

## THE UNCANNY FAITH OF RICHARD DAWKINS

-Reader Kyle Lickiss

Which of the following responses best describes the definition of faith?

- A) "Faith is a force and words are the containers of the force."<sup>1</sup>
- B) "Confidence or trust in a person or thing. Belief in God. A system of religious belief. Loyalty or fidelity."<sup>2</sup>
- C) "Faith is a rational response to the evidence of God's self-revelation in nature, human history, the Scriptures, and his resurrected Son."<sup>3</sup>
- D) "Faith is the great cop-out, the great excuse to evade the need to think and evaluate evidence. Faith is belief in spite of, even perhaps because of, the lack of evidence."<sup>4</sup>
- E) "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."<sup>5</sup>
- F) B, C, and E only
- G) B and E only

As one is probably aware from contemporary events, "faith" has come under serious scrutiny. Within western society, there is an increasingly outspoken group trying to dichotomize faith and reason. This is best seen in the arena of the debate between God and evolution. This segment of society is openly hostile to 'faith,' and especially as it relates to religion. One of this movement's most influential individuals is a British Biologist, and self acclaimed atheist, Richard Dawkins.<sup>6</sup>

Intentional or not, a wedge is being driven between faith and science; between religion and evolution.<sup>7</sup> Faith is codified as, "pie in the sky," unrelated to reality, fraudulent, and just

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<sup>1</sup> Hanegraaff, Hank, Christianity in Crisis (Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, OR, 1997), 52. See also Pg 66, "Words are the containers that `carry the substance of faith. . . ."

<sup>2</sup> Random House, Webster's Dictionary, 4th ed., (Ballantine Publishing Group, 2001), 255.

<sup>3</sup> W. Bingham Hunter, "The God Who Hears" (1986), 153; quoted in Lee Strobel, The Case For Faith (Zondervan Publishing House Grand Rapids, MI, 2000), 11.

<sup>4</sup> Dawkins, Richard, quoted from, [simonyi.ox.ac.uk/dawkins/WorldofDawkinsarchive/Catalano/quotes.com](http://simonyi.ox.ac.uk/dawkins/WorldofDawkinsarchive/Catalano/quotes.com), pg 5, accessed 9/24/2008.

<sup>5</sup> Holy Book of Hebrews, 11:1, The Orthodox Study Bible (St. Athanasius Academy of Orthodox Theology, 2008), 1666.

<sup>6</sup> Other noteworthy names include, Bill Maher, Christopher Hitchens, and Sam Harris. The latest antic of a small, but very vocal group of atheists, which includes Dr. Richard Dawkins, is billboard advertising in Great Britain with the following quotation, "There probably is not a God."

<sup>7</sup> Richard Dawkins, "Are science and religion converging? No." and, "To an honest judge, the alleged convergence between religion and science is a shallow, empty, hollow, spin-doctored sham." both quoted from, [positiveatheism.org/hist/quotes/dawkins.com](http://positiveatheism.org/hist/quotes/dawkins.com), page 6, accessed 9/27/2008.

wishful thinking on the part of people who cannot handle reality<sup>8</sup>. On the contrary, while science is masqueraded as a foil to faith, and marketed as everything positive, even wholesome. Science is then regarded as the only option for anyone within their rational minds.

You cannot be both sane and well educated and disbelieve in evolution. The evidence is so strong that any sane, educated person has got to believe in evolution.<sup>9</sup>

Is faith really blind? Is faith the great cop-out as Mr. Dawkins so astutely would have us to believe? Are faith and religion synonymous with ignoramuses, fools and the unintelligent masses of our society? Could it be possible that faith, as defined by statement B can also be found at the same level within the defenders of atheism, those bastions of pure science and evolution? For the present this discussion will be limited to the written works of Dr. Richard Dawkins.<sup>10</sup>

