic version of what is now called Intelligent Design, then Adam and Eve as the original couple can't be literally true. There couldn't have been only *one* original pair.

In either the literal stretched time-line or a simpler symbolic interpretation of Genesis the conclusion is the same. It is as CH pointed out in other contexts, Christianity is a mythical religion. Given the problems, people felt the need to somehow stretch the days in Genesis 1. They made them appear to be ages or invented gaps of time between the days in order to make the text more compatible with scientific understanding. The text could also be said to be symbolic and hence mythical. If you straight out say all verses in the creation tales are symbolic at least you cut through the chase. Then there isn't any need to mess with the days. You are accepting the Genesis origin accounts are myths and of course, every myth *is a fiction*. Rationally, it cannot be anything else!

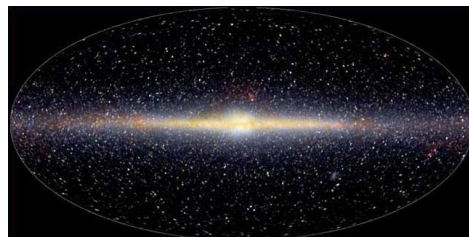
The Cosmological Argument

WLC presented his Cosmological Argument. Here he relied on the Big Bang model which is the current leading scientific genesis theory. The theory claims our universe had a beginning and it started out from a cosmic singularity. The idea is if this is so, our universe is a case of something that came from nothing or as expressed in Latin "ex-nihilo." WLC claimed this would require a supernatural creator operating outside of space/time.

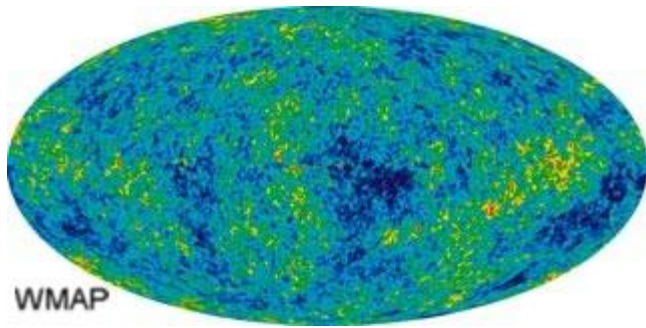
CH said modern cosmology is still in its infancy and hence caution needs to be exercised when drawing from it. We almost know nothing about what we don't know about the beginning. He asked whether god had used pre-existing material to build our universe or did he simply will it? He asked, "Who designed the designer?" He then pointed out this leads to an infinite regress; as the same question can be continually repeated. He also asked why there were so many shooting stars and exploding ones. He pointed out it was a wasteful and terrible outcome that leads to nothing. He also said that nothing is coming to our total universe as it keeps expanding at an increasing rate. The stars will burn out and the universe will undergo a heat death and all life will cease. He also pointed out that all known planets other than earth are either too hot or cold to support life. In short his examples show our universe doesn't look like it had been created by an all-intelligent, divine maker.

Comments: On the Cosmological Argument

WLC went to great lengths in trying to prove his god is uncaused, time- and space-less, non-material, has a personal mind and is all powerful. It is nonsensical to think about something that is outside of space/time, since we don't know what such a thing is or even could be. The only minds we know exist are in space/time such as those of you and me. Further as CH asked, does WLC's assertion mean the creator used something to create space/time and the things within it? If so what?



Any philosophical exploration of the ultimate genesis we end up with absurdities of some sort. When we apply the concept of causality to origins we wind up with an infinite regress. There could never be a so-called first cause of a first effect since such an argument also regresses to no end. Also, if we want to avoid the ex-nihilo problem then we must assume something is/was eternal. Or we can say that nothing is infinite but if so nothing must be something. This follows since infinity is a quality of something. We have to cut WLC a break on this one but he shouldn't



be given a preferred bye. There isn't anything he said that necessitates his anthropomorphic biblical god exists inside or outside of space/time or both, although the existence of an infinite *something* stands on solid philosophical ground.

It is still not clear whether our universe is finite or infinite in extent. The oldest thing that we have thus far detected is the light of the cosmic microwave background (CMB), such as via the WMAP satellite and others. This stems from the very early universe when light firstly separated from other particles in the primordial clogged up cloud of hot particles. So far physicists studying the CMB have determined our universe has a flat geometry suggesting it will expand forever.

However we have yet to be able to determine its overall shape and size. If it is finite, one theory claims our universe should have an overall donut-like or torus shape or topology. If the size of the torus-shaped universe were *under 100 times* the size of our observational horizon, the size of the universe could in principle be measurable. Light traveling within this limit would have had enough time to have made it around the torus and interacted. It would have formed a tell-tale image or signature on the CMB that we could detect. However the closer the size is to that upper limit the weaker the signature would be.

If the size of the universe hovers within about 10% of the upper limit the expected images could be too weak to detect with our current technology. If its size is greater than the limit and that includes infinite in extent, there couldn't be any such signature. So far we have *not* been able to discern such a signature in the CMB. Therefore the size of the universe must be at least 90% of (or greater) than the aforementioned limit. With more precise detectors, perhaps we might be able to discern the signature and if so we could conclude the size of our universe is finite. This could even allow us to do an estimated measurement of the universe's size. If not, it would be larger than the limit (or even infinite in extent) and the CMB could not be used to estimate any such measurement.

There are other competitive scenarios about the universe's shape and hence possible size that also hinge on detecting signatures on the CMB. One study is looking at a curious unaccounted for flow of clusters of galaxies moving in the same direction called dark flow. The idea is there might be some huge mass attracting these clusters. They are trying to determine what it is and it might shed light on the size and shape of our locality. These studies are in progress and will also weigh in on whether the universe is finite or infinite in extent, what its shape might be and more. In the meantime these questions remain unanswered.

In any case, the scientific evidence, as WLC pointed out, has accumulated and points to our universe having had a genesis or beginning in time. This evidence has been framed via the big bang theory and this is what WLC mainly relied on for his major arguments. His time was limited and he didn't explain the theory in any detail so here is a short expression of its modern and most general version.

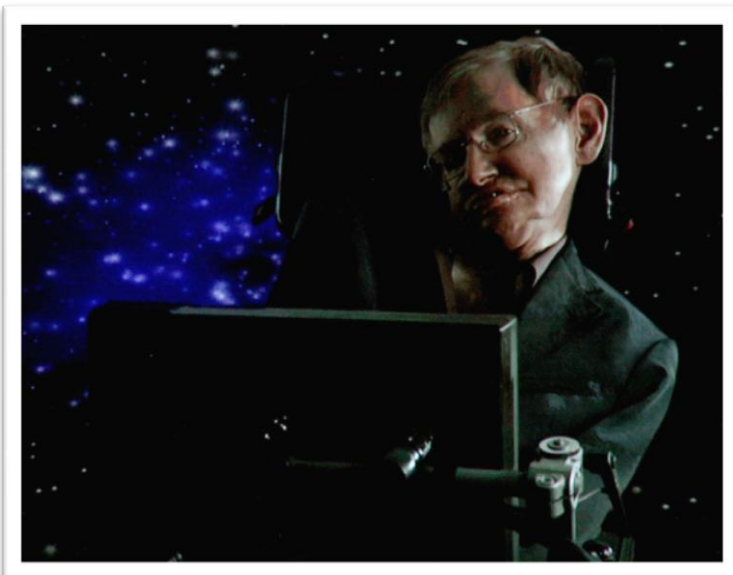
The big bang hinges on the initial cosmic singularity. Nothing, no space/time or mass/energy preceded it. Mysteriously the big bang emerged out of the cosmic singularity. The term *big bang* is a misnomer since it depicts an explosion in space/time. The event was more of a rapid creation and expansion of space/time and mass/energy that later became matter and the familiar forces. The micro-seconds immediately after the *big bang* are referred to as the *quantum gravity era*. It's a time when temperatures were unimaginably hot and all of the forces were unified in a

superforce. As the universe expanded and cooled to about 10^{32} Kelvin (this is 10 followed by 32 zeros degrees above absolute zero, an incredibly hot temperature) the *superforce* split into gravity & grand unified force i.e. the strong nuclear combined with the electroweak force. During the *inflationary epoch* (before the universe was an even a mere 10^{-35} seconds old) there was an ultra-short period of blazing expansion called inflation. It is said the universe expanded by a factor of 10^{50} which is an incredible increase in volume in less than a blink of an eye. At its end, the strong nuclear force broke off and left the electroweak force. Finally as the temperature dropped further the electroweak force broke up into the electromagnetic and the weak nuclear force. The matter building particles were also frozen out in the process and thus we have them and the four separate known forces.

In the early 20th century after Hubble announced the universe was expanding the Jesuit priest and astronomer Georges Lemaitre developed the early theory. He claimed that had to have been a primeval atom that exploded. However over time the big bang theory has been patched up and/or amended to accommodate our growing number of observations/detections. In the later 1960's Stephen Hawking determined there had to have been a cosmic singularity, a point with infinite density/energy and infinite space/time curvature, at the beginning. This replaced Lemaitre's primeval atom but introduced other problems that we will see shortly. Around 1982 Alan Guth an MIT physicist/cosmologist introduced inflation into the big bang theory. It was needed to explain the large scale uniformity that we see in every direction. Dark energy was included in the early 1990's in the wake of studies of Type 1a supernovae. Researchers had expected to see evidence that the universe's rate of expansion was slowing down. Instead they were dumbfounded to find out it has been and currently is accelerating. No one had predicted dark energy; the scientific community was blindsided and were completely surprised. I will explain more about these discoveries &/or theoretical additions momentarily.

Any cosmological origins theory must account for some major discoveries. There are several but five of them are: (1) The universe is about 14 billion years old and the further back we look the smaller it was. It appears to have been expanding ever since its genesis. (2) The light elements (hydrogen to helium) were synthesized during an early very hot phase of the universe. There is a good match between theory and our detections. (3) The universe's rate of expansion started accelerating at about the 5 billion year mark due to what has been dubbed "dark energy." (4) The universe looks much the same in every direction. It is said to be isotropic and homogeneous on the large scale and this is evident via telescopic observations and in studies of the cosmic microwave background (CMB). It stems from the photon radiation that firstly disconnected from

the primordial fireball. It is estimated this occurred about 380,000 years after the beginning. (5) Today's cosmic microwave background is remarkably uniform in its average temperature (2.725° Kelvin) but also contains tiny cooler spots called antistrophes. These were early density variations that acted as seeds which over time grew to become the universe's galaxies and clusters of galaxies.



The big bang theory is compatible with these & other points. However it suffers from *the singularity problem*. Recall a singularity is a point of infinite density and infinite space/time curvature or essentially or practically a non-volume of space/time.

In 1965 Roger Penrose, used general relativity to develop the first theoretically convincingly work that showed they exist at the core of black holes. In the late 1960's Stephen Hawking extended Penrose's work by predicting the cosmic singularity at the big bang. It was based on an assumption of perfect symmetry and Einstein's general theory of relativity. It has haunted the big bang and other cosmological origin theories ever since. It is something we simply don't understand since the known laws of physics breakdown at singularities. Further space/time proceeds from the singularity and that means nothing preceded it or there wasn't anything prior to the singularity. This is the main reason why WLC and the physicists/writers he cited claim the universe originated out of nothing. It also means the universe shouldn't be here as even after its mysterious start, Hawking claimed it should have rapidly collapsed into a black hole. Yet here we sit and it is much more convincing than what Hawking had said. In hindsight it appears he was defining a theoretical science problem and not anything else.

