

Kevin Seaton  
2016

# A Reasoned, Evidential Faith

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Seeking the Clues of God's Existence



# Asking the hard questions

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- ▶ Have you ever asked yourself difficult questions about the Bible's claims to the nature of God?
- ▶ Have you ever felt guilty for having doubts?
- ▶ Can being honest about our struggles with certain beliefs be beneficial to our faith?





# Love God...with all your mind

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- ▶ Should the Christian Faith be blind faith?
  - ▶ No, it should be a well reasoned, evidential faith.
- ▶ Matthew 22:37: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."
  - ▶ Love God with more than our hearts...Our relationship with God is to be emotional and intellectual.
- ▶ Biblical evidence of God encouraging belief through evidence...
  - ▶ Acts 1:2-3: "until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. <sup>3</sup>He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God."
  - ▶ Acts 17:2-3: "And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, <sup>3</sup>explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead"





# Be convinced!

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- ▶ Let's be convinced about what we believe!
  - ▶ Romans 14:5: " Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind."
  - ▶ 2 Timothy 1:12 "But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me."
- ▶ Be ready to make a strong defense of your faith!
  - ▶ 1 Peter 3:15: "always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect"



# Faith Reinforced with Reason

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- ▶ Since He made us rational beings, we must first examine the choices in life and claims about God to make a rational decision for Him.





# Where Do Doubts Lead Us?

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- ▶ Many people experience doubts about questions of God and of Faith.
- ▶ God encourages us to have faith, and not have doubts.
  - ▶ Matt 21:21: "Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done."
- ▶ Don't ignore your doubts!
- ▶ Seek God's help with your doubts and He will help you overcome them and grow in spiritual maturity.



# God Helps Us with our Doubts

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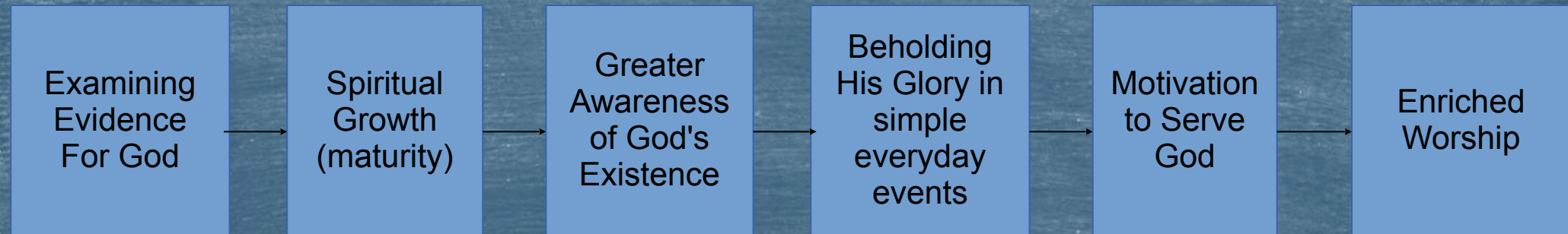
- ▶ Jesus helped others with their doubt.
- ▶ Jesus encouraged Thomas to “Believe”.
- ▶ Jesus responded to Thomas' request for more evidence.
- ▶ Jesus healed the demon-possessed son of a man who exclaimed “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”





# Where Does Examination Lead Us?

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- Overcoming doubts & examining the evidence of our faith leads to a strong awareness of God's presence and glory



# Role of Apologetics

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# Apologetics

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- ▶ Christian Apologetics: Reasoned argument in justification for our faith.

Apologetics comes in many varieties...

