

The Newsletter of the  
INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF  
CHRISTIAN  
APOLOGETICS



Keeping ISCA Members Informed on All Things Apologetic

Spring 2018-01

## 2018 ISCA Conference Approaching!

The 2018 Conference of the International Society of Christian Apologetics will be held April 6 - 7 on the campus of Southern Evangelical Seminary near Charlotte, NC. The conference theme is "The Centrality of Christ in Apologetics" which focuses on confronting myths about Christ in atheism and culture and false perceptions of Jesus in American evangelical mysticism. Everyone is welcome to attend. The Friday night plenary sessions are free to the public. There are several options for hotel reservations. See the listings below. Many thanks to ISCA Program Chairman Jason Crowder and ISCA Vice President William C. Roach for their hard work in organizing the conference.

**Southern Evangelical Seminary  
Charlotte, NC**



## Hotel Options for the 2018 ISCA Conference

### Best Western

2501 Sardis Road N, Charlotte, NC  
704-845-2810 / [Website](#)

### Quality Inn, Carolina Place Mall

9840 Pineville-Matthews  
Rd, Pineville, NC 704-889-7095 / [Website](#)

### Comfort Suites-Pineville

10415 Centrum Pkwy, Pineville, NC  
480-719-3013 / [Website](#)

### Springhill Suites by Marriott, Ballantyne

12325 Johnston Road Charlotte NC  
704-817-1500 / [Website](#)



### Four Points by Sheraton

9705 Leitner Dr, Pineville, NC 28134  
704-540-8500 / [Website](#)

### Holiday Inn Express

9825 Leitner Dr, Pineville, NC  
704-341-1190 / [Website](#)

### Residence Inn by Marriott, Piper Glen

5115 Piper Station Dr, Charlotte, NC  
704-319-3900 / [Website](#)

### Courtyard by Marriott, Ballantyne


15635 Don Lochman Lane Charlotte, NC  
704-341-0041 / [Website](#)

### Hampton Inn

401 Towne Centre Blvd., Pineville, NC  
704-889-2700 / [Website](#)

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INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF  
CHRISTIAN  
APOLOGETICS

**National Conference 2018**  
**Southern Evangelical Seminary, Matthews, NC**

**Friday, April 6, 2018**

- 9:00 – 11:00 am — ISCA Board Meeting  
 1:00 – 2:00 pm — Registration Opens  
 2:00 – 2:45 pm — Welcome and Instructions  
 3:00 – 4:00 pm — Breakout Session 1  
 4:15 – 5:00 pm — ISCA Members Meeting  
 5:00 – 6:30 pm — Break for Dinner (on your own)  
 5:30 – 6:30 pm — Registration Table Re-Opens  
 6:30 – 6:45 pm — Welcome  
**6:45 – 8:00 pm — Plenary Session 1**  
 8:00 – 8:15 pm — Break  
**8:15 – 9:30 pm — Plenary Session 2**

**Saturday, April 7, 2018**

- 8:00 – 9:00 am — Registration Opens  
 9:00 – 10:00 am — Breakout Session 2  
 10:15 – 11:15 am — Breakout Session 3  
 11:15 – 1:00 pm — Lunch Break (on your own)  
 1:00 – 2:00 pm — Breakout Session 4  
 2:15 – 3:15 pm — Breakout Session 5  
**3:30 – 4:30 pm — ISCA Presidential Address**

## BREAKOUT SESSIONS

## Breakout Session 1, Friday, April 6, 2018 3:00 - 4:00 pm

Rm. 1	Rm. 2	Rm. 3	Rm. 4	Rm. 5
<b>Dan Guinn</b> Francis Schaeffer on the Centrality of Christ in Spirituality and Apologetics	<b>Donald Williams</b> A Door for Father Christmas: Tolkien's Objections and the Mythical Structure of Narnia, with an Excursus on the Multiverse and Its Relevance for Apologetics	<b>Terry Rathman</b> The Worst Hate Crime of All Time	<b>Thomas McCuddy</b> Reaching the Pews: Integrating Apologetics in the Equipping of the Believer	<b>Adam Tucker</b> Finding the God Who Hides: Towards a Thomistic Response to the Problem of Divine Hiddenness