Hawking's criticism both added to and challenged the big bang theory but despite this, it still had a lot explanatory power. Scientific theories are *not* instantly scrapped in the light of new criticism, anomalies/problems or in-completions. Scientists often continue working on a theory's strengths while its weaknesses might have to be momentarily put aside. The cosmic singularity posed another problem. How could there have been a cosmic singularity when previously there wasn't even any space/time? Singularities are predicted to be in the core of black holes but at least they exist in space/time. Hawking predicted the cosmic singularity by starting from the modern universe and worked backwards to the beginning. When you start from nothing and go forward it is far more puzzling to say the least. The ex-nihilo problem appears even before anything happens.

The cosmic singularity was something theorists wanted to eliminate and/or by-pass and the by-pass option seemed to be more do-able. In addition to the ex-nihilo problem there is the puzzle of how can anything emerge out of a singularity? Such a thing couldn't spew out any material never mind accommodate the big bang from which our entire universe supposedly stems. In the late 1960s physicist John Wheeler was first to apply quantum theory to the cosmic singularity. This was a logical choice since the space/time scales in singularities are infinitely tiny. Such infinities are demons to general relativity but not so much for quantum theory. Its ability to create fuzzy scenarios was vital to blurring out the tip of the cosmic singularity.

A key feature of quantum theory is its ability to create infinite possibilities for quantum or energy states of fundamental particles. Wheeler tweaked this and applied it to the singularity. It was like saying the insurmountable singularity wasn't stable, and hence there are kinks in its armor. The impassable singularity became a quantum blurry something. Applying quantum theory to particles is standard but Wheeler's application was onto space/time, albeit on very tiny scales. This was new territory for quantum theory and it opened the door to much criticism. Since there are an infinite number of possible quantum states which one is correct for the cosmic singularity? More work clearly needed to be done but Wheeler had at least put the broad quantum strokes on the canvas of freeing the unmovable singularity.

In 1983 Stephen Hawking and James Hartle rolled up their sleeves and developed a model of the universe that has no boundaries. It became an unbounded thing that was self sufficient and had no need for anything else. This model is also based on quantum theory and doesn't have a restrictive cosmic singularity. The trouble maker was conveniently cast aside. The classical singularity was re-interpreted as being something like how one can travel beyond the North Pole on earth since it has no boundary. You can move by it because there isn't anything blocking you. They showed that when quantum theory was applied to space/time not only were points ill defined but in the environs of the cosmic singularity the fuzziness even smears the identity of space and time. Sometimes intervals of time behave like space and vice versa but primarily

inside an incredibly small realm, more or less restricted to what are defined as Planck lengths and time. Others later used similar ideas of space/time &/or time/space confusion to develop wormhole concepts or time/line ideas that potentially allow for time travel and other anomalies. However this has taken us off the immediate topic.

If the *classical* singularity was depicted as an infinitely tiny point of a cone, now its quantum counterpart could be viewed as a rounded but fluxing end. In this way the singularity's sting was essentially removed from the big bang genesis. Its uncertainty at least allowed it to open the flood gates for the expansion of space/time, matter and forces. The new theory came to be called the *Hartle-Hawking No Boundaries Proposal*. It initially claimed the universe was closed. It meant gravity would eventually arrest the expansion, reverse the action and space/time would gradually shrink and finally everything would collapse in a Big Crunch. Since the model doesn't contain any un-penetrable boundaries like the classical cosmic singularity the universe *might* bounce back for another expansion cycle. The cycle of expansion and crunching might go on but this scenario is hypothetically unclear.

A no-boundaries universe was at least self-contained and as Stephen liked to say there isn't any need for god in its operation. Later another physicist/cosmologist Neil Turok convinced him that even an open universe that would expand without end could also be modeled without boundaries. The possibilities to eliminate the troublesome cosmic singularity were expanded.

There was still much uncertainty in the *Hartle-Hawking No Boundaries Proposal* since the ex-nihilo problem still stood. The singularity may have been rounded out but *nothing* was still smiling outside its gate. The science book about the genesis wasn't finished. Some theorists think a more complete solution requires a quantum theory of gravity. If the singularity is anything, it is a gravitational entity. The idea is a more complete description of singularities requires a new theory that connects quantum mechanics with general relativity.

A theory of quantum gravity could also pay gravity's price of admission into the Standard Model of Particle Physics. It is the only known force that hasn't joined that exclusive club. We know what gravity does via Newtonian gravitation and general relativity but we don't really know how and why it works. General relativity includes the unique feature of a fluxing space/time. It constricts in the presence of a massive object like our sun or a black hole and comparatively expands in the absence of the same. The geometry (or shape) of locations of space/time change and this is the reason why we call general relativity a "geometric model of gravity." However we still don't know why and how it works. More theoretical work needs to be done.

Here is what I mean. Electromagnetism, strong and weak nuclear forces each have known bosons or quantum particle force carriers and these move energy to & fro the matter particles. The bosons explain how & why these forces work and the predictions agree with experimental results. It is the assumed gravity should follow suit and its alleged boson called the graviton, should be detected. However it hasn't been seen and further mathematical models that include it break down into pesky infinities. These anomalies are the extreme enemies of theoretical mathematics since when they appear the math instantly stops. You simply cannot do math with infinities. The known laws of physics collapse in the classical cosmic singularity for the same reason.

It is clear why many physicists think a theory of quantum gravity is needed to better explain how the cosmic singularity was breached and allowed the creation of space/time, mass/energy and its expansion. The problem of connecting general relativity with quantum mechanics is both theories are *extremely* different. General relativity is a force field theory, while quantum mechanics is all about quanta or fundamental particles. It is as if one speaks Chinese and the other English but

only no one knows how to do the translating. Some physicists have concluded it is impossible to force fit the two theories into a quantum theory of gravity, but others keep on trying.

In supersymmetric string theory quantum particles of matter and forces stem from vibrating strings and loops rather than the standard model point-like particles. String theorists claim to have succeeded in creating a quantum theory of gravity and cite it as one of their early theoretical successes. The idea is one kind of their strings, the wiggly stringy loops, something like tiny elastic bands are said to act like quanta of gravity. However, their luck seems to have run out on much of the rest of phenomena within their still unproven extra-spatial dimensions theory. After over 20 years of theoretical modeling they have yet to account for even the Standard Model forces/particles, nor found the missing M theory that should unify different supersymmetric string theories and much more. *Maybe there is a better way to model all the known forces of nature?*

Another weakness of the big bang theory is its ad hoc inclusion of the early universe super-expansion called inflation that we saw earlier. Recall it was needed to explain the universe's isotropic and homogenous make up. Our detections show a remarkable uniformity on the large scale in every direction; but what accounts for it? The process of inflation was suggested as something that rapidly ironed out the early universe's wrinkles but we really don't know how and why it occurred. Some physicists think inflation is also the answer to the singularity problem since its brief and very powerful early burst could have somehow broken free of the cosmic singularity. This would make inflation the cause of the big bang rather than something that mysteriously kicked in microseconds after it started. If this happened it would be like the classical case of the all powerful force trying to move the immovable object; only the force wins the war.

Studies of the cosmic microwave background CMB show signs/features that are *compatible* with the theory of early inflation. However, there isn't any *direct* evidence for the process. *Maybe inflation didn't even occur? If so, some other explanations will have to be advanced that can account for the universe's uniformity and the CMB features.* Dark energy that caused the later increase in the rate of expansion stands on more solid ground. It is supported by two different kinds of scientific studies. One is from Type 1a supernovae studies and the other stems from the analysis of the CMB radiation. This concordance has greatly bolstered the existence of dark energy but there are about 10 to the power of 120 magnitudes of difference in its action compared to the early theoretical inflation. Both are said to cause universal expansion but if inflation is an elephant then dark energy is a microbe. It is hard to imagine that both share the same cause as some theorists suggest. I think we need a cosmological theory of origins that doesn't include a cosmic singularity and the early inflation. I plan to publish one/mine later this year. Stay in touch with my website: <http://antspub.com>

WLC banked on the singularity problem in the big bang theory with its admittedly absurd conclusion that the universe started from "nothing" and as he says "by nothing" i.e. "ex-nihilo." Most of his discussion could be seen as a criticism of the short comings or nonsense that still exists in the earliest phase of the current big bang theory. I agree but, CH's comment that cosmology is in its infancy also rings true. The possibilities abound and the big bang theory as it sits today may not be the final answer. There might *not* have been a big bang that emerged out of its puzzling singularity, with inflation that followed microseconds in its wake. Our detections constrain our theories of any scientific genesis but are not limited to the early assumptions inherent in the big bang theory. Instead, *our universe may be a long-lived but temporary structure that emerged from within an infinite super structure of some sort. This emergence might not have required a cosmic singularity & a mysterious big bang. If so, the ex-nihilo problem would also disappear.* The biblical, anthropomorphic god or any other god for that matter is *also not* the only possible rational explanation for the origin of our universe. WLC's proof doesn't prove his god or

his divine tinkerer exists and our universe need not have come from nothing. WLC's cosmological proof is inconclusive and hence fails!

The Teleological Proof

The teleological proof can also be termed the "design proof" and hence CH's earlier comments about Paley's 19th century watchmaker argument even fit within its range. WLC used a more modern version of this proof that focuses on the nature of things within the early universe that appear to have been "fine tuned." He pointed out there were really two categories. Firstly there are the constants of nature such as the strength of gravity determined by the gravitational constant. There are also about 20 constants within the Standard Model of Particle Physics and these determine either the strength of forces or the mass of matter building particles. All of the values of the constants are known due to experimental measurements. To physicists this is a very unsatisfying as these values should be predicted by theory but that part of the physics has yet to appear. It is called the fine tuning of the constants problem. WLC pointed out you could plug any values into the current equations and it wouldn't matter. The mathematical laws do not dependent on or favor any values. However the values of the constants have to have been within a very small and strict range to account for the appearance of atoms, molecules, planets, stars, galaxies & clusters of galaxies and simple cellular life. He concluded the constants had to have been "fine tuned" by god.

WLC called the other category "arbitrary quantities." It refers to the existence of other essential factors such as the amount of early universe atrophy and the ratio of matter to anti-matter that he mentioned. One could add other ratios; such as, space/time to matter and radiation to matter, to the list. Although, these ratios would change over time their early values would be significant to later outcomes. They had to have begun within strict boundaries or the later life friendly conditions would also have been jeopardized.

WLC went on to say there are three possible explanations for the universe's fine tuned constants/arbitrary quantities. (1) Physical necessity: this is to say the fine tuned features stemmed from something that dictated their values/qualities. WLC claimed it "can't be due to physical necessity because the constants are independent of the laws of nature." (2) Chance: This possibility relies on the existence of a multiverse or world ensemble which is a large or even infinite collection of universes where the vast majority have constants/arbitrary quantities that prohibit life. Firstly, there isn't any independent evidence a multiverse even exists. Secondly, he cited physicist Roger Penrose who claims the probability of a life allowing universe arising within a multiverse is exceedingly small. If such a world ensemble exists it would be far more probable that life supporting regions should be much smaller, about the size of our solar system. The problem is we don't observe any such regions and this strongly suggests we are not in a multiverse. (3) Design: Since WLC dispensed with the two previous points, he claimed the right or logical answer is an intelligent creator did the fine tuning of the constants/arbitrary quantities.