In the proceeding paragraphs, the position will be postulated that Mr. Dawkins has faith. The very thing that Dawkins castigates can, by closer investigation, be identified within Dawkins' works. Mr. Dawkins has as much faith as many religious people. Richard Dawkins' faith is found in science, in himself, and faithfully within other people. This faith that he holds can also be categorized as a religion.<sup>11</sup>

Let us first begin our case by investigating the possible faith that Dawkins places upon the works of others. Laying down the introduction for his rebuttal against the "Proof of God by the Argument from Scripture," Dawkins had this to say:

The fact something is written down is persuasive to people not used to asking questions like: 'Who wrote it, and when?' 'How did they know what to write?' 'Did they, in their time really mean

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<sup>8</sup> Richard Dawkins refers to the belief in deities, and thus faith as "mind viruses." Cf. *The Devil's Chaplain*, 2004. Also quoted from, [positiveatheism.org/hist/quotes/dawkins.com](http://positiveatheism.org/hist/quotes/dawkins.com), page 3, accessed 9/27/2008.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Dawkins, as quoted from, [positiveatheism.org/hist/quotes/dawkins.com](http://positiveatheism.org/hist/quotes/dawkins.com), page 4, accessed 9/27/2008.

<sup>10</sup> The definitions of faith given previously can be grouped into three main themes. Response A could be called "faith" taken to its hyper extremes; matter becomes irrelevant to faith. Response D would be on the opposite end of the spectrum, that is "faith" becomes irrelevant to matter. The remaining responses would be somewhere in between, that faith and reason would compliment each other. I would suggest that there needs to be a balance between faith and reason; both are necessary. They are like two sides of a coin; you cannot have one without the other. Faith alone, is just as dangerous, or as blind, as no faith at all.

<sup>11</sup> If religion can be defined as, "A set of beliefs concerning the nature and purpose of the universe, especially when considered as the creation of a superhuman agency. An institutionalized system of religious beliefs and worship. The Christian Religion. Something a person believes devotedly." (Random House, *Webster's Dictionary*, 4th ed., 2001, 609.), then I would contend that the views Richard Dawkins holds could be categorized as a set of beliefs that he holds devotedly, regarding the creation in which we live. I would broaden the definition of religion even further, as the comprehensive package of all that a person believes, and by which they live. This would include world views, opinions, goals in life, and behavioural attitudes.

what we, in our time, understand them to be saying?' 'Were they unbiased observers, or did they have an agenda that coloured their writing?'<sup>12</sup>

Yet within that same topic, he quotes from N. Wilson, who “in his biography of Jesus, casts doubt on the story that Joseph was a carpenter at all. . . . This is one of several constructive mistranslations that bedevil the Bible.”<sup>13</sup> Dawkins then quotes from one, Ibn Warraq, about a possible mistranslation of the Koran regarding “virgins.”<sup>14</sup> Shortly thereafter, Dawkins introduces a Professor G. A. Wells, “of the University of London,”<sup>15</sup> author of the book, Did Jesus Exist, because, “It is even possible to mount a serious, though not widely supported, historical case that Jesus never lived at all . . . .”<sup>16</sup> Dawkins then goes on to another profound quote, less than a page later.

. . . ever since the nineteenth century, scholarly theologians have made an overwhelming case that the gospels are not reliable accounts of what happened in the history of the real world. All were written long after the death of Jesus . . . All were then copied and recopied, through many different ‘Chinese Whispers’ generations by fallible scribes who in any case had their own religious agendas.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Richard Dawkins, The God Delusion, (Houghton Mifflin Company: New York, 2006), 92.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 96

