Undesigned Coincidences

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Text:

Introduction:

# Illustration:

## The supper was over, Jesus rose, girded Himself in a towel, and began to wash the disciples’ feet with a basin of water. Jesus then explained, “If I then your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet” (Jn 13:1-20). This seems like a random, free-standing lesson on kingdom position and serving, but Luke’s account explains John. Luke’s narrative doesn’t include the foot washing, but in describing what happened just before the foot washing, he records that a dispute arose among the disciples as to which of them should be regarded as the greatest (Lk 22:24). John doesn’t tell about this dispute (it wasn’t needed for the narrative or his point), but Luke gives us a detail that is consistent with and explains the foot washing in John. Additionally, John’s account also fits with Luke’s account where Jesus is recorded as saying, “For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Yet I am among you as the One who serves” (Lk 22:27). We know from John that Jesus has just washed their feet which gives us a more complete picture of the event and what Jesus says (He had just served them)

### This is an illustration of what some apologists call an “undesigned coincidence”

### Not simply additional information in multiple Scriptures, but information which supplies explanation not contained in one account

## In John 6 (6:1-9), Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee and, after teaching, “…Jesus lifted up His eyes and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, ‘Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?’ But this He said to test him for He Himself knew what He would do. Philip answered Him, ‘Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little.’ One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to Him, ‘There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?’”

### Philip is a fairly minor character in the New Testament. Why ask Philip? Is this random? And why did Andrew get involved?

### In unrelated narratives, we are told that both Philip (Jn 12:21) and Andrew (Jn 1:44) are from Bethsaida. In Luke’s account of the feeding of the five thousand, Luke doesn’t mention the dialog involving both Philip and Andrew, however, in Luke 9:10, we learn that Jesus “…went aside privately into a deserted place belonging to the city called Bethsaida.” Luke, gives a minor detail (the feeding of the five thousand occurred in Bethsaida) which tells us why Jesus spoke to Philip in John 6:5, and why Andrew got involved. They are locals. John was getting specific extraneous details right.

## Note: Matthew 11, “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented…” (11:22). We don’t know from Matthew what miracles were performed in these cities. But we know from Luke’s account that the feeding of the five thousand was outside of Bethsaida.

#### These kind of details – the level of detail, the inclusion and exclusion of details, the dovetailing of details, and details explaining details, are common in eyewitness testimony – and is what some apologists call “undesigned coincidences.”

#### This doesn’t happen in multiple witness contrived testimony and is rare in fiction

## Those are illustrations of “undesigned coincidences”

### I will define and illustrate it more fully later in this outline

### It is a type of evidence for the veracity, reliability, and historicity of Scripture

### It is a form of internal evidence for the Bible’s reliability

### The coined phrase “undesigned coincidence” may be somewhat unfortunate since believers (or even unbelievers) in inspiration may errantly think this is an attack on inspiration

### It is NOT suggesting that the Scriptures are themselves undesigned or that the messages, events, or the recording of them are coincidental

### Various authors may use different verbiage for “undesigned coincidences” which may be helpful

##### Things casually stated

##### Unlikely coincidences

##### Specific extraneous details

##### Incidental evidence or incidental agreement

##### Accounts that fit together in casual ways

##### Passing details that fit together

##### Minor details which explain one another

##### Unintentional eyewitness support statements (J. Warner Wallace, https://coldcasechristianity.com/writings/how-can-you-believe-the-gospels-when-they-dont-seem-to-agree/)

Body:

# **Evidences and apologetics**

## Evidence for faith

### Some think faith doesn’t have, shouldn’t have, or even can’t have evidence

### Believers:

##### I just know in my heart, felt / feel something, saw something, heard something

###### “Thus miracles in the heart have replaced miracles in history…” (Montgomery*, Faith Founded on Fact*, 45)

###### “You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart” (Song lyric from Alfred Ackley song, “He Lives”)

##### “Faith” that is wholly experiential (feelings, visions, supposed miracles, etc.) is actually walking by “sight” (cf 2 Cor. 5:7)

###### Experiential “faith” is often falsely presented as faith based on evidence

###### Experiential “faith” is sometimes the reason some would-be believers reject faith because they don’t get the “experience” (and therefore God isn’t real, Scripture isn’t true, etc.)

###### Experiential “faith” is often the type of “faith” that skeptics attack and act like it is what all believers define as faith

##### Calvinists who believe faith is God’s gift without the believer’s participation, choice, study, etc. (there are many denominations which embrace the idea that man is so depraved that direct divine intervention is necessary to make man receptive to God’s will and capable of faith)

##### Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) which teaches that faith comes from “perceiving spiritual light” by desiring to believe and first exercising a “*particle* of faith” (see https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2015/04/choose-to-believe?lang=eng and Book of Mormon, Alma 32:27). They are not embarrassed to say that they have no text-critical or archeological evidence that is consistent with the claims of the Book of Mormon or the Church’s historical and geographic teachings

##### “…I often encounter devoted, committed Christians who are hesitant to embrace an *evidential* faith. In many Christian circles, faith that requires evidential support is seen as weak and inferior. For many, *blind faith* (a faith that simply trusts without question) is the truest, most sincere, and most valuable form of faith that we can offer God” (J. Warner Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity*, 51)

###### We may get reluctance or push back from brothers and sisters who fear the risks of open study of evidences for fear it will expose people to questions, skepticism, and the lack of 100% certainty in faith

##### Karl Barth (1886-1968)[[1]](#footnote-1) believed that truth in religion is essentially based on faith rather than reasoning or evidence (known as “fideism” – knowledge depends wholly on faith or revelation)

###### “The fideist goes even farther. He says that not only is it intellectually impossible to convince the unbeliever of the truth of Christianity; it is unscriptural to try. Only God convinces men of Christianity’s veracity, and you or I can do no more than preach His gospel.” (John W Mongomery, *Faith Founded on Fact*, 33)

##### Anti-science, anti-higher education, anti-intellectualism movements among some Christians

###### Some of the flat earth, conspiracy theorists, etc., are benefiting from anti-science movements and are handling evidence in unfair and dishonest ways. This WILL spill into Biblical questions and studies

##### Well-meaning Christians who are not prepared or equipped to explain, define, or defend their faith may advocate “just have faith” (without evidence) or may defend faith only with anecdotes, bumper sticker sayings, and memes (Ex: “God said it. I believe it. That settles it.”)

