



Does it take Faith to be Secular?

Some Christians honestly feel that it takes faith to become an atheist, more faith than to be Christian. This really puzzled me, so I set out to understand this mindset and where it comes from. My conclusion is that there are two major reasons for it.

1 Reason 1: Childhood Indoctrination about Hell

1.1 What is Atheism?

As far as I am concerned the general definition of atheism is pretty straight forward, widely used today and quite pragmatic for general use: "the rejection of all theist claims due to a lack of evidence"

We have to define the term "atheism" before we can assess this claim. I prefer the term secularism to atheism, as the latter is so vilified and used in so many different ways (both philosophically and in common language). Let's nevertheless work with this term after defining it, without getting bogged down in a highly abstract philosophical terminology discussion

- One common distinction, which was more popular a few decades ago, defines atheism as the proposition that there are no gods (implying that there is firm knowledge or proof about the matter), while agnosticism is a softer stance meaning not believing in any gods, without being able to prove it. Atheism and agnosticism are mutually exclusive using this distinction. I do not accept this distinction
 - It is impossible to prove the non-existence of imaginary or supernatural beings, so this definition of atheism **serves no purpose and I'm not aware of anybody with any credibility using it**
 - It also means this distinction is irrelevant
- A more nuanced and philosophical distinction is that atheism rejects the existence of gods while agnosticism is about the epistemological status of this position. This is more in line with the definition of T.H. Huxley, who **coined the term "agnosticism" in the late 19th century (agnosis = without knowledge) [1]. There are 2 common variations on this**
 - Agnosticism defined as a position that we **don't** have existing knowledge of any god (the original Huxley definition). This definition is compatible with both theism and atheism:
 - Somebody can be an agnostic atheist = not believing in any god, but without sure knowledge about that
 - Somebody can also be an agnostic theist = believing in god(s) without having any sure knowledge about that
 - Agnosticism defined as a position that gods are in principle unknowable and unverifiable so statements about them are meaningless
- Using the original Huxley definition, secularists will often claim that they are agnostic, because they have no sure knowledge about theism nor atheism. I think this definition is sound and it can be useful in some cases. However,

I **don't** use it for 2 reasons

- The burden of proof is on people who assert the existence of supernatural beings, different realms or any unsubstantiated claim. As long as they cannot provide evidence, their claims can be rejected and there is no reason to take it seriously
- The epistemological status of the claimants without evidence is not the same as those who reject the unsubstantiated claims. Taking this **"agnostic"** position on them is giving them equal epistemological status **as if they're equiprobable (which they're not)**. So if I should claim that there is a pink elephant on Mars, who is governing the entire universe and I cannot provide any evidence for that, you do not have to take an agnostic position on my claim, you can just reject it out of hand even though you have no way of disproving it
- As far as I am concerned the general definition of atheism is pretty straight forward, widely used today and quite pragmatic for general use: **"the rejection of all theist claims due to a lack of evidence"**. You either accept the **claims of any of the religions or you don't**
 - Nobody can prove it either way so no need to complicate the definition with caveats about its epistemological status
 - However, we can assess the likelihood of theist claims in many ways and the probability of any of the existing theist claims being true is so extremely low (for a variety of reasons), that in practical terms they can be ignored. That certainly include Christian claims and the god we encounter in the Bible



Bertrand Russell 1936 [Image credit: National Portrait Gallery, Creative Commons Licence]

- As Bertrand Russell put it: **"There** is exactly the same degree of possibility and likelihood of the existence of the Christian God as there is of the Homeric God. I cannot prove that either the Christian God or the Homeric gods do not exist, but I do not think that their existence is an alternative that is sufficiently probable to be worth serious **consideration"**. He made the following distinction in the same essay, which I find sensible **"Therefore,** in regard to the Olympic gods, speaking to a purely philosophical audience, I would say that I am an Agnostic. But speaking popularly, I think that all of us would say in regard to those gods that we were **Atheists. In regard to the Christian God, I should, I think, take exactly the same line."** [2]
- Atheism defined in this way:
 - Does not assert anything, it only rejects unsubstantiated claims. It does not articulate a coherent, dogmatic **"atheist worldview"** to which all atheists subscribe. For this reason, atheists differ on a large variety of issues

- It does not exclude the possibility that real evidence for a divine being may surface in future, in which case I will change my views.