## Breakout Session 2, Saturday, April 7, 2018 9:00 - 10:00 am

Rm. 1	Rm. 2	Rm. 3	Rm. 4	Rm. 5
<b>Ivan Yu</b> The Importance of Christ's Preeminent Identity with Respect to the Father, Creation, and the Church: Colossians 1:15-18	<b>Chris Van Allsburg</b> The Evidential Argument from Evil, Responses from Skeptical Theism, and Thomist Notions of the Divine	<b>Doug Bookman &amp; Russ White</b> The Importance of the Life of Christ on Apologetics in a Post-Narrative Culture	<b>Brian C. Melton</b> Browsing God's Bookshelf: The Multiverse, C. S. Lewis, and the Apologetics of Possibility	<b>Phil Fernandes</b> Did Jesus Really Exist? Refuting the Jesus Myth Hypothesis

## Breakout Session 3, Saturday, April 7, 2018 10:15 - 11:15 am

Rm. 1	Rm. 2	Rm. 3	Rm. 4	Rm. 5
<b>Daniel Howard</b> The Role of Redemptive History in Preaching Christ-Centered Messages from the Inerrant Word of God	<b>David Geisler</b> Practical Apologetics: The Case for Integration	<b>Andrew Hillaker</b> The Christology of John of Damascus as an Apologetic Against Islam	<b>William C. Roach</b> <i>Sola Fide:</i> Responding to the New Perspective on Paul from Romans	<b>Peter Van Keeck</b> Toward a Unifying Principle: A Confluence of Maximally Evolved Particulars, The Messiah, and Metaethics

## Breakout Session 4, Saturday, April 7, 2018 1:00 - 2:00 pm

Rm. 1	Rm. 2	Rm. 3	Rm. 4	Rm. 5
<b>T. J. Gentry</b> Mind and Heart: An Apologetic for Passional Reason	<b>Mark Ragsdale</b> The Necessity for Centrality of Both the Virgin Birth and Resurrection in Christian Apologetics	<b>Guy Francis Sutula</b> The Centrality of the Imago Dei in the Christian Witness	<b>Chirin Nkoula</b> Jesus and the Quran	<b>Randy Douglass</b> Teaching Apologetics to Uncompromising, Unchurched, and Unsure College Students

## Breakout Session 5, Saturday, April 7, 2018 2:15 - 3:15 pm

Rm. 1	Rm. 2	Rm. 3	Rm. 4	Rm. 5
<b>Ed Payne</b> Michael Polyani - Part III: Away from Objectivity Towards Personal, Biblical Truth	<b>Jeff Lenhart</b> The New Experimentalists and the Theological Interpretation of Scripture: A Comparison and Evaluation	<b>J. Wesley Price</b> The Man of His Word: An Argument for Authenticity in the Canonical Words of Jesus	<b>Joe M. Easterling</b> The Two Affections of the Will as Elements of the Imago Dei	<b>Timothy D. Carter &amp; Jason D. Crowder</b> Confronting Evangelical Mysticism with the Logos: Appealing to the Person of Christ to Refute the Ideology of Evangelical Mysticism



## Plenary Session 1

Friday, April 6, 2018

6:45 – 8:00 pm

Dr. Michael Kruger

*“Artifacts of Canon: Manuscripts as a Window into the Development of the New Testament”*

## Plenary Session 2

Friday, April 6, 2018

8:15 – 9:30 pm

Dr. Michael Brown

*“The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus—Yeshua”*



## ISCA Presidential Address

Saturday, April 7, 2018

3:30 – 4:30 pm

Dr. Richard G. Howe

Emeritus Professor of

Philosophy and Apologetics,

Southern Evangelical Seminary

*“Rethinking the Moral Argument: A Natural Law Perspective”*

## ISCA Conference FAQ

**When and where will the ISCA conference be held?** The 2018 ISCA conference will be held April 6-7, 2018 on the campus of Southern Evangelical Seminary near Charlotte, NC, located at 3000 Tilley Morris Rd. Matthews, NC 28105 (<https://ses.edu/>).