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 92-93. Also note a similarly made statement on page 237, "To be fair, much of the Bible is not systematically evil but just plain weird, as you would expect of a chaotically cobbled-together anthology of disjointed documents, composed, revised, translated, distorted and 'improved' by hundreds of anonymous authors, editors, and copyists, unknown to us and mostly unknown to each other, spanning nine centuries." Notice in the previous comment that Dawkins uses the term, “scholarly theologians.” Is this an attempt to silence any debate on the subject, by casting dispersions on a specific class of theologians rather than deal directly with the topic? How does Dawkins know the scholarly theologian and the non-scholarly? Is this not a case in which a theologian is only 'scholarly' when they agree with Dawkins' world view? The Bible has stronger manuscript support than any other work of antiquity. For example evidence for Jesus the Christ, can be found in the Jewish historian Josephus (before 100AD), the Roman, Tacitus (120AD), the Roman, Suetonius (110AD), the Roman Governor, Pliny the Younger (110AD), and early church leaders such as Saint Polycarp (100AD) and his pupil, Saint Irenaeus of Lyons (prior to 200AD), Saint Justin Martyr the Philosopher (150AD) and Saint Clement of Rome (100AD). Several scholarly theologian works come to mind that are worth reading:  
Craig Blomberg, The Historical reliability of the Gospels, (Intervarsity Press, 1987).  
Gregory A. Boyd, Cynic Sage, Or Son of God: Recovering the Real Jesus in an Age of Revisionist Replies, (Bridgepoint Books, 1995).  
Gary R. Habermas, The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ, (College Press Publishing Company, 1996).

Remember that Dawkins has subtly alluded to a person's faith in the Bible because of their inability to grasp reality. It is more convenient to place one's faith in written literature and leave the brain tucked in the home closet. But look at what Dawkins has achieved within his book, and in only two pages! He has placed his faith upon the works of several authors. Is he saying in essence, "They wrote it; therefore it must be true?"<sup>18</sup>

It is impossible for humanity to be omniscient. Even if it were possible, one must have access to educators who will invest their time and energy to share from the experiences of others. Yet, we are limited to a certain point in time. That being the case, we become dependent upon the works of predecessors. For example, we know a great deal about the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish Temple, in AD 70, by the Roman General Titus, because of the accounts by Josephus a Jewish historian. There is nothing wrong with admitting the works of others and giving credit to whom it should be given. But realize that this requires faith because we personally were not there. We have to trust that the accounts are accurate and truthful. In turn, this applies also to Dawkins. He is exhibiting faith, trusting in the people he has quoted and studied, that they are knowledgeable in their particular spheres. He has to trust their credibility, especially in the arena of religion, which is not Dawkins' 'forte.' However, and this is where the greatest evidence of his faith comes from. He has not asked the questions, "Do they really know what they are talking about?" or "Is it true what they are trying to articulate?" It would appear that Dawkins is merely taking them at face value. Is the faith Dawkins has exhibited in the works cited any different than the faith placed upon the Bible?

Secondly, by Dawkins' enmity with faith, could it blind Dawkins from the faith that he has in science?

What is interesting about the scientific world view is that it is true, inspiring, remarkable and that it unites a whole lot of phenomena under a single heading.<sup>19</sup>

We need to replace the automatic credulity of childhood with the constructive scepticism of adult science.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, there is no other interaction. In the works cited, Dawkins merely postulates an idea and then throws down a juvenile response. No challenge is given. It seems that in this case and in many other places, Dawkins is confusing 'evidence and proofs,' probability and 'certainty and certitude. Damian Thompson has suggested, ". . . observable facts do not "prove" a theory: They render it probable to some degree. The difference between a false and true theory is one of probability." (Damian Thompson, "Counterknowledge," National Post, 15 December, 2008, A15. Excerpts from Damian Thompson, Counterknowledge (Penguin Group, Canada, 2008). Proofs and certainty are objective while certitude and evidence are subjective. Richard Dawkins places before the reader a piece of evidence and then suggests it is a proof. The mere fact that he has a quote therefore becomes, at least for himself, indisputable and the very proof for his argument. If this were so, then we do not need a judicial system in society. All the police need to do is find an evidence of wrong doing and then they can automatically cast sentence.

