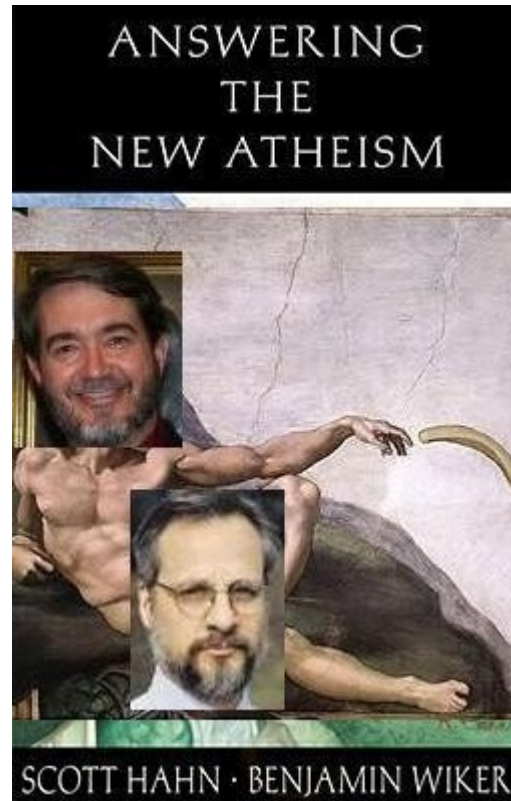


***Answering the New Atheism: Dismantling Dawkins' Case Against God*, by Scott Hahn & Benjamin Wiker: A Refutation**



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**Preface**

I wanted to add this preface to let the readers in on some of my thoughts during the writing of this refutation.

Honestly, to be blunt, this book was horrendous. Their logic was horrible, their supposed facts were even worse, and this is probably the first book I've read arguing against the New Atheists that throughout the entire book, I can honestly say that there were only about two things I agreed with in the entire book. Usually most apologists aren't *this* disconnected from reality, but the authors did make a few interesting arguments - ones that I hadn't come across before, though that didn't make them any better. They were still lame; just interesting. On the bright side the book *was* very well written and the authors explained their arguments in an easily understood manner.

To save on time and space I cited several blog posts I have previously written on a variety of subjects, which I cited for my references (which can be found at the end of this refutation). I've written so much

about several of these topics in the past I didn't feel the need to rewrite all of that here.

I hope you enjoy this new addition to the several refutations I've written and I am always appreciative of feedback - both good and bad.

Thank you.

## **Introduction**

This is a review/refutation of a book by two theologians in Scott Hahn and Benjamin Wiker whose attempt at refuting Richard Dawkins' bestseller, *The God Delusion*, is called *Answering the New Atheism: Dismantling Dawkins' Case Against God*, published by Emmaus Road Publishing in 2008.

Like the other refutations I've written, [1] I am going to point out the absurdities and errors of these two authors and show that their case really isn't made up of much at all.

Before I begin with the chapter by chapter breakdown I wanted to comment on something they mentioned in their Introduction about Antony Flew, the once great philosopher who seems to have become a deist. On page six they mention Flew and how he was convinced of a god because the arguments swayed him, but either Wiker and Hahn are being knowingly deceptive, or they are simply mistaken. The facts seem to be that Flew is suffering from acute memory problems due to his old age, or perhaps some kind of pathology. Either way, Flew doesn't seem to believe in any personal god, but an impersonal creator god, the kind a deist would believe in. This is also hardly any reason to celebrate for theists. Some christian apologists seem to have taken advantage of an elderly man whose memory is badly failing him and he can't seem to remember all of the reasons for his previous disbelief. The book that is partially credited to Flew, *There Is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*, didn't even seem to contain much of anything written directly by Flew at all. It seems that Roy Varghese, the author and editor of several books about God and science, was the main author and wrote the vast majority of it, so who can be sure if the words attributed to Flew are even true, or accurate? [2] To me, that is downright unethical and for these two christians to champion Flew for their cause is just downright despicable in my book. Even if Flew was convinced of some creator god that doesn't make theists' beliefs true in the slightest. We also have here another set of christians relying purely on an argument from authority [3] (and a very questionable one at that...), which is no proof of anything.

## **Chapter 1: Dawkins' God, Chance**

In the first chapter, Hahn and Wiker take issue with Richard Dawkins' chapter about miracles and the origin of life in his book *The Blind Watchmaker*, specifically his description about how a statue could *possibly* wave at you if its molecules spontaneously moved in one direction. [4]

Hahn and Wiker say, "In short, if God is only highly improbable, could His existence be any *less* probable than an event of such mind-numbing improbability that one couldn't write down the calculated improbability in 13 1/2 billion years? [...] If on Dawkins' reckoning God is at least as probable as the sudden waving of a marble statue, then according to his own reasoning God causing the miraculous waving of the Virgin Mary statue is at least as probable as random atomic jostling." [5]

At the end of the chapter they sum up their gripe against Dawkins' argument:

"The reason, as we have seen, is that Dawkins wants to use chance to replace God in regard to the

origin of life. Since it must have the powers of the God it displaces, then it grows accordingly, becoming a god that can do anything. Of course, Dawkins doesn't need his god to do everything, but only those things that he surmises natural selection cannot do, and that would seem to require a real God to do: create the first living things." [6]

They claim that they will provide evidence for their god in later chapters, but I remain highly skeptical, but despite their I'm sure poor attempts, their argument that god had to have created the first life is nothing but a god of the gaps argument. The authors do not want to understand Dawkins' argument that given the billions of years the universe has been here, the chances of life forming can be calculated, and is not impossible. These "chance" occurrences have even been replicated in the lab, [7] though several details have yet to be worked out, but as I've said many times before, this gap in our knowledge about the origin of life is no reason to plug the gaps with god. That's really all that Dawkins is arguing anyway and is not as unreasonable as the authors would like their readers to believe.

The authors would like to claim that by Dawkins' own argument their god is just as likely an explanation as the example of the statue waving, but here is where so many theists hit a snag in their attempts at logic. They *assume* their god is real, while Dawkins' example made use of molecules that we *know* exist and are aware of how they react, which is how Dawkins came to his calculation to begin with. It makes no sense to postulate some unproven entity to solve ones problems, which is exactly what Hahn and Wiker are doing.

