

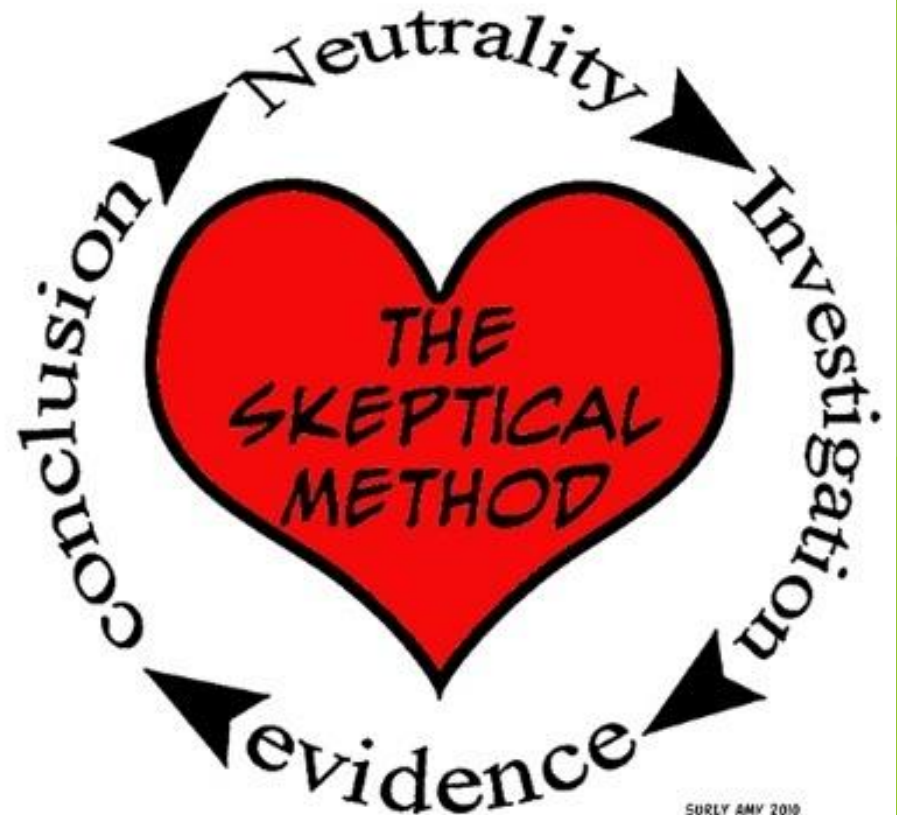
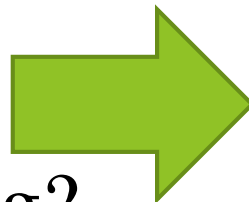
Faith and the Case for Faith

Highly Summarized Seminar, Spring 2019

By Harry Briley

Orig. 2/2013; Rev. 2/2015;
Six-week version: 2/2019

Looks unbiased and rational.
What could possibly be wrong?



People struggle with the value of Faith:

What is real about Christianity as presented?

Why should I bother to attend church? ... or follow Jesus?

God is not particularly relevant since my life is good.

I am not a needy person. Why should I care about faith?

Whose standards define what is moral right or wrong?

Why should you care if he/she/me are following your rules?

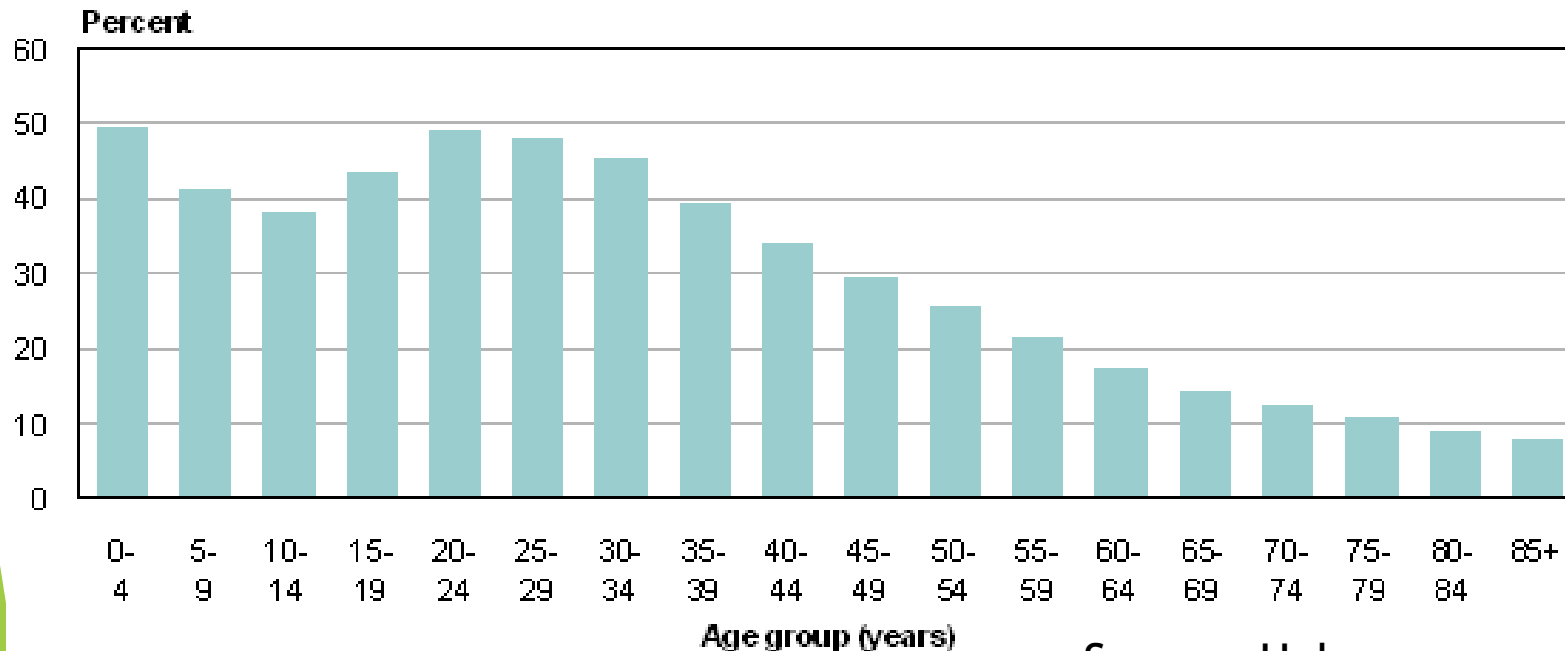
Bad people seem to be powerful, rich, and given a pass.

So, why do bad things happen to good people [like me]?

Learn (... not an exhaustive list):

- **Four** reasons why Christians leave the faith
- **Four** intellectual/rational barriers about God
- **Four** emotional/cultural barriers about God
- **Four** hurdles about Jesus

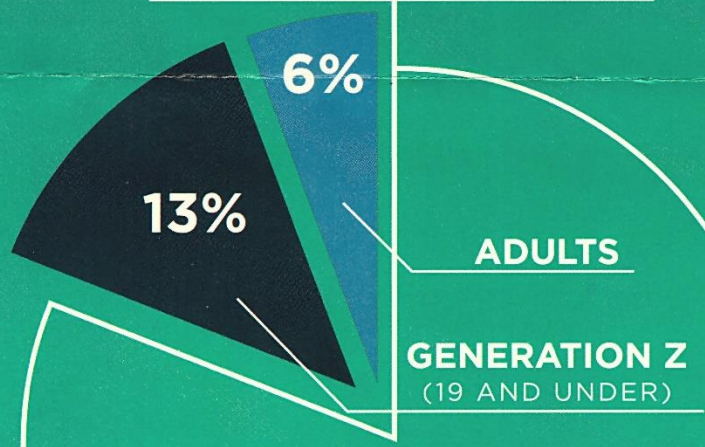
Percentage Stating No Religion by Age Group
2006 Census



Source: Unknown

Most are not hostile ...
but some issues block
faith. Respond with
kindness and humility.

ATHEISM IN AMERICA¹

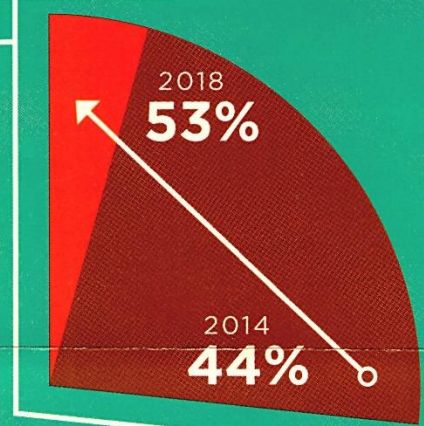


The percentage of Gen Z that identifies as atheist is **DOUBLE** that of the U.S. adult population.