**Does one have to be a member of ISCA to attend the conference?** No. We welcome non-members and encourage them to consider joining ISCA.

**Does one have to be a member of ISCA to be a break-out presenter at the conference?** Only members with dues current will be allowed to present at the conference.

**I'd like to become a member. How?** If you qualify for membership (academic credentials, agree to doctrinal statement), we encourage you to submit a membership application.

**How can I be considered to be a presenter at the conference?** In order to be considered to be a presenter, you need to submit a presentation proposal. Your proposal should



consist of a paragraph or two summarizing the thesis of the presentation.

**When is the presentation proposal due?** Presentation proposals were officially due before the end of Dec. 1, 2017. However, you can contact [Bill Roach](#) to see if there have been any cancelations.

**How do I submit my presentation proposal?** If the event that there might be an open slot due to cancellation, you can email your presentation proposal to ISCA Vice President [Bill Roach](#).

**When will I know if my proposal is accepted?** Decisions on presentations have already been made.

**What is the conference theme?** The conference theme is "The Centrality of Christ in Apologetics." Presentations do not necessarily have to be on the conference theme.

**What is the conference schedule?** The conference schedule has been finalized. You can find it in this newsletter on pp. 2-3.

# ISCA Intelligence Report:

## What Your Fellow ISCA Members are Doing



**David Deane.** May 19, 2018, "Living in the Real World" Hunter Men's Weekend, Tahlee, Australia. Date TBD, "Identity: Achieved or Received?" Belmont Christian College, Newcastle, Australia.

**Richard G. Howe.** March 29, 2018, "A Christian Perspective on the Occult, Ratio Christi, University of North Carolina Charlotte. April 21-22, 2018, Men's Retreat, Shepherd of the Ozarks Conference Center, Harriet, AR. May 21-26, 2018, Southern Evangelical Seminary MA/DMin course "World Religions." July-August 2018, Speaking tour throughout South Africa including the South Africa National Ratio Christi Symposium July 11-14, 2018. August 16-18, 2018, Cross Examined Instructor Academy, North Dallas Community Bible Fellowship

Church, Dallas, TX. October 12-13, 2018, Southern Evangelical Seminary's National Conference on Christian Apologetics on the Campus of Calvary Church, Charlotte, NC. October 31, 2018, "Halloween and the Occult," Grace Life Church, Pineville, NC.

**Robert A. Rucker.** April 10, 2018, 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm, "The Shroud of Turin, Jesus' Resurrection, and You" King's Park International Church, Durham, NC.

**Michael C. Sherrard.** April 21-22, 2018, "Pro-Life Apologetics," Clarkson Academy, London. 2018, Worldview teaching, Summit Ministries Student Conferences, CO, PA, TN, and CA. Spring/Fall 2018, "Beyond the Church Walls" leadership training seminars, GA, NY.

**Harvey Solganik.** May 31, 2018 - June 3, 2018, "C.S. Lewis: The Baptism of the Imagination," C.S. Lewis Colloquium and Conference of the C.S. Lewis Inklings Society, Taylor University.

**Don Veinot.** April 27-28, 2018. "Living a Legacy," Evangelical Ministry to New Religions, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. July 27-28, 2018, Witnesses Now for Jesus Midwest, Sunrise Baptist Church, Bonne Terre, MO. Sep. 16-19, 2018, Wheatland Congregational Church, Pittsford, MI. Oct. 5-7, 2018, 40th Annual Witnesses Now for Jesus Convention, New Ringgold, PA.

