

ABOUT FREE WILL

Question #1:

Pick up a shoe.....

Can you observe it with any OR all of your 5 senses? If you can, you are able to have as much certainty of this fact as anything else in the world. You'll never see two people debating the existence of shoes. That would be an exercise in stupidity.....

In contrast, the existence of a god is much less certain. Many reasonable and intelligent people become atheists and arguments for God's existence always have reasonable counter arguments. "Experiences" of God can be hard to distinguish from mere psychological or sociological effects.....

So the state of humanity is thus: we find ourselves in a world with an epistemological framework such that we are far more likely to know that a pencil exists than that God exists!

Having established all this, here is my question....

Now, if God really does exist and wants a relationship with us -- and if this relationship is the single most important thing to "get right" -- then why would God not give us more epistemic access to his own existence ... than that of a shoe??. Doesn't this seem incompatible with the existence of a god who wants to have a relationship with us?

Cc. ____, ____

Response #1:

I didn't notice the question here the first time I read this post when you made it. I probably skimmed the beginning and decided not to waste my time on an antichristian rant.

To begin with, very little that anyone believes (whether they are atheist or theist) is verifiable through the witness of our five senses. That is why the premise of your question is false. The reason that human beings debate all sorts of things is that there is always some question or other in them, and we debate nearly everything.

You believe that emotions, thoughts and memories exist, for example, but what is the proof? Do you see, hear, taste, smell or touch any of them? Obviously not. When we listen to Alexa or Siri, we don't assume that there is any thinking producing their words. We know that that is merely the result of

algorithms. Thus, the sound of words spoken by a human being, while indeed proof of thought, is really not the kind of proof you are asking for since through those words, you do not see thoughts or hear or feel or taste or smell them. This is exactly the same with emotions and memories.

Beyond that, much that we believe is believed because we trust the person who told us about them. I've never seen America but I believe it exists. All the evidence I have is in books, TV and pictures. To accept this evidence, I have to trust the people who make them.

This is precisely why insanity is possible. The very definition of insanity is a denial of what is real or the adoption of what is imaginary as real either because one rejects reasonable evidence or because one receives doubtful evidence or non-evidence as evidence. This can be willful leading to what we call delusions. Or else it is the result of damage to the brain either inflicted or inherited.

Now, when the issue is about God, what you are failing to account for is the potency of the Reality of God. God is Ultimate Reality. In other words, there is nothing as real as God is. When God shows Himself without any shielding to preserve Creation, every creature ability to resist Him melts away. Nothing exists which is capable of resisting God's Will. That is why in order to allow men to make a true choice about Him, God shields them from that revelation of Himself that makes it impossible for them to do anything but submit to Him. That is, He lets men today have the choice to deny His Reality and Power.

Creature free will is a true ability to choose to believe in God and submit to Him in Christ Jesus or to reject faith in Him. In addition, for this ability to actually be exercised, there must be alternative things to believe about God. This is why we can create fictions like atheism and false religions and philosophies that allow us to believe whatever we choose apart from the Truth.

For anyone willing at all to believe, creation all around us and our own selves are a strong testimony to the Existence of God. In fact, if one is willing to be honest at all, it is impossible to deny the existence of God or of His Identity. But we can choose to be dishonest and work up all manner of rationalizations to back up our dishonesty. This is possible in all sorts of situations, after all; it is even more so in questions of Faith.

Question #2:

Yet according to your tales the devil still chose itself over the god despite being in the very presence of the god. This your excuse for why the god will not show itself is a gigantic cop out.

Response #2:

Angels had a free will as well. In fact, that was why man was created: to replace those angels who used their free will to rebel.

As for being in the presence of God, so were Adam and Eve. Free will made and makes it possible for both angels and men to deny the Truth that is right before them.

After we have been tested, we will see God as He is and that will end all creature rebellion.

Question #3:

You just gave any excuse for the god that it does not show itself because it will interference with our free will then turn around to assert the opposite?

Response

What exactly are you complaining about now?

What am I asserting opposite to what I said before?

Question #4:

You:

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Creature free will is a true ability to choose to believe in God and submit to Him in Christ Jesus or to reject faith in Him. In addition, for this ability to actually be exercised, there must be alternative things to believe about God. This is why we can create fictions like atheism and false religions and philosophies that allow us to believe whatever we choose apart from the Truth.

Implying that the god doesn't show itself because it compromises free will but go on to contradict yourself with:

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As for being in the presence of God, so were Adam and Eve. Free will made and makes it possible for both angels and men to deny the Truth that is right before them.

After we have been tested, we will see God as He is and that will end all creature rebellion.

So people can see the god and still exercise free will or they can't which is it?

Response #4:

I think you probably ignored what I actually said for some pet notion in your head.

As I actually said,

"when God shows Himself without any shielding to preserve Creation, every creature ability to resist Him melts away."

Question #5:

Where has the god done this before?

Response #5:

If you are asking where He has shown Himself in Creation without any shielding or covering (and I cannot see how you segued into that question), He has not. That is why we are still here making choices.

At the Second Advent, though, the Lord Jesus will unveil His Glory in the eyes of the armies gathered around Jerusalem and destroying it. That is what will end the Reign of the Antichrist and the antagonism of all his worshippers at that time.

Also, at the Judgment of the Great White Throne, the Irresistible Glory of God will also be made manifest so that not a single mouth can still oppose His Wisdom or a single knee refrain from bowing to Him. That Judgment will end every last trace of rebellion left in all Creation. Those who are thrown into the Lake of Fire after that Judgment will not go defiantly. Their regret to have opposed the Lord God will be eternal. There will be no more pride or arrogance in any of them. The ability to resist God in any way at all will have been perfectly extinguished.

Question #6:

The reason for the question is, you have no example of this happening but you offer it up as a reason why the god does not show itself but yet you say other people have been with the god and made choices. What is the point of bringing it up then?

Response #6:

I think it is clear that you understand perfectly what I said.

The point of bringing it up obviously is that no one has ever seen God fully unveiled. God is a God Who hides Himself (Isaiah 45:15). Everyone who was granted the privilege of a theophany was shielded from the full Reality of God so that they could completely deny what they had seen. Their free will remained intact.

If God had made Himself fully manifest, it would destroy every creature ability to resist Him (Isaiah 45:23-24; Revelation 6:16-17). That would negate free will.

So, what you and others like you demand is that God submit to you and fulfill your own conditions before you grant Him any respect as God. It is madness, of course. He will never bow to you. He has given you both the ability and the opportunity to choose what you will receive at His Hand. Because He is God and you are not. He has preserved that ability by keeping you from seeing Him so that the terror of His Power does not strip you of all choice. You can decide to try to turn His Generosity against Him, but in the end, it is you who will regret it in indescribable eternal torment.

It doesn't matter what you choose to believe here. The Truth won't change to suit you. You are not that powerful.

Question #7:

LMFAO! If the devil who was in the god's presence could choose something different why is it now such a hard thing for the god to reveal itself? No instead you provide a cop out. LMFAO!

Response #7:

Satan and the other angels saw God. But they obviously had the ability to ignore His Power. Satan's ambition, as described in the Bible, suggests that he and other angels had knowledge gaps about God that could be filled with trust in Him or lies about Him.

That is the type of shielding that was done for the angels. They were spirits so it wasn't physical evidence that they were tested with. It was spiritual knowledge of God.

Question #8:

@Boded

But the scriptures deny free will in Romans 9 (see below). Any conception of free will you have thereafter, you would need to redefine to understand. God's plan is written all over the holy text. How, then, could we choose anything? Where there is a will, there is a way, no? Perhaps the concept of 'fate' is done away with by God, and you are free to choose anything you wish in the grand scheme of things? Perhaps the context we are given here on Earth is made smaller by the grand reality? The scriptures are not a be all, end all interpretation of things by the way. It may be God's word, but a human hand had a part in transcribing it, you will note.

17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.

18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.

19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?

20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?

21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?

22 What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:

23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,

PS: Expect a reply soon in the other thread

Response #8:

I already explained this to you elsewhere:

Christianity does not hold the philosophical position of Determinism. It holds Predestination.

