

I don't have enough **FAITH**
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with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Top 10 Philosophical Challenges Christian Students Face at Secular Universities with Dr. Owen Anderson

(September 27, 2024)

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, what are the top ten philosophical challenges Christian students face at a secular university? In fact, these top ten philosophical challenges aren't just what Christian students will face at a secular university. They are what you will face just in our culture in general.

So, how do you know what they are? And then how do you answer them when you hear about them, when they are thrown in your face or maybe even just subtly assumed? That probably happens more than anything. Some of these things we're going to talk about today are just assumed.

Now, if you want to be prepared in the culture in general or for the culture in general or your kid, you're going to send that kid off to a secular university, or you yourself are going to a secular university, you need to pay close attention because we have back, by popular demand, Dr. Owen Anderson. We had Owen on a couple of weeks ago.

He is a philosophy professor from Arizona State University where we visited a couple of weeks ago. And he and I had some email exchanges and met one another at the event. And Owen is very well-informed as to what's going on, on a university. He's been at Arizona State for 24, four years.

And as you may remember, there's a couple of conflicts he has with the administration at Arizona State University. One is they tried to put him through a DEI program, diversity, equity and inclusion, which contradicted with his moral and religious beliefs. That's actually a lawsuit right now. And then secondly, folks at the university tried to tell him how to teach his Intro to Christianity class.

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So, before we get into the top ten philosophical objections, you're going to hear from our culture and from a secular university, let me go back to Dr. Owen Anderson. Here he is, ladies and gentlemen. Owen, welcome back. Welcome back to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. And can you give us an update on the two situations going on between you and Arizona State? Let's start with the DEI issue. What's going on there?

OWEN:

So, DEI is a good example of a wolf in sheep's clothing, meaning that it presents itself as some really positive things, diversity, equity, inclusion. And so, if you object to it, you run the risk of being called some pretty bad names like, oh, you don't like inclusion, huh?

So, what actually is taught, though, this is where the wolf comes in, is in these classes at ASU, they're teaching us about the biggest problem facing our university, which is whiteness. And another big problem, heteronormativity. So, I did object because Arizona has a law prohibiting state universities from teaching race blame. You can't blame an entire group of people based on their skin color.

So, I'm represented by the Goldwater Institute, and ASU's first move, we've been at this for about seven months, was to try to dismiss the case by saying, I don't have any standing. And Goldwater attorney said, that's pretty typical for government agencies. That's always the first thing to do because if they can get a judge to agree, they save a lot of time and money. So, we're going into oral arguments on that on October 18. We just got the date set today, actually.

FRANK:

Oh, good. October 18.

OWEN:

The very people who wrote the law... April 18, oral arguments, and the very people who wrote the law, the state senator and the state representative here in Arizona, wrote a supporting brief for me to say this is exactly what we meant the law to do, and so, dismissal would be mistake. So, I'll keep you updated on what happens...

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FRANK:

I may have said that--

OWEN:

If it gets dismissed...

FRANK:

I may have said that date wrong. Did you say...?

OWEN:

That just means we appeal it.

FRANK:

Okay. Did you say October 18 it's coming up?

OWEN:

Yeah.

FRANK:

Okay. October 18. Okay, good.

OWEN:

That's where we actually get before a judge instead of just sending in briefs.

FRANK:

Okay, good. Well, as you pointed out on the last program, we did on this, and you just did a second ago, the folks that wrote the law pretty much are siding with you. So, unless the judge is completely out to lunch, this case should go forward, and you should win it. What about the other issue that's more internal with Arizona State? Is it the religion department telling you how to teach your Intro to Christianity class? What's the status of that right now?

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OWEN:

Yeah, so. That's right. I'm in a humanities department. ASU is the largest state university. So, it's confusing to understand, confusing to explain. But I'm in one department, and another department is trying to get me to stop using certain ideas in my Introduction to Christianity class, like they object to the idea of biblical worldview, and Old Testament, and western civilization.

So, I'm arguing that I have the freedom to teach my class as they want. Their objection is based on the idea that I'm teaching it as a Christian trying to convert students or something, as if I have an altar call at the end of the semester, which is just ridiculous. The ideas I just mentioned are perfectly acceptable for a secular university.

So, the step I've taken is try to be as neutral as I can. I reworded the first part of the syllabus, which I think is the part everyone has to use in any class to be as generic as possible to protect their freedom also. But then I told them the other part, which goes over how I teach my class. I can't change that because that's how I teach it. I don't think they have to use that, though. I just want to make sure they understand that.

So, that's the step I'm on right now, clarifying, you guys realize you don't have to use these ideas, but you also can't tell me not to. So, I'll keep you updated as well. If they come back and say no one can use these ideas, then we've got a big problem.

FRANK:

Okay, so right now the ball's in their court, basically.