In John 18:38, the Roman governor Pilate cynically asked Jesus: "What is truth?" Then he turned and walked away, apparently unwilling to grapple with an answer.

And so it is with a growing number in our society. Even among those who identify as evangelicals, a range of surveys and research indicates that trust in the Bible as the authoritative source of what to believe and how to live, is waning in our day.

MILLENNIALS IN AMERICA²



BELIEF: **BIBLE NOT LITERAL, JUST HELPFUL**

9% INCREASE IN THE PAST 4 YEARS

EVANGELICALS²

BELIEF: **EVERYONE SINS A LITTLE, BUT MOST PEOPLE ARE GOOD BY NATURE.** **53%**

BELIEF: **GOD ACCEPTS THE WORSHIP OF ALL RELIGIONS.** **52%**

BELIEF: **JESUS IS A CREATED BEING.** **78%**

American Family Association
afa.net (March 2019)

1. barna.com/research/atheism-doubles-among-generation-z/ 2. thestateoftheology.com

So, what attracted you to this seminar?

- New to intellectual aspects of Christianity?
- Getting hammered by atheists?
- Wanted an apologetics refresher?
- Having some recent personal doubts?
- Something else perked interest?

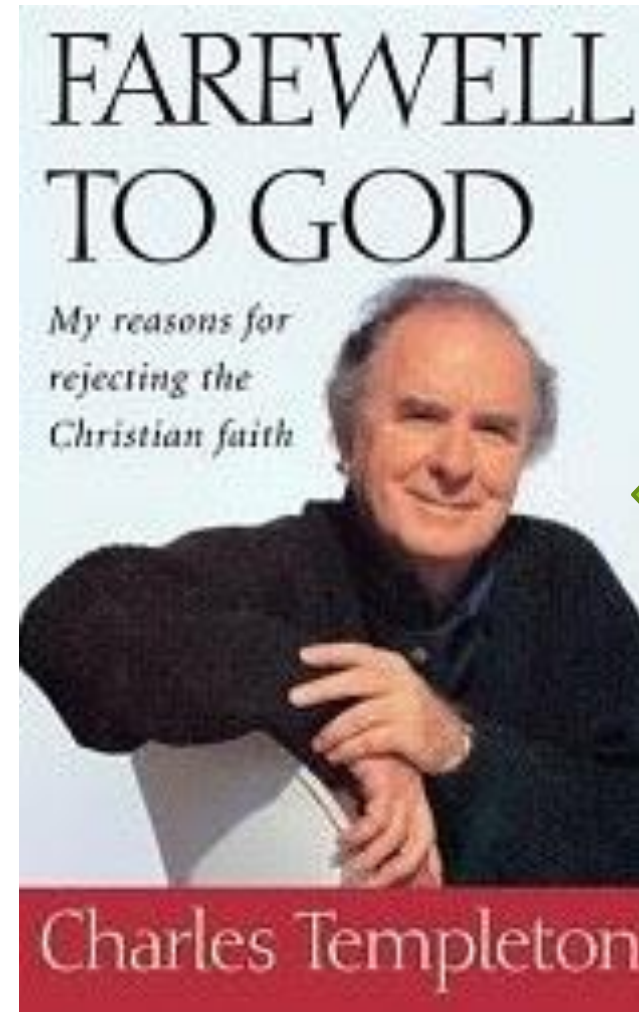


Humanists, media, universities say God is:

- not loving
- not credible
- not needed
- not responsive
- not worthy
- offensively exclusive
- cruel
- mean-spirited

They say that Jesus:

- is an invented fable or (IF he EVER existed) is still dead
- was delusional or misrepresented as a deity by the church



Founder of
Youth for
Christ

Evangelist 1946
Agnostic 1957
Atheist 1995

Doubters plagued Israel from ancient times

Exodus 5:2

“Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and moreover, I will not let Israel go.”

Psalm 42:3 and 10

My tears have been my food, day and night,
while they [taunt] me all the day long, *“Where is your God?”*
As with a deadly wound in my bones, my adversaries taunt me,
while they [taunt] me all the day long, *“Where is your God?”*

Psalm 74:22

Arise, O God, defend your cause;
remember how the foolish **scoff at you** all day!



Psalm 94:4 and 7

They pour out arrogant words; all evildoers full of boasting, saying, “*The LORD does not see; the God of Jacob takes no notice.*”



Isaiah 5:18-21

Woe to those who [harness] iniquity with cords of falsehood,
who [harness] sin as with cart ropes,
who [boastfully] say: “*Let [this so-called God] be quick,
let him speed his work that we may see it;
let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near,
and let it come, that we may know it!*”

Woe to [these boasters] who call evil good, and [call] good evil...

Isaiah 36:18 and 20

General Rabshakeh's challenge to King Hezekiah

“Beware lest Hezekiah mislead you saying, ‘The LORD will deliver us.’ Has any of the gods of the [other] nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? ... Who among all the gods of these lands have delivered their lands out of my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?”



Malachi 2:17

You have wearied the LORD ... by saying, *“Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delights in them [who do such evil].”* Or by asking, *“Where is the God of justice?”*



Christmas

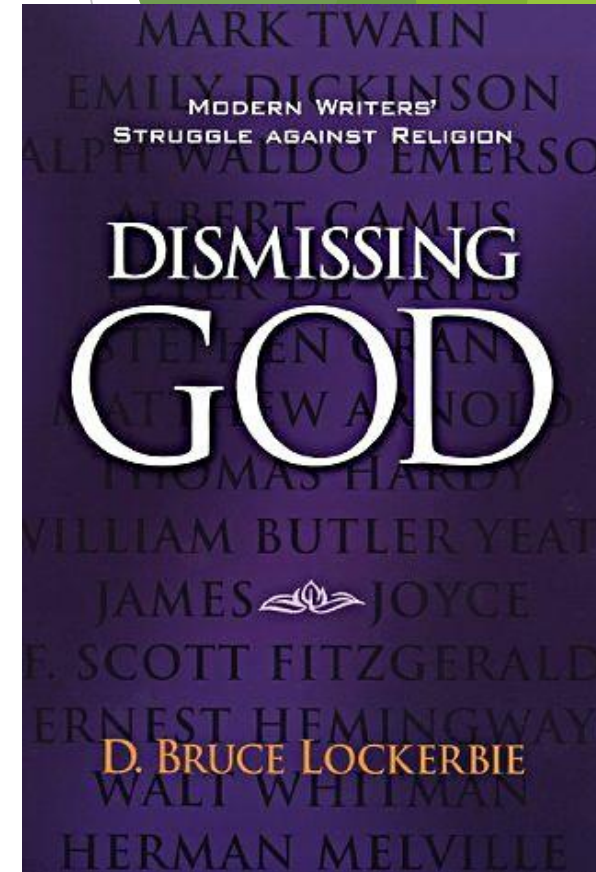
Calvin and Hobbes
- Bill Watterson

Doubts are not new to our generation

Dismissing God – Modern Writers Struggle Against Religion - D. Bruce Lockerbie, 1998

Examines how famous skeptics can inform believers:

- Matthew Arnold, Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman,
- Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne,
- Herman Melville, Stephen Crane, Mark Twain,
- Thomas Hardy, William Butler Yeats, D.H. Lawrence,
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemmingway, the Nihilists



Doubters in January 2019

Jesus and After traces this story in 66 chapters, some only a page long, each one based on a passage from Scripture and followed by a brief Reflection. An Afterword notes that this earliest Christianity, though it has not survived as an institution, lives on in the practice of many Christians in our own time.

“The author has accomplished something rare in this outstanding book. Freed from such “stumbling blocks” as the doctrines of blood atonement and bodily resurrection, the original Christian teaching shines forth with simplicity and directness.”

- Stephen W. Durrant, University of Oregon

“This witty and engaging exploration of the Gospel and contemporary texts gets closer to the historical Jesus of Nazareth and his earliest followers than any book I know of. Cutting through the many layers of mystification added by later writers, it reveals a Jesus with urgent ethical relevance for our lives today.”

- Paul Ropp, Clark University

From full-page ad in **January 2019 Biblical Archeology Review**.



