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### The New Theist

How William Lane Craig became Christian philosophy's boldest apostle

By *Nathan Schneider*

**W**hen, during a conversation in a swank hotel lobby in Manhattan, I mentioned to Richard Dawkins that I was working on a story about William Lane Craig, the muscles in his face clenched.

"Why are you publicizing him?" Dawkins demanded, twice. The best-selling "New Atheist" professor went on to assure me that I shouldn't bother, that he'd met Craig in Mexico—they opposed each other in a prime-time, three-on-three debate staged in a boxing ring—and found him "very unimpressive."

"I mean, whose side are you on?" Dawkins said. "Are you religious?"

Several months later, in April 2011, Craig debated another New Atheist author, Sam Harris, in a large, sold-out auditorium at the University of Notre Dame. In a sequence of carefully timed speeches and rejoinders, the two men clashed over whether we need God for there to be moral laws. Harris delivered most of the better one-liners that night, while Craig, in suit and tie, fired off his volleys of argumentation with the father-knows-best composure of Mitt Romney, plus a dash of Schwarzenegger. Something Harris said [during the debate](#) might help explain how Dawkins reacted: He called Craig "the one Christian apologist who seems to have put the fear of God into many of my fellow atheists."

In the lobby afterward, the remarks of students seemed to confirm this. "The apologist won because his structure was perfect," one said. "Craig had already won by the first rebuttal!" A Harris partisan lamented, "Sam kinda blew it."

Well-publicized atheists like Dawkins and Harris are closer to being household names than William Lane Craig is, but within the subculture of evangelical Christians interested in defending their faith rationally, he has had a devoted following for decades. Many professional philosophers know about him only vaguely, but in the field of philosophy of religion, his books and articles are among the most cited. And though he works mainly from his home, in suburban Marietta, Ga., he holds a faculty appointment at Biola

University, an evangelical stronghold on the southeastern edge of Los Angeles County and home to one of the largest philosophy graduate programs in the world.

Surveys suggest that the philosophy professoriate is among the most atheistic subpopulations in the United States; even those philosophers who specialize in religion believe in God at a somewhat lower rate than the general public does. Philosophers have also lately been in a habit of humility, as their profession's scope seems to shrink before the advance of science and the modern university's preference for research that wins corporate contracts. But it is partly because of William Lane Craig that one can hear certain stripes of evangelicals whispering to one another lately that "God is working something" in the discipline. And through the discipline, they see a way of working something in society as a whole.

**T**he enormous kinds of questions that speculative-minded college students obsess over—life, death, the universe—are taken unusually seriously by philosophers who also happen to be evangelical Christians. To them, after all, what one believes matters infinitely for one's eternal soul. They therefore tend to care less about disciplinary minutiae and terms of art than about big-picture "worldviews," every aspect of which should be compatible with a particular way of thinking about the fraught love affair between God and humanity—or else.

The debates for which Craig is most famous live on long after the crowds are gone from the campus auditoriums or megachurch sanctuaries where they take place. On YouTube, they garner tens or hundreds of thousands of views as they're dissected and fact-checked by bloggers and hobbyists and apologists-in-training. Such debates have an appealing absence of gray area: There are only two sides, and one or the other has to win. By the time it's over, you have the impression that your intelligence has been respected—you get to hear both sides make their cases, after all. The winner? You decide.

"I believe that debate is *the* forum for sharing the gospel on college campuses," Craig told an audience of several thousand at a seminar about "Unpacking Atheism" in a suburban Denver church last October, simulcast at other churches around the country. Compared with the rancorous presidential debates happening at the time, he added, "these are respectable academic events conducted with civility and Christian charity."

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Craig generally insists on the same format: opening statements, then two rounds of rebuttals, then closing statements, then audience. He prepares extensively beforehand, sometimes for months at a time, with research assistants poring over the writings of the opponent in search of objections that Craig should anticipate. He amasses a well-organized file of notes that he can draw on during the debate for a choice quotation or a statistic.

In the opening statement he pummels the opponent with five or so concise arguments—for instance, the origins of the universe, the basis of morality, the testimony of religious experience, and perhaps an addendum of evidence for the resurrection of Jesus. Over the course of the rebuttals he makes sure to respond to every point that the opponent has brought up, which usually sends the opponent off on a series of tangents. Then, at the end, he reminds the audience how many of his arguments stated at the outset the opponent couldn't manage to address, much less refute. He declares himself and his message the winner. Onlookers can't help agreeing.