- ▶ Historical evidentialism
- ▶ Defense of miracles
- ▶ Prophetic fulfillment
- ▶ Philosophical apologetics
- ▶ Creationist Apologetics

**Warning!**  
**This is getting technical!**



# Usefulness of Apologetics

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- ▶ Apologetics is a tool that is useful for believer and un-believers...
  - ▶ 1. For Believers... To be well-grounded in their faith, to provide evidence of the faith for examination purposes, to support us in articulating the hope that is in us and to defend the true Christian faith against objections.
  - ▶ 2. For Un-Believers... To support evangelism to unbelievers by providing evidence (both historical and present) of God's existence and to the truth of the death and resurrection of His son Jesus.
- ▶ God calls people to seek Him and come to faith using a variety of means. God may use apologetics as a tool to bring someone to faith.
- ▶ Apologetics is not the only tool that God uses to call people.





# Apologetics of What We Experience

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- ▶ This presentation largely covers an area of apologetics that looks at the world around us today as evidence of God's existence.
  - ▶ Evidence of God in relationships
  - ▶ Evidence of God in human behavior
  - ▶ Evidence of God within ourselves
- ▶ God's divine nature can be perceived...
  - ▶ Romans 1:20: "For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse."





# A Higher Standard: A knowledge of Right vs Wrong

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***Note: What remains in this presentation largely outlines the content of “Mere Christianity” by C.S. Lewis with some additional content from other sources.***



# Two People Arguing

- ▶ Things typically said in an argument...
  - ▶ “How would you like to be treated that way?”
  - ▶ “Go to the back of the line, for I was here first!”
  - ▶ “You promised, and now you won't take me to the movies!”
- ▶ The injured person doesn't appeal to merely his own preferences, but to a universal standard of behavior or morality to which both parties agree.



An Inevitable Question...  
**Where does this universal  
standard come from?**

FROM  
GOD!

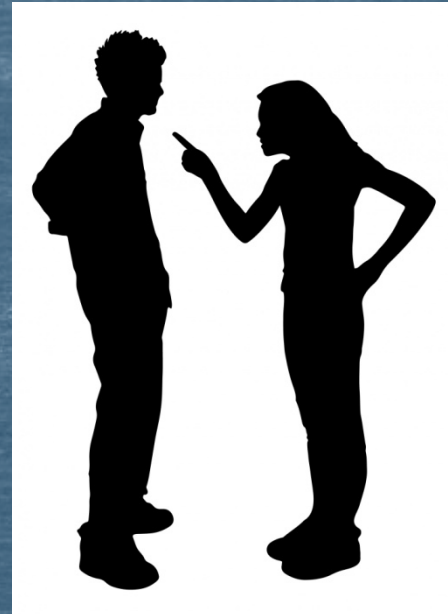
FROM  
GOD!



# No One Appeals to a Different Standard!

- ▶ In an argument, you never hear the oppressor try to say 'to heck with your standard'.
- ▶ More likely approach...
  - ▶ Tries to make the case that he didn't actually violate the standard.
  - ▶ Appeals to some special excuse why he could violate the standard this one time.

To heck with your standard!



***What are some common excuses given in an argument to justify bad behavior?***



# Fighting Like Animals

- ▶ People would just fight like animals if...
  - ▶ there was no agreement about a standard of fair play or behavior.
- ▶ Instead, most people will quarrel with each other.
  - ▶ Quarrelling: Trying to argue that the other person is wrong.
- ▶ There is no sense in arguing unless they both agree as to what right and wrong are.



Is This What People Do?



# Who Quarrels?

- ▶ All people quarrel, whether young or old, educated or non-educated.
- ▶ Our universal standard of morality is often simply called the laws of nature because it has been understood to be universal, found among all peoples, transcends time and is innate in our core nature.
- ▶ It is not something taught to us, but we have it by default.



An inevitable question...

***How did people come to have a universal morality by default? How did that happen?***

FROM  
GOD!

FROM  
GOD!

