



Q & A



Atheism on Trial *A Lawyer Examines the Case for Unbelief*

March 8, 2022 | \$17, 192 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0226-1

In the courtroom, lawyers establish certain facts to prove their cases. But can the legal mind discern the validity of one's belief or unbelief? With an evenhanded approach, nationally recognized trial lawyer Mark Lanier explores whether atheistic frameworks give satisfactory answers for understanding human existence and considers the questions of agnostics as to whether God is knowable.

Top Trial Lawyer Challenges Atheism, Agnosticism

Why did you, a top trial lawyer, decide to put atheism and agnosticism to the test in your new book *Atheism on Trial*?

Mark Lanier: A lot of my close friends are both lawyers and atheists/agnostics. In discussing faith with them, I was stunned that they would leave their legal precision behind in considering the life-critical questions that surround their views. It seemed propitious to me, therefore, to encapsulate the arguments in the manner of a trial.

How do you bring your courtroom experience to bear in your research and case for/against atheism?

Mark: Trial work is based on a simple premise: pursuit of truth. To find truth, one needs to seek, accumulate, and evaluate all the relevant evidence. Then, armed with all the evidence, a good lawyer determines the truth, whatever it may be. All too often on the issue of whether there is a God, people seek evidence to support their view, rather than letting the evidence dictate their view. That is what I sought to change.

What would you say is the strongest argument for unbelief?

Mark: I believe the strongest argument for unbelief is emotional rather than intellectual. Many (1) don't think about God, (2) don't sense a need for God, or (3) emotionally are not happy with life and then blame God, although without believing in him. For the third group, it is as if they think, *Well, if there is a God, then why is my life like this? I will blame him for this and decide he doesn't exist. Or at least doesn't deserve to exist.*

How would you cross-examine that argument?

Mark: I cross-examine the argument by first unmasking it for what it is. Those who ignore God, I force to focus. Those who don't perceive a need for God, I seek areas of their life under strain. And those angry with God and life, I seek to show that God isn't mean or ignoring them but is drawing their attention.

How do you hope readers engage with and respond to *Atheism on Trial*?

Mark: I hope the book gives people a paradigm to consider rational reasons for faith. For the believer, it should strengthen faith. For the unbeliever, it should challenge and give them pause. Hopefully for all, it becomes a dialogue point that furthers them on the continuum of faith.



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W. Mark Lanier, *Atheism on Trial*

W. Mark Lanier (JD, Texas Tech University) is an attorney, author, teacher, pastor, and expert storyteller. He founded the [Lanier Law Firm](#), which has offices in Houston, New York, and Los Angeles, and was named as the National Trial Lawyers Association's Trial Lawyer of the Year twice. Furthermore, he was named as one of *U.S. New and World Report's* Best Lawyers in America for nine consecutive years and as the 2013 Top Class Action Attorney in America, as well as being inducted to the national [Trial Lawyers' Hall of Fame](#). He also received the American Association of Justice's [Lifetime Achievement Award](#). Holding three honorary doctorates, Mark was bestowed the Ambassador of Peace award by the Guatemalan government.

Mark's courtroom work has resulted in feature articles in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, and *The American Lawyer*. He is also a frequent guest on news shows on CNBC, Fox Business News, ABC, and other networks, and a frequent lecturer at law institutions including Harvard, Stanford, Pepperdine, Baylor, and Texas Tech. He is the author of *Christianity on Trial* and *Atheism on Trial*.

Mark is the founder of the [Lanier Theological Library](#), one of the nation's largest private theological collections. He also teaches a weekly, 750-plus-member [Sunday school class focusing on biblical literacy](#) at Champion Forest Baptist Church. Mark is the founder of the [Christian Trial Lawyers Association](#), a non-profit organization whose goal is to create a network of principled attorneys to minister to others through civic-minded endeavors. He and his wife, Becky, have five children and live in Houston.



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