##### Unbelievers:

##### See Appendix A for an extensive list of skeptic and atheist quotes on their opinions on the nature of faith and evidence

##### Richard Dawkins: “Faith is the great cop-out, the great excuse to evade the need to think and evaluate evidence. Faith is belief in spite of, even perhaps because of, lack of evidence.” (https://quotepark.com/quotes/934763-richard-dawkins-faith-is-the-great-cop-out-the-great-excuse-to-ev/) and (Speech at the Edinburgh International Science Festival (April 15, 1992); quoted in "EDITORIAL: A scientist's case against God", "The Independent"(London), (p. 17), April 20, 1992)

##### Aron Ra: “Unsupported assertions of impossible absurdities are indistinguishable from the illusions of delusion, and no one should believe anything that requires faith. Because faith requires that we believe without question, without reservation, without reason. That is irrational, foolish; that's what a fool is. Your Bible got it wrong. Any assertion that requires faith should be rejected for that reason.” (https://www.aronra.com/a-letter-to-a-certain-christian/)

##### George H. Smith: “For the atheist, to embrace faith is to abandon reason” (Atheism: *The Case Against God*, 33)

##### Sam Harris: “Faith is nothing more than the license religious people give themselves to keep believing when reasons fail” (https://www.samharris.org/blog/selling-out-science)

##### jordanthegreywitch[[2]](#footnote-2): “If there was any evidence… your religion wouldn’t be a religion it would just be historical fact. Christianity is completely faith based. Evidence is the antithesis of faith.” (TikTok)

## True faith is evidence based

### Generally, faith is a persuasion or conclusion based on evidence that something is true (and which generally produces responsive trust in both thought and action) [DD summarizing many sources]

### Note: Some are suggesting that currently, the English word faith has become so ill-defined and misused that it has become meaningless (you don’t know what anyone means when they use it). Not only does this mean that it needs to be carefully, accurately, and Biblically defined when we use it, but we may need to search for other, more definitive English words to define and describe it (and maybe replace it)

### J. P. Moreland[[3]](#footnote-3) (1948-): “Faith is relying on what you have reason to believe is true and trustworthy” (quoted in *Wandering Toward God* – Travis Dickson, 15)

### Faith is “ventured trust” (Travis Dickson, 15)

### “Reason is simply a tool to help us know what or who to place our faith in” (Travis Dickson), 15)

### J. Warner Wallace (1961-)[[4]](#footnote-4): “…Jesus seemed to have a high regard for evidence. In John 14:11, He told those watching Him to examine ‘the evidence of the miracles’ (NIV) if they did not believe what He said about His identity. Even after the resurrection, Jesus stayed with His disciples for an additional forty days and provided them with ‘many convincing proofs’ that He was resurrected and was who He claimed to be (Acts 1:2-3 NIV). Jesus understood the role and value of evidence and the importance of developing and evidential faith.” (J. Warner Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity*, 51)

### John Warwick Montgomery (1931-)[[5]](#footnote-5)

### “John Warwick Montgomery is about as evidentialist as they come” (J.W. Wartick, https://jwwartick.com/2014/04/14/fff-jwm/)

### “…a ‘non-evidential’ apologetic *is* a contradiction in terms, roughly equivalent logically to a ‘square circle.’” (Faith Founded on Fact, x)

### Greg Koukl (1950-)[[6]](#footnote-6): “I’ll go to churches and make presentations and give all the reasons why it makes good rational sense to put your trust in Jesus Christ…And then Christians will come up to me afterwords and ask, ‘If what you say is true, if all these facts are really so, then where is the room for faith?’ And I realize when they say that they have a conviction deep down inside that somehow faith and facts do not go together. You exercise faith when you do not have the facts. But that is not a biblical understanding of faith…Biblical faith is trust based on what you have good reason to believe is true” (https://shanerose.substack.com/p/episode-2-is-faith-irrational#details ]at 27 minutes and 57 seconds])

### John Lennox (1943-)[[7]](#footnote-7):

### “Faith is a response to evidence, not a rejoicing in the absence of evidence. The Christian apostle John writes in his biography of Jesus: ‘These things are written that you might believe…’ That is, he understands that what he is writing is to be regarded as part of the evidence on which faith is based. The apostle Paul says what many pioneers of modern science believed, namely, that nature itself is part of the evidence for the existence of God: ‘For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.’ It is no part of the biblical view that things should be believed where there is no evidence.” (God’s Undertaker: Has Science Buried God? 16 – Lion Books)

### Robert Turner (1916-2007) – “…refection on the very meaning of ‘faith’ would show us it is an act of man’s, something man does. He ‘believes’ or refuses to ‘believe’ evidence.” (*Plain Talk*, March 1969, 6:1:5)

## Eyewitness testimony

### Note: Believers in the inspiration of the Bible do not depend on the reliability of the memory of human eyewitnesses to verify the truthfulness of Scripture. It is truth because it is revelation from God. The reliability of eyewitness testimony is relevant, however, because opponents of God and Scripture reject inspiration and an argument can still be made that, even without inspiration, what the eyewitnesses recorded in Scripture are still reliable.

### Eyewitness testimony has come under fire as being undependable (maybe even the least dependable of evidences), with variation in testimony given as evidence of it being unreliable.

### The development and use of forensic evidence in both the sciences and criminology have cast a shadow of distrust on eyewitness testimony (which has spilled over into a distrust of eyewitness testimony as an evidence in Biblical apologetics). Note: forensic evidence is generally not useful in events leaving no material evidence. And even forensic evidence usually requires interpretation and application that are not infallible.