CH didn't comment directly on the constants/arbitrary quantities determined in the early universe; rather he took another approach. He used examples from the macro-realm of the later universe to show evidence of things that lack fine-tuning; such, as the death of the billions of stars that cease shining and in some cases explode. He mentioned how the earth will one day be engulfed and burned to a cinder by our own Sun during its end cycle as a greatly swollen red giant star. He pointed out our universe was destined to keep expanding and eventually undergo a universal heat death. All of life will eventually be destroyed during the unforgiving end game. These scientific themes/pictures do not support any divine fine-tuning.

WLC countered by claimed there wasn't any reason not to believe in an intelligent creator just because all life in our universe will one day end. CH didn't comment further probably because the philosophical discussion had slipped back into the faith mode.

Comments: On the Teleological Proof

The Earth-Moon/Solar System Dilemma

WLC implied the fine tuning of the constants/arbitrary quantities were the basis for the rise of intelligent life such as human beings. However, it's not the total case. Our universe is by & large hostile to life. It couldn't have arisen anywhere during its very hot early history and even later it required some local special conditions to accommodate its arrival. Of course life exists on earth and life may exist elsewhere but we really don't understand *all* the factors, conditions and mechanisms that allowed simple life to arise from matter. Even our solar system is largely hostile to life and it can only thrive in relatively small areas such as on our planet. There are many things to consider and these are outside of or in addition to the early fine tuned features WLC discussed.

On earth life evolved partly due to our planet being in what is called a Goldilocks or habitable zone. Our planet is in an orbit around its star so that it creates a temperature range that is "*just right*," where liquid water can exist. Liquid water is a prerequisite for the appearance and sustenance of life. If there is no liquid water then as far as we know there can't be any cellular life. After simple life appears we know it can remain suspended in cold icy conditions for very long periods of time. This feature allows for *the possibility* that life may have even formed elsewhere and was delivered to earth via some extraterrestrial body such as a meteoroid, comet or asteroid.

The earth also has an unusually large orbiting moon compared to the size and mass ratios of other known planet/moon systems. Scientists have determined that we lucked out. Just as spinning tops wobble so do planets but only gradually over long periods of time. The gravitational effect from our large orbiting moon keeps the gyrations of our revolving planet down to a minimum. If it weren't for its stabilizing effect the earth's equator would over long periods have been close to the position of the North Pole and vice versa. It would have played havoc with the climate over the ages creating an overall unstable environment. It would have made the evolution of more complex life, especially of the land-based kind, extremely unlikely. This means reptiles, amphibians, and mammals including Homo sapiens and many kinds of insects most probably couldn't have arisen and/or survived for long under such overall chaotic conditions. What were the chances of all of this?

Our current best theory of the origin of the moon is the giant impact hypothesis or "the big splash." The theory claims that during earth's early history the planet was impacted by a fairly large proto-planet that has been dubbed "Theia." The theory says the angle of impact had to have been oblique enough, about 45°, so earth wasn't pulverized. Much of the lighter crust and mantle material from both bodies were splashed into space settling into a low orbit around the earth while at least a significant amount of Theia's iron core over time sunk into and joined that of the earth. Over time the orbiting debris accreted into larger pieces and it eventually became our Moon. If this theory is correct it means the likelihood of other earth-like planets in other solar systems to have such a large orbiting moon would be even more remote.

We also lucked out in the make-up of our planet. There is an abundance of liquid water but much is also in the solid and gaseous states. Our planet is a rocky one with a firm crust creating large areas of dry land. Earth is massive enough so that its gravity over long periods of time largely succeeds in containing the gases that make up our atmosphere. These are for the most part locked within an outer envelope surrounding our planet. Our atmosphere also happens to contain

enough oxygen for air breathing creatures with lungs to have evolved. Our ozone layer also largely protects us from damaging ultra violet rays from the sun. The magnetic shield around our planet protects cellular life from deadly cosmic rays that originate from our sun and elsewhere. What were the chances of all of this?

Our luck goes further. Our solar system just happens to have Jupiter, a gas giant planet, orbiting on the edge of the back woods of our solar system. Its huge mass attracts a lot by-passing celestial bodies such as asteroids, meteoroids and comets. Some crash into Jupiter but most are gravitationally slung out into the far reaches of space. Almost all of them that enter into its powerful gravitational field are prevented from striking our planet. Jupiter acts like a giant guard dog whose presence and actions have steered away potential impacts and thus spared the earth from planet-wide devastations. What were the chances for all of this?

Even with Jupiter's protective presence scientists estimate there have been at least five major mass extinctions of life over earth's early history. The most famed is that of the demise of the dinosaurs at the end of the Cretaceous Period. There is much evidence that show one or more extraterrestrial impacts played a massive role in their demise. When an ecosystem takes a massive hit, over time or suddenly for whatever reason or factors, it opens the door for surviving life forms to take hold, expand and evolve. This is what we see in the fossil record; periods of relatively rapid spurts of the arrival of new species sometimes called "punctuated equilibrium." *The evidence also clearly shows that chance factors played a huge role in the history of the evolution of life on our planet.*

None of this is *directly* related to the early fine tuned qualities we discussed earlier but is additional and just as essential for *our* existence. The early universe so-called fine tuned qualities are cosmological or global features, assumed to be the same everywhere in the universe. If this isn't the case then the laws of physics would act differently from location to location. This has never been conclusively seen. However the earth-moon/solar system factors we just discussed are local; as far as we know they only apply to our planet and solar system. Even if one or more similar solar systems are eventually discovered they will most probably have some dissimilar qualities. Just the same, any concordance of solar system factors would still apply only to distinct and uncommon localities. These would still *not* be universal or cosmological factors.

The fine tuning argument can *not* apply to our isolated solar system. Chance simply has to be evoked otherwise the divine tinkerer is a clown who made it all look like an unusual random sequence of events occurred in our tiny locality. Imagine even after deliberately setting up our earth-moon/solar system features he would have had to have deliberately bombarded the earth or otherwise destroyed the ecosystem about five different times! In the wake of each disaster it gave new life an opportunity to appear. Even then, he had to be involved in tinkering with each detail along the long & laborious road of evolving new life forms. If this god is so powerful and all knowing why didn't he simply do it like the first chapter of Genesis suggests? He should have done it in one shot or more or less over 6 earth days. The answer in the light of the evidence shows both the earlier and later scenarios are equally absurd.

Our universe is incredibly huge. It contains super clusters consisting of galactic clusters. These consist of galaxies and galaxies consist of stars. There are literally billions upon billions of stars in our universe. Each star can either be the single center or part of a pair of stars or binary system around which other bodies are gravitationally bound and orbiting. It seems the possibility to line up all of these additional factors around at least *one planet in a single solar system* is highly probable. WLC likes to argue from probabilities and here is one that doesn't favor his point-of-view. None of these additional essentials support or needs any fine tuning via some supernatural mind or tinkerer who exists outside of space/time.

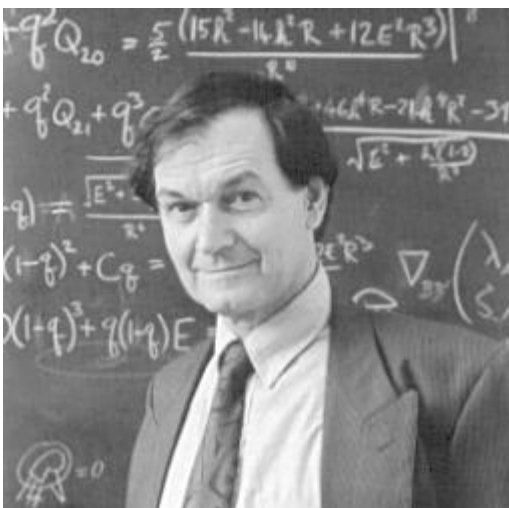
Here is another reason why the qualities of our planet/solar system was due to chance. All a divine tinkerer needed to create was solar systems with life allowing & evolving qualities like ours but this isn't what we observe. Why all of the wasted efforts? This speaks to some very sloppy work via a supposedly all knowing & powerful creator. It doesn't make much sense even for any deistic theory of gradual intelligent design. We will revisit these earth-moon/solar system factors again shortly but CH's macro-scale criticism of fine tuning looks better in the light of this dilemma. *He briefly mentioned that other known planets are too hot or too cold to accommodate life and he should have expanded on that.* His other examples had end game themes such as the death of stars and eventually all of life within our universe. WLC countered by saying just because something breaks down, deteriorates and eventually ends doesn't mean it wasn't designed. He used cars as one of his examples. *The far more damaging argument is based on what we've seen that relate to the chance factors in our arrival in our tiny and very rare locality.*

Our earth-moon/solar system's unique properties had to pre-exist before life could have evolved into the many complex life forms we see. This is independent of whether life firstly appeared on earth or was delivered to our planet via an extraterrestrial object. It is surely possible that life could exist even elsewhere in our solar system around underwater volcanic vents on some moons &/or exo-planets. After all we have discovered unique life forms around undersea volcanic vents on earth. The life there doesn't depend on the energy of the sun but on that spewing up from the interior of our planet. However such localized small undersea ecosystems do not show the greater diversity of life such as is evident in other places all over earth. These other environments are by far more ideal for the evolution of diversity of life than any underwater vent on some moon in our solar system or elsewhere.

Comments on Physical Necessity

WLC's first stated possible explanation of the fine tuned constants/arbitrary quantities is they were a physical necessity. He correctly stated they were not specified in the mathematical laws of nature. However the initial conditions of the genesis are unknown. WLC & Roger Penrose whom he quoted, began with the supposition that natural laws are primary and the constants had to be plugged into them. In their vision, it appears as if *a sequence of individual random processes* had to hit or coalesce to get *all the constants* to appear with life supportive qualities. This assumes *each* constant's value had to have been *individually & randomly* determined as if due to a chance roll of the dice. However these dice do not simply consist of the common 6 sides but millions upon millions of sides, maybe even an infinite number. Now give the dice some rolls over a limited time frame and try to come up with the required value *of even one* constant! This would make the appearance of the *entire set* of constants/arbitrary quantities highly improbable.

Penrose, *who didn't use my example*, nevertheless determined the chances for this are higher than that of random particles forming our solar system. WLC jumped on the band wagon and concluded it was evidence of divine tinkering.



However, the initial conditions could have even dictated the known laws of nature as well as the constants/arbitrary quantities in our universe. To avoid the ex-nihilo problem it would require the initial conditions stemmed from some infinite realm with a previous set of laws. Once the initial conditions were seeded they could have caused a chain reaction, something like the fall of a complex placement of dominoes. The laws, constants & arbitrary conditions in our

neck-of- the-woods simply fell into place and took over after they were formed. This would alter WLC's assertion the constants are independent of the laws of nature. It would mean they became co-dependent when their mutual values fell into place. It is their combined activity over much time that accounts for the all of the prerequisite conditions needed for primitive life to arise.

It could even be that there are additional arbitrary quantities which are prerequisites for building successful long-lived universes. The volume of space/time may had to have been very large to contain enough mass/energy to create a sequence of increasingly complex entities; such as, atoms, molecules, stars, galaxies etc. If this is the case then perhaps there are many smaller universes that in effect miscarried as far as the lack of life is concerned. Larger ones like ours succeeded in at least housing simple cellular life.

