

THE ROAD OF THE RIGHTEOUS

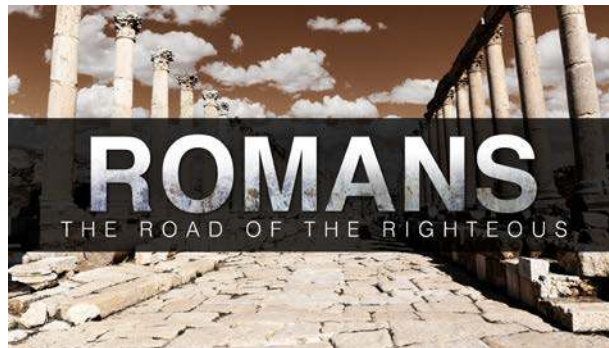
Expositional Study Of Romans

Romans 1:18b-23

Written By

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People come hardwired with the ability to make excuses for their sinful activities so they can escape blame and possible consequences. Take, for instance, a young man who was arrested at the border facility in San Diego were attempting to smuggle an exotic bird into the United States.

Once his mother found out the size of the hefty fine, she made appointment to meet with my father who is the U.S. Customs District Director who had levied the fine against her innocent teen. Sitting across from my father's desk, with the beautiful windows facing Coronado Island, the anger mother declared, "My son should not be fined for this infraction because he was a victim."

My father replied, "Could you elaborate on why you think he was a victim?"

Without hesitation, she said, "My son said he was merely returning from Mexico to the United States. As he sat in the line to go through U.S. Customs, he rolled his windows down to get some air because his air conditioner is not working effectively. Suddenly, as he inched closer the Customs officer, an exotic bird flew in the passenger's window and landed on the seat."

"That's very interesting," my dad replied. "What happened next?" "Well, Jose attempted to grab the bird but it jumped onto the floor board. When he reached for it again, the bird crawled under the passenger seat. As luck would have it, that is exactly when he pulled up to the check point. Within a few minutes the officer searched his car and found the bird under the seat. This is why I believe my son should not be fined for being a smuggler."

"I find this all very interesting," my father retorted, "because this is not what the officer told me."

"What did he say?" asked the angry mother?"

"Let me put it to you this way," my father stated. "If you can answer my following question based on what the arresting officer told me, then I will not fine your son. You say the exotic bird just happened to fly into the opened window, and then after a few chaotic moments of pursuit by

your son, it managed to hide under the front seat. How do you account for the fact the exotic bird just happened to crawl into a paper sack, tape its beak closed, and manage to tape the flap shut as well?"

The woman paid the fine because the evidence trumped the lame excuse her perpetrator concocted to get out of his criminal predicament.

Such is the way of sinners when it comes to sin. They will make all kinds of well-crafted, well-thought-out excuses to escape divine judgment, but they will have no excuse before a holy, living, omniscient God. Jesus taught that on judgment day many fine, well-educated religious people who have performed all kinds of religious works, will stand before His throne and give all kinds of excuses as to why they, of all people, should not experience His wrath. Jesus' wrath will, on the contrary, rest upon them for they willfully chose to build their lives upon the shifting sands of a false worldview while utterly rejecting Him, the rock of salvation upon which their lives should have rested (Matt. 7:22-23).

Paul opens his letter to the Romans by talking about the power of the gospel of Jesus to radically transform sinners into saints at the moment of faith (Rom. 1:16-17). However, the converted rabbinical scholar turns in verses 18 through 23 and makes a very sobering, spine stiffing revelation. Pay attention to the fact that God leaves Christ-rejecting man with no excuse for his unbelief on the day of judgment:

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹ because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. ²¹ For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²² Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures (Rom. 1).

Believers should be ardent, passionate evangelists because God's wrath is revealed against sinners in the here and now and in the future. Challenge God in this life, chose to flaunt His laws and teachings and you, my friend, will discover there is a price to pay in the here and now, but it is but a small taste of the price to pay in eternity (Rom. 2:1-5). Better and wiser to build your house, by faith, upon the rock called Jesus so blessing will flow to you now and in the halls of eternity.

For those who willfully choose to reject the redemptive work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, they, as Paul articulates here, will stand before God's throne of judgment one day without one viable excuse for the choice. Why is this true? Paul gives us the reasons starting in the last clause of verse 18. All of these reasons, of course, readily answer a question which arises naturally from the verses (pericope, for Greek students).

