

I. Common Biblical Objects to God's Goodness

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A. Introduction:

1. A common tactic among anti-Christians is to question God's moral integrity because of alleged or real evils in the Bible.
2. Often these are from the Old Testament era, such as offensive laws in the early books (Gen-Deut.), or warfare and intrigue in the time of the Judges and Kings. But things like slavery and sexism are still found in the New Testament era.
3. This line of objection should be distinguished from the problem of Church abuse/violence (i.e., Crusades, Inquisition, Slave-ownership, etc.). Underneath the behavior of Christians lies a theological and textual foundation which either undergirds or undermines the behaviors of believers. The church has been known to deviate, at points, from its Christian ethical heritage. And Christian theology even predicts as much (note the behavior of the church at Corinth, in the 1 Corinthians). In such cases, it's important to remember that more than the behavior of Christians, Christ himself defines *Christianity*, and his behavior and teachings are found in Scripture. The church universal could be reprobate, compromised, or otherwise wicked, yet Christianity could still be true if Christ is the truthmaker for the claims of the Gospel, the exemplar of Christian living, and intermediary between the sinful world and the Righteous Father God.
4. Some general points can be made, which apply to most or all of these.
 - a. *Note the context*: Any given passage has a context. And a text without a context is a pretext for a proof-text (a logical fallacy). Words have meaning only within a context.
 - b. *Description Isn't Prescription*: Not everything described in Scripture is prescribed.
 - c. *The Bible is Both a Human and Divine Book*: It is not surprising to find evidence of human influence in Scripture; inerrancy doctrine comports with this.
 - d. *The Bible Is an Old, Foreign, Composite Book*: We can expect it to be difficult to modern eyes. If we are going to understand it in fairness and truth, we should remember that it was written in a different time, in a different land, to a different audience, from a different culture, over many hundreds of years.
 - e. *The Bible Speaks on Its Own Terms*: Sure we can question and test the text of Scripture, but we should remember that the Bible is written with different purposes in mind than what modern skeptics may have. We can't rightly fault it for speaking in ways that don't interest us. We risk malicious and errant interpretation when we read the bible ignoring the evident intentions of the biblical authors.
 - f. *Case Law isn't Apodictic Law*: Casuistic laws say "if x, then do y." But they do not necessarily affirm or encourage "x" in the first place (as apodictic laws do). Apodictic laws just say, "Do x," or "Don't do y." Many OT laws were put in place so the Hebrew people could interact with foreign cultures whose laws diverged widely from their own, or so that Hebrews who'd fallen or failed in one regard could still salvage things after sinning.
 - g. *Remember the Audience*: God's word to an audience 2000 yrs ago can be applied today *only after* identifying how we are the same as that audience. If we have no theocracy, or pre-Christ epoch, or Temple sacrificial system, then we should not apply that teaching the same today as back then.
 - h. *Note the Covenantal Context*: Biblical instruction is often bound by covenantal constraints. Biblical instruction often sits within a kind of "legal document"—isolating a single line from it for critique does injustice to that line and to the covenant in which it sits.
 - i. *Rule of faith*: Normally the broader text is its own best reference for interpreting its own difficult component passages. When a given interpretation suits all the relevant verses it is a better interpretation than one which only suits one or a few of the relevant verses. The idea that "scripture interprets Scripture" is known as the "rule of faith".

B. General Badness	1. Two Different Gods: The Old Testament God is vicious and cruel compared to the New Testament God of love and grace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People were still saved by faith through grace in the OT (Gen 15:6; Hab 2:4) as well as the NT (Rom 3-10; Eph 2:9-10; Gal. 3:10-14). • In the OT their faith looked toward the coming Christ and in the NT era our faith looks back at Christ whose already come. • Works of obedience are required in the Old Testament (Gen-Deut.) as well as the NT (Rom 6:1; Gal 5:16-26; James 3:14-26). • OT Theophanies (Gen 32:24-30; Ex 3:2-6; et al)—possible encounters with Christ in the OT help show that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Heb 13:8). • Grace and Law are complements; they make no sense apart from each other. • Just as my dad can be loving but stern, so can God be loving yet stern. • The NT book of Revelation easily comports with the harsh parts of the OT. • By the doctrine of Progressive Revelation God reveals himself progressively over time thus nuancing the laws and expectations of the people. • It could be that God has acted toward mankind as a parent to a maturing child. The stern authoritarian voice to a toddler eventually gives way to a more generous voice for the college grad. • One Christian option is Dispensationalism which teaches that there are different dispensations where God offers humanity chances to “pass the test,” yet they fail every which way they are tested—when it’s libertarian (Garden of Eden), Nomadic Patriarchy, Theocracy, as the Oppressed People, or as a Grace Based Free People. The NT delineates latter dispensations.