In order to help determine these things we need what is called a *Theory of Everything* i.e. *TOE*. Unfortunately the caption is a misnomer since no theory could literally be about everything. Some prefer the term *unified field theory* since the theory should show us how the known forces of nature are connected. It would also have to tell us what the initial conditions were and give us clues about the genesis of our universe. It would explain the physical laws, constants and arbitrary quantities of nature. It would also include the theory of quantum gravity or something similar that tells us how and why gravity works. It should explain why matter is so much more dominant than antimatter, clarify dark matter and energy, show whether there is a common underlying factor in matter building & force carrying particles, tell us what space/time is, & more. When discovered it will sit on the top of the pyramid of the theories of physics unifying and giving clarity to the theories in lower tiers. I plan to publish my TOE later this year. Stay tuned to my website: <http://antspub.com>

Comments on The Chance Explanation

The chance explanation of the fine tuned constants/arbitrary quantities leans on modern multiverse theory. It is what WLC often referred to as a world ensemble. It claims, as we saw earlier, there are many universes and most inhibit or do not allow for the appearance of life. Firstly and correctly WLC claimed there isn't any direct evidence we are in a multiverse. Secondly he attacked its probability to exist. In this case he again quoted Roger Penrose and especially his assertion that smaller areas of space/time with differing constants about the size of our solar system should dominate. We haven't detected them and WLC & Penrose concluded a multiverse is highly unlikely to exist.

The skeptical Roger Penrose isn't the only physicist who has commented on the multiverse possibility. There are several physicists who take it very seriously, including Leonard Susskind of Stanford University. One of the reasons is the multiverse or megaverse theory is also connected to the previously mentioned early process of inflation. Assuming it occurred, it is said that once the process started there wasn't anything that could have reined it in. This means that inflation could be still be on-going somewhere even as you read this. It could be blazing away continually creating more pocket universes, adding to the super-collection of the multiverse.

Some physics like Andrei Linde think that inflation is essentially eternal. It could have always been and will always be. This theory assumes eternal inflation creates unbounded universes and hence each lacks a cosmic singularity. It relies on random quantum fluxes creating a phase transition of energy bubbling up and blasting off, creating space/time, forces and matter at the end of an inflationary cycle. Yes, it repeats and goes on & on; or so the theory claims. This is one of the *highly speculative theories* that suggest the universe or more correctly the multiverse may be eternal. Of course if it can be shown that inflation didn't happen it would negate Linde, Susskind and others' multiverse inferences.

In any case theory usually outraces detections. In the meantime, Leonard Susskind likes to characterize the multiverse as something like a bubble bath. Each bubble has a unique size and reflects light slightly differently and this is analogous to each universe having differing laws and values for the constants of nature. There are supposedly many more bubble universes that *can't* accommodate life as their constants are off-the-track. It is the large numbers of universes created by eternal inflation that randomly and occasionally allows life accommodating universes like ours to come into existence. This waters down the fine-tuning factor as it makes it look more due to random processes and less like the doings of a divine tinkerer.

There's also another chapter of thinking in the book of the multiverse and this one is courtesy of physicist/cosmologist Lee Smolin of the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. Here is a *very brief* explanation. The theory claims a universe can give rise to another via a collapsing black hole. This means every time a black hole forms via collapsing, it can give birth to a new universe via a wormhole that exits out to a white hole. The offspring or baby universe might have physical constants that differ slightly from the parent universe. The theory is called *cosmological natural selection* as it contains ideas of reproduction and mutation. Any universe that can span black holes could therefore produce other universes. Some of the offspring might not have the qualities to succeed in reproducing but others might. Some of those that do, could give rise to universes that are hospitable to the appearance of life.

Even though there is good evidence that black holes exist, currently only theory and computer simulations can be used to determine their inner workings. We do not know whether so-called "worm holes" exist. And if so, whether they can be used as short cuts in space/time for time travel or that they or some other mechanism allow for the birth of baby universes or are avenues to other universes. It might all be due to wishful thinking.

In any case, this part of physics is admittedly speculative but then so is deistic intelligent design. Both philosophical camps begin with known or observable things within our universe and then backtrack on a hunt for their origins. At some point they split off. One hypothetical trail goes to a divine tinkerer and other goes to a multiverse or some other naturalistic scenario. None of the trail beginnings are directly observable and so assumptions ensue. However on any such a search we can look for improved explanations and logical inconsistencies.

If the constants/arbitrary quantities & natural laws were co-determined via initial conditions then Penrose's argument expressed earlier fails. There isn't any evidence of regions in our observable universe where the laws of nature operate differently. I've also turned a version of his argument that appeals to a divine tinker on its head. *Why aren't solar systems with the complex life promoting qualities like ours the only thing we observe?* Astrophysicists and astronomers have aimed their telescopes in many directions and have discovered billions objects like galactic clusters, galaxies and stars. There are about a hundred billion stars in our galaxy, the Milky Way alone. Some stars have been detected with what is termed extra solar planets or "exo-planets" orbiting about them. NASA's Kepler satellite is currently in orbit and hunting for exo-planets in our galaxy. Some hundreds of exo-planets have been observed orbiting stars and others candidates are being studied but we have not yet seen another solar system with an earth-like planet in a habitable zone. *This does not favor WLC's argument for an anthropomorphic divine creator.*

Kepler can detect many kinds of planets: gas giants like Jupiter, icy ones like Neptune and rocky terrestrial ones like Earth and even smaller ones. One of the Kepler's mission goals is to determine how common earth-like exo-planets are in our galaxy. It can search for & potentially find exo-planets around sun-like stars in habitable zones like our earth. Even when and if they get an initial hit, the confirmation process is painstakingly slow. Kepler relies on planets eclipsing their host stars and blocking out a little light or causing a slight dip in the overall stellar emission. An

earth-like exo-planet orbiting around a sun-like star would only eclipse its star in Kepler's plane-of-sight for about 12 hours and only once a year. A single detection isn't sufficient and you have to wait another year to detect another dip in the star's emission. Ground telescopes assist and make further detections but there is much they can't detect.

Just because the planet orbits its star in a habitable zone, creating a temperature range that allows liquid water to exist, *it doesn't mean the planet has much water*. There are still questions about where all of earth's water originated. Some could have been delivered in early comet, meteoroid and asteroid impacts. However the isotopic signature of common sea water doesn't match that of the water analyzed from many extraterrestrial objects. It is most probable the abundant water on our planet is another local anomaly and not the norm amongst exo-planets around other stars.

Another good question we would advance about any suspected earth-like exo-planet is: how would we know that life of any sort inhabits the planet? It is beyond the capabilities of our current technologies but let's assume these problems will be solved in the future. Even then, if all the earth-like planet-moon/solar system factors were detected it still wouldn't necessitate the presence of life. This is particularly true if the earth was by-chance life seeded by an extraterrestrial body; such as, we discussed earlier. Without more direct evidence, the presence of special conditions alone would only speak to the possibility/probability of the presence of life.

All of this may be interesting but *chance factors* as we have seen *must have* played out in the building of our solar system or we wouldn't be here. It is nonsense, as I pointed out, to claim the earth-moon/solar system factors were fine tuned. We also have good evidence, as I pointed out earlier, for five massive life extinctions our planet endured in its earlier history. There were many chance factors in the origins and aftermath of these devastating events. This echoes to a mild extent CH's comment about the near extinction of Homo sapiens about 16,000 years ago. One of the outcomes is that *we currently stand on top of the geological column and its fossil record*. Therefore WLC's brief comments *definitely didn't rule out chance factors* in the arrival of complex life, including human beings.

Comments on The Design Explanation

This leaves us with what WLC didn't say about his teleological proofs. He gave the nod to the design explanation of the fine tuned constants/arbitrary quantities based on the idea he had negated all the other possibilities. This wasn't a surprise since the divine designer is a key component of his faith. I wasn't in the debate but the other two explanations have clearly been expanded and bolstered in my comments and in other literature. Of course he couldn't have responded to information that wasn't presented at the debate. He also doesn't have to respond to my comments but readers can come to their own conclusions.

One thing I can fairly say is WLC didn't make any additional positive assertions for the design explanation in this section of his presentation. His argument was a modern version of Paley's watchmaker argument that CH briefly discussed and dismissed. Only the "watch" is the set of constants/arbitrary conditions and these are interpreted as part of the god's past handiwork. He thought he had negated the other two possibilities and nothing else needed to be said. Recall he wanted CH to prove a negative by accepting the challenge of positive atheism. CH wisely decided not to play the game. WLC must also positively prove his position and not just negate some sparsely presented alternative explanations.

The Morality Argument

I found this argument to be one of the most bewildering ones WLC presented. I can't even see how it even stands as any kind of philosophical argument for the existence of god. As we will see it is really and merely a mix of confused and wishful ideas. Here is my summary of what was said.

WLC claimed that without a transcendent god there isn't any objective standard for morality. Objective moral values are valid, binding and true whether we believe it or not. Atheists, on the other hand, rely on their desire to cooperate for the common good but nothing is really right or wrong. In other words some form of morality is a social evolutionary adaptation common to all social animals. It aids for survival & reproduction purposes and nothing more. However WLC claims committing crimes like rape, cruelty & child abuse is wrong and deep inside we know it. He made it clear such an objective moral standard has nothing to do with how people behave but if it doesn't exist we are stuck or lost in cultural relativism.

CH countered and said there isn't any moral behavior that theists claim to follow that he isn't capable of. In other words claiming or appealing to a divine celestial being doesn't give Christians any advantage. He cited the New Testament so-called golden rule attributed to Jesus: *"Do unto others as you would have them do to you."* It appeared before Jesus' time in the writings of the Babylonian Rabbi Hillel and there is also an earlier version in the Analects of Confucius. CH showed how the rule is flawed. We don't want criminals like Charles Manson and others convicted of heinous crimes to get the same kind of treatment as law abiding citizens. CH was poking holes in the commonly cited Christian best moral standard, the so-called "golden rule." WLC didn't comment.

CH also claimed almost all acts of genital mutilation are based on religious precepts and most suicide bombers are motivated by religious ideology. Indeed, he asked, "What crime would someone not commit if they think god has commanded it?" He indicated the Old Testament condones slavery, racism and even genocide. The OT god is often portrayed as a tribal god of war who even speaks directly to leaders like Moses and Joshua. In the book of Deuteronomy god commands the Israelites to "blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." God was angry because during the exodus out of Egypt the Amalekites had attacked the tired, weary stragglers at the rear of the moving group. In retribution they were to kill every Amalekite and destroy every material possession they owned. (Dt. 25:17-19).

In Joshua's case his god commanded him and the Israelites to kill the inhabitants such as the Amorites during the conquest of Canaan. God even supposedly caused the Sun and Moon to stand still; it gave them more daylight time to kill them (Jos. 10). (To find out how absurd this is, download my essay *"The Day the Sun & Moon Stood Still."* Go to <http://antspub.com> and click on any Downloads button). It went even further as they were also told to kill the enemy's donkeys, other live stalk and on one occasion to injure horses.

In the later case, Joshua was commanded to burn the enemy's chariots and actually hamstring their horses! This is an incredibly cruel and completely unnecessary. Horses do not have anything to do with tribal human conflicts! When you cut their hamstring muscles they become lame and you can't use them for anything. That is, if they do not bleed to death or die of infections (Jos. 11:6, 9). You have to imagine a herd of captured horses and then they were needlessly brutalized one-after-another. I take care of two horses and I can't even imagine doing such a heinous thing. This OT god was a brutal god of war who instructed his people to commit immoral act after immoral act! *Where is WLC's moral objectivity in any of this?*

WLC said the biblical genocide incident depends on how one interprets the scripture. The question is whether it is to be taken literally or perhaps has some other meaning. It was obviously a touchy point. Such a scenario is reminiscent of the Nazis & others who actually committed such atrocities. There isn't any make believe about what they did. The problem runs much deeper. Many times European peoples used the biblical injunctions to kill and conquer Canaanites to justify their doing the same over indigenous peoples. It was evoked by the Dutch in their subjugation of the natives in South Africa. It was also used by other European oppressors in North, Central and South America. They all, at times, justified their cruelty against other humans based on the biblical precedent.