In that latter, God creates the Universe along with different possible ways it could exist. That is, once moral creatures came into existence, God created multiple possibilities for how the Universe will be depending on the choices they made. In fact, these possibilities are the options from which each individual moral creature must choose. If they decide to submit to Him, then the Universe "looks" a certain way in response to that choice. If they choose to rebel, then it looks another.

However, even though these multiple possibilities are absolutely genuine and real, God knows precisely how each moral creature will choose and therefore designs the Universe leading up to that choice in a way to make that choice actually possible. If He did not, the creature in question would be forced to make a choice they really didn't want to.

It should be obvious how this is completely different from Determinism. Although moral creatures cannot make a choice unless God decrees that choice so that it is fixed in creature history, no moral creature has ever been forced to make a choice that they didn't want to make. The options they have are absolutely real. As easily as one moral creature chooses to submit to God, they could also choose to rebel and vice versa. It is their true choice which God decrees, not an arbitrary path chosen for them completely independent of their true desires.

- lhedinobi3 (<https://www.nairaland.com/4955808/ten-questions-christians/16#74971920>)

Romans 9 affirms that our free will is empowered by God's Decree. It wouldn't function otherwise. We choose what we choose because God decreed that we would choose it since He knew before creating us that it is what we would want to choose once we received life from Him. The freedom of our will is perfectly real and true.

As for God's Plan, He is the Designer and Builder of all Existence. Our free will choices were accounted for in His Plan. Because He knew what we would want to choose, He designed existence to run in such a way that we will all make the choices we want to make while definitely working everything together to lead to the End that He Himself wants. This is just a matter of His Own Sovereignty over all things. Our free will is only limited to the options that He Himself presents us with. It is not a Sovereign Will as His is. So, we can only choose from among the options we are given by Him which options are part of His larger eternal plan.

Regarding the Reliability of the Scriptures, I know no reason to doubt them. Men did write them but these were believers who submitted to God in their human weakness. The Lord God is perfectly able to override that weakness in order to produce through such willing servants a perfect work. That was exactly what happened. As a result, the Bible is perfectly accurate. The copies and translations that exist today are obviously not inspired so they all contain some errors but because of the nature of the Word of God, any diligent student or seeker can get through those errors to the exact Truth that is obscured by them.

Question #9:

So the god created a universe in which it has predetermined that a whole swaths of people will go to hell yet it is the good god? LMFAO!

Response #9:

Straw man fallacy.

Question #10:

Read the scripture I quoted, and try to process it. It basically says that God dumped the Pharaoh (and other beings) in the trash so to speak for reasons you will not comprehend, being mortal and so on. The book of Job is similar. Read Job 38. How can you reconcile that with your Christian faith? You can't, and don't want to.

Just because you chose an action in a temporal sense to relate to God doesn't mean that he didn't will it in a cosmic sense, making it real. God's will moves mountains. Our part in it was only faith. In other words, endurance. In other words, only existence. This, I agree with.

But free will is a relic of a concept that denies reality. God moulded the inception of the universe and observes everything after that. However, even at its inception God knew everything that would ever happen to it, and even spells out future events for us in cryptic prose in the Bible. Free will makes sense if you are detached from consequences and can literally be anything you want. But such an idea is unconquerable to me, because it seems fair that every action has its consequence, whether temporally or indefinitely. And this idea is the main one for many religions. But you may as well be indifferent to this conception and any one bearing the name "consequences" being as you've championed the philosophy of a man who claims to create equals, and if you champion it you must believe in its victory, no?

I fail to see the strawman here.

Response #10:

Regarding your first paragraph, I already explained this with that post. God speaks from foreknowledge as easily as we speak from increasing knowledge. He knew Pharaoh before Pharaoh was born. He knew the choices that Pharaoh would want to make. He decreed those choices after all to make it possible for Pharaoh to choose them when he decided that he wanted to. In other words, he designed Pharaoh to be what Pharaoh wanted to be. This was why Pharaoh was a "vessel of wrath". It was not an arbitrary choice that God made for him in spite of what he might prefer. It was what Pharaoh wanted to be in Time as a creature. This is applicable to every other person who has ever existed. The choices that God knew we would make with our free will are what He designed us to make.

Yes, I not only can but I have reconciled this to my Christian Faith. Jesus Christ died to save everybody. The Gospel was proclaimed right from the Garden of Eden to make sure that everybody who wants to be saved will be. But the fact that God made provision for everybody's Salvation does not mean that everybody will be saved whether they want to be or not. Even though the provision was made, they still have to choose. And God knew from eternity past who would reject it. Those ones were thus designed to reject it according to their desire. In other words, all rebels who will go to Hell are so because that is precisely who they want to be.

When you say,

"Just because you chose an action in a temporal sense to relate to God doesn't mean that he didn't will it in a cosmic sense, making it real. God's will moves mountains. Our part in it was only faith. In other words, endurance. In other words, only existence. This, I agree with,"

you are close to what I am saying. You just didn't finish it. As creatures, we clearly do not self-exist. Our existence is powered by something external to us. That is, we exist by God's Will. But God's Will is that we will choose whether we will submit to His Authority or not. Therefore, our existence incorporates the ability to make that choice. Because also we cannot make any choice at all without God's enabling, God using His Foreknowledge of us decreed that we would make the very choice we would want to make. Therefore, we choose precisely what we want by God's Own enabling through His irresistible Decree. In other words, our free will choices were ratified and sanctioned by God's Own inviolable Decree so that nothing can stop us from choosing exactly what we want to choose.

However, when you say,

"Free will makes sense if you are detached from consequences and can literally be anything you want,"

you make the same straw man that ____ saw fit to make. That may be why you failed to see that he made a straw man. Free will is not the ability to do whatever you please with or without consequence. It is the ability to choose between just two options:

1. Submit to God's Authority

2. Rebel against God's Authority..

That is all. Consequences and rewards are only part of the furniture involved in making this choice. They themselves do not affect the freedom of the will. If they did, the fear of the Lake of Fire would force everyone to be saved or else the Hope of Glory, Honor and Immortality with God would force everyone to be saved. Obviously, neither is the case. Everyone is born with a sense of concern about their bad behavior and a dread of death and the nagging knowledge of Judgment after Death. But lots of people extinguish such concerns by the time they are out of childhood. In fact, by teenage, the desire to have fun and test your limits in all types of things pretty much makes the concept of a more fun eternal existence ridiculous. Most people don't want a moral conscience at that age. Beyond that age, life is just plain depressing unless you can find something to lose yourself in and think as little as possible about it. So, the incentives and deterrents attached to the options do not force a decision one way or another.

In summary then, here's what I said:

1. Free will is the ability to choose whether to submit to God or to rebel against Him. (What I did not say: It is the ability to do whatever you like.)
2. The very fact that we are creatures means that we cannot do a single thing unless God enables us to do it.
3. God's Omniscience means that He knows beforehand what we will choose once we have a free will. (What I did not say: God's foreknowledge makes us do things whether we want to do them or not.)
4. Because our very existence is powered by God and because God knows what we want to choose, every choice that we make or will make was already decreed by Him before He made us.
5. Thus, free will is possible because of both God's Omniscience and His Omnipotence.

That is, there is no determinism here. The options we have are real but because God knows what we want to choose, He makes us able to choose it by decreeing that we will choose it. Otherwise, we would not be able to choose it at all. This is the Christian doctrine of Predestination.

Romans 9, Job 38, Exodus 10 and indeed the whole Bible teaches this.

Question #11:

@bolded answers free will a bit. But concedes that God has no plan.

Response #11:

That is very difficult to understand. Do you really believe that such a concession was so much as implied there?

Consider that it is precisely because God is working toward getting an Eternal Family of creatures willing to be with Him in loving fellowship eternally that He creates a universe that provides His moral creatures with all the opportunities they need to exercise the free will that He has given them. Each free will choice is wisely worked with every other choice in order to lead steadily to the full number of that Family.