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**Norman L. Geisler.** *Preserving Orthodoxy: Maintaining Continuity with the Historic Christian Faith On Scripture.* Matthews: Bastion Books, 2017; *Somewhere Under the Rainbow: A Christian Look at Same-Sex "Marriage"* (with Doug Van Gordon) N.C.: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017; *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* (with Paul Compton). Forthcoming.

**Douglas Groothuis.** *Walking through Twilight: A Wife's Illness—A Philosopher's Lament.* Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2017.

**Randy Hroziencik.** *Worldviews in Collision: The Reasons for One Man's Journey from Skepticism to Christ.* Greenwood: Paley, Whately and GreenLeaf Press, 2018.

**William C. Roach.** *Sola Fide: A Primer on Paul's Doctrine of Justification in Romans.* Forthcoming.

**Harvey Solganik.** *C.S. Lewis: Lessons on Evangelical Discipleship.* Forthcoming, Bloomington: Archway Publishing, May, 2018.

**Stephen M. Vantassel.** "A Practical-Theological Assessment of the Conflict between Darwinian Evolution, Creationism, and Scripture." Forthcoming, *Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics.*

**Donald Williams.** *An Encouraging Thought: the Christian Worldview in the Writings of J. R. R. Tolkien.* Cambridge, OH: Christian Publishing House, 2018; "Made for Another World: C. S. Lewis's Argument from Desire Revisited" *Philosophia Christi* 19:2 (2018): 449-54; "The Argument from Desire Revisited." Forthcoming, *Christian Research Journal*, March/April 2018.





# The Journal of the International Society of Christian Apologetics

**Don't forget about the Journal of the International Society of Christian Apologetics.**

For submission of prospective manuscripts or for inquiries concerning content or policies of the journal, contact Doug Potter at [dpotter@ses.edu](mailto:dpotter@ses.edu). Please conform manuscripts to the Chicago Manual of Style. See [www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)

## About the Journal

The *Journal of the International Society of Christian Apologetics* is a peer-reviewed journal published annually with the support of the International Society of Christian Apologetics to foster scholarly discussion of ideas among evangelical scholars relevant to the defense of the Christian Faith. It includes articles from a wide variety of apologetically relevant fields, including philosophy, ethics, theology, biblical studies, history, and missions.



Journal of the INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY of CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS

Volume 11

2018

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**April 6-7, 2018.** International Society of Christian Apologetics. On the campus of Southern Evangelical Seminary, Charlotte, NC. (<http://www.isca-apologetics.org/>)

**April 13-14, 2018.** Intelligent Faith Conference, "The Certainty of Christianity in an Uncertain World" Cedar Rapids, IA. (<https://www.servethecity.org/intelligent-faith-conference/>)

**April 19, 2018.** Philosopher Edward Feser speaking on the campus of Southern Evangelical Seminary, Charlotte, NC. Admission fee required. (<https://ses.edu/edward-feser-sga/>)

**April 27-28, 2018.** Evangelical Ministries to New Religious Movements Convention, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, NO, LA. (<http://www.emnr.org/2018-conference-details/>)

**May 5, 2018.** "Axiome 2018: l'Évangile en haute-définition" ("The Gospel in High-Definition") hosted by Association Axiome, Montreal, Canada. (<http://www.eglisedaujournhui.ca/levangile-en-haute-definition/>)

**July 11-14, 2018.** South Africa National Ratio Christi Symposium, University of Kwazulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

**July 22, 2018.** Reasons 2 Believe Apologetics Conference, Colonial Baptist Church, Cary, NC. (<http://reasons2believe.org/>)

**October 12-13, 2018.** Southern Evangelical Seminary's 25th Annual National Conference on Christian Apologetics on the campus of Calvary Church, Charlotte, NC. (<http://ncca2018.myfreesites.net/>)

**August 16-18, 2018.** Cross Examined Instructor Academy. North Dallas Community Bible Fellowship Church. (<http://crossexamined.org/what-is-cia/>)

**November 1-7, 2018.** Witnessing and apologetic opportunity at the Parliament of the World's Religions, Toronto, Canada. Anyone interested can contact Don Veinot ([donveinot@midwestoutreach.org](mailto:donveinot@midwestoutreach.org)) to coordinate.