## **Chapter 2: Pride and Prejudice**

This second chapter starts where the last one leaves off with the authors explaining to their readers how "fine-tuned" the universe is, and how individual cells and everything else *must* have been arranged by some kind of intelligence. They claim that Dawkins' refusal to allow a god into the explanation for the complexity of the universe and life is a case of "prejudice - prejudgment - against God. [Dawkins] seems intent on *any* explanation, as long as it doesn't allow for God." [8]

Like the last chapter, the authors engage in needless and ignorant "god of the gap" explanations, when it's not even necessary, especially when it comes to the universe. The Anthropic Principle that the authors bring up doesn't seem to be much evidence for a god, at least according to some physicists, such as Victor J. Stenger [9]

The authors' attempts at critiquing evolutionary theory is laughable. On page 49 they ask why, given the "useless" features of the brain, such as "entirely theoretical purposes", would natural selection create such needless baggage!? 'It *must* be for some higher purpose, put there by my god!' is what it sounds like they are arguing. They quote Paul Davies as saying that, "We have certain skills - for example, we can jump streams and catch falling apples [...] These are completely outside the domain of everyday experience...not at all necessary for good Darwinian survival." [10]

I'm sorry, but what did Davies just say??? That our very acute coordination, which *can* be put to use catching a falling object is useless? Or "jumping streams?" I suppose I could see how jumping over a body of water to aid in our speed of flight wouldn't be useful if we were running away from a predator...now, why in the world would natural selection allow us to do such "useless" things?! As far as our abilities to "discern [...] what's going on inside atoms or black holes", how is that not explained by evolution? These quests to find answers are nothing more than an expansion upon our need to figure out about the world that are much grander and larger than, say, figuring out how the body works to cure an illness, or figuring out an animal's patterns so that we may be able to more effectively hunt it, kill it,

and eat it. Science is simply about our need to know; to ponder about the world, which is likely the reason for religion, which was replaced by the more reliable and logical methods of science.

All joking and sarcasm aside, these authors and the individual they quoted clearly haven't got a clue about evolution.

On page 32 they clearly demonstrate their hypocrisy by boldly stating about Dawkins:

"It should be obvious that there is something very fishy about assuming what you would have to prove" [referring to Dawkins' claim that because life is here, this chance event he speaks of must have happened]. If only they would turn that statement back around on themselves, they'd see how silly it was because they're making use of their own very large assumption, one no theists have ever been able to prove to begin with - that their god exists.

Not to pick on the authors' ignorance again, but on page 45 they are guilty of another lapse of reasoning when they attempt to refute Dawkins' *analogy* (a purely hypothetical example) of monkeys, given enough time, typing out the works of Shakespeare. They cite an experiment that was done in which monkeys were put in a cage with computers and the monkeys "did very little typing" over the course of several months, along with a "fair dose of computer abuse." They end this sound thrashing of Dawkins' analogy (there's that sarcasm again...) with the following:

"Real monkeys don't generate much of anything literarily, let alone something of the caliber of Shakespeare."

My head is spinning. Dawkins' illustration is meant to demonstrate the effects of time *plus natural selection!* This experiment demonstrated precisely what Dawkins always has said in his books. Without natural selection the random mutations will not do anything! In that case it would just be chance, but that's not the case when natural selection takes over. [11]

### **Chapter 3: Dawkins' Fallacious Philosophy**

In this chapter Hahn and Wiker attempt to point out holes in Dawkins' arguments against god. In the beginning of the chapter they cite a few individuals, such as Alvin Plantinga, who criticized Dawkins' arguments as being "sophomoric." [12] Of course, it's not as if these authorities' insults do anything to disprove Dawkins or prove their god.

While they disagree with much Dawkins has to say they do give him kudos on a very few points he made in *The God Delusion*. For example, "To his philosophical credit, Dawkins sees the same kinds of problems that St. Thomas did." [13] However, their criticisms fail to hit their intended mark.

The authors begin by discussing Dawkins' claim that in biology things *seem* designed, but in reality, they were simply crafted by the blind hand of natural selection. But the authors question why Dawkins would deny a creator when design is implied in nature, in favor of the natural explanation of natural selection:

"As he notes in his *God Delusion*, 'We live on a planet where we are surrounded by perhaps ten million species, each one of which independently displays a powerful illusion of apparent design.' Since things in nature give the strong appearance of having been made by 'a superhuman, supernatural intelligence who deliberately designed and created the universe and everything in it, including us,' we are naturally

inclined to believe in God.[...] That puts Dawkins in an interesting position, quite the reverse of the one he implied. Since complicated biological things at least *appear* to be designed by an intelligent being, then it would be foolish (until one had better evidence) to believe that they were not." [14]

This question is easy to answer. While organisms in nature do seem designed, there are many flaws that would cast serious doubt upon that claim of design. There are too many examples to cite, but why would a "supernatural intelligence" create organisms that get diseased far too easily? Why do so many organisms contain vestigial organs? Why are there animals who have wings but cannot fly; who have eyes but are blind? This "supernatural intelligence" seems to be playing a cruel joke upon the animal world with its crazy designs. But, this is *exactly* what a purely natural world would look like; one that was crafted by the blind hand of natural selection.

Beginning on page 56 the authors make use of the same argument Dawkins mentioned in *The God Delusion*, when theologians dismissed the "Great Prayer Experiment" by claiming that god "answers prayers only if they are offered up for good reasons." [15] Just like Oxford theologian Richard Swinburne, whose quote from *The God Delusion* is cited above, Hahn and Wiker offer up their own illogical rationalizations.

They argue that Dawkins' reasoning is fallacious because god is "being unjustly subjected to a humiliating attempt to manipulate Him by an experiment." [16] Because god is not like a "genie" [17] who grants requests on a whim; god has his own will and can deny a prayer request if he wants. [18]

They elaborate on the above theme:

"As fathers or mothers, we don't grant every request made by our children, even though we have the *power* to do what they ask; in fact, we deny quite a few requests because we *know* that answering them would not be good for the child and, since we *love* the child, we don't want any harm to come to him or her." [19]

They claim that they will return to this claim later on about god's "benevolence" [20] but I have to wonder what argument they will use, because why would god not want to grant a request to help his child avoid pain, as even Hahn and Wiker claim about a loving parent? And wouldn't the authors feel that god is like a loving parent? I will get to their argument once I get to it, but until then, it seems to me that they just shot themselves in the foot because that's what those experiments were testing: To see whether or not the patients had much pain and/or complications during their surgery, but god simply allowed them to have those complications and pain regardless of the prayers asking for them to be avoided.