<sup>19</sup> Dawkins, quoted from, [simonyi.ox.ac.uk/dawkins/WorldofDawkins-archive/Catalano/quotes.com](http://simonyi.ox.ac.uk/dawkins/WorldofDawkins-archive/Catalano/quotes.com), page 9, assessed 9/27/2008. Quoted from "Darwin's Dangerous Discipline," an interview of Richard Dawkins with Frank Miele.

If the demise of God will leave a gap, different people will fill it in different ways. My way includes a good dose of science, the honest and systematic endeavour to find out the truth about the real world.<sup>21</sup>

Science offers us an explanation of how complexity (the difficult) arose out of simplicity (the easy).<sup>22</sup>

The feeling of awed wonder that science can give us is one of the highest experiences of which the human psyche is capable. It is a deep aesthetic passion to rank with the finest that music and poetry can deliver. It is truly one of the things that make life worth living and it does so, if anything, more effectively if it convinces us that the time we have for living is quite finite.<sup>23</sup>

The enlightenment is under threat. So is reason. So is truth. So is science . . . I am one of those scientists who feels that it is no longer enough just to get on and do science. We have to devote a significant proportion of our time and resources to defending it from deliberate attack from organized ignorance. We even have to go on the attack ourselves, for the sake of reason and sanity.<sup>24</sup>

The previous five quotations can be thematically grouped into common characteristics. For instance, can the discipline of science prove the discipline of science, as "the honest and systematic endeavour to find out the truth about the real world"? Science cannot prove that reality is only that which can be observed by science. These quotes are evidences of Dawkins' faith. This is a faith that exudes a confidence and optimism, which has blinded the holder to the limitations of science. Science can only work on subjects that are observable<sup>25</sup>, as well as discoveries which are based on technology and knowledge based. Science cannot tell us about the past, or the future, or the present. For instance, science cannot be used to tell what has

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<sup>20</sup> Dawkins, quoted from, [positiveatheism.org/hist/quotes/dawkins.com](http://positiveatheism.org/hist/quotes/dawkins.com), page 9, assessed 9/27/2008. Also quoted from Richard Dawkins, *Unweaving the Rainbow: Science, Delusion, and the Appetite for Wonder*, (1998), pg 143.

<sup>21</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 361.

<sup>22</sup> Dawkins, quoted from, [simonyi.ox.ac.uk/dawkins/WorldofDawkins-archive/Catalano/quotes.com](http://simonyi.ox.ac.uk/dawkins/WorldofDawkins-archive/Catalano/quotes.com), page 12, accessed 9/24/2008.

<sup>23</sup> Dawkins, quoted from, [positiveatheism.org/hist/quotes/dawkins.com](http://positiveatheism.org/hist/quotes/dawkins.com), page 7, accessed 9/27/2008. Excerpt from, *Unweaving the Rainbow: Science, Delusion and the Appetite for Wonder* (1998), page x., quoted from Victor J Stenger, *Has Science Found God?* (2001).

<sup>24</sup> Dawkins, quoted from, [positiveatheism.org/hist/quotes/dawkins.com](http://positiveatheism.org/hist/quotes/dawkins.com), page 5, accessed 9/27/2008. Also quoted from the press release, "The Cydonia Group Declares War On Religion," December 15, 2006.

<sup>25</sup> "One of the greatest legacies of the European Enlightenment is a scientific methodology that allows us to make increasingly accurate observations about the world around us. This methodology is based upon the assumption that all we need to comprehend nature is a solid understanding of the laws and processes that we can observe and test in the natural world. The supernatural does not enter the equation, because it does not provide us with any explanations that can be tested empirically." Damian Thompson, "Counterknowledge," *National Post*, A14. Later in the same article, Thompson also referenced the scientific methodology as, ". . . a methodology for evaluating the probability of claims relating exclusively to the material world." (Counterpoint, *National Post*, A15).

happened in the past if all traces of evidence are removed. It cannot be used to illustrate what will happen to anyone at a future point in time. It cannot be used to define the 'beauty' within something,<sup>26</sup> or morality, values and norms. In fact, it may be asserted that science cannot 'speak' to us. It is after all, only a discipline. Science cannot physically communicate, as it only provides a snapshot of what has happened. Science can provide only observable evidences.<sup>27</sup> Something external to science itself, must provide conjecture and an interpretation about what is significant.