Warring States Project

University of Massachusetts at Amherst

In sum: Mark was basis of Jesus myth and other authors added to mythology. Once we get past the cross as a substitutionary penalty and the myth of the bodily resurrection, we can see the 'real' Jesus as a teacher of humanist ethics. Jesus' teachings are what matters.

This **new 2019 book** assumes the *Passover Plot* (1965 conspiracy theory by British biblical scholar Hugh Schonfield) correctly debunked the narrative of Jesus' so-called rising from the dead.

Books with helpful responses?

C.S. Lewis, **Problem of Pain** – Why Evil with Loving God?

C.S. Lewis, **Mere Christianity** – Given choices, why Jesus?

C.S. Lewis, **Miracles** – Is Nature all there is?

Lee Stroebel, **The Case for Faith** (2000)

- Answers Youth For Christ founder Charles Templeton atheism

Timothy Keller, **The Reason for God** (2008) – Quotes C.S. Lewis

- Speaks to New Yorkers post-modern clash with Christianity
- Answers *Da Vinci Code*, misuse of Gnostic texts, and Dawkins

George Bassilios, **Timeless Truth in Truthless Times** (2018)

- Quotes C.S. Lewis, Zacharias, Kreeft, and Keller
- Answers Dawkins, Hawking, and Harris “New Atheism”

Matthew 13:18-22

*“... the **parable of the sower** means: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one [like birds] comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the [hard-packed] path.*

The seed falling on rocky [shallow] ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.

The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful.” - Jesus



Matthew 13:18-22 (Cont.)

Why American Christians Leave the Faith

- Believers go through the motions until a crisis (Birds of Air)
- Believers found engagement hit by disillusion (Shallow Soil)
- Believers distracted until weaned from faith (Weeds)
- Believers had troubling unanswered questions (Thorns)

Adapted from:

Why Christian Kids Leave the Faith, Tom Bisset, 1992



Guilt by Association

Most, not all, anti-God speech comes from people who left in disgust. They disbelieve in God because someone in church offended them, was uncharitable, or they found egregious hypocrisy. If re-thought, their anger is with sinful people, but God gets blamed ... as parents get blamed if their teen steals.

If God exists (and he does) and presented sufficient reasons to believe in Him (and he has), then we cannot wish Him away to non-existence. Our limited choices are to ignore him, spew hate at him, or fall on our knees in deep respect.



Are All Believers Insane? (Edited) - Rabbi Tzvi Freeman

From a talk to college students, March 2014: "Jews and the New Atheism"

I'm a Believer - I believe first and prove afterwards. I believe that each of my kids has enormous gifts. I believe the value of each individual is greater than society even though the math doesn't work. I believe that the world has one Creator, that He is good, and that His intents were good, even though it doesn't look that way.

Dangerous Beliefs - Belief is dangerous. Lethal. Belief can destroy humans and has.

- Human worth can be measured. That belief led to racist immigration and tens of thousands of forced sterilizations in America. That belief terminated crippled children, homosexuals, gypsies, and Jews. **Eugenics** was cutting edge science. But it was a belief.
- Proletarian revolution would lead to emancipation, fair distribution, no governments, and peace on earth. People truly believed it enough to fight revolutions that relegated hundreds of millions to serfdom and killed tens of millions. **Communism** is a belief.
- Everything got here by accident. Consciousness came from matter, energy, and physics. There is no meaning. All is an illusion. **Materialist reductionism** is a belief.

Atheism is the belief that there is nothing to believe - All these beliefs: eugenics, fascism, communism, materialist reductionism and atheism—are **regressive**. They never assisted humanity. What makes these beliefs most pernicious is that those who believe those beliefs, believe they are pure reason. Proven fact. Science. It believes it gave birth to itself. If anyone tells you that his beliefs are proven true by science, it is such beliefs that can destroy. There is no human being without beliefs. Without many, many beliefs.

Reason is useful. But it goes nowhere without the faith that there is a somewhere to go. Without belief, the human moral compass is doomed. If none believed that all human life is sacred, we would be living devoid of civil rights. After all, rational scientists supported modern racism [and] reason was on the side of totalitarian states. Reason alone won't get you ethics, won't get you truth, won't find you meaning.

We have two faculties by which our minds interact with the world: **reason and faith**. But if someone refuses to recognize the sanity of faith, the channels of dialogue are closed.

https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2539704/jewish/Are-All-Believers-Insane.htm

Rabbi Tzvi Freeman, a senior editor. We encourage you to distribute but comply with our copyright.

The enigma of **Charles Templeton**, founder of Youth for Christ, senior partner with young Billy Graham ... became atheist over eight major barriers to faith while later at Princeton Seminary

We must present a **bridge** for why Jesus makes sense,
despite their disillusionment

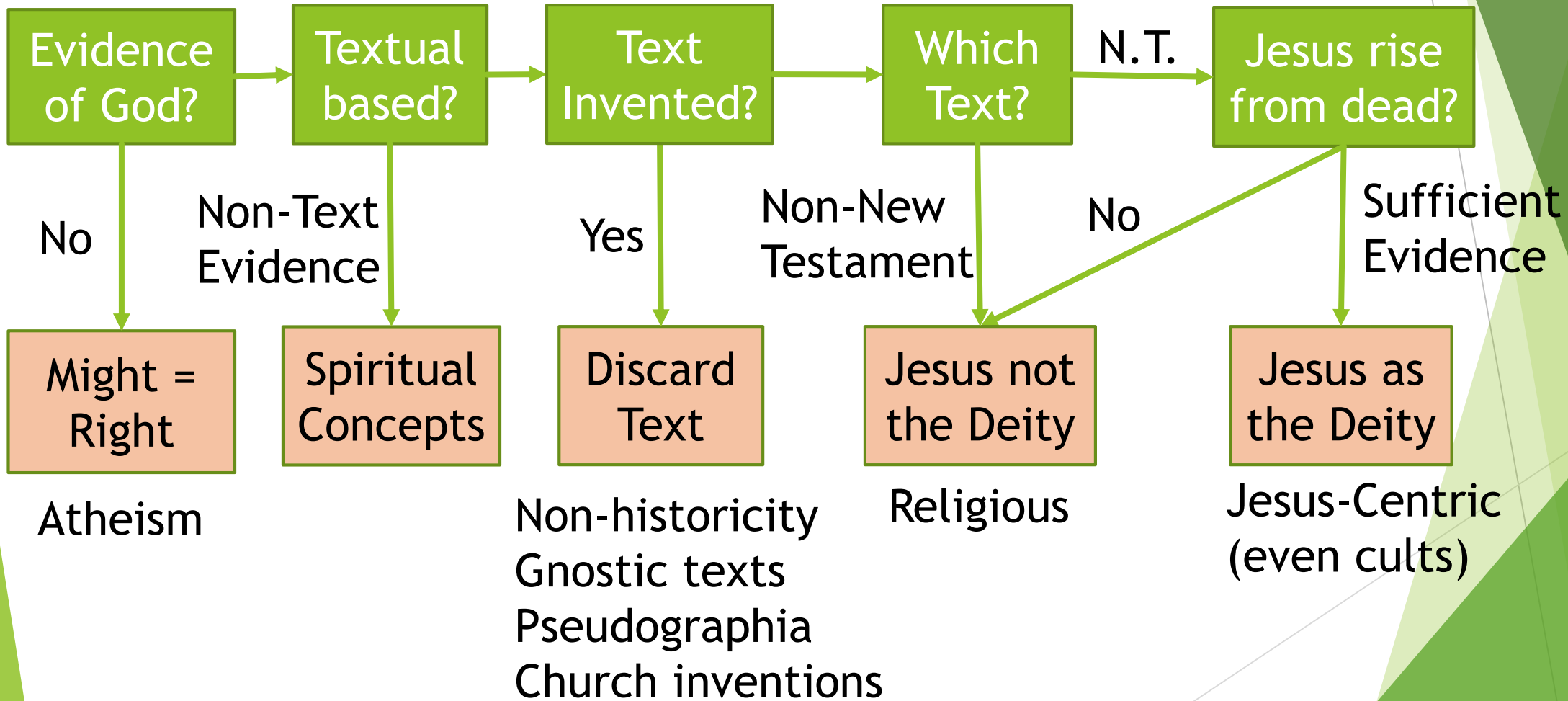


If Jesus is not real, all other faith discussions are dust in the wind.