Next, Hahn and Wiker argue that Dawkins' claim of a god needing a designer is flawed because Dawkins' idea of god is skewed. Dawkins, according to the authors, falsely believes that god is no *superhuman*, who thinks like Richard Dawkins himself might think. [21] But, argue Hahn and Wiker, god is "purely spiritual" and is "outside of physical contingency." [22] Therefore, he is not a material being who must abide by the laws of natural selection, as Dawkins believes all things must arise from this natural process. Because of this, Dawkins is trying to force this materialistic explanation upon god, an immaterial being, at least according to the authors.

Wow, what a convenient argument! Once again, how can the authors apply attributes to a being whom they can't even prove to exist? To be blunt, this is simply Wiker and Hahn's illogical rationalizations to excuse their god from helping people in need and causing their god to be immune to evidence and

argument. Second, an immaterial world has yet to even be proven, so falling back on that argument gets these authors nowhere.

Of course, the authors later answer that god not only attends to the physical needs, but spiritual needs as well, and because he knows all he can see the larger picture, so all of his decisions are really for the best and has everyone's interest at heart:

"Given this much larger spiritual, eternal context, we can see again why it is difficult to assess whether God had indeed answered the prayers of petitioners in light of their true good, present and future, as inextricably bound up with the good of an infinite number of others." [23]

Once again, to be blunt, that's a crock of theological bullshit.

The authors next pull out the 'evolution leads to social Darwinism' card by claiming that, "On [Dawkins'] own terms, that is, in the context of evolution, death is a way of weeding out the unfit, and the destruction of individuals is fully in accord with the larger evolutionary and environmental whole [...] If Dawkins found himself on the other side of the prayer experiment, in charge of affirming or denying petitions, he would have to take all this into account, and this includes decisions about life and death, since in general people want to go on living when it might be better, from a purely material medical and evolutionary view, that they die." [24]

I've covered this absurd - no let me call it what it is: bullshit - claim in the past that by following some "evolutionary view of morality" there is no reason to help those in need. Well, needless to say these ignorant theists need to do their homework. [25] Our innate compassion for others could also likely cause us to be more moral than this god so many worship, who allows untold numbers to needlessly suffer.

The last argument I shall cover can be found on pages 68-70 regarding Dawkins' arguments against St. Thomas Aquinas' five proofs. Hahn and Wiker claim that Dawkins misunderstands the argument of Aquinas. They say,

"[Dawkins] dismisses three of them [Aquinas' five proofs] because 'they make the entirely unwarranted assumption that God himself is immune to regress.' This criticism misses the point of the proofs.

Each of St. Thomas' three proofs makes the exact same kind of assumption that was made by scientists in the 20th century who inferred from the present state of the universe's expansion, that if one 'played' the expansion backwards, one would come to a 'singularity,' a 'point' which has to be considered an origin but which is outside of space, time, and the domain of the laws of nature, and which itself must either be a cause or have a cause because the universe cannot come from nothing. [...] If St. Thomas is wrong in using this kind of proof, then Dawkins must likewise reject the kind of reasoning that led to the revelation of the Big Bang." [26]

If the authors wish to criticize Dawkins for a slight lack of understanding some of the finer details of Aquinas' arguments, then I am more than justified in pointing out the flaws in the understanding of the Big Bang that the authors (in fact most theists) make. The Big Bang does not infer some ultimate "origin" or even a "cause." Recent research is showing that the universe may be eternal, which is consistent with all of the laws and theories we currently have discovered and proposed. [27]

Regardless if Dawkins didn't understand every facet of Aquinas' arguments, Dawkins' entire point is

that using god to fill in the gaps in our knowledge about the universe is a useless exercise, and Hahn and Wiker did nothing (at least not yet) to refute this very logical conclusion of Dawkins'.

#### **Chapter 4: Can God's Existence Be Demonstrated?**

This chapter attempts to argue that because the laws of nature are so well ordered, and the human mind is so capable of comprehending these laws and the workings of nature, they must have been created to complement one another. They also turn back to their earlier argument by Davies about why the human brain is capable of understanding nature, when that is beyond what we need for survival. The authors say:

"If nature were indeed the result of chance, then it might happen that by chance, on some particular level, the evolved human mind could be able to make some intellectual headway in discovering the secrets of nature. But what we find - and what makes science possible as a successful, cumulative activity sustained over many centuries - is that nature is strangely amenable to rational inquiry on multiple, integrated levels, and especially on far more abstract levels than natural selection tied to survival or sexual selection could provide. Even stranger, nature seems to be designed tutorially, so that human beings are able to 'read the book of nature' beginning with very simple concepts that bear unsuspected intellectual fruit, and which therefore allow for further discovery using more sophisticated concepts, and so on as scientists plumb its successive depths. This makes one suspicious not only that nature is intelligently written, but that it was written to be read by human beings with just the kind of capabilities they happen to have." [28]

Hahn and Wiker also argue that, "[i]f evolution confers capacities, even general capacities, that are roughly associated with some kind of direct utility, then we've got to explain how these same general capacities are far, far more powerful than any original use that could have produced them through some beneficial mutation." [29]

This argument, if you really want to break it down, is truly nothing more than another variation on the old "god of the gaps" argument that the authors have continuously favored throughout their book so far.

Yes, nature seems to be very orderly and, yes, our brains are capable of understanding this order, *but only to a point*, which is what the authors fail to comment on. But how can this all be said to lead to a god??? As I said in the last chapter about the capabilities of the human brain, our ability to comprehend the cosmos is simply an outgrowth of our natural capacity to learn and understand, which highly favored our survival. Now, the authors argue *why* we're able to understand such things that are beyond what we need to survive, but in reality, as Richard Dawkins noted in his book *The God Delusion*, the human mind did not evolve to be able to completely understand the universe:

"We are at home with objects ranging in size from a few kilometers (the view from a mountain top) to about a tenth of a millimeter (the point of a pin). Outside this range even our imagination is handicapped, and we need the help of instruments and of mathematics [...] Our imaginations are not yet tooled-up to penetrate the neighborhood of the quantum. Nothing at that scale behaves in the way matter - as we are evolved to think - ought to behave. Nor can we cope with the behavior of objects that move at some appreciable fraction of the speed of light. Common sense lets us down, because common sense evolved in a world where nothing moves very fast, and nothing is very small or very large." [30]

This fact is all too apparent because Hahn and Wiker are perfect examples of our brains being unable to understand the universe. Instead of being able to understand the how's and the why's (or be patient and

see what future discoveries uncover) of the universe, the authors would rather fall back on their primitive brain's answer to their lack of knowledge: If it seems orderly, it must have been designed.