	2. The Doctrine of Hell Is Terrible/Vindictive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If God is infinitely holy, its rejection demands infinite punishment. • Hell is torment (self-inflicted) not torture. • Hell was originally intended for Satan and Demons (Mt 25:41) • Hell is the fiercest consequence for a wrong use of a great good (free will). • Theologians differ on how literal hell is, but orthodoxy teaches that hell is a literal place even if the features of it are disputed. • It seems that, among other things, hell is what it is like to be fully autonomous, with superior to answer to, no divine moral compass to guide you, no creator/sustainer to protect you, nor grace to save you from yourself. • “The damned are, in one sense, rebels to the end; . . . the doors of hell are locked on the <i>inside</i>. . . . [T]hey certainly do not will even the first preliminary stages of that self-abandonment through which alone the soul can reach any good. They enjoy forever the horrible freedom they have demanded, and are therefore self-enslaved just as the blessed, forever submitting to obedience, become through all eternity more and more free.” C.S. Lewis, <i>Problem of Pain</i> (NY: Touchstone, 1996), 114.
	3. Utilitarianism: It’s still evil if God allows evil for “greater goods.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God is a moral absolutists so that some things are fundamentally good. But utilitarianism is relativistic, identifying goodness with pleasure yet “pleasure” can mean a range of arbitrary things. • God isn’t bound to the (utilitarian) human law of “the most pleasure for the most people,” since there are many other goods besides mere “pleasure.” • Utilitarianism denies any “good” in the means; but God only allows fundamentally good means such as free will, natural order, human beings, life, etc. and it is these things which make evil happen.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The “evil” can exist as a human intention, whereas God intends only good through the same event: “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.” (Gen 50:20). • Utilitarianism allows for any “greater good” tradeoffs—even if other comparably good options are available. But according to (a Christian ethical option) Graded Absolutism, there is no place for “greater good” tradeoffs unless there’s a genuine dilemma.
4. God created a cruel and violent world		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God created a perfect world, with great goods, and entrusted the greatest of his creations to manage it for him. There’s nothing intrinsically wrong there—“it was good, . . . it was good, . . . it was very good” (Gen 1-2). • We messed things up, but it was still overall good for Him to entrust us with the great honor of representing him, the great power of free will, the great endowment of mind and judgment and understanding, and the great good of a moral compass. In short, the <i>Imago Dei</i> is a tremendous good, but it puts us in charge of a lot of things (Gen 1:26-28). • God could have done things differently, but for various reasons it may not have been feasible to create a world with these great goods yet no drawbacks. Great evils have their respective opportunities for redemptive good via <i>Imago Dei</i>, Character Building, Free Will, and Love Theodicies. • The “last chapter in the story” (Rev. 21-22) reorients the rest of the story so that it’s a “rushed judgment” to conclude one’s views on the basis of this world alone, without the 2nd Coming of Christ, the final judgment, or Heaven.
5. Authoritarianism: God Is overbearing/intrusive/legalistic.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If sin is as bad as the Bible says it is, then the laws/punishments are justified. • While some theologies deny robust “Free will” (Strong Calvinism; see Rom 9), that’s only one Christian option. Others allow for free will so that God is not overbearing in the sense of coercing all behavior (Mt 23:37). • The Jews addressed in the Levitical law are spiritually immature, pagan influenced, recent slaves, in a new land thousands of miles away from their former home, forging a new theocracy. They have not been socialized into a Bill of Rights, Democratic Republic. Stiff law code suits the people at the time. • Much of the OT law appears to Mosaic covenant law, suited only to that theocratic era. Only the Natural Law—appearing before and after Moses—would apply today. That’s why it’s unethical to practice homosexuality (Gen 18-19; Rom 1:26-28) and God may judge such people directly if He desires, but it’s not right to stone homosexuals to death (Lev 20:13). The former was pre-mosaic and post-mosaic non-theocratic law, the latter was theocratic mosaic law only.
