Throughout his allegory, John Bunyan has introduced us to various people (metaphors) who, for one reason or another, could not come to terms with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (e.g., Obstinate, Pliable, Mr. Worldly Wiseman, the Judge and jurors at Vanity Fair, Mistrust, Timorous, the Man in the Cage, Passion, Ignorance, etc.). Some of these are quite subtle and claim the same path as Christian. Others are more brazen and mock the
very notion of a God who is there. Today, Bunyan will usher us into the presence of a man who is a committed atheist. Admittedly, we will only be able to examine a very small portion of the entire corpus of theological and philosophical debate related to atheism, but perhaps enough to whet our appetites for further reading, study, and energetic debate in our earnest search for the Truth.
Introduction

After Christian and Hopeful had become ensnared in the Flatterer’s net and disciplined for ignoring the warnings of the shepherds (pastors), the Shining One (an angel) “invited them to go on their way and to pay attention to the other directions the shepherds had given them. So they thanked him for all his kindness and went peacefully along the right way.”
After a while, they encountered a man coming toward them whose back was towards Zion. Hopeful was concerned lest he prove to be another flatterer. As the three of them met on the path, Atheist asked them where they were going. Christian told him that they were going to Mount Zion. Atheist broke out in laughter.
Atheist’s Arguments

• “You are such ignorant people.” (argumentum ad hominem, i.e., “to the man,” a phrase applied to an argument or appeal founded on the preferences or principles of a particular person rather than on abstract truth or logical cogency).

• “You have undertaken a very difficult journey and will likely (probably) have nothing to show for your efforts except the travel itself.” (Used
to utter guarded and restricted predictions – predictions to which we are not prepared positively to commit ourselves; marks the sub-standard quality of the evidence).

• “I have been looking for this city for twenty years but have found no more of it than I did on the first day that I began my journey” (This is a possibility, so we concede that it has a right to be considered).
Reasons For Atheist’s Laughter

• “I have not found anything, yet I should have, had there been such a place to be found – because I have gone farther than you have.”

• “I am going back and will enjoy those things that I had discarded when I had hope in that which I now see does not exist.”
“We are all atheists (referring to Dawkins, Hitchens, and himself), which means we don't believe in a deity, we don't believe in a magic spaceman, and we think people that do, have a neurological disorder and they need help.”

- November 2009 on Imus
“For nearly a century, the moral relativism of science has given faith-based religion – that great engine of ignorance and bigotry – a nearly uncontested claim to being the only universal framework for moral wisdom.”

Sam Harris
Neuroscientist
1967-
“Enjoy What I Had Discarded”

“If God doesn’t exist, everything is permitted.”

- *The Brothers Karamazov*

Fyodor Dostoevsky
1821-1881
"If any man will reason with me, let us first define our terms."

François-Marie Arouet (Voltaire)
Statue by Jean-Antoine Houdon
1694–1778
The word **atheism** is from the Greek *theos* (God) and *a* (without), meaning “disbelief in, or denial of, the existence of a God. Also, disregard of duty to God, godlessness or *practical* atheism” (OED).

In ancient Greece, the word **atheist** was used to describe 3 groups of people: (1) the godless, (2) those without supernatural help, and (3) those who did not accept Greek deities.
Some Tenets of Atheism

- Skeptical of supernatural claims; life is material
- Criticize the lack of empirical evidence
- Inconsistent revelations about God
- The problem of evil
- Religion cannot be supported by reason, logic, science, or evidence
The Case Against God

1. Evil and suffering exist in the world.
2. If God were omnipotent, he would be able to prevent these things.
3. If God were wholly good (specifically, if he were a God of love), he would want to prevent them.
4. If there were an omnipotent and wholly good God, then evil and suffering would have no place in the world.
5. Therefore, there is no such being as an omnipotent and wholly good God.
Two Kinds of Evil

• **Natural Evil**: floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, volcanoes, fire, avalanches, blizzards, drought, famine, landslides, lightening, monsoons, plagues, typhoons, heat and cold extremes, disease, parasites, etc.

• **Moral Evil**: Holocaust, Cultural Revolution, Cambodian killing fields, Bosnia, Ted Bundy, Mark Barton (Atlanta), Vietnam, WW I & II, Korea, corporate theft, abuse, etc.
Atheism

• Sees itself as the only true faith and demands that everyone conform to its beliefs.
• Obsessed with power.
• Atheists often speak of the eradication of religion as if this would be a painless, even pleasant process.
• Dostoevsky foresaw that the elimination of God led to new heights of moral brutality and political violence in Stalinism and Nazism.
Atheism

• Postmodernity is intolerant of any totalizing worldview.
• “Atheists can be just as nasty, prejudiced, stupid, and backward as their religious counterparts” (Alister McGrath).
• Atheism’s attraction resides primarily in what it denies, rather than what it articulates as an alternative.
“Among the repulsions of atheism for me has been its drastic uninterestingness as an intellectual position.”
“God is a unique, personal, plural, spiritual, eternally self-existent, transcendent, immanent, omniscient, immutable, holy, loving Being, the Creator and Ruler of the entire universe and the Judge of all mankind.”