**November 13-15, 2018.** Evangelical Theological Society / Evangelical Philosophical Society. Sheraton Downtown Denver Hotel, 1550 Court Place, Denver, CO. (<http://www.etsjets.org/> and <http://www.epsociety.org/>)

**January 7-11, 2019.** Defend Apologetics Conference, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, NO, LA. (<http://nobtsapologetics.com/defend/>)

**Jason Crowder.** *Anthropology and New Testament Theology* by Jason Matson and Benjamin E. Reynolds.

**David Deane.** *The Paradoxical Structure of Existence* by Frederick Wilhelmsen; *The Challenge of Affluence* by Avner Offer.

**Thomas J. Gentry.** *The Line Through the Heart: Natural Law as Fact, Theory, and Sign of Contradiction* by J. Budziszewski.

**David Haines.** *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomisms* by Fergus Kerr; *Aquinas Among the Protestants*, ed. by Manfred Svensson and David VanDrunen; *Norse Mythology* by Neil Gaiman.

**Richard G. Howe.** *Discourses upon the Existence and Attributes of God* by Stephen Charnock; *Summa Theologiae* by Thomas Aquinas; *Some Philosophical Issues in Moral Matters: The Collected Ethical Writings of Joseph Owens* ed. by Dennis J. Billy and Terence Kennedy; *The Disintegration of the Natural Law: Aquinas to Finis* by Pauline C. Westerman

**Ed Payne.** *The Great Influenza: The Story of the Deadliest Pandemic in History in 1918* by John M. Barry; *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious*

## What's On Your Nightstand?



*What Your Fellow ISCA Members Are Reading*

*Revolution Secularized Society* by Brad S. Gregory.

**Mark Ragsdale.** *Born of a Virgin? Reconceiving Jesus in the Bible, Tradition, and Theology* by Andrew T. Lincoln.

**William C. Roach.** *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures* by D. A. Carson; *Jesus and the*

*Eyewitnesses* by Richard Bauckham; *Making Sense of God* by Timothy Keller; *Five Proofs of the Existence of God* by Edward Feser; *The Intolerable God: Kant's Theological Journey* by Christopher J. Insole.

**Robert A. Rucker.** *Beyond the Cosmos: The Transdimensionality of God* by Hugh Ross.

**Michael C. Sherrard.** *Love Thy Body* by Nancy Pearcey; *The Well educated Mind* by Susan Wise Bauer; *The Only Wise God: The Compatibility of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom* by William Lane Craig; *Apologetics and the Christian Imagination* by Holly Ordway.

**Don Veinot.** *Jim Jones: The Malachi 4 Elijah Prophecy* by John Andrew Collins.

**Donald Williams.** *Samuel Davies: Apostle to Virginia* by Dewey Roberts.

2 5 T H A N N U A L



**NATIONAL CONFERENCE**  
on Christian Apologetics 2018

"It was AMAZING!  
CAN'T WAIT to come back!"  
- 2017 ATTENDEE

# THE GODWHOIS

OCT 12-13 / CHARLOTTE

FEATURING

**RAVI ZACHARIAS**  
**JOSH McDOWELL**  
**CHIP INGRAM**  
& **MANY OTHERS**

▶ **PANEL: Is the Age of the Earth a Matter of Biblical Authority?**



**GEISLER**  
Southern Evangelical



**GULIUZZA**  
Institute for Creation Research



**HOWE**  
Southern Evangelical



**ROSS**  
Reasons to Believe

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## “Howe About That!”

Musings from ISCA President Richard G. Howe, Ph.D.



In continuing my discussion from the last two musings on theistic arguments, I would be remiss if I said nothing about the moral argument—surely the most popular argument for God's existence currently making the rounds. Perhaps the most familiar, cogently set forth, and adroitly defended version of the moral argument is by the eminent contemporary Christian apologist and scholar William Lane Craig.<sup>1</sup> His common formulation of the argument is:

1. If God does not exist, then objective moral values do not exist.
2. Objective moral values do exist.
3. Conclusion: Therefore, God exists.

