

# This I Believe

## Michael Battalio (<http://www.battalio.com>)

I started this thread of posts on my blog about a year ago. It stemmed from my desire to define what I held sacred and to solidify those ideas in my mind. I began by critiquing two books I had just read. After a short time two fanatical Christians and two of my atheistic friends began commenting on my posts; a sizeable chunk of my posts were responses to them. After a lot of this talk, I came to the conclusion that Christianity is not the whole answer, and that God, faith, and religion are not easily defined.

### Part 1:

First, a discussion of two books I have read recently.

I think of myself as an equal opportunity offender-someone who can offend not only the religious but the nonreligious as well. So, with that in mind I'd like to comment on some of my reading as of late. Within the last few months, I have read [The God Delusion](#) by Richard Dawkins and [The Case for a Creator](#) by Lee Strobel. Both have their moments, but it's interesting that both use the same scientific facts to create a thought process that proves their arguments. They are arguing for a dichotomy; there is a God or there isn't. One of them must be wrong. Figuring out who is wrong is a problem. Despite philosophy being logical it's hard to prove wrong. (Which I suppose is the point, if it were easy I certainly wouldn't be worrying about it now.)

The first stepping stone they use is the anthropic principle. I've touched on the anthropic principle before, but I think it bears a second look. Both books spend a chapter or two each touting anthropic reasoning as proof of their argument. How is that possible? What does this have to do with God? What is the anthropic principle?

The universe has some very precise constants, fine-tuned is the clichéd phrase for it. So precisely tuned these constants are that the chances for just one of the constants (there are a lot of constants) being supportive of the universe we see today (galaxies, stars, planets made of stable atoms and molecules) are, according to some studies, along the order of one in ten billion raised to the 123 power (Roger Penrose, [The Emperor's New Mind](#), New York: Oxford 1989, pg 344). Our universe, being more than  $1/10,000,000,000^{123}$  against us being here, seems rather difficult to be scientifically explained. But wait...

The anthropic principle dates back a few decades, although allusions to it go back as far as 1900ish. A man named Brandon Carter first formally proposed the anthropic principle to defeat an argument for the Steady State Theory of cosmology which contended that not only are all places identical, but all times are also identical. This helped defend the now (mostly) accepted Big Bang theory. The argument comes in two forms, a weak argument and a generalized strong argument (kind of like how special relativity is generalized by general relativity). The weak argument refers to the selection of specific times and spaces in the universe for the development of intelligent life. In summary the weak anthropic principle says our existence coincides perfectly with conditions for intelligent life because life would not be around to measure the perfect conditions for its existence if those conditions did meet the needs of intelligent life. I imagine some of you just went, "What?..." To restate, we would not be here to measure stuff if the stuff we were measuring precluded our existence. The strong argument generalizes the weak argument to include fundamental constants and forces of physics. The conclusion to this is we are in a universe where the forces and constants are such that we can exist. (Which, I know, is rather obvious.) An implication of this is that there are universes where forces and constants do not include our existence. So, we are left with a theory of the multiverse, that we are in one of an infinite number of possible universes. Dawkins proclaims the multiverse as an alternative to the Teleological argument for the existence of God. (To sum up the Teleological argument in a sentence: God exists because the universe is too perfectly designed for there not to be a God. That's a vast simplification. I suggest a bit of research on the subject - perhaps a topic for a future blog post.)

By introducing this idea of the multiverse, the strong anthropic principle selects our universe as one in which life can exist. This is analogous to the weak version of the anthropic principle selecting our

planet at our time for intelligent life, which is also somewhat analogous to the Darwinian theory of Evolution selecting our genes for life. So instead now of exemplifying his atheistic view, Dawkins inadvertently advances an agnostic view of the uni/multiverse. A bit of explanation: Dawkins affirms that the multiverse is an alternative possibility to God having a hand in explaining the implications of anthropic reasoning (i.e. That despite the chances of humanity existing being infinitesimally small, there are an infinite number of universes in the multiverse, so the chances don't matter. We are in this universe as opposed to the infinite other universes because if our universe didn't support life we wouldn't be here to consider it.). The problem with this is there is no way to prove a multiverse exists, just as we have no way to prove the existence of a diving maker. So, instead deifying a multiverse, we have to relegate Dawkins's argument to an agnostic argument.

Strobel takes a different approach. Strobel asserts that the chances are so small for the conditions to be met for life that there must be some sort of overall intelligence or purpose in creating the universe. To dismiss the multiverse, he cites several scientists (specifically, John Polkinghorne) as discrediting the multiverse theory as "pseudo-science" and "a metaphysical guess" (pg. 140). But again where does this leave us; agnosticism. There is no way to prove God; there is no way to prove the theory of the multiverse. On this Strobel and Dawkins merely redefine the argument.

## Part 2:

Next, I'm going to present a summary of evidence for and against God concerning evolution and irreducible complexity from Lee Strobel's "The Case for a Creator" and from Richard Dawkins's "The God Delusion".

Strobel interviewed several scientists, most notably biologist Michael Behe. He argues that evolution cannot explain certain systems because they are too complex to evolve naturally, and thusly must have been designed.

Having done a bit of research into Behe I have discovered his claims while though intriguing are disputed by the majority of biologists. In fact there is a considerable amount of work debunking all of Behe's claims. There is even a case decided where Behe was a witness in which the court dismisses Behe's claims. (See *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District*) Still though, I believe an explanation of this is in order.

Behe provides several examples of irreducible complexity; the eye, blood clotting, and flagellum. To begin his discussion he provides the example of a mousetrap. The mousetrap is irreducibly complex. Remove even just one component-the spring, wooden base, the closing bar-and it no longer works. Behe argues the same for each of his examples. I'll describe just one. Consider a blood clot, if the clot doesn't form over a cut, no matter how small, you'll die. If a clot forms in the wrong place, your brain for instance, you'll die. If a clot doesn't completely cover a cut, you'll die. The system is highly choreographed. According to Behe, blood clots have to follow a sequence of ten steps using 20 different components (C. for a C. pg.209). Remove just one of the components and the system falls apart. The system is useless if step six of ten fails. How did these 20 components come together to create this system?

Behe also argues against gene duplication (the accidental creation of an extra copy of a piece of DNA where the original copy performs its intended function and the extra copy can perform a new function). To revisit the mouse trap: say you have the spring but not the base. Now via duplication you have two springs, so you have two springs and no base. That's still useless. How does the extra spring become a base?