Science can also be manipulated by self-interests. As has been briefly mentioned, interpretation plays a very important role in the discipline of science. As such, one needs to be cautious about having absolute faith in science. Climate change is a very good illustration. The debate rages because there are polarized sides; one side claims the causes are man-made while the other side disagrees, and yet each side is using science to support their argument. For instance, the IPCC has been accused of political correctness and hijacking science because of their ideology.

. . . Lord Lawson's conclusion: [is] that global warming "resembles a Da Vinci Code of environmentalism. It is a great story, and a phenomenal best-seller. It contains a grain of truth-and a mountain of nonsense." He notes that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which was set up by the UN in 1988 to oversee climate research, has mutated into a "politically correct alarmist group." The "PC" at the heart of the IPCC, he writes is "the most oppressive and intolerant form of political correctness in the Western world today."<sup>28</sup>

Science has its limitations. There is a time and a place for science. Yet, it behooves the user to know where certainty and certitude do not collide. The current debate is not over the usage of science, but rather whose science is superior, and whose methodology is the most beneficial towards achieving certainty.

In exploring some of Dawkins' written works, his faith oozes off the pages. If Dawkins' hostility was over a specific type of faith,<sup>29</sup> and its misuse, the issue would be simplified.

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<sup>26</sup> Remember that the scientific methodology can only "distinguish between true and false empirical claims." Ibid., 14.

<sup>27</sup> For example, science will observe what happens when a copper molecule is mixed with a sulphate solution. However, the questions such as why, and how, must be provided by the scientist. This becomes an interpretation.

<sup>28</sup> Quoted from the article of Peter Foster, "Nigel Lawson's lonely crusade," National Post, 2 October, 2008, FP15. Peter Foster has briefly summarized the recent book authored by Lord Nigel Lawson, An Appeal to Reason: A Cool Look at Global Warming. This book is a critique on the global warming issue and has not been well received. The response has been similar in approach to a previously published work by Bjorn Lomborg, The Sceptical Environmentalist.

<sup>29</sup> Take for instance an unsound and unwarranted faith. This faith lacks strong supporting evidence to support its tenants. Such an example is found in statement 'A' as presented in the opening of this article. It is clearly the subjective ramblings of the hyper-imaginings of its holder. The Word of Faith movement is, and should be, a growing concern for all Orthodox Christians.

However, his objections are regarding 'faith' in general.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, Dawkins displays faith every time he communicates or attempts to communicate something. All languages use an interaction of symbols to express meaning. The symbols have no power or purpose within themselves if expressed individually. By stringing different letters (symbols) together, or in combining sounds to create words, purpose and intent are suddenly created. If there is any meaning, it is because we have created certain symbols to represent ideas. The point here is that Dawkins has faith in the expression of these symbols as a medium to share his ideas with others. Faith also is exuded by the passing along of intent. He has to assume, and take by faith alone, that what he is intending to communicate (his intentions) is also what the reader will understand (the result).

Intent also is an indicator of faith. Dawkins is expressing his knowledge and the evidences that seem reasonable to himself. Dawkins has written several works to express reasonable and affirmative evidences that he thinks are indicative of reality. It is a very simple faith statement. "I believe because it makes sense to me. Because it makes sense to me, therefore it must be true." Two illustrations come to mind.