The only ones who could take exception to the form of the argument would be those who do not understand basic formal logical schemata. This argument is known as a *modus tollens* (Latin for "mode of denial"). It is also known as denying the consequent. In a material implication, the denial of the consequent logically entails the denial of the antecedent. Thus,

$p \supset q$  [which reads: "If p, then q"]  
 $\sim q / \therefore \sim p$  [which reads: "Not q. Therefore not p."]

As it stands, I believe there can be no objection to the argument. However, I know that those who advance this argument would likely have a problem with my *prima facie* reading of it. It is undoubtedly true that if God does not exist, then nothing else would exist, including moral values. In this respect, this moral argument "collapses" into a cosmological argument.<sup>2</sup> But this is not why the defenders of this moral argument offer the argument in the first place. For them, the causal connection between God and objective moral values (I will leave aside whether the relationship intended by the argument between God and objective moral values is a causal one) is not merely ontological in this respect. Instead (the argument seems to go), even if (per impossible) there could be a world with humans but without God, this world would necessarily be absent any objective moral values.

But is this the case? Does morality need God? I submit that in the tradition of Natural Law Theory, the answer is 'yes' and 'no'.<sup>3</sup> I shall not take the time here to flesh out too many details about Natural Law Theory.<sup>4</sup> Only a few points are needed to jump directly to how the 'yes' and 'no' answers follow from Natural Law Theory.

Regarding the 'no' answer, a few things need to be unpacked. First, the moral argument sometimes traffics in the

language of whether morality can be objective without God and sometimes it traffics in the language of whether there could be morality at all without God. Framing the argument in the latter way is what gives rise to my *prima facie* response above. Framing it in the former way avoids the problem of trying to defend the existence of something absent God's existence in this *prima facie* reading. It also allows for the important distinction between the epistemology of morality (knowing *that* something is immoral) and the ontology of morality (what it is that *makes* something immoral). But in an important sense, one might argue that the question of the objectivity of morality and the question of the ontology of morality are really the same practically speaking, since it would be difficult to distinguish morality without objectivity from abject moral relativism or even from moral nihilism. I will leave this discussion aside for our purposes.

Second, the Natural Law tradition is grounded in the metaphysics of Aristotle with the significant augmentations from Aquinas both metaphysically and theologically.<sup>5</sup> Only a few of these metaphysical points need to be introduced to sketch out the way in which Natural Law would give the 'no' answer to the question of God and morality. Here is the short version. The "good" for X is the perfection of X as the potentialities of X are made actual, i.e., as they are made real. To be made real just means to come into being.<sup>6</sup> These potentialities of X are what they are precisely because of the nature of X. One should be able to see the basics of Aristotle together with the fingerprint of Aquinas in these few points—act and



### Your Venerable ISCA Leaders

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 Charlotte, NC

**Tim Adkisson, Secretary / Webmaster**  
 Software Engineer, Cedar Rapids, IA

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 Personal website: [profjasondcrowder.com](http://profjasondcrowder.com)



potency, final causality (teleology), form and matter, natures as a metaphysical reality, and Aquinas's understanding of existence as an act.

Given that what is good for X has proximately to do with X's nature, then the objectivity issue is quite straightforward. Human goodness is defined in terms of human nature. Given (in Aquinas) that human nature is an objective fact of reality, then human goodness is an objective fact of reality. To deny the objectivity of morality in the absence of God would be like denying the objectivity of gravity in the absence of God.

But something is still missing here. To define the good for a human in terms of human nature has not yet risen to the level of *moral* goodness. The failure to recognize the distinctions between 'good' and 'moral good' can be the source of some confusion among the detractors of Natural Law Theory. One can begin to grasp the significance and distinctiveness of human moral goodness when one identifies why it is that we regard humans as guilty for wrongdoing and yet do not blame animals for wrongdoing in the same way. In Aquinas, morality is unique in humans among sensible creatures on earth because only humans have rationality, free will, and are able to desire the good for its own sake.

