For biblically and theologically thinking Christians, to know existentially Christ means eternal life. “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3 NIV). Baptist pastor Jeremy LaBorde rightly states: “What you believe to be true will control you, whether it’s true or not” (n.d.). Richard Rice aptly observes:

Our understanding of God has enormous practical significance. . . . What we think of God and how we respond to Him are closely related. An inaccurate view of God can have disastrous effect on personal religious experience. We could never love a hostile, tyrannical being. . . . And we could not respect a mild, indulgent figure who never took us seriously. Our personal religious experience can be healthy only if we hold an adequate conception of God. (1985:10)

Happiness and balance in life depends on the right picture of God. However, the recent attacks on God’s character in different forms not only by atheists but even Christian thinkers influence many, leading to a realization of the importance of theodicy (a combination of two Greek words, theos “God” and diké “justice,” referring to a discussion on the problem of evil and a defense of the justice of God in the context of the existence of evil). “Theodicy is the attempt to defend divine justice in the face of aberrant phenomena that appear to indicate the deity’s indifference or hostility toward virtuous people” (Crenshaw 1992:6:444).

Atheism in My Life

This article is closely related to my own experience with atheism. Atheism was part of my personal journey, even though I was never an atheist, but for almost 40 years I was daily bombarded with this ideology. I was
born, grew up, and lived in an atheistic state (in the former Czechoslovakia, today the Czech Republic, one of the strongholds of atheism),¹ and went to atheistic schools. All ideology was atheistic and built on the evolutionary theory and the premise that the stronger will survive. Even though I lived in a Seventh-day Adventist family, one of the integral members of our family was my uncle who lived with us and was a convinced atheist. He tried hard to persuade me that the evolutionary hypothesis was the best explanation for the origins of life and that to believe in God was nonsense and only good for weak, uneducated, and old people. My story is connected even with persecution under the atheistic government. I was ridiculed in schools for being a Seventh-day Adventist Christian; my father had immense difficulties at work for his beliefs related especially to Sabbath observance; my father-in-law was imprisoned for his faith. During my studies, I had to listen to many atheistic lectures and reasoning (propaganda) and read atheistic books. In my university studies in Prague, I had some of the best Marxist’s philosophers teach me their ideology and philosophy. In other words, I was constantly confronted with atheism.

I have learned that atheism is also a sort of religion, a different form, but nevertheless a religion that is built on reason as the highest authority. In such a system, evolutionary theory is untouchable, and some thinkers (their saints/gurus) are “worshiped” (e.g., Lenin, Marx, Engels, Nietzsche, Sartre, and others). Not everyone would agree with my simplified assessment, but this is what I lived, and observed.

**Brief Outline**

This paper briefly compares classical atheism with neo-atheism, and presents four apostles of neo-atheism (Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Christopher Hitchens, and Sam Harris) along with their main literature and describes their principal arguments. In the following section, I mention attacks on the character of God from Christian writers and point to the sources that summarize the answers of Christian scholars, theologians, and apologists. In the last exegetical-theological section of my paper, I deal with one biblical example, namely Job’s sufferings, in order to demonstrate that these recent attacks lack substance, because they are not working contextually and theologically with the biblical material. They are highly selective and retell the biblical story with their own twist in order to ridicule a Christian faith in God and who He is in order to deny His existence. They do not do justice to the original intent of the biblical text and to the overall actual biblical picture of God. I conclude with an emphasis on the importance of cultivating and proclaiming the right picture of God, because everything in our spiritual life depends on the true picture of God.
Classical Atheism

Main Claim and Reasoning

Atheists’ principle assertion is that religion is a human invention, is wrong, and only for the weak. Karl Marx stated: “Man makes religion, religion does not make man. Religion is, indeed, the self-consciousness and self-esteem of man who has either not yet won through to himself, or has already lost himself again. . . . Religion is the opium of the people!” (1976:3:1). Lenin claimed: “‘Religion is the opium of the people’: this saying of Marx is the cornerstone of the entire ideology of Marxism about religion.” Exceptionally naïve argumentation accompanied classical atheism. I remember as a 7 or 8 year-old boy that I had to read in school a book in which on the first page was this argument, taken from Ps 14:1 and 53:1 that “there is no God.” Omitted, of course, was the first part of the sentence: “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’”