Well, as science has amply demonstrated, this isn't always the case. That is why I find their argument so very ironic. They're trying to argue that our evolved minds are able to understand the universe, and yet, this isn't always the case. We then have two individuals who for various reasons are ignorant about the world, and so resort to the very *primitive* explanation: "God did it." The two authors' ignorance seems to refute their own thesis.

## Chapter 5: The Problem of Morality

This chapter summed up the authors' argument that, like most christian apologists have in other works, [31] atheists have no moral standard, and because they follow a purely materialistic view of the world, their morality must come from evolution, therefore, we must follow the sayings 'might makes right' and 'survival of the fittest.' There is no standard of morality, therefore the christian concept of morality is superior. In the final paragraph of the fifth chapter they say:

"For the Darwinian universe, absent any Creator, the human species is a transient production of impersonal causes that are part of an entirely amoral understanding of nature. Since the various moralities are simply sets of traits produced by evolution that have no more permanence than the conditions which created them, then there can be no single standard of morality. Some societies may find some moral traits that are both compatible to Christian moral traits that happen to be beneficial to them, but others may find that such Christian-compatible moral traits hinder their survival. In either case, the only issue is whether some trait contributes to survival; no action can be condemned as intrinsically evil. The question is: Does it promote survival? If it does, it is 'good.' If it brings self-destruction, the trait isn't morally evil, but (at best) bad evolutionary strategy." [32]

This paragraph sums up the ignorance about morality by these two authors very nicely. Their thesis is fatally flawed because christians have no consistent set, or standard, of morality either. Put briefly, and simply, it is the famed Euthyphro Dilemma. It is because of the cruel acts and commands by the christian god (Joshua 10:28-42 & Leviticus 20:13 for example). [33] Factually and logically, this is the only conclusion we can come to: morality is relative, *deal with it*. Now, the next question is how best to live as a group once this fact has been realized. But this discussion is beyond the scope of this refutation, though there are logical, and well thought out secular alternatives to some ridiculous appeal to the supernatural for morality. [34]

I will now point out the many errors they make in this chapter.

They attempt to argue that the argument over the morality of individual atheists (Stalin, Hitler, etc.) and christians (too many atrocities to list) is pointless because, "[w]hatever the ultimate merits of that exercise, we should at least see that it would be just as absurd to try to prove that *no* atheist *ever* did *anything* evil in the name of atheism, as it would be to try to prove that *no* Christian *ever* did *anything* evil in the name of Christianity. Christians must answer for the Inquisition, and atheists must answer for Stalin."

Later on, the authors say:

"It is not enough to claim that in the cause of these deaths [the millions of deaths brought about by Communists] was Marxist ideology and not atheism, because Marxism claimed to be a fulfillment of



atheistic principles." [35]

As I have already proven in my review of David Marshall's book, *The Truth Behind the New Atheism*, countless christians *have* killed, enslaved, and harmed people, and groups of people, *because of their beliefs*. [36] I have also shown that atheism is unable to influence individuals (it has no "ideology"), therefore atheism could not have been a factor in the 20th Century atrocities. I then provide quotes showing what *did* influence the Communists. [37]

The authors complain about a "purely evolutionary account of morality" by arguing that "there would be many different kinds of moralities and not just one morality for all humanity. That does not mean 'anything goes,' but anything goes that contributes to survival under particular conditions. Moral traits, like all traits, are naturally selected as more fit under particular conditions for particular peoples, conditions that do not pertain for other peoples. There is no independent standard of morality." [38]

Once again, like most theists who so badly yearn for some moral standard, [39] the fact is that morality is relative and, as I stated earlier, there are methods to sort out the morality and rules of society, though they are not "standard", but relative. But there is no getting around this because that is the only kind of morality there is. Even theisms' morality is relative; the Euthyphro Dilemma points out this flaw perfectly.

Hahn and Wiker bring Charles Darwin into the discussion, quoting him at length about the evolution of morality, though what the authors should have done is cite much more recent scholarship, because there has been an abundance of information that the authors could have quoted which is more accurate and updated, based on newer research.

They also laughingly claim that "evolved moral traits can only be explained, not condoned or condemned." [40]

Why cannot human beings make moral statements? Does our altruistic sense not compel us to feel empathy for other creatures or other human beings? A human being is perfectly capable of making moral judgments. Just because these judgments are not always set in stone, and can and do change, doesn't make them more or less sincere or binding. The authors also say that "...it is interesting that Darwin called slavery a 'great sin,' given the fact that its very universality attests to its evolutionary usefulness. In fact, Darwin could not condemn any of these actions on principle (even though he did in practice). As we have seen, in accord with his account of the evolution of morality, there is no objective, independent morality by which they can be condemned." [41] (The authors also claim that murder and theft cannot be condemned by 'evolutionary morality' either. [42])

It's very hypocritical for the authors to say this, because how can a christian condemn slavery "in principle?" They cannot, because the bible condones slavery and was used for centuries as justification for slavery. It may have been because of the Quakers' own evolutionary sense of altruism that a minority of Quakers went against the majority, and the other christians sects, to speak out against slavery, while the majority of christians used their bibles and christian dogma to support the horrid institution. [43] Right here is a perfect example (there are several others, such as homosexuality - some christians oppose it; some accept it) of relative morality in relation to christian morality, so in reality the authors haven't got a leg to stand on regarding their argument.

In sum, the authors' understanding of Communism is weak at best, and their constant appeal to some form of "standard" of morality is a pipe dream. Another large gap in their argument is assuming that an

atheist *must* follow some evolutionary sense of morality, or nature, in moral matters. There are secular moral systems (Utilitarianism, or my personal choice, the Social Contract, for example) that can be used as an alternative to the absurd theistic account of morality, which really isn't any different, because the theistic moral system is relative and changes over time as well.