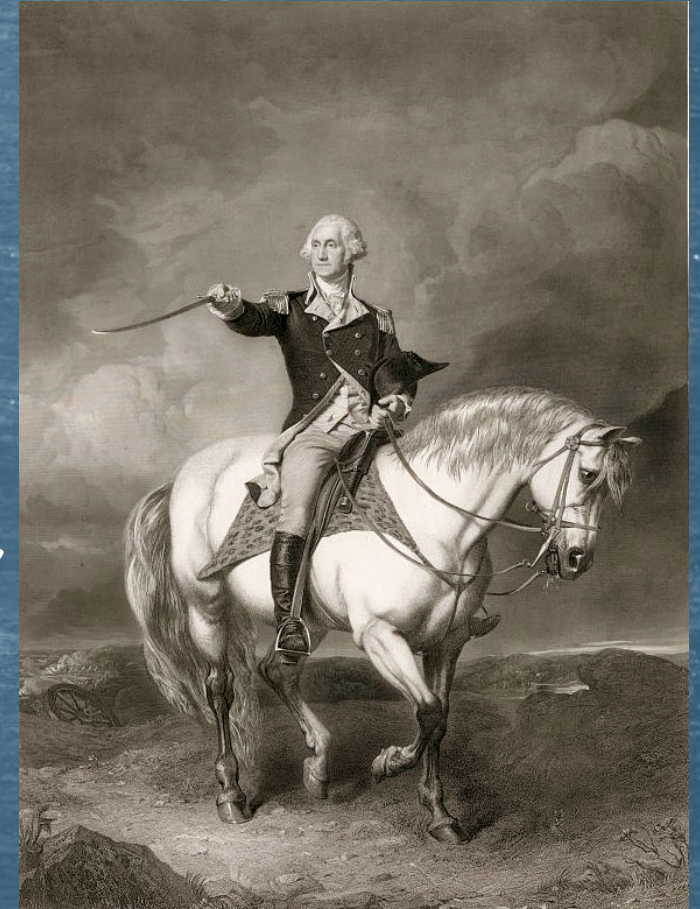


# Morality that Transcends Time

- ▶ It has always been wrong to...
  - ▶ Run away in battle.
  - ▶ Double-cross others who have been good to you.
  - ▶ Putting one's self before others.
- ▶ Ancient and modern civilizations have all shared the same core understanding of proper behavior or laws of nature.

Other examples?

An inevitable question...  
***What world view best explains this?***





# None of Us Keep the Laws of Nature

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- ▶ We often fail at vulnerable moments...
  - ▶ "I was so tired."
  - ▶ "I was feeling lonely."
- ▶ When caught, we often string out a bunch of excuses.
- ▶ Our excuses point out how very deeply we believe in a Law of Decent Behavior.
- ▶ If we didn't share this universal law of decent behavior, why do we make so many excuses?
- ▶ Why don't we make excuses when we do something right? Don't we typically take the credit ourselves for that?





# Our Founding Fathers

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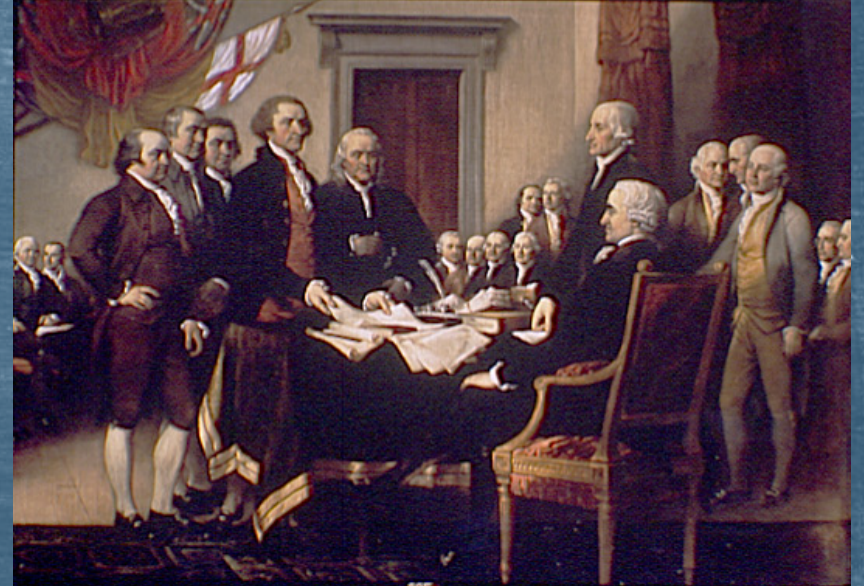
- ▶ Thomas Jefferson appealed to God's universal laws of nature as justification for declaring independence from England.
- ▶ So...our country is founded on the principle that all people have fundamental natural rights and that they come from "Nature's Law" which Jefferson equates with God's Law.