It seems that often when people wanted to find answers to their hard questions, they bought into atheism. The evolutionary hypothesis provided an easy solution to the issue of the origin of life, however, the strongest arguments against Christianity were based on the injustice in the world, the suffering of innocent people, questions on how a good and omnipotent God could allow concentration camps, torture, rapes, violence, and exploitation. Many felt that if such evil phenomena exist, it means that God does not exist. Others were disappointed with Christian behavior and lifestyle (atheists often point to the countless religious wars, the Dark Ages with the dominance of the inquisition, and fighting among Christians), and the dominant churches’ dogmatics (like the doctrine of hell, the intercessory ministry of the saints, and belief in miracles).

Bertrand Russell explains that if one wants to be intellectually honest and scientific then such a person cannot believe in God (1957:12). He elaborates on philosophical arguments that deny God’s existence and also rejected Christianity because of the doctrine of hell: “There is one very serious defect to my mind in Christ’s moral character, and that is that He believed in hell. I do not myself feel that any person who is really profoundly humane can believe in everlasting punishment.” Russell continues: “I must say that I think all this doctrine, that hell-fire is a punishment for sin, is a doctrine of cruelty. It is a doctrine that put cruelty into the world and gave the world generations of cruel torture; and the Christ of the Gospels, if you could take Him as His chroniclers represent Him, would certainly have to be considered partly responsible for that” (12, 13).

Classical atheists usually did not paint a dark picture of God. It was enough for them to assert God’s non-existence and the folly related to believing in God. Some even expressed their frustration and nostalgia,
because there were not good enough reasons to believe in God even though the human heart longs for a loving God to rest in. Thomas Hardy in his poem “God’s Funeral” (n.d.) expresses the melancholy that God is dead:

XI
"How sweet it was in years far hied
To start the wheels of day with trustful prayer,
To lie down liegely at the eventide
And feel a blest assurance he was there!

XIV
I could not prop their faith: and yet
Many I had known: with all I sympathized;
And though struck speechless, I did not forget
That what was mourned for, I, too, once had prized.

XV
Still, how to bear such loss I deemed
The insistent question for each animate mind,
And gazing, to my growing sight there seemed
A pale yet positive gleam low down behind,

XVI
Whereof, to lift the general night,
A certain few who stood aloof had said,
‘See you upon the horizon that small light —
Swelling somewhat?’ Each mourner shook his head.

XVII
And they composed a crowd of whom
Some were right good, and many nigh the best . . .
Thus dazed and puzzled ‘twixt the gleam and gloom
Mechanically I followed with the rest.’

Matthew Arnold in a poem “Dover Beach” eloquently describes these strange feelings when one loses the certainty and beauty of faith:

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth’s shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl’d.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.
Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! For the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night."

One would expect that with the fall of the Iron Curtain and communism in 1989 and the early 1990s of the last century that the atheistic ideology would die too. However, while seemingly the ideology of atheism and its propaganda was declining, especially after 9/11/2001, it has recently been resurrected because people have had enough of organized religion with its associated violence, greed, superficiality, fakery, and selfishness, and constant hunger for power, glory, and richness. Atheism is now reviving, is being promoted in more subtle ways, and has become quite aggressive. It is still built on the foundation stone of Darwin’s theory of evolution, and this hypothesis has also influenced the interpretation of the evolution of religion from many gods to a more pure form of one God and then to the best and pinnacle concept of evolution—no god. At the end, one’s own reason and scientific worldview decide everything.