I Cor. 15:17 and 19

“... if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.” - Paul

Christianity has hoops to jump through



L. Strobel: *Each of "The Big Eight" [by Templeton] needs to be weighed in light of overwhelming evidence for God and Jesus.*

When I was an atheist [in 1980], I needed more than merely to raise random objections; I needed a non-theistic scenario that accommodated the facts. Atheism cannot credibly account for the Big Bang, the fine-tuning of the universe, life, moral laws, the supernatural confirmation of the Bible, and the Resurrection.

I examined each obstacle with experts having satisfying analysis. After a year investigating "The Big Eight", I remained utterly convinced that the most rational step is to invest faith in Jesus.

Basic Barriers



- T. Keller: *“Three barriers in my spiritual unreality in college:*
- ***intellectual** [rational] with a host of tough faith questions*
 - ***interior personal** [emotional]. I had never experienced God’s presence personally. Faith journey’s are never simply intellectual exercises.*
 - ***social** [cultural]. I needed a [culturally sensitive] camp of Christians who had concern for justice in the world.”*

Orthodox Jewish Rabbi asks:

Is Religion a Childish Thing? <https://www.chabad.org/4281534>

If an adult means being rational, what does it mean to be a child? Does it mean being irrational? When religion involves the childlike gesture of “faith”, it would seem to be irrational and immature.



This 7-minute video gently pokes at famous but unnamed **atheist**, a Jewish psychoanalyst

Intellectual/Rational Barriers

- 1 Theodicy – Evil/ Suffering with a Loving God?
 - God is not loving
- 2 Miracles are impossible
 - God is not credible
- 3 Evolution and Modern Science are evidence of no God
 - God is not needed
- 4 Jesus is the **ONLY** way to God
 - God is offensively exclusive



1 Evil/Suffering vs Loving God?

“If there is no God, where is there so much good in the world? If there is a God, why is there evil and suffering?” - St. Augustine

Basic Argument: God and evil are incompatible.

God must be powerful enough to stop evil.

Evil exists. THEREFORE, God [of my design] does not exist.

OK, Evil exists. Now what? Different countries, cultures, and eras disagree significantly over what constitutes good/evil.

Yet, some universal right/wrong exists. Why? ... if survival of fittest is indeed the primary rule of random undirected existence?

1 Evil/Suffering vs Loving God? (Cont.)

*You cannot have real safety or happiness except where everyone plays fair, ... But as of why we feel about Right and Wrong it just misses the point. If we ask: "Why ought I to be unselfish?" and you reply "Because it is good for society," we may then ask, "Why should I care except when it happens to pay **me** personally?" and then you will have to say, "Because you ought to be unselfish"—which brings us back to where we started. You are saying what is true, but not getting any further.*

- C.S.Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, pg.29

because circular reasoning works

1 Evil/Suffering vs Loving God? (Cont.)

T. Keller: *“Many philosophers identified a major flaw that if evil appears pointless to me, then it **must be** pointless. ... It is a mistake, though understandable, to think that if you abandon belief in God, it somehow makes the problem of evil easier to handle.*

If we embrace Jesus as God and that he went to the Cross, then we have a deep consolation and strength to face the brutal realities of life on earth. We can know [Jesus] is truly Emmanuel even in our worst sufferings.”

1 Evil/Suffering vs Loving God? (Cont.)

L.Stroebe: *“Peter Kreeft [a Catholic apologist] conceded that suffering [indeed] constitutes some evidence against God, but in the end it's buried by evidence that he exists, loves us, can redeem our suffering, and draw good from it.*

The mountain of evidence can give us confidence that though we may not understand why there is suffering or hell, we can trust that God is just, that he acts appropriately, and that someday we will have a deeper explanation.”

2. Miracles are impossible

Seven Causes of Intellectual Doubt in Seminary literature

- Absent God (Aristotelian Dualism/Watchmaker Deist)
- Disbelief in the Supra-natural (Nature is all there is)
- Internal willfulness (hostility to traditional faith)
- No ancient society technically superior to ours
- No ancient society had more natural resources than us
- Lack of knowledge of archeology (Bias stuck in 1880s)
- Lack of knowledge of cultures within ancient societies

- Harry Briley, some date long ago in Seminary

2. Miracles are impossible (Cont.)

T. Keller: *“The Christianity that is growing is not the [emaciated], belief-thin versions predicted by sociologists. It is a robust supernaturalist [supra-natural] kind of faith, with belief in miracles, Scriptural authority, and personal conversion.*

Efforts to suppress or control it only makes it stronger... Religion is not a temporary [crutch] that helped us adapt, but a permanent central aspect of the human condition. This is a bitter pill to swallow [since] every [humanist] thinks they are in the ‘mainstream’ but robust religious beliefs dominate the world. There is no reason to expect that to change.”

2. Miracles are impossible (Cont.)

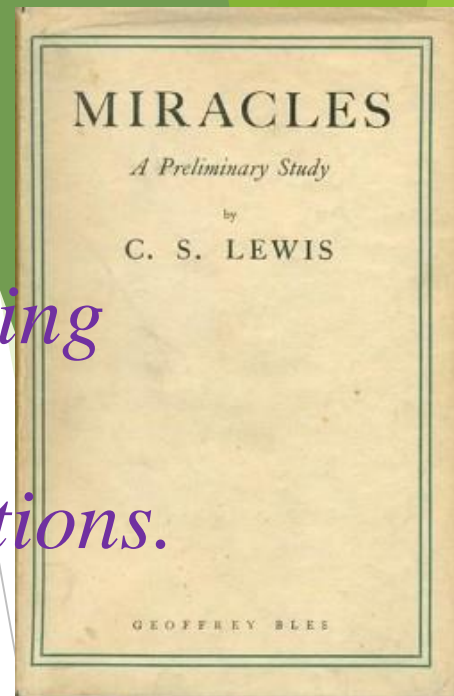
The Naturalist believes the ultimate Fact, called Nature, the thing you cannot go behind, going on of its own accord. Inside that [closed] system, every event happens because another event happened; in the long run, because the Total Event is happening.

... [It is]so interlocked that nothing can be independent from "the whole show." No part exists "on its own" ... Thus no thorough Naturalist believes in free will [e.g. hostile atheist Sam Harris is thus consistent]: for free will means humans have power [over] the total series of events. And any such separate power is what the Naturalist denies." - C.S.Lewis, Miracles. pg.6

2. Miracles are impossible (Cont.)

The Supernaturalist [supra-naturalist] agrees that something exists in its own right; whose existence is nonsensical to explain because this Fact is the starting-point of explanations.

*He does not identify this Fact with "the whole show." Things fall to two classes [in this open system]. In the first, things or (more probably) One Thing is original. In the second, things merely derive from that One Thing. They will cease to exist if it ceases to maintain them; they will be altered if it ever alters them. [Hence, any externality injected into "the whole show" is called a miracle.] - C.S.Lewis, *Miracles*. pg.7*



Miracles were not ruled out in ancient civilizations

G. Feliciano (2019) identified the dichotomy of an open/closed system as a modern philosophic concept [at least since the Age of Enlightenment].

Ancient civilizations saw no philosophic conflict with the natural and supra-natural interacting within their environment without humankind's permission.

Moderns felt science had explanations for such events.

2. Miracles are impossible (Cont.)

T. Keller: *“The reason many people think science has disproved [God] is that most major faiths believe in miracles, the intervention of God into the natural order. This began with the [Age of] Enlightenment belief that miracles cannot be reconciled to a modern rational view of the world.*

[This premise] is a leap of faith [or leap of doubt –hb] since science is only equipped to test for natural causes and cannot speak to any others ... The other hidden premise is that ‘there cannot exist a God who does miracles’”.

3. Evolution and Modern Science are evidence of no God

- Premises for ‘No God’ Theory are unprovable
- Macro-evolution versus micro-evolution
- Limitation of Scientific Method
- Problems with Fossil Record (for everyone, Creationists too)
- Problems with Geology (for everyone, Creationists too)
- Problems with Carbon-14 Dating
- Some scientists believe in speedy creation (but how ‘speedy’?)

