

## BIO

Stephen Rodgers is first and foremost a slave of Jesus Christ. He holds degrees from both UCSD and SDSU. He is an amateur apologist and theologian who serves both his church and family to his utmost ability, including teaching on apologetics in general and Van Til in particular. He strives daily to keep the words of Paul ever in mind: “The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.” (1 Timothy 1:15)

## ABSTRACT

No doubt this journal will have a few articles penned by great minds wishing to push the boundaries of presuppositional theory. Some will be philosophical in character; some might even employ logical notation.

This is not one of those articles.

In the apologetics classroom, a question is often raised that has been asked in many other classes and many other contexts. The question is variously phrased, but the general form goes something like this: *this is all well and good, but when will we ever use this in life?*

A few months ago, an incident occurred that struck me as illustrating a number of Van Til's teachings, particularly the lack of epistemological self-consciousness in non-Christian thought. As Van Til famously observed, the unbeliever can *count*. He simply cannot *account* for why he can *count*. And obvious pun notwithstanding, I hope that this *account* will drive that point home, and provide some grist for the mental mills that we are commanded to steward in this world (2 Corinthians 10:5).

The incident in question centered around the appropriation of an infographic originally conceived by a Lutheran minister and a graduate student, which visually represented 63,779 cross-references within the Bible. The derivative version attempted to use the same visual methodology to represent alleged Biblical *contradictions*.

Almost immediately, hilarity ensues.

This article will explore this incident, set against the backdrop of the recent publications of the so-called “Four Horseman” of the New Atheism. Together, we will see how presuppositional apologetics matches up against atheist dogma and practice, and how even in the creation of something as small as a *picture*, atheism must ultimately presuppose theism, just as Van Til said it would.

## “The New Atheism, Fast Company, and the Integrity of Doubt”

by Stephen Rodgers

**Author’s Note:** *The events described in this article took place in November 2010, and the original article was written at that time as well. Please read it with that understanding in mind. All Scripture references are taken from the ESV.*

### Introduction

Some time after I was saved but before Abraham Kuyper’s “all of Christ for all of life” was more than a slogan for me, a dear friend and pastor deposited a number of books by Cornelius Van Til in my lap with the instruction that I should read and comprehend. I’m not sure if this was done out of a loving desire to see to my spiritual welfare, a selfish desire to spare himself from my incessant questions (at least for a while), or both. It was probably both; after all, shepherds of the flock conform themselves to the image of the great Shepherd, and often wind up working in mysterious ways, just as He does.

That being said, the work of Dr. Van Til and his students caused nothing less than a revolution in my mind. And like most revolutions that last (and unlike those where one simply renames the monuments and bridges and life goes on), it has come at considerable cost and grief along the way. This is a good thing; as the old adage goes, *the more you sweat in training, the less you bleed in combat*. And as one who has chosen to spend their precious time reading an apologetics journal, I trust you understand the utter appropriateness of the warfare metaphor.

Since that time I have become a teacher of apologetics at my church, which is not so much an honorific as it is a divine judgment, and further proof that while GK Chesterton was right about a great many things concerning God, he was wrong to assert that we don’t see evidence for His sense of humor.<sup>1</sup> To my dismay, I find that I have less time to bother people with my *asking* questions, because the demands of the role dictate that I spend time *answering* theirs. Sometimes I find my own curiosity satisfied in the process; other times it is simply piqued all the more. But in the apologetics classroom, a question is often raised that has been asked in many other classes and many other contexts. The question is variously phrased, but the general form goes something like this: *this is all well and good, but when will we ever use this in life?*

A while ago, an incident occurred that struck me as illustrating a number of Van Til’s teachings, particularly the lack of epistemological self-consciousness in non-Christian thought. As Van Til famously observed, the unbeliever can *count*. He simply cannot *account* for why he can *count*. And obvious pun notwithstanding, I hope that this *account* will drive that point home, and provide some grist for the mental mills that we are commanded to steward in this world (2 Corinthians 10:5).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> From GK Chesterton’s *Orthodoxy*

<sup>2</sup> *We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,*

## The New Atheism

Today I want to bring your attention to the so-called “New Atheism” that we’ve all no doubt heard of. Numerous books have been written *by* this group, in support *of* this group, in opposition *to* this group, and *about* this group. The whole movement has become something of a cultural lightning rod in certain circles, which is why I think that it will pretty much burn out in five to ten years. As a whole, Western thought in the 21<sup>st</sup> century seems to have been afflicted with a rather serious case of ADHD, and the shirt that begins a rational thought and concludes with “...oh look, a chicken!” seems rather prophetic. It’s been a fun diversion, but we’re starting to lose interest and it’s time to move on to the next all-the-rage-ideology in our marketplace of ideas.