Again, however, there is scientific evidence disproving this claim. (see <http://www.pnas.org/content/100/13/7527.full>) The puffer fish cited in the article has three less of the genes Behe contends are need for blood clotting. And the question follows what is the fewest amount of genes needed for the supposedly irreducibly complex system to continue to work. That's unknown, but even if one of the ten steps is removed then the system still finds a way to work debunks this example. Behe has many other examples which you may want to research on your own.

Conversely, Dawkins contends that irreducible complexity is a myth thanks to natural selection, gene duplication and genetic redundancy. Dawkins claims that components of irreducibly complex systems can have served other functions before becoming a link in an irreducibly complex system. For example, a gene in blood clotting might have been used to code information for the storage of oxygen in red blood cells before it was used to trigger solidification in the presence of open air.

Dawkins has a separate title, "Climbing Mount Improbable" (which I hope to read in the future), that goes at length into explaining seemingly insurmountable leaps in evolution by a sequence of small steps. Each step is slightly advantageous to life so these steps are added one on top of the other until you have a creature that, for example, doesn't die if it receives a cut. Dawkins likens it to getting to the top of a sheer cliff by walking to the other side of the mountain and ascending the gentle slope on the opposite side.

One last topic of interest Strobel includes is the mind-bogglingly large amount of information stored in DNA, which is likened to the cliché of monkeys on a typewriter producing not just Shakespeare but the entire volume of knowledge of mankind. All that information, except the origin of the very first piece of data, can be explained by natural selection. The problem is where did that very first piece of data come from that directed replication. Strobel refuses chance based on the improbability of proteins randomly forming a chain of replicating DNA. However, I would argue that our friend the anthropic principle might have something to say about that. The logic being that we wouldn't be here to consider the first piece of data if that first piece of data didn't replicate. Still though, that's a bit of stretch. Where did that first piece of information come from? I don't know.

### Part 3:

This entry into the series will focus on "The Case for a Creator" by Lee Strobel, specifically a critique of some of the more ambiguous points. I will go through a list of some of the illogical points he makes, plus comment on a couple of items to his credit.

Strobel and his interviewees use apples to oranges analogies to try to affirm God's existence. For example, in Chapter 6 Robin McGrath asks you to picture this: Suppose when we first send a human to Mars we discover a biosphere constructed with an atmosphere supportive of life. Would we not immediately believe that an intelligence beyond our own created it? The answer is yes obviously, but when you change "biosphere" to "universe" and "intelligence" to "God" in that argument you create an awful logical fallacy. On Mars, it is "obvious" that nature did not create the biosphere. To call it obvious that the universe is not created via natural processes is *petitio principii* (begging the question). It's what we are trying to answer in the first place. If it were obvious that the universe was created artificially, as the biodome was, then the argument would be valid, but it is not obvious—that is the whole point.

I could come up with many other examples of that, but you get the point. Just be careful if you read this book. Despite Ockham's razor, question the simplest sounding of arguments; they are usually too good to be true.

Here is a more compelling argument: Strobel focuses a chapter, Chapter 5, on the Kalam Cosmological Argument. To summarize: 1.) Whatever begins to exist has a cause. 2.) The Universe began to exist. 3.) The Universe has a cause. That cause is God.

Saying that another physical process caused the Universe simply pushes the argument back a level. What caused the cause? This is an intriguing argument. I find it difficult to easily find a hole in it. (Warning: Physics mumbo jumbo) Saying that quantum fluctuations caused the Universe implies that an energy field had to exist (and something for it to exist in) before hand. What caused that? We're talking about the Universe being created from nothing, absolute nothing. Virtual particles are caused from an energy field, not exactly nothing. There are also p-branes (physicists love their whimsy) in string theory and the aforementioned multiverse. [I've already talked about the multiverse (see Part One of this series). P-branes and just about everything dealing with string theory are improvable, just like the multiverse, so it's a moot point to bother with them in this discussion, but p-branes are a mathematical construct composed of multiple dimensions, any integer from zero up. The thought is that the universe is inside one of these p-branes (the p is just a variable, so that a three dimensional brane would be a 3-brane.), and these p-branes are floating around in something, and every time they collide with one another, they form a new universe. That's really simplified, mostly because I have a hard time understanding it. If you're interested, there's a lot of literature on the internet.] Anyway, the point being, what caused the universe? And granted, just because we don't have a reason now, doesn't mean we won't have a reason eventually.

Next, in Ch. 7, Strobel discusses with Guillermo Gonzalez and Jay Wesley Richards evidence of God from Astronomy. The main rebuff I would like to give is on the rare Earth hypothesis. The theory being that the Earth is so fine tuned, so perfect, so one in a quadrillion that it has to be designed. Here is

my case against that argument: just recently earth sized planets have been discovered around stars. I believe the percentage of planets with stars is about 1 in 10, or at least that is the best estimate so far. With the discovery of earth sized planets orbiting even some of the stars we can see, I can say without a bit of reservation (although there is a chance I'm wrong) that there must be another earth sized planet in the Goldilocks zone. The Goldilocks zone is just a clever way of saying that a planet is in an orbit where its temperature is just right for liquid water to continuously exist.) I also must dismiss the arguments about the rarity of having a molten iron core (the iron core creates the magnetic field around the Earth that protects us from all kinds of high energy particles that could kill life) and a moon of the right size and distance, because even with a one in a trillion chance, there are billions or more chances for the exact conditions to exist more than once. I am afraid astronomy does not support the rare earth hypothesis anymore.

I must say that I do not know enough about most of the biological evidence presented to make a determination on it one way or the other. It has convinced me I need to spend some time reading up on biology because that's a subject in which I'm deficient. (But look at Part Two of this series for a discussion of irreducible complexity.)

The biggest problem with the book though is that despite Strobel's claims to being unbiased, there are no religious skeptics interviewed, and almost all of those interviewed have doctorates in philosophy or theology, not science. This really needs no explanation. It is difficult to call oneself unbiased when you have no arguments that differ from your own presented.

#### **Part 4:**

This entry into the series will focus on "The God Delusion" by Richard Dawkins, specifically a critique of some of the more ambiguous points. A kind of editor's note: these are undeveloped ideas and just about each paragraph is a separate thought. If I have more time, I will explore these ideas more thoroughly later.

Dawkins argues that a free, omnipotent God controlling every atom and answering every prayer usurps the role of science. He feels that science must be able to explain everything, and that a supernatural power that is not ruled by science lessens the meaning of science. In effect, the argument defines science as something that can have no holes, that must be omniscient, that must explain everything without any supernatural causes (GD 147-8). That argument is no better than making Science a kind of God. Which isn't necessarily a bad thing, but the wording he uses is what bothers me. It is almost as if he is making science a religion, which is a bit worrisome in itself.