It is hard to miss that in what I said. There would be no point in having a free will if the end result is not to have an Eternal Family of willing creatures.

Question #12:

That depends on you. You said God gives us the ability to make a choice. So do we choose our actions by ourselves OR does God choose for us? Answer this first.

Response #12:

It seemed to me like we were already done with this and had moved on to God's possession of a Plan.

I don't quite see how the above is not a false dichotomy in the face of my foregoing arguments.

Question #13:

Now before I continue, I want us to establish something first:

Free will, in humans, is the power or capacity to choose among alternatives or to act in certain situations independently of natural, social, or divine restraints. Free will is denied by some proponents of determinism. Arguments for free will are based on the subjective experience of freedom, on sentiments of guilt, on revealed religion, and on the universal supposition of responsibility for personal actions that underlies the concepts of law, reward, punishment, and incentive (for additional discussion of free will and determinism, see moral responsibility, problem of). In theology the existence of free will must be reconciled with God's omniscience and goodness (in allowing people to choose badly) and with divine grace, which allegedly is necessary for any meritorious act. A prominent feature of existentialism is the concept of a radical, perpetual, and frequently agonizing freedom of choice. Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–80), for example, spoke of the individual "condemned to be free."

Source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/free-will>

When I'm discussing free will, i'm discussing free will as related to philosophy, not just christianity.

Response #13

Philosophy is not much my cup of tea. I indulge sometimes but my business in apologetics is specifically to demonstrate the Bible's position clearly so that everyone interested knows what they are arguing for or against regarding it.

Therefore, I cannot defend that definition of free will. It is not the biblical one although it does skirt close to it. As I said before, biblically, free will is the ability to choose between submitting to and rebelling against God in the context of one's temporal circumstances.

In other words, there are limits, if not restraints. Creature free will is not sovereign. It is absolutely free but only within clearly defined limits. We cannot choose what circumstances we must make our choices in. And we cannot expand or shrink our array of options. But we are completely free to choose one thing or the other in our changing circumstances from day to day.

Question #14:

I honestly don't get this logic

If God knows EVERYTHING that will happen, then if something different happens he would be wrong. Therefore, everything must happen exactly the way that he foresaw it at the beginning of the Universe. If nothing different can happen then we don't have free will. If we don't have free will and everything is predestined, then God is accountable because he pre-arranged the laws and starting conditions of this universe that determined our actions. Therefore, we can't be held accountable for our "sins"

TLDR; If all actions are in fact predestined, the Creator must be fully culpable for all sins.

I get that we're trapped by the limitations of our understanding. But that just emphasises God's evil in creating us without the ability to understand him. We literally cannot be expected to understand that God's plan is good, but God nonetheless expects us to accept this. Which might be ok if there weren't a thousand other mutually incompatible religions and ideologies all insisting that any failure of understanding reflects our deficiency and not a deficiency with the ideology.

Response #14:

I feel right now like I just got stuck in a loop. This is what I already explained. Nothing at all can happen unless God decrees it. Thus, our choices were decreed by Him. But the freedom of those choices is not thus negated. Rather, it is guaranteed by that Decree.

Therefore, these choices are not made by God, they are only made possible by Him.

Question #15:

You put yourself in this loop to be honest. I understand what you are saying but it seems you don't understand what I am.

Let me explain in few sentences what i'm driving at here:

1. Take for example me wanting to drive down a road and choosing my turns on the fly.
2. If there are only two roads, and both start at A and end at B, where is my free will?

You might say that it depends on the road chosen, but what if my will is to go to destination C? What if I just want to stop part way on that road? If I have to go to B regardless of the route chosen, I really don't have free will.

Thus my argument: you can either have a plan, or you can have free will, but not both.

Response #15:

If you want to believe that, I can't stop you. These conversations are not about me, only about the Truth.

The Truth is that everyone has two options. Also, everyone has the ability to choose one or the other. As long as anyone is alive, they have the opportunity to exercise that ability. That is what free will is about.

Nothing in that suggests that you have two roads that start at the same point and end at the same point. I have no idea where you got that from. It has nothing to do with my argument.

As for having a plan, I'm sure you know that I won't take your word for it. Clearly, God has a Plan that requires human beings to make a choice to submit or rebel against Him. I don't see at all how both things are not working together. The mutual exclusivity you are insisting on is unjustified.

Question #16:

If the choice is ours to make, please reconcile this thought with God's plan

"...it is precisely because God is working toward getting an Eternal Family of creatures willing to be with Him in loving fellowship eternally that He creates a universe that provides His moral creatures with all the opportunities they need to exercise the free will that He has given them."

- Ihedinobi3 (<https://www.nairaland.com/5020369/god-shoes/3#76350634>)

Question #17:

Let me use another (hopefully more clear) example. If I am in a maze, and the only ways that I can turn lead me to the exit (aside from the fact that this is a pretty poor maze), then have I free will if my turns are forced? Even if I have to choose a path, aren't my turns still forced if I am moved from an incorrect path onto the correct path to reach the desired end?

Response #17:

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"...our free will choices were ratified and sanctioned by God's Own inviolable Decree so that nothing can stop us from choosing exactly what we want to choose..."

...Free will is not the ability to do whatever you please with or without consequence. It is the ability to choose between just two options:

1. Submit to God's Authority

2. Rebel against God's Authority..

That is all. Consequences and rewards are only part of the furniture involved in making this choice. They themselves do not affect the freedom of the will. If they did, the fear of the Lake of Fire would force everyone to be saved or else the Hope of Glory, Honor and Immortality with God would force everyone to be saved. Obviously, neither is the case. Everyone is born with a sense of concern about their bad behavior and a dread of death and the nagging knowledge of Judgment after Death. But lots of people extinguish such concerns by the time they are out of childhood. In fact, by teenage, the desire to have fun and test your limits in all types of things pretty much makes the concept of a more fun eternal existence ridiculous. Most people don't want a moral conscience at that age. Beyond that age, life is just plain depressing unless you can find something to lose yourself in and think as little as possible about it. So, the incentives and deterrents attached to the options do not force a decision one way or another."

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If you want to use analogies, then

1. Road A leads to Eternal Life with God;

2. Road B leads to the Second Death.

Also, you drive. You choose which road you take. Nobody does the choosing for you.

The maze analogy is still unclear. I am not sure how it relates at all to my arguments.

Question #18:

Can you go into more details of this plan @bolded?

Response #18:

"...it is precisely because God is working toward getting an Eternal Family of creatures willing to be with Him in loving fellowship eternally that He creates a universe that provides His moral creatures with all the opportunities they need to exercise the free will that He has given them."

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Question #19:

Also, since your god is allpowerful and he pre-arranged the starting conditions of the universe, why couldn't he create a world where we have choice, but children aren't burned alive in sewers?

Response #19:

What does this mean exactly?

Question #20:

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- Ihedinobi3 (<https://www.nairaland.com/5020369/god-shoes/3#76350634>)

Question #23:

Also, since your god is allpowerful and he pre-arranged the starting conditions of the universe, why couldn't he create a world where we have choice, but children aren't burned alive in sewers?

Response #23:

What does this mean exactly?

Question #24:

What of the creatures who aren't willing to be with him in loving fellowship? Was it God that created them? Are the choices they made not part of God's plan? He knew before they even existed that they'd rebel against him but he punishes them anyway, no?

Response #25:

"Regarding your first paragraph, I already explained this with that post. God speaks from foreknowledge as easily as we speak from increasing knowledge. He knew Pharaoh before Pharaoh was born. He knew the choices that Pharaoh would want to make. He decreed those choices after all to make it possible for Pharaoh to choose them when he decided that he wanted to. In other words, he designed Pharaoh to be what Pharaoh wanted to be. This was why Pharaoh was a "vessel of wrath". It was not an arbitrary choice that God made for him in spite of what he might prefer. It was what Pharaoh wanted to be in Time as a creature. This is applicable to every other person who has ever existed. The choices that God knew we would make with our free will are what He designed us to make.