**Neo-Atheism**

With the rise of neo-atheism comes a new phenomenon. The naturalistic origin of life is now mixed with aggressive attacks on religion, including both Islam and Christianity. Neo-Atheists repeat the old atheistic arguments with better scientific reasoning and new tactics. They try to demonstrate not only a foolishness and wrongness of believing in God, but they claim that religion is evil, dangerous, and harmful! They viciously attack the God of the Old Testament and aggressively criticize all religion! They express their anger, yet they write with charm and elegance. Four gurus are spokespersons of neo-atheism in today’s world.

Richard Dawkins

Richard Dawkins is the most famous of the four as well as an outstanding author. He is emeritus professor of evolutionary biology at the University of Oxford and strongly challenges Christians, their faith, and religion. Dawkins formulated the most articulate and wicked attack on the God of the Bible: “The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving
control freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully” (2008:51). Marcion in the second century after Christ had already expressed negative thought about the God of the Old Testament, but Dawkins plays forte fortissimo with the same melody and strongly claims that the God of the Hebrew Scriptures is a moral monster. Moreover, Dawkins advocates an opinion that everything has only biological origin. He also speaks about the “hell houses of Pastor Keenan Roberts” (2008:359–362) and understandably criticizes the Christian teaching on hell. Needless to say, Dawkins does not believe in such a cruel “God” and neither do I, because the biblical God is different and His main characteristic is love!

Sam Harris

Sam Harris is a critic of religion and especially famous for his three books: *The End of Faith*, *Letter to a Christian Nation*, and *The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values*. His first book, *The End of Faith*, fueled a debate about the validity of religion (2004). In his *Letter to a Christian Nation* (2006), he ferociously stands against child sacrifices to bloodthirsty gods and argues that the bloody atoning sacrifice of Jesus for humanity’s transgressions is reminiscent of those perverted religious practices. Then he added *The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values* (2010) because he realized that many people do not think that science and evolution have anything to say on the subject of morality and the formation of human values. He tries to answer that puzzle through science, otherwise people’s ethical behavior is one of the primary justifications for the Christian faith.

Christopher Hitchens

Christopher Hitchens is a polemicist and journalist who also presents a case against religion. The title of his main book eloquently describes why he wrote it and what his aim is: *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (2007). This phrase is a play on a crucial Muslim saying: “Allahu Agbar” meaning “God/Allah is great” which is used in various contexts by Muslims (e.g., in formal prayers or in the calls for prayer [adhān] by the muezzin at the prescribed worship times each day). Hitchens denies the relevancy of any religion and defines religion as a social poison. With his reading of the major religious texts, he states that religion is a man-made wish, a cause of dangerous sexual control, and a distortion of human understanding of origins. He argues for a secular life based on science and reason and replaces the doctrine of hell with the Hubble Telescope’s...
splendid view of the universe and Moses with the beauty and miracles of nature.

Daniel Dennett

Daniel Dennett, a Tufts University cognitive scientist, published a thought-provoking book, *Consciousness Explained*, in 1991, and anyone reading it will agree that to explain human consciousness is not an easy task. He, of course, explains everything from a naturalistic point of view. Dennett claims to have developed a major new theory of consciousness, yet what is different in his counter-intuitive theory is the claim that human consciousness, rather than being “hard-wired” into the brain’s innate machinery, is more like software “running on the brain’s parallel hardware” and is largely a product of cultural evolution. In another groundbreaking book *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life* (1995), Dennett argues for the power of the theory of natural selection (see also Dennett 2006). Populist argumentation for the undergirding rationale of Darwin’s theory of evolution leads him to a conclusion that the evolutionary hypothesis is like a powerful acid, “universal solvent, capable of cutting right to the heart of everything in sight” which dissolves everything at the end and states that “the truly dangerous aspect of Darwin’s idea is its seductiveness” (1995:521). Dennett also claims, in the chapter when he discusses Morality and Religion that Christians fabricate terror, psychological abuse, hell, and create phobia (2006:279–283).

The views of these neo-atheistic thinkers and scientists are built on very naïve views of human nature and a denial of the power of sin. Their positivistic understanding of human nature is doomed to defeat as the history of humanity so often demonstrates. The selfishness of the human heart is naturally incurable and is not going from bad to good but from bad to worse. In communism, everyone was equal, but some people were more equal (those who belonged to the leading party). Corruption is unfortunately a notorious problem in any political system; no one is immune.