### Note: In spite of sensational news articles, most (if not all) alleged contradictions have been adequately explained by Biblical and literary scholars for hundreds of years

### “By definition, a contradiction exists only when there is absolutely no way to reconcile two statements. If a plausible explanation exists, there is no contradiction. So long as the explanation is logical and agrees with all the known data, it cannot be said that a contradiction exists” (Kenny Chumbley, *The Gospel Argument For God*, 23)

### Many scholars, apologists, and forensic experts emphasize that apparent inconsistencies and differences in eyewitness testimonies suggest they are sincere and honest narratives, whereas minute agreement produces suspicion of collusion and fraud

##### William Paley (See *Hidden In Plain View*, 19)

##### Lydia McGrew (*Hidden In Plain View*, 18)

##### J. Warner Wallace (*Hidden In Plain View*, 19-20; Also Cold Case Christianity presents evidence for the value of eyewitness testimony)

##### Paley’s dictum: “The usual character of human testimony is substantial truth under circumstantial variety” (*Hidden In Plain View*, 19)

### However, don’t imply or leave the impression that faith is ever the same as sight, that there are no mysteries, or that we can always know everything and answer every question.

### We have to admit that some things are unknowable, but what we DO know causes us to trust God (and His Word) in the unknowable areas

### “Faith is what you trust in, that you can't prove. Does it take more faith to believe a personal God made personal beings that deserve human rights based on their creation, or an impersonal universe randomly created personal beings with human rights that evolved over time?” (Timothy Keller on Twitter, https://twitter.com/timkellernyc/status/1062425615985508352)

### “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deuteronomy 29:29; NKJV)

### “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2; NKJV)

### Leaving the impression that all questions have answers, that faith is sight, can be disastrous to one’s faith when eventually faced with times when one must trust rather than fully know.

### There is a difference between 100% certainty and 100% conviction or confidence

### Note: Theories of science are often claimed to be known with certainty, however, in reality, there is always some chance of error – it’s never 100%

### Note: Those rejecting faith often are prejudiced by other issues (Ex: Atrocities of the Crusades, Inquisition, and Holocaust. Note: Atheist regimes [Russian/Soviet and China] have committed far more atrocities])

# **Defining the argument and approach of undesigned coincidences**

## Ways of explaining it

### There are Scriptures where parts of narratives are left hanging (not fully explained) but are then given context or fuller explanation in other Scriptures.

### It is not simply telling the same story or giving the same information in multiple accounts. Note: even though there is verbal independence (different vocabulary and styles) indicating that they were eye-witnesses (or spoke with them) and didn’t simply copy from one source, yet there are indirect interconnections (consistency, harmony, but not verbal borrowing)

### It is not simply additional information in one account that is not contained in another account, or even an explanation or teaching additionally provided in another account

### It is not simply differing information in accounts of the same event or teaching (which skeptics often point out as contradictions)

### “Here is a broad definition of an undesigned coincidence:

### “An undesigned coincidence is a notable connection between two or more accounts or texts that doesn’t seem to have been planned by the person or people giving the accounts. Despite their apparent independence, the items fit together like pieces of a puzzle” (Lydia McGrew, *Hidden in Plain View*, 12)

### “Casual comments, allusions, and omissions that *fit together* are not what one would find in different fictional or fictionalized works written by different people. They are also not to be expected among different legendary stories that grew up gradually long after the events.” (Lydia McGrew, *Hidden in Plain View*, 15)

### “…we may examine them to see whether the manner in which they discuss these things fits together obliquely, in a way not likely to have been deliberately chosen for that effect – *undesignedly”* (Timothy McGrew, https://christianapologeticsalliance.com/2013/09/01/undesigned-coincidences/)

### “getting on with the story, mentioning or implying details in passing that make sense when they are understood against a backdrop of independent information” (Lydia McGrew, *Hidden in Plain View*, 41)

### So, they are events or details in Scripture that align in a meaningful or seemingly purposeful way without any evident design or intention behind them

### Note: There are different forms of undesigned coincidences (some are more direct while others are more nuanced)

### The argument is not that undesigned coincidences prove the story is true or historical, but that they provide evidence that it is more probable that the event is real, historical, or accurately reported

### The argument is not that undesigned coincidences suggest that authors were necessarily present for the events they report (ex: Luke reporting the last supper), but that either they were eyewitnesses or that they had access to reliable sources

### Note Appendix B: The Weight of Evidence

### The force of the argument is that fiction or forgeries do not generally contain the kind of details and incidental cross-over details which not only do not contradict each other, but which actually unintentionally explain one another

### An additional detail supplied by another may only be significant in that it supplies information or context to something done or said in another context which doesn’t happen with collusion, legend, or fiction

### Edmund Bennett: “Forgers do not rest content with such roundabout confirmations” (*Hidden in Plain View*, 120)

## History of the argument and approach

### “The phrase ‘undesigned coincidence’ was coined by the 18th century Anglican clergyman and apologist William Paley, who used this type of argument extensively in his work *Horare Paulinae* (first published in 1790) to illustrate the intersections between Acts and the Pauline Epistles and among the Pauline Epistles” (Lydia McGrew, *Hidden in Plain View*, 21)

### William Paley (1743-1805) was an English Anglican clergyman and theologian. He is best known for what he called “Natural Theology,” technically the “teleological argument” (commonly known today as “intelligent design”). This argument is not original to him, but he was a major voice for it during his time. He also is known for his version of the “watchmaker analogy”

### Paley appears to be the first to develop and make the argument specifically from undesigned coincidences

### John James Blunt (1794-1855) was an Anglican clergyman and theologian. He presented and published lectures using undesigned coincidences to support the reliability of the Old and New Testaments. His book, *Undesigned Coincidences* was first published in 1847

### Timothy McGrew is a professor of philosophy at Western Michigan University and specializes in epistemology and history of philosophy. It appears he began lecturing and writing about “undesigned coincidences” around 2011-2013

### Lydia McGrew has her degree in English Literature with interest in epistemology (theory of knowledge). She is married to Timothy McGrew and credits him with introducing her to undesigned coincidences. She has published several books, including *Hidden in Plain View* (2017) about undesigned coincidences and *Testimonies to the Truth* (2023) with a section on undesigned coincidences. She doesn’t claim originality for the argument and admits she is “standing on the shoulders of giants” in writing her book (Lydia McGrew, *Hidden in Plain View*, 24)

### J. Warner Wallace uses this approach when describing the credibility of eye-witness testimony (in criminal investigation and within Scripture). He is a former atheist and former homicide detective. He is now a Christian apologist, professor, and author (*Person of Interest*, *Cold-Case Christianity*, etc.)