Why Is God's Wrath Against Sinners Valid? (Rom. 1:18-23)

Two reasons emerge from an analysis of the text:

God's Revelation Is Resisted (Rom. 1:18b-20)

The resistance to God is stated in the last clause of verse 18:

... who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

The word “suppress” is from the Greek verb *katecho* (κατέχω). According to BAG, it has eight lexical meanings:

- ① to prevent the doing of something. Or cause to be ineffective, *prevent, hinder, restrain*
- ② to hold someone back from going away *hold back, hinder, prevent from going away* (Hom. Et al.; BGU 1205, 27 [28 B.C.]; 37, 6 [50 A.D.]; PFay 109, 11; Gen 24:56; cp. Jos., Ant. 7, 76; Just., A I, 45, 1) Hs 9, 11, 6. ὄν ἐβουλόμην πρὸς ἐμαυτὸν κ. *whom I wished to keep with me* Phlm 13. Foll. by gen. of the inf. w. article (B-D-F §400, 4) οἱ ὄχλοι κατέχον αὐτὸν τοῦ μὴ πορεύεσθαι ἀπ' αὐτῶν Lk 4:42.
- ③ *hold down, suppress τὶ someth.* (γέλωτα X., Cyr. 2, 2, 1; Chariton 3, 7, 4 τ. λύπη; WCrum, Coptic Ostraca p. 4, 522=Dssm., LO 260 [LAE 306]=PGM II 233, no. O 1, 1–3 Κρόνος, ὁ κατέχων τὸν θυμὸν ὄλων τ. ἀνθρώπων, κάτεχε τ. θυμὸν Ὄρι; cp. II, 7, 935f, p 41; Jos., Vi. 233 τ. ὀργήν) τ. ἀλήθειαν ἐν ἀδικίᾳ *stifle the truth by unrighteousness/ wickedness* Ro 1:18 (cp. JFitzmyer, Ro [AB], '93, 278; but s. 6 below).
- ④ to prevent someone from exercising power, *restrain, check* (Thu. 6, 29, 3; Appian, Bell. Civ. 2, 149 §622 τοῦ δαίμονος κατέχοντος τὸ πέλαγος=divine power held the sea back until Alexander reached the other shore; PGiss 70, 3 [II A.D.] ἡ ἀναγραφὴ κατέσχευεν ἡμᾶς μέχρι ὥρας ἕκτης) ἵνα μὴ κατέξω τὰ [προσ]τεταγμένα καὶ ἐπεικίμ[εν]α *so that I might not delay (carrying out) the instructions and orders* AcPl Ha 7, 14f. τὸ κατέχον (Themistocl., Ep. 13, 4) 2 Th 2:6 and ὁ κατέχων vs. 7 mean *that which restrains* and *one who restrains*, i.e. what prevents God's adversary fr. coming out in open opposition to God, for the time being. In an effort to define κ. more specifically here, many interpreters have followed the exegesis of the ancient church (Tertullian) and taken τὸ κ. to be the Roman Empire and ὁ κ. the Emperor (OBetz, NTS 9, '63, 276–91). An alternative view, as old as Theodore of Mops., but without sustained acceptance, would make τὸ κ. the preaching of Christian missionaries and ὁ κ. the apostle Paul (so OCullmann, Dodd Festschr. '56, 409–21). These and other attempts to limit more precisely the mng. of these terms in 2 Th invite skepticism because of insufficient textual data (vs. 5 appears to imply in-house information). The concept of the temporary restraining of the forces of hell (cp. Rtzst., Poim. 27 late Egyptian prayer 6, 4 Horus as κατέχων δράκοντα=PGM 4, 994f; cp. 2770 Μιχαήλ ... κατέχων, ὄν καλέουσι δράκοντα μέγαν) does not appear to play any role here.—WBousset, D. Antichrist 1895; NFreese, StKr 93, 1921, 73–77; VHartl, ZKT 45, 1921, 455–75; WSchröder, D. 2. Thess. 1929, 8–15; DBuzy, RSR 24, '34, 402–31; OCullmann, RThAM 1, '38, 26–61; JSchmid, TQ 129, '49, 323–43; OBetz, NTS 9, '63, 276–91. Diff. CGiblin, Threat to Faith '67, 167–242, a hostile power. S. also JTownsend, SBLSP 19, '80, 233–46; RAus, JBL 96, '77, 537–