## Chapter 6: Dawkins' Morality

Wiker and Hahn make two main mistakes in this chapter. The first is a continuation from the last chapter, arguing that a materialist must derive their morality from evolution, and making the same mistake that other christian apologists have. [44]

The authors say:

"Providing an evolutionary account of morality does not help [Dawkins'] case either. As we have seen, the principle of natural selection is fundamental and amoral, and morality is simply one more thing that must be explained by evolution." [45]

They later say, partially quoting Dawkins:

"Natural selection is a deeply nasty process. Darwin himself remarked, 'What a book a devil's chaplain might write on the clumsy, wasteful, blundering low and horribly cruel works of nature.' The problem is that the 'theory of natural selection itself seems calculated to foster selfishness at the expense of public good, violence, callous indifference to suffering, short term greed at the expense of long term foresight.' It doesn't get us the 'super niceness' [...] desired by Dawkins, and instantiated (as Dawkins relates) in some of his friends." [46]

It's the same mistaken belief I noted above about natural selection/nature being the basis for a materialistic view of morality. Though, this is a very incorrect view because a materialist does not follow nature, or the ways of natural selection for morality. What the authors do not understand is that *natural selection crafted our innate morality*, which can be altruistic and loving towards those of both our own "group" and those outside of our "group." *It is **not** the ways of natural selection that materialists follow regarding morality! This "cruel" process is what created these altruistic tendencies in humans and other animals.*

If this "natural" morality was nothing more than "selfish" then why did natural selection craft the "reward pathways" of our brains to respond when we cooperate with others and act altruistically? Genetic studies have also shown that dopamine genes are involved as well. It *literally* makes us "feel good" to cooperate and to help others! [47]

Next, the authors continue with their strawman argument about natural selection and materialists and attempt to argue that they can condemn Dawkins' view of morality (or at least what they *think* Dawkins bases his morality on) by claiming that the same complaints he levels against the christian god, they can level against natural selection.

The authors write:

"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 cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic,

capriciously malevolent bully.' So begins Dawkins' argument against God in *The God Delusion* [...] Dawkins lists a number of objectionable Old Testament scenes: Lot's offering of his two daughters to the men of Sodom who want to rape his two male houseguests [...] Moses' slaughter of 3000 Israelites after finding they had made a golden calf while up on Mt. Sinai getting the Ten Commandments [...] Yet now another, more amusing problem arises. It would seem that a good many of the complaints made by Dawkins against the God of the Old Testament could, with equal justice, be made against natural selection itself. That is, the very complaints that bring him to reject the Old Testament are the ones that brought him to reject Darwinism itself as a moral foundation and guide." [48]

The authors continue:

"What would evolution look like if we tried to deify evolution's principles? Would the Evolution God (EG) be 'unjust' in its callous indifference 'to all suffering,' and supremely so, for continually picking off the weak and sickly? Would EG be an 'unforgiving control-freak,' 'magalomaniacal,' and 'petty' [...]?" [49]

Following further complaints the authors add:

"Perhaps Dawkins will fare better in his case against the people of the Old Testament? But now another paradox comes to the fore. It would be hard to imagine a people who more assiduously pursued a better set of evolutionary strategies for ensuring that its gene pool was carried forward, undiluted by rival tribes and races, than the ancient Jews.

Think over the above reprehensible examples Dawkins provided from the Bible and then ruminate upon his account of how evolution, including human evolution works. Dawkins maintains in his *Selfish Gene* that we may 'treat the individual as a selfish machine, programmed to do whatever is best for its genes as a whole.' [...] The selfish machine works, literally, by gene-o-cide, the destruction and use of other selfish machines, treating them as fodder for its own survival." [50]

Once again, so many theists don't understand Dawkins' views he expressed in *The Selfish Gene*. Dawkins was describing evolution at the level of the genes, which act selfishly, but this does not mean that the actual organism (the bodies carrying the genes) act selfish! To quote Robert Wright on this subject:

"[T]hose genes that are conducive to the survival and reproduction of *copies of themselves* (emphasis in original) are the genes that win. They may do this straightforwardly, by prompting their vehicle to survive, beget offspring, and equip the offspring for survival and reproduction. Or they may do this circuitously - by, say, prompting their to labor tirelessly, sterilely, and, and 'selflessly,' so that a queen ant can have lots of offspring containing them. However the genes get the job done, it is selfish from *their* (emphasis in original) point of view, even if it seems altruistic at the level of the organism." [51]

The authors continue their strawman against evolution and morality, and argue that Dawkins does the exact same thing as believers: cherry-pick what he likes:

"There now arises an illuminating connection between Dawkins and the believers he criticizes. Dawkins is not making the case that modern Christians *do* act like the people in the Old Testament as he describes them. Rather, he wants to make clear that what believers actually do is 'pick and choose among the scriptures for the nice bits and reject the nasty.' But if such is the case, adds Dawkins, believers must be using some kind of independent criterion 'for deciding which are the moral bits,'

which, since they apparently don't come from Scripture, must be available for non-believers as well. As will be come apparent, Dawkins does the exact same thing in regard to evolution." [52]

Later on the authors argue:

"The difficulty for Dawkins lies in the fact that these 'nice' traits are derived from evolution, and hence not themselves any more 'moral' than the 'nasty' traits that likewise contribute to survival. He himself is picking and choosing from the great multiplicity of evolutionary traits, the particular traits that he, Richard Dawkins, would *like* to be moral and hence would *like* to be universal. But that means, as he admits, leaving the other 'nasty' traits behind." [53]

I would actually agree with this to some degree, since natural selection has crafted both good and bad "traits" or behaviors in human beings, therefore we must *choose* to be good, though as I noted earlier, acting altruistically literally makes humans "feel good" and thus we are often driven to do good because of this. Humans also seem to be 'hardwired' for altruistic behavior; some individuals seem to be genetically more altruistic than others. For example,

"Rushton and colleagues from the University of London gave questionnaires that measured altruistic and aggressive tendencies to 573 twins. [...]The majority of the variance of each scale was due to genetic factors. Specifically the heritability of altruism was 56 percent. Altruism increased with age while aggressiveness decreased. *Virtually zero percent of the variance of each trait was due to the common environment such as religious instruction.*" (emphasis in original) [54]

Of course, they are arguing that no traits from evolution can be considered "moral" or "immoral" whatsoever since we live in an amoral universe, though they're missing the entire point. The reason is because *humans* decide what is "moral" and what isn't, with a little help from our social instincts as well.

However, the kudos stop here because Hahn and Wiker argue that "even if given an evolutionary account of altruism, it only extends to one's own group." [55] Of course, as I've shown before in my review of David Marshall's book, this isn't true that our altruistic tendencies are only for one's own group. Humans, as well as many chimpanzees, have been shown in experiments to help others without any reward, and who helped people unknown to them. From the January 2008 issue of *Discover* magazine:

"The pattern showed up in a similar experiment with chimpanzees and humans: When a person with whom they had no prior relationship struggled to reach a stick, the chimps handed it to the person even when it required climbing up to a tall raceway. The chimps helped people just as often as 18-month-old German toddlers did in a similar set up involving a person struggling to reach a pen. 'The main finding is that humans and chimpanzees share altruistic tendencies,' Warneken says. In terms of evolution, he adds, this similarity suggests that the two species' common ancestors has these inclinations before culture developed." [56]

Ultimately, Hahn and Wiker's argument fails because they are arguing against a strawman form of evolutionary morality. However, it is true that materialists must choose to be good, though Hahn and Wiker are not immune to this dilemma, as all humans are: theists, atheists, materialists, spiritualists, etc. But, this does not mean we are without moral foundation. We have social instincts that can help guide us and we also have at our disposal secular moral systems that can help us traverse this morally relative universe. Theists might not like that, but reality is reality, and that's that.