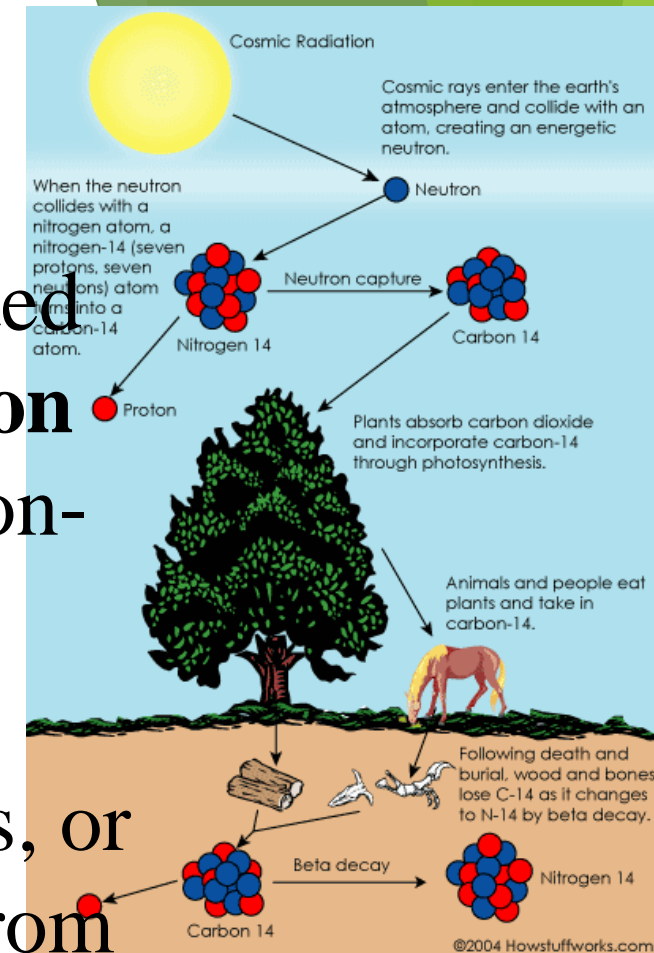


Bloom County –
Berke Breathed 3/17/1989

3A. Problems with Carbon-14 (C14) Dating

C14 works using carbon-based materials interpolated **between** known dates. It excels for range finding **on plants that pull C14 from the air** (in particular non-petrified trees and plant-eaters).

C14 cannot extrapolate nor date the universe, rocks, or creatures (shellfish) that ingest lime. C14 dating from the ICR RATE project showed that samples from ten different coal seams **regardless** of geological depth gave a consistent range of 48,000 to 50,000 years.



3A. Problems with Carbon-14 (C14) Dating (Cont.)

- Public (and pastors?) believe prehistoric dates come from C14
- C14 **cannot** date over 100,000 and **gets wobbly** beyond 50,000
- Freshly killed creatures show up dead 1500 to 2500 years earlier
- Diamonds/dinosaurs should have no C14 due to rapid C14 decay. Soviet (1991) and Univ. Arizona blind tests found C14 in samples.
- Evolutionists do not test dinosaur bones because they "already know" the age must be 65 million years ago. Statement of faith.

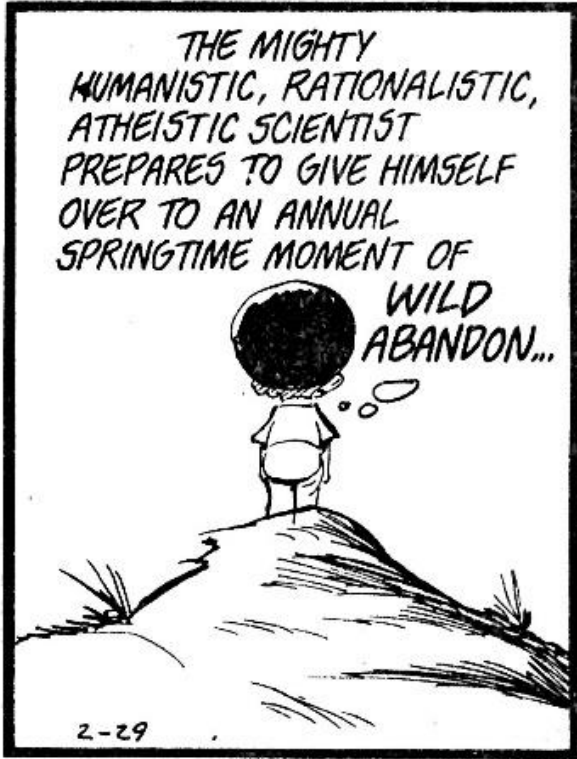
www.dinosaurc14ages.com/carbondating.htm

3B. Mount St. Helens Annoyances



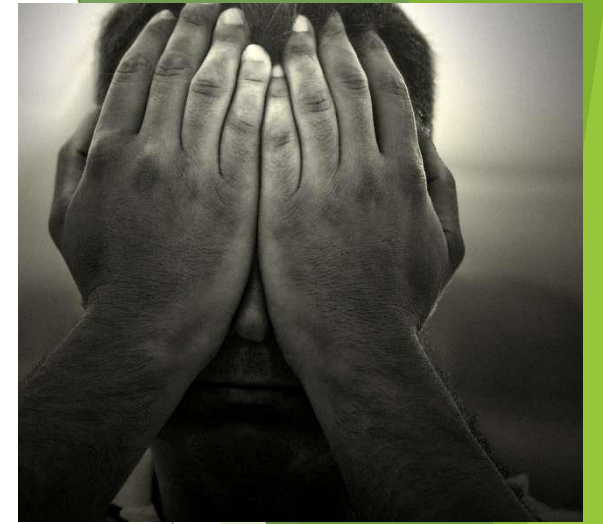
Since the Mt. St. Helens eruption and mudflows, hydrologists believe Grand Canyon carved by a **breached dam of huge inland sea** covering Colorado. The middle layer of Mt. St. Helen carved out canyon walls has 25-foot deep band of **thousands of deposited layers** from that one pyroclastic event. Such activity should mix, but instead put down thousands of layers of solid rock in one day. That is, **not** through thousands of wet/dry seasons.

ICR sent 10-year dome specimen to independent lab for blind tests, yielding a million years each. If standard dating failed a **known lava date**, how can critics justify dates for other lava?



Bloom County –
Berke Breathed 2/29/1989

Emotional/Cultural Barriers



5 Lingering Doubts / Unanswered Prayers

- God is not responsive

6 Conquest Morality (Spoils of War) promotes Killing Innocents

- God is not worthy of my respect

7 Religion is source of all intolerance, violence, and wars

- God is cruel

8 A God who sends people to hell is not God

- God is mean-spirited and sadistic

5. Lingering Doubt / Unanswered Prayers

T. Keller: *“The reason you doubt Christianity's Belief “A” is because you hold unprovable Belief “B”. Every doubt therefore is based upon a leap of faith [or leap of doubt -hb].*

It is inconsistent to require more justification for Christian belief than you do for your own, but that is frequently what happens. In fairness, you must doubt your doubts ... you will discover that they are not as solid as they first appeared.”

5. LingerinD Doubt / Unanswered Prayers

Mark 9:24 – Father of demoniac child had faith mixed with doubt

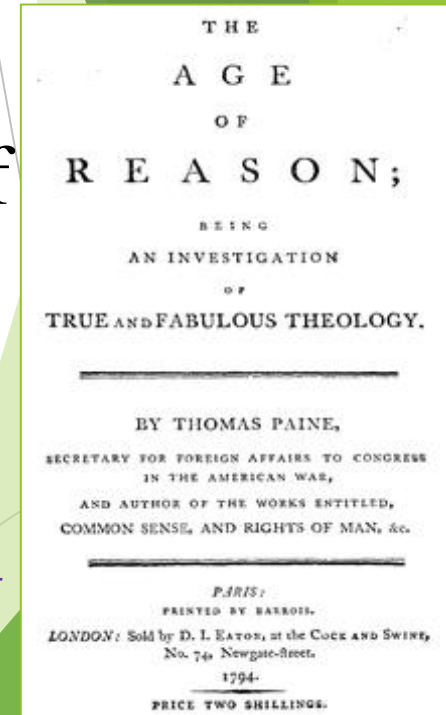
John 17:17 – Willing to believe: “*Help my unbelief*”

I suggest:

- Put doubt in context of overall faith
- Clarify object of faith. **Faith in thin ice will kill me**
- “Leech” off others. **Attach and learn from strong believers**
- Put faith-material into brain. **Examine food we feed our minds**
- Experiment with what little you know ... but still follow Jesus