That’s not what I wanted to talk about however. And all my predictions notwithstanding, I am neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet. However, for those who missed it the first time around, let me give you a rather brief recap of the New Atheism, its notable representatives, and its latest contribution to the discussion among worldviews.

## The Four Horsemen

The so-called “New Atheism” movement is really nothing that new, *per se*. A few years ago, there was a flurry of books published pro-atheism/contra-Christianity, and from this body of literature four voices emerged as the primary spokesmen. Those voices were Richard Dawkins (a biologist), Daniel Dennett (a philosopher), Christopher Hitchens (a writer), and Sam Harris (at the time, a graduate student in neuroscience who has since completed his studies). And ever since they got together for a roundtable discussion of sorts in 2007, they’ve referred to themselves (and been referred to by the media) as the “Four Horsemen of Atheism.” As an amateur apologist of the Van Tillian variety, I can’t help but facepalm in noting that even their very name is “borrowed” from the Christian scriptures (Revelation 6:1-8).<sup>3</sup> Truly, as the Preacher said, there is nothing new under the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:9-11).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Now I watched when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, “Come!” And I looked, and behold, a white horse! And its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer.*

*When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, “Come!” And out came another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people should slay one another, and he was given a great sword.*

*When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come!” And I looked, and behold, a black horse! And its rider had a pair of scales in his hand. 6 And I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures, saying, “A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and wine!”*

*When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, “Come!” 8 And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider’s name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.*

<sup>4</sup> *What has been is what will be,  
and what has been done is what will be done,  
and there is nothing new under the sun.  
Is there a thing of which it is said,  
“See, this is new”?  
It has been already  
in the ages before us.  
There is no remembrance of former things,  
nor will there be any remembrance  
of later things yet to be  
among those who come after.*

I'm not particularly fond of the "Four Horsemen" label. For one, I don't like loaning out Christian books to people who return them with the pages smudged and the corners dog-eared, not to mention the nasty notes written in the margins. Also, with the relatively recent revelation that Christopher Hitchens is in the final stages of esophageal cancer, drawing parallels between him and *Pestilence* seemed rather tasteless.<sup>5</sup> It is the sort of shocking reference that I would actually expect Mister Hitchens to embrace rather than shrink from, but mine would be a most uncomfortable laughter.

To my mind, the "Four Horsemen" were more reminiscent of the modern boy band than the Biblical Apocalypse. Richard Dawkins is the front man; he is the catalyst, the rallying point, and the central pillar of the group. Daniel Dennett is the deep one, the writer, the (for lack of a better word), the soulful one (and he sports an epic beard to prove it, of which I am duly jealous). Christopher Hitchens is the bad boy; in a different world I can envision him sporting sleeveless undershirts in combination with a beanie, muscled arms covered in cryptic tattoos, and adorning the posters on teenage girls' walls. And Sam Harris...well...not to be too insulting or dismissive but Sam Harris is *that other guy*. Every band has one, and those of you who play in one know exactly what I mean.

But more on Mister Harris later.

## **The Integrity of Doubt in General**

The literature of the New Atheism is often said to be bracing in its assertions. The authors do not shy away from making their claims, rather they proclaim them boldly, assert them aggressively, and even take a rather perverse joy in blasphemously sticking their finger in the eye of religion in general and Christianity in particular. And once the initial shock wears off, there is something almost endearing about this; after all, at least they are honest about it right? These are not knives in the dark; this is a gunfight at high noon.

But when one reads further, something is not quite right about their assertions. They muster seemingly-impressive arguments to justify their disbelief. Their objections seem almost righteous in their fury, and their claims that they are simply following the evidence wherever it might lead seem almost noble...but one can't help but feel a bit uneasy. To paraphrase the Bard, something is fishy in Denmark, and while it isn't immediately apparent, it's there...just beneath the surface.