1.2 It does not take any faith to reject unsubstantiated claims, only to accept them

If there is evidence for something, by definition no faith is required. If there is no evidence for a claim, it could be true or not. We just **don't** know, but we **don't** need any faith to realize that, and the burden of proof is on the claimant making the unsubstantiated claims. Even if we **don't** have any evidence we can use critical thinking to assess the probability of it being true. Examples of unsubstantiated claims:

- That Zeus, Odin or Apollo exists
- That fairies live at the bottom of the garden, that unicorns exist or Santa Claus lives at the north pole
- That pigs (or my neighbour) can fly
- That the Pink Elephant on Mars governs the universe
- That Vishnu, Allah or Yahweh exists and they want me to take all sorts of actions, from donating money to supporting a specific political agenda

If it was true that it requires faith to reject claims without evidence, Christians would require a lot of faith

- They would require faith to believe in the existence of their own god
- They would need additional faith to reject each of the thousands of other gods still being worshipped today
- They would require still more faith to reject all other unsubstantiated claims and conspiracy theories (which they often **don't** reject, as a quick aside).

Of course they **don't** need faith to reject any of these and they do not experience that as a leap of faith at all (and rightly so). So why do they feel atheism requires so much faith?

1.3 Childhood Indoctrination, especially about "Hell"



[Image credit: dreamstime]

There is a fundamental reason why Christians experience becoming secular as requiring faith

- It is about having to reject the god they have been indoctrinated with as children
- Since there are still thousands of gods being worshipped today, this is by no means a 50-50 proposition. If you want to make a theist choice, you have thousands of gods to choose from, and Christians are already comfortably rejecting these thousands of gods. Conversely, making an atheist choice involves rejecting thousands of gods. However, Christians look at this through the lens of their faith only, so for them it becomes a 50-50 proposition: accepting or rejecting their god, which they experience as very different from rejecting all the other gods
- Childhood indoctrination plays an enormous role in this experience, especially the fear of hell they were all raised with. They experience it as a big gamble because of their fear of hell. What if **they're** wrong with this perceived 50/50 proposition and they end up in hell?
- This is a primarily psychological issue, not a rational one. I have empathy with this fear they experience, as **I've** been through that difficult journey. Luckily my critical thinking was stronger than my fears, and I had enough knowledge when I assessed the evidence
- The invention of religious faith combined with divine retribution after death (which is unfalsifiable by definition and design), proved to be a very powerful one. As much as they try to emphasize love, fear plays such a central role in Christianity
- May I suggest two tests for Christians about this?
 - The hell of Islam is arguably even more gruesome than the Christian hell. Are they worried that they may end up in it? Do they feel it requires faith to reject Allah? No, they sleep very well and require no faith to reject the claims of Islam, because they were not indoctrinated into Islam as children and they were not indoctrinated to fear the Islamic hell. It sounds like harmless mythology to them, much like the stories of the Christian hell sound to everybody else
 - What efforts did they make to assess the likelihood of the religion they were raised with, and what efforts did they make to assess the alternative religions? Why did they not regard it as necessary?

The invention of religious faith combined with divine retribution after death (which is unfalsifiable by definition and design), proved to be a very powerful one. As much as they try to emphasize love, fear plays such a central role in Christianity

2 Reason 2: **They're** being told that is the case by Christian Apologists

Whenever a popular book is published by high profile apologists, everyday Christians quickly start making the same arguments. In this case the book is **"I Don't** have enough Faith to be an **Atheist"** published by Norman Geisler and Frank Turek in 2004 (both with PhDs in Theology, Norman from Loyola University and Frank from the Southern Evangelical Seminary) [3]. Reason 1, above, explains why a book about this topic is likely to resonate with Christians.

It seems a popular and highly regarded book, with 3,557 reviews and an average 4.8 out of 5 rating on amazon.com. In the Foreword of the book David Limbaugh writes "... the giant among giants in the field of Christian apologetics - Dr. Norman **Geisler"** and **"Many** a hungry soul awaits the truths that are brilliantly set out in this **work"**. Based on this hype I expected some substance, but was quite disappointed. Reading it for the sake of this article was quite a painful exercise.