## Two kinds of undesigned coincidences

### External – Biblical narratives where additional details are found and explained using non-Biblical sources (Ex: Josephus, archeology, etc.)

### Internal – Biblical narratives where additional details are found and explained using Biblical sources (Note: This outline will focus primarily on these within the gospels)

# **Illustrations of Undesigned Coincidences from the gospels (developed by various authors)**

## “He was before me” (Jn 1:30)

### Contextually and theologically, is an allusion to Jesus Christ’s pre-existence and incarnation (Jn 1:1-14). Could it simply mean Jesus was physically older than John?

### Luke records that John the Baptist is six months older than Jesus (Lk 1:26ff)

### The undesigned coincidences

### John’s mention of John the Baptist’s (JTB) words at this point in his argument show that he knows Jesus was physically younger than JTB (which confirms Luke)

### Luke’s 6-month mention is “undesigned” in that it is simply part of the narrative

### Neither John or JTB explain the significance of “He was before me”, however the theological implications are made clear when it is known that Luke records that John is actually physically older

### Note: As with all undesigned coincidences, if the account is actually reporting what was said (or done), all relevant details or background information may not be fleshed out (and may exist in other accounts)

## “This is the Son of God” (Jn 1:34)

### John’s account of Jesus’ baptism, (as in Mt, Mk, and Lk) records the Spirit descending on Jesus

### John’s account is the only one that mentions the reason for the Spirit descending like a dove and remaining on Jesus – He would baptize with the Spirit

### John’s account is the only one that records the words of JTB: “I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God

### The undesigned coincidences

### How did JTB know Jesus was the Son of God when he was only told the dove sign was to reveal the One who would baptize with the Spirit?

##### Mt, Mk, and Lk record the voice from heaven that said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”

##### Although not recorded in John, this is how JTB knew Jesus was “the Son of God”

##### John’s account also provides explanation for Mt, Mk, and Lk, who all mention the Spirit descending on Him like a dove but don’t mention the dove-sign to JTB significance

##### Without John we wonder why a dove? Is there any significance to it happening that way? It’s a historical narrative and we can be satisfied that it just happened that way, but there is another piece of the puzzle

##### We know from John that it was an important sign to JTB

## “They immediately left their nets and followed Him” (Mt. 4:20)

### In Matthew’s gospel, the first mention of Peter and Andrew is in chapter 4 when Jesus calls them to follow Him to be “fishers of men”

### It isn’t explained why and doesn’t seem reasonable that they immediately leave everything and follow Jesus

### The undesigned coincidence

### According to John, they met Jesus earlier – Jn. 1:40-41

### Great catch of fish had occurred, but not recorded in Matthew (Jesus was simply “walking by the Sea of Galilee” in Mt.): Lk. 5:1-11

### This explains why they were willing to follow Jesus so quickly in Matthew’s account

### The great catch of fish in Lk. 5 where the net was breaking (Lk. 5:6) may also explain why they were mending their nets in Mt. 4 when Jesus called them (Mt. 4:21)

## “Many were coming and going” (Mk. 6:30-31)

### Mark records Jesus taking His disciples to a desolate place to rest because there were so many people they didn’t even have time to eat (Mk. 6:31)

### The undesigned coincidence

### Mark doesn’t explain the reason for things being so busy around them

### Although John doesn’t mention the disciples’ need for solitude, he records that the Passover feast was near (Jn. 6:1-4), unintentionally explaining why Mark recorded the many people coming and going

## Sit down in groups on the green grass” (Mk. 6:39)

### At the feeding of the five thousand, only Mark mentions that the grass was green

### The undesigned coincidence

### Where the feeding of the five thousand occurred is mentioned in Mk. 6:39; Mt. 14:19; and Jn. 6:10 but only Mark mentions the green grass. It is an arid area and the grass is generally not green

### John mentions that it was near Passover (Jn. 6:4), which is in the spring after the winter rains when the grass would have been green

### Interesting that at the feeding of the four thousand it is only stated that the people sat on the ground (Mt. 15:35; Mk. 8:6)

## “At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the report about Jesus and said to his servants…” (Mt. 14:1-2)

### Why was Herod speaking to his servants about Jesus and how could Matthew know what Herod was saying to his servants?

### The undesigned coincidence

### In listing those who accompanied Jesus in His preaching, Luke mentions, “Joanna, the wife or Chuza, Herod’s household manager” (Lk. 8:1-3) which gives a coincidental possible reason for how Herod could have gotten direct information about Jesus and how Matthew would know Herod would have heard about Jesus

## “Began to wash the disciple’s feet” (Jn. 13:5)

### John records that Jesus washed His disciples’ feet (Jn. 13:1-15

### Why did Jesus do this at this time and place?

### John is the only one who records the foot washing, but he doesn’t tell us why it happened (other than Jesus’ apparent lesson on humility and serving)

### The undesigned coincidences

### Luke records a dispute among the disciples that same night about who was to be regarded as the greatest (Lk. 22:24-27)

### Note: Luke records Jesus’ response to the controversy among the disciples as teaching them about true greatness and leadership. He concludes: “For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Yet I am among you as the one who serves.” (Lk. 22:27)

### It appears, according to John, it is around this point in the evening that Jesus arose and washed the disciples’ feet

### “John does not mention the dispute among the disciples. Luke does not mention the foot-washing. Put together, they give us a more complete picture than either gives alone. The fact that each Gospel gives different details is a reason to believe that they represent independent accounts of the same night” (Lydia McGrew, *Hidden in Plain View*, 50)

## “The servant’s name was Malchus” (Jn. 18:10)

### Peter, trying to defend Jesus in the garden, cuts off the right ear of the high priest’s servant named Malchus

### The undesigned coincidence

### All four gospels tell of cutting the ear off the high priest’s servant (Mt. 26:51; Mk. 14:47; Lk. 22:49-50), but only John names him

### It is considered odd to mention a minor person’s name, but even stranger that the writer of the gospel would know his name. Note also in John 18:26-27 that the writer also knows that it is a “relative of him whose ear Peter cut off” who accuses Peter in the courtyard of the high priest of being in the garden with Jesus.