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<sup>5</sup> At the time this article was initially composed, Mr. Hitchens was ill but had not yet passed away. Since then, he has gone to meet the Maker he denied and the Judge he reviled. While Scripture is quite clear that it is not given to me to know the disposition of his soul, I will gladly admit that I hold out hope that in his final moments he saw the error of his ways and the inconsistency of his position. You see, I always thought there was something charmingly *Van Tillian* in many of Mr. Hitchens' arguments; perhaps most clearly seen in his denial that humanism provides the necessary preconditions for pro-choice ideology...a position that alienated him from many would-be supporters. In much the same way, Van Til argued that on a larger scale, non-Christian worldviews cannot provide the necessary preconditions for logic, morality, and science.

With such a contradiction hanging over his head in a Damoclean fashion, it seemed to me that Mr. Hitchens was ever at risk of being waylaid by the grace he rejected. For while we know from the Apostle John that Heaven rejoices in the just punishment of the guilty, we also know from the Lord Jesus Christ that it rejoices in the salvation of the lost. And while we often associate God's patience with a forestalling of *judgment*, it occurs to me that salvation could also be framed (at least poetically), as a divine unwillingness to forestall *grace*. And as I note elsewhere in this essay, one takeaway from the book of Job is that any attempt to dictate terms to God falls into a category that theologians have historically referred to as "really stupid ideas."

I'm afraid this footnote has become embarrassingly long, so I will endeavor to wrap this up. Given what human wisdom I have at my disposal, I would not say it is *probable* that Mr. Hitchens repented prior to his passing. However, given what divine revelation I have at my disposal, I would say that such an outcome is absolutely *possible*. After all, we have the parable of the Generous Employer and the penitent thief do we not? But as Thomas Brooks once wrote in regards to that thief (not JC Ryle, as many misattribute for some reason): "...That one was saved to teach sinners not to despair, so another was damned to teach them not to presume."

In my experience, between the twin errors of Despair and Presumption we have a valid option left to us: Worship. It is enough.

It took me a while to put my finger on it, but I think I've finally sorted it out. While it's easy to get carried away by their claims, there is an undercurrent of disingenuity to the whole affair. And in that understanding I was finally able to understand while after nearly five years of dealing with the fallout that this movement has produced, I can honestly say that while I have been *exhausted*, I have not been *enriched*. In other words, there is a good reason that the whole affair has made me *tired*, but not *smarter*.

You see, the whole movement, when the veneer of glamour, rage, and panache is stripped away, is empty inside. It's a parody of the Trojan Horse: hollow yes, but the soldiers overslept and the arborous equine was delivered without its martial payload.

### **The Integrity of Doubt in Dawkins**

Take Richard Dawkins for example. He quotes early and often the atheist argument (technically categorized under "multiple-attribute disproof") that if God did exist, He could not *possibly* be both omniscient and omnipotent. After all, a God who knows the future in absolute terms is actually powerless to change it, is He not? For if He knows something about the future, and He knows it in the past, then when He eventually arrives at the time of the event in question, He's stuck. If He *knows* the event, He can't *change* it (and is thus not omnipotent). If He *changes* the event, then He didn't really *know* it (and is thus not omniscient). And so Mister Dawkins crosses his arms, leans back in his chair and feels that in 30 seconds he has dismissed the very question of the existence of God.

Now don't get me wrong; this might be a great argument to use against *me* if I ever were to claim that I was God, with all the divine *properties* and human *limitations* therein. But who EVER suggested that the *Christian* God is like me? Who said that He *knows* things as I do, subject to the vicissitudes of space and time? The God of Christian theism is not subject to the universe He created, caught up in His own creation and along for the ride whether He likes it or not. Rather He stands over and outside it; this is precisely what we mean when we describe God as *transcendent*, when we speak of the *Creator/creature distinction*, and is even hinted at when we invoke His attribute of *Holiness*.