6 Conquest Morality promotes Killing Innocents

- *The Bible tells us to be like God, and then on every page describes God as a mass murderer* – Atheist **Robert Wilson**
- Atheist **George Smith** agrees OT God garnered in a list of atrocities. Jehovah was fond of exterminating people.
- **Charles Templeton** said OT God is utterly unlike God of most Christians, injustice by any modern standards.
- *Whenever we read the obscene stories, ... torturous executions, unrelenting vindictiveness with which more than half the Bible is filled. It would be more consistent that we called it the work of a demon than of God. -*
Thomas Paine, 1794

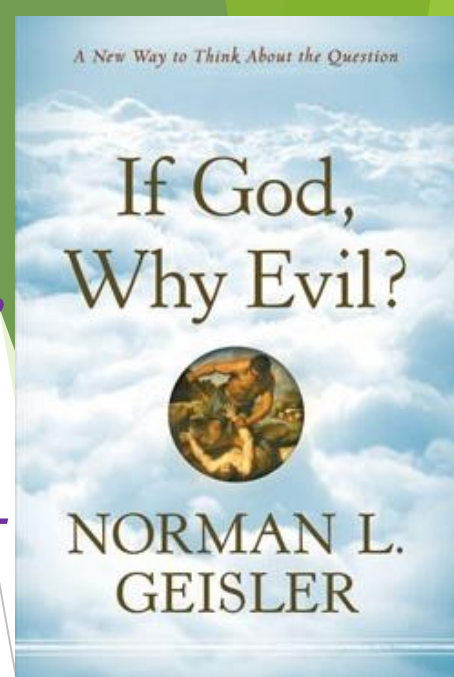


6A. Conquest Morality promotes Killing Innocents (Cont.)

- N. Geisler remarked that when Paine wrote first part of the **Age of Reason** he did not have a Bible! He confused things which the Bible dutifully records versus what the Bible approves.
- N. Geisler: *“A simple word study puts a lot of worries to bed. Mercy appears 261 times, 72% in OT, a three to one ratio. Love occurs 322 times, half in each. God seems more judgmental in NT than in OT. The OT says little about eternal punishment.”*
- *However, you Lord are compassionate and a gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness - King David*

6B. Conquest Morality promotes Killing Innocents (Cont.)

N. Geisler: *While God will punish sin, He is merciful. He let anyone who wanted to run, escape. Let us start with Amalekites. They were far from innocent. They were hell-bent to commit genocide. Had some hard-core remnants survived, they might resume their constant aggression. They were persistent, vicious, and warring people [like the Islamic State or Boko Haram in 2015]. They cowardly slaughtered the most vulnerable. Their children were immersed in a culture of hate [like Hamas does in Gaza]. God could use natural disaster like a flood, but instead he used Israel to fight against a truly evil people.*



7A. Violence versus Justice-based War

[If there is a God, which God are we talking about? – hb]

In 8/2018, popular evangelical [liberal] pastor Brian Zahnd declared [Truman's] bombing Hiroshima was as bad as Nazi Auschwitz. For him, all violence is equal ... but worse if coming from America.

- <https://brianzahnd.com/2018/08/hiroshima-anti-transfiguration/>

In 11/2018, *I met a young Southern Baptist church planter in Wash. DC. He works for defense industry while pastoring a church full of people working for defense. He said these highly educated and church-going Christians have no idea how the Bible and Christian faith relate to defense work.* [How about our Livermore? –hb]

- Mark Tooley, 11/30/2018, Institute for Religion and Democracy

7B. Own up to violence in Church History



Critics decry ANY violence tied to the Church

- Crusades – Appealed to non-pious soldiers with promise of loot
 - Christian rank-and-file soon resisted further calls for Crusades
- Inquisitions: French, Papal, Spanish - Abuses opposed by many
- Salem Witch trials (16 people) - Halted by single Puritan leader
- Exploitation - Missionaries protested mercantilism of Spain
- 30-Year War between Catholics and Lutherans - No Winners
- Anti-Jewish sentiment by Luther and Hitler
 - Luther only became bitterly hostile late in life (but no deaths)
 - Hitler studied to be a Catholic priest (and dropped out)
 - Hitler fascinated by occult and supernatural evil powers

7C. Do Critics prefer violence by Non-Christians??



- Chairman Mao (Communism)
 - Current government admits to 30M killed (“due to hunger”)
 - The most violent dictator: Estimates 49 to 78 million killed
- Himmler and his SS
 - 6M Jews killed but 15M died ... who were other 9 million?
 - 3M Russian POWs left to die, 3000 Polish Catholic priests, Gypsies, mentally deficient, elderly, earnest Christians
- Pol Pot killing fields of Cambodia? 1,700,000
- Rwanda genocide by African tribe in power? 800,000
- Idi Amin terror in Uganda? A novice: only 300,000 killed
- Sudan: Enslaved, churches burned, hands/feet chopped off

7C. Do Critics prefer violence by Non-Christians??



Stalin (Communism)

- Out of 170 million citizens, the 10% tally exceeds Hitler
1M executed, 7M starved, 10M deported (3M who die in camps)
- The 7M persons starved in Ukraine deprived of food they grew.
Declared "enemies" these 7M small-plot owners (most peasants)
became homeless. It was forbidden by law to aid these families.
Men, boys, childless women became slaves in mines and industry.
- Notorious 1937 Order 447 called for mass execution and exile
of "socially harmful elements" (about 1M killed in Great Purge)
- Stalin killed 5,000 in power who could challenge him

7D. Do not forget what **determined** non-Christian tyrants seek

On 6/6/1941, Martin Bormann, head of Nazi Chancellery, private secretary to Hitler, issued secret decree on churches [... *“National Socialism and Christianity are irreconcilable.”*]

- *People must be separated from churches and their pastors ...*
- *Just as the deleterious influences of astrologers, seers and other fakers are eliminated and suppressed by the State, so must the possibility of church influence also be totally removed . . .*
- *Not until this has happened, does the state leadership have influence on the individual citizens. Not until then are the people and Reich secure in their existence for all time*

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Nazi_Germany



8 A God who sends people to hell is not God

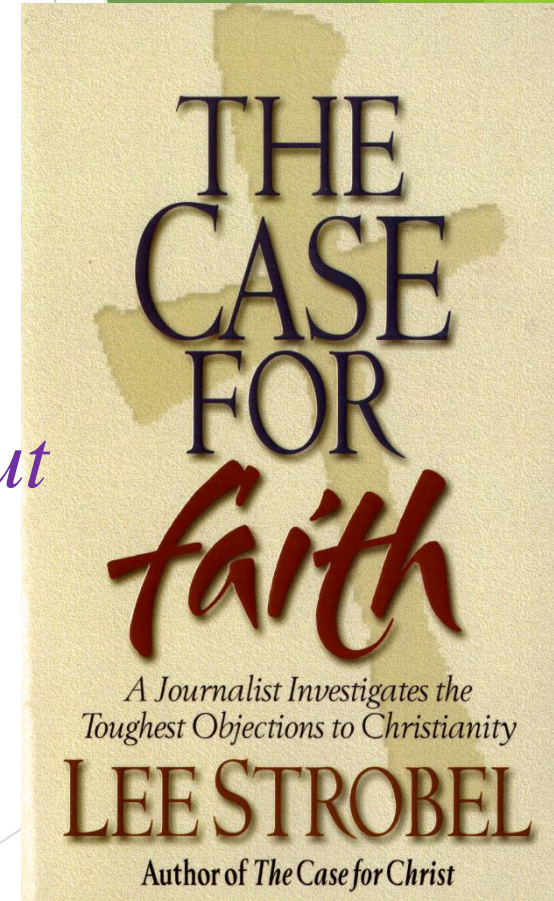
Mark Twain: “*Heaven is for the climate, but Hell is for companionship*”. Gold Miners agreed. The musical *Paint Your Wagon* accurately portrayed that miner-49er mindset.

D.A. Carlson: “*Hell is not where people are consigned because they were pretty good blokes but just did not believe the right stuff. They defied their maker, still want to be the center of their own universe, and persist in defying God. If this does not matter to God, then he is either amoral or positively creepy. To act in any other way in the face of blatant defiance, reduces God himself.*”

L. Stroebel: *“Hell was something God made because people chose to rebel. When people founded the United States, they did not start by first creating jails.*

Templeton’s premise [of hell] is [thus] flat wrong. It is not appropriate to frighten children about eternal fire in hell to manipulate them. Certainly, scare them about jail and prison, but do not present hell as a [mocking] God [gleefully] torturing children.

Eternity is the adult version of our soul. Jesus used children as a model of trust [and adults as the] cynics.



Why must everyone suffer the same in hell?