Dawkins argues that a grand designer would be so complicated that he would need an even more grand designer to design Him. He has something there, but he's trying to constrain religion, which is difficult to do. Religion has God conveniently boxed up as an omni-present, omnipotent, omniscient being. By definition, there is nothing greater than He. If he's everywhere, he's always existed. He doesn't need a creator. If he is all powerful, it doesn't matter how complicated He needs to be. He's all powerful. If he's all knowing, it doesn't matter how much knowledge it took to create the universe. But his argument does reveal that argument by design can be a circular argument, i.e. if the world is so complex that there is no way it cannot be designed, then there must be some complex being that designed it, but if there is a being more complex than the universe, who designed Him. Et cetera. (See the paragraph on the Kalam Cosmological Argument in part 3 of this series.)

Dawkins is also unnecessarily hostile towards religion. Several times throughout the book I found myself feeling insulted by his derogatory comments on religion, and here I am reading the book because I might agree with him. He is correct in saying that I only am so easily insulted because I have been raised religiously, and I should try to remove the chains of thought that a religious mindset had locked me to. But that does not change that the feelings I have toward religion are there now. There's nothing I can do about those preconceived notions, much less the preconceived notions of others who are merely reading his book out of curiosity. If his goal is to make atheism more accepted and make theism seem less ominous, he is being self-defeating. He would do better trying to cater to those individuals who are being introspective instead of being belligerent.

However, his hostility might serve a purpose. By attacking God, Dawkins is attempting to cut down the barriers that many, including me, have against crossing God's infallible commands. Although I felt resentful occasionally, every once in a while I did have to step back and say, "Wait, he does have a point." The God of the Old Testament is, to quote Dawkins: "jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynist, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully." Turning one into a pillar of salt just for turning one's head around out of curiosity seems a bit harsh of a punishment. I do have a hard time combining the God of the Old Testament to that of the New.

There is an element of the straw man in the book as well. Dawkins tries to take the best elements of science to dispute the worst elements of theology. To quote Marilynne Robinson, "If religion is to be blamed for the fraud done in its name, then what of science? Is it to be blamed for the Piltdown hoax, for the long-credited deceptions having to do with cloning in South Korea? If by 'science' is meant authentic science, then 'religion' must mean authentic religion, granting the difficulties in arriving at these definitions." One cannot defeat the egregious errors of religion and ignore the errors of science. While true that science did eventually uncover the Piltdown hoax and the fraud of cloning in South Korea. Religion is also attempting to flesh out the inconsistencies in its own beliefs.

One of Dawkins most interesting propositions is that of the "meme." A meme is a gene of culture essentially. It's a bundle of cultural beliefs that are passed on, so to speak, from generation to generation. A key distinction between genes and memes is that memes don't necessarily help the holder of that meme survive; it is just the meme itself that is surviving. Dawkins supposes that memes are why religions have remained so strong despite the lack of proof. For example, a religion is aided in its own survival if one of its beliefs is that God or some other higher power punishes disbelief. The religion will survive if punishment is sufficiently awful. Hence why Christianity and Islam have become so prevalent. Who would want to be thrown to the eternal fire? Or who wouldn't want 72 virgins when they die?

I believe Dawkins's largest fault is his bias. Dawkins does not speak with a single theist; just as Strobel did not speak with a single atheist. Many of his critics, both agnostic and religious alike, point out that Dawkins does not take on some of the greatest writings of religion, instead focusing on dismantling it from the edges, as opposed to facing some of its best literature head on.

## **Part 5:**

This short entry is a comment on the lack of respect in the argument over religion.

Theists and atheists do a really good job of insulting each other, but many fail at actually proving or even really arguing anything. Many people of faith find Richard Dawkins offensive. I, however, find that people who prescribe to his beliefs more offensive than he. (Before I get a bunch of atheists mad at me, I also find many religious people offensive. [Pat Robertson comes to mind.]) They have a self righteous, childish, indignation for people of faith because they have found a leader, someone to champion their cause, and they are willing to bash whoever it takes to make sure Dawkins's message is heard.

The fact of the matter though is that both sides of this argument are pretentious. Both believe they are absolutely correct and don't care if insulting the opposition makes them or anyone else appear foolish. I am very turned off by both sides of the atheist/theist debate when they resort to name calling, which unfortunately they both do frequently. I don't want to read a book or critique when a person resorts to calling people naïve or stupid. They spend so much time insulting the other side that one never actually gets to the point. If you can't intelligently defend your argument or retort another's, do not fill your essay with mindless blather. It helps no one and hurts your cause. Isn't the point of argument to find a resolution? What many of these people do is make matters worse.

## **Part 6:**

Call this “What I actually Believe”  
Special thanks to --jam for getting me to do this.

When I first sat down to do this (figure out what I actually believed in), I wasn't sure I believed anything. Then I realized I was forcing it, and I wasn't looking at a large enough scope. I do believe in several things, most of them concepts. Here are a couple.

I believe there is a purpose to me. Whether or not that purpose is to be self determined or whether it comes from some other entity I cannot say. I can say what purpose I have given myself, and that purpose is three fold. One, my first purpose is to be happy, not a just a physical happy, but a psychological happy as well. Part of that happiness is doing what I like to do and being around who I like enjoy being around. Two, a purpose of thought, to be self aware and constantly questioning what it is I believe and do, and if this questioning leads me away or towards religion then so be it. Three, to return what I have been given (whether by divinity or chance or fate) to the people around me, that can be through my talents, actions, personality, and words - to make other people around me better off and happier than they were.

To sum this up: I believe in the Pursuit of Happiness, the Enjoyment of Life, the Ability to Question, and the spread of those Ideas.

Second, I believe in the connection between humanity. For whatever reason, we are self aware; we can learn; we can grow. We can only do these things when we interact with others. Except for some, we need companionship. We need friends with whom we can share our joys and our sorrows. Life is empty without others to share it with. Conversation with a good friend is hard to beat.

I hope there is something much greater than this tiny little existence I have, but there is no way to know. But I can say with absolute certainty that those things above exist to me. They are important: happiness, enjoyment, thought, friendship. They are the something bigger than me that I believe in.