To be sure, quite a bit of philosophy has been telescoped here. All I can do at this point is to suggest some reading.<sup>7</sup> The up-shot is that, in Natural Law Theory, human morality has quite a bit of objectivity given human nature, human rationality, human free will, and the human's pursuit of the good as such.

As for the 'yes' answer, I have mentioned above that morality would need God ultimately because everything else needs God in order to exist.<sup>8</sup> Thus, for there to be human morality, there would need to be humans. But for there to be humans, there would need to be God. This point is keenly made by the metaphysics of Aquinas. For Aquinas, God does not HAVE existence. Instead, God IS existence. God is a being whose very essence is His own existence. This is what some theologians mean by God's self-existence, also known as God's aseity.<sup>9</sup> God exists by virtue of being *ipsum esse subsistens*—substantial existence itself. Everything else that exists only *has* existence, which is to say, its existence is given to it and does not arise from its very nature.

Understandably, certain ones are critical of taking the moral argument as seemingly being nothing more than a roundabout cosmological argument. But in the metaphysics of Aquinas, there is more going on here than the critic might suspect. It is not merely the fact that, since morality needs humans and humans need God, then morality needs God.

Rather, there are important details that are nested in exactly what it is about humans as God has created us that gives rise to morality. I have already mentioned a few specifics about the metaphysics. One can add that the teleology of humans comes from God. This is why Aristotle can have human teleology and yet never connect it to his Unmoved Mover as efficient cause. While in Aristotle the Unmoved Mover is the telos of all of the universe, it itself is not the efficient cause of that telos (nor, indeed, of that universe either). For him, the telos is just an eternal fact of reality. But in Aquinas, it is not only the case that humans have the telos we have because of the nature we have, but, given that God is the creator of that nature, God is also the creator of that telos. God has created us to aim toward particular goods in this world like survival and procreation. But He has also created us to aim toward Him as our ultimate good.

There is, perhaps not surprisingly, more to say about the 'yes' answer. Having introduced it, I have said nothing by way of explanation about the notion that humans are unique in our pursuit of the good as such. I said neither what exactly is the "good as such" nor how that figures in to the notion of moral obligation. But to balk at what has been said as being nothing more than a remote, if not cumbersome, cosmological argument misses how powerful this notion of morality is.

Most apologists with whom I am familiar employ a number of findings of contemporary science to leverage various arguments for God's existence, including the fine-tuning of the universe, the information content of the DNA molecule, and the irreducible complexity of biological systems. Nowhere do I hear these apologists frame the argument as "if God does not exist, then fine-tuning does not exist" or "if God does not exist, then information does not exist" or "if God does not exist, then irreducible complexity does not exist." Indeed, I am not sure exactly how one would even take the notion that, without God, there is no (for example) "objective" information. It would seem that most people would maintain that even if (per impossible) God did not exist, there would still be fine-tuning, information, or irreducible complexity. Now, to be sure, some might object and exclaim "no!" for it is precisely the argument that God is the only viable explanation for how and why there is fine-tuning, information, or irreducible complexity. But this objection just shows that, in some sense of the term, God is the cause of the EXISTENCE of these features. But to argue here that God is the cause of their existence says nothing about their objectivity. It is only to admit that these arguments are some species of the cosmological argument, broadly construed. The "objectivity" of fine tuning is completely understood along the contours of the laws of physics and mathematics. The same

goes for information and irreducible complexity. There is no need posit that, without God, these features would have no objectivity.