In addition, theists, like Hahn and Wiker, are in a bind because they *must* follow the commands of their god, even if they disagree. And their entire moral system is also based upon the "morality" of a being who has been recorded in the bible as being a cruel monster, who murders people for the tiniest infractions (for example, god kills 70 men just for *looking* at an ark! - 1 Samuel 6:19). Whatever this cruel being decides is "moral" and theists must go along with it because it's god's command. While materialists and atheists can follow their innate morality and altruistic tendencies, along with any other rules of behavior that have been agreed upon in each individuals' social contract. A theist doesn't have this choice to renegotiate their contract or the rules they live under, even if they don't agree with them. So, in reality, the atheists and materialists are in a much better position morally.

## Chapter 7: Dawkins Dismantled

This chapter continues in the same vein as the last two chapters with their moral arguments, claiming that materialists have no moral foundation, as I've quoted the authors in the previous chapters. This chapter, however, examines Dawkins' views about specific moral issues. This chapter is essentially arguing that despite Dawkins' argument that atheists and christians have a similar moral foundation (our biology) the authors claim that our morality is actually different and examines some moral issues to contrast the materialist versus the christian views.

The authors begin by saying the following:

"By Dawkins' own admission, he invokes 'super niceness' as a kind of moral goal that, while it may have some original traces in the evolution of altruism, is ultimately defined against our evolutionary origin. Given his approving words about the ethics of Jesus, it would seem that, although he began at a radically different cosmological beginning, he ends up at roughly the same moral end as Christians.

What is the source of this alleged commonality? And more importantly, is there really common moral ground between Dawkins and Christianity? He makes some effort to show that there is common ground, although the argument is in the service of his belief that since there is common moral ground, then 'we do not need God in order to be good - or evil.'

Dawkins offers one proof of common ground in a study that revealed that people from many different cultures gives roughly the same responses to contrived moral dilemmas (very contrived, we should note: the dubious runaway-trolley-with-several-people-on-the-tracks-and-will-you-throw-the-switch-if-it-diverts-the-train-into-another-innocent-bystander type quandaries). His conclusion: since atheists, believers, and non-Westerners give about the same responses, then evolution must have been the cause of uniformity, not religion." [...]

"Although Dawkins isn't quite clear, we assume that the ethics of Jesus, super niceness, and the advancing moral *Zeitgeist* march more or less together. He is also not clear how we sort out having a common humanity on one end, and races of human beings branching off into different species on the other.

However, even though he fails to sort all that out, [Dawkins] happily maintains that we now enjoy a growing 'broad liberal consensus of ethical principles.' Most of us won't cause needless suffering, we believe in free speech, we pay taxes, we don't cheat, kill, or commit incest, and we generally follow the golden rule.

While this might all look fairly cheery - so that there is no radical moral disagreement between Christians and atheists - a closer look reveals otherwise. Despite the surface similarity, the fundamental disagreement that exists between a universe with and without a supernatural Creator also manifests those fundamental differences in rival, irreconcilable moral views." [57]

The authors later on discuss the following moral issues: abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, bestiality, and cannibalism.

Above Hahn and Wiker claimed that "[Dawkins] is also not clear how we sort out having a common humanity on one end, and races of human beings branching off into different species on the other."

The authors once again demonstrate their lack of knowledge of evolution. All of humanity right now is of one species: *Homo sapiens*. All the other species on our branch have died off long ago, so I have no idea what Hahn and Wiker are talking about. So, there is no reason for us all not to share a common evolutionary morality.

I find it funny, however, that out of all of the moral issues available that these authors could have chosen, they found only five issues - only two of which are even much of an issue. Infanticide is surely condemned by most - if not all - atheists, as well as cannibalism - at least the eating of someone who has died, but was not murdered - as in an accident where many individuals are stranded. And I'm also sure bestiality isn't much of an issue either, and most would probably see it as a disgusting act. I know I do.

Regardless, out of the thousands of moral issues, the authors chose only these, which really doesn't help their case because there are many other things both atheists and Christians agree on. In fact, many atheists are also against abortion.

Despite the authors' attempts to somehow show Christians and atheists have different moral views, the majority of issues both sides can agree on, however, as I've stated previously, morality is relative and there is bound to be disagreements, but there is no reason why, as a society, we cannot work out these disagreements. The authors did nothing to show the lack of commonality between atheists and Christians, because it's only natural for a large group of people to have differing views on moral matters, despite with our instincts that have been shaped by natural selection. Even the evolutionary moral test that Dawkins mentions showed that not everyone agreed on all moral choices, though a large percentage did.

## **Chapter 8: King Richard**

This chapter was the most absurd of them all. In this chapter, Scott Hahn and Benjamin Wiker argue in a "thought experiment" that "King" Richard, if in power, would abandon "the respect for freedom of speech", [...] "the toleration of cultural diversity", and [...] "the rights of the parents against intrusions by the state [to teach their own children their religious beliefs]." [58]

These are the same strawmen (or more un-politically correct, *bullshit*) claims that have been leveled at the New Atheists, and especially, Richard Dawkins since his book *The God Delusion* came out.

Hahn and Wiker argue that the New Atheists are seeking "political power" [59] and once this is achieved, Richard Dawkins would "outlaw all religious instruction", [60] close religious schools, [61] ban religious holidays and replace them with secular equivalents like Darwin Day, and the winter

solstice. [62] They continue to argue that, following Darwinian logic, eugenics would be legalized, [63] as well as stifling any "irrational criticisms" against Darwinism, and that doubting "evolutionary atheism" "must be considered a kind of treason." [64]

Earlier in the chapter they say,

"Dawkins makes the charge of child abuse with all seriousness, and this brings him to wade into what even he regards as dangerous waters. If it is abuse, then shouldn't children be protected *from* their parents? Agreeing heartily with psychologist Nicholas Humphrey, Dawkins argues against the notion that parents have a right to educate their own children in their own faith, precisely because children have a right to be protected from harmful nonsense." [65]

This is complete nonsense. Dawkins did not agree with Nicholas Humphrey about not teaching children religion. Dawkins simply stated, after quoting Humphrey:

"Of course, such a strong statement needs, and received, much qualification. Isn't it a matter of opinion what is nonsense? Hasn't the applecart of orthodox science been upset often enough to chasten us into caution? Scientists may think it is nonsense to teach astrology and the literal truth of the Bible, but there are others who think the opposite, and aren't they entitled to teach it to their children? Isn't it just as arrogant to insist that children should be taught science?"