Yes, I not only can but I have reconciled this to my Christian Faith. Jesus Christ died to save everybody. The Gospel was proclaimed right from the Garden of Eden to make sure that everybody who wants to be saved will be. But the fact that God made provision for everybody's Salvation does not mean that everybody will be saved whether they want to be or not. Even though the provision was made, they still have to choose. And God knew from eternity past who would reject it. Those ones were thus designed to reject it according to their desire. In other words, all rebels who will go to Hell are so because that is precisely who they want to be."

- lhedinobi3 (<https://www.nairaland.com/5020369/god-shoes/3#76349854>)

Question #26:

@bolded. This just proves that you've not understood what I've been writing.

First of all, there's two roads but they lead to the SAME stop.

God knows the end from the beginning. Is there any choice you'll make that will surprise God & alter where you're going to end up?

Response #26:

Why does God need to be surprised?

Question #27:

You know exactly what it means. God is not a dullard. Or do you believe there is no free will in heaven?

If NO, are we just puppets on a string? One may say, you may be so blissful that you are not even tempted to sin any more--so we're just mindless automations in heaven? Does that mean God created temptation in the first place? Why didn't he just have the blissfulness to begin with? Because of free will?

If YES, how long until someone pulls another fast one and screws up? Until the next failure? It would be a cycle of Bible stories that time after time the God character has to wipe out most of humanity and start fresh, then they fall back into "sin" and he has to wipe them out all over again. Whether it be flood, fire, or what have you.

Permit me to use this excerpt from blogger Vexen Crabtree:

If we do have a 2D object, such as a picture, then we can turn it into a 3D object via a simple trick. If we make an exact copy of the 2D painting and change it slightly, and put them behind each other and repeat this 100 times, the result apparently turns 2D into 3D. Every school child knows this. If you draw a stick man in the bottom corner of a notebook, and a slightly different one on the next page in the same relative location, a school child can then bend the corner of the notebook, flick through all the pages and see each 2D drawing in quick succession. This creates an illusion of a 2D stick man moving. It is almost as if the 2D drawing has gained a third dimension of movement.

The child, who exists one dimension "above" the drawing, created the stickman's past and future (even if it is presently half way through its flickering existence). The stickman has no way of perceiving or inferring the existence of dimensions other than its native two (unless the stickman developed complex maths, as we have). It exists in ignorance of "higher" dimensions. Higher means dimensions that are not native to the theorized 2D object.

<http://www.vexen.co.uk/religion/dimensions.html#Dimensions>

Do you think there's anything that stickman will do that will surprise the child?

Just like that child has authored the stickman's destiny, that's how God has authored our own destiny. So, I'm asking again. Isn't there a possibility that God could have created the universe without the unnecessary burden of sin and pain and punishment?

Response #27:

Regarding

"...do you believe there is no free will in heaven?"

Obviously, there is no free will after Death (or Resurrection for believers who live to see the Lord Jesus return). My responses from the beginning have implied that. Life on earth is the only time we make a choice whether to submit to God or rebel against Him. There is no point in still making a choice after you have been made an eternal part of God's Family or after you have been eternally rejected by Him.

As for:

"Isn't there a possibility that God could have created the universe without the unnecessary burden of sin and pain and punishment?"

What does this have to do with anything?

Edit: Regarding this:

"If NO, are we just puppets on a string? One may say, you may be so blissful that you are not even tempted to sin any more--so we're just mindless automations in heaven? Does that mean God created temptation in the first place? Why didn't he just have the blissfulness to begin with? Because of free will?"

As I said,

"Free will is not the ability to do whatever you please with or without consequence. It is the ability to choose between just two options:

1. Submit to God's Authority

2. Rebel against God's Authority.."

Free will is not the ability to choose whether to take a nap or to eat noodles or things like that. We only have to choose whether we will submit to God or not. Other choices are just the joy of existing, which God has granted to all His creatures. We can enjoy different experiences and discover the wonders of life all around us and take pleasure in that discovery. Only rebels will lose this gift in the end.

So, in the end, all of God's Family will still enjoy making choices but not of submission or rebellion. To their joy, they won't need to deal with that test again.

As for being automatons because they no longer have to make that choice, all believers with any lick of sense look forward to being able to live without sinning against God. In other words, they look forward to not being able to choose to sin against God anymore.

As for creating temptations, God did not. As I have said, God only sanctioned and made possible all creature choices. So, when rebellion came in, it brought temptation with it independent of what God preferred for His creatures. The temptation has served and will continue to serve to give other creatures a real opportunity to exercise their own free will but it is not at all necessary. If temptation did not exist at all, free will still would have. All creatures would only just not be interested in sinning against God at all so none of them would be trying to persuade the other to sin against Him. But some creatures did sin and they are the ones tempting others.

As for bliss, that is the issue of planning already spoken of. God's first creation was perfect and blissful. There was not a trace of evil or badness at all in it. Satan had no reason to sin. When he sinned, it was entirely because his own perfection went to his head, not because anything or anyone tempted him. Nothing did. Even after the angelic rebellion that followed and subsequent judgment, God still re-created the Universe to perfectly accommodate human life. Adam and Eve had no reason to sin either. The Garden of Eden was perfectly blissful in every way. The animals served the human couple's perfect pleasure. The trees and fruits delighted them. They had God to commune with every single evening and each other to enjoy all the time. Nothing was missing or unpleasant in any way.

When Satan tempted Eve, she had no reason to fall for his tricks. She only did because as long as free will exists, human beings and angels can decide to ignore all the perfection around them in search of a fantasy that is nothing more than a nightmare. She simply tried to see if there really could be some other way to exist. And there was. And it was very not-pretty.

So, it was not that God did not create perfect bliss. It was that bliss is not enough for people determined to rebel against God. Rebellion against God is all about insisting on replacing Him as Ruler. It isn't about getting anything good that is lacking or correcting something bad in our experience.

That is why those who believe in God will enjoy eternal fellowship with Him: they are perfectly happy to have God rule over them. But rebels will always be miserable to have that. But there can never be more than one God, so rebels can never be truly happy nor will what happiness they enjoy right now last because they will eventually see God and recognize the futility of all their rebellion against Him.

Question #28:

With all due respect, Ihedinobi, you're starting to sound like a broken record. And it just proves that this is one of those aspects of religion which has so completely lost track of logic that it makes the belief system irreconcilable with logic.

Response #28:

About sounding like a broken record, you are of course very correct. I have, after all, just been copying and pasting excerpts from earlier responses in answer to your repeated questions.

But you are quite wrong to conclude from that that there is any problem of logic in the biblical position. The true conclusion is that you have recycled questions in an effort to try to undermine or suggest some kind of insufficiency in the answers that you have received. In fact, that is precisely why you have here declared that there is a problem with them since I have continued to demonstrate that you really have no new objection to the arguments I have made by simply copy-pasting old answers to the same objections.

If you do manage to demonstrate an error in the reasoning - other than unilaterally declaring the existence of one - then my position is bad. But you actually have to do it. You have not done it yet.

Question #29:

AN OMNIPOTENT GOD eliminates ALL semblance free will.

Response #29:

Normally, I wouldn't separate the topic sentence from its explanatory paragraph sentences. But I am doing it here to demonstrate your major problem here.

Judging by your earlier responses, you did appreciate the consistency of the arguments I made. But then you did something that I always find disturbing in your arguments: you turned around to begin to cycle through the arguments all over again acting like the questions that had just been addressed were not even answered at all. Also, you started trying to get me to answer an argument that I told you was not my position.

Perhaps in philosophy, free will has a certain meaning, but my arguments on this thread, which you decided to challenge, presented a different meaning. Technical terms are everything for meaning. Words change in meaning as they are used in different contexts, sometimes very significantly too. And I made sure to explain what free will means in the Bible. But you have been trying to force me to argue for a meaning that I do not hold. And I simply pointed you back to the very arguments that you had decided to challenge.