OWEN:

And it certainly is seen like, so far, they've been saying you can't even use these ideas either.

FRANK:

Wow. Well, that certainly would be a violation of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, to say nothing of the fact that you have the academic freedom to teach as you see fit, especially on an issue that is the ground of western civilization and that is Christianity.

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So, let's see where that goes. I'm sure we'll get an update in the future here, Owen. But thank you for standing up for the freedoms that you have, and all Christians should have. And by the way, not just Christians, any religious group should be able to teach the way they want to teach their course on that particular topic.

Now, we're about to see, because you just put together an article on the top ten challenges Christian students face at a secular university. There are some of the challenges that you're being faced with right now as a professor at Arizona State, ironically.

So, we're going to count down the top ten, and this will be a blog post on crossexamined.org. So, if you want to see this in written form, you can. And we may not get to all ten in this program, ladies and gentlemen. If not, we'll extend it into the midweek podcast.

But let's start with number ten. The number ten reason or the number ten challenge, philosophical challenge that a Christian student will face at a secular university is academic skepticism. Say a couple of words about that, Dr. Anderson.

OWEN:

Yep. Yeah. So, academic skepticism is really the hallmark of the academy. It's right there in the name. And what happened is that Plato, who developed the academy in Athens, within about four generations of Plato, the academy adopted this position called academic skepticism, which means that we really can't know anything.

The only job of the academy is to ask questions and to debunk fideism, but we don't really ever come to conclusions. And so, that's still with us today. I put this as number ten counting down to number one on purpose because it kind of is an entrance into all the others and it's the safety net that professors will use.

So, if you say to them, well, so are you saying there isn't a God? They'll say, well, we just don't know. There's different arguments that people have. And they'll try to cover themselves with academic skepticism, but they will also use it to attack a Christian's faith, and they'll try to make it so that faith just means fideism.

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Now, you do enough apologetics, apologetic work, to know that no, faith and arguments go together. But if the academic skeptic can get the student to think that faith is just blind belief, then basically they've got the student to also be an academic skeptic.

FRANK:

Now, for those of you that have been listening to this program long enough, you know that this is self-defeating. To say you can't know is basically knowing that you can't know. So, academic skepticism defeats itself. To say, I can't know anything, you would simply ask that person, well, how do you know that you can't know? How do you know that?

Or if they say there's no truth, you're going to say, well, is that true? And I might ask a professor who, who pointed this out, Owen, you know, an academic skeptic, I would say, if there is no truth, only opinions, then that's just your opinion. And why am I spending thousands of dollars each year for you to give me just your opinion? Right? Like, why am I going to university at all if it's all opinions?

OWEN:

You're 100% right. And I actually think there is either coming or there should be coming a movement to get money back from universities because I think students are going to say, I didn't get taught anything. And I want my money back.

FRANK:

That's right. We're going to have a lot more. We just did one out of the top ten. There's more coming with Dr. Owen Anderson, philosophy professor at Arizona State University. I'm Frank Turek. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist on the American Family Radio network. We're back in two minutes.

Welcome back to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. I'm with Dr. Owen Anderson all the way from Arizona State University. He has been on the program a couple of times earlier this month. So, go back and listen to those podcasts, if you will, and radio programs. And if you're listening on the American Family Radio network, don't forget that this is also a podcast called I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist.

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We actually do two of these a week, so, you won't hear the midweek podcast. You've got to find I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist wherever you find podcasts and you can hear it. Also want to mention that next, let's see. What is this going to be? On Tuesday, October 1, I will be near Dallas, Texas, in Flower Mound.

That's not far from Dallas. I'm flying into Dallas and hang on. I'm trying to get to church here. Somehow my calendar isn't cooperating with me right now, but I will find it and let you know. Yeah, it's Rock Point Church in Flower Mound, Texas. That's, I think, 7:00 p.m. central time. Open to everybody.

We're going to do I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist and take your questions. That is this Tuesday, October 1. And then this following weekend I'm going to be down in Melbourne, Florida at Calvary Chapel, Melbourne. There is a very big apologetics conference down there. Also be speaking there on Monday or, sorry, Sunday morning. That's Calvary Chapel, Melbourne. I'll be there, of course, with Alisa Childers as well. That's the 4-6th of October.

And then don't forget about the SES conference, Southern Evangelical Seminary. That's in Rock Hill, South Carolina, just south of Charlotte. That is the 11th and 12th of October. And I'll be speaking at First Baptist Church, Rock Hill on the 13th of October. All those details on the website. And this week we just got done with several events in Louisiana and Texas, a lot more on our calendar. Check it all out there.

We're talking to Dr. Owen Anderson. We're going through the top ten philosophical challenges Christian students face at secular university. But it's not just Christian students. If you're a Christian and listening to this, you're facing these challenges as well. The first one we did, number ten, was academic skepticism, which of course is self-defeating because if you say you can't know truth, you're claiming you know that's true.