# Declaration of Independence

- ““When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the **Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God** entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.”

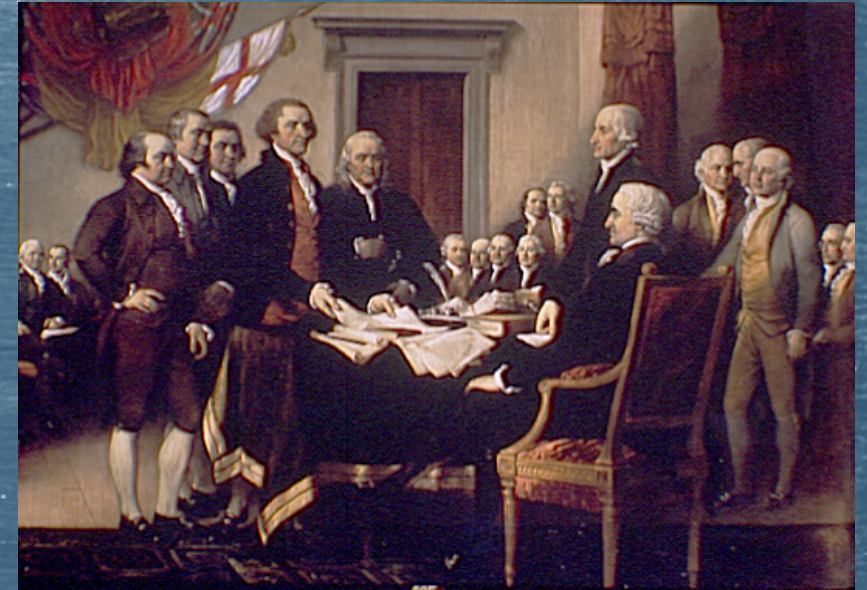


- Equates Natural Law with being in agreement with God's law.
- Justification for America declaring independence from England.



# Declaration of Independence

- ▶ John Quincy Adams, in a court case in 1841...
- ▶ “In the Declaration of Independence the Laws of Nature are announced and appealed to as identical with the laws of nature’s God, and as the foundation of all obligatory human laws.”
- ▶ Natural Law is the foundation for all other just laws, and is based upon the law of decent behavior or morality that all humans share.
- ▶ To equate Natural Law with God's Law is to recognize that our shared sense of justice comes from God Himself, and is thus evidence that God is real and has given us all a shared sense of morality and justice.





# In Conclusion...

- ▶ There is a real standard of morality & decency that we all share. How do we know?
- ▶ Historical evidence shows that the law of decency transcends time, cultures and education levels.
- ▶ When we quarrel, we never object to the standard of morality that we all share.

An inevitable question...  
***What world view best explains this?***

Answer...  
***Only the existence of a creator God can explain this.***





# Not Just Following the Herd

Law of morality, not just an instinct

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# What is a “Herding Instinct”?

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- ▶ Is the Law of Nature or Morality not the same thing as an instinct such as a herding instinct that was developed over many years?
- ▶ An instinct is an innate impulse or strong desire to certain behaviors that we all share.

## ***What are some examples of human instincts?***

- ▶ Examples: Motherly love, desire for food, sexual instincts.
- ▶ A herding instinct may also include a strong desire to help someone in need.