As I said, exactly because creatures are creatures and therefore not self-existing, their free will can only be possible by the Will of their self-existing Creator. Thus, God created real possibilities and alternatives for His Moral Creatures and empowered them by His Own Power (the Omnipotence that exercises you so much) to choose between them. In other words, free will is only possible for creatures because an Omnipotent God guarantees it.

But when you ignore the meaning of free will as a biblical concept, then all you will have is absolute lies like the above for which you will be scrambling up all manner of rationalizations that really do not hold up under scrutiny. See below for an example.

Question #30:

In a universe containing an omnipotent god, all actions can only occur in accordance with the will of that god. This renders EVERYTHING, even the option to submit or rebel, the responsibility of the god. And all actions taken by human beings are subject to that control. The beings might think they are autonomous, but omnipotence means they are actually puppets. For game developers, this is exactly like the situation in a video game (If you're a fan of videogames, you must have heard of or played The Sims). The programmer is responsible for everything within the game cosmos. The programmer cannot blame game characters for their actions because their actions are entirely driven by the will of the programmer. Their appearance of autonomy is simply a trick.

Response #30:

The key problem here is this:

"This renders EVERYTHING, even the option to submit or rebel, the responsibility of the god."

Now, why is the above true?

Your video game parallel works well enough up to a point.

A self-existing Creator exists purely by His Own Will. That means that He is whatever He is pleased to be. Creatures of His production, on the other hand, cannot be whatever they are pleased to be for the important reason that they did not will themselves into existence.

But unlike your game developers, the Creator here possesses the ability to create real alternatives that each moral creature can choose from. As I explained in my very first response to you (copying incidentally from an earlier response also to you in another conversation), these alternatives are as real as the Universe that you actually see. In other words, for every single unbeliever who goes to Hell, there was just as real a possibility that they could have gone to Heaven instead. Both possibilities were created by God, and until the choice was made, nothing was decided.

Of course, in order for any choice at all to be made, God must decree it. Otherwise, creatures being creatures cannot do anything at all. Therefore, because God, knowing all things, knew precisely what each creature would want to choose, He designed the Universe and the creature itself leading up to that temporal choice so that exactly the choice it wants to make is made. Again, that did not cancel out the other alternative. The other alternative remained just as real until the choice was made. But because the creature in question wanted to make the choice that was actually made, God empowered it with His Decree.

That means that God's Decree is actually made by our desires, in a manner of speaking. God decreed that we would be what we want to be between the options of a loyal subject of God and an arrogant rebel.

Thus, we decide. Thus, WE are responsible.

Now, if you decide to maintain your insistence on God's Responsibility, there is a simple answer for you: so what? So what if God unilaterally decided to make you a rebel? Then what? Did you make Him or did He make you? Who has a responsibility to the other here? The maker or the thing made? Does the video game have any right at all to challenge the developer? So God made you a vessel of wrath, what will you do? What difference does it make if you call Him evil for it? Will your calling Him that make Him evil any more than your pretending that He does not exist will put Him out of existence? You are in a no-win situation. Either you humbly submit to the One Who made you and live or you hang on to your arrogant rebellion and spend eternity in torment and regret. That is a choice. If you feel that it is not, well, I am happy enough being a believer who had no choice but to be one, even if that were true. I can't possibly envy you the future you have as an unbeliever.

Question #31:

AN OMNISCIENT GOD also eliminates all free will. Firstly if all actions are foreseen then the illusion of freedom is shown to be false. Individuals are merely acting out a pre-written script. No freedom there. Also, omniscience in a cause and effect natural universe means all the causes for decisions are known by the omniscient observer. This renders all actions as inevitable and driven by physical laws. No freedom there either. The addition of supernatural causes for decisions does not restore free will either. Neither does random quantum noise, souls, angels or time travel.

Response #31

This one is the constant ugly duckling in any argument opposing free will. It has not even a prayer at all. What does knowledge have to do with anything here?

How does my knowing that the clock will strike noon today mean that it had no choice but to do so? How does my knowing that the sun will rise tomorrow make it rise? Knowledge has nothing to do with causation.

Knowledge, however, can inform action. In other words, if I deliberately act on what I know, then I can produce certain effects.

As I said above (and lots of other places still in response to you elsewhere), God exerted His Power in response to His Knowledge in order to create the Universe. In doing so, free will was made possible.

Question #32:

So to make free-will work, religion has to come up with a model where God backs away from humans, ceases to be omniscient and omnipotent, and allows each person a bubble of private operating space, in which, according to religion, true free will can operate, outside the controlling influence and scrutiny of a god.

Of course there's a problem with that too.

Free will is demonstrably not possible in any universe. The definition is itself a contradiction in terms.

Human beings enjoy the illusion of free will. Which for non-omniscient people, is pretty good. We can't perceive the difference. But an omniscient observer could. So an omniscient god would regard a person as a cloud of atoms, all obeying the laws of physics, acting-out according to prior causes. (or whatever prior causes are abroad in the universe).

Any close scrutiny of the free will question, will always dismantle the mythology around sin, accountability, responsibility and judgement. This is not the first time we've had this argument and as expected, we've ended up running in circles.

Response #32:

So, basically, there are no such things as sin, accountability, responsibility and judgment, according to you. That, of course, is the goal of all atheistic philosophies. If God does not exist, you can do whatever you want since there is nobody to judge or punish you.

An investment in such a thing would necessarily force desperate measures to avoid facing the Truth. The "free will question" is not at all a question. Obviously, you are not just an unbeliever, you are an anti-believer committed to opposing the Bible wherever you can and however you can, but I am a believer just as committed to following the Bible. The world is filled from end to end with people who are one side or the other. These are obviously choices. We are also obviously not self-existing so that we can "get behind the scenes" to observe whether or not we are really making choices. But people cross from one side to the other and back all the time. For all human intents and purposes, that is unarguable evidence that they are making choices.

I get that being God is a closely-held fantasy of atheists, but however hard anyone believes anything, it does not become true for all that.

Regarding your arguments, whatever religion may say, the Bible teaches that human beings were made "in the image of God". That is, we were made to possess a mirror of God's Sovereign Will. We have a real ability to choose who we will be. This makes us gods according to the Bible because God is the I AM. God does not step back at all for free will to work, as I have demonstrated numerous times now.

Not only is free will possible in this universe, it is the only reasonable way to explain this universe. As for a contradiction, this is not the first or the second time we have discussed it and the contradiction is still mysterious. Everything offered to validate it is all noise and no substance.

As for illusion and being non-omniscient, as I said, isn't that the crux of the atheistic objection: why does God get to be the omniscient and omnipotent one but not me? Well, you should have found a way to self-exist too and then we would all be worshipping you instead.

Question #33:

This is the part that lays the haymaker to logic and knocks it down out cold,... i find it baffling how it is even an argument.

So God would rather let us suffer in eternal torment rather than alter our free will because he's a loving God? Excuse me..... Whaat?

Is it no longer possible for God to alter our free will whilst giving us the illusion of it? Are we here to act out a play then suffer for eternity because how a "loving " God decided to create someone and destine him for hell?

So, let's say God made us for himself. Then turns around and created "free will" again knowing that some people are going to hell. Why create them?

Response #33:

Up to this moment, I have been trying to keep the conversation out of absurdity but "freethinking", as your kind calls it, is wont to jump straight into absurdity after huffing and puffing fails.

What does "alter our free will" mean? If free will is altered, is it still free will? This is precisely the same thing as assuming that omnipotence means the ability to do contradictory things. So, if God is all-powerful, then He must also be able to lie, for example. What do these things mean?

As for creating somebody to go to hell, see my last response to you. Additionally, you are exactly right that we were made for Him. Exactly right. Therefore, how dare anyone rebel against Him?

Look, for example, at the atheistic position. You say that no God exists. When you are asked why you believe such a thing, you claim to have no evidence of His Existence. So then, how come you exist? How are you here? Your answers end up at "I don't know, no one knows." In other words, you completely reject a perfectly reasonable explanation for your existence in favor of complete ignorance. And that is the intellectually superior position for the lot of you!