### However, later, in John 18:15-16, John was able to bring Peter into the courtyard of the high priest because he “was known to the high priest.” John could have easily known the servants’ names and relationships

## “Shall I not drink the cup?” (Jn. 18:11)

### After Peter attempts to stop Jesus’ arrest with the sword, only John’s account adds the words of Jesus to Peter, “…shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?” (Jn. 18:11).

### The undesigned coincidences

### Why use the “cup” metaphor here?

### Although this line in John (“shall I not drink the cup…”) is not mentioned in Mt., Mk., or Lk., all three of the Gospels record the words of Jesus while praying in the garden before His arrest, “He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, ‘O My Father, if possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will” (Mt. 26:39) (also in Lk. 22:42; Mk. 14:35-36). This prayer is not mentioned in John.

### Matthew, Mark, and Luke introduce the cup metaphor, but John answers exactly what the cup metaphor applies to and whether it became a reality

### “What we have here are different, interlocking details of the night of Jesus’ betrayal and arrest as told truthfully from different perspectives” (Lydia McGrew, *Hidden in Plain View*, 53)

## “Who is the one who struck you” (Mt. 26:68)

### When Jesus was abused before the high priest they found Him guilty and then struck Him with their hands, mocking Jesus to prophesy who it was who struck Him. Why is this a challenge?

### The undesigned coincidence

### In Luke’s account (22:64) we learn that they had blindfolded Jesus which then makes sense of their taunt in Matthew, “Who hit you?”

## “Are you the king of the Jews?” (Jn. 18:33)

### John doesn’t record a reason for Pilate asking if Jesus is “king of the Jews” – there is no mention of sedition or any political accusation

### The undesigned coincidence

### Luke (23:1-3) alone mentions the accusation, “…forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king”

### Luke explains John

### Note additional coincidence:

##### Why does Pilate say, “I find no fault in this man” after Jesus affirmed to Pilate that He is a king? (Lk. 23:1-4)

##### Although Luke doesn’t give a reason for Pilate not being threatened by Jesus’ reply, John does as he records Jesus saying to Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world…” (Jn. 18:33-38)

## “My servants would fight” (Jn. 18:36)

### John records that Jesus said to Pilate, “…If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews…” (18:36)

### However, the night before, John records that Peter drew his sword and cut off the right ear of Malchus, the high priest’s servant.

### Peter was told to put away his sword, but nothing more is recorded. It seems from John’s account that Jesus’ servants DID fight so He wouldn’t be delivered and there is a missing ear to prove it

### The undesigned coincidence

### Note: both Mt and Mk record the cutting off of the high priest’s servant’s ear, but only Luke records that Jesus healed the ear (Lk. 22:51)

### John’s record of Jesus’ words of non-violence is explained by Luke’s record of the healing which removed proof of violence and was evidence of His position on non-violence

## Note: There are many more undesigned coincidences in Scripture

### Lydia McGrew reveals more undesigned coincidences in the Gospels and Acts in her books *Hidden in Plan View* and *Testimonies to the Truth*

### J.J. Blunt reveals many undesigned coincidences throughout the Old Testament, the New Testament, and between the Gospels, Acts, and Josephus, in his book *Undesigned Scriptural Coincidences*

### J. Warner Wallace also references some illustrations of “unintentional eyewitness support statements” in Scripture in his book, *Cold-Case Christianity*

Conclusion:

# **Summary of skeptic and atheist responses**

## Natural explanations – statistically, coincidences will occur by random chance

## Confirmation Bias – looking for and seeing patterns and connections, meaning and design, that isn’t really present because one’s world view, belief system, or desire needs it to be there

## No empirical evidence – arguments from what is probable based on evidence are generally rejected by naturalists / materialists who require things that are physically testable

## Textual questions – all textual questions (variants, “Q,” etc.) are used to highlight alleged discrepancies in Scripture and to discount harmony (ex: they simply copied from one another or all had a single source document)

## Popularity – this argument was first presented in early 1800’s and did not flourish as an argument because it was not a good / strong / viable / logical argument. Reviving it today is desperation, desire to sell books, etc.

## Scholarship – attacks on the educational and scholarly credentials of those making the undesigned coincidences arguments

# **Possible weaknesses of the argument / approach**

## Subtle and nuanced [not in your face like design requires a designer or life does not come from non-life which are easily understood and experienced]

## Thought processes must be explained, validated, and applied

### Potentially a weakness of J. Warner Wallace’s books (*Cold Case Christianity* and *Person of Interest*). We don’t generally think like a cold-case FBI agent

### I believe these approaches are valid, but not everyone will do the work to think through it

# **Strengths of the argument / approach**

## Strongly textual (anyone can do it if they know what to look for)

## Broader applications to other areas of apologetics (textual criticism, authorship, dating, historicity, alleged contradictions, synoptic vs John problems, etc.)