Of course you can know truth. If you wouldn't, you wouldn't be able to go to school, you wouldn't read a book, you wouldn't do any of these things. By the way, you couldn't catch anybody in a lie if there was no truth, right? Lies presuppose truth. Number nine. The number nine challenge is religious and worldview pluralism. What's that all about, Dr. Anderson?

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OWEN:

Yeah. So, this one builds on number ten, because if you can't know the answer to the most important questions that face us, like does God exist? How should we live? What happens after death? Then all the answers that you get are equal. And so, however any religion answers those questions is just an opinion and every other religion is also an opinion.

And so, the only real problem is if some student begins to think that their religious answers are the correct ones. And so, students are taught to be inclusive and tolerant, except for of anybody who has an exclusive truth claim. Those people you don't need to be tolerant to because they're breaking the rules, so to speak, and they think that they know things when they don't. They only have an opinion.

FRANK:

Isn't that something they know, though? Isn't pluralism a religious worldview that they think is absolutely true?

OWEN:

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, the whole self-referential absurdity that you mentioned for skepticism is true here as well. But there's a kind of strategy I want everyone to see in these ten points, which is to disarm the Christian student and to take away the point of the Gospel. And so, I kind of set them in the context of the very first temptation because I think if we understand what the devil was doing there, we'll understand what is going on with these as well. The first thing that's said is, did God really say that?

And so, the first thing that the tempter does is gets us to doubt the truth of God. And so, you enter university, and they say, well, there really isn't truth with a capital T, and all religions basically teach the same thing. So, what they've done there is, they've said the same thing that the tempter did. Did God really say this? I don't think so.

FRANK:

Yeah. Pluralism is the idea that all religions do lead to God. In fact, even the Pope seems to believe this now, tragically.

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OWEN:

Yeah, he said something like that.

FRANK:

Is the Pope Catholic? Actually, he's not right now. [Laughter] And even many Catholic apologists are going, this guy's just going too far. We just... [Laughter] What are you doing? You know? And he said in Singapore basically that we're all children of God and all religions just lead to God and all this, it's just nonsense.

And yet, when people say that pluralism's true, that all religions do lead to God, that there isn't one way, there isn't just the only way, well, they're essentially saying that pluralism is the only way. And I would ask them, how do you know that? By the way, as you mentioned, Dr. Anderson--

OWEN:

Well, no, and also... What I like to point out is that they are, it's their solution to a pluralistic society, because there's no doubt we live in a pluralistic society. But their solution is this relativism and skepticism. And I don't believe that's the only solution.

I think, actually that the United States was founded with the idea that we do indeed have diversity of ideas, but we also have a framework for pursuing the truth together. And there are some foundational truths, like God created us, that all the rest of our system is built on. So, I don't think pluralism, or a pluralistic university requires this skepticism.

FRANK:

No. Yeah, you're right. When Jefferson said we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men were created and endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights. Among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, he was establishing the fact that our government is built on theism.

Now, if you don't like theism, you can go to another country, but that's what this country is built on, theism. They did not have a religious test for the federal government.

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It's interesting, though, the state constitutions did. The state said, you know, you had to be a member of a certain church, or you had to be a believer in Jesus Christ to serve in government. We didn't have that from the feds, but we had it from the states.

In fact, many of the states had their own state churches in the early days of our country. But to say that all religions teach the same thing, or all religions lead to God, which is essentially what pluralism says, first of all, it's a truth claim itself. How do you know that?

And when they say, Dr. Anderson, that all religions teach that we ought to love one another, they only disagree on... Well, if you think about it, they disagree on the nature of God, the nature of man, sin, salvation, heaven, hell and creation. Other than that, they're exactly the same. [Laughter]

OWEN:

That's what I was about to say. I was about to say that. When the word God is used here, it's completely ambiguous because it's important for the Christian student to know that the God of creation, who's revealed in all creation is the same one who spoke in the Bible. And no other religion teaches that. The other religions, like Hinduism, teach that all things are God and that you are God, or Buddhism teaches that you don't even exist. Everything is just moment by moment, particular existences.

And so, Christianity is unique in its understanding, and the Bible is, in that sense, self-attesting. It's the only book that says this is from God. The other claimants to that are derivatives of the Bible. For example, Islam, which builds on the Old and New Testament, or Mormonism, really doesn't, because Joseph Smith told us that God the father also had a father, and that you one day can be God. Although it would say to be in that tradition, it isn't in that tradition.

FRANK:

Yeah, and it could be that all religions are false. It can't be that all religions are true. That's quite obvious. But who's using logic when you're teaching at a secular university, unfortunately.

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OWEN:

Well, that's part of my training in DEI, is that logic is part of structural whiteness.

FRANK:

And they used logic to say that didn't they?