Obviously, you didn't create yourself. Obviously something or someone caused you to exist. Why does it not register with you that if anything is powerful enough to produce something as awesome and incredible as you with your self-awareness and ability to reason that even the most talented animals completely lack, then that thing or person must have a reason for you to exist? It is entirely because you want to be responsible to no one at all that you pretend that your existence is a complete mystery. That mysteriousness gives you the delusion that you might be God yourself so that you can make your own rules and do as you please.

Clearly, if God made you, then He has a right to be obeyed by you. If you don't obey Him, whether it is because you are unable to do so or it is because you just don't want to do so, He has absolutely every right to throw you into the Lake of Fire with no resulting stain on His Character. In what way are you equal to Him that you would judge Him? You simply can't since you are His product.

This is painfully obvious in all of human experience. We do what we want with our possessions, especially with the ones that we produce. Why should God not do the same?

Question #34:

How many more times will I illustrate my arguments before you finally see what I am saying?

Let us look at God's plan & Free will exclusively

God's Plan: Fate or god's plan, whatever you wish to call it... implies that our actions have to be predestined

Free will:implies the opposite. That our actions and choices are completely a personal decision.

For example, let's see how these two ideas function together. Let's say, your fate or plan/destiny is, as you Christians say describe it... to spread the word of the lord. You're supposed to be a good

christian, and found a highly successful church in Africa. And this church, through donations, is able to feed and give shelter to thousands. And all of them convert to christianity, and your followers and set up other churches, as a result of your actions and leadership, which help millions. That's your fate. But, let's say you have free will, you make your own decisions. So, perhaps at a relatively young age you hear about the Christian churches abhorrent sexual abuse scandals, and disgusted by the organization, you want nothing to do with the church. You decide to be an atheist, and instead of opening churches, you open a brewery and use your hard earned cash to buy hundreds of expensive cars. By one choice, you've completely destroyed the plan.

Get it now?

Response #34:

It's the same here. Or rather it would be if I was concerned about persuading you about anything. There are two reasons we are having this conversation:

1. It's an opportunity to explain some things in a different way to an audience that may comprise believers who don't understand this stuff.
2. I decided to extend the same benefit of the doubt that I give all antichristians to you just to demonstrate that I can be as generous as I told you I was. I have answered your questions and arguments multiple times and excused the underhanded tactics you have employed just to make a difference from the last time we did this.

Otherwise, it matters nothing to me what you believe to be true. If it didn't, I'd be pulling teeth by now.

As I always say, atheists have a completely different set of assumptions about reality than Christians do, so it is hopeless to expect a reconciliation of views here. I haven't answered you in order to convince you of the correctness of Christian beliefs. Can't care less what your opinions of them are.

God's Plan: to get an eternal Family of willing subjects composed of human beings and angels.

Free Will: the tool through which such a Family is produced.

Illustration: Jesus Christ died on the Cross for everyone. If anyone believes in Him and perseveres in Faith, they will end up as part of that Family. If anyone does not believe or falls away, they will be rejected from that Family.

I can't credit your position then.

Question #35:

Please, I'd like to know where in particular I expressed satisfaction in any of your comments as related to this argument thus far in this thread

Response #35:

"@bolded answers free will a bit. But concedes that God has no plan."

- IAmSabrina (<https://www.nairaland.com/5020369/god-shoes/3#76350436>)

That was you admitting that at least a part of my post at least explained free will to some extent for you. Then, I found that I had to start over again and run the gamut several times.

Question #36:

What does that say about your definition of free will? There's a reason I copy-pasted that excerpt from Britannica you know....

And even by your definition of free will, the problem of a supposedly "loving" God still arises. Hence why I keep asking you and you keep dodging this question in particular: Isn't there a possibility that a "loving" God could've created the world without pain & sin, and we still maintain our free will? Is this impossible for him to do?

Response #36:

What does it say then? That I ought to worship God according to Britannica or according to the Bible? My arguments are made to defend the Bible's position, not Britannica's, and the Bible has specific meanings suited to its own "philosophy", if you will. That is my business.

And again, I ask you what your question means. Does omnipotence mean the power to contradict things and even one's own nature? If possession of free will means that some creatures will sin and thus introduce pain and suffering into the world, how then can a world where free will exists be devoid of these things? Is it still free will if God were to "alter" it, as you said?

Question #37:

Again..... This. Concedes. That. God. Has. No. Plan

I literally don't see how you don't get this

Response #37:

As you know, I don't take your word for it.

Question #38:

Because God has scripted everything that will ever happen in the universe the moment he set it into motion in his omnipotence AND omniscience

Response #38:

Have you ever heard of a non sequitur?

Question #39:

God created alternatives. Fine. Now does God know EXACTLY which alternative said creature is going to choose?

If NO, he's not allknowing. Hence, omniscience should be scrapped from his character list

If YES, then he is malevolent for creating that creature and watching him in end in hell

Its as easy as ABC really.

Response #39:

Yeah, still a non sequitur. Even if you say it a little louder and a few more times too.

Question #40:

See above

Response #40:

Same as above then.

Question #41:

LOL

_____, I guess the faeces is being flung already cheesy

I always laugh to tears when I see christians drive into this lane of thought. Victim complex much?

Thanks for admitting your God is not benevolent

Response #41:

I know that you and other atheists are very sensitive to any mention of Hell, but I was only saying that if we have no choice, then, of course there was no point in these arguments since I am a believer and you're not. We're not going to be choosing anything different, are we?

Question #42:

@bolded: Not if you're an all-knowing, all-powerful, supposedly omni-benevolent deity

Response #42:

Why is this not special pleading?

Question #43:

Ihedinobi, let me ask you:

Which came first: God or the Universe?

Because most of what you're suggesting in the post above would make sense if the Universe came before God, which would make no damn sense

You said: God exerted His Power in response to His Knowledge in order to create the Universe.

"Knowledge" of what exactly?

Response #43:

It's not a very good question to ask because even human engineers and builders work in accordance with a plan with clearly spelt out details. Does their product precede them then? It is the plan that informs their actions.

Is it really in doubt what His Knowledge was of? Is this really the first time I'm saying that?

Question #44:

LoL

There is no "goal" in atheism. Atheism is simply accepting reality the way it is without adding concepts we aren't sure of or cannot explain satisfactorily. It is a rejection of belief in a deity because of lack of evidence.

Now that's what I call strawman...

Question #44:

I take it that there are no implications in such a rejection?

Question #45:

(grin) @bolded

It was only a matter of time before you resumed this tactic you love to use; as someone here hilariously termed it - the random flinging of poo all over the place.

Response #45:

Again, your sensitivity to things like that notwithstanding, that was part of a demonstration that people choose sides and change them all the time. That means that choice is rather obvious.

Question #46:

Whilst you stay branding me with whatever term you like, I advise you look up on "Occam's Razor".

Just between the two of us, you're the one drifting further from reality.

Response #46:

Second time now that you are offering me that advice. Still not clear why you do.

As for drifting from reality, I'm a Christian, you're an atheist. Reality has very different meanings for both of us.

Question #47:

LOL. And just how did you get this? I'd like to know

Response #47:

Easy: deductive reasoning.

Question #48:

The Christian God is omnipresent (everywhere and anywhere at the same time); omnipotent (all powerful, having no limits in ability); and omniscient (all knowing, not lacking in any knowledge). If God is all knowing, then he was aware, antecedent to all existence, of every possible paradigm of existence that could possibly be, ad infinitum. If God is omnipotent, then he had the power to create any possible paradigm without limit (for if there were any limits whatsoever on his power to create, he would by definition not be omnipotent). And if God is omnipresent then he could be simultaneously within and throughout all possible paradigms of existence.

So, if God was aware of all possible paradigms, throughout all possible paradigms, and empowered by himself to create any such paradigm he arbitrarily chose, then every single limitation and event and consequence of this current paradigm was foreseen and actively chosen by God before it came to be. That means that God knows the eventual outcome of every single event, every single moment, every single life that ever was, and is, and possibly can be in the future. Not only does he know it, he actively foresaw it as a possibility and then chose it and all it contains, out of an infinite number of possible choices (because, again, if the number of possible paradigms is not infinite then God's power, foresight and presence are not infinite). Therefore, with both the beginning and end of all that is being seen as one simultaneous God-chosen paradigm, all that is, is already predetermined. If God exists, then humans are only afforded the illusion of choice insofar as this: we are able to perform a limited number of functions within a predetermined paradigm of existence.