6. God Makes People Sin then Punishes Them for it (Rom 9)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Romans 9 is a difficult passage, highly contentious. Yet most Christians agree that God never makes anyone sin (James 1:13). • This interpretation is one objection to Calvinism, but not to Arminianism or alternative views which affirm a stronger sense of free will (Deut. 30:11-19; 2 Chron. 36:12-13; Matt. 23:37) • If people are truly free in that they are the direct efficient causes of their actions (self-determination), then moral responsibility follows. The problem here is not with the Bible per se, but with the idea that people are not really free, but coerced by God to do everything they’ve done.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God may allow sin, without being directly responsible for any given sin. • In the context of sin, other goods are possible such as forgiveness, salvation, victory, courage, heroism, faith, hope, fortitude.
C. Killing/Violence/Cruelty	7. Sacrifice of Isaac (Gen 22)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abraham knew God would intervene—"we . . . will return to you," and "God will provide for Himself the lamb" (Gen 22:8) • Abraham was a proven prophet, we're not. • God had talked with Abraham multiple times, and confirmed it with miraculous fulfillment of his promises. • Isaac was already a miraculous birth, a supernatural gift from God. There was less "natural" right to a son, when the son was supernaturally given. • God can rightly reclaim what's his—He gives and reclaims life. • God's proven himself trustworthy • The circumstances with Abraham make disanalogies of any modern "equivalents" (i.e., 'God told me to kill my boy Billy').
	8. Slaughter of the Amalekites/Canaanites/Etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Amalekites were very wicked including sexism, rampant domestic abuse, incest, molestation, temple prostitution, polyamory, fornication, homosexuality, bestiality, wars of provocation, idolatry, and child sacrifice to Molech (see Clay Jones, "We Don't Hate sin So We Don't Understand What Happened to the Canaanites"). • Their polytheistic idolatry consciously antagonized Yahweh mentioning Him only as a sniveling weakling, a drunkard, and a fool (Jones, pg. 56) • Their polytheism served in establishing a cultural group identity, a kind of "intrinsic" element of that people group which is liable to survive as long as its members survive. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to wipe out that false religion without also wiping out all its practitioners. • Israel is used as God's arm of judgment, not because Israel is "so good" but because the Amalekites are so bad (Deuteronomy 9:5) • Heinous sin deserves just punishment. • They were warned • They had lots of time to repent. • God does not enjoy punishing wicked people: "'As I live,' declares the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?'" (Ezekiel 33:11).
	9. God condones wars of aggression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God has a right to judge individuals and nations, even to the point of squelching all future uprisings from a sinful nation. • While God has the rightful authority, a representative nation can serve as His delegated authorities, representing His punishment against evil. • This is no excuse for vigilantism (Romans 13; 1 Pet 2:13-17)
	10. God kills innocent babies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regarding Psalm 137:9 "How blessed will be the one who seizes and dashes your little ones against the rock." (NASB) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Descriptive, not prescriptive. b) Historical context mitigates things a bit, Israel had been overrun in war, exiled from their homeland, and many of them killed in a brutal fashion. c) Imprecatory Psalm: These are curses pleading to God for vengeance and justice against wicked oppressors. They shouldn't be interpreted like direct teaching, or axioms, or parables. They are more like angry music

		<p>covering that part of the emotional spectrum left out for the otherwise saccharine psalms. Imprecatory psalms affirm (1) justice, (2) hope, (3) trust in God, and they dignify the negative feelings—those have a place in Christian faith (including depression, despair, anger, and fear)</p> <p>d) The Psalmist is speaking to God, not to his posse. Vengeance <i>is</i> God's.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regarding the Destruction of the Amalekite Children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The culture is analogous to United 93 (the 4th plane on 9/11 that the passengers rose up against the bombers and crashed it). Innocent lives were destroyed in halting the time bomb that was happening. b) Not all “young” people are innocent (i.e., youths on trial as adults) c) They had been badly abused. They are damaged children. There was little chance of “saving” them. d) Fostering is hard work, and has a low success rate anyway. e) There's inevitable bitterness and rebellion once the children group up and realize their foster parents killed their blood parents. f) Any survivors are liable to rediscover their roots and resurrect that culture, in all its depravity and wickedness. g) God can rightly reclaim life that he's given. h) God can preempt “disasters waiting to happen.” i) See, http://www.clayjones.net/2015/07/canaanite-children-2/
11. God kills innocent women		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regarding the slaughter of the Canaanites <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Women “of-age” would have been either culpable participants in the sinful culture or, if they were coerced (like property) they would be regarded similar to the innocent children above. b) Israelite women have a proven history of being swayed by foreign women (to serve false gods). c) Non-combatants can still be enemy sympathizers/supports. Regarding rape victims (Deut 22:23-24, 28-29)
12. Capital Punishment (Too Much/Too Petty/Exists)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The fact of capital punishment is brutal, but can be justified if the sin/evil is deserves it. Emotional objections have some merit, but it's limited unless one's emotional distaste is also factual and moral. Initially, mortal death was introduced as a way of protecting people from living eternal in their fallen state. Death guards against worse outcomes. The Death Penalty is a matter of justice—“eye for eye, tooth for tooth, etc.” Framing issues, surrounding this issue include: (1) Penal vs. Rehabilitation views of justice, (2) “Cruel and Unusual Punishment” as a Definitional problem, (3) Hamartiology (doctrine of sin). The passages about capital punishment (as opposed to simply other kinds of manslaughter like war, accidental death, or self-defense) could be fair and just—posing no serious problem to God's goodness, but one's worldview may prohibit accepting that fact since he or she has denied the doctrine of sin, a penal view of justice, or the moral authority of God to administer such judgment. In short, this is more likely a worldview dispute instead of a textual issue.
