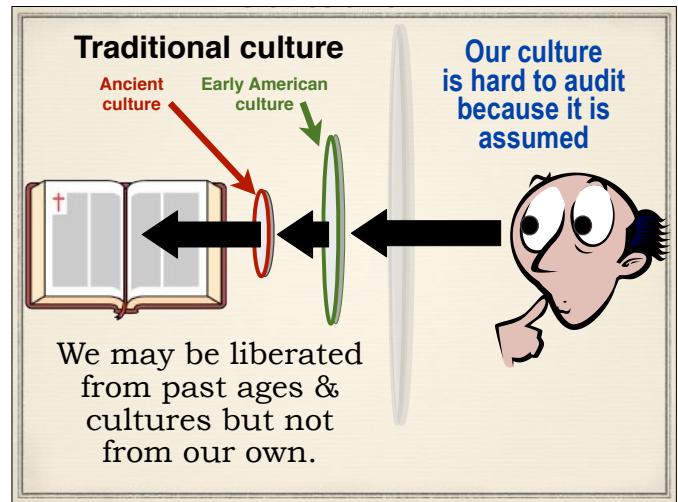
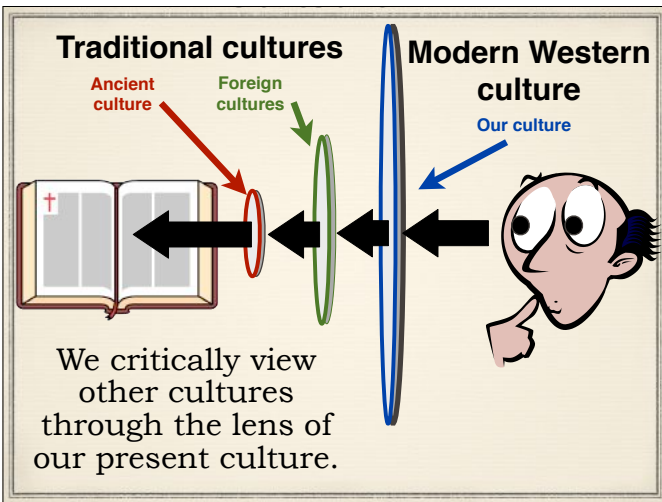


A serious challenge

- His observations are fair & accurate.
- His reasoning is sound.
- In the end this is a powerful refutation to orthodox Christianity that is hard to dismiss.

IF you start with his presuppositions.



Blind assumptions in Western culture

- **Narcissism** - Life is all about ME, NOW, and THIS WORLD.
- **Materialism** - There is no reality beyond the natural world of space, time, energy, and matter.
- **Hubris** - Our present culture is the standard of all truth.

Genesis 1-3

- Man is created in God's image - with knowledge of God - the ability & responsibility to commune & cooperate with God.
- Man chose to live independent of God and repress his special connection with God.
- Man came under the judgement of God.
- Man entered a world of good & evil, confusion & pride, conflict & suffering.

Paul recounts this drama in Romans 1

Romans 1

“18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who **suppress** the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God **is evident within them**; for **God made it evident to them**. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been **clearly seen**, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.”

1. **All people have an awareness of God at some level.**

Primary source (God's providence)

Secondary source (material means)

The creation provides a “general” revelation that is accessible to everyone.

It can be observed scientifically.

It is a secondary or material expression of a primary (spiritual) reality.

1. **All people have an awareness of God at some level.**

Primary source (God's providence)

Secondary source (material means)

✓ *Scripture is the main source of understanding primary sources.*

✓ *Science looks at secondary sources only.*

✓ *Secondary sources can give hints to the existence of primary sources.*

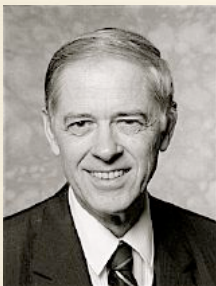
✓ *Scientism limits reality to secondary sources.*

✓ *True science does not address primary sources but neither does it deny them.*

Clear hints of God's existence from secondary sources

- ✓ The universe had an origin.
- ✓ The universe is designed for life.
- ✓ The universe is ordered.
- ✓ The universe is seen as beautiful.
- ✓ The universe includes good & evil.

“One cannot reasonably have human personality drop out of the blue in evolving history and not hypothesize a divine person that elicits and awakens human personality.”



Thomas C. Oden

Francis Collins



“Today, we are learning the language in which God created life. We are gaining ever more awe for the complexity, the beauty, and the wonder of God's most divine and sacred gift.”

Sam Harris



“Collins’ book reveals that a stellar career in science offers no guarantee of a scientific frame of mind.”

Richard Dawkins



“To an honest judge, the alleged convergence between religion and science is a shallow, empty, hollow, spin-doctored sham.”

2. All people tend to suppress or confuse this awareness of God.

Human reason is not the problem.

- It is a part of bearing the image of God.
- It is fundamental to both Christianity and science.

Faith presuppositions behind reason are the problem.

- Metaphysical materialism - reality is limited to the temporal and material.
- The presuppositions of the enlightenment are often uncritically assumed.

A cut-flower moral ethic



embracing
Christian ethics,
Awe, & Beauty



while denying
God & His image
in man

²¹ For even though they knew God, they did not **honor** Him as God, or **give thanks**; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”

3. **Man’s problem is not in his “knowing” but in his “responding.”**

1 Timothy 3:7

“always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

1 Corinthians 1

“²² For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, ²⁴ but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

“I am an atheist to protest the fact that even if God exists he has not revealed himself clearly to his creatures, or shown us divine compassion. Even if there is a God after all, I will shame him for not providing sufficient evidence to believe.”