It was also the second time in the debate WLC expressed a willingness to circumvent biblical literalism. Recall the first was changing the meaning of Genesis 1. As it turns out his selectivity is at the heart of the reason why his morality argument fails. If you cherry pick your truths you don't have an objective standard. CH didn't comment *but missed an opportunity to make a major point*. CH furthered his stance on morality by critiquing the religious desire to get their morality from on high. The idea is humans alone are not good enough, dignified, have enough character to know a right action. There is a servile element in the religious impulse, a desire to be un-free and subject oneself to a dictator in a kind of heavenly North Korea. This was one of CH's finest points and WLC didn't have any adequate respond.

There were questions from the audience that related to the morality theme. The main part of one was whether it was a good thing that god said i.e. in the Law of Moses that people should not have sex with animals. CH implied the laws were human or man-made and so they were limited in range and hence dealt with agricultural activities. However they were also "male" made and had much to do with suppressing female sexuality. As per sex with animals he said he didn't have any good advice. He did say that many practices such as incest & cannibalism are self controlling since in the long run they threaten society. If you eat human flesh, for example, you become susceptible to a debilitating disease called "kuru." In any case CH didn't really give a clear answer. WLC claimed his lack of resolve confirmed his conclusion; atheists lack an objective basis for morality.

Sex with animals strikes me as a form of mistreatment of animals but this point wasn't made. Human sex is only moral when there is mutual consent by adults. The domesticated farm mammals in these inhumane cases do not really exercise choice as it is imposed upon them. Mammals only naturally succeed to copulate with members of their own species during rutting cycles.

There was also some discussion on whether theists or atheist have been more moral over history. CH offered his perspective about the history of Hitler and the Nazis and the enactment of the now historical apartheid policy in South Africa. He showed examples of how both politico-social systems had religious underpinnings. WLC interjected by citing Bertrand Russell's claim the truth of an ideology is independent of its social impact or the actions of people. CH agreed. It was a good point and one that put an end to the game of pinning the tail on the better donkey.

Comments: On the Morality Argument

WLC claims that since there is a god it forms an objective basis for morality. CH countered with questions: How do you know your god is benevolent or good? Couldn't your god have started the universe and then walked away? WLC didn't reply.

Since WLC made the morality argument it is up to him to prove it. How do you know what god's will is or what is the objectively correct moral standard? He insists an objective moral standard

exists but it has no value if one doesn't know what it is. You can cite the Bible but WLC had already shown during times in the debate there are scriptures that he either doesn't or probably wouldn't accept as it clearly says. Where does this go in the search for objectivity? Should anything in the Bible make anyone squeamish can they just dismiss it by suggesting a spiritual or symbolic interpretation? When people do that, it looks like denial and the kind of excuses a thief, who got caught with the jewels in his pockets, makes. When the evidence is self evident and you don't like the consequences, twist the story and lie like hell.

Then there are the moral dilemmas in the Old Testament accounts including the Law of Moses. The slavery, racism and genocide issues are only the tip of the iceberg. The Law doesn't say anything about abusing children. In fact, it is much the opposite. Young people who were disobedient and therefore dishonored their mother & father were to be stoned to death (Dt. 21:18-21). I can't imagine any loving modern parent doing that? Only the sickest religious nuts would commit such a crime. There are cases of some modern Muslim fathers with the aid of other males like brothers & sons murdering their daughters due to allegations of immorality. In the book of Deuteronomy such actions were legal. If a young woman married and it was found she is not a virgin she was to be brought to her father's door. The so-called proof was a cloth that had been placed under brides during the consummation act. If it wasn't bloody, the poor lady was in deep trouble. This is hardly a definitive test of virginity but it is the one that was ordained and declared by a supposedly all knowing god. In any case the men of the city were instructed to stone her to death (Dt. 22:3-21). This is not a joke.

Usury or charging interest on a loan was not allowed (Lev. 25:35-38). Instead if a brother couldn't repay his debt, he could sell himself into service as a bond servant which was essentially slavery. It could even, depending on circumstances, have been for life (Dt. 15:12-18, Ex. 21:2-6). *Doesn't it make better sense to charge some interest and give him more time to repay?* When an Israelite became a bond servant they were supposed to get better treatment than strangers who became slaves (Lev. 25:39-55). An owner could even kill his slave and not be punished providing she/he didn't die within a day or two after a beating (Ex. 21:20-21). The god of the OT instituted the slavery of human beings.

There is little doubt slavery has been historically justified based on its institution in the Bible. The early American slave trade was brutal. Slave traders would moor their ships off the shores or in ports along the Africa coast while armed hunting parties sought out, captured & chained people. They were housed like rats in the ship's hold, sometimes they were stacked up lying horizontally in locked holds for hours on end. The captives received subhuman treatment and were merely valued as cargo. They were given little food and water and minimal medical care. They lived in filthy conditions and many people got sick and died during the several weeks long, grueling transatlantic crossing. The dead and sometimes new born babies were tossed overboard. In the southern states around the time of the American Civil War it was estimated the value of slaves was in excess of 3.5 billion dollars. It was worth more than all the railroads, banks and factories put together in the entire country. It was the most valuable commodity the South had and some historians cite it as the reason so many southerners were opposed to President Lincoln's policies.

Slavery was big business and the wealthy estate owners stood to lose a lot of money. Perhaps this greed stands as a hidden emotional cause for prolonging the evils of slavery. Slaves had precious little in the way of rights. They could be forced to work long hours, beaten, raped, chained and separated from families when sold etc. Even in the wake of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, after the Civil War ended and even in light of the Thirteenth Amendment to the US Constitution some estate owners still kept and treated their people like slaves. They may

have been freed people but they were largely powerless against their wealthy lords. Some who escaped were captured and beaten. In some extreme cases they were killed.

Legal freedom is one thing but it has no teeth when poor, under-educated people are without the means and abilities to fight for it. The real emancipation of American blacks had taken much time and suffering such as the killing of blacks by the Klu Klux Klan and the struggles of the African-American Civil Rights Movement (1955 –1968) and the cowardly assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King. Some commentators claim the struggle for equality continues. All of it stems from the one time legalization of slavery. It is unbelievable to think a righteous god condoned slavery in the Bible. It has caused untold suffering in the world. *I dare ask: where is the moral objectivity in any of this?*

There are numerous accounts in the OT of men having several wives. Polygamy was practiced without condemnation. There also isn't a single account about democracy. The common people didn't have a vote or a representative body. In autocratic systems too much depends on the whim of the leaders who are all too human. Without fair and democratic checks and balances any system can be grossly abused. All of this is also supposed to be the handiwork of a loving, all knowing & wise creator. That is really hard to believe. *I dare ask: where is the moral objectivity in any of this?*

Christianity is a fractured religion, with many different denominations. The differences between the groups primarily stem from two things. The *first* are the biblical factors. This includes what role does or should the Bible play and how it is interpreted. The Catholics appeal to their traditional records as on par with the Bible. Mormons, for another example, have the Book of Mormon in addition to the Bible. Some Protestants groups go as far as claiming one or both aren't real Christians. WLC in answers to CH's questions said Mormons (& via a separate implication Calvinists) were not real Christians. CH didn't ask WLC about the status of Catholics. The condemnation of other groups is a very old game. Numerous different churches have and still do lay claim to being special or the only true Christians and/or exclude others from the divine club. Some Amish elders for example tell their people you have to be Amish to go to heaven. The story is all too common.

The biblical interpretative differences amongst Christians are legendary and I have to admit (for me at least) at times the comparisons are a source of much comedy. It's hard to choose the funniest ones. However the recent case of Harold Camping and his Family Radio ministry is hard to resist. He had calculated and then set the date for Jesus Christ's triumphant return to earth. He claimed Jesus would return on 6 pm May 21st 2011 and Judgment Day would be upon us. He also said the world will end on Oct 21st. After May 21st had come and gone and nothing happened he claimed that Jesus' return was spiritual, but he is here and so is Judgment Day. Camping admitted he had erred in details but the faithful will still be raptured or taken away on Oct. 21st when the world ends. This is another example of someone out-of-the-blue claiming some scriptures are spiritual or symbolic when it suites their purpose.

The second coming of Jesus Christ is based on New Testament teachings. Jesus and his disciples were walking around the temple buildings grounds and some of his students marveled how amazing they were. Jesus predicted their destruction. Later when they were sitting on the Mount of Olives which is just outside Jerusalem some of his disciples asked him when it was going to happen? He gave them a talk listing a number of events but specifically he referred to a sign related to the temple that marked the beginning of a time of great troubles. It was the abomination of desolation spoken by the prophet Daniel standing in the holy place. So it is clear he predicted the temple was going to be desecrated before its destruction and the time of troubles in and around Jerusalem. It would culminate by strange signs appearing in the sky

including the Son of Man coming on the clouds with power and glory. The angels would also come at the sound of a trumpet and they would gather the elect. All of the events he predicted were certain to happen before all the people of his generation died. (Mat. 24, Mark 13, Luke 21). The Romans under Commander Titus, during the Judeo-Roman war (66- 70 CE), did conquer Jerusalem and destroyed the temple in 70 CE. but there weren't any strange signs in the sky, the Son of Man (a title Jesus often used when referring to himself) didn't come on clouds and the angels also failed to appear. Nevertheless every New Testament writer wrote of the expected and eminent return of Jesus Christ but the prophecies failed.

The temple that Jesus and his disciples saw and referred to was destroyed and all the people of his generation died. The prophecies simply *cannot* refer to any other time including our day. Never-the-less many well meaning but confused true believers take the predictions out-of-context and try to make it all look as if it is going to happen in our time. One lame attempt is to say another temple will be built and then destroyed in our day. This isn't what Jesus clearly claimed. The modern interpretations are all biblically baseless but show that many people don't want to accept the prophecies failed. (Download my free e-book: "[What I Told My Son About the Bible: Things the Clergy Doesn't Want you to Know](#)". Go to <http://antspub.com> and click on any Downloads button).

I could go on and on, but it is always the same. What is literally true in the Bible for one group is symbolic or spiritual to another. We saw evidence of this in WLC statements. The problem is what we say to be true is only so due to the degree it is confirmed. One can skate around biblical issues all day and every day and thereby attempt to avoid falsification. These people are essentially saying what I believe is logical and my faith is not falsifiable. It means whatever I say is true and if it is not I will change it in at a whim. Harold Camping is not unusual in this regard. The record of such activities including those who listen and accept it belongs in the "Museum of Fools." *I dare ask: where is the moral objectivity in any of this?*

The *second* difference amongst the Christian denominations is in how the so called Holy Spirit supposedly leads people today. This point is probably best understood as part of the *first* difference but I think it deserves specific mention. There are groups in the southern USA who think handling rattlesnakes is a good test of their faith. Their graveyards contain many who tried. People in some groups speak in tongues, which are really mutterings of incomprehensible gibberish, thinking the Holy Spirit is inspiring them. Some groups listen to people prophesying supposedly via the Holy Spirit and sometimes predicting future events. Rarely do you hear or read of their track records. In most cases there isn't even any attempt to objectively record their predictions in detail. People commonly tend to recall the hits and forget about the misses. These so-called predictions are often framed within some sort of overriding biblical theme such as we are living in the end time and Jesus' return is eminent. This has been going on for centuries.