13. The Bear Attack Against Children Is Overkill (2 Kings 2:23-24)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mistranslation: “children” should be “youths”—this was a gang, not a kindergarten class. The taunts are likely threats of violence, not just jeering. Attacks/threats on God's prophets are an attack/threat against God.

D. Ass aul	14. God Allows Animal Suffering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This falls within the problem of “natural evil” and is addressed as a variation on the “Problem of Evil” elsewhere, (ex., Trent Dougherty, <i>The Problem of Animal Pain</i>). • Mankind is made in “God’s Image” entailing (among other things) authority and responsibility over creation. When Adam and Eve sinned, they (1) invited Satanic influence into the world, (2) Disobeyed God, (3) Forged their own path apart from God’s way. • Their authority was a huge privilege, and an awesome responsibility. They had all the opportunity to bless creation and enjoy it’s fruits, but they instead cursed creation and marred it’s fruits. • Apparently gratuitous suffering—where no Free will theodicy, character-building, or punishment theodicy can directly apply—can potentially be addressed as part of The Fall of Man. • Moreover, a great deal of animal suffering is caused by man whether actively, passively, directly or indirectly. That aspect of animal suffering is addressed under Free will and Imago Dei theodicies. • Some animal deaths are painless, and some suffering is only nominal, light, and passing, posing little threat to Classical Theism. • Animal suffering before the Fall could have been retroactive judgment from the Fall in the Garden (Dembski, <i>The End of Christianity</i>). Or it could have been muted or resolved in other ways, such as (1) the influence of Fallen Angels, (2) distinguishing suffering as conscious pain versus non-conscious pain, (3) conjectured divine intervention or natural adaptability minimizing or eliminating all cases of suffering. • Or, the Fall of Man could have been—through whatever means—much earlier in cosmic history than previously thought. Thus, Adam and Eve’s sin predated the first case of animal suffering. • Particular cases of animal suffering, such as William Rowe’s “Bambi” are addressed under the category of: <i>The Evidential Argument from Evil</i>.
	15. Reprehensible Behavior of the Judges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of Judges is descriptive, not prescriptive, detailing how the recently liberated Jewish people descended into relativism and lawlessness (Judges 21:25) for lack of a governing order. They rejected God as their king, and so they were left without a king and only their corrupt judgment to guide them. • God later concedes and grants them their wish in King Saul, and he ends up being a disaster. Only with the second and third kings do they experience a Golden Age. After that, though, the Hebrew people descend into a cycle of rebellion leading to eventual oppression, conquest, and exile. • Judges, is summed up by the closing line, “In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25)
	16. “Dash their baby’s heads upon the rocks” Psalm 137:9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See “10. God Kills Innocent Babies” above.
	17. Jesus “brings a sword” dividing families (Matthew 10:34)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sword is figurative for “dividing family relations” in the context of religious persecution. There’s no literal swordplay in Jesus’s earthly ministry, or in the immediately following apostolic ministry (the 12 disciples after Jesus’ resurrection).