OWEN:

I know, yep. [Laughter]

Self-referential absurdity.

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, I know I've said this previously on the podcast, but I can't emphasize this enough, that the law of non-contradiction is your best friend in defending the truth of Christianity. That self-referential false ideas, ideas that are self-defeating, like saying there is no truth. Is that true? There are no absolutes. Is that an absolute? You ought not judge.

Then why are you judging me for judging? This process of turning a claim on itself, what we call in the book, 'I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist', we call this the roadrunner tactic because it reminds us of Wile E. Coyote and Roadrunner. When Wile E. Coyote overshoots the...

I'm dating myself now. I've watched cartoons 60 years ago. When Wile E. Coyote overshoots the cliff and is hanging in midair, and then he realizes he has no ground to stand on, and he plummets to the valley floor in a heap, that's what you can do when you use the law of non-contradiction to point out that what people are saying defeats itself.

So, when they say there's no truth, is that true? When they say you can't know anything, how do you know that? Pluralism is the same thing. It may not be self-referentially false, but it is false when you analyze it, because all religions are not equal. All religions don't teach the same thing. Religions teach contradictory, mutually contradictory claims, as Dr. Anderson just said. So, they can't all be true. They can all be false, but they can't all be true.

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And so, that's why we give evidence that Christianity is indeed true. By the way, it's even false... Go ahead, Dr. Anderson.

OWEN:

Oh, sorry. If I could add something. Going back to my first sin theme, Eve was asked to believe a contradiction, that she could know good and evil the way God does. You'll know good and evil as God, but God knows it as the creator. He's the one who made things the way they are. He's the one who made human nature and therefore made what is good and evil.

So, she was being asked to believe a contradiction, and that's what sin really is, right? We put ourselves in the place of God. We act as if we are our own gods, which is a contradiction.

FRANK:

Yeah. In fact, let me run something by you. This is something that my friend Natasha Crain points out in her book, 'Faithfully Different.' We cover this in the Unshaken conference. By the way, the next Unshaken conference will be in Austin, Texas on November 16.

Myself, Alisa Childers, Natasha Crain, go to UnshakenConference.com for more. Here's what Natasha, Dr. Anderson, says in her book, and I think this is quite insightful. The book is 'Faithfully Different.' She says, the modern mind, the modern woke mind, the modern leftist mind, the modern academic mind, makes decisions this way.

First of all, happiness is the ultimate goal. Secondly, feelings are the ultimate guide. Thirdly, judgment is the ultimate sin. Because look, if happiness is the goal and feelings are the guide, how can you judge me for my feelings? And then fourthly, which is what you're saying here with regard to pluralism and academic skepticism, is that God is the ultimate guess, that we don't know whether God exists or not. It seems that that's essentially what they're saying here. True?

OWEN:

Yeah. And given what, the first points that she gave us, you don't need God to get those things. So, you can get happiness without God. You can follow your feelings without God. So, God, even if He exists, is not necessary for a good life. It's really the opposite. We're told in the

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Scriptures, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. You need to know God in order to be wise and lead a good life.

FRANK:

Right. And if they have no standard, moral standard, or there's no purpose to life, then good is just their preference. It's not really good objectively. And so that creates a problem.

OWEN:

Yeah, well, that's one thing that happens. For example, Aristotle said that the good life is a happy life, but he meant something different than we mean. He meant something more like a full and contented life.

FRANK:

Well, let's--

OWEN:

But when we hear happiness, we think fulfillment of desire.

FRANK:

Let's unpack that more right after the break. We're talking to Dr. Owen Anderson, philosophy professor, Arizona State. We're talking about the top ten challenges you hear on a college campus. We'll have much more. We're only on number nine, so there's more coming. Hang on.

What are the top ten challenges Christian students face at a secular university and you're facing in this secular culture? We're talking to Dr. Owen Anderson, and on our website, crossexamined.org, you'll see a blog post on this. And we're counting down from ten down to one. Number ten is academic skepticism. Number nine is religious and worldview pluralism. And at the end of that last discussion, we could do a whole show on each one of these.

So, we're summarizing here. But at the end of that last discussion there, on religious and worldview pluralism, we started talking about happiness. Dr. Anderson, how does the Bible define happiness? How does the culture define happiness? And what did Aristotle say about happiness?

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OWEN:

Yeah, I mentioned Aristotle, since I'm a philosophy professor. But because that's an important part of his view, is that the good life is a happy life. But he meant something more like contentment. And Aristotle is a good example of what we were talking about before the break also, about the ambiguity of the word God, because by God, he meant something much different than God the creator.

The God for Aristotle doesn't create matter. Matter is co-eternal. And I just mentioned that to say, when we look into these philosophers, it's important for us to know what each of their words mean. The biblical view of happiness, I think, is like joy or contentment, closer to what Aristotle is saying, and it comes from knowing God.