# Moral Law: Encouraging & Suppressing Instincts

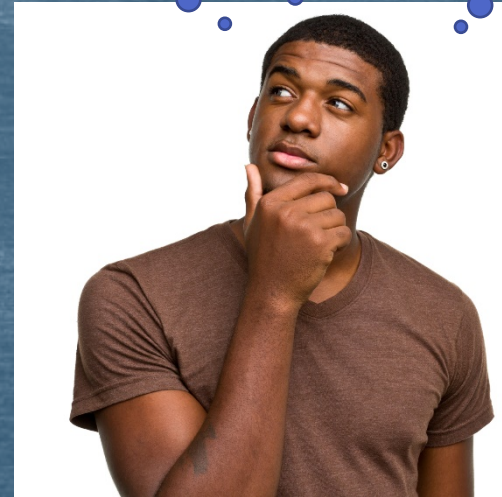
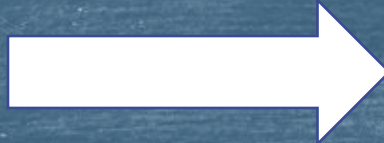
Moral Law rides above instincts.  
Telling us what we ought to do.



Moral Law:  
I Should do  
Instinct A!

Instinct A:  
Help the man!

Instinct B:  
Run Away!



This Moral Law encourages one instinct and discourages another.



# Are Instincts Always Used For Good?

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**Motherly Love**

**Fighting  
Impulse**



**Patriotism**

**Sexual Impulse**

Each of these instincts (or impulses) are good in some circumstances and bad in others.



# Our Moral Law is Like the Tune of a Song

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- ▶ Just like the keys on a piano, there is no right or wrong notes.
- ▶ Each key is the right one sometimes and the wrong one at other times.



**Our Moral Law is like the right tune  
(what we call goodness or right conduct)  
that guides a pianist to play the right keys.**

Just as the music rides above the notes, our Moral Law  
rides above our instincts.



# Objection! Right & Wrong are Things Taught to Us

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- ▶ Objection: Some say that our moral standard is just a human convention and something taught to us by our parents.

**Well, this is kind of true!**

- ▶ Just because we are taught good morals & good behavior doesn't make it less true.
- ▶ We learn multiplication in school, but mathematics of multiplication would still be true whether we learn it or not.

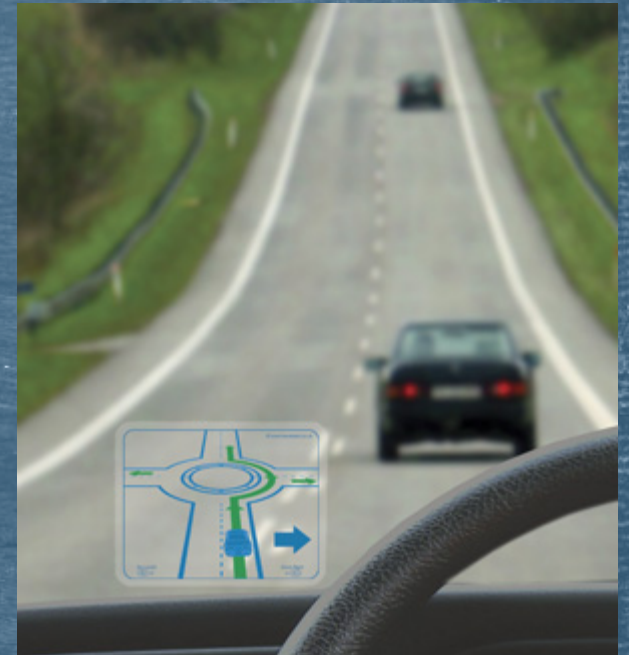


***What are some things that we learn as children that wouldn't otherwise be true?***



# Things We are Taught That Wouldn't Otherwise be True

- ▶ Example: Driving on the right side.
  - ▶ A human-made convention
- ▶ What if the rules of Right & Wrong were simply taught to us like driving on the right side of the road? What are the implications?
  - ▶ The morals of one country would be no better than another.
    - ▶ American morals in the 1930s would be no better than Nazi morals.
  - ▶ No progress of morals over time.
    - ▶ Civilized society morals would therefore be no better than savage morals.