- 53; New Docs 3, 28.
- ④ to hold back with design *hold back* τὶ *someh.* κ. ἐν μυστηρίῳ τὴν σοφὴν αὐτοῦ βουλήν *hold back his wise plan as a secret* Dg 8:10.
 - ② to adhere firmly to traditions, convictions, or beliefs, *hold to, hold fast* (cp. the lit. sense λαμπάδας ἐν ταῖς χερσίν ParJer 3:2)
 - ③ *keep in one's memory* (Theophr., Char. 26, 2, a word of Homer) εἰ κατέχετε *if you hold it fast* 1 Cor 15:2.
 - ⑥ *hold fast, retain faithfully* (X., Symp. 8, 26 τ. φιλίαν; TestJud 26:1 τ. ὁδούς) τὸν λόγον Lk 8:15. τὰς παραδόσεις *guard the traditions* 1 Cor 11:2. τὸ καλὸν *hold fast what is good* 1 Th 5:21; Agr 11. τὴν παρρησίαν βεβαίαν κ. *keep the confidence firm* Hb 3:6; cp. vs. 14. κ. τὴν ὁμολογίαν ἀκλινῆ 10:23.
 - ③ to keep in one's possession, *possess* (Ps.-Aristot., Mirabilia 159; 160; Polyb. 1, 2, 3; IMagnMai 105, 51 [II B.C.] ἵνα ἔχωσιν κατέχωσιν τε καρπίζονται τε; Ezk 33:24; Da 7:18, 22; Ath. 8:3) τὶ *someh.* Mt 21:38 v.l.; ὡς μηδὲν ἔχοντες καὶ πάντα κατέχοντες 2 Cor 6:10 (DMealand [ZNW 67, '76, 277–79] cites Ps.-Crates Ep. 7 Hercher-p. 58 no. 7, 8 Malherbe: ἔχοντες μηδὲν πάντ' ἔχομεν, ὑμεῖς δὲ πάντ' ἔχοντες οὐδὲν ἔχετε). Abs. 1 Cor 7:30.
 - ④ to keep within limits in a confining manner, *confine*
 - ③ in prison *keep, confine* (PFlor 61, 60; BGU 372 I, 16; Gen 39:20; Philo, Leg. All. 3, 21) pass. Χριστιανοὶ κατέχονται ὡς ἐν φρουρᾷ τῷ κόσμῳ *they are confined in the world as in a prison* Dg 6:7.
 - ⑥ by law: ἀποθανόντες ἐν ᾧ κατειχόμεθα *having died to that by which we were bound* Ro 7:6 (cp. PAmh 97, 17 οὐ κατασχεθήσομαι τῇ ὑποσχέσει; PRyl 117, 13).
 - ③ by disease (Diod S 4, 14, 5; Philo, Op. M. 71, Congr. Erud. Grat. 138; PSI 299, 3 κατεσχέθην νόσῳ; act., Jer 13:21; Jos., Vi. 48) Lk 4:38 D; J 5:4 v.l.
 - ⑤ to have a place as one's own, *take into one's possession, occupy* (Hdt. 5, 72 et al.; PAmh 30, 26 [II B.C.] τὴν οἰκίαν) τὸν ἔσχατον τόπον Lk 14:9 (cp. Philosoph. Max. 491, 69 τὸν κάλλιστον κατέχουσι τόπον; Jos., Ant. 8, 104). Cp. GPt 5:15.—AcPl Ha 5, 28 [κατ]εῖχεν αὐτὰς ἔκστασις perh. means *astonishment overcame them*.
 - ⑥ *lay claim to, legal t.t.* Ro 1:18 (the point is that a claim is made for truth, which is denied in practice, cp. vss. 22f; s. FDanker, in Gingrich Festschr. 93. For a diff. interpr. see lb above).
 - ⑦ *hold course, nautical t.t., intr.* (Hdt. 7, 188 κατέσχε ἐς τὸν αἰγιαλόν; Dicaearchus, Fgm. 85 W. εἰς Δῆλον κατέσχε; Polyb. 1, 25, 7; Philostrat., Vi. Apoll. 4, 13 p. 133, 5; 5, 18 p. 178, 13; cp. Jos., Ant. 1, 204) κατεῖχον εἰς τὸν αἰγιαλόν *they headed for the beach* Ac 27:40.
 - ⑧ Perh. in the sense of *determine* (cp. προσέχω 2c) κατεχόντων εἰ ἄρα ἀληθῶς ἀπέθανεν AcPt Ox 849, 2f; s. ed.'s notes.—M-M. EDNT. TW. Spicq.¹