And this is no cheap equivocation on the part of the Christian; we aren't making this up as we go along. In several of my conversations with modern atheists they have been unable to grasp the irony of mocking my "bronze age holy book" with one breath, and then faceplanting into the most basic descriptions of deity it espouses with the next.<sup>6</sup> "That argument," they will sputter, "was advanced by *Plantinga*, and has yet to be *proven!*" No friends. That argument was advanced by *Isaiah* (and I detect echoes of *Moses* in there as well) and has yet to be *refuted*. I realize that being fashionably belligerent is all the rage these days, but please, a modicum of respect for history. We have gone over this ground before: the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 46:8-10),<sup>7</sup> the apostle Paul (Acts 17:24-28;<sup>8</sup> Romans 11:36;<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> One debate in particular comes to mind, where an unbeliever (who claimed to be an expert in matters of Christian doctrine) commented that I should find it suspicious that the Christian God seems to be described in such anthropomorphic terms. I responded that from the Christian worldview, such comparisons are inevitable, since the Bible declares that it is not God who is *anthropomorphic*, but rather mankind who is inherently *theomorphic*. And when I was accused of blindly asserting that, we wound up back in Genesis 1:26...which, at least in my Bible, is on page 1. Apparently, despite their vaunted study of the Bible, they never made it *that* far. You see my point?

<sup>7</sup> "Remember this and stand firm,  
recall it to mind, you transgressors,

Colossians 1:16<sup>10</sup>), the church father Augustine<sup>11</sup> (in his declaration the prior to God creating it, *time was not*) ...and these men have been on record for *thousands* of years. There comes a point in debate when your opponent refuses to abandon a pointless line of argument, and we all channel our inner James White<sup>12</sup> and finally resort to praying for patience as we repeat our mantra of “asked and answered” through gritted teeth.

And so, as a Christian theist and amateur philosopher, I am forced to admit that perhaps Mister Dawkins has done some damage to the god of *deism*. If these arguments were assembled, put in good order, and aimed well then we might conclude that they strike the god of *Spinoza*. But the God of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob* watches the missiles sail harmlessly by, and were He *not* omniscient, would no doubt be wondering what the *heck* the archer thought he was aiming at.

### The Integrity of Doubt in Hitchens

This is getting long, so I must move along, and so I skip past Dennett for reasons of *space* rather than *fear* to arrive at Hitchens.<sup>13</sup> Now to be fair to Mister Hitchens, he is rather fun to listen to. Of all the exemplars of the New Atheism he is the cleverest, the most humorous, and far-and-away the most entertaining. But nestled among his *bon mots* and his scorching sentences is a rather alarming vapidity of scholarship. His book *God Is Not Great* betrays a rather obvious dearth of philosophical argumentation, historical accuracy, and logical reasoning. And his written exchange with Douglas Wilson in *Is God Good for the World?* shows either an inability to apprehend the hard questions asked

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*remember the former things of old;  
for I am God, and there is no other;  
I am God, and there is none like me,  
declaring the end from the beginning  
and from ancient times things not yet done,  
saying, 'My counsel shall stand,  
and I will accomplish all my purpose,'*

<sup>8</sup> *The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for*

*“In him we live and move and have our being”;*

*as even some of your own poets have said,*

*“For we are indeed his offspring.”*

<sup>9</sup> *For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.*

<sup>10</sup> *For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.*

<sup>11</sup> *Confessions*, Book XI, Chapters XII to XXVIII in general, and Chapter XIII in particular

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.aomin.org/aoblog/index.php?itemid=4240&catid=7>

<sup>13</sup> If Dennett simply *must* be addressed, then I would suggest that the backlash against attempts to apply Darwinian philosophy to non-biological fields of study presents serious problems for his lines of reasoning. Even secular, anti-Christian academia has largely rejected notions of Darwinian psychology, Darwinian physics, Darwinian astronomy, et. all.

of him (if one is inclined to be charitable), or a refusal to engage subject matter that is uncomfortable given his inability to ground his own beliefs in it (if one is being accusatory).<sup>14</sup>

David B. Hart goes into far greater detail on the matter, and is more fun to read as well, so I would simply recommend to you his essay on the subject.<sup>15</sup> (And in the interest of giving credit where credit is due, was a source of inspiration for this essay as well). But at the end of the day, to my mind at least, Hitchens' objections to Christianity fail to even *find* Christianity in the first place, and then fail to even rise to the level of *argumentation* in any event. So we have arguments that *aren't* against a target that *isn't*...which is politely known as "nonsensical" to those in academia. Others may employ harsher language, but this is, after all, a Christian publication.