## That it is a different and lesser-known approach may produce interest in believers (another tool in their toolbox) and may cause some skeptics to re-think some things because standard arguments may not apply

## Materials (books, videos, websites) often present the argument / approach in a non-technical, easy to read and understand format and language

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**Appendix A: Quotes From Skeptics and Atheists About Faith Without Evidence**

# **Note:** The following “definitions” by skeptics and atheists are pulled out of thin air. They are not dictionary definitions or what most theists mean by the term. Many of these statements are mocking faith and attempting to make it look absurd. Many are strawman arguments

## John C Lennox concerning Dawkins’ “idiosyncratic definition of faith” (that it is not evidence based) – “For, in an exhibition of breathtaking inconsistency, evidence is the very thing he fails to supply for his claim that independence of evidence is faith’s joy” (*God’s Undertaker*, 17)

# **Skeptic and atheist quotes about faith and evidence**

## Fredrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)[[8]](#footnote-8): “‘Faith’ means the will to avoid knowing what is true” (Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, 148)

## Mark Twain: “Faith is believing what you know ain’t so” (*Following The Equator - Pudd’nhead Wilson’s New Calendar*, 50)[[9]](#endnote-1)

## Jerry DeWitt (1969-)[[10]](#footnote-9): “Faith is what adults call pretending” (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KvP4-0AKH4Y&t=2000s)

## Matt Dillahunty (1969-)[[11]](#footnote-10)

### “Faith is the excuse people give for believing something when they don’t have a good reason” (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KvP4-0AKH4Y&t=2000s)

### “I don’t have faith, faith is the excuse people give for believing something when they don’t have evidence” (https://twitter.com/iaatheists/status/1292209943165071360?lang=en)

## Richard Dawkins (1941-)[[12]](#footnote-11)

### Faith is “belief that isn’t based on evidence” (‘Is Science a Religion?’, essay from Science in the Soul, Transworld Digital, 2017, location 3585)

### “The dictionary supplied with Microsoft Word defines a delusion as ‘a persistent false belief held in the face of strong contradictory evidence, especially as a symptom of psychiatric disorder’. The first part captures religious faith perfectly. As to whether it is a symptom of a psychiatric disorder, I am inclined to follow Robert M. Pirsig, author of *Aen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance:* ‘When one person suffers from a delusion, it is called insanity. When many people suffer from a delusion it is called Religion.’” (*The God Delusion*, 9)

### Religious faith not only lacks evidence, its independence from evidence is its pride and joy, shouted from the rooftops.” (‘Is Science a Religion?’, essay from Science in the Soul, Transworld Digital, 2017, location 3585)

### “Faith is the great cop-out, the great excuse to evade the need to think and evaluate evidence. Faith is belief in spite of, even perhaps because of, lack of evidence.” (https://quotepark.com/quotes/934763-richard-dawkins-faith-is-the-great-cop-out-the-great-excuse-to-ev/) and (Speech at the Edinburgh International Science Festival (April 15, 1992); quoted in "EDITORIAL: A scientist's case against God", "The Independent"(London), (p. 17), April 20, 1992)

## Sam Harris (1967-)[[13]](#footnote-12)

### “Faith is nothing more than the license that religious people give one another to believe such propositions when reasons fail. The difference between science and religion is the difference between a willingness to dispassionately consider new evidence and new arguments, and a passionate unwillingness to do so” (https://www.huffpost.com/entry/science-must-destroy-reli\_b\_13153\_)

### “We have names for people who have many beliefs for which there is not rational justification. When their beliefs are extremely common we call them ‘religious’; otherwise, they are likely to be called ‘mad’, ‘psychotic’ or ‘delusional’… Clearly there is sanity in numbers. And yet, it is merely an accident of history that it is considered normal in our society to believe that the Creator of the universe can hear your thoughts, which it is demonstrative of mental illness to believe that he is communicating with you by having the rain tap in Morse code on your bedroom window. And so, while religious people are not generally mad, their core beliefs absolutely are” (*The End of Faith*, 72)

### “…every religion preaches the truth of propositions for which no evidence is even *conceivable.*” (*The End of Faith*, 23)

### “…faith is nothing more than a willingness to await the evidence – be it the Day of Judgment or some other downpour of corroboration. It is the search for knowledge on the installment plan: believe now, live an untestable hypothesis until your dying day, and you will discover that you were right.” (*The End of Faith*, 66)

### “It is time we recognized that all reasonable men and women have a common enemy, that we keep its counsel even as it threatens to destroy the very possibility of human happiness. Our enemy is nothing other than faith itself." (*The End of Faith*, 131)

### “The danger of religious faith is that it allows otherwise normal human beings to reap the fruits of madness and consider them holy. Because each new generation of children is taught the religious propositions need not be justified in the way that all others must, civilization is still besieged by the armies of the preposterous. We are, even now, killing ourselves over ancient literature. Who would have thought something so tragically absurd could be possible?” (*The End of Faith*, 73)

### “Faith is nothing more than the license religious people give themselves to keep believing when reasons fail” (https://www.samharris.org/blog/selling-out-science)

## Christopher Hitchens (1949-2011)[[14]](#footnote-13)

### “Our belief is not a belief. Our principles are not a faith. We do not rely solely upon science and reason, because these are necessary rather than sufficient factors, but we distrust anything that contradicts science or outrages reason. We may differ on many things, but what we respect is free inquiry, open mindedness, and the pursuit of ideas for their own sake.” (*God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*, 5)

### “Religion has run out of justifications. Thanks to the telescope and the microscope, it no longer offers an explanation of anything important.” (*God is Not Great*, 282)

## George H. Smith (1949-2022)[[15]](#footnote-14)

### “The conflict between Christian theism and atheism is fundamentally a conflict between faith and reason. This, in epistemological terms, is the essence of the controversy. Reason and faith are opposites, two mutually exclusive terms: there is no reconciliation or common ground. Faith is belief without, or in spite of, reason.” (*Atheism: The Case Against God*, 32)

### “For the atheist, to embrace faith is to abandon reason” (*Atheism: The Case Against God*, 33)

## Daniel Dennett (1942-)[[16]](#footnote-15)

### “I decided that it was important to explore people’s faith scientifically…” (https://www.salon.com/2006/02/08/dennett/)

### “If you want to reason about faith, and offer a reasoned (and reason responsive) defense of faith as an extra category of belief worth of special consideration, I’m eager to play. I certainly grant the existence of the phenomenon of faith; what I want to see is a reasoned ground for taking faith seriously as a way of getting to the truth, and not, just say, just as a way people comfort themselves and each other.” (*Darwin’s Dangerous Idea*, 154)

### “How is it that you use reason as a path to truth in every endeavor of your life, and then when it comes to ‘ultimate truth’ – the most important truth – you’re saying that faith is required. And how does that reflect on a god (who supposedly exists and wants you to have this information); what kind of god requires faith instead of evidence?” (Episode 696: "Viewer Calls" http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0OCYhDFc42I, Channel Austin (February 13, 2011)

## Aron Ra (1962-)[[17]](#footnote-16)

### Described himself as an “apistevist,” someone who “rejects faith as being the most dishonest position that is possible to have.” (Aron Ra, “Theism Is Not Rational,” October 2, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fvg3mRZXut4.)