***Unlike learning how to drive a car, our moral law would be a real thing even if our parents didn't attempt to teach us manners!***



# Where did we get this Standard of Right & Wrong?

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- ▶ The best explanation is from something (or someone) outside of this physical universe.
  - ▶ If it's not an instinct or something taught to us, then where else would it have come from?
  - ▶ Since it's hard for us to imagine an object outside of our universe that could instill a sense of morality into creation, the idea of an intelligent creator or a God fits the observable facts much better.



***Any biblical references for how or when we received this moral law?***



# Conclusions About Our Moral Standards

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- ▶ Our rules of decent behavior or right conduct are...
  1. Not the same as an instinct.
    - ▶ The Moral Law will suppress some of our impulses at times and encourage others.
  2. Not a human convention or something simply taught to us.
    - ▶ They are more like mathematics in that they are constant and true no matter how much mathematics training we may have had.

**Realizing this truth means that we must accept that there is such thing as absolute right in this world.**

**It exists as an overall standard by which we judge and compare different systems of morality (i.e. savage vs civilized morality, or Nazi vs American morality).**



# Character of God – As the creator of Morality

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- ▶ What characteristics about God can we conclude based upon the discussions so far?
  - ▶ God is discerning (or wise)
  - ▶ God cares about our individual choices (personal God)
  - ▶ God is good (standards that he gives us are always good)
  - ▶ God is eternal and unchangeable (basic morality never changes)



# What We Are Not

Law of Morality as distinct from nature and preferences

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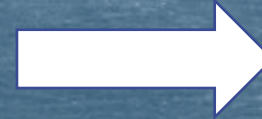
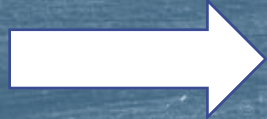
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# Laws of Nature vs Laws of Morality

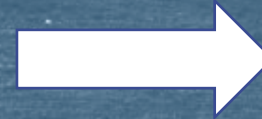
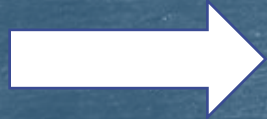
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Laws of Nature



What nature in fact does (observable).  
I.e. "water falling"

Laws of Morality



What human beings should do.  
(un-observable).

Laws of Decency are different from other laws of Nature



# Humans Have Two Natures

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Observable

Facts of How  
Humans Behave

Un-Observable

Knowledge of  
How Humans  
should Behave



# Rebuttal: Morality: A Matter of Convenience

- ▶ Some say that things that are moral are simply a matter of convenience.
  - ▶ An Example in nature: A Hokie stone that is the wrong size or shape for a building. “It wasn’t meant to be.”
  - ▶ This argument is similar to the instinct of “self preservation.”
    - ▶ Things that are right for us are things that tend to help us along in this life or things that are “convenient.”



***Any examples of moral decisions that are not convenient for us?***



# A Response to the Rebuttal

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- ▶ What if I find a man occupying my favorite seat in church? One of two scenarios could have occurred...
  - ▶ Scenario #1: The man arrived at the chair before me.
  - ▶ Scenario #2: The man slipped into the chair while my back was turned.
  - ▶ Both scenarios are equally "inconvenient" to me.
  - ▶ I blame the 2<sup>nd</sup> man, and not the 1<sup>st</sup>.
- ▶ 2<sup>nd</sup> example: Someone tripped me by accident. -I'm not angry
  - ▶ If done on purpose – Now I'm angry
    - ▶ Even if I don't actually trip.