So, we don't pursue happiness directly. It's an effect of something else. And it's not the same as a psychological state. But that's what we mean by today in our culture. We mean by happiness, the feelings your body gets when you do something like eat ice cream and you feel a certain way.

Essentially, it's the satisfaction of desire. I have some kind of desire for ice cream, or of course, it gets into things like sex. And so, I should be allowed to satisfy it with only one rule. The only rule is as long as you don't hurt anybody else, so you can do whatever you want sexually, as long as you don't hurt anybody else. And that's a good life, they think.

But that view of happiness is very fleeting. It doesn't give you lasting happiness. What the Bible gives us is a kind of happiness that Paul and Silas can have when they've been wrongfully imprisoned and beaten close to death. They can sit in their cold prison cell and sing Psalms to God, their creator, because they know he's in charge. And so, that's the kind of happiness that we want.

FRANK:

Yeah, Paul does talk about contentment, and he's talking about it when he's in prison. You go, wow, how do you do that? Now, when they say you can do whatever you want as long as you don't hurt somebody else, now they're bringing a moral standard into that. What is the

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problem, philosophically and practically, with that idea that I can do whatever I want as long as I don't hurt somebody else?

OWEN:

Yeah. I like to approach it two ways. One is, okay, let's take that standard. I agree 100%, but you've got a narrow definition of hurt because they usually mean physical hurt. You're harming their soul and endangering their soul of eternal damnation. That's the worst hurt there could be.

So, I think in that sense, we can kind of take their, it's like a judo move, take the force of their argument and apply it back to them. But the other argument is what you're getting at right now, which is that as a moral standard, that's simply too weak and you need something more than that.

FRANK:

And how do you know if you're going to hurt somebody else, even if it's just physical? There are many ways you could hurt people. Not just physical. You could hurt people emotionally, socially, spiritually, as you just mentioned.

OWEN:

And there's actually people who want to be hurt. What do you do with them? Their desire and what makes them happy is being hurt. So, is that okay? And so, they get into these weird ethical dilemmas.

FRANK:

Yeah. And how do you even know down the road whether or not something you do now will or will not hurt somebody in the future? You don't really have that kind of knowledge.

OWEN:

That's a great point, too. Yeah. So, in other words, a coach makes you get up at 4:00 a.m. and run 10 miles and then practice for the game. It hurts, but on game day, it makes you very happy. So, yeah, you're right. You don't know. When something hurts, is it long term, short term?

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FRANK:

Yeah. It's hard to know whether or not your actions are going to hurt somebody else long term into the future. And it says, of course, nothing about our ethical responsibility to obey God. We're just looking at whether or not we're going to hurt other people here horizontally, not our relationship with God, which is vertical. That's another whole aspect to the ethical question. But they don't even--

OWEN:

And these problems are also kind of foreshadowing some of our other points because you're seeing the implication of religious pluralism is basically, I can do whatever I want.

FRANK:

Yeah, but they wouldn't agree with that, though, if you did something to them that interfered with what they wanted. Like, for example--

OWEN:

Yeah. The only rule is no exclusivism. So, if you come in, I think I mentioned last time I talked to you, ASU had an event three weeks ago about the benefits of polyamory. So, that's fine. But if you come to campus and you say, only marriage between a man and a woman, the professors are going to object. You don't get the right to say that view because it's exclusive.

FRANK:

Well, aren't they excluding your view if they say only polyamory is good and not monogamy? I mean, they're excluding your view by saying that.

OWEN:

Yeah, I think, yeah, it's absolute nonsense. But that's why I brought up the first temptation. So was the first temptation, and yet people give in. We should be able to notice these, as you pointed out, contradictions and see them for what they are. And I hope that what you and I are doing now is going to equip a young student or a parent with children to do just that.

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FRANK:

You know, we're going to get to this later, maybe not in this program, but in the next, because we're going through the top ten philosophical challenges that you'll hear on a college campus. And now, even in the culture, we'll get to this one later. But it seems to me, Dr. Anderson, that this is also prevalent when it comes to the LGBTQ community, when somebody says they've come out and then they want everybody to accept this new identity they have and maybe their new partner. And they say, look, I'm not hurting anybody else with what I'm doing. Why don't you accept it?

Now, let's leave that aside for just a second, whether or not it's wrong according to Scripture or natural law. But you know who they are hurting? Like, say, their parents who object. Why is it okay for that couple to hurt their parents and demand that their parents accept what they're doing when in fact, they're saying, I can do whatever I want as long as I don't hurt somebody else. Well, they're hurting their parents who disagree. So...

OWEN:

Yeah, they're hurting a lot of people. Yeah, you're right. 100% right. The standard is not evenly applied, but you're right also that we're going to come up to that point soon.