### **The Integrity of Doubt in Harris and Fast Company**

Now you've been quite patient to come this far with me. I would beg your indulgence to go a little further, with the encouraging comment that, (as Henry VIII perhaps said to one of his wives), "I shan't keep you long."

You see, this brings us to Sam Harris and his most recent foray into the fray, armed with nothing less than an *infographic*. For those of you who haven't been blessed or cursed so as to have relatives who forward a veritable bounty of these to you daily (in my family the less scholarly inclined seem fond of GraphJam.com, whereas the more educated have a preference for FlowingData.com), and infographic is simply a visual representation of some data set. If that's still confusing, think of it simply as a "graph on steroids" and that should be a sufficient basis for moving on.

You see, all that to say that late last week Mister Harris emerged onto the scene with a graphic showing the alleged contradictions within the Bible. One writer has even crowed her triumph by crowning her endorsement of the graphic with the proclamation "So to anyone who thinks the Bible's the last word on anything, remember this: It isn't even the last word on itself."<sup>16</sup>

Alright...got it. Flag on the play. A claim against Biblical inerrancy has been lodged, and the ball, as they say, is in our court. But is this really a case of novel argumentation, or once again do we find ourselves *well-lit* and in the presence of something rather *old*?

### **Integrity MIA: "Info-"**

First there is the question of where these objections came from. Apparently they came from someone named Steve Wells...and apparently Mister Wells has been able to put his copy/paste skills to good use in appropriating (that is the correct term, we do not say "stealing" when it comes to works of literature and art!), the very same questions raised by the Skeptic's Annotated Bible.<sup>17,18</sup> For those unfamiliar with

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/mayweb-only/119-12.0.html>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2010/04/believe-it-or-not>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.fastcompany.com/1701846/infographic-of-the-day-what-the-bible-got-wrong>

<sup>17</sup> [http://images.fastcompany.com/upload/bibleContra\\_text\\_excerpt.jpg](http://images.fastcompany.com/upload/bibleContra_text_excerpt.jpg)

the work, it is pretty much exactly what you would expect given its name: a series of objections and questions to the Bible, often relying on either an overly-literal hermeneutic of some kind, a lack of context, or both...in annotated form. And just to muddy the waters further, it typically uses the KJV, but that's another issue for another day.<sup>19</sup>

Now please understand, my point here is not to fault Mister Wells in using a readily available set of data. And to be fair, it doesn't seem to be an exact match since the graphic in question cites 439 alleged contradictions and the latest version of the SAB cites 457. My point is simply to show these are not new objections; they have been *asked* before, they have been *answered* before, and this whole exercise is one in retracing our steps rather than boldly going where no man has gone before. And more to the point, the SAB at least has the intellectual honesty to link to a fair number of Christian explanations and refutations regarding these alleged contradictions. (And I do emphasize "alleged" since a large number of them can be resolved simply by restoring one or both verses to their context, and then reading them there). In fact, the SAB is sometimes used in seminaries to underscore the importance of *hermeneutics*; it's not considered a strong argument raised against *inerrancy* (at least, properly understood).<sup>20</sup>

(I'll skip quickly past the observation that said chart, which vociferously decries textual errors, actually *contains* typographical mistakes of its own and accidentally repeats multiple objections. This is, after all, a rather small ironic fish in a sea of much larger ironic brethren).<sup>21</sup>

Alright, so at the very least this presentation is predicated on specious argumentation and a lack of intellectual charity. After all, as the late Dr. Greg Bahnsen observed, when your opponent presents an argument that can be understood in either a *weak* or *strong* sense, it is incumbent on any scholar wishing to preserve their integrity to deal with the strongest possible form of the argument. Otherwise at *best* you are a coward, and at *worst* you've committed the logical fallacy of arguing against a straw man. Or perhaps that should be the other way around?

But does it end there?

