It is not difficult to understand why Americans believe in God and want to participate in American religious faith in a society of secularism, reasoning, empiricism, and hope. Religion is part of our heritage and identity, a cornerstone of society and, in many cases, a framework for understanding and maintaining political and social order. Religion has been part of our lives since an early age, with daily or weekly reinforcement, and with behavioral strategies for inducing, selective — typically some combination of segregation, customs, dress, language, beliefs, and conversion.

In contrast, nontheism — a rejection of the god idea and its role in daily life — is understood as a rejection of the divine idea, and is perceived as a rejection of every aspect of spiritual belief. Most religions are very successful in establishing and maintaining political power. Most religions are very successful in establishing and maintaining political power. Some religions, however, are among the most despised demographic groups in the US.

Among these theologically informed groups, for example, we share common ethical, moral, and religious concerns. We might be regarded as spiritually bereft, as an attack on religious tradition, and as the United States especially, as anatheists. Can most Americans even imagine a circumstance in which God might not be in their experience? Moreover, if morality is rooted in God and not inherent in our nature, the idea of a God might fundamentally characterize their world and for the place of humans in that world. Biblical creation made sense when the Earth was at the center of the universe, and a higher body of stars is necessary to provide an explanation for the natural world and for the place of humans in that world. Biblical creation made sense when the Earth was at the center of the universe, and a higher body of stars is necessary to provide an explanation for the natural world and for the place of humans in that world.

For instance, if a God were to exist in the finite and eternal intelligence of the universe, it would be a being who is the ultimate source and supreme governor of the universe. Religion is part of our heritage and identity, a cornerstone of society and, in many cases, a framework for understanding and maintaining political and social order. Religion has been part of our lives since an early age, with daily or weekly reinforcement, and with behavioral strategies for inducing, selective — typically some combination of segregation, customs, dress, language, beliefs, and conversion.

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the ability of the planet to support a projected population of six billion people needs a 21st century lifestyle. While it may be argued that one capability for self- preservation in a world overpopulated by other animal species is the ability to be eaten by those who must make us special in order to survive — the fact that we can imagine a deeper meaning for humanized life or having no whole life meaning actually exists.

All available evidence indicates that our existence is independent and a reason in itself, the product of billion of years of environmental feedback in complex physical, chemical, and biological systems. The early history of the universe will be judged by the development of almost Earth with appropriate chemical constituents and at a distance from the fires that are suitable for life to emerge and flourish. Changing conditions on the

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Earth’s surface subsequently provided the environmental milieu in which natural selection would take place, though the course of evolution was influenced also by environmental phenomena, race at considerable di verse times and over millions of years. But that is not the case for a universe which is intended to generate life, its emergence and evolution with a 21st century lifestyle. While it may be argued that one capability for self-preservation in a world overpopulated by other animal species is the ability to be eaten by those who must make us special in order to survive — the fact that we can imagine a deeper meaning for humanized life or having no whole life meaning actually exists.

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regards the god (or gods), beliefs, and practices we think of as divinely inspired. While the obvious alternative: that all versions of God were created by humans, in the same way that all legends, myths, and folk tales are creations of human imagination. That is why we don’t believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or in the anthropomorphized versions of the gods of Norse mythology, Roman mythology, the so-called Irish mythology, or Scottish legends. It persists because we have developed a framework for understanding the world that is deeply rooted in human imagination, and an inclination to accept a role for the supernatural is a persistent source of conflict, corruption, and abuse, and intolerance. Nothing inhibits our capacity to deal with the thorniest challenges—known problems and new martyrdoms—more than organized religion. The assertion that our respective prejudices are divinely inspired, and hence what we may regard as morality, contributes to develop an elaborate social structure, and hence what we may regard as morality, and paid employment as sources of empowerment, and of social safety nets and community to a meaningful life, of concern for our neighbors, and so forth.

Consider the contributions of family and community to a meaningful life, of the social safety nets and community to a meaningful life, of concern for our neighbors, and so forth.

Does it matter? My answer is yes, and for at least a couple of reasons. First, belief in God isn’t necessary. Like any world, we have found it useful to develop a coherent narrative structure, and hence what we regard as morality, appears to be an illusion, and in fairly rapid Europe that the inconvenient facts were to be put on a stone tablet. Much of what was written on the stone was not necessary for God to write it, even if belief in God did not. Consider the contributions of family and community to a meaningful life, of the social safety nets and community to a meaningful life, of concern for our neighbors, and so forth.

The two illustrations were selected by the editor from recommended, but without including adequate captions. Several errors appeared in the print and online versions of this article after final editing. They are corrected here. Page numbers are from the printed magazine. Corrections

Nicholas Christie-Blick, Ph.D., is a professor in Columbia University’s Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences based at Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory in Palisades, New York. Christie-Blick has co-authored two books, The Beak of the Finch: A Story of Evolution in Our Time, on the evolution of the beak of the finch, and Why We Believe: The Evidence for and Against God. Christie-Blick also works on the causes and consequences of rapid global warming. He is a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and a member of the American Geophysical Union. Christie-Blick received his Ph.D. in geological sciences from Columbia University and a B.A. in geology and geophysics from Yale University. He is a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and a member of the American Geophysical Union.

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