If death is final, a rational agent can be expected to value his life highly and be reluctant to risk it. This makes the world a safer place, just as a plane is safer if its hijacker wants to survive.<sup>31</sup>

I may well appear passionate when I defend evolution against a fundamentalist creationist . . . . It is because the evidence for evolution is overwhelmingly strong and I am passionately stressed that my opponent can't see it. . . . But my belief in evolution is not fundamentalism, and it is not faith, because I know what it would take to change my mind, and I would gladly do so if the necessary evidence were forthcoming.<sup>32</sup>

There is an implied assumption. Since Dawkins views the evidence for evolution as justifiable, it is warranted to view the evidence in that particular fashion. In Dawkins' works, his knowledge and understanding become his basis, his foundation, for identifying the really real (what we think is reality).<sup>33</sup> Science could not tell him to trust his senses, and he is unable to test

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<sup>30</sup> "It is fashionable to wax apocalyptic about the threat to humanity posed by the AIDS virus, "mad cow" disease, and many others, but I think a case can be made that faith is one of the world's great evils, comparable to the small pox virus but harder to eradicate." Quoted from *The Humanist*, Vol. 57, No. 1, as found in [positiveatheism.org/hist/quotes/dawkins.com](http://positiveatheism.org/hist/quotes/dawkins.com), page 3, accessed 9/27/2008. Also compare, "Faith is an evil precisely because it requires no justification and brooks no argument." (Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 308).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 283.

<sup>33</sup> Ronald Nash wrote an introductory work, *World-views In Conflict: Choosing Christianity in a world of Ideas* (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1992) whereby he lists, on page 28, questions regarding the identification of one's view of reality. "What is the relationship between God and the universe? Is the existence of the universe a brute fact? Is the universe eternal? Did an eternal, personal, omnipotent God create the world? Are God and the world coeternal and interdependent? Is the world best understood in a mechanistic (that is, nonpurposeful) way? Or is there purpose in the universe? What is the ultimate nature of the universe? Is the cosmos ultimately material or spiritual or something else? Is the universe a self-enclosed system in the sense that everything happens is caused (and thus explained by) other events

them scientifically to prove his assumption. He has accepted the whole process by trust, and this is a major element of faith.

In Dawkins' writings, his preferences are identified consistently. Many of the previous quotes are illustrative of his faith-based assumptions. However, it is also advantageous to capture the ideology found in Dawkins' reference to Bishop John Shelby Spong, "whose beliefs are so advanced . . . ." <sup>34</sup> Why are Bishop Spong's beliefs "advanced"? It is simply due to the shared beliefs that Bishop Spong and Dawkins have in relation to one another. Dawkins proceeds to categorize the attributes of theologians. "Reputable biblical scholars," <sup>35</sup> are those who do not, generally, regard the New Testament as a record of truthful history. <sup>36</sup> It is not a surprise that he identifies the enlightenment as a very positive moment in time and therefore any attack on tenants of the enlightenment are anathema especially from "organized ignorance." <sup>37</sup> In another reference, the United States of America is a highly honoured republic, "because men of the enlightenment drew up the constitution in explicitly secular terms . . . ." <sup>38</sup> It should be evident that the previous quotes are not indicative of scientific exploration and inquiry. Rather, they are the expressed opinions indicative of the faith of the possessor.

Being the most familiar with Dawkins' latest work, The God Delusion, it is extremely difficult to call it a scientific work on any level. The hard issues are not explored. The silence of interaction both with leading theologians and apologists, and also with contemporary issues, is deafening. <sup>39</sup> Dawkins' makes many exegetical fallacies and errors in logic on a consistent basis. In so doing, he illustrates further his dependence on faith. If Dawkins' goal was to write, The

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within the system? Or can a supernatural reality (a being beyond the natural order) act causally within nature?"

<sup>34</sup> Dawkins, The God Delusion, 236. Bishop Spong is a very liberal minded clergy man who has denied the resurrection, the divinity of Christ and almost every tenant of the Christian faith. Further, Dawkins also divides theologians (or apologists) into two groups. The first are the "moderns" and lastly, everyone else, cf. 242, 245, 246, 247, 253, 285.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> See footnote 23.