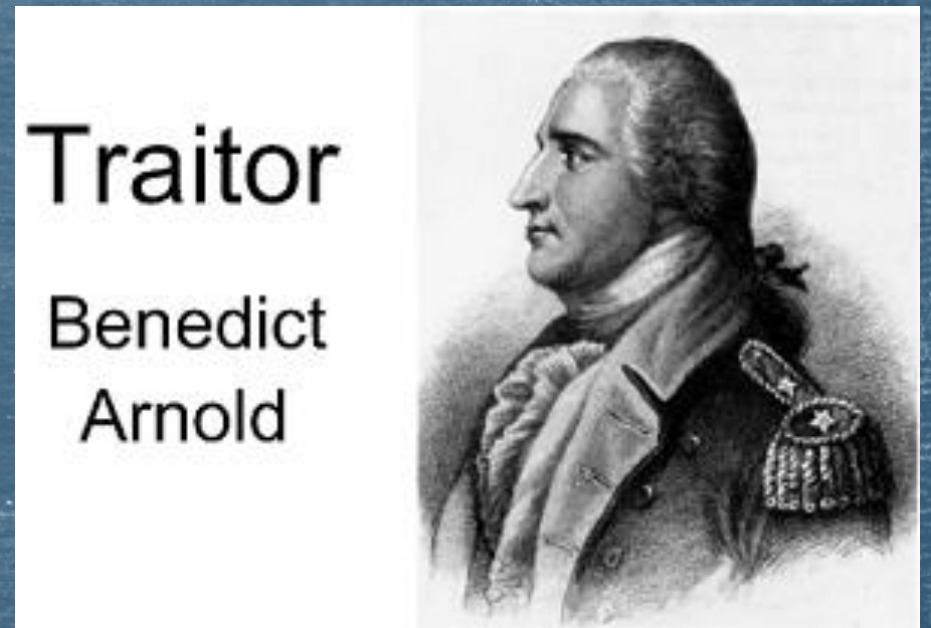
Conclusion: The Law of Morality Transcends Things Convenient to Man



# Taking a Reverse Example...

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- ▶ Sometimes things that are convenient and useful to us are not morally right.
- ▶ Example: A traitor during war.
  - ▶ I may give money and benefit greatly from a traitor during a war.
  - ▶ However, a traitor typically has very low respect from even those who benefit.
  - ▶ Traitors historically considered “human vermin.”



Conclusion: The Law of Morality Transcends Things Convenient to Man



# How the Universe Got Started

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- ▶ Two Basic Views of How the Universe Got Started
  - ▶ Materialist View: “Big Bang”: Sheer probability coupled with extraordinary time caused complex lifeforms to be created through completely random chemical processes.
  - ▶ Creationist View: This universe was created by something more like a mind as far we know. This Creator created complex creatures like itself, in that we also have minds.



How Can We Go About Determining Which View is Correct?



# Using Science to Prove How Universe Started

- ▶ We cannot determine which of the two views of creation are correct by using science.

## ***What are the limitations of science?***

- ▶ Science works by experiments. It watches how things behave. For example, I put such-and-such chemicals in a pot, heated it up to such-and-such temperature and the result was such-and-such.
- ▶ Science cannot answer the question of why anything comes to be there at all, or if there's anything behind the things that science observes.



If there is anything behind our observable world, it will not be revealed by science.



# Is There a Better Alternative to Scientific Observation?

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*If science provides real limits to our ability to observe the reality of a God or creator, what is a better a way to study the realities of what lies behind what we observe in the universe?*





# Observing Ourselves: Clues to a Creator

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- ▶ The situation would be hopeless, except that there is one thing in this universe that we know better than just things that are observable. That is man.
- ▶ We don't just observe man, we are man. We have insider knowledge.
- ▶ We know that there is a moral law within us that we don't always follow, but we know that we ought to follow it.





# God's creation: Looking with a New Lens

- ▶ If there was a controlling power behind the universe, it could not show itself to us from objects inside the universe any more than an architect can show itself with a staircase or doorway.
- ▶ Since we are in the universe, the only place that we could find this evidence of a controlling power would be from within ourselves...
  - ▶ A voice or feeling that tells us to behave in a certain way.
  - ▶ This is exactly what we experience.