It is true that there have been many crimes committed and wars fought in the name of God or Allah (against this misuse of religion, Seventh-day Adventists strongly protest; think of the inquisition, slavery, terrorist attacks, etc.). The violence in the name of God is a black spot, curse, and plague in the history of Christianity and brings great shame on Christians! However, that shameful past needs to include in the picture the atrocities done by atheistic dictators. Neo-atheists would like to deny that many terrible things have also been done as a result of a denial of God. Just remember Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, or Máo Zédōng. One simple illustration from
the French Revolution suffices. It is documented that in 1793 (when religion was replaced by reason) Marie-Jeanne Roland was sent to the guillotine to face execution on trumped-up charges. On November 8, 1793, she was beheaded. A few weeks afterwards, Marie Antoinette met the same fate. As Madame Roland was going to her execution, she bowed mockingly toward the statue of liberty in the Place de la Revolution and uttered the words for which she is now remembered: “Liberty, what crimes are committed in your name” (2014).

The point is that we are dealing with a common element, regardless of whether we are religious or atheists, namely, sinful human nature! The sinful heart cannot be changed (maybe it can be improved if there is willingness to cooperate) by education, a better economy, or different circumstances. Only true conversion performed by the power of God’s grace, His Spirit, and Word can change the human heart. However, no true unselfish love is possible on the basis of our biological inclinations. At its best, natural human behavior may demonstrate altruistic love, but even it is selfish. From a consistent evolutionary perspective, it is impossible for genuine self-sacrifice or morality to spring from the natural heart. In the end, only the most powerful and strongest survive according to their ideology.

**Dark Pictures of God’s Character by Christian Theologians**

In addition to the four spokesmen for neo-atheism, a few Christian thinkers have also painted a dark picture of God with their pragmatic and biblical-theological arguments that have spread in current literature. The skeletal outline of the biblical narratives are picked up and elaborated upon usually with the author’s own spin.

Theological constructs are many and one must seriously ask if they best describe and explain the meaning of difficult biblical narratives. For example, biblical scholar Julia O’Brien wrestles with images of God as “an abusive husband,” “authoritarian father,” and “angry warrior” (2008). David Penchansky titles the six chapters of his book in the following way: “The Insecure God,” “The Irrational God,” “The Vindictive God,” “The Dangerous God,” “The Malevolent God,” and “The Abusive God” (1999). Readers of the Holy Scriptures sincerely struggle with such descriptions of God. Another strong attack on the loving character of God is expressed by Bart D. Ehrman, the James A. Gray Distinguished Professor of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina and a leading authority on the early Church, New Testament textual criticism, and the life of Jesus in his book, *God’s Problem: How the Bible Fails to Answer Our Most Important Question—Why We Suffer* (2008).

The most popular arguments often used for purposes of putting God down are the following:
1. God is not good—there is so much innocent suffering in the world (God is blamed for all evil).
2. Abraham has to sacrifice his own son—God is a blood-thirsting monster.
3. Child abuse—42 children were killed by two bears because they were laughing at the prophet Elijah (2 Kgs 2:23–25).
4. God demands a human sacrifice, as in the case of Abraham (Gen 22).
5. God is not great and He is not good—just the opposite of most popular religious teaching.
7. Wars performed in the name of God under God’s commands.
8. God is cruel because He let people suffer and be punished in Egypt with 10 plagues, including the killing of firstborn sons.
9. God is a jealous and egocentric being (other gods need to be destroyed).
10. Ethnocentrism and racism (God called Abraham and chose a specific nation to be the bearer of light, while placing a curse on Canaan).
12. Inferiority of women to men.
13. Institution of Levirate marriage.
15. Old Testament legislation with its violence (eye for eye; capital punishment).
16. Incest of Lot with his two daughters.
17. Rape and violence in Judges.
18. Life of David—warrior, polygamist, seeker of revenge, murderer, adulterer, yet called a man according to the heart of God.
19. Innocent suffering of Job that proves “nothing” in the end.