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Context locates this passage within the first commissioning of the Twelve Apostles (Matthew 10:1-42; not the “Great Commission”). They are to expect hostility and persecution for their faith, even to the point where their own family won’t understand them and might betray them. Many families “just won’t understand.” In light of heaven, eternity, and God’s glory even one’s closest family relations become secondary in importance. This hierarchy of moral and social commitments makes sense when we realize that only God can support the god-sized expectations we have when it comes to everlasting unconditional love, unchanging loyalty, moral perfection, etc. Countless earthly relations have been squeezed to death in the grip of our unyielding expectations. The emphasis is on absolutely loyalty to Christ. Even skeptics and atheists can appreciate how family is important but not the highest importance. One cannot rightly stick with one’s family in support of some gross immorality, or some dangerous falsehood. One may have to separate from one’s family to serve higher goods. Or one’s family may disown him or her because of religious reasons—such as an atheist angrily disparaging or disowning a believing child, or a Jewish family disowning a child who married Catholic.
	18. Anti-Abortion Teaching harms family planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elective abortion remains the single most deadly natural or human cause in world history (see, Ferrer “Abortion is the Worst Thing Ever . . . Literally”). It’s trivial/deceptive to say that elective abortion is “necessary” for healthy family planning since it makes parents mortal enemies of their own children. This objection rests on a highly disputed/tenuous views of “family,” “sex,” “pregnancy,” “human rights,” “civil rights,” and “women’s rights.” Even if abortion-choice mitigated or resolved other injustices (sexism), its answer is more injustice. That’s not a live option when seeking justice.
	19. Anti-Divorce Passages Harm Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is marriage is a special kind of good, then divorce is bad, all else being equal. Even divorcees can attest to that. Broad biblical opposition to divorce (“I [God] hate divorce” Mal 2:16) shows a moral rebuke against the different beliefs and practices undercutting the good that could occur in marriage. To oppose to divorce to oppose its causes such as infidelity, abuse, or cruelty (see, Hebrews 13:4). There is biblical provision for some kinds of divorce (i.e., in cases of abandonment or marital unfaithfulness) though these are disputed (Deuteronomy 24:1-4; Isaiah 50:1; Jeremiah 3:8; Matthew 1:19; 5:32; 19:1ff; Mark 10:2ff; Luke 16:18; 1 Corinthians 7:10-20).
E. Cruelty to Animals	20. Animal Sacrifice /Sacrificial System is a bloody mess	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The sacrificial system makes sense only if (1) mankind is understood to be intrinsically more important than other animals, (2) man’s sin is a really big deal, (3) the need for forgiveness/restoration is important enough to merit extreme measures such as animal sacrifice, and (4) animal sacrifice a comparable or better option than alternatives. Given our propensity for evil and the gravity of sin (in light of God’s perfect holiness and the moral perfection needed for heaven) a drastic measure is needed to awaken our conscience to horror of sin. We acknowledge and affirm sacrificial practices when it comes to feeding people (at least in emergency situations), or with trained animals, attack dogs, and police or military dogs which are liable to die trying to protect us.

F. Discrimination/Injustice		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most all of the animal sacrifices described in Scripture, were eaten afterwards—it was not a “total waste”. • The sacrificial system, in Hebrew thought, functioned (1) as a substitute punishment where the innocent animals takes on the punishment we deserved, (2) as a reminder of how ugly and deadly is our sin, (3) as a reminder of how sin “costs,” and livestock is expensive (see • Having our meats processed in factories far away has sensitized us to animal suffering by ignorance of how our current lifestyle is only possible through animal suffering/sacrifice. • Most everything about our lifestyle involves taking from and harming animals, whether that’s harming field animals when harvesting our grains and vegetables, butchering meat-animals, depleting their habitat by taking and using natural resources for our use. Ancients often knew this reality better than we do, and so our “shock and awe” testifies to our ignorance more than to their barbarism.
	21. God commands that Animals from pagan cultures be slaughtered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Canaanite culture, bestiality was rampant and that can dangerously alter animal psychology (see Clay Jones, “We Don’t Hate Sin,” pg. 64-66). • “When the king stumbles, the kingdom falls”—the governing authorities in Canaan invited corporate punishment for a collectively sinful culture. This is another abuse of the Imago Dei (on the part of the Canaanites) • If the culture, the people, and the animals are cursed by God because of the wickedness of that culture (see, #8 “Slaughter of the Amalekites” above), then the animals are a liability, introducing harm if allowed to live. • Perhaps, the <i>imago dei</i> includes federal representation for our respective households—including animals and property. While good management brings rewards, mismanagement can bring punishment.