### “There are certain rules of logic that science has to adhere to, and there are good reasons for that; faith by contrast ignores all of that outright, preferring to believe whatever makes one happy.” (*Foundational Falsehoods of Creationism*, 128)

### “Unsupported assertions of impossible absurdities are indistinguishable from the illusions of delusion, and no one should believe anything that requires faith. Because faith requires that we believe without question, without reservation, without reason. That is irrational, foolish; that's what a fool is. Your Bible got it wrong. Any assertion that requires faith should be rejected for that reason.” (https://www.aronra.com/a-letter-to-a-certain-christian/)

### “There is nothing reasonable about faith. Those two words mean completely opposite things. Putting them together creates an oxymoron, That's why William Lyin' Craig thought it would make a clever book title. Faith is an unreasonable conviction which is assumed without reason and defended against all reason. That's why faith is the most dishonest position it is possible to have. It really is!” (https://www.aronra.com/a-letter-to-a-certain-christian/)

### “Now I would say that any honest earnest quest for truth must begin with the abandonment of faith. Are you prepared to lie in order to maintain your self-induced delusion? Or are you bold enough to question your own convictions and even test them to find out if they’re true, and discard them if they are not? That’s the rift. That’s the difference between us.” (https://www.aronra.com/a-letter-to-a-certain-christian/)

### “Thus everything they say is completely empty to us. Unsupported assertions of impossible absurdities are indistinguishable from the illusions of delusion, and no one should believe anything that requires faith. Because faith requires that we believe without question, without reservation, without reason. That is irrational, foolish; that’s what a fool is. Your Bible got it wrong. Any assertion that requires faith should be rejected for that reason.” (https://www.aronra.com/a-letter-to-a-certain-christian/)

### “But faith is often a matter of pretending to know what you know you really don’t know, and that no one even can know, and which you merely believe – often for no good reason at all” (Foundational Falsehoods of Creationism, 133)

### “Knowledge is justified belief, meaning that it is demonstrable and measurable. As I explained in previous chapters, ‘truth’ is whatever statement can be shown to be true; as such, since no one can show that there is any truth to anyone’s religious beliefs, then those beliefs cannot count as knowledge. An assertion of unwavering conviction that is not based on factual evidence is irrational by definition and illogical as well. Thus, assuming the existence of a god should fly in the face of truth, knowledge, and logic” (Foundational Falsehoods of Creationism, 111)

### “Faith is the assertion of unreasonable conviction, assumed without reason, and defended without reason. Meaning that people of strong faith, refuse to reason, reject reason, and will not be reasoned with.” (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fvg3mRZXut4)

### “…to believe in creationism, you don’t have to know anything about anything, and it’s better if you don’t, because creationism relies on ignorance.” (*Foundational Falsehood of Creationism*, 22)

## Bill Maher (1956-)[[18]](#footnote-17): Christian faith in God is the “purposeful suspension of critical thinking” (https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/jun/7/bill-maher-christian-faith-god-purposeful-suspensi/)

## Note: Some of these men are being labeled “new atheists” because of their evangelistic fresh attempts at answering Christian apologetics and popularity. It has been noted that their arguments are actually rooted in 17th century scientism (the view that science alone can render truth about reality). It should also be noted that scientists also cannot escape having faith in many things (see more in the article: https://www.lumenchristi.org/news/2015/05/debunking-arguments-of-new-atheists)

### “Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Daniel Dennett—the twentieth century “four-horsemen of new atheism” as described by Georgetown theologian John Haught—are (were) confident and self-assured, certain that believers (and the unfortunate beliefs they espouse) will eventually disappear.” (https://www.lumenchristi.org/news/2015/05/debunking-arguments-of-new-atheists)

### NOTE: I am NOT proposing that these quotes be presented publicly or to our young people (young in body or in faith). We should not give blasphemers and atheists a platform or voice in an audience mixed with the weak and the strong (where we might cause stumbling, ill-advised rabbit chasing, or verbiage for already existing questions or doubts). But teachers and leaders need to know what is out there and to what young and old are being exposed.

### Most of their popular writing, lectures, and online content is very sarcastic, mocking, and intentionally blasphemous. It is interesting to note that they disdain non-scientists who make any scientific references (and reject the qualifications of scientists who are theists) while they themselves are not theologians in any sense of the term, yet make constant Biblical references, interpretations, and conclusions

**Appendix B: The Nature of Evidence**

# **Notes on the nature and weight of evidence**

## J. Warner Wallace has good thoughts about the standard of proof “beyond a reasonable doubt” rather than “beyond a possible doubt” (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WgnvrENuDWQ&t=93s at about 1:05:00)

### There is a difference between 100% certainty and 100% conviction or confidence

### Very few things in life can be proven to be 100% certain, but there are many things (even most things) we can obtain enough evidence to approach with 100% conviction or 100% confidence (this conviction or confidence is what we call faith)

### Faith is not knowing. Faith is confidently trusting because you have been convinced of its reality and trustworthiness.

## Anti-supernaturalist / Naturalists / Humanists will never be satisfied with evidence for faith (what is immaterial, or cannot be repeated, or cannot be physically experienced or tested). It is anti-supernatural prejudice.