Then there are groups who deny their children medical treatment thinking that faith alone heals. Unfortunately some children have needlessly died of very treatable illnesses. Other groups like the Amish think that modern technology is worldly and shun its use even though there isn't any such clear admonition against it in the Bible. To some of them electricity and hence all electrical & electronic appliances or devices are forbidden. They live a very comparative austere live style without cars, radios, television, telephones, computers etc. Photographs are also taboo to some as they are likened to idols to be worshipped. Some of these people know comparatively little about what is and/or has been going on in the world outside their communities. Yet most do hear things and know of the outside world. Some of them, usually young people go off on trips and/or leave for a time but are drawn back due to family and social ties. Also technologies do drift into their communities via cheaters. Others have business contacts with outsiders and travel to

locations via horse and buggy. There are those who make compromises and allow some modern technologies/conveniences while trying to hang onto to their essentially pre-modern way of life.

Many of these groups deny their young people higher education claiming all one needs is basic elementary schooling and they usually provide that. Sports and playing games of any sort are also often discouraged. People in more extreme religious groups spend most of their time living within compounds or fenced off security areas. I'm sure all of the groups lay claim that the Holy Spirit guides them in forming and maintaining their restrictive positions. I could continue, but I think I've made my point. *I dare ask: where is the moral objectivity in any of this?*

The reality is Christians do *not* have any so-called moral objectivity that gives them a heads up on what is right or wrong, over and above others including atheists. In a comical moment WLC said during the previous weekend CH was debating with a group of Christian ministers and he asked them to name one moral thing that they do that he couldn't do? A pastor piped up and said, "How about tithing?" WLC joked, "Leave it to a minister to think about that!" Tithing was the giving a tenth of one's increase to the Levites. It was part of the legislation in the Mosaic Law given to the people of Israel (Dt. 14:22-29). Many early Christians weren't Jews and they weren't bound to the Law (Acts 15:19-29) and tithing per se is *not* commanded of Christians in the NT literature. So you can see how fuzzy this so-called objective morality really is.

Even if objective morality exists the biblical god would still have to tell people what the principles are. It makes little sense, like WLC to keep saying it exists when there's no way to know it. If god has been and currently is telling people what is right and wrong, something has gone haywire in the process. Christendom as seen in overview is clearly in a state of moral chaos. The result is the same as if there isn't a god and/or objective morality as Christian professing people can't agree on what is right or wrong any more than other people. I don't know how WLC or anybody else came up with this argument? *If clearly fails.*

The Resurrection of Jesus

WLC's argument from the resurrection of Jesus is another weak presentation that doesn't make very much rational sense. The reasons for this will be forthcoming. Here is my summary of what WLC & CH said.

WLC claimed the resurrection of Jesus was a proof that god exists. He said it stands on the following three points: (1) The empty tomb: WLC claimed on the Sunday morning following the crucifixion the tomb was discovered empty by a group of women followers. (2) Jesus' postmortem appearances to believers, unbelievers and even enemies. (3) The disciples came to believe in Jesus' resurrection despite having every predisposition to not accept or believe it. The Jews in general didn't have a belief in a dying Messiah never mind one who was resurrected, yet they became willing to die rather than recant it. He claimed theories like the body was stolen or Jesus was not really dead have been universally rejected by scholars. He went on to say there simply isn't any plausible or naturalistic explanation for these facts.

One of WLC's star sources is the Anglican bishop, writer and eminent New Testament scholar N.T. Wright. He considered the empty tomb and later post mortem appearances of Jesus to be so un-Jewish, as to raise huge questions and he came to some far reaching conclusions. "Tom" Wright implied there wasn't anything in the then existing Jewish religion that really supported and hence created any expectation of the resurrection of any rabbi or even one of whom it had been claimed was a Messiah. As a historian he couldn't explain the rise of Christianity outside of the truth of the resurrection. Wright thought the resurrection had to be accepted on par with events

such as the death of Augustus in 14 AD and the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD. This last statement contains some very bold words.

The appearances of Jesus aren't just good campfire side ghost stories since his body at least reportedly had mysteriously disappeared. Matthew's gospel claims Pontius Pilate had allowed for guards to be placed at the tomb's entrance. Their intended purpose was to prevent any wild tale like Jesus had been resurrected on the third day as he had claimed during his life. In other words any "theft of the body theory" was in principle at least eliminated.

CH commented on the resurrection by claiming it is depressingly easy to start a rumor especially amongst uneducated, frightened and illiterate populations. More specifically he attacked N.T. Wright's assumption that no explanation other than the truth of the resurrection explains the success of the Christianity. He said that in other religions, like Mormonism and Islam have also been very successful. CH noted that WLC and others like him do not accept either of these two religions as being truthful yet both had and have very committed people spreading the religion. They have also sacrificed, suffered and some gave their lives during various campaigns and conquests. In other words if these kinds of details are permitted as a proof of Christianity they must also have the same connotation in these other religions.

WLC countered by saying N.T. Wright's conclusion is not based on the success of Christianity. It is based solely on the amazing turn around where the disciples believed that Jesus was resurrected when there wasn't anything in the Jewish religion that a dead Messiah would be resurrected. He also can't account for the empty tomb and the postmortem appearances. All of this together is reason why he claimed the resurrection of Jesus was on par with the death of Augustus and the destruction of the temple.

Comments: On the Resurrection of Jesus

WLC's argument rests on two pillars. The first is the New Testament record. The second is the aforementioned claims of N.T. Wright. If Wright leaned on the missing expectation factor as a source of bewilderment to the Jesus' postmortem sightings then one has to look no further than to that of Jesus' own inner circle. Wright failed to consider that such an event was very much expected by Jesus' disciples and they were the ones who reportedly had the visions. All of the inner circle people had Jesus on a pedestal and his teachings or sermons were undoubtedly personally inspiring and perhaps even hypnotic.

I have chosen to initially present four scriptural accounts that stand out as being somewhat unusual but there are others. The first is a sole account in John's gospel where Jesus told some of his contemporaries, who were not yet followers, that he had the power to raise the dead; specifically those who believed in him on the last day (John 6: 38-40). This shows a *deviation* from what was commonly believed by many Jews. They thought there would be a *general resurrection of everyone* to the judgment at the end of the world. *Jesus narrowed the field and would resurrect people who accepted him on the last day. It was still paramount to claiming he was god.*

The Gospel of John also contains a second sole account. It is that of raising Lazarus from the dead. His body had obviously begun to decompose; yet he allegedly walked out of his tomb, alive, normal and healthy (John 11:1-44). The Gospel of Mathew cites that when Jesus died on the cross the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom, *there was an earthquake and rocks were split. Then it says graves were opened and many bodies of the saints were raised and appeared to people in Jerusalem (Mat. 27:50-54).*



CH questioned WLC on this part of Matthew's account. He answered, "I don't know if Matthew intended this as apocalyptic imagery or intended this to be taken literally. I haven't studied it in depth and I'm open to one way or another." Every time he says something like this about some disturbing scripture it looks and sounds like he is talking out of both sides of his mouth. *There isn't very much here to study and his comments showed his familiarity of this account.* In an answer to another of CH's questions, he didn't have any problem in affirming he accepted Jesus' virgin birth. All of this gives us good reason to wonder why he waffled about

Matthew's account of the resurrection of the saints. *It turns out as we will see; this is a very touchy gospel account.*

If these events really happened then all of Jerusalem would have been buzzing about the strange resurrection event. Surely some of Jesus' disciples would have either witnessed it, perhaps spoken to one or more of the resurrected saints and/or heard of it via reliable sources. In any case many people including and especially Jesus' followers must have been talking about it. Since this event occurred as Jesus died it would have clearly portrayed him as a miracle worker who had performed his last miracle. *If anything this strange event should have added to the expectation of Jesus' own predicted resurrection (Luke 24:7). These and other NT scriptures show the resurrection of Jesus was certainly expected by people in his inner circle.*

Contradictory Accounts of Events After the Crucifixion

Matthew's account also has the chief priests and Pharisees going to Pilate the day after a disciple name Joseph of Arimathea laid the corpse in a new tomb. They got Pilate to agree to have soldiers guard the tomb since Jesus had claimed, *'after three days I will rise.'* The Jews secured the tomb by *sealing the stone* that Joseph had previously placed at the entrance. Then they set the guards in place (Mat. 27:62–65). *Another pertinent point is that if the Jewish leaders knew that Jesus predicted his own resurrection, his disciples must have actually have heard him say it.* WLC & N.T. Wrights' assertion they didn't have the slightest expectation is wearing thin.

As the first day of the week began to dawn Mary Magdalene and the other Mary witnessed some strange events. There was a *great earthquake* as an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and rolled back the stone. The angel's countenance was like lighting and his clothing was white as snow. The guards shook for fear and became like dead men. The angel told the women Jesus had been raised from the dead and they will see him in Galilee. The guards were later bribed by the chief priests to say the corpse had been stolen while they slept (Mat. 28:1– 8, 11-15).

The problem is Matthew is the *only gospel writer* to mention these details. To recap, this includes: the account of two earthquakes, the resurrection of saints at Jesus' death, the group of Jews going to Pilate, sealing the stone at the tomb's entrance, the placement of the guards, the early arrival of only two women - both named Mary, appearance of one angel who rolled back the stone, the fear & paralysis of the guards and their later bribery by the Jews. *How can this be?* It is clear that Matthew went to great lengths to eliminate the theft of the corpse theory. It was one argument that could have called the bodily resurrection into question. Did he invent the account as an attempt to discourage that possibility? Why did the other gospel writers omit such important details?

It isn't just that Mathew stands alone on this, but his details contradict those in the other gospels. When Jesus died, Mark only says the veil of the temple was torn in half, from top to bottom (Mark 15:37). Luke says *there was darkness over all the earth and when the sun was darkened* the veil of the temple was torn in two (Luke 23:44-45). John did not write of *any unusual events occurring when Jesus died* and is the sole one who claimed the side of Jesus' corpse was pierced while it still hung on the cross (John 19:31-37). Overall it is a very different story. In fact John has all of the events of Jesus' last days starting one day earlier than the other gospels. It has been a long standing and disturbing contradiction even to conservative New Testament scholars. We will see more about this gospel shortly.

In any case, the angel in Matthew's story rolled away the stone as the two Mary's watched. The angels told the ladies that Jesus has risen and has gone on before you. "You will see him in Galilee." They had already left the tomb and were on their way to tell the disciples *they* met Jesus and he said, "Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see me." Then the *two ladies held him by his feet and worshipped him* (Mat. 28:1-10). *The first postmortem appearance to the eleven disciples in Matthew's gospel was on a mountain in Galilee* (Mat. 28:16-20). The details in Mark's account are different. When the two Mary's arrive at the tomb the stone *had already been rolled away*. When *they entered the tomb* they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe (presumably an angel). He tells them Jesus has risen and they will see him in Galilee. Jesus then appeared *firstly to Mary Magdalene* not to the two Mary's as per Matthew's account. He then appeared in another form to two unnamed disciples and *afterward he firstly appeared to the eleven disciples as they sat at the table*. The *exact location* is undisclosed but it appears they are sitting at their common table. Taken in context it probably occurred within a short time after the resurrection and at their residence in the environs of Jerusalem (Mark 16:1-14).

Luke's account is the only Gospel that fits WLC's characterization that a group of woman followers arrived early Sunday morning and found the tomb was empty. He knows much better and probably tried to steer away from the NT contradictory pot holes during the debate. CH didn't make any comments about it but missed an opportunity to caught WLC in a deception. Luke claims the group consisted of women who had come with Jesus from Galilee and certain other women (Luke 23:54-56; Luke 24:1). They arrived early on the first day of the week and they found the stone had been rolled away from the entrance of the tomb. They went in and did not find the corpse and then suddenly two men wearing shining garments appeared. They said Jesus had risen and asked them to recall what he had said to them when they were in Galilee, "The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again" (Luke 24:1-7).