Picture yourself in a swimming pool attempting to hold a large ball underwater while you sit on it and you have a good idea of the meaning of *katecho*. It denotes a willful suppression of something

¹ William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 532–533.

you are cognizant of. The present active nature of this particular participle reveals the person in question is the subject of this deviant perpetual action. Translated, they know exactly what they are doing. What is the person doing according to Paul? The sinner is willingly and knowingly suppressing divine truth. What divine truth? Contextually, the answer is really quite simple: The gospel of Jesus Christ. They now it is truth, but they chafe against it, so they, like the Pharisees and Sadducees, devise clever false religious systems so they do not have to come to terms with the gospel (Matt. 12:9-13). Consider the Jehovah's Witnesses view of Jesus:

Jesus is Jehovah's most precious son—and for good reason. He is called “the firstborn of all creation,” for he was God's first creation (Col. 1:15).

Jesus, therefore, is not God, which is what He claimed, for instance, in John 8:58. He is, conversely, a created god-like creature of many creatures. Obviously, this tweaked position is a *willful* suppression of Paul's teaching in Colossians 1:15. Dr. Ron Rhodes, a cult expert, puts this in perspective with this astute grammatical analysis:

The Jehovah's Witnesses have wrongly understood Colossians 1:15 to mean that there was a time when Christ did not exist, and that he came into being at a point in time. “Firstborn” does not mean “first created.” Rather, as Greek scholars agree, the word (Greek: *protokos*) means “first in rank, preeminent one, heir.” The word carries the idea of positional preeminence and supremacy. Christ is the firstborn in the sense that He is positionally preeminent over creation and supreme over all things. He is also the heir of all creation in the sense that all of belongs to the Father is also the Son's.²

Further, in Old Testament times, the word “firstborn” clearly pointed to a preeminent position, not a position in time. For instance, though David was the last child born to Jesse's line, in Psalm 89:27 God says He will make him the firstborn. Contextually, lexically, grammatically, and theologically the Jehovah's Witnesses are holding down the truth of Christ's true identity so they can manufacture a lesser god of their own making.

The Jehovah's Witnesses also willfully suppress the free grace and faith of the true gospel. In their book *What Does The Bible Really Teach*, they say this regarding the path into God's presence: “Water baptism is a requirement for all who want to have a relationship with Jehovah God.”³ This is not the gospel, but a false gospel. Paul is quite clear in Ephesians 2:8-10 that salvation is by means of grace through faith, and it is not related to any works whatsoever.

Don't think for a moment that the suppression of the true gospel is limited to cultic teaching. If cultic teaching speaks of a group which deviates from biblical teaching and revelation, then world religions are a different category of falsity altogether. Regardless, however, of which one you choose, be it any group from Hinduism to Islam, they evidence an outright suppression of the gospel by the creation of their works-based methods of ascending into God's presence.

The question is: Are you suppressing the truth of the gospel by means of erroneous belief? Mark Gabriel, a former professor at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, eventually became a Christian when other Islamic leaders would not field his questions about incongruities in his Islamic faith.

² Ron Rhodes, *Reasoning from the Scriptures with the Jehovah's Witnesses* (Eugene: Harvest House, 1993), 130.

³ “*What Does the Bible Really Teach?*” (Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower and Tract Society of New York, 2006), 175.

In his book *Jesus and Muhammad: Profound Differences and Surprising Similarities*, he spends the opening chapters detailing how the living God led him from being a suppressor of the gospel to being a possessor. Perhaps it is time for you to make the same journey.