FRANK:

All right, we're going through the top ten. We've done number ten and number nine. How about number eight? This is the 8th challenge you'll hear on a college campus and also in our culture, scientism. What's that, Dr. Andersen?

OWEN:

Yeah. So, the first two kind of echo the theme of we don't really know anything, but when you push a professor that believes these things, they're going to back up into what's called scientism. And all of a sudden, they know a ton of stuff. And I say scientism on purpose because it's not science, it's not the scientific method where you have a hypothesis which you try to falsify in a lab. This makes all kinds of claims that go way beyond lab science about our origin, our nature, our purpose, life after death.

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And so, scientism essentially is materialism. It says that only material or natural causes explain everything we see today, in the past or in the future. Carl Sagan, who no one will remember probably, but they remember Neil DeGrasse Tyson. Carl Sagan started cosmos by saying the cosmos is all there is, all there was, and all there will be. Purposely mocking the Catholic catechism, which says that of God.

And so, only the material universe exists. And so, from there you get these scientific claims about human evolution, human nature. And especially the one I point out is about things like global warming. So, they'll try to pull you into belief systems that are on the radical left in the name of science. And that's what scientism does. And the student, if the student comes in a little bit naive, they'll say, well, I mean, they're scientists, they give us lots of good things. I like my Apple phone. That's from science. So, I guess they must be right about this other stuff, too.

FRANK:

That's a confusion of empirical science and forensic science too, that just because we can--

OWEN:

Technology and science.

FRANK:

Yeah, just because we can make air conditioning and an Apple phone, doesn't mean that with the same level of certainty we know where we came from. One is an empirical thing that we can do over and over again in the lab. The other is a historical question. Where did the first life come from? Where did subsequent life forms come from?

That's a more difficult question to answer, but I think it's better answered, if you look at what actually has been created, or at least life itself, when you look at life, you realize it is designed. But let's go back to the scientism question for a second, Dr. Andersen. They're essentially saying that all truth comes from science. Why is that logically absurd?

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OWEN:

Well, of course, that standard itself doesn't come from science. And that's been kind of our theme today, is the self-referential absurdity of these standards. So, science doesn't teach us this. And we both know that all of the early modern scientists who gave us what we think of science today, whether it's Francis Bacon, or Kepler, or Galileo, Newton, we're all theists.

And they said things like, by studying the creation, I know more about the creator. And that's what scientism denies. It denies that the world reveals its creator. And the Christian student needs to be equipped with that, to go in and know absolutely all of God's works reveal Him to us.

And that's why it's such a joy to study science and such a joy to get into how the world works, because you get to think about the mind of the creator. And I am worried as a professor that I see more and more students are disillusioned because they feel they've been lied to so much by the government, by scientists over these last five or ten years. And so, you do see some weird things popping up, like a resurgence of flat earth.

FRANK:

That's right. Yeah.

OWEN:

And I think the cause for that is that they're disillusioned. But we don't want to lose science in that, because people who claim to be scientists lied to us, let's hold on to what really is science. We have some wonderful things from scientists that teach us about God's creation.

FRANK:

Yes, we cover much of that in the book 'Stealing from God: Why Atheists Need God to Make Their Case.' There's a whole chapter on science in there, ladies and gentlemen. The title of that chapter is science doesn't say anything. Scientists do because all data needs to be gathered, all data needs to be interpreted, and science doesn't do that. Scientists do that.

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So, you don't get all your information from science. That would be impossible anyway. There are so many aspects of reality that you need to assume before you can do science, like the laws of logic, like the principle of uniformity, like cause and effect, like my obstacles.

OWEN:

And those aren't scientifically discovered.

FRANK:

Yeah, yeah. Morals. That's right. Or my faculties are good enough so I can observe the real world and get reliable data. Which is another problem with scientism, Dr. Andersen. I mean, if naturalism's true, that we're just molecular machines, if we're just moist robots, what does that do for our confidence in what we think?

OWEN:

Well, exactly. Why should we believe? If I'm just an evolved amoeba over millions of years, why should I think nature gave me a mind that can understand the world? I shouldn't think that. I mean, all my mind is for is to reproduce more of me, not to understand the truth of the universe.

FRANK:

Yeah, you don't get reason from just a bunch of molecules bumping into one another. Now, molecules bumping into one another--

OWEN:

Even scientists. It's kind of funny the way the scientists still can't answer, where do we get reason and language? And probably our audience may not remember space Odyssey 2001, but that starts off with a bunch of apes. And this obelisk from space falls to Earth. And when the apes touch it, they suddenly get language and reasoning.

So, the scientists themselves have no idea besides they say, it's not God. It must be a space obelisk.

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FRANK:

It must be something else other than God. We can never go to God. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek. My guest, Dr. Owen Anderson, philosophy professor from Arizona state. Back in two minutes.