The ladies, including the two named Mary, returned and told the eleven disciples and all of the rest but many didn't believe it. Peter ran to the tomb, saw the linen cloths and he marveled. Later two of them met a man and were unaware that he was Jesus. They were traveling to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. Jesus talked to and taught them along the way. Later at dinner they finally realized who he was and he vanished. Soon afterwards as the two were telling the others; Jesus appeared in their midst. He showed them he was off flesh and blood and even ate some food. *The first postmortem appearance to the eleven disciples and those that were with them in Luke's account is clearly in Jerusalem.* (Luke 24; Luke 24:33).

John's gospel also differs in details. It says on the first day of the week, very early while it was still dark *Mary Magdalene came to the tomb* and saw the stone had been moved. She ran back to Simon Peter and the other disciple whom Jesus loved i.e. John and told them the corpse was missing. The *two disciples ran to the tomb* but John got there first. They inspected the empty tomb and the linen clothes and went back home. Mary stayed at the tomb and wept and then looked inside and *saw two angels in white*. They asked her why she was crying and she replied

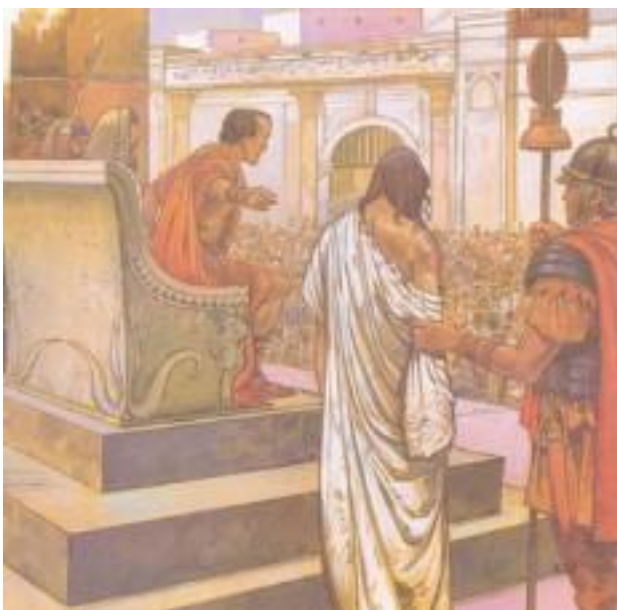
the corpse of her Lord had been taken. Then she turned around and *saw Jesus standing there* but assumed he was the gardener. Jesus asked, why are you weeping? She replied the corpse was gone and asked him where he had laid Him. Jesus said, "Mary." She replied, "Rabboni!" i.e. Teacher. Jesus cautioned her *to not touch him as he hadn't yet ascended to My Father* and told her to tell the others (John 20:1-18). This contradicts Mathew's account as it says *two ladies named Mary* firstly met Jesus. He said "Rejoice!" And they came to him and *held him by his feet* and worshipped Him. Then Jesus tells them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brethren to go to Galilee, and they will see me there." (Mt. 28:8-10). This is clearly *not* the same story!

According to John's gospel, later on the same day Jesus appeared to the disciples at their residence even though the doors were locked. He showed him his wounds on his hands and side and breathed on them so they received the Holy Spirit. Eight days later Thomas was told what had happened but he wouldn't believe it unless he could put his own fingers into Jesus' wounds. Again when the doors were locked Jesus appeared and let doubting Thomas put his hands into his wounds (John 20: 24-29). In any case the 21st chapter of John's gospel goes onto tell of a later postmortem appearance around the Sea of Tiberias or Galilee.

We can see in John's gospel *the first postmortem appearance to perhaps 10 of the disciples in John's account is clearly in the environs of Jerusalem*. The second appearance included Thomas and it was in the same location. *The problem with this story is that Luke claims the first post-mortem appearance was to the eleven and those who were with them, gathered together. It is also clear they were in Jerusalem (Luke 24: 33-50). Thomas is one of the eleven and so both stories cannot be true.* John's story line also differs in other details. *Mary Magdalene was firstly at the tomb, John and then Peter were next to visit. Later Mary was alone when she encountered firstly two angels and then Jesus at the tomb.*

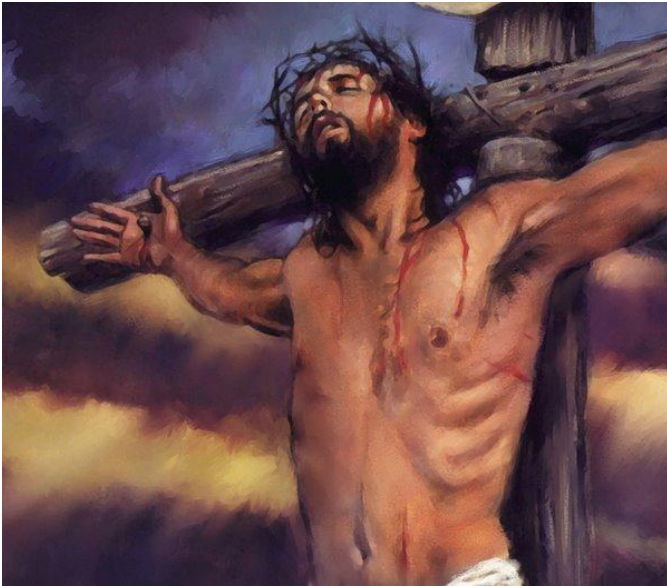
Much in John's story is made of Jesus showing off his wounds in his hands and side and of Thomas touching them (John 20: 20, 24-29). *Modern research with corpses shows the hands of crucified victims were not nailed as it could not hold the weight of the body to the cross. It has to be done through a specific point between more supportive bones in the wrists.* I have heard it said there are those who after learning this, claimed the Greek term for hands includes the wrists. I wondered why they didn't say it before the research results were revealed.

There are several problems in accepting the gospel accounts at face value. There are numerous contradictions and some unique details found only in one gospel. At times it is hard to believe it's



the same story. The telling of the resurrection story clearly had drifted and changed in details just like ghost stories commonly do over time and after many retellings. This isn't unique to the resurrection related details as there are many other examples of this kind of story drifting in other New Testament accounts. The following is some other examples in random order but still related to Jesus' last days.

John's gospel claims the famous account of Jesus turning over the money exchangers tables in the Temple area occurred early in his ministry during his first visit to Jerusalem to observe the Passover (John 2:13-16). The problem is this account is covered by Matthew during Jesus' final visit to Jerusalem; after he rode to much fanfare into the city on *a donkey and a colt*. (Mat. 21:1-13). Mark &



Luke's accounts are different as both have Jesus riding into the city only on *a colt*. Both also contain the story of his overturning of the money exchangers tables but include that after this the scribes and chief priests began to plot how to destroy him. They were obviously jealous as the people were astonished at his teachings. Jesus had become a standout but outsider Galilean Rabbi. He was getting the attention and treatment equivalent to a modern rock star (Mark 11:1-18; Luke 19:28-40; 45-48).

Luke's account is alone in mentioning the role Herod (the grandson of the infamous King Herod) played in Jesus' last hours. He happened to be in Jerusalem and Pilate sent

Jesus to him because Jesus was from Galilee & it was Herod's territory. After Jesus refused to answer any questions or perform a miracle Herod's men treated him with contempt, put a robe on him and mocked and mistreated him (Luke 23:6-12). This story replaces the other one in which it was Pilate's soldiers who mocked & beat Jesus and put a robe & a twisted crown of thorns on him. *Luke doesn't say one word about the thorny crown.*

In any case the common artist's rendering of Jesus suffering on the cross wearing his crown of thorns on his head and his body appearing badly thorn up by a brutal whipping is probably a fabrication. At least Mathew and Mark claim that after his mockery robbing & crowning they put his own clothes on him before leading him out to be crucified. (Mat. 27:27-31; Mark 15:16-20). *John's gospel is the only account that claims Jesus was scourged. After the whipping,* Pilate's soldiers mocked and struck Jesus after he had been robbed and crowned with twisted thorns. He was also led out to be viewed by the Jews, still robbed and wearing the crown, and they cried out "crucify him!" (John 19:1-7). Since John is alone on the scourging issue it at least calls into question whether it even happened?

Throughout Pilate's interrogation Jesus engaged him in conversation (John 18:34 –37; 19:11). In the other three gospels he only said, "*It is as you say,*" and in the first two gospels the governor marveled about his silence (Mat. 27:11-14; Mark 15:1-5; Luke 23:1-5). John is also the only gospel that says Jesus carried his cross to the Place of a Skull, "Gogotha" in Hebrew (John 19:7). The other three say a man named Simon a Cyrenian was made to carry the cross. Luke's account adds that Simon bore the cross after Jesus; or in other words he carried it behind him as they were forced to walk to the place of crucifixion (Mat. 27:32; Mark 15: 21; Luke 23:26). There are so many more contradictions and examples of story drifting in the Bible but I think I've made my point. I find it rather comical and sad when I hear Christians claiming the Bible never contradicts itself. Who is the fool? Who has been fooled? Who is trying to fool who? Who has fooled oneself? Who is who?

N.T. Wright's Statements & My Conclusion

WLC likes N.T. Wright's conclusion that the resurrection of Jesus is so certain to be on par with the death of Augustus in 14 A.D. and the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 A.D. I have already indicated Jesus' disciples had been pre-programmed to expect his resurrection and so Wright's claim of a lack of expectation via the Judaism of their day is a mute point. According to the gospels the expectation was certain and they were the ones who allegedly had the visions/experiences. *WLC's claim that the resurrected Jesus was seen by believers, unbelievers, skeptics and enemies is not supported in the NT.* All of the gospel accounts and the one in the

first chapter of Acts he is only seen *only* by his followers and yes, some are depicted as initially being skeptical. *Specifically there isn't a single NT account of Jesus being seen by "enemies."* CH failed to comment and another inaccurate statement passed by him. In any case, perhaps the stories of the post-mortem sightings are fictional, but more likely they did see something and the stories drifted over time and were embellished. Perhaps it was due to hypnotic-like suggestions planted in the unconscious minds of those who were open to the teachings of their esteemed Rabbi? Or, maybe it was due to something else?

Ghost sightings are one thing but the missing corpse is another issue. It isn't hard to imagine some contemporary people some years after Jesus' death saying things like, *"You say he was resurrected but you don't know because you weren't there. Maybe someone stole the body and his mourning disciples were emotionally upset & thought they saw him. Why doesn't this Jesus show himself now?"* As we have seen Matthew's account solely make much effort to avoid the theft of the corpse theory. That being said, Matthew's gospel does not make any statements about Jesus' wounds or of him eating food in his postmortem accounts.

Mark's gospel doesn't mention Jesus' physicality in his postmortem accounts and it is widely understood to have been the earliest gospel. New Testament scholars have determined the general story line found in Mark appears in Matthew and Luke. The three gospels are very similar and this is why scholars collectively referred to them as the synoptic gospels (the Greek term means "same view"). Overall there is very good textual evidence that Mark was used as a source document by the writers of the other two gospels. However the other two do occasionally go off in different directions. Matthew's account of the details following Jesus' death, that we saw, is an example. Another example is Luke's postmortem account. It is the only *synoptic gospel* that speaks of the resurrected Jesus' flesh and blood and of him eating food. When a deviation stands by itself, such as these examples, it makes them less believable. This follows since the more time there is between the earliest account and later ones allow for more story drifting. Even Mark's account is far from proven; it could well have also been the product of story manufacturing in the decades since the crucifixion and associated events. We probably will never know how much fiction was added to the original events.