Epicurus, the Greek philosopher of the third century B.C., declared: “Either God wants to abolish evil, and cannot; or he can, but does not want to. If he wants to, but cannot, he is impotent. If he can, but does not want to, he is wicked. If God can abolish evil, and God really wants to do it, why is there evil in the world?” (In Meister 2112:6). Seemingly, evil conflicts with the existence of God so many rush to an easy, simplistic, and false dilemma: either God does not care or God does not exist. How can an allegedly perfect, loving, and omnipotent God exist with so much evil, suffering, and death in the world?

What is one to do with all these issues and the vast atheistic and theological literature on the biblical picture of God? Making God immoral or impotent is nothing new, but the recent neo-atheistic and even biblical interpretations come with innovative twists and argumentation which are very disturbing, shocking, humiliating, and puzzling.
Christian Responses to the Denigration of God’s Character

Is God a moral monster? The answer has much to do with a close reading of the sacred text, an understanding of the biblical metanarrative, worldview, and the great controversy. In the final analysis the answer hinges on epistemology, hermeneutics, and the issue of who or what is the final authority in life. There are outstanding biblical and theological studies which can help the searching student to better understand the issues that have been raised. There is no book that can explain them all, and some answers are better than others. The reader needs to be critical and will probably not agree with each detail because different writers explain things from their own perspectives, presuppositions, and pre-understanding. It is also important to remember that our knowledge is limited, but the material presented is extremely helpful, stimulating, and leads to serious reflection.


The Book of Job Scandal

The innocent suffering of Job is the most notorious and significant objection to belief in the goodness and fairness of God. One must ask, what is the primary purpose of this ancient document? Is the author intending to answer the question of why the innocent suffer as it is usually asserted? Is it a story about a wager between God and Satan about who is right and who will win?

I totally disagree with Bart Ehrman who states: “God himself caused the misery, pain, agony, and loss that Job experienced. . . . And to what end? For ‘no reason’—other than to prove to the Satan that Job wouldn’t curse God even if he had every right to do so. . . . God did this to him in order to win a bet with the Satan. . . . But God is evidently above justice and can do whatever he pleases if he wants to prove a point” (2008:168).

What God allows He does not cause or do. The biblical text reveals that it was Satan who brought on Job’s calamities and not God (Job 1:12; 2:6–7). God is the Creator of life and created everything very good (Gen 1:31). Evil comes from another source.

The Issue in the Great Controversy

The most crucial issue in the book is not Job’s suffering, even though his suffering plays an important role in the whole drama, but it is not the heart of the matter. It is neither about a capricious or private bet between God and Satan, because the whole drama of the book begins in heaven when of the sons of God assemble before the Sovereign Lord (Job 1:6). In this cosmic scenario, the great controversy unfolds, thus signaling that the problem is not local but universal. The recognition of this cosmic dimension is crucial.
According to Job’s prologue (1:8; 2:3), God justifies Job in front of the solemn assembly gathered before Him. Twice in the first two chapters, God declares Job to be right, i.e., blameless, upright, fearing God, and shunning evil. His character is without question, but not because he is sinless (Job knows he is a sinner; see 7:21; 10:6; 14:17). He can be blameless only through God’s transforming grace. In these two encounters that God initiates, God directs His words to Satan, and He engages with him in heightened dialogue.

God is presented as passionately standing up for Job, but Satan does not share God’s loving affection for Job. Instead he involves Job in his argument against God, and his evil devices go to the very root of his dispute with Him.