After the numerous topics & numerous threads we've encountered, you've not been able to answer this riddle, Ihedinobi

Response #49:

I will answer this in another post. Your premises are faulty (because of those straw men I always talk about) and your conclusion is a non sequitur.

Question #50

The Christian God is omnipresent (everywhere and anywhere at the same time); omnipotent (all powerful, having no limits in ability); and omniscient (all knowing, not lacking in any knowledge). If God is all knowing, then he was aware, antecedent to all existence, of every possible paradigm of existence that could possibly be, ad infinitum. If God is omnipotent, then he had the power to create any possible paradigm without limit (for if there were any limits whatsoever on his power to create, he would by definition not be omnipotent). And if God is omnipresent then he could be simultaneously within and throughout all possible paradigms of existence.

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After the numerous topics & numerous threads we've encountered, you've not been able to answer this riddle, Ihedinobi

Response #50:

To begin, the biblical position is what I care about and since you are addressing yourself to the Christian God, it is my business to explain to you what that is. If you decide that it is your definitions that you want to attack, I'll help you do it if I find it worth my time and energy.

You are correct about Omnipresence as the attribute of God that describes His ability to be everywhere at once. He is "bigger" (we describe Him spatially for convenience since His existence is independent of space) than the Universe after all.

You are wrong about Omnipotence which actually means that God has no real opposition to His Will. It is not the ability to do just anything. It is God's ability to do whatever He wants. In other words, it does not stretch to accommodate the ability to contradict His Own Nature. God cannot lie. That does not have anything to do with His Omnipotence. It is a statement about His Character.

You are also wrong about Omniscience. It only describes God's Perfect Eternal Knowledge. God's Knowledge does not evolve over time. He does not come to know things. He does not have "infinite possibilities" which He has perfect understanding of to choose from. Rather, God has always known everything there is to know because His Knowledge is perfect and complete. Thus, God does not choose from infinite possibilities. Rather, He does exactly what He pleases.

Perhaps one way to appreciate God's Omniscience is to imagine writing a program. When God created the Universe, He didn't do so knowing that if He did this or that, that or the other would result, no. He decided exactly what would result in each and every case, a little like when you tell the computer through the program every single thing that it must do. If you don't describe every single detail to the computer about how it should function in the program, it simply doesn't do anything at points where it has no information. God's Omniscience means that He wrote the rule book Himself.

God's Omnipotence and Omniscience mean that He knew what each creature would choose once He brings them into existence and gives them a free will and therefore He guaranteed that choice by a "code" in the program so that the choice would be made without anything preventing it.

In other words, the connection of Omniscience and Omnipotence to Free Will is immediate and obvious here.

But when you say that because God knows what you will choose, you cannot choose contrary to His Knowledge thereby invalidating free will, that is a huge non sequitur. The connection is not clear. Why does your choice need to be guaranteed by God's Ignorance? What is the relationship here? It is completely mysterious. This is more truly a complaint that you are not God yourself able to act with fiat.

Question #51:

@bolded. So basically your god has predetermined particular chosen people to be sons of Jesus! That must be what you mean by "an eternal family of willing subjects", no?

To this lucky people God has "freely given" Jesus. But to the others, there is no access to heaven? LOL. You must be kidding me

So, if I may ask, why did God create the people who'd later rebel against him? Are you saying he was not aware of their eventual fate? Or he just did it cos he can?

Response #51:

I assume bald-faced lying is now back in the menu too.

Question #52:

This is my problem with you. You assert things as positive even if you don't fully understand.

If you didn't get it, let me clue you in: that was me establishing that you can explain free will and explain God's plan separately, but cannot explain them together. Something you've failed woefully to understand time and time... and time..... and time again.

Response #52:

Okay. So why did I have to explain free will again after this?

Question #53:

For your information, i have no problem with free will as a concept. I have a problem with it when a supposedly tri-omni being who watches over reality and supposedly loves us exists. You should know by now that my arguments are hypothetical.

Response #53:

Not sure how this answers what I said there.

Question #54:

Whatever

Response #54:

Okay.

Question #55:

Explain how my response was a non sequitur. I'm waiting

Response #55:

Already did elsewhere.

Question #56:

Do you even know the meaning of non-sequitur?

You said god created alternate possibilities for us to choose from. Now i'm asking you if he knows what choice will be made....

Response #56:

I do. Do you?

Question #57:

You must be wondering why we're still here shooting and missing then.....

Response #57:

I don't understand this response.

Question #58:

Because the part I bolded pretty much summarizes everything else you said prior to that statement.

Response #58:

I don't understand this response either.

Question #59:

What you don't realize, Ihedinobi, is that atheism is rather eclectic in that it is NOT defined as a positive philosophical position which some people choose to take, but rather as a negation of the

many and diverse religious positions taken by other people – ie: theists – the world over, and throughout history. Let us examine your logic here....

Do you believe in Santa Claus? Obviously you'll agree with me that he's just a made up mythological fun figure for children during christmas, innit?

Now what are the goals of aSANTAism? what goal-oriented behaviour arises from your own personal aSANTAism? Like pretty much everybody else, my educated guess is that you haven't ANY goals you're aiming to fulfil as a direct consequence of your disbelief in Santa Claus – am I right?

Response #59:

Evasion. False equivalence.

Question #60:

Why not actually look it up and find out?

Response #60:

Still don't know why you assume I don't know what it is or why I would bother to look it up just because you say I should. You atheists are on a constant power trip.

Question #61:

Obviously

Response #61:

Glad we agree on something. So, I'm hoping that you'll stop assuming that I am interested in making sense to you. You are just an opportunity for me to accomplish something else I care about.

Question #62:

And what makes you think atheists alone have this fantasy?

Come to think of it, isn't this a generalization fallacy?

Response #62:

In answer to both questions, the issue is atheism itself and therefore all adherents of that philosophy.

Question #63:

Lol. Whatever you say

Response #63:

Right.

Question #64:

And i assume pointless fault finding and frantic straw grasping is also back on the menu

Response #64:

More lies though.

Question #65:

Yes, sir. I do as a matter of fact

Response #65:

Great.

Question #66:

And whose fault is that?

Response #66:

I think it's yours.

Question #67:

Its a false equivalence because unlike atheists, you don't think your God a myth. Anyways, that's your cup o' tea

Response #67:

Not quite. It's a false equivalence because Santa Claus is not a philosophy or a religion.

Question #68:

I never declared your ignorance on the subject though.

Response #68:

You implied it.

Question #69:

You were never making sense to me. I was just giving you the benefit of doubt

Response #69:

I don't believe you did nearly as much as you think you did but thanks anyway for the thought at least.

Question #70:

So no single christian or religious person on earth has such fantasy?

Response #70:

As I said, I was not addressing individuals. If I was, then of course, I would mention that everyone at least struggles with that kind of arrogance. But atheism as a philosophy is all about that, thus all atheists are that way by definition.

Question #71:

As always, Ihedinobi, you do know how to put in the effort. But when you don't give certain terms their proper definition. Every argument you make from that moment just fails to hit the spot. Your arguments would be convincing if you hadn't diluted the implications of the OMNI adjective. Just saying

Response #71:

Thank you for your kind words. For once I am perfectly happy to have spoken with you. You are obviously smart enough to make and keep conversation interesting and you can be gracious and decent when you want to be. I always value such a disposition highly since religious and philosophical debates, especially informal ones, tend to be extremely emotional and cantankerous.

As to your observations or concerns or advice (as they may be), I have already told you a few times that one serious problem with debating against the Bible is that its opponents typically don't know what it says. That is because, first of all, the Bible, just like its Author God Himself, does not force itself on anyone. It is available to read, study and research and learn about from the right authorities, but it does not make as much noise about itself as other philosophies do. Human beings are naturally arrogant and tend to respond only to a high hand. So, they ignore the Bible for more forceful and aggressive ideas.