Craig comes by his mastery of the formal debate honestly; he worked at it on debating squads all through high school and all through college, with uncommon determination.

From birth he has suffered from Charcot-Marie-Tooth syndrome, a neuromuscular disease that causes atrophy in the extremities. He walks with a slight limp, and his hands often look as if they're gripping an invisible object. Growing up, he couldn't run normally.

"My boyhood was difficult," he says. "Children can be very cruel."

Since varsity sports weren't an option, he discovered debate. High-school competitions took him all over Illinois. The subject matter was never religion—rather, the usual debate-team fodder of public-policy questions—but religion was meanwhile starting to matter more and more to him personally.

"My folks sort of believed in the man upstairs," he says. "He's sort of up there watching out for you, and that's sort of it." In high-school German class, an especially radiant girl sitting near him told him about what Jesus Christ had done in her life. That got him reading the Bible, and the Jesus he found there took hold of him. "For me it was a question of personal, existential commitment: Was I prepared to become this man's follower?"

He went on to attend Wheaton College, a well-regarded evangelical institution in Illinois, where he continued debating

and searching for his calling. Not until years later, though, after establishing himself as a philosopher, did he begin to be asked to debate publicly in defense of his faith. It came as a surprise, but a welcome one.

"I was just thrilled to be able to do it again as a means of fulfilling this vision of sharing the gospel," he says.

By then, Craig had come under the influence of the theologian Francis Schaeffer, who from his refuge in Switzerland called on American evangelicals to reclaim Western culture's Christian heritage, and who helped orchestrate the rise of the religious right during the Reagan years. Debate, then, served as both a philosophical exercise and a part of a growing movement.

Paul Draper, of Purdue University, is one of the leading nontheist philosophers of religion today, and though he has debated Craig, he doesn't see these debates as having much philosophical merit in and of themselves. He does see value, however, in studying them closely with students in a classroom: "It helps them learn to distinguish persuasive arguments from good arguments." Draper has recently co-written a paper, "Diagnosing Bias in Philosophy of Religion" in *The Monist*, alleging that the work of Craig and his ilk exhibits "a variety of cognitive biases operating at the nonconscious level, combined with an unhealthy dose of group influence."

This line of questioning—about whether William Lane Craig is merely persuasive or actually correct, an honest philosopher or a snake-oil evangelist—arises every time another one of his bouts hits the Internet. Anyone can see that he is good, but is he for real?

**I**n the mid-1970s, Craig was looking for a place to do his Ph.D., on the cosmological argument for the existence of God. He was finishing master's degrees in church history and philosophy of religion at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, near Chicago, where he argued against Kant and Hume that observation and reason could form a valid basis for religious belief. With the cosmological argument—which deduces God's existence from what we know about the nature of the universe as a whole—he hoped to put that groundwork to use.

At the time, this was a rather unpopular kind of project in philosophy departments, which were still recovering from the positivists' doctrine that religious concepts are too incoherent to be worth even meddling with. It couldn't have helped that Craig was a seminary graduate who'd worked for Campus Crusade for Christ.

"I couldn't find anybody in the United States who would supervise such a dissertation," Craig recalls.

So he and his wife, Jan, packed their bags for the University of Birmingham, in England. Craig's proposal was welcomed there by John Hick—one of the best-known philosophers of religion of his generation and also one of the most liberal-minded. Hick, who died last year, counts Craig in his memoir as among the top three students of his teaching career, even while describing Craig's "extreme theological conservatism" as in at least one respect "horrific" and generally indicative of "a startling lack of connection with the modern world."

Yes and no. On the one hand, the dissertation Craig produced in Birmingham was a retrieval of the "Kalam cosmological argument"—a way of reasoning about the cause of the universe developed by Muslims and Jews between the fall of the Roman Empire and the Renaissance. On the other, he updated the argument with more recent scientific notions, such as the Big Bang and the laws of thermodynamics. The dissertation was soon published in the form of not one but two books, which went on to become influential and widely discussed in the philosophical literature.

