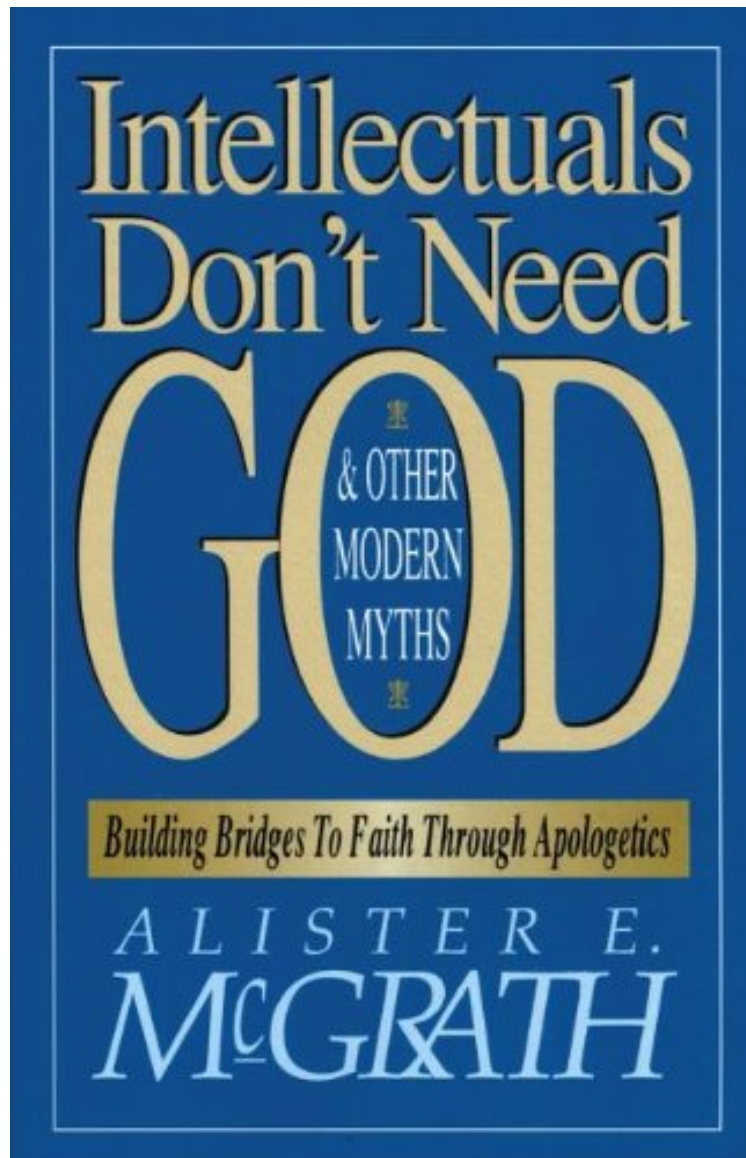


(Download pdf ebook) Intellectuals Don't Need God and Other Modern Myths

## Intellectuals Don't Need God and Other Modern Myths

*Alister E. McGrath*

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**Alister E. McGrath : Intellectuals Don't Need God and Other Modern Myths** before purchasing it in order to  
gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Intellectuals Don't Need God and Other Modern  
Myths:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A Helpful Work On The Art of Christian ApologeticsBy S.  
Peek'Intellectuals Don't Need God And Other Modern Myths' is a valuable addition to an apologetics library.It does

not focus on the evidences of Christianity, although it does contain some of that. This book is more about how to interact with another person in an apologetics discussion. As the author states, "The science of apologetics needs to be complemented by the art of apologetics." Written by Dr. Alister McGrath, one might expect more hard core science since McGrath has a doctorate in microbiology, but in this volume, he addresses the art side more. Two things that Dr. McGrath really stresses are listening before responding and personalizing the approach to the individual. Both of these are very much needed. He compares apologists to physicians in that they both need to have a strong bedside manner or else their knowledge and skills in other areas will not be effective. There are many very helpful areas in this book including the need to explore the presuppositions of the listener(s) and the need to use images, stories, etc., rather than just sticking with arguments, reason, etc. Dr. McGrath does explore some of the arguments and evidences for Christianity, but these are not the main focus. For that reason, this would probably not be a great introductory apologetics work, but it is a very good one to supplement some others.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Intellectuals don't need god. By John Hunter I have always enjoyed Dr McGraths writings. His background is uniquely suited to engage in discussions involving science and religion. This work can be summed up by the last statement in his concluding remarks, that apologetics is not just about winning arguments, it is about winning people. He give his views on the philosophy behind good apologetics, from both perspectives. I recommend this book as an addition to a well rounded library in the armamentarium of the apologist.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Four thumbs up. By Older Student I read this for an apologetics class I was taking and left notes in the margins to re-read certain chapters later. McGrath presents issues and goes deep with answers. I enjoyed the clarity of his writing.

Intellectuals Don't Need God is for people who are not convinced by the arguments of classical, rationalistic apologetics, for people who feel that Christianity must have a broader appeal than to reason alone if it is to be persuasive to non-Christians. Alister McGrath shows convincingly that reason is only one of many possible points of contact between the non-Christian and the gospel. In today's world, nonrational concerns -- such as a sense that life lacks focus, an unconscious fear of death, a deep sense of longing for something unknown we don't have but know we need -- are much more effective points of contact for apologetics. In this book, Dr. McGrath (who is both a theologian and a scientist with a Ph.D. in microbiology) combines the clarity of a brilliant scientific mind with a deep commitment to Christ and to reaching non-Christians. Intellectuals Don't Need God is for anyone who has questions about the validity of Christianity as well as for students, pastors, and lay leaders. Anyone who works with students and young people especially needs to read this book. As McGrath says, "apologetics is not about winning arguments -- it is about bringing people to Christ."