### **Integrity MIA: "-graphic"**

You see, as I observed earlier in my essay (we're being charitable remember, so let's call it an essay), that I am both a Van Tillian in my apologetic orientation, and an artist/statistician by training who is often besieged by emails from well-meaning family members containing just such infographics. And while those might seem unrelated, they converge precisely at the point of Mister Harris' *allegedly*-novel presentation (alternatively described as "stunning" and "provocative") of *alleged* Bible contradictions. And since my theological betters have already addressed the issue of the contradictions well enough

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<sup>18</sup> [http://www.skepticsannotatedbible.com/contra/by\\_name.html](http://www.skepticsannotatedbible.com/contra/by_name.html)

<sup>19</sup> In the interest of keeping the hate-mail to a minimum, my intention here is not to fault anyone who uses the KJV as their translation of choice. I merely point out the obvious that sometimes it is used by unbelievers precisely *because* it employs language that has fallen out of common parlance over the years.

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.spurgeon.org/~phil/creeds/chicago.htm>

<sup>21</sup> For those who want specifics, #7 and #9 are copies of one another, as are #263 and #264. There may be others, but those are the two that immediately presented themselves.



(see contributions from Justin Holcomb,<sup>22</sup> Douglas Wilson,<sup>23</sup> and Matt Perman<sup>24</sup>...which interestingly enough pretty much covers a decent range of my theological library as well), there's not much left to say on that subject. That leaves very little for me to deal with, except the "graphic" part of the infographic. But I have a BA in Visual Arts...sort of<sup>25</sup>...and so with sketchbook in hand and beret perched at a *rakish* angle, into the fray I go.

Now, the design of the graphic itself is attributed to Andy Marlow. But it seems rather familiar to me...probably since I wrote about one suspiciously similar back in January in my church newsletter. You see, this has been done *before*. It has been done *better*, and ironically enough, it has been done by *Christians*.<sup>26</sup> (And ironically enough, the original artwork was intended to show *continuity* within the Bible; seriously, I could not make up this much irony if I *tried*). And so, interestingly enough, we have a very real example of atheism once again propping itself up on *borrowed* capital. However, lest I mistake charity for lying, it is worth noting in passing that when the capital is borrowed without the original artist's knowledge, we call that "stealing," and when the capital is abstract and epistemic or artistic in nature we call that "plagiarism."

Now to be fair, do I have any real evidence that Mister Marlow simply stole Mister Harrison's work, made a few minor changes, and is now passing it off as his own? Well, again in good presuppositional fashion, that is going to depend entirely on what sort of propositions you accept as "evidence" in the first place. If you are asking if I have video evidence of Mister Marlow talking aloud to himself about how the inspiration of his work came from elsewhere...then no. If you are wondering if perhaps certain emails have come into my possession wherein he admits to having prior knowledge of the original piece, and elects to use an almost-identical style without attribution...then no. However, I do have two perfectly good eyes, and when point out that this is Mister Harrison's work from at least ten months ago, and this is Mister Marlow's work from last week...well, decide for yourself.<sup>27</sup> To my "trained" eye, the appropriation seems completely obvious. And I suspect that even if you spent your college years on the science side of campus rather than the humanities side, you'll agree.

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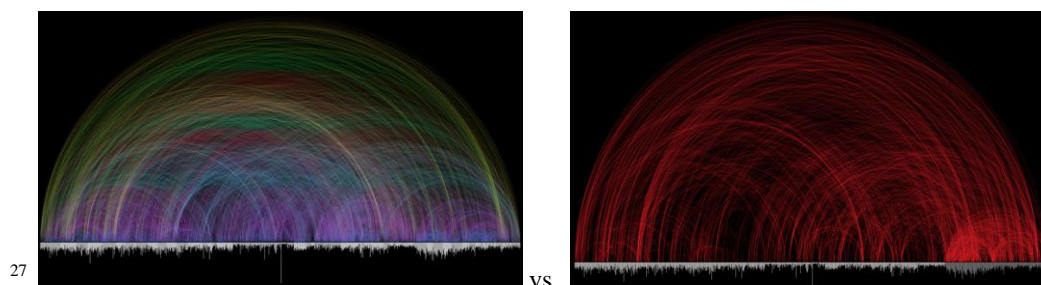
<sup>22</sup> <http://theresurgence.com/2010/11/12/why-fast-company-sam-harris-need-to-do-their-homework>

<sup>23</sup> [http://www.dougwils.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=8173:a-little-something-called-context&catid=93:letter-to-mr-harris](http://www.dougwils.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=8173:a-little-something-called-context&catid=93:letter-to-mr-harris)

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.whatsbestnext.com/2010/11/a-few-thoughts-on-the-fast-company-article-what-the-bible-got-wrong/>

<sup>25</sup> Technically a BA in "Interdisciplinary Computing and the Arts" for those who care about such things. There's an MBA in there somewhere as well, but not surprisingly, there weren't a lot of art history classes in that program of study.