### **Part 7:**

As a quick post, here is an analogy speaking about the argument from design. This is from the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy writer and atheist Douglas Adams. Imagine an intelligent puddle of water. This puddle, in contemplating its existence, realizes that the world must be designed for him because the hole in the ground in which he exists (his universe) fits him so well. There must be a creator. The puddle exists in its universe until it evaporates.

What we, and the puddle, don't realize is that perhaps the universe is not made to fit us but perhaps we are made to fit the universe, a la evolution. A creationist would say that means nothing, perhaps evolution was the instrument God used to create the Earth. There is the element of reasonable doubt. All a theologian has to do is come up with some explanation to cover whatever new science reveals as a truth about the universe. Religion, as has been the case since the dawn of man, can evolve just as science does.

### **Part 8: Comments on the comments (1)**

The next few posts will deal specifically with the comments I have received to my previous posts. Only three posts had much discussion with them: “This I Believe (part 4)”, “Serious Conversations (part 6)”, and “Serious Conversations (part 7)”. I'll deal with each set of comments separately.

Firstly I'd like to make some general comments. It is interesting to note the ratio of how much commentary everyone left to useful comments. I pasted all the comments into a word document and the result was 293 pages of 12-pt Times new roman font. However, I deleted a lot of it because I found it irrelevant (e.g. the name calling, arguments on specific authors, like Dawkins, the argument on homosexuality, anon. 2 soliciting five positive comments to speak intelligently [which I still maintain is a bribe], the argument of anon 2 actually being an agent of the devil [which I first interjected as a joke to demonstrate how childishly the anons were behaving], I could go on and on about the pointless items

discussed.) or when people repeated themselves. The end result was only 24 pages of relevant, original discussion. So only about 8% of the comments posted were useful. A PDF of the comments I found relevant can be found at "<http://www.battalio.com/comments.pdf>" I'm sure many of you will be aggravated by me leaving out something you feel important. Leave it as a comment later on if you want me to look at it again.

In reference to specific Biblical passages, I ignored references to the Bible in arguments where the Bible was used to justify its own veracity, that being a fallacious argument. In cases, mostly between Ted and anon 2, where specific topics about religion were argued, for example what is hell or do demons exist, I considered those references because in those arguments the presupposition is that God exists and Bible is true.

I should also say I deleted or ignored comments I felt needed no reply - places where I find it obvious that the argument is true or false. Let me justify that statement. I'm certain both anon. 1 and 2 will condemn me as a narcissist. I will repeat; this is my blog. While others might find our commentary useful, I don't think I need to justify myself for every thought I have. I'm not trying to convince anyone but myself. If I am comfortable with my own logic, I don't care what condemning statement others have.

As well as deleting entire comments, I deleted sections of comments I found irrelevant, obviously true/false, snipes at one another's intelligence, et cetera.

I am leaving comments off until I post my responses to the first set of comments. I suspect that to be complete in the next week or two. I again apologize for having to take that step. I felt that the conversation was being pointed toward places I really don't want this blog to head, namely politics. I will end that discussion with this: Despite the prevailing opinions of many, politics has nothing to do with religion and vice versa. In political discussion most confuse ethics with religion. Politics should be a case were they are separate entities. If your ethics are defined by religion then fine, but do not directly inject religion into politics. I firmly believe in the separation of church and state.

## **Part 9: Comments on the comments (2)**

Let's start from the beginning. This post will only deal with comments from "This I Believe (part 4)" and will thus be rather short. None of the anons had really joined yet, so this was really just a couple of points between myself and Wesley.

Firstly, no, I don't really believe in a personal God (as in a God that "...interferes in the physical world for [my] sake.") anymore. I really want there to be a personal God. I want to believe that there exists an intelligence that if I only hope (pray) hard enough and in the correct way that he will grant me wishes, but this does not seem to be the case. (As an aside and I suppose to see if the anons are back, I'll will say this: yes, there are some things that are beyond human control [e.g. natural disasters and a lot of other things], but most prayers are for silly things that would be more easily solved if people weren't as lazy [e.g. oh God, please let me pass this test] or things that if God does exist He probably doesn't care about [e.g. oh God, please let my foot/base/basketball team win]. If everyone took a bit more personal responsibility, the need for prayers to be answered would be greatly reduced.) Yes, a lot of "miracles" happen, but in the end, I think a lot of those "miracles" will be attributed to our own stupidity and lack of understanding. It seems far more likely that miracles are a lot of chance, coincidence and people taking the initiative to help themselves. Just because I don't believe in a personal God does not mean I don't hope there is something greater than myself.

Secondly, I believe that the primary reason for the continuance of religion is childhood indoctrination. I think that if we let a child develop without religion and then try to teach that child any religion once that child has developed the logical part of the brain, the child would reject it as silly.

I don't believe in what Catholicism believes, but I do believe in the institution that is the Church - the "Body of Christ", the people that make up the church. The Church has a lot of good, decent people that do good works, so while I don't really espouse many of those beliefs, I do believe in the people. The Church (and when I say that I mean the people of the church) has helped me a great deal. And because of that, I will continue to support Catholicism.

Wesley is absolutely correct in his summary of my methodology for "minimizing the possibility of 'accepting things on faith that are wrong'". Namely:

1. "Figure out as much as you can with reason.
2. Begin believing things for which you have no evidence (or even evidence of likelihood) and call it 'faith.'"

I use the all too familiar risk-reward idea. Here are the possibilities. One, God doesn't exist, but you believe. You die; nothing happens. Two, God doesn't exist. You don't believe; nothing happens. Three, God exists. You believe; you live in "paradise" for eternity. Four, God exists. You don't believe; you suffer in hell for eternity. (In a future post I'll comment on how I think that if option four is true, then God is a petty, childish megalomaniac.)

Am I, if I were to become an atheist, willing to bet against option four for eternity? No, so I must still force myself to believe even though reasoning tells me it is silly. (I'm sure Wesley and the anons must be exasperated with me now.)

I'll end this part with saying that I agree that God seems infinitely improbable, but because we do not know for certain I cannot dismiss the possibility that a God, even a personal God exists. I simply have a difficult time believing that. Moreover, I want a personal God to exist. I want an omnipotent being watching out over me, but it does seem like it is a fairy tale.

### **Part 10: Comments on the comments (3)**

I agree that hoping that God exists will never help me; that doesn't keep me from hoping though. Hoping and having faith are two different things. I hold out this hope because I want God to exist even though at this point I do not think he does. I want there to be an omnipotent, loving being that looks out for me and that created the universe. Isn't hoping that God exists better (in your opinion as a Christian) than giving up on God altogether?