Satan opposes God’s pronouncement of Job’s righteous and confronts Him with a frightful and seemingly innocent question: “‘Does Job fear God for nothing?’” (1:9 NIV). This cynical inquiry introduces the whole plot of the book, because Satan categorically denies that God is just while justifying Job and proclaiming him perfect. At first glance, the remark appears to be directed against Job, but in reality it is an attack upon God by trying to disprove His statement about Job. Thus, the main theme of the book of Job is God’s justice, the trustworthiness of His word. The real drama turns on the fact that God is for us and proclaims us just. Is God just while justifying us? At stake in the cosmic controversy is the ultimate question of whether or not God can be trusted and if His judgment is valid? It must be demonstrated in front of the whole universe that God is the God of love, truth, and justice, and that He is the guarantor of freedom. If His word is not trustworthy, God’s whole government will collapse.

Why is Satan’s question—whether Job serves God out of love—so evil? When the motives of Job’s behavior are questioned, he cannot immediately defend himself. Only time (a long period of time) and the difficulties of life (problems, persecution, and suffering) will reveal who is correct—Job or the accuser.

Satan’s Request and the Scandal of the Book

Satan argues that Job’s motives are impure. To prove his argument, he demands that God allow him to take everything from Job, because only in this way will God see the real Job: “‘He will surely curse you to your face’” (Job 1:11 NIV). Satan requests that God remove His blessings and protection from Job. When Satan attacks Job’s integrity, God allows him to try Job: “‘Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands’” (v. 12 NIV).

Every time I read God’s answer, I am irritated. I do not like it. We naturally revolt against such a reaction by God. Those who believe in a good,
loving, just, and all-powerful God have an immense problem with this picture of Him. Believers confess that the Creator and the King of the Universe is the Protector of life, Giver of happiness, Prince of peace, Intervener in human affairs, and Friend of humans. It seems that Job’s God is a different kind of God from what they know from other parts of biblical revelation. Faith makes no sense and to some extent it makes the situation even worse.

Why did the Omnipotent God not protect His servant? This is the real scandal in the story. We would like to see the Omnipotent and loving God intervene and immediately silence Satan’s accusations and prevent him from harming Job. We wish that God would stop at once the abuse of children, rape of women, concentration camps, murders, suffering, car accidents, plane crashes, collapses of towers, pain, violence, hurricanes, tsunamis, and all the other tragedies.

People ask poignant yet seemingly simple questions in times of tragedy, loss, and war: “Where is God?” The only answer to questions of suffering is that God was exactly in the same place where He was when His son was murdered at the cross. God is always on the side of the oppressed, suffering person. In our suffering, He suffers. “In all their distress he too was distressed, . . . In his love and mercy he redeemed them” (Isa 63:9 NIV).

The book of Job begins with a tension. On the one hand, God put a hedge around Job protecting him from any harm; God blessed him so generously that he had become the Bill Gates of his time. On the other hand, Job is abandoned (for a time) by God and given into the hands of Satan. There is no logic to this. The situation seems self-contradictory.

We live in a world in which evil reigns, and evil is irrational. Let us not try to find a logical answer to the problem of evil. We need to learn how to live with our unanswered questions. From that angle, the book of Job is really a quest for God’s visible presence in life.

How Can Satan be Defeated?

The question, How can Satan be defeated? needs to be answered to shed greater light on the whole issue of theodicy and the conflict in the book of Job. Surprisingly, Satan cannot be defeated by logic because against each argument is a counterargument. To refute someone only with external facts has no lasting results. If Satan could be defeated through debate, God would have done it a long time ago for He is the Truth (Exod 34:6; Deut 7:9; 32:4; Ps 31:6; Jer 10:10; John 17:17).

Can Satan be defeated by force? Nothing would please him more than to face force in whatever form. This is exactly what he wants to prove.
about God. He wants to accuse Him of using force, but he lacks evidence; he cannot demonstrate it. Of course, Satan could be silenced by physical power if God chose to do so. The Omnipotent Creator is also the Mighty Warrior (Exod 15:3; Judg 6:12; Isa 42:13; Jer 20:11). In that case, however, God would be accused of not playing fair because He is stronger and thus has an advantage over Satan. The great controversy does need to be won but in a different way, by moral power. But how?