As we learn from Paul in Romans 1, verses 18 through 20, the suppression is not just about the gospel. Suppression of what Paul calls “the truth” is all truth related to the person of God. Read on and you will see the validity of this observation:

¹⁹ because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

Here Paul turns from the gospel to God Himself. What he says is jaw-dropping.

First, Paul says that God is known within each man. He has built into each person the knowledge that He exists. Solomon speaks of this reality when he states in Ecclesiastes 3, verse 11:

¹He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end.

Solomon’s argument in the previous verses is that God has created and permitted all kinds of ups and downs in life to accomplish His purposes for each of us. He has also built into the fabric of our beings the concept that there is something more beyond us, beyond all the triumphs and tragedies of life, really a new day beyond life lived on this unpredictable planet. Yes, everyone knows in their heart of hearts there is an eternity beyond the temporal, and then Solomon adds that until that time of eternity is true for each of us we will grope at trying to understand what God has done while we’ve walked this ol’ earth. Why? Because He is infinite and we are finite. Nevertheless, we can’t miss the reality that in the still of the night, as you think of the complexities of your day, or sadness you’ve encountered, or the joy you’ve witnessed there must be an eternity where life is lived to the fullest. And where there is eternity, there is the God of eternity. This concept is hardwired into man’s being and he cannot escape it.

The reality and revelation of God’s existence is also external. God created the cosmos so man cannot help but realize there is a Designer behind the design, there is a Banger behind the Big Bang, and there is an Uncaused One behind all the cause and effect we cannot escape. Here’s how Paul develops this crucial theological point:

²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

God purposefully designed the cosmos so all mankind can readily see two things: one, He exists, and two, they cannot miss some of His amazing characteristics. Note well that Paul says these concepts are “clearly seen.” You don’t have to have a Ph.D. in astronomy, chemistry, or biology from MIT to figure out there is an amazing personal God behind all you see with your eyes. The cosmological and teleological arguments are designed to help people understand these realities.

The *cosmological argument* has two forms: one which is *horizontal* and another which is *vertical*. The horizontal argument runs like this:

- Major premise: Everything that begins has a cause.
- Minor premise: The universe had a definite beginning.
- Final conclusion: Thus, the universe had a cause.

It forces you to consider the fact the universe, which is an effect, was caused by someone or something. Since the cosmos is not eternal, based on the first two laws of thermodynamics, we are left with Someone as the first cause, and this Someone is God who stands outside of cause and effect.

The second form of the cosmological is the *vertical*, and it is concerned with answering the question, Why is there something rather than nothing? Here is its syllogistic construction:

- Major Premise: Every contingent (dependent) being has a cause right now.
- Minor Premise: The whole physical universe is contingent right now.
- Final Conclusion: The whole physical universe has a Cause right now.

The Cause, of course, is God who is not bound by cause and effect is who is outside of time and space. He is the eternal Being who can readily and logically account for the complexity and intricate order we see in our spectacular cosmos. Norman Geisler breaks this helpful argument down further when he writes:

- No part of the universe is self-sustaining.
- Each part is dependent on something else for its existence.
- No parts are purely or logically self-caused.
- Every part of the universe is dependent on something beyond it for its existence.
- The whole is equal to the sum of all the parts.
- Summation: If every part is caused, then the whole universe is caused as well.⁴

Since the cosmos, which is cause, continues to be, then there must be One who is uncaused to efficiently caused it and who presently sustains it. That One is the God of the Bible. All of this, of course, is clearly seen to anyone who is honestly thinking and paying attention to the world around them.

The *teleological argument* has many different form, way too many for me to present in a short study. What is this argument? It's the simple argument that where there is design logic says there is a Master Designer. Here are two forms of this interesting argument:

- Major Premise: Wherever we observe specified complexity in the present (such as in human language), it is caused by an intelligent cause.
- Minor Premise: The specified complexity in a living cell is mathematically

⁴ Norman Geisler, *Twelve Points That Show Christianity Is True* (Indian Trail, NC: Norm Geisler International Ministries, 2016), 29.

- identical to that in human language.
- Conclusion: First life must have had an intelligent cause.

Here's another.