As far as childhood indoctrination, I don't think this is an important point. I'm never going to be a child again, so I don't particularly care if this is true at the moment. I will reconsider this when I have children. The main point of it is this: the child should not be forced into a religion. The problem is that it would be difficult for any child to choose a religion when they have no way of getting to nor communicating with other people from other religions. Children may not be forced into a religion, but at least all children are predisposed towards the religion of their parents. The thing about religious children being more well behaved children is when children are not indoctrinated with religion it is because they are instead left on their own. Although many of the statistics are probably correct, the flaw is that when children are not indoctrinated with religion it is because the parents aren't around enough to teach them anything. For those studies to be valid you would have to take a group of loving religious families and compare them to equally nurturing and loving atheist families. If you were to take atheistic parents that were around and showed just as much affection as religious parents, I would be the results on the child's behavior would not be conclusive.

I am still Catholic because the Church is more than just what its beliefs are. The Church is also the people that are members of the Church. The feast for that concept is the Body and Blood of Christ that we celebrated not too long ago. I still call myself Catholic because while I do not espouse all the beliefs of the Church, I value the people and their ideals. One can be a member of an organization and not believe everything the organization believes.

I also agree that faith and reason are two different things, but just because they are different doesn't mean I can't use both of them. But yes, reason cannot help you in areas of religion, and faith is not useful in science and logic. Presently we can't use reason because to find answers because we lack information. Should the answer in those situations automatically be faith? No (for example in deciding if the big bang proves the existence of a creator). As Wesley said every atheist is infinitesimally agnostic because there is the chance that God exists in the same way there is a chance that the force of gravity could stop working tomorrow. By definition that chance is not a reasonable doubt, but merely a chance. That is where I exist. That is where I try to apply faith, but my faith is not strong enough to fill in this chance, and that is why I do not believe in a personal God, but that I hope.

The thing is though that there is free will. God doesn't stop the heart of callous, blasphemers. And calling God a megalomaniac is probably blasphemy, but I don't believe, so it doesn't bother me.

I understand that prayer is two way conversation and that most prayers are asking for things that

are not willed by God, but the fact is that most prayers are essentially wishes to God. I do still pray. Let me just say what I pray for. Under the hope that God exists, I ask him to show me the “Way and the Truth” wherever that may take me and to help others with that same cause. I also acknowledge my talents and gifts, and I express where I would like my life to go. Lastly I pray for the decrease of misery and pain in the world.

If God doesn't exist there is still a use for prayer in my mind. It helps solidify my desires and wants, and makes me grateful for what I have been given and helps put into perspective the misfortune of others. I think that level of awareness is a good thing.

I have a question. Didn't Moses convince God not to destroy the people of Israel when he made the Golden Calf? Wasn't that changing the will of God?

The problem with saying that the Bible has 2,000 fulfilled prophecies is that those prophecies were recorded by the Bible and then purportedly fulfilled and recorded in the Bible. I would be much more interested in independently proven prophecies made by the Bible.

### **Part 11: Comments on the comments (4)**

As far as children and religion goes, obviously it was a mistake of me to talk about Dawkins even once. The posts from a year ago where I talk about Dawkins were simply me expressing my thoughts on Dawkins. I do not agree with him on most things. So, I assure you, you don't need to convince me that he says some stupid things. Two, there is no possible way those studies are unbiased because they are trying to quantify qualitative results.

Again, the church is more than the beliefs it espouses. The church is the people that make up the church. I attend church for more than participating in religious ceremonies. I attend for the people and the community.

I also stay because I love playing the music. Notice I said play and not perform. I do not care about showing off my talents. I do it because I enjoy it. The music I play in church is the closest I get to having faith anymore. If God exists, then I believe and am comfortable with what the Catholic Church does and says.

I realize that faith and hope are different; I said that explicitly. But I disagree that if I don't believe I can't hope, because that's exactly how I feel. For the very reason that hope is not faith, I can hope and still not have faith. And no, I'm not courageous. I am human; that's why we need God isn't it?

I keep going to church because I want everything the church says to be true. I do understand that wanting (hope) it to be true, believing (faith) it to be true, and it actually being true are completely different things. I also know, however, that after great moments of doubt there often come great moments of faith. I want to always have my foot in the door of the church so to speak. That's why I don't leave.

Question: you say that you will only make it to heaven “if [you] have faith, and inherently in [your] heart KNOW that He will take [you]”, but you say two sentences later that “No one knows, MBat!” I'm really confused. Do you know or don't you? Or am I missing something?

A new thought: I do think that being a good person alone helps you get into heaven. 1 Corinthians 13:13-“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” The greatest of these is love, not faith. The question is does being a loving, charitable and hopeful person make up for not having a strong faith. I would argue yes. Obviously others would argue no. Perhaps I'm being narcissistic, but I just don't see how a God who gives us reason would then demand we have faith (which is contrary to reason) for salvation when there is a reasonable doubt whether God exists.

### **Part 12:**

I'm about to be brutally honest. Here is the problem. Not only do Christians of the evangelical variety believe they are correct because the Bible tells them so, but they also believe they are better than people that are more moral, more caring, more loving, and that are just generally better people than they are, just because they were indoctrinated in or adopted the “correct” religion from childhood. Also, it is

demanding of them to correct the heathen masses who aren't Christian exactly as they are Christian or rebuke and condemn them if they refuse.

And if "God" supports this, then that is not a God I want to believe in, a god of intolerance, hate, and mockery. And if hell is complete separation from a petty, intolerant god, then I welcome it. But, I believe in a God of love, and perhaps that isn't the Christian God they believe in and perhaps it is, just the actual Christian God. Condemn me all you want.

The problem with religion is that all religions are based off of books (Bible included) of dubious credibility - books that have contradicted themselves and were written by fallible, corruptible human beings even if they were inspired by divinity. On top of this, it is left up to other corruptible, fallible human beings to interpret what those books say. So now not only can the original manuscripts be wrong, but the interpretation of an incorrect manuscript be wrong. And the fact is no Christian has any idea, nor does anyone else in any other religion. Everyone thinks they know, but no one actually does for sure. One may feel moved by divinity, but are they sure, really sure? Is anyone sure? Or do they just think they're sure? (Is there anything beyond a feeling? And how do you express, convince others that your feeling is correct?) That to me is the definition of gullibility: the ability to believe in the credibility of something that can be wrong in so many ways but can never be questioned by the believers simply because that object of belief maintains its own legitimacy.