Hick, a pioneer of religious pluralism and nonexclusivist approaches to Christianity, was taken aback by this brilliant student's single-minded ambition: to persuade more people everywhere to make professions of faith in Jesus Christ.

Any given debate about the existence of God or some related topic reveals the tremendous intellectual labor Craig has undertaken to that end. In addition to his two master's degrees and philosophy Ph.D. under Hick, he spent the early 1980s acquiring a further doctorate in theology at the University of Munich, where he studied the reliability of the source texts about the resurrection of Jesus. He has published more than 100 articles in philosophy and theology journals. The result is a person (verging on machine) who cannot only hold his own against fellow analytic philosophers on matters such as the possibility of an infinite regress and the nature of time, but who can also spar with physicists on the first milliseconds of the universe and with biblical scholars on the provenance of particular passages in New Testament Greek.

Craig thinks of the course of his studies as having been more improvised than deliberate. "I pursue research topics that are of interest to me," he avers. He has spent the past decade or so, for instance, pondering the subject of abstract objects—numbers, concepts, ideas—which has little obvious apologetic value. His inquiries have even led him into minor unorthodoxies, including a

disagreement with the Nicene Creed on the details of the Trinity. Yet these serve as exceptions that prove the rule: His investigations might thus seem all the more rigorous, together with his commitment to the bulk of old-time religion. Just following his curiosity has made Craig an ever-abler defender of the faith.

"The funny thing," he says, "is that I have found over and over again that the area I'm doing research on comes up." When people at his lectures and debates try to stump him with questions, "I hear these, and I think, 'Thank you, Lord, I'm working on this! I never would have thought that this would be relevant!'"

Craig's oeuvre of philosophical arguments for Christian faith is available in many forms, each tailored for a different audience and promoted—online, with a mobile app, and through local chapters on several continents—by his Reasonable Faith ministry. At the top tier, for those undaunted by more than 600 pages of heavy groundwork, is *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*. Somewhat more concise is *Reasonable Faith*, which can be purchased with a companion study guide. Church groups might prefer the illustrations and sidebars in *On Guard*, while Sunday schoolers can go straight to *The Defense Never Rests: A Workbook for Budding Apologists*. Now even small children can benefit from the "Dr. Craig's" What Is God Like? picture-book series—originally written for his own children—in which various divine attributes are explained by Brown Bear and Red Goose.

The Reasonable Faith ministry has been growing rapidly in recent years, raising hundreds of thousands of dollars annually from donors who attend Holy Land tours and Mediterranean cruises. But Craig isn't satisfied with just more books and more campus debates. He has recently appeared as a commentator, for instance, discussing the spread of atheism on *The Washington Post's* Web site and CNN.

"I have become convinced that we need to be more active in using the media," he told me in April. "I need to work smarter, not harder, by leveraging these media opportunities."

**I**t's clear that the Evangelical Philosophical Society is meant to be more than solely an academic organization by what its members do with their evenings. At the society's annual meeting—which is part of the much larger Evangelical Theological Society conference—the EPS's leading figures bus out from the downtown convention center after the daytime panel sessions are over to a large-enough church somewhere in the suburbs of whatever city they're in. A thousand or so rank-and-file believers, from teenagers to grandparents, await them in the pews. People travel from around the country and the world to attend. There, the

philosophers are stars; wearing TED Talk-like clear headsets, with slide shows glowing overhead, they present the latest deliverances of analytic philosophy as they pertain to defending the Christian faith in the vernacular world—by the water cooler, at the dinner table, in the locker room.

There are lectures about the relationship between science and religion, about countering the latest New Atheist claims, about the foundations of morality. Gary Habermas, of Jerry Falwell's Liberty University, tells the story of his years-long correspondence with the British philosopher Antony Flew, during which the outspoken atheist drifted, shortly before his death, toward some kind of deism. One session sets out to justify God's harsher commands in the Hebrew Bible, while another exposes the dangers of so-called tolerance of other religions. Craig himself speaks on whatever seems fitting—maybe the cosmological argument one year, or abstract objects another year. Whatever it is, he draws a large, attentive crowd, and afterward budding young apologists ply him with questions about one intricacy or another of his position.

The speakers are mainly men, but there are women, too: Mary Jo Sharp representing her "lean in"-style ministry, Confident Christianity, and Holly Ordway, an English Ph.D. who underwent a relatively recent conversion through the works of John Donne and J.R.R. Tolkien.

