News of God’s demise greatly exaggerated

I guess by now you’ve heard the bad news. God is dead. Again. I understand that God took the news pretty hard.

However, I’m sure that God might reply to the assertion of his death much the same way that Mark Twain did when he read his own premature obituary: “The news of my death was greatly exaggerated!”

My attention to God’s death came from a headline in the Sept. 8 issue of the New York Times that read: “Many Kinds of Universes And None Require God.”

The article was a book review by Dwight Garner of Stephen Hawking’s latest book: “The Grand Design.” Garner described Hawking as “the most revered scientist since Einstein, a formidable mathematician and a formidable salesman.” Hawking’s earlier book, “A Brief History of Time,” sold nine million copies.

As you may know, the brilliant Hawking is confined to a wheelchair. “Mr. Hawking’s body,” Garner writes, “has been wasted by Lou Gehrig’s Disease, while his mind is utterly intact, a pinging black box amid the physical wreckage.”

The longtime professor of mathematics at Cambridge University previously felt that a unified theory of physics would help us to “know the mind of God.” In his current book, however, he writes that creation “does not require the intervention of some supernatural being or god.”

This is not, of course, the first time that God has been denied, called irrelevant, or simply called dead. Frederick Nietzsche (1844-1900) had suggested that “God is dead.” I remember a famous cartoon that my good friend, the late Andy Hannon, had shown to me back in the 1960s. It showed a tombstone. At the top was written: “God is dead, Nietzsche.” Underneath that was printed: “Nietzsche is dead. God.”

There was a strong philosophical movement in the 1960s that focused on the demise of God. More recently, there have been a spate of books by celebrity atheists again

arguing that there is no God.
Yet, despite being disparaged and dispatched, God continues to go on, with or without our permission, with or without our acknowledgement.

I always side with the fine mind of the great scripture scholar, Sulpician Father Ray Brown. Whenever anyone would attempt to "prove" that there were no angels or no devil, or whatever, he would thoughtfully reply: "I don't know how anyone can prove a negative." We can prove that something exists. We can't prove that something does not exist.

Thus I find many of the arguments against the existence of God so convoluted, that, believing in God seems more plausible than non-belief.

We can indeed, and we do indeed, argue about concepts of God. Language is finite. God is infinite. We can describe God by analogy (like a shepherd, like a Father, etc.), rather than comprehend God's essence.

The best argument for the existence of God is in the lives of believers. Atheists are refuted, not by brilliant arguments, but by humble lives. If we live lives of tolerance, forgiveness, compassion, generosity, gentleness, kindness, prayerfulness and the like, when our lives seem to reflect the values and presence of God, then God lives in us and is visible through us. To put it another way: If we were on trial for our faith in God, would there be enough evidence to convict us? Would there be immediate and obvious differences in the way we lived, and the way atheists live?

Arguing convinces very few people. The witness of our lives is far more credible to the seeker and the searcher.

Years ago, Dr. Billy Graham was asked if God was dead. Graham replied: "Oh no, God is fine. I was talking to him just this morning." Let the conversation continue.