And maybe that is why I don't have faith anymore, because it seems that people with an absurdly strong faith in any religion are gullible. I really don't know. All I know is that I don't want to believe I was created in the image of an intolerant, petulant, revengeful, and seemingly unintelligent (if ignoring good science [i.e. evolution] is a requirement) being.

The difference is, not every Christian is like Anon2 (or Anon1 for that matter), and that's why I can still call myself Christian, because there are decent, intelligent people of that religion. Truthfully, I think we'll all end up in heaven, assuming any divinity exists (I think that only then will we understand each other.), but for very different reasons. Both of us are undoubtedly misguided, but that's why God is all loving, because by being human we could never please the intolerant, petulant god you speak of. Everyone has some measure of doubt. Let me repeat that. Everyone has some measure of doubt (We wouldn't be human if we believed all the time.). So how do you measure how strong someone's faith is against another's? If good works aren't good enough for God, how much faith does it take for them to become good? If good works are filthy rags simply because we don't believe, then all works are filthy rages because at some point everyone doesn't believe because we are all human. If we did believe 100% all the time we would be divine. No one could get to heaven otherwise.

### **Part 13:**

Christianity is a leap of faith, and that leap is believing that everything in the Bible is 100% true and inspired by God. If you can accept that, then everything else taught by Christianity follows. If that isn't obvious, then Christianity is a leap of faith.

The following is in response to some possible proofs of the credibility of the Bible.

#### **1. The unity of the Bible--**

Thanks to Wesley here are several examples of the Bible contradicting itself. These could be attributed to human error of course, but if there are these obvious contradictions, how many more non obvious untruths are there?

God sent his prophet to threaten David with how many years of famine?

- \* Seven (2 Samuel 24:13)
- \* Three (I Chronicles 21:12)

How many pairs of clean animals did God tell Noah to take into the Ark?

- \* Two (Genesis 6:19, 20)

\* Seven (Genesis 7:2). Despite this last instruction only two pairs went into the ark (Genesis 7:8-9)

Did Joshua and the Israelites capture Jerusalem?

\* Yes (Joshua 10:23, 40)

\* No (Joshua 15:63)

Who was the father of Joseph, husband of Mary?

\* Jacob (Matthew 1:16)

\* Heli (Luke 3:23-38)

In the count how many fighting men were found in Israel?

\* Eight hundred thousand (2 Samuel 24:9)

\* One million, one hundred thousand (I Chronicles 21:5)

Jesus descended from which son of David?

\* Solomon (Matthew 1:5-16)

\* Nathan (Luke 3:23-38)

Did Jesus bear his own cross?

\* Yes (John 19:17)

\* No (Matthew 27:31-32)

Who killed Goliath?

\* David (I Samuel 17:23, 50)

\* Elhanan (2 Samuel 21:19)

Does the Earth spin around in space?

\* No (1 Chronicles 16:30)

So when it comes to specifics the Bible isn't consistent all the time, but the major themes are connected throughout the book, those of love, faith, hope and a righteous God are well maintained. I'm not sure if this is coincidence or if it is a sound argument. It does seem improbable that the overarching themes would remain intact, but simply because it is improbable without intervention does not mean impossible. In my mind this is one of the (few and) best attributes the Bible has going for it: its consistency.

2. The Bible is non-mythical---

This is a matter of opinion and interpretation. Yes, the creation story in Genesis can be interpreted to fit with science, but what about other stories, Noah and the Ark, Moses parting the Red Sea? What is the difference between the "miracles" of the bible and "myths" of other religions? The only difference is that miracles of the Bible are not myths because the Bible is assumed to be true; besides that, the two are different in name only. The Bible is miraculous because the Bible says it is true and miraculous. Some of these stories you might call miracles, but others are obviously just stories, like the fashioning of Eve from a rib of Adam. And if some stories are just metaphor, how does one determine which stories are miracles and which are just stories and myths? Also, just because the Bible has historically accurate accounts of ancient peoples does not mean it has accurate accounts dealing with God.

3. The Bible is intact---

Define intact. If by intact it is meant that the Bible is how it is right now, then it's intact, but what about all the purported books and manuscripts that aren't part of the "intact" Bible. If the Bible is correct just

because there are a lot of really old pieces of paper with transcriptions on it, then what about the gospels of various other people, Mary Magdalene, Thomas, Judas? Those are really old accounts of Biblical happenings. And there are other books that are accepted in one version of the Bible and not in another. There are seven books in the Catholic Bible that aren't in the King James Version, including, for example, the book (2 Maccabees) that contains one of the major passages that Catholics take the concept of purgatory from. The acceptance of some books and not others appears random or if not then motivated by politics, power, and personal preference. The Bible is not intact; it only appears intact.

4. The Bible tells events ahead of time---

I've explained this point as illogical several times already. I predict that in a couple of lines I will randomly say the word "tomato" in the middle of the sentence. You cannot make predictions, then fulfill them yourself, and call them inspired by divinity. Can passages be specifically and undeniably dated so that an absolutely accurate timeline be created for when prophesies were made and fulfilled? No, so the Bible cannot be independently verified. The Bible is believed because the bible says it should be believed, therefore tomato this argument is moot. Wait, did you see what just happen? The prophesy I made was fulfilled, there must be a God. See how silly that is.

Again, do I want God to exist? Yes. Do I want the Bible to be true? Yes, but there appears to be reasonable doubt as to the veracity of the Bible. Reason does not appear to be helpful in proving the existence of God or the truth of the Bible. At best it is also not possible to prove the inexistence of God or the falsehood of the Bible. So again I say that Christianity and any other religion requires a leap of faith.

#### **Part 14: Comments on the comments (5)**

This post deals with some of the comments from the post "Serious Conversations (part 6)" I've really focused in on just the things I felt were important.

Anon: *The reason you can't understand this [to know God exists] is because you've never had a conversion experience. And guess what, you never will because you have decided to reject the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; and for this, we Christians believe you will spend eternity separated from love and from a God who loves you.*

If to know God is real, you must blindly believe enough to have a personal conversion experience seems a bit inadequate. So to have a conversion experience (i.e. to know that He exists) you must know He exists in the first place. So only the people who are willing to believe in something that does not seem possible are the only ones rewarded. That is counterintuitive.