Victory through Weakness

Satan can be defeated only by someone who is weaker than he is, and God can do it only with pure ammunition—love, truth, justice, freedom, and order. Satan draws different weapons from an evil arsenal: ambition, pride, selfishness, lies, deceit, violence, anger, hatred, prejudice, racism, terrorism, addictions, manipulation, etc. How often we wonder why our Almighty God allows tragedies to happen in the lives of good people, forgetting that God’s victory is not won by power or force. Our gracious Lord is not acting like a superman. He wins by humility.

This is the reason for the incarnation. The God of the whole universe had to become weak in order to defeat evil. Only with the frailties of humanity could He defeat Satan. On the cross of Calvary, the Creator God demonstrated His love, truth, and justice. The suffering God, hanging on the cross, is a victorious God. He lived a life in total dependence on and in relationship with His Father. What a paradox! Sin started with pride but was overcome by humility (Phil 2:5–11; Isa 14:12–15).

In the story of Job, only Job himself, who is weaker than the devil, could refute Satan’s argument, defeat him, and thus prove that God was right when He justified him and stood on Job’s side! Job overcame the devil not because he was so good or strong (Job 7:21; 10:6; 14:17), but because he totally surrendered his life to God. He did this in full confidence and trust in the God who gave him strength and victory (13:15; 19:25–27; 42:5). Paul says eloquently: “When I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor 12:10 NIV).

When Job demonstrated that he loved God above all, God’s standing up for him was vindicated. His justice prevailed. God is just while justifying us because His grace and presence, even though very often unseen and silent, sustains His people. God demonstrates that He rules in love and justice. Thus, God’s justice and theodicy prevails. The beauty of God’s character brilliantly shines, because our God is a God of love, truth, and justice.

Our Primary Task

The first task of the followers of Christ is to present a right picture of
God and His character to this world. This is the work needed to be accomplished before the second coming of Christ, because Satan has grossly distorted the character of God from the very beginning (see Gen 3:1–6). Today the postmodern attacks on God, His character, and the Scriptures are more sophisticated and stronger than ever. Once again our task is to be witnesses for God and let His glory shine through our characters (Rev 14:7).

Revelation 18:1 states that at the end of world’s history the glory of God will shine throughout the world. The last work of God’s people will be to let God illuminate the world with His glory through His people. This will be the most powerful argument in favor of God’s existence and love, and His true character will be defended. God’s existence must be shown in the lifestyle of God’s followers. His people need to live to the glory of God, reflecting in their character the loving character of God. According to 2 Thess 1:3–5, the evidence that God is true and His judgments are just is the living faith and love of believers!

If God’s followers are spiritually dead then God is dead too, and Nietzsche’s slogan “God is dead” would be right! We are a spectacle to the world and to the whole universe (1 Cor 4:9)! Ellen G. White powerfully explains our role in the parable about the 10 virgins when she interprets the work of wise virgins:

So the followers of Christ are to shed light into the darkness of the world. Through the Holy Spirit, God’s word is a light as it becomes a transforming power in the life of the receiver. By implanting in their hearts the principles of His word, the Holy Spirit develops in men the attributes of God. The light of His glory—His character—is to shine forth in His followers. Thus they are to glorify God, to lighten the path to the Bridegroom’s home, to the city of God, to the marriage supper of the Lamb. The coming of the bridegroom was at midnight—the darkest hour. So the coming of Christ will take place in the darkest period of this earth’s history. . . . It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy, and truth. This is the work outlined by the prophet Isaiah in the words, “O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him.” Isaiah 40:9, 10. Those who wait for the Bridegroom’s coming are to say to the people, “Behold your God.” The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is
a revelation of His character of love. The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them. The light of the Sun of Righteousness is to shine forth in good works—in words of truth and deeds of holiness. (1941:415, 416, emphasis supplied)

Many biblical texts assure that God is abundant in love (Exod 34:6-7; Ps 100:5; 117:2; 136:1–26; Rom 5:5, 8; 1 John 3:1; 4:16). “Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness leads you toward repentance?” (Rom 2:4 NIV). “Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him” (Ps 34:8 NIV). The God of the Bible is the God of love, truth, justice, freedom, and order!16

In the time of deep trouble, there are no easy answers and often there are no answers. In such situations, people need to focus on the big picture of God’s revelation that ultimately testifies about the goodness of God. An inscription was found on a wall in a cellar in Cologne, Germany, where Jews hid from the Nazis. The anonymous author, who perished with many others, left behind the following profound words: “I believe in the sun even when it does not shine. I believe in love, even when I do not feel it. I believe in God, even when He is silent” (Waldman 2005:197; see also Borowitz and Patz 1985:88).