### Science is not qualified to deal with questions that cannot be empirically determined

### “Diametrically opposed to naturalism and materialism is the theistic view of the universe that finds clear expression in the opening words of Genesis: ‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.’ Here is an assertion that the universe is not a closed system but a creation, and artefact of the mind of God, maintained and upheld by him. It is an answer to the question: Why does the universe exist? It exists because God causes it to be.” (*God’s Undertaker*, 30)

### “Professor of Ecology and Evolution Massimo Pigliucci states that ‘The basic assumption of science is that the world can be explained entirely in physical terms, without recourse to godlike entities’” (*God’s Undertaker*, 33-34)

### Harvard geneticist Richard Lewontin: “Our willingness to accept scientific claims that are against common sense is the key to an understanding of the real struggle between science and the supernatural. We take the side of science in spite of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs… in spite of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment… to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, on the contrary, that we are forced by our *a priori* adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated.” (*God’s Undertaker*, 35-36)

### Atheists often charge that faith (and religions in general) will be the death of knowledge and advancement because, “Apparently, our teachers are supposed to tell students whenever we haven’t figured something out yet, we should stop our research and assume God did it – as if that counts as an explanation.” (Aron Ra, *Foundational Falsehoods of Creationism*, 21)

### “Knowledge is justified belief, meaning that it is demonstrable and measurable.” (Aron Ra, *Foundational Falsehoods of Creationism*, 111) [Note: Only things physically demonstrable and measurable are accepted. DD]

#### “There is a difference between scientific knowledge and historical knowledge. Scientific knowledge is based on the repeatability of an experiment… Science is based on your ability to repeat the experiment that taught you something – and if you can’t repeat the experiment, it is not scientific knowledge. Historical knowledge has nothing to do with repeatability… Historical knowledge is based on a single event, eyewitnesses seeing it, and they write what they see. Science, you’ve got to be able to repeat it – if you can’t repeat it, it’s not science. History, you never repeat. You record what you see people do, they write it down…” (stuartknechtle Stuart Knechtel TikTok)

# **Notes on the weight of the compilation of or wealth of evidence**

## One piece of evidence, or even one genre of evidences, is not the whole puzzle. Although we may look at pieces of evidence one at a time (or even one genre of evidences), our claim is that the whole of the evidence (not just one piece or one genre) is the overwhelming and convincing thing that points to truth. However, one piece or genre of evidence may prove more impactful to one person over another person (why it is good to be well-rounded in evidential proofs). Also, a skeptic or atheist may attack one piece or genre of evidence as though faith depends solely on that one thing (which it doesn’t – but if someone only knows or depends on one piece of evidence skeptic attacks can be more impactful)

## “The argument is cumulative… it is not necessary that any one coincidence carry the weight of the argument for reliability on its own. When, in instance after instance, these documents fit together just as truthful testimony fits together, there is a strong cumulative case for the documents” (Lydia McGrew, *Hidden in Plain View*, 20)

### “The sort of case that one can build using these undesigned coincidences does not provide a logical guarantee; such guarantees are not available in historical work. And no single example, taken by itself, may be enough to persuade a reasonable but skeptical person. But the argument is cumulative. If it can be fairly shown that such interlocking exists in case after case, the combined weight of the evidence will, to an unprejudiced mind, be most satisfying and convincing.” (Timothy McGrew, https://christianapologeticsalliance.com/2013/09/01/undesigned-coincidences/)

### “If there were only a small number of undesigned coincidences, we might shrug them off as statistical noise. After all, in a large box of jigsaw puzzle pieces taken at random, one apiece, from many different puzzles, someone searching with great patience might find a few pairs that fit together (more or less) by sheer accident. But when a large number of pieces fit together, sometimes in clusters, the chance explanation rapidly becomes absurd. That is why, to appreciate the force of the argument from undesigned coincidences, we must have the patience to work through multiple examples. But the picture that emerges when we take the time to do this will amply repay us for the labor and study we bestow on the project.” (Timothy McGrew, https://christianapologeticsalliance.com/2013/09/15/undesigned-coincidences-part-2-2/

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1. Karl Barth was a twentieth century Swiss (and German) theologian. He was a professor of Systematic Theolog, wrote, lectured, and traveled extensively. He was part of the Protestant group called the Confessing Church which eventually was reorganized as the Evangelical Church in Germany. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Jordanthegreywitch (Jordan The Grey -no online bio) has 305.9 followers and 10.8 M likes across about 450 TicTok videos on many topics. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. J.P Moreland is an American philosopher, theologian, and apologist [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. J. Warner Wallace is a former atheist and former American homicide detective and is now an apologist, speaker, and author. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. John Warwick Montgomery is an American lawyer, professor, theologian, and author. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Greg Koukl is an American apologist, speaker, author, and radio talk show host. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. John Lennox is an Irish mathematician, bioethicist, and apologist who has written many books on science and faith, lectured, and debated atheists. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Fredrich Nietzsche was an influential German philosopher known for his criticism of traditional European morality, religion, conventional philosophical and psychological ideas, and political ideologies. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
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Wallace, J. Warner. *Cold-Case Christianity*. Colorado Springsd: David C. Cook, 2013. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
10. Jerry DeWitt is an American author and public speaker who was an evangelical pastor who de-converted to atheism in 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
11. Matt Dillahunty is an American atheist speaker, writer, and debater. He is a software engineer and has no formal education degrees. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
12. Richard Dawkins is a British evolutionary biologist and atheist. He is a professor, author, lecturer, and debater. He is a strong critic of creationism, intelligent design, theism, and religion in general. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
13. Sam Harris is an American atheist who is a philosopher, neuroscientist, and author, and debater. He has written extensively against faith and religion and has also had a popular podcast. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
14. Christopher Hitches was a British-American author and one of the most influential atheists of the 20th and 21st centuries. He addressed many topics on politics, social issues, but is most known for his writing, lectures, and debates affirming atheism. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
15. George H. Smith was an American author, educator, and speaker who addressed a variety or political, social topics, including a defense of atheism. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
16. Daniel Dennett is an American philosopher and cognitive scientist. He is popular writer and debater defending atheism and evolution [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
17. Aron Ra (formerly L.Aron Nelson) is a popular American atheist who is an author, debater, podcaster, and producer of videos against theism, creationism, and religion. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
18. Bill Maher is an American comedian, writer, producer, political commentator, actor and television host. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)