<sup>38</sup> Dawkins, The God Delusion, 248.

<sup>39</sup> On a consistent basis, there is ongoing research into the benefits that faith and religion have on personal health and well-being. For instance William Harris, lead researcher with the Lipid Research Laboratory at St. Luke's Hospital in Kansas City, Missouri, has a research article published in the, Archives of Internal Medicine, Oct 25, 1999, detailing the effects of prayer on 466 coronary patients. See Shafer Parker, "Thy Faith hath made you well," The Report, November 22, 1999, 52. Prominent theologians/apologists such as William Lane Craig, Peter Kreeft, and Ravi Zacharias are noticeably absent. By far the greatest omission is Alvin Plantinga and his trilogy work, Warranted Christian Belief. In western Christian circles, Dr. Plantinga has revolutionized the whole epistemology debate and made a very strong case for the warrant of Christian faith. Plantinga's trilogy work smashes a gaping hole through Dawkins' "mind-virus" argument.

God Delusion, as an academic work, it is disappointing. The persuasion is not foundational logic<sup>40</sup>, but rather sheer humiliation. Dawkins' subjects are of a pious nature but with loose lips that display gigantic levels of ignorance. Along with Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens and Bill Maher, Dawkins,

harbours so much contempt for religion that he would rather score easy points than explore the messy reality of humanity's complicated-often sordid, but sometimes noble - religious impulses and experiences. That's why Maher [and company] takes on simpletons and extremists instead of seeking out theologians and other thoughtful believers to explain and defend their beliefs.<sup>41</sup>

Dawkins is exhibiting faith, that through the use of humiliation and ridicule, he will be able to aid in the process of the demise of religion. His exhibition of ridiculous faith also includes a large dosage of entertainment. This following quote is typical of the commentary found within Dawkins' works.

Augustine's pronouncements and debates epitomize, for me, the unhealthy preoccupation of early Christian theologians with sin. They could have devoted their pages and their sermons to extolling the sky splashed with stars, or mountains and green forests, seas and dawn choruses. These are occasionally mentioned but the Christian focus is overwhelmingly on sin sin sin sin sin sin sin.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Dawkins commits various exegetical fallacies, and on a consistent basis. There are many examples where he uses circular reasoning, in the sense that he is assuming the very principle for which he is arguing. Consider this case in point, ". . . that the way we see the world, and the reason why we find some things intuitively easy to grasp and others hard, is that our brains are themselves evolved organs: on board computers, evolved to help us survive in a world. . . ." (Dawkins, The God Delusion, 367). In making the case in changing moral attitudes, "the increased understanding that each of us shares a common humanity with members of other races and with the other sex-both deeply unbiblical ideas that come from biological science especially evolution." (The God Delusion, 271). A third example of circular reasoning can be illustrated from his observance of suffering, as found from, [positiveatheism.org/hist/quotes/dawkins.com](http://positiveatheism.org/hist/quotes/dawkins.com), page 4, accessed 9/27/2008, and quoted from Dawkins, "God's Utility Function," Scientific American (November, 1995), 85. "The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pitiless indifference." In other places, he misrepresents and overstates his case, and then links the specific evidences he offers as proofs. He is guilty of semantic anachronism, in the case of Jephthah and other Biblical examples of moral failures (The God Delusion, 248), by taking modern values (women as equals to men) and superimposing them upon characters of the ancient past (see The God Delusion 237-239, 265-272). He makes simplistic appeals to authority without stating the reasons for doing so. He creates straw men arguments, (cf. the dualist argument on page 180). Then there is the use of red herring tactics. One example is the diversion of the subject by shifting the topic away from faith to matters of personal intelligence. Ultimately his whole premise for the book, The God Delusion, is evidence of "begging the question." That is, the conclusion he makes about all faith being evil is part of the premise involved to reach that conclusion, and as such is not answered.