Ladies and gentlemen, there's only two major facts you need to show our truth in order to show Christianity is true. Number one, does God exist? If the answer is yes, it's possible that Christianity is true. Number two, did Jesus rise from the dead? Only if God exists does a resurrection make sense.

And Paul even says, if Jesus hasn't risen from the dead, your faith is in vain. The question is, did Jesus rise from the dead? What's the evidence? And what are the objections for the modern mind? Myself and Dr. Mike Licona are taking that question on in a brand-new online course. It begins October 7. You don't want to miss it.

If you take the premium version, you'll be live with myself and Mike, Dr. Licona for several Q&A Zoom sessions. And then on October 23, if God does exist, why does He allow evil? With Dr. Clay Jones. And that's one of the best books. He actually has a book on that, 'Why Does God Allow Evil?'

And Dr. Jones, who's a cancer survivor, is going to give you some great insights on why God allows evil. That's October 23 that class starts. Go to crossexamined.org. click on online courses for either or both of these courses. Hope to see you there.

I'm talking with my friend, Dr. Owen Anderson. He is a philosophy professor from Arizona State University. We're going through the top ten philosophical challenges Christian students face at a secular university. It's also a blog post at crossexamined.org. We're going from ten down. Number ten was academic skepticism. Number nine, religious and worldview pluralism. Number eight, scientism. We just talked a little bit about that. And number seven is pragmatism. What's that about Dr. Anderson?

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OWEN:

Yeah, it's really the cornerstone of how universities present themselves today to high school students and the parents of high school students, which is that to be a successful person in our culture, you've got to get a college degree. And so, in one way, our children and students are held captive to the secular universities because they're the most affordable, they're the most accessible.

There's great private and Christian universities, but they tend to be more expensive and maybe you don't live near one. And so, we're stuck with this story. Yeah, I guess I have to go to university because I want to get a good job. And the job I want requires a degree. And so, this pragmatism says that whatever works is what's true. That's the standard for truth. Does it work?

And so, if someone says to you, hey, I think Jesus rose from the dead, they say, does that work? And you might say, well, I mean, I guess it makes my life meaningful. And they'll say, okay, so good for you, it works for you. That wouldn't work for me. I don't think that.

And so, I do something else. And so, that becomes the whole standard. Because although we started with academic skepticism, no human can live as an actual skeptic. They still have to make claims of what they believe. And so, scientism at number eight and now pragmatism is how they do that.

FRANK:

Well, how do they get around the fact that lying works, that slavery works, that murder works, that censorship works, that power works? You can just impose whatever you want on other people. It depends on what moral end. So, how do they deal with that, Dr. Anderson?

OWEN:

Well, that's precisely the problem we see right now with some of the college protesters. And some of the things professors are teaching about revolution is they would say yeah, a bloody revolution that works to overthrow a white supremacist nation. So, maybe we should do that. Traditionally or historically, the pragmatists would say that they are rule utilitarians, which means that you pursue what works within certain rules like the one we mentioned, don't hurt

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anybody. So, they would say you can't just do anything you want. You've got to work within these rules. But you're right to say where do we get those from? What if your rules don't work for me?

FRANK:

That's right. [Laughter] Well, what is their objective standard of morality? Those that listen to this program are going, Frank, you're ringing the same bell over and over again. Yes, I am. Why? This isn't hard, ladies and gentlemen. It's not hard to figure out the problem with these anti-Christian worldviews.

They don't have a grounding for what they say is true. They have to steal it from God. They have to steal a moral standard from God then distort it and try and impose it on you and say you have to obey us when they have no grounding in their own worldview. If there is no God, there is no objective moral standard. It's a free for all. It's just your opinion against Hitler's opinion. I mean they're really-- Go ahead Dr. Anderson.

OWEN:

Really with, with all of these. But especially we're getting into these now where the purveyors of these beliefs specifically have Christianity as their target. So, you're never going to be told that up front and students won't be told that perhaps ever in their four year degree. But John Dewey specifically wanted Christianity out of education and he's one of the fathers of pragmatism.

And so, of course that's the same with scientism and its theory, materialistic theories. But as we keep going further it's going to get more and more anti-Christian. That's how I've organized these. And it's good for the students to know that your teachers aren't neutral. They dislike, I would even use the word hate Christianity.

FRANK:

Well, when they say things like whatever works is true or they imply that pragmatism is true, would they apply that to you as a student cheating on a test to get a better grade because it works? Would they say that's okay?

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OWEN:

Yeah, I think they'd give this kind of argument. They would say having rules makes it so more people can be happy than if we just have anarchy. So, by having don't cheat rules that guarantees more people get knowledge and they get good jobs than if we just stay, just do whatever you want.

So, that's the kind of rule utilitarianism I mentioned before. But you're good to push back on that and say well, but why should I as an individual care about society? I just care about what makes me happy.