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.chrisharrison.net/projects/bibleviz/index.html>



## Integrity and Lack Thereof

Part of the oft-referenced title of this piece is “the integrity of doubt.” I originally latched onto that idea in confronting the claims of the New Atheists that their doubt and disbelief stemmed honestly from their examination of the evidence available to them. Some of you might realize that as a Van Tillian I already reject that notion on Biblical grounds, while conceding the possibility that perhaps, in their self-deception, they believe it to be true. As I showed several times, this “doubt” is not really doubt at all; after all, what they *disbelieve* is not what the Christian *believes*. They have not refuted Christian theism so much as they have simply failed to understand it.

In his letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul writes “*Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?*” (1 Corinthians 1:20) Simply put, it is an open challenge: if you want to go head to head with God, then show up and do so. Step into the ring. And like Job, (I’m paraphrasing here), you will find that in the end, *your arms are simply too short to box with God*.

The New Atheists act like prizefighters. They strut around, chests puffed out, flexing impressively. Oh sure, they talk a good game. Initially they sound dangerous. On paper, their record seems good. And we start to wonder if when they finally get into the ring, if perhaps God might be in a bit of trouble after all.

But they never get in the ring. They run *around* the ring. They shout insults *into* the ring. Occasionally they may even climb into some *other* ring and administer a beatdown to some lesser conception of deity. But they never actually fight the Christian God; He is *evaded*, He is *made fun of*, but He is never actually *engaged*.

But this comes to a head of sorts in this latest offering from Harris. All manner of problems are both inherited and invented here. You see, it is one thing to exhibit shoddy scholarship in selecting your data set. And into that general realm of intellectual feebleness I would include things like broadly construing words like “contradiction,” and ignoring elements of the case that undermine your argument like *context*, *metaphor*, and *genre*.<sup>28</sup> But it is something else entirely to blatantly rip off another’s work without even passing attribution. As someone instilled with a particular form of academic ethos, I am outraged; in respectable scholarly company, this is simply not done. And as an artist, I can’t help but notice that it is also utterly unnecessary. After all, atheism in general and the New Atheists in particular have a history of using traditionally Christian forms of argument in a satirical and subversive way. I may not always enjoy or appreciate their doing so, but when done so honestly, it is a valid form of expression. However, this is not really *satire*; this is *lying*.

Or if you prefer, taking the late Dr. Greg Bahnsen’s work on self-deception into account, and quoting from his debate with Gordon Stein, it “is not only over-simplified and misleading, it is simply mistaken.”

And all this brought to us by the so-called “Horseman” whose most notable academic work is in the area of attempting to establish a scientific basis for grounding *morality* and *ethics*.<sup>29</sup> I trust the irony is not lost on you.

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<sup>28</sup> I have a minor in Literature as well, but I suspect that statement is just as obvious to those who don’t.

It certainly wouldn't have been lost on Van Til.

**Update:** The Fast Company page now contains a line stating "Inspiration: Chris Harrison."<sup>30</sup> It's about the bare minimum that could be done in terms of attribution, but at the very least, they have now done that.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> And who recently was profoundly drubbed for trying to do so in a debate with William Lane Craig. While Dr. Craig is no presuppositionalist, he clearly exposed the difficulty (if not impossibility) of Sam Harris' position.

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.project-reason.org/gallery3/image/105/>

<sup>31</sup> And just to avoid any unnecessary controversy, the attribution has remained there for the past several months, since the original formulation of this article was penned some time ago. My ultimate point is not to *tsk-tsk* at what could be considered uncredited or insufficiently credited attribution, but rather to illustrate how the futility of non-Christian thought is exposed throughout the entire incident...just as Van Til taught it is evident throughout all of life.