John Loftus

Two themes in critiques of Christianity.

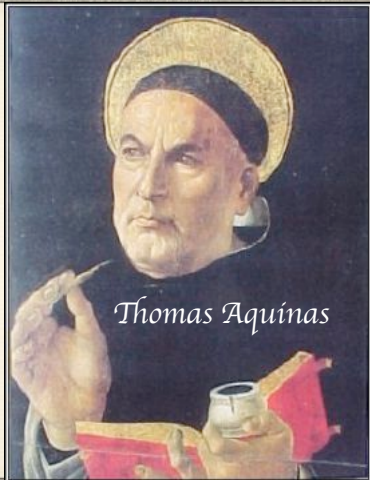
1.
*Based on the evidence
I believe God is not there.*

2.
*Based on my experience
I believe God does not care.*

“There are two serious arguments against the existence of the Christian God.”

The challenge of
science

The challenge of
suffering



22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and **exchanged** the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.”

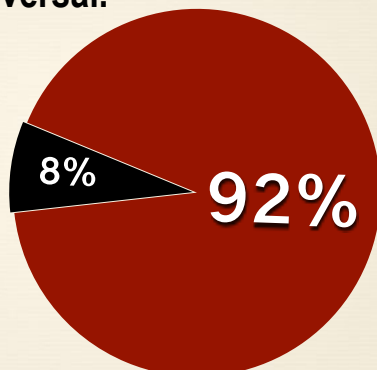
4. **All people have faith in something enabling them to make sense of life.**

*Faith (presuppositions)
Formal religion -----Secular religion*

World religious beliefs are nearly universal.

2005 Statistics adherents.com

● Belief in God
● Agnostic / atheist




What does fallen man see when he looks for reality in the creation?



Matthew 6:22

“The eye is the lamp of the body”

Richard Dawkins



"The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind pitiless indifference."

Some say the only meaning to life is what we bring to it.



Rorschach inkblot

exposes the reality of the inner life of the observer but has no intrinsic meaning in itself.

Others say meaning is arbitrarily imposed, by ancient traditions.

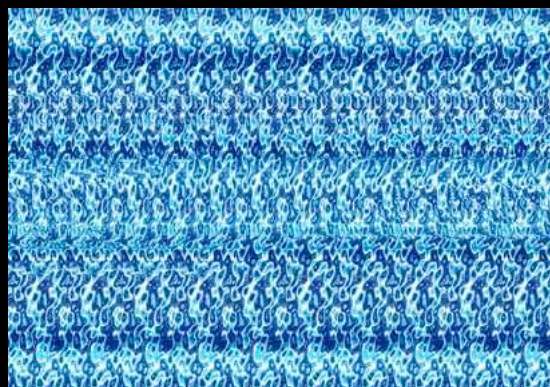


Stellar constellations

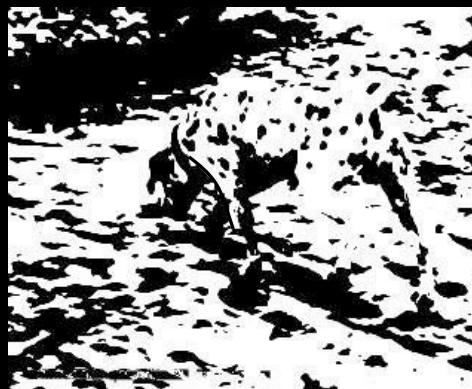
Others say objective reality can be seen in different but equally valid ways.



"All religions are equally valid?"



Others say it is clear but only for those who have eyes to see it.



Sometimes things become clear only after we have a little help.

What does this tell us about inner spiritual warfare?

The Old sin nature verses Our New life in Christ.

1. We are tempted to live in darkness - apart from God with shame, & worldly wisdom.
2. We tend to push aside God's revelation and replace God's Spirit with false hopes.
3. We must take our baptism seriously - counting ourselves dead to sin and presenting ourselves alive in Christ.

What common ground does a believer have in talking with an unbeliever?

Bearing the image of God in a fallen world.

1. We know that there is a latent fear of God in all humans.
2. We know that there is a deep sense of shame and alienation in all humans.
3. We know that there is a faith commitment to something in all humans.

What common ground does a believer have in talking with an unbeliever?

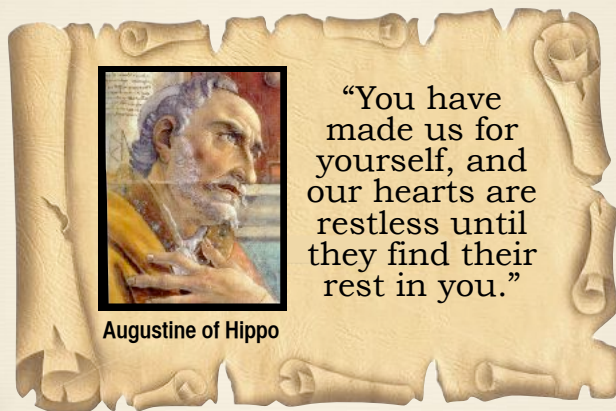
There is an appetite for the Gospel

1. It restores a conscious intimacy with God.
2. It offers shalom in place of shame.
3. It provides for a worthy object of worship.

“There is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled



by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator, made known through Jesus.”



“You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.”

Augustine of Hippo

John 6:68

“Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.””