John is commonly thought to be the last gospel to have been written. Overall it is the weirdo gospel in the sense that it is so *very different* than the synoptic gospels; it breaks the mold. One can clearly say John's gospel follows the beat of its own drummer. John follows Luke's lead in relating the physicality of the resurrected Jesus but he adds some spice to the account in his unique account of doubting Thomas.

However, all the gospel writers wanted people to think that Jesus' death and his postmortem appearances amounted to much more than a common ghost story. *If you take each gospel solely on-its-own account there are not any problems. However, when you compare them it's a disaster.* Unfortunately all of the contradictions and story drifting do not make it historically convincing. How can anyone tell what really happened, when and where?

All of these problems having been noted there is another one that is equally important, if not more so. Jesus' death and resurrection isn't historically supported by any truly *contemporaneous* documents and there isn't a lick of physical evidence. The gospels were written decades after the event. The letters attributed to Paul on-the-main was probably written earlier than the gospels. Paul mentions the resurrection but he never saw Jesus when he was alive and thus wasn't an eye witness. There probably was a Roman record of the crucifixion but it has never surfaced & perhaps was destroyed along with others records during the Roman siege of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Going to Jerusalem doesn't help too much as there are several sites where Jesus was allegedly crucified. An internet search of images that picture Golgotha, the Place of the Skull, shows

several photos of local hillsides with vague skull-like patterns. It is a little bit like seeing faces in clouds while lying on one's back on the lawn on a warm summer afternoon. There are also several sites of Jesus' alleged tomb. Each creates an atmosphere of believability in the manner of good theme parks. We don't know precisely when or specifically where Jesus was crucified nor do we know the site of his tomb.

Other later Roman records mention Jesus and the rise of what is once referred to as "the new superstition" but these were written in the wake of the influence of the spreading religion. There is a mention of Jesus and the resurrection in Flavius Josephus' "*Jewish Antiquities*" but its authenticity is questionable. It too strongly essentially states *Jesus was the Messiah and had been resurrected* since Josephus wasn't a Christian and this goes against the then common Jewish thinking. The account is suspected of having been glossed into a later manuscript by someone with Christian sympathies. There is also a later Arabic version of this same work translated by Agapius. Of the account about Jesus it merely says: "whose disciples *reported* that he appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and he was alive; accordingly *he was perhaps the Messiah* about whom the prophets related many miracles." Agapius' translation is clearly watered down compared to the other account. In any case both date to many decades after Jesus' death.

The earliest detailed accounts of Jesus' life, death and alleged resurrection are the four different gospel accounts but each is at least portrayed as a genuine history. As we have seen, comparatively they contradict and this shows evidence the story changed or drifted over the decades. I'm sorry to say, they read like a collection of altered but still good ghost stories. I'd even concede the disciples probably may have seen something and were convinced that Jesus lived on. Of course this could have been part of the inspiration and why they so fervently preached their message and in some cases wouldn't concede even in the face of death. However reasonably speaking and faith aside, the NT stories do not prove to be very much more than some confusing things later Christians came to believe. *It was probably much like today; most literate people glossed over or didn't see or pay attention to the contradictions and were satisfied by the most general agreements and conclusions.*

In contrast, we have many records and much physical evidence for dates and details of Emperor Augustus' death and the destruction of Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD. There is much on Caesar Augustus' life and reign. He was the first Emperor of the Roman Empire and reigned from 27 BC until his death in 14 AD. We know the place and details of his death. Augustus is even mentioned in Luke's gospel (Luke 2:1-2). Similarly we know a lot about Commander Titus and of the Roman



siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the last Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. The so-called "Wailing or Western Wall" is a remnant of the outer retaining wall to the one time temple complex. It is a highly esteemed place and Jews to this day pray in front of it and leave their paper prayer-like messages in cracks in between blocks of the wall.

Even though N.T. Wright is a New Testament scholar, unfortunately his statements that the resurrection of Jesus is on par with

the other histories are loaded with incorrect thinking. Just because other parts of his work is of good quality it doesn't mean he didn't misfire on this issue. *CH should have challenged WLC on his make-believe point.* I don't know how WLC or any educated and subject-informed person could agree with this nonsense. *WLC's proof for god from the resurrection of Jesus Christ clearly fails!*

The Immediate Experience of God

I find WLC's inclusion of this issue in a philosophical debate about god rather puzzling; but here is what he said about it.

WLC said the immediate experience of God isn't really an argument, but one can know there is a god apart from argument by immediately experiencing him. He claimed it falls within what philosophers call properly basic beliefs. These beliefs do not stem from any previous beliefs but rather are based one's personal system of basic beliefs. The belief in the reality of the external world, the belief in the existence of the past and the presence of other minds were given as examples of properly basic beliefs. To this list WLC adds the existence of god by immediate experience. He claimed several times during the debate it was objective in nature. He also said all one needs to do is to seek for the immediate experience of god and it will happen.

Comments: On the Immediate Experience of God

These alleged properly basic beliefs are perplexing. The experience of an external reality, for example, seems to me to be far more sensory based than a "*belief*" in the common sense of the term. Certainly our brains/minds at an early age make a distinction between the "me" experience and that of "other or outside things." This is the first duality we pass through when our minds awaken at an early age. For example, we experience pain directly and we can see/hear others in pain. We know there is a separation between us, others and things.

Other experiences build upon our developing individuality. We recall past events and can separate them from present ones. We also hear of planned events for the weekend or some other day, like a friend's birthday party. So we learn about the idea of "tomorrow." If your Mom promised you can go to the ice cream store tomorrow, when you wake up you know that "today" is the "tomorrow" you were waiting for. So we gradually acquire a sensory/reason oriented sense of time.

The question I ask is: why is the immediate experience of god referred to as a "properly basic belief?" *The problem is a belief is an act of mind that fills in the blanks between things known and unknown. However this entails that a mind is aware and able to consider at least some of the pros and cons of the evidence.* In any case an immediate experience of god is often part of a religious conversion process. It follows or comes along with sensory, intellectual, emotional, cognitive, social experiences and physical activities. It is said that many people are programmed by groups who actively seek to convince and convert others. The new devotees do have religious experiences and these are as convincing if not more than all of the doctrines. In fact the content of the teachings per se is not directly related to inducing an immediate experience of god. Jews, Christians, Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists etc. all succeed in altering the awareness of those they convert so they become convinced of the "*truth.*" Yet each of these religions has different ideas about god. *How can you use this, as any kind of proof that god exists?*

It should be said the term "*properly basic beliefs*" is used in some schools of philosophy such as "reformed epistemology." Here beliefs are said to be basic if they are reasonable and consistent with a sensible world view. This school of thought includes faith in our senses, faith in our memory and faith in god as properly basic beliefs. Although it can be argued all fit their criteria I

would still say there is a difference between the later and the former two. The former ones are about mental processes that are directly experienced and are no doubt subject to occasional error. The subject of god is ethereal and has many interpretations and once one is embraced it can elicit an immediate experience that is unique to its form.

WLC suggested to initiate an immediate experience of god one should seek him. We don't have to "seek" for the experience of the outside world, time or that of the existence of other minds. These are a-priori experiences and a direct effort of the will is not needed to kick start them. *In fact an immediate experience of god builds on primary basic beliefs; such as, the experience of the outside world.* The seeker comes to their experience after having looked around the outside world and concludes that indeed god exists. *It therefore cannot be a properly basic belief in the same sense.* Further to induce an immediate experience of god, true believers often tell the people they are trying to convert, to pray and ask god to reveal whether the things they say are true. It is as if the pump needs to be primed before the water starts to flow. *The priming issue must also put the immediate experience of god into a different subcategory.*

The immediate experience of god is also *not* universal amongst humans as is the awareness of the outside world, time and of other minds. It is not in the same objective class and is subjective in nature. *WLC is clearly wrong in claiming it is an objective experience.* Atheists do not have an immediate experience of god and they obviously experience the outside world etc. So, how can it be a "*properly basic belief*" in the same sense as the other examples?" Also as we've seen the immediate experience of god is not the same thing to people of different faiths and beliefs. In fact WLC might say at least some people who are outside of the radar of his faith aren't having a correct experience. This *assumptive comment* stems from what he said during the debate about those whom he doesn't think are Christians but here I'm thinking more about Muslims, Buddhists & Hindus etc. In any case there are those who would say that all others outside their faith are deceived and are having an *immediate experience of the devil and his demons*. This so-called proof of god, that isn't really a proof, is far from conclusive. It amounts to perhaps some well intended but fuzzy thinking. It is another topic that should not be part of a logical and objective debate about the existence of god.

Conclusion

I wondered how I should conclude my essay since the video of the debate did not contain any concluding remarks. During the audience questions period one person asked CH without god what purpose was there for life? After some back & forth between the debaters CH said, "*struggling myself to be free & helping others to be free*" i.e. of the shackles of religion and implied it and the solidarity with others of like-mindedness gives me a lot of meaning in my life. WLC said, "*The Westminster Confession gets it right: the purpose of life is to glorify god and enjoy him forever*". Both comments were sincere but there isn't a single & specific purpose-of-life statement in the Bible and other Christians could and do state it very differently.

The young man who posed the initial question for example claimed the purpose of life is to serve god. WLC before he made his concluding comment said he didn't think so. Jesus didn't say we were servants, but rather friends. Any way you can see how people who read the same book come away with different conclusions on the big question. This kind of thing on many issues characterizes Christianity over the ages. People in groups/churches, in effect, accuse those in other churches of having hallucinations or being possessed by demons and/or being deceived. The beat goes on.

All things considered the debate was interesting and educational. However it did not *quite* live up to its billing. The chief disappointment is it lacked a *verbally expressed* specific purpose

statement and the blame rests on the Biola University debate organizers. After several viewings I concluded there really wasn't a single knock-out punch and therefore this one goes to the judges. Based on what was presented I think the debate was a draw. CH could have been stronger on criticizing some of WLC's so-called proofs. WLC repeatedly parroted his proofs but also overly relied on statements of faith i.e. citing the Bible. He could have spent more time on philosophical or rational proofs. *In any case it is only my conclusion and if you view the video you might come to a different one. Thus goes the way of judges who often disagree.*

It is clear the god that WLC argued for was the one or ones depicted in the Bible. However If one thinks the purpose of the debate was whether it is *rational* to *believe* the biblical god exists; it implies the Bible is rational in its depiction. It clearly isn't and therefore the answer has to also be no. If one thinks the purpose of the debate included proving that Jesus Christ is god's son; the answer is no. *In addition my comments show each of WLC's proofs fails to prove the god of his vision exists, even according to probabilistic or belief criteria. However I re-iterate; I had the advantage of viewing & listening to the entire debate several times and had time to prepare my arguments.*

The lack of a formal & specific definition of god is the debate's other major failing & is really part of the first. In other words what were they debating? However the assumed biblical concept as per WLC's usage failed. Taking this as a lesson if one wants to argue for or against the existence of god it is advisable that something else is meant by the term. It also depends on how it is specifically defined. There isn't, for example, any way one could *prove or tell* god has a human-like form or is an anthropomorphic being. However, it is possible to give a specific definition of god that could be shown to exist or is rational to believe exists. To those who wish to see what I think further are invited to go to my website <http://antspub.com> . Click on the *Downloads* button at the top of any page and click on the essay: *"What is ATI-ism?"* All our downloadable files, like this one, are in PDF format and are free of charge. I hope you enjoy and learn from them!

