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### **Reply to Peterson**

Michael Ruse

[B]efore Darwin it really did make sense to say that God was involved in the design of organisms. Blind laws do not lead to complex functioning. Then Darwin showed that they do. Evolution through natural selection does all that God had to do and more. Before Darwin, the isomorphisms between organisms—homologies—really were a puzzle. “God did it to create Order” and that sort of thing. That sort of rather unsatisfactory thing. After Darwin, God does not have to enter the picture.

As I see it, Peterson accepts pretty much all of this, but then goes on to say that if we put things in a religious context...we have a much more satisfactory, overall explanation. Blind law may do it all, but that is the very point. How come blind law does it all? Why does blind law do it all? That is a pressing question and science has no answer. Religion does, however. A god, eternal, outside time and space, all-good and all-powerful (and hence all-knowing) created out of his own goodness. Things are as they are because God wanted them to be, and God wanted them to be because he is all-loving.

Well, I see the point, but I am not sure it is a point I want to grasp. Take, by analogy, my wife Lizzie. Lizzie is a warm and friendly person. One day, she comes home and is in a really foul mood. Just plain mean to her ever-loving, ever-helpful husband. How do I explain this? She has a toothache? Not true. She had a row with one of the children? Not true. Her ever-loving, ever helpful husband did something irritating? Impossible. Finally, I give up and say that I do not know why Lizzie is as she is. I hope she gets out of it soon.

Lizzie is a warm and friendly person. One day, she comes home and is in a really foul mood. Just plain mean to her ever-loving, ever-helpful husband. How do I explain this? She was abducted by aliens who brainwashed her and programmed her to be mean to the nicest person she knows? Well, that is certainly an explanation and not immediately falsifiable, and it does the trick. The mystery is a mystery no more. So, why do I not take this option? Because I simply do not believe it and I think there are all sorts of flaws in it. I have trouble with aliens in the first place and I have trouble with them brainwashing Lizzie in the second place. My experience of aliens—like in *The Day the Earth Stood Still*—is that they usually want to be taken to our leader and do not bother with lesser mortals like Michael and Lizzie.

I feel much the same about Peterson’s position. I do not believe in the [Abrahamic] God. Philosophically, I find the idea of something outside time and space, necessarily existing incomprehensible. Theologically, I think the [Abrahamic] God is an uneasy mix of Greek and Jewish thought. I simply do not see how something unchanging, outside space and time, can be the person of the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments. Eternal beings do not speak to the child Samuel...They do not even feel compassion. Anselm, in Chapter VIII of *Proslogium*, tells us that God does not go in that direction: “For when thou beholdest us in our wretchedness, we experience the effect of compassion, but thou dost not experience the feeling”

My position is that having an explanation that gives more immediate satisfaction is not enough. You have got to back it up by making that explanation at least vaguely reasonable.