- Major Premise: Specified complexity (or Irreducible complexity) has an intelligent Designer.
- Minor Premise: Life has specified complexity (or Irreducible complexity).
- Conclusion: Life had an intelligent Designer (we call God).⁵

All of this type of reasoning is built by God into the cosmos He has beautifully designed for us. This type of reasoning, therefore, should move us reason our way to the living God who is the reason behind all that we see.

And just in case you are lost in the philosophy of it all, then just look up. As David says, "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. (Ps. 19). Do they not? God has many attributes like omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, mercy, grace, holiness, glory, patience, compassion, and so forth. To stare up at the heavens is to see Him in all of His magnificence. For instance, Sirius is the brightest evening star. Concerning it Donald DeYoung, an astronomer muses, "This blue-white star is the fifth closest star to earth at 8.8 light-years, or ½ million times the earth-to-sun distance. It is also twice the size of our sun, and its high temperature produces the light of 23 suns."⁶ Can you say "the glory of God?" Indeed. Can you say, "raw power of God Almighty?" Indeed. Facts like this loudly announce His presence.

But people, who love darkness more than they love light, who want to be accountable to themselves and no one else, who want morality to be fluid and not fixed, who glorify their thinking above God's thinking suppress these evidences to maintain their current, though sub-par lifestyles. On judgment day, however, when they stand before the holy God who gave them all these evidences that He was and is, they will be utterly and completely without excuse and readily prepared for God's eternal judgment on their choice of sin over the Savior. Will you be one standing there with a lame excuse like, "Lord, I'm sorry, I just had no idea you were really there." Or, "Lord, I have such a keen, critical mind I could have used some better evidence on your part." Trust me on this one, these excuses won't float. So I must pause and ask you again, Are you a *suppressor* the spiritual truth about God and His gospel, or a *possessor*?

A second reason why God's wrath against sin and sinners is valid is developed in verses 21 through 23.

God's Revelation Is Rejected (Rom. 1:21-23)

Follow closely how Paul presents this next reason:

²¹ For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

²² Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the

⁵Norman Geisler, *Introduction to Apologetics*, class notes, Southern Evangelical Seminary.

⁶Donald B. DeYoung, *Astronomy and the Bible: Questions and Answers* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 63.

incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures (Rom. 1).

Don't miss the import of verse 21. Paul says here man began with a knowledge of God. Winfried Cordon's book *in The Beginning God* substantiates the thesis, based upon the analysis of the belief systems of tribal people, that man originally held to monotheism. He debunks the notion that monotheism has followed polytheism and animism by showing how scholars have covered up the evidence for what he calls "original monotheism." This reasoning certainly squares with what Paul says in verse 21. Man originally knew there was a living, all-powerful God, and man currently knows the same reality is true. However, as stated, man's love of darkness over light motivates him to move from suppressing the truth of the gospel and its living God to rejecting it outright.

Those who actively reject divine truth are everywhere. John Lennox, MA PhD DPhil DSc, who happens to be a professing Christian, is Professor of Mathematics at the University of Oxford. He acquaints us with many of these rejecters in his book *God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?* I'll present a few of them for your consideration:

Peter Atkins, Professor of Chemistry at Oxford University, while acknowledging the religious element in the history of the genesis of science, defends this view [naturalism] with characteristic vigor: "Science, the system of belief founded securely on publicly shared reproducible knowledge, emerged from religion. As science discarded its chrysalis to become its present butterfly, it took over the heath. There is no reason to suppose that science cannot deal with every aspect of existence. Only the religious-- among whom I include not only the prejudiced but the under informed-- hope there is a dark corner of the physical universe, or of the universe of experience, that science can never hope to eliminate. But science has never encountered a barrier, and the only grounds for supposing that reductionism will fail are pessimism on the part of scientists and fear in the minds of the religious."⁷

For Atkins, science is god, therefore we don't need God. In his analytical, thinking mind he has reasoned away the need for God, while opting for the new god called science. Interestingly enough, Dr. Lennox, who is also a gifted analytical thinker, sees the logical and philosophical limitations of science, and the utter need to look at all of the evidence which points to the Almighty. Shocking. One man sees the evidence for God and becomes combative and arrogant, while the other become honest and humble. One man dishonors God, while the other honors him. Those who suppress the truth of God naturally wind up resisting him by willfully choosing not to honor Him in any area of their lives, professional or personal.