The best proof of God’s existence and His goodness is our personal experience with Him. Only our appreciation of Christ’s ultimate sacrifice for us on the cross can give us inner peace and assurance of His love in times when calamities, struggles, and tragedies of life strike. Christ-like Christians are the best proof for God’s presence among us. Loving Christians are the ultimate argument for the God of love.

Notes

1The Czech Republic is considered to be the most atheistic country in the world. The main reason for this situation is that this country has one of the worst histories of re-catholicization (the forced process through which the Protestants were brought back to the bosom of the Roman Catholic Church) after the Battle of White Mountain in 1620. Also the world wars and influence of Nazism and then communism played significant roles. The cynicism toward religion and material pragmatism has strong roots in this society and has brought their fruits.

Statistics vary, for example, according to the Eurobarometer Pole of 2010, only 16% of the Czechs believe there is a God. In 2001, the Czech Statistical Office provided census information on the ten million people in the Czech Republic: 59% had no religion, 32.2% were religious, and 8.8% did not answer. The next census in 2011 provided the following figures: 34.2% not religious, 20.6% religious and
45.2% no answer. According to the Gallup Pole in Europe (2007–2008), the lack of importance of religion was 74% among the Czechs.

Atheism is not something new that would start with the French Revolution and expand with Lenin and the Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917. Even though traces of atheism can go back to some Greek philosophers and thinkers in Asia of the sixth or fifth centuries before Christ, the spread of atheism slowly began after the renaissance and the reformation but boomed with the French Revolution.


Augustin well expressed people’s basic desire for God: “You move us to delight in praising You; for You have formed us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in You” (The Confessions, I.1; emphasis added).


To understand Satan’s motive, it is necessary to study the key words in the question: “for nothing.” The Hebrew term for this occurs four times in the book (1:9; 2:3; 9:17; 22:6) It can be translated also as “gratis,” “gratuitously,” “without a reason,” “for nought,” “freely,” “disinterestedly,” “for no purpose,” “in vain,” “without cause.” Satan’s question can be stated thus: Does Job serve God disinterestedly? Is his piety unselfish and devotion wholehearted? Or expressed differently: Does he serve God out of love, i.e., for nothing?

Jan Hus proclaimed: “The truth will prevail” and the Hussites adopted that phrase for themselves that God’s truth would prevail. When communists were in power, they also spoke that truth would prevail, meaning “their” truth. The first president after the Velvet Revolution in 1989, Václav Havel, ingeniously improved the slogan to say, “Truth and love will prevail.” But still one more crucial element is missing, namely “justice,” so my personal motto is: “The truth, love, and justice of God will prevail!” I think that is an adequate description of God’s government and of who God is. He is the God of love, truth, and justice.

Jan Hus’s famous phrase in respect to truth is: “Seek the truth, hear the truth, learn the truth, love the truth, speak the truth, hold the truth and defend the truth until death.” “Truth prevails” was adopted as a motto by the first President of Czechoslovakia Tomáš Masaryk in 1918 and then echoed in Václav Havel’s notion of “life in truth” and in his 1989 freedom campaign slogan, “Truth and love must prevail over lies and hatred.” Jan Hus and Jan Amos Komenský (John Amos Comenius) connected the truth with theological aspects, while in Masaryk’s ethical concepts truth was seen as the opposite of lies. Hus’s credo traditionally has been seen as testifying to moral and spiritual truth. The Charter 77 movement had the motto “Truth prevails for those who live in truth.”
Works Cited


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