Between sessions, speakers and audience members mingle over coffee near the sprawling book sale, where attendees snatch up as many copies of the speakers' books as they can carry, along with DVDs of Craig's debates and subscriptions to the society's academic journal, *Philosophia Christi*. ("I am amazed at how low the prices are!" exclaims one speaker from the stage.) A handful of distractible audience members tweet to one another on the conference hashtag.

**Craig is more than his students' teacher; for many, this is the man who saved their faith.**

This kind of philosophy and these most-conservative kinds of churches were never supposed to mix. In the early part of the 20th century, figures like Bertrand Russell and A.J. Ayer made it their business to ensure that the analytic style of philosophy emerging in the Anglophone world would be a stronghold of unbelief. Questions that had animated the whole history of philosophy in Europe and the Americas about whether God exists, or whether there is an afterlife worth anticipating, were suddenly deemed more or less finished—the answer was no.

Significant cracks in this consensus didn't begin appearing until the 1960s and 1970s, especially thanks to the work of Alvin Plantinga, a young philosopher who leveraged the cutting-edge modal logic and epistemology of the time to argue that Christian belief wasn't so manifestly unreasonable as his predecessors had claimed. Along with his lifelong friend Nicholas Wolterstorff, who has spent much of his career writing and teaching at Yale, Plantinga engineered a stunning revival of philosophy in a Christian key, largely through the vehicle of the Society of Christian Philosophers. Following his lead, many more philosophers became braver about articulating Christian faith in arguments, and together they've amassed an arsenal more formidable than many outsiders, whether professional philosophers or laypeople, realize.

The Evangelical Philosophical Society was founded in 1974, four years before the SCP. It didn't really take off, however, until the SCP membership's insistence on including Mormons compelled William Lane Craig to redirect his energy to the more narrowly defined EPS in the 1990s.

"I thought, let's kick this organization into high gear," Craig remembers.

He held the presidency from 1996 to 2005. It was during that time, in the early 2000s, that the society began holding an "apologetics conference" alongside the annual scholarly meeting—starting at Craig's own church, in Marietta. The EPS grew rapidly as both an academic society and a publicity platform for the most culture-warring flavors of Christian philosophy.

Norman Geisler, one of the founders of the EPS, watched in amazement. "The term 'Christian' took on a positive connotation that people actually wanted to claim," he told me. "When I started in philosophy, in the late 1960s, it was a term of reproach." Now openly Christian faculty are perched in many of the major departments in the discipline.

"It's such a privilege to be alive and working in this field during this era," says Craig.

**A**long the narrow basement hallway that was home to the Biola philosophy master's program when I sat in on Craig's class in 2011, there was a map of the United States on the wall. On it were labels with the names of universities you've heard of—Notre Dame, Cornell, Rutgers—and some you probably haven't. The labels were fastened by pins in three colors. Blue signified alumni enrolled in doctoral programs. Red meant programs where alums had been accepted, and yellow meant

where they held full-time teaching jobs. There were several more pins in the Atlantic Ocean: Oxford, King's College, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

This is a not-unusual sight in the hallway of any placement-minded graduate program. But at Biola—a name derived from "Bible Institute of Los Angeles"—the map had particular significance.

"My goal is for Christian theism as a worldview to be articulated cogently and persuasively in the academy," says Scott Rae, an ethicist who co-founded the master's program in the early 1990s. The purpose of the program was not simply to train evangelical Christian students for evangelical Christian schools, but to send those students off to doctoral programs, and eventually professorships, at leading secular universities. "We figured if we ended up with 30 or 40 students, and maybe we sent 20 of them to Ph.D.'s before we retired, that'd be awesome," Rae added. "The thing just snowballed."

The program's other founder, J.P. Moreland, was already in high demand as an author and speaker on apologetics, in addition to being a philosopher of mind. Rae and Moreland invited William Lane Craig to join their team, though he comes to the campus only for brief, intensive courses in the fall and winter. Before long they were attracting more than 100 master's students at a time (including women, generally, in only single digits); as many as 150 have continued on to further graduate work. Despite having only a handful of faculty, perhaps no philosophy master's program in the English-speaking world enrolls so many students and, even if by that measure alone, few can claim to be so influential in shaping the next generation of analytic philosophers.