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About the Author Alister E. McGrath is a historian, biochemist, and Christian theologian born in Belfast, Northern Ireland. McGrath, a longtime professor at Oxford University, now holds the Chair in theology, ministry, and education at the University of London. He is the author of several books on theology and history, including Christianity's Dangerous Idea; In the Beginning, and The Twilight of Atheism. He lives in Oxford, England and lectures regularly in the United States.

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Part 1  
Creating Openings for Faith Chapter One The Theological Foundations of Effective Apologetics THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS Awareness of a sense of emptiness resonates throughout secular culture. One thinks of Boris Becker, the noted tennis player, who came close to taking his own life through being overwhelmed by this sense of hopelessness and emptiness. Even though he was enormously successful, something was missing. I had won Wimbledon twice before, once as the youngest player. I was rich. I had all the material possessions I needed: money, cars, women, everything.... I know that this is a cliché. It's the old song of the movie and pop stars who commit suicide. They have everything, and yet they are so unhappy.... I had no inner peace. I was a puppet on a string. Or one thinks of Jack Higgins, a highly successful thriller writer at the top of his profession, author of best-selling novels such as The Eagle Has Landed. He is reported to have been asked what he now knew that he would like to have known when he was a boy. His reply: 'That when you get to the top, there's nothing there.' Becker and Higgins are excellent witnesses from the world of secular culture to the fact that most people are aware that something is missing from their

lives, even if they are not able to put a name to it or may not be able to do anything about it. But the Christian gospel is able to interpret this sense of longing, this feeling of unfulfillment, as an awareness of the absence of God---and thus to prepare the way for its fulfillment.

### A. Apologetics Is Grounded in the Doctrines of Creation and Redemption

Through the grace of God, the creation points to its Creator. Through the generosity of God, we have been left with a latent memory of him, capable of stirring us toward a fuller recollection of him. Although there is a fracture between the ideal and the empirical, between the realms of fallen and redeemed creation, the memory of that connection lives on, along with the intimation of its restoration through redemption. If there is some point of contact already in existence, then apologetics can make use of a God-given starting point in the very nature of the created order itself. The witness to God within his creation, the 'signals of transcendence' (Peter Berger) in human life, can act as a trigger, stimulating people to ask questions about the meaning of life or the reality of God. Those points of contact are meant to be there---and they are meant to be used. A point of contact is a God-given foothold for divine self-revelation. It is a catalyst, not a substitute, for God's self-revelation. It is like the advance guard of an army, preparing the ground for the major force that follows it. It is like the prestrike of a bolt of lightning, in which a conductive path is established from the earth to the sky so that the massive energy of the lightning can discharge itself fully into the waiting earth. God gives himself in the act of revelation; there is, however, a sense in which he has prepared the ground for that giving: not to preempt it, nor to make it unnecessary, but simply to make it more effective when it finally happens. But we must be careful. Points of contact are not in themselves adequate to bring people into the kingdom of God. They are merely starting points. Nor are they adequate in themselves to bring people to a specifically Christian faith. They might well point toward the existence of a creative and benevolent supreme being. The connection with 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Peter 1:3) remains to be made. The apologist must still show that the Christian gospel is consistent with these points of contact, that it is able to explain them, and more than that it is able to deliver all that they promise, turning hints into reality. Christian apologetics cannot go beyond the boundaries of the biblical insights concerning the revelation of God in his creation, but it must feel able to press on toward those full limits authorized by Scripture. It must do this cautiously, wary of the dangers that lie in the path of an uncritical appeal to creation. Among those dangers, the following may be noted as especially significant.

- a. There is a limit to what human reason can discern about God by an appeal to nature. Sin brings with it a propensity for distortion, by which God's revelation in creation is easily changed into an idol of our own making. The egocentricity of human sin, grounded in the fallen human will, expresses itself in the fatal wish of fallen humanity to create God in its own image and likeness, rather than to respond obediently to the self-revelation of God. This disobedience is without excuse (Rom. 1:18--2:16). Yet this flagrant abuse of God's revelation in nature does not discredit a cautious and responsible appeal to nature as pointing beyond itself to the one who created it and who will one day recreate it in glory---that is, God himself. There is thus a fracture within creation. Fallen human nature can only reflect on a fallen creation. The fallenness of both the beholder and that which is beheld thus introduces a twofold distortion. This is most emphatically not to say that no knowledge of God may be had. Rather, we must admit that this knowledge is imperfect, broken, confused, and darkened, like a cracked mirror or a misty window. Anything that reveals less than the complete picture potentially presents a distorted picture. A 'natural knowledge of God' is thus a distorted knowledge of God. But as a starting point it has real potential and value. And responsible Christian apologetics makes no claim greater than this: That our perceptions of God from nature can be taken up and transfigured by the Christian revelation, in Christ and through Scripture.
- b. How can the infinite ever be disclosed through the finite? How can God, who is infinite, reveal himself through or in nature, which is finite? Early Christian writers were fond of comparing our ability to understand God with looking directly into the midday summer sun. The human mind can no more cope with God than the human eye can handle the intense glare and heat of the sun. So how can a finite and weak creature ever comprehend the Creator? The most thorough-going response to this question relates to the 'principle of analogy,' an idea deeply grounded in Scripture and given sophisticated theological development in the writings of such individuals as Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin. The basic idea can be stated as follows. In creating the world, God leaves his trace upon it. Just as an artist might sign a painting to draw attention to the fact that it is his or her creation, so God has left the imprint of his nature upon the created order. This is no historical accident; it is the self-expression of God in his world. And just as the eye can cope with the brilliance of the sun by looking at it through a piece of dark glass, so God wills to make himself known in a manageable way in his creation.