Neither are they thankful, as Paul notes, for the presence of God. They should be thankful for the Being who makes sure all the anthropic principles are kept in proper balance so we can enjoy life on this blue planet, but they are not. They should be thankful for the God who makes sure the cosmos is orderly and somewhat predictable so they can even create scientific hypotheses. They should be thankful for the specified complexity He has built into the world, but they are not, opting to become enamored with the complexity as an end in itself. They should be thankful for the genus and species which cover the planet, but they choose to simply study the field while rejecting the Master who lovingly created all the interesting, intricate variety among plants and animals. For instance, with the plant genus of Roses/Rosa there are 100 species of

⁷John Lennox, *God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2009), 8.

roses. Why not just one type of rose? Within the *Canis* genus, which represents wolves, dingos, dogs, coyotes, and jackals, there are a plethora of species and sub-species. Are you thankful for the variety? Why not just one type of dog? God has blessed mankind with so much and man, in turn, chooses to reject God and not live a thankful life toward God.

When man rejects God what occurs? He fills the void with his own finite, limited, and illogical thinking. As Paul notes,

²²Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures (Rom. 1).

Once, my friend, you reject God, the absolute of all absolutes, you quickly and logically head toward devising foolish systems to keep you from bowing before God. Truly, you become vacuous and vain in your thinking, despite what you think. Is this not the mindset of our day? Wake up. “The Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are vanity” (Psa. 94:11). He sees straight through your best arguments to hold Him at bay in your life. You do not fool Him.

During Christmas I read Etienne Gilson’s *Methodical Realism*. In it he critiques the view of Idealism which replaced Thomistic thinking. Descartes “I think therefore I am,” (*Cogito ergo sum*), or “I think therefore things are” (*Cogito ergo res sunt*) was the cornerstone of idealistic thinking which believes mind is more important than matter, and we also cannot be sure the matter is really there for the mind is merely projecting it.⁸ Hugh? Thomistic thinking, which was the way mankind looked at the world prior to Descartes, believed that things are independent of any actual knowledge thinking people may have of them. For the former, the world is really an illusion, while for the latter, the world is, well, full of realism. It is really there. For the former, there is being only in thought, while in the latter there is thought in being.⁹ For the former if the tree falls in the forest there is no sound because the tree is not really there, while for the latter, yes, there is sound because a falling tree interacts with laws which logically create sound.

Our world has drunk the Kool-Aid of Cartesian thinking, and it results in man professing to be wise but really being a fool. Those in our culture who say that what you see is not reality and what you feel and think is reality are card carrying members of Cartesian thought. Mind trumps matter is what matters to them, and they who shout for tolerance of their illogical notion will quickly be intolerant of any realist who says otherwise. They who have abandoned the God of true religion, have opted to worship at a throne either of man or the creatures God created for man. Their beliefs to back up their lifestyles are getting more bizarre and mind-numbing by the moment, are they not?

Paul’s warning to these types of people is clear: God’s wrath is coming on all those who reject the reality of God and the wonder of His redemptive gospel. Further, when that wrath is displayed every unbeliever will be rightly and justly judged because they were utterly and completely without excuse for the life they chose to live.

When you stand before God, you can stand there in two ways. On the one hand, you can stand there without fear of His wrath because your life is covered by the blood of Christ which has washed away your sin and made you righteous and holy in God’s sight. On the other hand, you can stand there and start giving God the best excuses you can manufacture as to why you

⁸Etienne Gilson, *Methodical Realism* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1990), 13.

⁹Ibid., 53.

should not be standing there. I think I know what He's going to say to people like this: You are without excuse.

What will that day hold for you? It can be a day of great joy and wonder, but it is dependent on you laying down your vain excuses for rejecting the evidence for God and His gospel. The moment you trust in Christ as your Savior is the day you become His child. And the day you become His child, is the day your soul burst forth into song:

I will sing the wondrous story,
of the Christ to die for me;
as He left his home in glory
for the cross of Calvary.

I was lost Jesus found me
down the sheep that went astray;
threw His loving arms around me,
drew me back to His way.

(chorus)

Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story
of the Christ to die for me
sing it with the Saints in glory,
gathered by the Crystal city¹⁰

¹⁰ Peter Bilhorn and Francis Rowley, *I Will Sing The Wondrous Story*.