I thank my own parents for taking the view that children should be taught not so much *what* to think as *how* to think. **If, having been fairly and properly exposed to all the scientific evidence, they grow up and decide that the Bible is literally true or that the movements of the planets rule their lives, that is their privilege. The important point is that it is *their* privilege to decide what they shall think, and not their parents' privilege to impose it by *force majeure*.** [...] Humphrey's point - and mine - is that, regardless of whether [the sacrificed Inca girl] was a willing victim or not, there is strong reason to suppose that she would not have been willing if she had been in full possession of the facts. For example, suppose she had known that the sun is really a ball of hydrogen, hotter than a million degrees Kelvin, converting itself into helium by nuclear fusion, and that it originally formed from a disk of gas out of which the rest of the solar system, including Earth, also condensed...Presumably, then, she would not have worshiped it as a god, and this would have altered her perspective on being sacrificed to propitiate it." [66] (emphasis mine in bold)

As Dawkins clearly stated in *The God Delusion* he's simply asking parents to respect their children's minds and allow them to make up their minds for themselves. He is not saying, and has never said, that parents cannot teach their own children their religious beliefs.

I've also exposed this outright distortion of Dawkins' views on this issue of "child abuse" in a series of more in depth blog posts. The three part series obliterates these absurd claims against him. [67]

As for the other claims that the New Atheists are striving for political power, nowhere have I seen any such statement in the writings of the New Atheists (Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens, and Daniel C. Dennett), and Hahn and Wiker fail to cite any one of the four men to back up that assertion. Also, in none of these four men's writings have I seen them wish to ban the teaching of religion, or close churches, or religious schools. In fact, they've made direct statements against this. Even a fellow christian author has noted this fact. In David Aikman's 2008 book *The Delusion of Disbelief: Why the New Atheism is a Threat to Your Life, Liberty, and Pursuit of Happiness*, [68] Aikman says of Sam Harris and Christopher Hitchens (which is also the same thing Dawkins argues):

"Hitchens also says, 'Religious faith is, precisely *because* we are still-evolving creatures, ineradicable (emphasis in the original). It will never die out, or at least not until we get over our fear of death, and out of the dark, and out of the unknown, and of each other. For this reason,' Hitchens concludes, ' I would not prohibit it even if I thought I could.'"

Aikman also has this to say about Sam Harris:

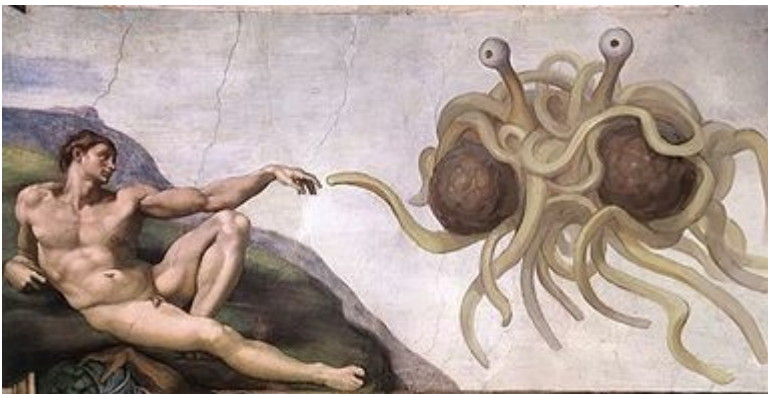
"Harris does not advocate explicit suppression of religious faith, but rather seeks what he calls 'conversational intolerance.'" [69]

This empty propaganda, void of one shred of evidence, seems to have become the beat so many theists want to march to ever since the New Atheists began their book publishing boom in 2004 with Sam Harris' *The End of Faith*, with talks of some grand atheistic takeover. If anything, theists must look at themselves in the mirror because they're the only ones who have been trying to take over the courts, and control peoples' lives through the political process.

## Conclusion

I don't have much to say about this book. Like the other books I've reviewed/refuted, they all make similar mistakes, and misunderstand the atheist authors. In my opinion, this book was the worst of the four books I've reviewed. *Answering the New Atheism* is tied with Ray Comfort's books, because like Comfort's books, this book's arguments were completely illogical and were entirely based on their theistic assumptions. To be honest it was actually pretty easy to refute because most of their arguments were based on flaws in their logic, so I didn't have to set out to research some historical period, or scientific findings, as I did with David Aikman or David Marshall's books. Plus, most of their arguments I had refuted on my blog already, so I mostly made it simple by citing my already written rebuttals. I always hated it when authors cited their previously published works because I wished they could just repeat the information for the convenience of the reader, but since this is the internet and my other sources are not only free, but are available at the click of a button (with the direct links in the footnotes), I thought this would be the easiest route to take.

Finally, I'd like to briefly discuss my mock cover of Hahn and Wiker's book. Yes, that "noodly appendage" is none other than the "Flying Spaghetti Monster" or FSM [70] made popular in 2005, in order to parody the christian god:



Like most of the other book reviews I've done, I thought it would be comical to mock the cover of this



book and I think I made a very funny parody with this one. But Hahn and Wiker just made it too easy for me. The cover, not to mention the entire book, was just ridiculous. Not one single christian apologist has *ever* come close to refuting any of the main arguments of the New Atheists. Their book is just one more in a long line of failures.

## References:

1. These refutations can be found here:

<http://arizonaatheist.blogspot.com/2009/05/truth-behind-new-atheism-refutation.html>

[http://arizonaatheist.blogspot.com/2009/05/delusion-of-david-aikman-revised-at\\_16.html](http://arizonaatheist.blogspot.com/2009/05/delusion-of-david-aikman-revised-at_16.html)

[http://arizonaatheist.blogspot.com/2007/08/taking-way-of-morons-master-to-task\\_27.html](http://arizonaatheist.blogspot.com/2007/08/taking-way-of-morons-master-to-task_27.html)

2. <http://arizonaatheist.blogspot.com/2009/04/is-antony-flew-unwilling-pawn-in.html>

3. Arguments from authority seem to run rampant in theistic literature. I suspect this is because their entire worldview is based upon authority to begin with and because they lack the critical thinking skills to properly evaluate arguments, they think an argument from authority is somehow a good argument. If someone says it, it must be true (which was actually somewhat a kind of argument David Marshall proposed as well)! As I've said in my review of David Marshall's book, *The Truth Behind the New Atheism*, which used an immense amount of arguments from authority without any evidence to back up his claims, those kinds of arguments mean nothing.