- John Blanchard
Elaborating

1. By “unique” I mean that there is only one God and that all other objects or ideas given that name are figments of misled imagination.

2. By “personal” I mean that God is not a “thing” or “power”, influence or energy, but that he lives, thinks, feels and acts.

3. By “plural” I mean that there are distinguishable persons within a single Godhead.
4. By “spiritual” I mean that God has no physical attributes or dimensions, that he does not have a body, or any characteristics that can be defined in terms of size or shape.

5. By “eternally self-existent” I mean that he has always had the power of being within himself and has neither beginning nor end.
6. By “transcendent” I mean that God is over and above all things, outside of time and space, completely distinct from the universe, and not to be confused with it in any way.

7. By “immanent” I mean that, while remaining separate from it in being and essence, he permeates the entire universe.

8. By “omniscient” I mean that he knows everything, including the past, the present and the future.
Elaborating

9. By “immutable” I mean that he is unchangeable in every aspect of his being.

10. By “holy” I mean that he is utterly without blemish or deficiency in his being, essence or actions.

11. By “loving” I mean that he cares for all of creation and that in a very special way he demonstrates his love to humanity and communicates this to individuals.
12. By “Creator” I mean that by his own choice and power he brought into being all reality other than himself.

13. By “Ruler” I mean that he is in sole and sovereign control of everything that exists or happens, and that nothing can prevent him from doing as he pleases.
14. By “Judge of all mankind” I mean that he alone determines the eternal destiny of every member of the human race.
There is but one only, living, and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions; immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute; working all things according to the counsel of His own immutable and most righteous will, for His own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in
goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarde...
Arguments for Christian Theism

• Theistic arguments (ontological, cosmological, teleological
• Intelligent design
• The moral argument for God
• The argument from religious experience
• The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ
• The case against the case against God: evil
Theistic Argument *From* Evil

1. If God does not exist, transcendent, objective values of good and evil do not exist.

2. Evil does exist.

3. Therefore objective values exist, and some things are really, basically, fundamentally bad.

4. Therefore God exists.
For Consideration

• There is no logical contradiction in the co-existence of God and evil.

• In a world without God, how can the atheist speak of anything as being either good or evil.

• Without an infinite reference-point, the atheist can never speak of “good” or “evil” in the absolute sense.
For Consideration

• No one has a complete answer to the problem of evil.
• God does not owe us an explanation for everything he has done or is doing.
• To be left with doubts is not the same thing as being left in the dark.
• “The whole Bible addresses the problem of evil, for the whole story turns on the entrance of sin and evil into the world and on God’s plan for dealing with it” (Dr. John Frame).
“The very fact of our outrage at evil is a clue that we are in touch with a standard of goodness by which we judge this world as defective, as falling short of the mark.”
“There is no dispute with Freud, Nietzsche, etc., on the question of man’s ability to create a god according to his own psychological desire or need. This is precisely what Biblical Christianity asserts in the case. There is no dispute that gods so created will reflect the desires of the human creators as Feuerbach maintained. The dispute, of course, is located in the
question of whether or not men would be naturally disposed to create the Christian God. Though it is freely acknowledged and granted that man would be pleased to receive the benefits that only God could give them, it is highly questionable whether men desire the God who makes those benefits possible. Men would apparently rather die in their sin than live forever in obedience. They would rather hide
behind trees than face the penetrating gaze of God. They would prefer moral anarchy to the law of God.”
The Enchanted Ground

“Now the Pilgrims enter on the Enchanted Ground. The air of that region tends to such drowsiness that it disposed the Pilgrims to lie down at once and sleep...Sleeping here, there is no safety; for if you give way to your almost irresistible inclination, it becomes more irresistible, you are in imminent danger of the lethargy of spiritual death. Wherefore, beware of spiritual indolence; it is a gradual, but fearful
and powerful temptation. Wherefore, let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober...Pray earnestly to God to infuse more life and earnestness in your devotions, to give you a more vivid view and sense of eternal realities, to wake you up, and to shake you from this sloth, and to make you vigorous and fervent in spirit. This is what is needed.”

- G.B. Cheever