***Ever sense an inner voice or urge to do right, even when it's not what you want to do?***



# The Limits of Observing the Outside of Man

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- ▶ Observing man from the outside...observing what man does....Doesn't provide much evidence of the moral law within man.
  - ▶ Observations only reveal what we did
  - ▶ Moral Law is what we ought to do.
- ▶ Similarly, if there anything above or behind the observable facts of our universe, we have no hope to ever discover it by observation only.
- ▶ The only way we can observe something behind creation is within ourselves...a command or a feeling of how we should behave or what we ought to do.





# Clues That Support the Christian Message

How the Christian Message Uniquely Affirms and Addresses our Observations

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Seeking the Clues of God's Existence



# Observable Characteristics of God

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- ▶ From observing the Universe...
  - ▶ He is a great artist...Universe a beautiful place
  - ▶ He is powerful & can be quite terrifying to humans... Universe is a dangerous place
- ▶ From within us..."Insider Information" – the best source.
  - ▶ He cares deeply about right conduct or decent behavior... Must conclude that God is good.



God isn't good in a soft sense. He encourages us to do good no matter how painful or difficult that may be.

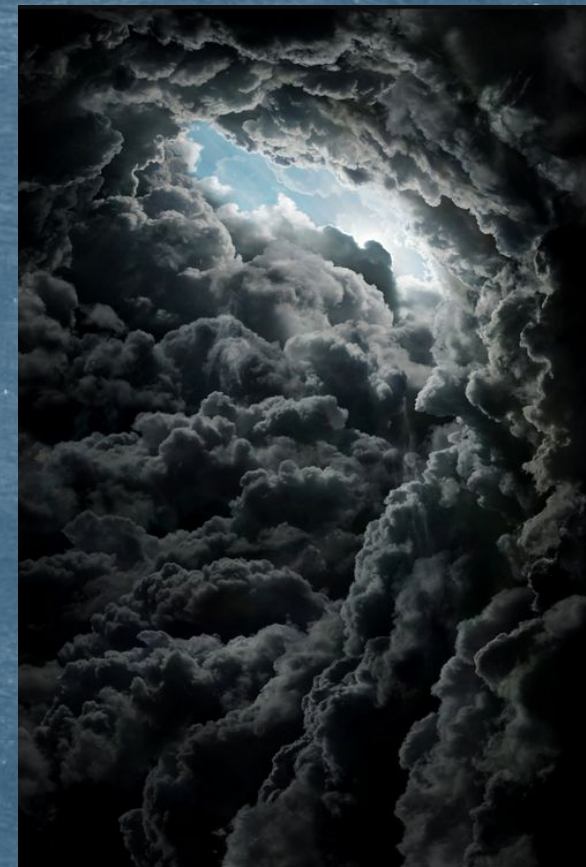


# A Situation of Hopelessness

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- ▶ If God is absolute goodness, then He must hate much of what we do.
- ▶ This puts us into a position of hopelessness either way that we look at it...
  - ▶ If the universe is not governed by absolute goodness, then our situation is ultimately hopeless. What is there to look forward to?
  - ▶ If it is governed by absolute goodness, then our situation is hopeless still...since we rebel against and make ourselves enemies to Him every day.

God is our only comfort.  
He is also the supreme terror!





# The Christian Message

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- ▶ We have made ourselves enemies of God, when He is our only possible ally.
- ▶ But....God has thrown us a lifeline. He has offered us a way out.
- ▶ The Christian Faith starts with this realization...That we fall short of a perfectly good God. That our situation is hopeless. It starts with the realization of the painful truth that we are helpless before an uncompromising God.
- ▶ The Christian Message is one that offers a way out of this hopelessness. It explains how God intervened in His creation by sending his son, Jesus to take all of our sin with Him when He died on a cross.





# The Christian Faith

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- ▶ Jesus suffered and paid the price for our sin. As a result, we are offered God's forgiveness of our sins, which gives us an eternal life where God will never leave us or forsake us.
- ▶ The Christian Faith offers us a life of unspeakable comfort where we are at peace with God, who is almighty, powerful, uncompromising and loving!



***Come to know the true God of creation. He is offering Himself to anyone who asks for his forgiveness, and He wants a relationship with you which will transform your life!***



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The End