4. *The Blind Watchmaker*, by Richard Dawkins, W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1996; 227-228

5. *Answering the New Atheism: Dismantling Dawkins' Case Against God*, by Scott Hahn and Benjamin Wiker, Emmaus Road Publishing, 2008; 13-14

6. *Ibid.*; 22

7. <http://arizonaatheist.blogspot.com/2009/01/self-replicating-rna.html>

8. *Answering the New Atheism*, by Scott Hahn and Benjamin Wiker; 50

9. <http://arizonaatheist.blogspot.com/2009/02/against-gods-arguments-against-gods.html>; Please refer to the fourth section titled *Teleological Arguments*. Their arguments have also been answered about "complexity" and "design" in that post as well.

10. *Answering the New Atheism*, by Scott Hahn and Benjamin Wiker; 50

11. *The Blind Watchmaker*, by Richard Dawkins; 66-70

12. *Answering the New Atheism*, by Scott Hahn and Benjamin Wiker; 52

13. *Ibid.*; 68

14. Ibid.; 55

15. *The God Delusion*, by Richard Dawkins, Houghton Mifflin, 2006; 64

16. *Answering the New Atheism*, by Scott Hahn and Benjamin Wiker; 57

17. Ibid.; 58

18. Ibid.; 57

19. Ibid.; 58

20. Ibid.; 59

21. Ibid.; 63

22. Ibid.; 64

23. Ibid. 67

24. Ibid. 68

25. I have refuted this claim most notably in two places. One was my review of David Marshall's book *The Truth Behind the New Atheism* and the other was a piece summarizing the research into our innate morality that evolution is responsible for. Something these ignorant theists don't seem to have a clue about. The book review can currently be found here: <http://arizonaatheist.blogspot.com/2009/05/truth-behind-new-atheism-refutation.html> My post about our innate morality can currently be found here: <http://arizonaatheist.blogspot.com/2009/02/altruism-in-primates-and-humans.html>

26. *Answering the New Atheism*, by Scott Hahn and Benjamin Wiker; 69

27. *Endless Universe: Beyond the Big Bang*, by Paul Steinhardt & Neil Turok, Doubleday, 2007

28. *Answering the New Atheism*, by Scott Hahn and Benjamin Wiker; 84-85

29. Ibid.; 79

30. *The God Delusion*, by Richard Dawkins; 363-364

31. *The Truth Behind the New Atheism*, by David Marshall; *The Delusion of Disbelief*, by David Aikman, and several other christian apologists make use of this absurd argument.

32. *Answering the New Atheism*, by Scott Hahn and Benjamin Wiker; 118

33. <http://arizonaatheist.blogspot.com/2009/02/against-gods-arguments-against-gods.html>; For the facts and logic that lead one to conclude that christians have no standard of morality, either, please see the first section titled *The Euthyphro Dilemma*.

34. <http://arizonaatheist.blogspot.com/2009/04/relative-morality-and-social-contract.html>

35. *Answering the New Atheism*, by Scott Hahn and Benjamin Wiker; 96
36. <http://arizonaatheist.blogspot.com/2009/05/truth-behind-new-atheism-refutation.html>; The evidence for my claim can be found in my review of the eighth chapter titled, "Is Christianity a Blessing?"
37. I have written an in depth article dealing with the absurd claim by christians that atheism influenced several mass murderers in the 20th Century. It can currently be found here:  
<http://arizonaatheist.blogspot.com/2009/02/communism-and-atheism-revised-and.html>
38. *Answering the New Atheism*, by Scott Hahn and Benjamin Wiker; 105-106
39. <http://arizonaatheist.blogspot.com/2009/04/relative-morality-and-social-contract.html>
40. *Answering the New Atheism*, by Scott Hahn and Benjamin Wiker; 109
41. Ibid.; 109
42. Ibid.; 107-108
43. <http://arizonaatheist.blogspot.com/2009/06/refutation-of-truth-behind-new-atheism.html>
44. <http://arizonaatheist.blogspot.com/2007/10/review-of-book-truth-behind-new-atheism.html>; Please see the sixth chapter of my refutation for an explanation of David Marshall's error regarding this topic.
45. *Answering the New Atheism*, by Scott Hahn and Benjamin Wiker; 119
46. Ibid.; 127
47. *Did Man Create God? Is Your Spiritual Brain at Peace with Your Thinking Brain?*, by David E. Comings, M.D., Hope Press, 2008; 483-484
48. *Answering the New Atheism*, by Scott Hahn and Benjamin Wiker; 120-121, 122
49. Ibid.; 122
50. Ibid.; 123-124
51. *The Moral Animal: Why We Are the Way We Are: The New Science of Evolutionary Psychology*, by Robert Wright, Vintage Books, 1994; 162
52. *Answering the New Atheism*, by Scott Hahn and Benjamin Wiker; 125-126
53. Ibid.; 128-129
54. *Did Man Create God?*, by David E. Comings, M.D.; 482
55. *Answering the New Atheism*, by Scott Hahn and Benjamin Wiker; 129

56. <http://arizonaatheist.blogspot.com/2007/10/review-of-book-truth-behind-new-atheism.html>; For the entire portion of the article please see the sixth chapter of my review titled "Is the Good Book Bad?"
57. *Answering the New Atheism*, by Scott Hahn and Benjamin Wiker; 133-135
58. Ibid.; 151
59. Ibid.; 151
60. Ibid.; 145
61. Ibid.; 145
62. Ibid.; 146
63. Ibid.; 148
64. Ibid.; 147
65. Ibid.; 144
66. *The God Delusion*, by Richard Dawkins; 326-327, 328
67. <http://arizonaatheist.blogspot.com/2009/03/richard-dawkins-and-child-abuse.html> (the links to the other two parts are at the bottom of part one)
68. For my refutation of *The Delusion of Disbelief*, please see the following:  
[http://arizonaatheist.blogspot.com/2009/05/delusion-of-david-aikman-revised-at\\_16.html](http://arizonaatheist.blogspot.com/2009/05/delusion-of-david-aikman-revised-at_16.html)
69. *The Delusion of Disbelief: Why the New Atheism is a Threat to Your Life, Liberty, and Pursuit of Happiness*, by David Aikman, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2008; 30, 32
70. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flying\\_Spaghetti\\_Monster](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flying_Spaghetti_Monster); accessed 10-5-09