Still, many in the profession aren't even aware of it. The Philosophical Gourmet Report, which ranks philosophy departments by the reputation of their faculty members, doesn't mention Biola on its Web page about master's programs. "No one has ever called to my attention that Biola's M.A. program should be included," says Brian Leiter, of the University of Chicago, who edits the report.

Among philosophers—Christian or otherwise—who have worked with the Biola program's alums, the impressions tend to be positive. According to Laurence Bonjour, a philosopher at the University of Washington who has supervised the Ph.D. work of program graduates, "Biola students, especially those interested in epistemology, are often very well trained."

"But," he is careful to add, "I doubt if the Christian aspect of the

program has much to do with that."

For the program's architects, however, the "Christian aspect" is everything. "What makes this program different from other philosophy programs is the distinctively Christian setting," says Rae. Students take courses in the Bible and theology as well as in logic, ethics, and metaphysics. On their application forms, they're asked to sign Biola's century-old, page-long doctrinal statement and note any points of disagreement; on the campus, alcohol, tobacco, and gambling are prohibited. Craig begins each day's lecture in his classes with a personal reflection on integrating the life of scholarship with the life of a Christian—covering such topics as marriage, prayer, and regular exercise. Everyone basically agrees on where, in the end, all the flights of argument and inquiry need to land.

Gail Neal, a retired administrative coordinator for the program, says she always noticed a culture of mutual support and encouragement, rather than competition, among the students. "Their whole purpose is to help people know Christ and to make a difference in the world for him, and to bring people into his kingdom," she told me. "They just empty themselves of themselves, like Christ did for us."

In a now-decade-old lecture, "Advice to Christian Apologists," Craig outlined his view of the university as "the single most important institution shaping Western culture." He argued that it's a lot easier for people throughout the society to accept Christ as their savior if Christianity appears reasonable in higher education, if the academic conversation takes it seriously, and if there are Christian professors to serve as role models. The Biola master's program is thus a strategic intervention designed to resound everywhere.

"In order to change the university, we must do scholarly apologetics," he reasoned. "In order to do scholarly apologetics, we must earn doctorates. It's that simple."

Jonathan LaSalle, a doctoral student in philosophy at the University of California at Santa Barbara who took master's-level classes while an undergraduate at Biola, says that, for Craig and his colleagues, "philosophy is sort of the beachhead." From it, all else is meant to follow.

Craig's version of the cosmological argument, or his case for the Resurrection, could appeal to believers of just about any denomination or party; the arguments themselves have no inborn political persuasion. But the crowd they run in does. When I heard J.P. Moreland speak at a lunchtime mixer in a Congressional office

building in Washington, he argued for a "minimalist conception of the state"; Scott Rae's business ethics extol "the virtues of capitalism." The current-events podcasts available on Craig's Web site and mobile app broadcast his reflections against homosexual parenting, secularism, and global Islam, along with patriotic exhortations on behalf of U.S. invasions abroad.

Since Jonathan LaSalle left Biola, his evangelical faith has wavered. But what has started to concern him most are the political messages being tucked into the metaphysics at his alma mater. "It should worry Christians, too," he says.

Most outsiders are familiar with the caricatures of evangelical anti-intellectualism, from the Scopes "Monkey Trial" in 1925 to televangelists and the faux-folksiness of George W. Bush. So are evangelicals themselves. Almost 20 years ago, the evangelical historian (and historian of evangelicals) Mark Noll warned, at book length, about *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*. This, as much as secularism itself, is an ill that Craig and others at Biola have set out to cure.

"Biblical Christianity retreated into the intellectual closet of Fundamentalism," he writes in the introduction to *Reasonable Faith*. "Satan deceives us into voluntarily laying aside our best weapons of logic and evidence, thereby ensuring unawares modernism's triumph over us."

Craig Hazen, who directs the apologetics department at Biola, calls the problem "blind-leaping." He told me, "The idea that we're blind-leaping into faith is actually reinforced by evangelical churches all the time."

With close ties to the philosophy master's program, the apologetics program teaches a couple of hundred students at a time how to defend their faith with reasons. There are master's and certificate tracks, and about half the students take courses online from around the world. The program also organizes high-profile events, such as Craig's 2009 debate with Christopher Hitchens, and seminars at churches around the country. Part of the purpose of these is recruiting students, and part of it is advocacy; Hazen and his team have to convince fellow Christians that reason is not merely a dead end for faith, and that a grown-up faith in modern society requires grown-up reasons.