The second and even more important reason is that the Bible was written for Faith. That is, it does not eliminate the need to believe. So, it presents puzzles that demand patient and humble questioning in order to understand. This is what actually sends all willing students to gifted and prepared Bible teachers who can explain the puzzles to them.

Every arrogant person, then, will simply never understand what the Bible says. Given also that human beings (just like the angels) tend not to tolerate complete ignorance, they make up false ideas or adopt them to fill the void where true Bible knowledge should be. This is why you can make an argument about the Christian God on false premises that lead to faulty conclusions and not anticipate a correction of the premises. It is the Bible that explains the Christian God, therefore it is the Bible that can tell you what terms like free will, omnipotence, and omniscience mean. The words don't mean just whatever you want them to mean with respect to Christian theology.

Finally, about the effect of my arguments, consider that if God were to unveil Himself completely right now, you would be perfectly convinced of His Existence, but you would also be destroyed by that revelation. In the same vein, Christian arguments are not designed to negate free will. They are only meant to be true. Truth is not defined by its persuasiveness, only by its faithfulness to Reality (that is, to the Bible). So, I don't argue to convince. I argue to bear witness to the Truth. Those who love the Truth will hear me. Those who don't will not.

Question #72:

But you christians always call your god an infinite god, no? I personally defined those terms independent of the christian god using their proper meaning before relating it to him. Seems to me you're defining these qualities dependent on your god and then finetuning it which just exposes the contradiction of his nature to me. Yet another epic christian fail in my book.

Response #72:

About this, I already explained elsewhere. Christian arguments are Christian arguments. Straw man fallacies are straw man fallacies.

In the Bible, the terms free will, omniscience, omnipotence etc are not used. They are terms of convenience coined to explain biblical concepts. So, when someone attaches a meaning to them that has nothing to do with the biblical concepts in question, they only create a straw man for Christian apologists to contend with.

That is why I insisted on correcting the meanings to reflect the biblical position.

As for contradictions in God's Nature, Satan banked on such a thing too to launch his pre-human coup d'etat. It failed, of course, for the same reason that your own arguments do here: the contradictions are not what you think. Mercy contradicts Justice, and God is both merciful and just, yet He had no problem at all reconciling both through the Sacrificial Death of the Lord Jesus Christ. The same way, He had no problem reconciling creature free will to His Own Sovereign Will. Rather than the latter making the former impossible, it actually makes it possible.

Question #73:

Straw man how?

You:

As laid out above there are two components to this predestination:

1. Foreknowledge: The god knows what all creatures are going to do and what the outcomes will be ie the god knows exactly who is going to "rebel" and thus go to hell.
2. Enabling: The god provides all the resources to enable the already foreknown choices to happen exactly as it foreknew it ie the god enables those making choices to go to hell to make those choices.

Conclusion: The god foreknew all those going to hell and enabled them to do so therefore the god predestined those going to hell to go to hell.

This conclusion is from your very words so where is the strawman?

Response #73:

Your new conclusion is the correct one. Predetermination and Predestination are not the same thing.

As I said, you are exactly right that God has predestined many people to be condemned. That is part and parcel of the business of creating a universe with God's Plan. Because God wanted a Family of

willing moral creatures, He gave a free will to all of such creatures (which is what makes them moral) and empowered them with His Decree to make perfectly free choices.

So, that God predestined absolutely free moral creatures to go to the Lake of Fire just as they themselves prefer is still an act consistent with His Goodness and Love. As a loving God, He will not force people into fellowship with Him against their will. As a good God (because of His Justice), He will certainly reward every choice appropriately. It would be grossly unfair of Him if He gave His good eternal gifts to people who chose to rebel against Him even up to the point of trying to seduce or force others to join them in their rebellion.

So, again, those who will go to the Lake of Fire will completely deserve it and God will be completely blameless in condemning them.

Question #74 :

I am not sure how you show a difference. You are saying god enabled people to go to hell where is the good in that?

Response #74:

Perhaps you should read it again and ask a more specific question.

Question #75:

That was the crux of my statement you called a straw man. If the god is predestinating people to hell how is it a good one?

Response #75:

I called it a straw man. Because it was a straw man. As I also explained.

I'm sure I don't need to repeat my entire argument answering the same question over and over again. ____ called me a broken record for doing that already. I did it with her for a reason. I have a reason too for not doing it with you.

Question #76:

You did not address how the god is good if it is predestining people to hell which was what my statement was about until you decided to quibble over nothing as usual.

Response #76:

Your statement was that God was predetermining that some people would go to hell, LordReed. Not that He predestined anybody for anything.

As for what I addressed or didn't address, I am not going to repeat my argument for you. If you actually have some way to demonstrate that it is insufficient or wrong, I will listen. Your claim that it didn't do its job is a waste of time.

Question #77:

Then you could have corrected me and answered the substantial issue instead you chose to quibble over nothing without even addressing the main issue. It remains your problem when you fail to address the issue at hand.

Response #77:

I did. Told you it was a straw man. I have debated you probably more than any other atheist on this board, you know. So I have a general idea when it is worth it to correct you and when it isn't

Question #78:

Gosh! Can you stop quibbling and answer the main issue?

Response #78:

Go and do some work, _____. The post is right here on this thread. Read it and point out what is wrong with it. Or don't, if you prefer. I'm not repeating it for you.

Question #79:

LMFAO! That's your bleeping business if you do not answer direct questions, it just shows how dumb your position is.

Response #79:

Sure, my position is dumb because I won't jump through hoops for Your Bright Majesty Lord Reed. Please wait for me. I am coming to write a new argument for you. Do you have a list of other things you want me to do? Maybe roll over and play dead too?

Question #80:

That would be great, at least it would show you understand something.

Response #80:

(No response.)

Question #81:

Really? Some claim Jesus Christ is one such instance. Do you disagree?

Response #81:

That the Lord Jesus during His First Advent was God manifesting Himself without any shielding?
The very ridiculousness of it!

In Philippians, it was made clear that He "voided" His Deity in order to live a truly human life and die a truly Human Death. Why on earth would anyone think of that as a Unclad display of God's Glory? Ridiculous is the understatement of all understatement here.

Question #82:

Does make one think Jesus was human, no? And not God?

Response #82:

Can't see why it does. Why does it make you think so?

Question #83:

It could also, is in fact, the clad God, as in, "God with shielding".

Response #83:

I don't understand what you said here.

Question #84:

It is the freewill of every human being to decide to be a part of the "eternal Family of willing subjects composed of human beings and angels" with freewill.

Correct? Is that what you wrote?

Whether one wants to be like God is up to one and being like God is how to be like God?

Response #84:

I'm not sure I understand this either.

What I said here is that free will is what we have in order to decide if we want to be part of God's Family or not.

Question #85:

That's what I said too. Consider. In the first one, at least.

Response #85:

Okay.

Question #86:

Been observing your arguments on this topic and I have to say you have a very warped concept of free will...

Unlike others here, i have neither the time nor the desire to start writing down epistles, so I just need you to settle down, stop flinging your faeces all over the place and answer this one question:

Can we make a choice that god did not expect?

Response #86:

The very first time that you address me you found it necessary to insult me as well. Very interesting.

A warped concept of free will, you say. What is the straight one and where does it come from? Are you going to make a straw man for me? I have observed that atheists in their arrogance often think they know what the Bible says and then proceed to throw straw men everywhere claiming that those ridiculous constructs have something to do with the Bible and Christians are responsible to defend them. Is that what you have in mind when you think of free will: a straw man?

As for your question, obviously not. God's knowledge of all things is complete. Nothing takes Him by surprise.

Are you now going to repeat that travesty of an argument that omniscience magically negates free will? ___ already made it, you know.

Question #87:

Then there is no freewill. Simple

The rest of your rant couldn't bother me less honestly.

Response #87:

Sure. Your word is law.