	22. Affirms Meat Eating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is no better than nature, which has meat-eating in many species. The human digestive system is omnivorous. One cannot feign moral superiority when doing the same thing. • Meat eating (among people) was, apparently, only after the Garden of Eden, and after the Great Flood (Gen. 12). Also, since heaven is supposed to be parallel to the Garden of Eden (in many ways) it might not have meat-eating there either. • While meat-eating is allowed (Acts 10:9-16), it’s not necessarily ideal or encouraged, especially whenever there are mitigating circumstances such as idolatry, i.e., “blessing” the food with a prayer to a false God, or there is a “weaker brother” (who might be offended by it), see 1 Cor 8:13.
	23. The Bible Condoned Sex Slavery/Forced Marriage Exod 21:7-11; Num 31:17-18; Deut 20:10-14; 22:8-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scripture decries sex outside of marriage (1 Cor 7:1ff), so “sex slavery” is banned on those grounds. • The term “sex slavery” is often an imprecise term anachronistically forced on ancient practices that were not literally “sex slavery.” Arranged marriage may be weird by today’s standards but well suited to a different time and culture. • Not all arranged marriages are forced marriage—having wise elders (parents) involved together with clearly communicated, sensible, practical shared interests between families can all add stability and reinforcement to help keep their wedding vows and they can all be with spousal consent.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regarding war captives, war slavery would have been a lower status than “wife” status—which Scripturally entailed the privileges of citizenship and a chance for assimilation and even liberty as an independent citizen if he chose to divorce her (Deut 21:10-14) • Deutonomy 21:10-14 might not preclude the woman’s interests. He might not have the blessing of his family and elders if the woman isn’t willing. • OT casuistic law often elaborated the upper limit of justice, barring any worse judgment (i.e., not “two eyes” for an eye). But lesser or alternative punishments were allowed at the discretion of the judiciary. Deut 22:8-9 is like this. If the fathers suspect that the rapist and woman were actually consensual then they can arrange for the marriage and have legal support. If they believe it was non-consensual but the rapist has already ruined her for other men, and if they parents think that a salvageable marriage might still be possible then they can arrange for the marriage and have legal support. But it’s not clear from this law that families <i>must</i> wed the victim to the rapist. • Biblical laws about sex reflect the expectation that youths will try to “screw around” and will say all sorts of things to keep from getting caught.
24. Bible Promotes Slavery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which “slavery”? Chattel slavery, as we know it, was uncommon in ancient Israel. More often the sense to “slavery” would have been indentured servant, i.e., a voluntary servant paying off a debt. Besides that there was penal slavery (punishment) and war slavery both of which were practically indispensable since standing jails and standing police forces weren’t possible with a nomadic and stone age culture. • The Bible gives both (1) ideals for which to aim in the future, and (2) practical instruction for the “here and now” • Ex., Scripture clearly asserts the moral superiority of liberation: “For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” (Galatians 5:1), “the truth will set you free” (John 8:32), “if the son sets you free, you are free indeed” (John 8:36), “where the spirit of the Lord is there is freedom” (2 Corinthians 3:17), “we are not children of the slave woman but of the free woman” (Galatians 4:31); “you my brothers were called to be free,” (Galatians 5:13) • The Exodus (Exodus 3-12) and the book of Philemon teach that slavery is bad, far from an ideal. Yet, since abolition is so rare in history, Scripture also offers practical advice for people to apply even before any abolition would reach their land for example, Ephesians 6:6-8 and 1 Peter 2:18-19. • Chattel slavery was banned in Scripture because kidnapping was illegal (Ex 21:16; Deuteronomy 24:7), slave trading was sin (1 Timothy 1:10), and oppression of foreigners was prohibited (Exodus 22:21). • The overall tenor of Scripture treats slavery as a bad thing (2 Corinthians 3:17; Galatians 2:4; 4:31), something to be avoided at all costs hence the refrain “Remember your time in Egypt”—the clearest example of chattel slavery in Israel’s past (Leviticus 19:34; Deuteronomy 10:19; 16:12, et al). And It’s foolish to submit, unnecessarily, to a slaver (2 Corinthians 11:19-20). • Debt slavery was more practical than debtor’s prison. • Penal slavery was more practical than lashing, stoning, prison, etc.