"Frankly, I find it hard to understand how people today can risk parenthood without having studied apologetics," Craig has written. "We've got to train our kids for war."

The students in Craig's classes at Biola, it's true, bear a kind of

battle scar. A common story among them goes something like this: When they were teenage boys, growing up in evangelical households, their childhood faith began to buckle. Their classes in school and their classmates and the Internet posed questions they didn't know how to answer. Their parents and pastors couldn't help; they only recommended more prayer and faith, more blind-leaping. It didn't work.

Then someone would lend them a book by William Lane Craig or J.P. Moreland, or send them a link to a debate on YouTube. All of a sudden, their questions were being taken seriously. They could chew on the latest science and philosophy while still going to church with their friends and families. They went to Biola to study philosophy or apologetics because they knew it would be a safe place to ask any question they needed to, with whatever rigor and detail they craved. Afterward they take the answers they get there back to their friends and to the Internet, and the entrepreneurs among them start apologetics ministries of their own.

They're born again: rebaptized in philosophy.

In class, Craig is more than his students' teacher; for many, this is the man who saved their faith. Standing before them he projects a paternal bearing, a seriousness broken only when he throws himself into imitations of past debate opponents, especially those with British accents. For the brief weeks each year when he's on campus at Biola, he eats lunch with his students in the cafeteria. But he won't tell them his e-mail address, for fear of the onslaught of correspondence that could bring him. If they have any more questions, he recommends that they ask through ReasonableFaith.org, like everybody else.

"My calling is not the classroom," he admits. The rest of the year, he spends most of his time at home in Marietta with Jan, where he can study, write, build his ministry, and prepare for his next debate without interruption.

The story one tends to hear among older people drawn to Craig is a bit different from that of the younger ones; fathers, in fact, often go to him at first at the urging of their Internet-savvy sons. (In April, for a bachelor party, one man from Pennsylvania brought his father and grandfather to Georgia for Craig's seminar on the Resurrection.) While Craig's philosophy enables the young to hold on, it gives the elders license to let loose a bit, to think more freely in a faith that for decades may have satisfied their hearts more than their minds. Craig's muscular arguments lend them the confidence to delve into areas of inquiry that might have previously seemed closed, from historical criticism of the Bible to theistic interpretations of evolution. One middle-aged devotee I

met had recently self-published a book on the scientific evidence for Christianity in near-death experiences.

"A person doesn't feel like they have to be a six-day creationist anymore," says Philip Murray, a late-career computer specialist who directs the Reasonable Faith chapter in New York City.

There's a prophecy in the Book of Joel, paraphrased later in the New Testament: "Your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams." Maybe something of that is being fulfilled in the simultaneously tightening and loosening effect of Craig's presence. One on one, the younger students err on the side of acting holier-than-thou, while the older ones let a mild curse word or two slip. For both, this philosophy is changing their lives.

Philosophy was never supposed to be a narrow discipline, fortified from the argumentative swells of the agora by specialization and merely professional ambitions. That was for the Sophists whom Socrates regaled against. Philosophy was supposed to serve the polis, to educate and embolden its young, to raise up leaders. Whether one likes their preconceived conclusions or not, today it is evangelical Christians, with William Lane Craig in the lead, who are doing so better than just about anyone else.

*Nathan Schneider is the author of God in Proof: The Story of a Search From the Ancients to the Internet (University of California Press). This article was written with support from a Knight Grant for Reporting on Religion and American Public Life from the University of Southern California.*

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gerard\_harbison 2 hours ago

Craig's "debate" technique sounds very much like the "Gish gallop", perfected by dead but not lamented creationist Duane Gish. Throw out a serious of specious objections to evolution, relying of the fact you can throw out more arguments in a given time than your opponent can make counterarguments. Then claim you won any point he didn't respond to.

I suppose it make sense that theists might use the more tried and tested techniques of creationists. Problem is, Gish may have turned in a few bravura performances, but creationism is still wrong.

And the technique itself if profoundly intellectually dishonest. The 8th/9th commandment seems to be the one Christians seem to honor most in the breach than the observance.