Anon: *God did not make himself logically impossible to us. In fact, He made it very clear for us. HOW? Where? If the answer is the Bible, then your argument is moot. The Bible was written by human beings. We are all fallible. To say the Bible was inspired by an omnipotent being is one thing, to say it was actually written by an omnipotent being is another. Example: Just now, God told me that the Bible is wrong. A Christian would say I was lying. To which I would respond, no I'm not; God told me I'm telling the truth. The problem is neither of us can prove what we are saying. That's what is wrong with the Bible. It was written thousands of years ago by people who have purported to have been talked to by God. There is no way to prove the Bible is true other than the circular argument that the Bible is true because the Bible says it is true. That is obviously fallacious just as me saying God spoke to me is fallacious.*

Anon referring to Hell: *"The Bible tells us that God is righteous....Righteousness deals with justice and justice deals with the Law. This means that God will always do that which is right and He does so according to the righteous Law that He has set forth. How many good works must he perform in order to undo an offense against an infinitely holy God?..."*

Because He is loving He forgives. I believe an atheist can "sin" (even though he doesn't believe in God, he can still recognize that he has done something immoral) and really feel sorry for what he has done. If he does feel sorry and remorseful, I feel that he has corrected his wrong. The point being when a believer sins are they are less guilty simply because they also believe in something that does not logically exist but

still have faith for? Thinking that one is required to have a priest (as in the Catholic faith) absolve them of sin for salvation is also silly. The priest is given power by the church, human beings run the church, human beings, unlike God, are fallible, therefore priests are just as fallible as any lay individual is. The notion that you must be absolved to be forgiven is silly. I believe that if you are truly sorry even in the “silence of our own hearts” you are forgiven. Because God is infinite, He is also infinitely forgiving if we are truly sorry)

Anon *“But if an atheist were to be diagnosed with terminal cancer, then this would be the time to watch him or her. They would be forced to think about a greater spiritual purpose in my opinion. But now, as long as they are without problems or plaguing events in their lives, why bother?”*

This is true. I wonder how many non believers, whether they are premeditated nonbelievers or lazy nonbelievers, beg God for forgiveness and convert just before they die. I wonder if I will do this. I won't really know until I am presented with a situation like this. I hope that I will be at peace with whatever decisions I have made throughout my life and will be content with my faith or lack thereof.

### **Part 15: Comments on the comments (6)**

This post deals with some of the comments from the post “Serious Conversations (part 7)” I've really focused in on just the things I felt were important.

Anon2: *“All worldviews require at least some faith, but Christianity, as the only one that accurately portrays reality, requires the least, because its claims can be shown to be objective fact.”*

Actually, no they cannot be proven to be objective fact; that's the point. It only appears to be objective fact because you assume that it “accurately portrays reality”. I also think that moral relativism holds if there is no God.

Anon2: *Agnostics are "atheists" when it comes to most religions. Why does the agnostic feel that it's quite all right to play dumb [when it comes to the Christian God] but not in the other cases? The agnostic must believe that he has evidence for the existence of the Christian God that prevents her from outright dismissing Him. (Actually, that's the best case scenario from an intellectual perspective. The worst case scenario is that the agnostic is afraid to admit that he does, in fact, dismiss God all together.) ... If agnostics want to play dumb they have to explain why playing dumb makes sense in certain cases but not others. ... The main argument I have heard that is pro-agnostic is that 'Church wastes time'*  
Truthfully, I think that anything is *infinitesimally* possible. I choose to formally address the Christian God because that is the faith I was indoctrinated in. I suppose I could randomly pick some other infinitesimally possible deity and address him/her. In this sense I lump all popular religions together. I cannot prove or disprove any of them. They are all possible. The difference is that there is a tradition of belief. That is why it is different to address all formal religions and ignore an obviously made up religion. For why I only attend a Catholic church see my previous posts, but to reiterate in short: Church is about the people and interacting with those good people, not just worshipping a deity that may or may not exist.

Anon2 referring to Occam's razor: *“the universe cannot replace God as explanation for its own existence. The universe is finite in both size and time. ...How did this universe decide to create itself? ...The laws of physics are designed with such precision that it is almost inconceivable that they could be the result of chance. ...Random chance does not design such a well-crafted universe. All the atheistic explanations for such an exquisitely defined universe require the presence of trillions of other universes, of which ours is the one which happened, by chance, to have the exact physics required for the formation of galaxies, stars and planets. Therefore the atheistic explanation actually goes against Occam's razor since it requires some mechanism by which universes can sprout from some super universe and randomly change their laws of physics. The mechanism by which physical laws could randomly evolve would add further complexity. Design by an intelligent designer is obviously a much simpler explanation.*

I am familiar with Occam's razor, and it would be useful if you could prove that intelligent design is much simpler. The problem is who are you or anyone else to say that the multiverse is more complicated than an intelligent designer. It is relative. There is no way to prove it. How is it obvious that the multiverse or any other explanation is simpler than God?

I refer you to this post I made on the anthropic principle:

[...]

The weak argument refers to the selection of specific times and spaces in the universe for the development of intelligent life. In summary the weak anthropic principle says our existence coincides perfectly with conditions for intelligent life because life would not be around to measure the perfect conditions for its existence if those conditions did meet the needs of intelligent life. To restate, we would not be here to measure stuff if the stuff we were measuring precluded our existence. The strong argument generalizes the weak argument to include fundamental constants and forces of physics. The conclusion to this is we are in a universe where the forces and constants are such that we can exist. (Which, I know, is rather obvious.) An implication of this is that there are universes where forces and constants do not include our existence. So, we are left with a theory of the multiverse, that we are in one of an infinite number of possible universes.

By introducing this idea of the multiverse, the strong anthropic principle selects our universe as one in which life can exist. This is analogous to the weak version of the anthropic principle selecting our planet at our time for intelligent life, which is also somewhat analogous to the Darwinian theory of Evolution selecting our genes for life.

So, which is simpler a multiverse, which we cannot prove, or God, which we also cannot prove. At best these considerations leave us agnostic.

#### **Part 16: Comments on the comments (7)**

After all the name calling, superfluous comments on everything ranging from my psychological state to the Christian thoughts on homosexuality, and approximately 400 posts and comments, the following three quotes sum up what I now consider my world view. I'm sure this will change, but it is what it is right now.