FRANK:

Right. If I can get away with it and it's going to work for my life... Like, for example, it worked for Stalin. He killed 20 million people or so and then died comfortably on his deathbed, shaking his fist at God one last time at the age of 74. He got what he wanted most of his life in terms of power and in terms of what he wanted. He was protected. Why is he wrong? It worked for him.

OWEN:

Yep. Yeah. You don't have... Well, and that actually at first, your question to all of us listening, that seems obvious. But what you see now at the universities is you no longer have heroes lifted up, where you say, this person was a hero who stood up for values. You couldn't lift up John Bunyan.

No university student knows who John Bunyan is, except for if they learned it outside of their university. But they do lift up people who did exactly what you're saying. Shay, you might have a t-shirt on with Shay and Cuban revolution, but he was also a Marxist murderer. And so, a Marxist who murdered people who opposed him. So, they hold up people who are actually vile and they're not heroes because they no longer have these standards of virtue.

FRANK:

Yeah. Without virtue and without a standard beyond us to know what virtue is, ultimately, we're going to be destroying ourselves and destroying one another. So, it's just so obvious here they have a piece of the truth, but they distort it. Like you said earlier about, well, we need rules, so we don't have anarchy.

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Well, that's kind of true, but they don't have a standard by which to say that anarchy is a bad thing, not an external standard, anyway. It's just their opinion. All right, let's do one more, Dr. Anderson, and we'll pick up the rest of them in the next program.

OWEN:

Well, because this one really gets to the serpent in the garden.

FRANK:

All right, this is--

OWEN:

Did God really say, causing us to doubt the word of God.

FRANK:

This is number six. It's higher criticism. First of all, what is higher criticism?

OWEN:

Yeah, so that's a word coming from the 1800's in German biblical scholarship and it spread to England and the United States. And it's different than textual criticism. When you do textual criticism of the Bible, you compare different manuscripts we have to see if they're the same.

And if maybe there's one letter different, you try to figure out, well, what happened? Where'd that come from? That's textual criticism. Higher criticism says, let's compare these as literary works. They're only man made. They're not divine. We'll treat them the same way we would treat the Iliad.

And so, we'll try to figure out who wrote them. It wasn't the author the Bible says. It was somebody else. And really it was a collection of authors over time, as these books were edited to fit the power structure of their day, mainly patriarchy.

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FRANK:

Well, some of that we Christians would agree on, that men did write it, and it was written over time. And there was some editing that went on with later groups. But we can still say that even God guided the editing process. And of course, theories of inspiration vary. And we might also say this, that as apologists, we can treat these documents, at least initially, like they're just historical documents.

But once we check into them, we do realize that there is some sort of divine hand behind them. But, Dr. Anderson, when they are saying that in your article, you say that they claim there's no historical Jesus. There are Gnostic gospels that are kept out for political purposes.

Don't they know that the Gnostic gospels were not written by any eyewitnesses? That they came in the century after Jesus, and so they couldn't have been written by the people whose names are on them, like Peter, and Thomas, and Judas, and Mary Magdalene? Don't they know they're forgeries?

OWEN:

Right. Well, that's where this is all very deceptive. And why a young student coming in and looking up to their professor isn't told those things. Not at all. They're just told, hey, your Sunday school teacher never told you about 'The Gospel of Thomas'? Well, that's weird. I wonder why they kept that from you.

And so, they use this to undermine the young students, parents, and Sunday school teachers also. And the claim is that it's only a human document, not just because we agree humans wrote it, but that's the only author. And it was men who were trying to get power over others.

So, that's the lens we're going to increasingly see on the next ones, is trying to get power over others. That's all Christianity is. It's all the Bible is. And the young student has to learn this for the first time when they come to school. And you pointed out the historical Jesus one, it went from Thomas Jefferson saying, Jesus really only said a few moral things. He didn't do all of these miracles. Now, I don't even think there is a Jesus. He's just invented by later Christians to justify their attempt to have control over other people.

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FRANK:

Well, we're going to respond more to this in the next program because anyone who says you can't know history, you can't know what the Bible writers wrote down, or you can't figure out who the historical Jesus was, they're making an historical claim there. If we can't know history or truth, then how do you know it's true that the history of the Bible and Jesus is false? You wouldn't be able to know that.

And I think it also, this view also ignores or denies the evidence for the Bible, which we spend a lot of time on, as you know, on this program and in our book, 'I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist.'

OWEN:

Well, that's where it comes from. Number ten was on purpose. It's kind of the gateway into all of them. Academic skepticism, they'll always back them and say, yeah, we just don't know if there was a Jesus.

FRANK:

We got a lot more. We're running out of time here. If you're listening on the American Family Radio network, you will not hear the midweek podcast on AFR. Look for the 'I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist' podcast and hear the next five of the top ten challenges you'll hear on a college campus and in the culture. So, join us there. See you then. God bless.

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