[Says who?] Rejecting God yields eternal loss of God. Thus, we will live eternity by our own wits among other selfish people.

Why punish people infinitely for finite crimes?

A murder by gun takes a second. No court punishes based upon how long the crime occurred. The question misleads. Those in hell will likely feel justified with their continuing rejection of God.

Why not just snuff people out and annihilate them?

God will not destroy something that he valued. However, he will not force people to be where they are unwilling. Coercion is not [a trait] of God. That [evil] behavior is found only in willful man.

Why doesn't God give people a second chance?

If a second chance sees God in his glory, then it would be coercion or an avoidance of punishment, but not a choice. If there was a follow-up for a person to turn his life around, then that would make this life meaningless. Our decisions here defines our character. Hell is the logical outcome of [our decisions].

Isn't re-incarnation more rational than hell?

Reincarnation breaks what I am essentially. If you say, I lost weight, people applaud. If you said I am now an ice cube, people balk because the essential thing they know is that I am human. Re-incarnation says I come back as a dog or even as an ice cube. What is the difference [since none of my essentiality remains?]

Four Hurdles about Jesus

1 Biographies of Jesus not trustworthy

- Propaganda by those in power to control uneducated masses
- Church suppressed Gnostics, hiding data contrary to party line
- Archeology found nothing about Jesus, only about cult followers

2 Cross/Tree/Pole a Myth

- Islamic: Jesus did not die criminal or substitutionary death

Four Hurdles about Jesus

3 Resurrection a Myth

- Jesus is an invented fable or (IF he EVER existed) still dead
- Islamic: Jesus was virgin-born prophet who died normal death

4 A man is never a God nor a Son of God

- Jesus was delusional or misrepresented as deity by church
- Islamic: Blasphemy to say God fathered a son with a woman

1. Biographies of Jesus not trustworthy



Archeology cannot specify transcendent truth, they can only confirm/deny tangible items (inscriptions, coins, towns, dates)

The NT reads like reliable history with no undue bias. It has embarrassing material. People (**even** many enemies) still alive could challenge/extinguish exaggerations or false reports.

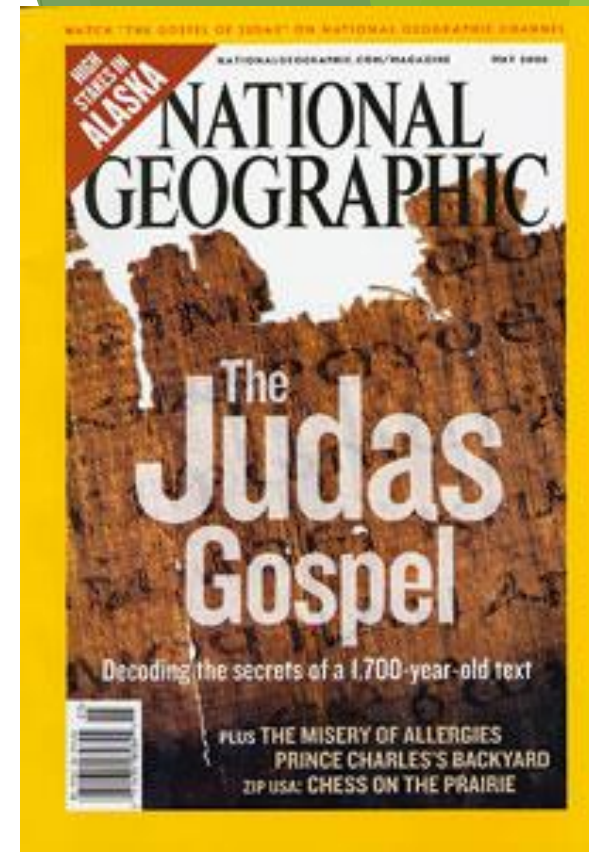
The timings in the gospels is strengthened when read from Jewish view and floating Passover. Gnostic texts are later.

The text is reliably preserved in quantity and quality of copies.

Discover the *real* Betrayal — of JAMES

This new textual interpretation provides readers a totally new Gospel meaning

The Gospel of Judas is the most important discovery in history. From gnostic texts that have just recently arisen — phoenix-like— from the desert sands of Egypt, is the true original mastership succession story of first-century savior James the Just, whose every detail is inverted to hide his coming in the “Betrayal of Christ” narrative of the New Testament Gospels. All biblical scholars missed that Judas —*not Jesus!*— is the spiritual self-sacrifice of “the man who bears me,” and an inverted stand-in for successor James ... just like Dr. Robert Eisenman of Dead Sea Scrolls fame showed for fictional ‘Judas’ and ‘Joseph Barsabbas JUSTUS’ in Acts 1, and fictional ‘Stephen’ in Acts 7.



Written beneath:
“Seeking assistance/
publisher/producer”
JudaswasJames.com

From half-page ad in **January 2019 Biblical Archeology Review**.

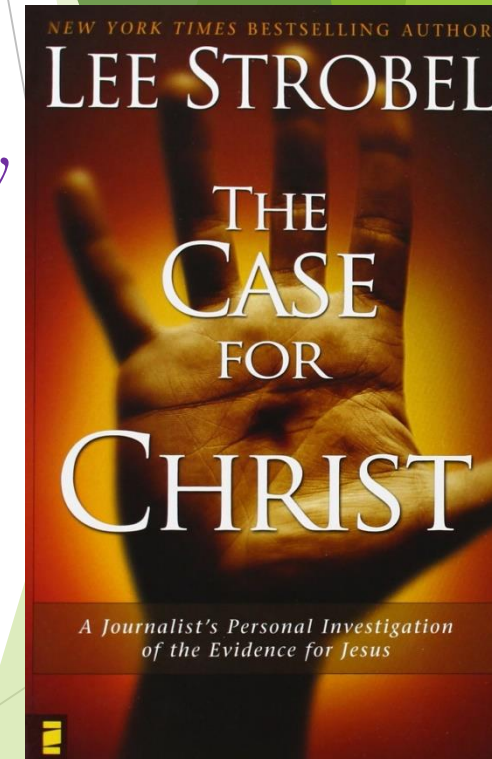
Author of this **new 2019 self-published book** (with hopes to become next “Da Vinci Code” best seller) assumes that Dr. Eisenman correctly debunked stories of Judas and Stephen. He relied upon Gnostic texts (written long after biblical texts).

Robert Eisenman is an American biblical scholar, theoretical writer, historian, archaeologist, and "road" poet. He is professor of Middle East religions, archaeology, Islamic law, and director of Institute for Study of Judeo-Christian Origins at California State, Long Beach. Eisenman helped free access to Dead Sea Scrolls.

1. Biographies of Jesus not trustworthy (Cont.)

L. Strobel: [In recounting my leaving atheism in 1980-81 in my book] *The Case for Christ, I established that:*

- *biographies of Jesus stand up to intellectual scrutiny*
 - *they were reliably passed down through history*
 - *there's corroborating external evidence for Jesus*
 - *Jesus was not psychologically imbalanced when he claimed he was God*
 - *he fulfilled all attributes of deity*
-
- See the dramatic 2017 movie: *The Case for Christ*



3 Resurrection a Myth

I had spirited evolution conversations with co-worker Tim. Our friendship let these be calm about raw data. We talked about how I felt Jesus was God incarnate. Tim replied, “*You have convinced me that the world was created, but when you ask me to believe in Jesus (as that Creator), you are asking me to take a leap of faith.”* We ended there, because that leap (of doubt) felt far too huge.

Past evidences might help regarding that specific historical event. However, reports of Jesus rising from the grave require more faith from me than believing in speedy (faster than evolution) creation.



Easter

B.C. —
Johnny Hart 4/12/2009

3 Resurrection a Myth (Cont.)

L. Strobel: *“On multiple occasions and various circumstances, different individuals and groups experienced appearances of Jesus alive from the dead.*

This cannot be dismissed as legendary because of the early date of accounts. The original disciples suddenly and sincerely believed Jesus was risen despite their predisposition to the contrary. They were willing to go to their death proclaiming Jesus was resurrected [as proof that] he was the Son of God—and nobody knowingly and willingly dies for a [known] lie.”

3 Resurrection a Myth (Cont.)

The evidence is highly circumstantial from purported testimonials of many uneducated eyewitnesses. I cannot test it by experiment.