By analogy, this is what I'm doing with the moral argument. I am saying that there are objective features of reality (act/potency, teleology, form/matter, natures, existence) that account for the objectivity of (and in an important sense the very existence of) morality irrespective of God. This is not merely an epistemological point. Just as there can be information without God at some level of consideration (e.g.,

information as specified complexity), there can be morality without God at some level of consideration (e.g., act/potency, teleology, nature, etc.) But the reader should notice that these metaphysical truths are the building blocks of the classical cosmological argument.<sup>10</sup> What one needs to account for morality at a proximate level, becomes the sufficient condition of the demonstration of God's existence—and not only the existence of God, but almost all of the attributes of classical Christian theism. It would seem that the moral argument construed along Thomistic lines is quite powerful indeed. †

<sup>1</sup> Craig's argument is pervasive on the internet. Several samples from his website include <https://www.reasonablefaith.org/writings/question-answer/slaughter-of-the-canaanites> and <https://www.reasonablefaith.org/writings/question-answer/the-moral-argument-for-god/>. You Tube versions can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3psg3ITDTrU> (pt. 1), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9DgQi7fxRsA> (pt. 2), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CV6FGHkk\\_X4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CV6FGHkk_X4) (pt. 3), and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aE31Lv3hUvY> (pt. 4).

<sup>2</sup> Craig leveled this very criticism of the Thomistic version of the argument as I formulated it as collapsing into the cosmological argument. See his critique of *The Christian Post's* account (an internet Christian newspaper) of the presentation I gave at the 2016 National Conference on Christian Apologetics available at <https://www.reasonablefaith.org/media/reasonable-faith-podcast/is-god-necessary-for-morality/>.

<sup>3</sup> I am indebted to Edward Feser for spurring on my interests in this topic with his "Does Morality Depend on God?" (<http://edwardfeser.blogspot.com/2011/07/does-morality-depend-on-god.html>, accessed 03/26/18). I owe much of my thinking to his insights but I do not want to necessarily implicate him in everything I have to say on this subject.

<sup>4</sup> See my paper "God and Morality" available at [http://richardghowe.com/index\\_htm\\_files/GodandMoralityPaper.pdf](http://richardghowe.com/index_htm_files/GodandMoralityPaper.pdf), accessed 03/26/18.

<sup>5</sup> My take on Aquinas's doctrine of Natural Law is a fairly common one but is not without its critics. See footnote 6 of the paper cited in endnote 4 above.

<sup>6</sup> This important notion is what explains how it is that 'being' and 'good' are convertible terms in Aquinas's (and other's) thinking. See Jan Aertsen, "The Convertibility of Being and Good in St. Thomas Aquinas," *New Scholasticism* 59 (1985): 449-470. Since being and good are convertible, then the Supreme Being is the Supreme Good. For Aertsen's treatment of this issue of the medieval doctrine of the transcendentals vis-à-vis Aquinas see his *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals: The Case of Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: Brill, 1996). For his fuller treatment of the transcendentals in Medieval philosophy see his *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought from Philip the Chancellor (ca. 1225) to Suárez* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

<sup>7</sup> For a discussion see John Knasas, *Being and Some 20<sup>th</sup> Century Thomists*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2003, pp. 248-272.

<sup>8</sup> It is significant to note that I am not merely saying that everything else needs God in order to have come into existence at the beginning (as the Kalam cosmological argument would say). I think this is true enough. I hold that the Kalam Cosmological argument is sound. Aquinas, however, did not (see his *Summa Theologiae* I, Q46). Rather, in Aquinas's thinking everything else needs God in order for it to exist at any moment of its existence. God is not merely the cause of everything else's coming to be, but God is also the current cause of everything else's continual be-ing.

<sup>9</sup> One should not press the Latin too far (*a*, "from" and *se*, "self") as if to say that God's existence is self-caused. Such a notion is incoherent. Instead, to say God's existence is "from" Himself is to say (or at least allows it to be said) that God's existence is His essence. He exists by virtue of His nature.

<sup>10</sup> For a discussion and more details on how such philosophical doctrines are the necessary ingredients of the science that many atheists tout and yet are also the sufficient ingredients of the demonstration of the very God those atheists deny, see Edward Feser, *The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism* (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 2008).