Wesley: *"You're realizing you can't win an argument based on reason, so now you're falling back to, 'Well, I know God doesn't make sense, but that's because God doesn't have to make sense. He's beyond our understanding, so he's immune to reason - he doesn't have to follow the laws of the universe as we know them.' My answer to this is that if there were a God who made himself logically impossible to us, I'm sure he won't be surprised when people do not believe he exists."*

Anon2: *"So Wesley, you don't see any convincing evidence for the existence of God. That does not mean there is no God. Since you cannot know all evidence, it is possible that evidence exists that proves God's existence, or at least supports His existence. Therefore, it is possible that God exists. If it is possible, then faith has its place."*

Wesley: *"You say that 'if it is possible that God exists, then [I] should be an agnostic.' This is a very common criticism - the response is this: every atheist is infinitesimally agnostic. It is possible that your omnipotent and omniscient God exists, but it is infinitesimally possible. The point is this: there is some point at which an unlikelihood becomes an impossibility. If you are familiar with the mathematical concept of a limit from calculus, then you should understand this."*

These three quotes sum up my thinking about God and religion. Formally:

- 1.) God is unreasonable, but because of his nature, God doesn't have to be reasonable to human beings. No matter how unreasonable God seems, if reason cannot prove without any doubt God does not exist, religion can always claim that God does not have to be reasonable. Also if God does exist, He should not condemn a person to whom He gave logic and reason for logically thinking, as long as they truthfully consider the universe. Good acts can save.
- 2.) We cannot know all evidence in regards to the God question. God can neither be 100% proven nor 100% disproven. Questions will always remain. Reason is not helpful when it comes to religion.
- 3.) There is a small chance God does exist. Regardless of how small this chance is, faith can bridge

the gap. Faith is believing when there is no proof. Notice I say no proof. If there is absolute proof God does not exist, faith no longer has a place. Also, faith without some doubt is not really faith. If one believes without any doubt, that is credulousness not faith. God requires faith, not blind following.

Thus, does God seem probable? No. Is God possible? Yes. Do I want to believe? Yes. How strong is my faith? Obviously not strong enough, but I think that as imperfect human beings, no believer has that quality.

### **Part 17:**

This post poses an interesting question regarding original sin.

Here's an interesting thought: God created the world in six days. Some time afterward Adam and Eve committed the original sin. From then on, all humans would have original sin that would have had to be cleansed via the Resurrection. If then it only took seven days (more or less depending on interpretation) to create the universe, why not just start over again? God is omniscient. He knew that from the original sin onward that everyone would be tarnished and would suffer. Why go through with the trouble on continuing with a sinful people? (Because He loves us and couldn't destroy the future of everyone because of two people.) Why then did He let us continue for however long until He got fed up with us and flooded the Earth (the Noah story) and killed every human except for one family, who because of Adam and Eve all still have original sin and will then repopulate the Earth with people who will still have original sin. Why not just stop it from the beginning? Wipe out the universe, start over again. It makes no sense.

The best answer I can come up with is that because of original sin of Adam and Eve, all of His creations (even if He started over) would be stained as well. You can also call Adam and Eve a myth, an explanation of why God felt compelled to give us free will, a reason I find more believable. The problem is, if Adam and Eve is a myth, what else is? Possibly everything.

### **Part 18:**

Here I want to comment on two concepts: faith and hope.

Faith, in the simplest sense I can think of, is believing in something, a thought, a person, a worldview, when you have no proof for the correctness of your belief. Faith also requires knowing that your belief is true regardless of a lack of evidence supporting that belief. I think that faith without doubt is not faith. Faith without some doubt is acceptance.

I am a follower of Kierkegaard in this sense. There will never be sufficient evidence to demand belief, but faith alone will be enough to demand belief. Doubt is the rational part of the brain telling you that what faith demands is nonsense. But by its own nature faith flies in the face of that and is meaningless without the doubt without which it is simply credulousness.

Hope, on the other hand, is wanting something when you have no proof for the correctness of your belief yet also not knowing or being sure how correct that belief is. Hope is wanting but doubting.

Hope is wishing something will happen, but faith is believing something will happen.

To make sense of this I picture an isosceles triangle where the two legs of the triangle are hope and credulousness, and the pinnacle of the triangle is faith. Faith requires some of both hope and credulousness to exist, but faith is not either of those two.

## **Part 19:**

This is part nineteen of my “This I Believe” series. I have had trouble over the last several years defining exactly what it is I prescribe to as a worldview. I hope to figure some of what I believe here.

I pose the following question: Why did God stop performing obvious large scale miracles after Jesus? God could have a much larger following if he would just perform a parting of the Red Sea or some other active miracle.

Option one is that God doesn't exist and the Bible is a myth.

Option two is that God needed the big miracles to start his following, but now that he has one large miracles that interfere in the development of man aren't necessary. And that He is trying to inspire faith of those who believe (e.g. what point is faith if the object of belief is obvious?)

The point I again want to make is that every time I think up or am presented with an argument against God, religion always finds some sort of loophole around what doesn't appear to make sense. And that's all it has to do, simply remind that the possibility exists for divinity, not rebuff an argument against it.

## **Part 20:**

This is part twenty of my “This I Believe” series. I have had trouble over the last several years defining exactly what it is I prescribe to as a worldview. I hope to figure some of what I believe here.

I have one last thing to talk about for now (I'll start this series back up once I come to more conclusions.): a thought that occurred to me a while ago. All the other times I've suffered a lack of faith it has been because I was mad at God for whatever reason, being depressed, loosing a friend, being lonely, etc. Right now though, I'm doing very well. I'm happy, productive, and usually around people I enjoy. So why am I having a hard time now? I think it's because I'm finally not thinking like a child anymore. I am being very critical of everything that I am exposed to. I can step back and take a logical look at my culture, religion, politics, etc. and not have the influence of adults shade my judgments. And those judgments are very skeptical of religion. To again sum up my worldview:

- 1.) God is unreasonable, but because of his nature, God doesn't have to be reasonable to human beings. No matter how unreasonable God seems, if reason cannot prove without any doubt God does not exist, religion can always claim that God does not have to be reasonable. Also if God does exist, He should not condemn a person to whom He gave logic and reason for logically thinking, as long as they truthfully consider the universe. Good acts can save.
- 2.) We cannot know all evidence in regards to the God question. God can neither be 100% proven nor 100% disproven. Questions will always remain. Reason is not helpful when it comes to religion.
- 3.) There is a small chance God does exist. Regardless of how small this chance is, faith can bridge the gap. Faith is believing when there is no proof. Notice I say no proof. If there is absolute proof God does not exist, faith no longer has a place. Also, faith without some doubt is not really faith. If one believes without any doubt, that is credulousness not faith. God requires faith, not blind following.

Thus, does God seem probable? No. Is God possible? Yes. Do I want to believe? Yes. How strong is my faith? Obviously not strong enough, but I think that as imperfect human beings, no believer has that quality.