Yet, that event occurred and the leap to invite Jesus into daily life is rational and wise. The resurrection is the crux of faith. It is not blind, but it takes trust first **that God even exists** [Hebrews 11:6] and that the **recorded data is trustworthy** about Jesus [John 20:31]

“If you do not believe that the Resurrection occurred, then you have absolutely no right to call yourself a Christian”

- Rabbi Dobin, formerly of Beth Emek (Reform), Pleasanton

3 Resurrection a Myth (Cont.)

Romans 10:8-11 → [As per Deut. 30:14,] *"The word is near; in your mouth and heart," that is, the word of faith we proclaim:*

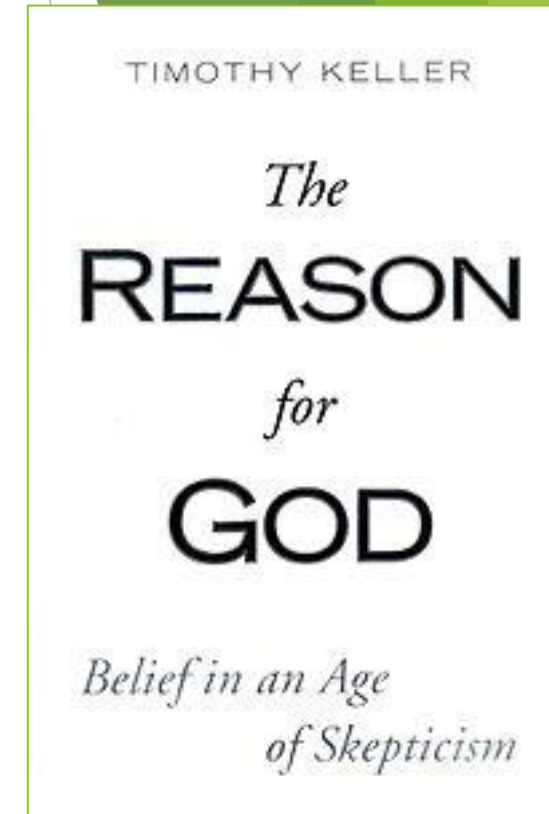
That if you confess "Jesus is [the rightful King per Matt. 10:32 and John 13:13]," and believe God raised him from the dead, you will be [redeemed]. For with your heart you believe and are justified, and with your mouth you confess and are saved [from the final penalty of sin and for good purposes – Eph. 2:10]

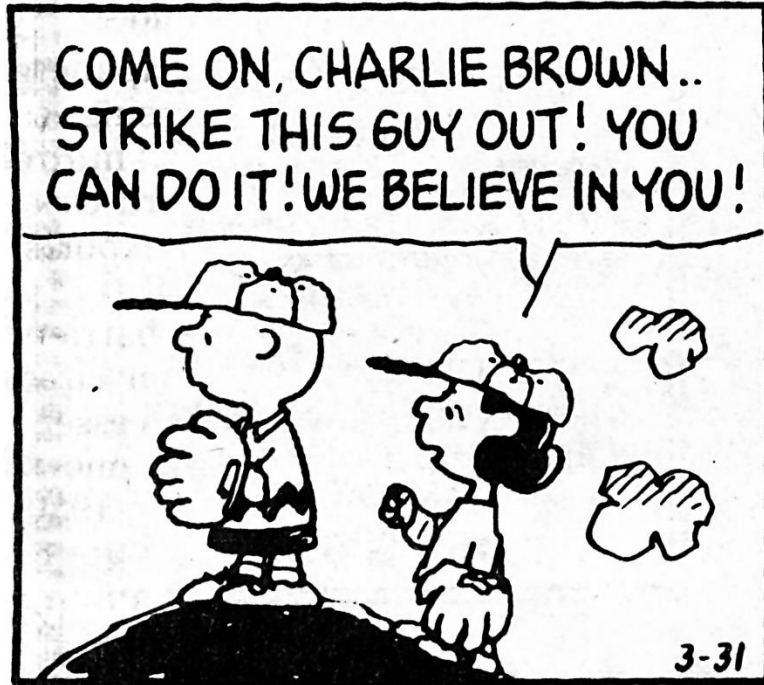
[As per Isaiah 28:16,] *"Anyone who trusts him will never be ashamed."* ← Paul valued experiential data

4 A man is never a God nor a Son of God

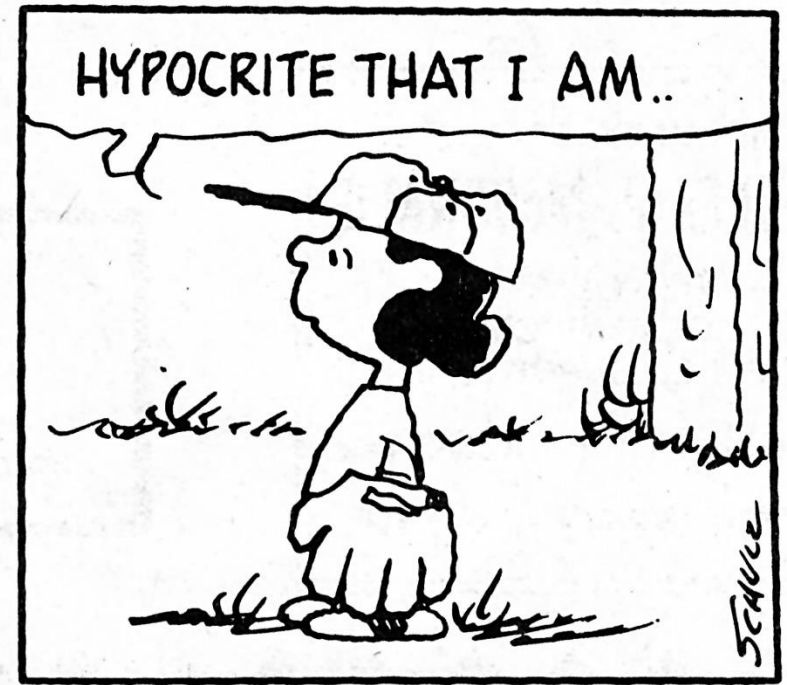
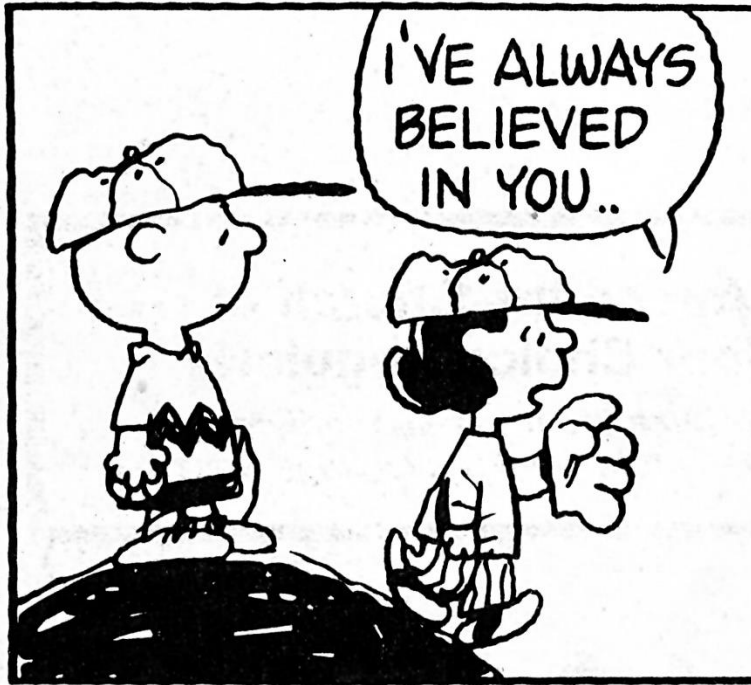
T. Keller: “[Our large church in New York City] *has basic doctrines – the deity of Christ, the infallibility of the Bible, the necessity of spiritual rebirth through faith in Christ’s atoning death – are in unity with the orthodox supernaturalist [supra-natural] beliefs of the evangelical and Pentecostal churches of Africa, Asia, Latin America, U.S. South and U.S. Midwest.*”

[Notice the distinct absence of both U.S. coasts. –hb]





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Summary Comment

This six-week compressed seminar merely pointed out common significant complaints (not exhaustive) against God and a few responsive excerpts (not exhaustive) giving partial answers (not exhaustive). Whew! I am exhausted!

Americans in particular have been the targets of snake oil salesmen, scandals, and political lies for so long that we are suspicious of anything not verified **in advance** of our personal experience. Would you jump off a bridge with only rubber band cables attached to your ankles? Discuss why or why not.