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • War slavery was a better option, for the prisoner, than was death. Debt slavery was allowed, but was a bad thing, variously discouraged in Biblical law with bans against graft and cheating (Leviticus 19:34-35), generous lending policies (Deuteronomy 15:7-11), restrictions on interest (Exodus 22:25), gleaning (Leviticus 19:9-10), etc. • Abolition is not a sentiment—it takes real work to make it possible for a society. Otherwise abolition efforts fail, resulting in either an amped up oppression, or a conquest by another nation and re-enslavement of the population. It's anachronistic to fault ancient societies for not abolishing slavery since abolition was not practically accessible till much later. • Historically, only ancient Persia was able to abolish slavery before being Christianized—yet they had first enslaved the Hebrews and had exposure to the Hebrew Scripture (OT); every other culture that attempted abolition failed because abolition was too socially, economically and politically tumultuous to last unless the institution abolishing slavery was strong enough to replace it with something equal or better (in terms of economic success, military strength, social order, political power, etc.) • The Hebrew laws were superior to, for example, the Code of Hammurabi: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The Code of Hammurabi exacted no penalty for the murder of a slave, but the Law of Moses proscribed the death penalty for the murder of any man (Exodus 21:12) * The Code of Hammurabi exacted no penalty for injuring a slave, but the Law of Moses required a master to set his slave free if he inflicted permanent injury (Exodus 21:26-27) * The Code of Hammurabi held the life of a slave to be of less value than the life of a free born man, but the Law of Moses valued them equally (Exodus 21:12, 19) <p>[Quoted from Jonathan Burke, 14 July 2014]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scripture discourages people from reentering slavery, characterizing sin's dominion as "slavery": "[F]or you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption as sons." (Romans 8:15) • Atheists and skeptics had centuries more time to abolish slavery and they had been failing at it before Christianity ever arrived. • I'd like to see atheists do better, offering some abolitionist sentiment to a 1st century people (or earlier) who won't have a chance to be free for centuries, any escape efforts would surely worsen things for their family, they would likely get returned to brutal public beating or death, and society could hardly survive a generation with abolition without being conquered again and slavery reinstated. "Turn the other cheek" is wiser than we realize. • See also, John 8:34; Rom 6:16; Gal 3:28; 5:1, Col 3:11; Titus 2:3; 3:3; Heb 2:15; 2 Pet 2:19. • See also, https://bibleapologetics.wordpress.com/slavery-in-the-bible-25/
	25. Sexism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regarding Inequality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both men and women are created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-28). • People can be equal in dignity & worth before God & country, yet be distinct in their roles w/ substantial differences due to their gender.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many of the passages suggesting inequality were descriptive, not prescriptive, telling how people acted but not necessarily how society should be and how people should behave. • Regarding arranged marriage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OT references to arranged marriage were no less constricting on the husband as on the wife. • Plus, they didn't necessarily preclude spousal consent and parents generally want what's best for their children meaning, typically, there was some cooperation between parents and children in the marriage. • Arranged marriages often have better success rates than free marriage • "Wives submit to your husbands as to the Lord..." (Ephesians 5:22-24) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • this is about roles, not innate worth as human beings. • The husbands are instructed more harshly, and at greater length, to love their wives to the point of surrendering their lives (vss. 25-33) • ¹¹Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. ¹²I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. ¹³For Adam was formed first, then Eve; ¹⁴and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. ¹⁵Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control." (1 Timothy 2:11-15) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women were customarily illiterate and would have been a distraction in worship services interrupting sermons with their questions. As illiterate and uneducated, they would not have been as fit to lead churches. • There could be a legitimate distinction in nature and role which reflects a different mode of service than that of "spiritual leadership." • Women can serve a uniquely redeeming role in society through traditional maternity, something men cannot do (or at least, men are ill fitted for "Mothering"). • Adam is not exempt from culpability even if Eve is described as having a different role in the family and in the Fall. • Regarding Rape Laws (Deut 21:10-14; 22:28-29) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above #23 "The Bible Condones Sex Slavery/Forced Marriage." • The historical context changes things. In a patriarchal society with no standing jails, no standing police force, and no standing army punishments have to be efficient, simple, and fair since ancient nomadic societies can't abide much disorder without collapsing into chaos. There was no "jail" option, and the death penalty was extreme—since they need workers, soldiers, and strong backs. • That also means brothers and fathers were important for enforcing social contracts, trades, sales, and even marriage covenants. Otherwise women then, as is still true today, will often get used and abused by profligate males. Marital rapists had to face the in laws. • If a woman is walking around without a trusted male to protect her then in that society, she's foolishly inviting harm or hiding secret sin. Judiciary are left to wonder if she sought a fling or was she raped.