<sup>41</sup> Damon Linker, "A Problem of Persuasion" National Post, Friday October 17, 2008, A14.

<sup>42</sup> Dawkins, The God Delusion, 252. Compare also a similar quote found on page 167. "It is hard to believe, for example, that health is improved by the semi-permanent state of morbid guilt suffered by a Roman Catholic possessed of normal human frailty and less than normal intelligence."

Dawkins has the unidentified assumption that by insulting the faith of certain individuals, this disproves the existence of God. If only faith were one-dimensional! Faith is multi-faceted and tiered. There is individual faith. Communal faith. Faith in specific concepts and ideas. There is rational faith and irrational faith. There is also faith that encompasses the totality of what one believes. If one has faith that tomorrow the weather will be warm and inviting but in actuality, it turns out to be cold and snowy, how does this disprove the faith one has in the origins of life? Everyone lives by faith and everyone has reasons for the faith that they exhibit. Whether the belief is warranted and logical is a different topic. In all circumstances where faith is being demonstrated, that faith did not come totally blind or without some evidential merit. We live by faith everyday, but a faith based upon various patterns that we compile to make sense of our environment. We do not know what tomorrow will bring. We are not sure of the exact moment we will die. And what exactly will we be doing at 10:23AM on July 17, 2009? That remains unanswerable at this point in time. There are huge limitations to the knowledge we can attain and presently have acquired. However, we take that knowledge, the experiences and the totality of our senses, and plan for the future accordingly.<sup>43</sup>

Richard Dawkins is a highly intelligent and entertaining author. However, in the case against faith, he has shown a dependency on faith that has gone unchallenged.<sup>44</sup> His faith is based upon science and the scientific model.<sup>45</sup> He has shown a reliance and trust upon the works of others and the arguments they have brought forward. By the very act of communication, the tenants that make up his reasons against faith are expressions of faith in himself, and the tools of epistemology. How strong is his faith? Could his faith in science and in the exaltation of sensory perceptions be categorized as a religion?<sup>46</sup>

After sleeping through a hundred million centuries we have finally opened our eyes on a sumptuous planet, sparkling with colour, bountiful with life. Within decades we must close our eyes again. Isn't it a noble, an enlightened way of spending our brief time in the sun, to work at understanding the universe and how we have come to wake up in it? This is how I answer when I am asked -- as I am surprisingly often -- why I bother to get up in the mornings. To put it the other way round, isn't it sad to go to your grave without ever wondering why you were born? Who, with such a thought, would not spring from bed, eager to resume discovering the world and rejoicing to be a part of it?<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Christmas is a great example of faith. Clearly the purchasing of gifts displays great faith that the intended recipient will not have reposed by the time that the gift is given.

<sup>44</sup> This is what some people call a self-referentially absurd statement. In other words, it becomes self-defeating. If faith is evil, why does the case being made against it rely largely upon the tenant against it?

<sup>45</sup> Yet he is scientifically challenged, being evidentially lacking in a great many points he is trying to make. An example of this is the Old Testament narrative of Noah, which is "derived from the Babylonian myth of Uta Napisthim and known from older mythologies of several cultures." (The God Delusion). An example coming from the New Testament could be, "It was Paul who invented the idea of taking the Jewish God to the Gentiles." (The God Delusion, 257).

<sup>46</sup> A religion does not have to be organized and systematically put together. It just needs to be a system of beliefs and practices by which one lives.

<sup>47</sup> Dawkins, as quoted from, [positiveatheism.org/hist/quotes/dawkins.com](http://positiveatheism.org/hist/quotes/dawkins.com), page 10, accessed 9/27/2008. Excerpted from chapter 1, The Anaesthetic of Familiarity, "Unweaving the Rainbow: Science, Delusion and the Appetite for Wonder", 198.