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biblical laws about sex reflect the expectation that youths will try to “screw around” and will say what they have to avoid getting caught. • Much of the sexism in Scripture fails to qualify as “sexism” if gender and roles are somehow innate and/or rightful.
	26. Racism/ Xenophobia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much of the racism and arguments for slavery espoused in antebellum US were prooftexted, hasty generalizations, or otherwise stand outside of the stronger, more consistent teachings of conservative Christian thought. • The “mark of Cain” (Gen 4:15) has no strong or consistent argument tying it to a “cursed” skin color (i.e., a pseudo-Christian myth of white supremacists). • There are strains of antisemitism, such as Luther and much of Catholic history, but Jesus was a Jew, the Disciples were Jews, at least 144,000 Jews will be part of the elect/saved (Revelation 7:4-8), and there is a strong biblical case that the Jews will always have a special place in God’s eyes, via the Abrahamic Covenant, the Noachian Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, and even the Covenant of Grace, where God still uses Israel to be a light to the Gentiles. • Racist Christians are no strict proof that Christ/Christianity affirm such things. • Moses married a Cushite (Ethiopian); Simon of Cyrene was African; and the White/Anglo sheen on medieval art often deviated away from the middle eastern complexion that adorned the patriarchs and church fathers. • OT prohibitions against intermarriage were more about blending with false religions than about mixing ethnicities.
	27. Harms Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regarding the slaughter of the Amalekite children see #10 above “God kills innocent babies.” • Regarding religious teaching generally <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hitchens and Dawkins, for example, exaggerate things when they describe religious training as “child abuse.” It’s a sacred right of families to train up their children in the way they see fit. There’s a measure of risk there, but it’s better than the tyranny over federally dictating the details of our parenting. • Hitchens and Dawkins are operating on the belief that Christianity is false. If instead, Christianity is true and the Biblical Christian narrative is broadly correct then Christian religious training is indeed a wise way to raise a child since it correctly accounts for reality, man, nature, God, origin, history, destiny, and morality. • Conversely, it is potentially damning to a child to teach him or her that they are ultimately just animals, nature and reality are ultimately truthless, meaningless, and unguided, without purpose—there’s no guarantee they won’t jump off a hedonistic cliff into a nihilistic grave. • Regarding Discipline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discipline isn’t necessarily harm. • There’s room for disagreement over what counts as “discipline” (i.e., “spare the rod spoil the child”, and Prov. 13:24). • Disciplinary measures often fall within “cultural pluralism” (yet without having to surrender extreme cases, conceding to moral relativism). • Regarding Faith Healing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faith healing may or may not work today, the church is split on that.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If faith healing does work today, that's no proof or excuse for neglecting natural revelation, natural causes, and medicine as means of help and healing. • Faith Healing abuses children but isn't the normal historic teaching of Orthodoxy. It's a cult abuse—deviating from the Biblical Christian model of using both natural and special revelation to advance health, wellness, and prosperity. That includes medical and natural means as well as special and supernatural means. • Regarding natural evils—like fetal deformity, birth defects, etc.—these are addressed in theodicies over the Problem of Evil—such as Natural Law theodicies, Character Building, and Inscrutability defenses.
	28. Punishing Humanity for the Sins of Adam and Eve is unjust (Genesis 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If God chose Adam to represent us, and God knows all, then he would be able to pick the best representative on our behalf. • Since the practical and direct effects of sin/obedience are not limited to the individual why should the punishment /reward be limited to the individual? • Adam and Eve were made in God's image (Gen 1:26-28) signifying more than just autonomy but also governing duties ("Subdue...rule over" the earth [v28]), and when the king falls the kingdom falls with him.
	29. Homophobia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irrational fear of gay people, no. Sincere moral disagreement, yes. • Disagreement with homosexual practice can be motivated by love instead of fear/hate—wanting what's best for them, rather than just to "control" them. • A person can believe that homosexuality is sin and still affirm any number of socio-political positions (for/against gay marriage, don't ask don't tell, gay adoption, etc.) since morality and legality aren't the same. • A normal/fair reading of Scripture teaches that homosexuality is a sin, but (a) it's not necessarily any worse than other sexual sins like pornography, adultery, or fornication (b) social conventions can be wrong, (c) it's sinfulness need not be arbitrary divine fiat. • There are principled reasons, besides Scripture, for objecting to homosexuality such as alleged health concerns, child-rearing concerns, gender normalization, etc.