In essence they argue that [4]:

- They are **"starting** from a position of complete **skepticism"**
- Religion is not only about faith, but about facts too. Its truth claims can be evaluated through scientific and philosophical investigation. But they add that **"Certainly** not all religious claims are open to scientific or historic investigation. Some are unverifiable **dogma"**. And they are, of course, free not only to make this unsubstantiated claim, but also the exact distinction, just based on their faith

- **When one looks at the facts Christianity is true "beyond reasonable doubt". I will focus on this as it is the cornerstone of their book**
- But god just stops short of providing conclusive proof of his existence, so faith is still required (after all the Bible is pretty big on faith!). In this regard they add this pearl of wisdom **"There's** a difference between proving a proposition and accepting a proposition. We might be able to prove Christianity is true beyond reasonable doubt, but only you can choose to accept **it"**!
- There is much more evidence for Christianity than other religions or atheism. I will not spend much time on this, but suffice to say that people not sharing their faith (like Muslims, ex-Christians, atheists, scientists and philosophers) all reach very different conclusions
- Therefore, a lot more faith is required for atheism because **"the** empirical, forensic, and philosophical evidence strongly supports conclusions consistent with Christianity and inconsistent with **atheism"**! Supposedly even forensic evidence!
- Their definition of atheism and agnosticism
 - **"An** atheist, of course, is someone who does not believe in any type of **God"**
 - But as they start using the term it becomes clear that their definition actually boils down to someone who holds a worldview of absolute certainty/proof that there is no god. As they faced a strawman atheist they ask **"Did** he know for sure there is no **God?"**. This is a strawman definition
 - They also add the following explicit qualification: **"...theists** say that the universe had a beginning, while many atheists and pantheists say that it did not (the universe is **eternal)**". This is another strawman and part of a rather transparent effort to claim later in the book science is on the side of Christianity and against atheism
 - An agnostic is defined as **"someone** who is unsure about the question of **God"**
 - Another strawman painting **"agnostics"** as doubtful and unsure instead of the much more sophisticated epistemological position that there is no existing knowledge about any gods
 - They also **don't** use **"unsure"** for themselves and other Christians who cannot proof the existence of their god. And they actually come very close to claiming they can prove it
 - So just with their strawman definitions they immediately exclude the vast majority of atheists who decisively reject theist claims (**they're** not unsure or in doubt), without claiming to have sure knowledge or proof about the matter. Like Bertrand Russell, most atheists just assess the likelihood of the 3-in-1 Christian god so low that he does not warrant serious consideration.

My purpose is not to systematically or comprehensively review this book as it will take too much space; I will only deal with their key arguments and will provide some additional examples of their approach. This is enough to be a scathing indictment of their approach and the entire book.

21 Supposed evidence for the existence of their god: Science, the Cosmological Argument and the Biblical Creation Myth



[Image credit: dreamstime]

21.1 Introduction

A foundational section of the book is Chapter 3 to 7 in which they claim to prove the existence of their god **"beyond reasonable doubt"**: **"Indeed**, we think our conclusions are true beyond a reasonable doubt. (This type of certainty, say, 95-plus percent certain, is the best that fallible and finite human beings can attain for most questions and it is more than sufficient for even the biggest decisions in life.)". This **"95-plus percent"** claim is a pretty wild, unsubstantiated one, and as they continue with the book they use a technique to subtly go further by omitting that highly improbable quantified qualification, and just write about **"proof"**, and **"scientific evidence"**, as if it is 100% certain



- They use 3 of the 5 classical proofs of **god's** existence (the cosmological argument, the teleological argument and the moral argument), as evidence that their god exists
- All 5 these classical philosophical arguments for the existence of a god has been fully debunked, some for centuries and volumes have been written about them. If apologists still use these arguments today they are

- Either ignorant
- Or disingenuous with these arguments to their readers
- Or they have an inability to distinguish between faith-based and logical arguments
- Or a combination of the above
- The original Cosmological Argument:
 - Premise 1: Everything that exists has a cause
 - Premise 2: The universe exists
 - Conclusion: The universe had a cause
- The Kalam Cosmological argument was a refinement to get around the obvious flaw that if they claim that god is the cause of the universe then he needs a cause too (ad infinitum), according to Premise 1 (in other words it is self-defeating and a case of special pleading). The revised Kalam Cosmological Argument:
 - Premise 1: Everything that begins to exist has a cause
 - Premise 2: The universe began to exist
 - Conclusion: The universe had a cause
- We'll assess the Kalam Cosmological argument in 2.1.5 below. For now, just the following 3 facts:
 - The cosmological argument goes back to Classical Greece and was initially used to prove the existence of the Greek gods
 - And a somewhat newer variation (the Kalam cosmological argument, which the authors use here) was initially used to prove the existence of Allah
 - Christian apologists today happily use both these variations to prove the existence of their own god, without any hesitation and without seeing the irony
- They regard the existence of their god as a closed question, like whether George Washington was the first president of the US (their example). No need to wonder and keep an open mind about that. A very obvious false equivalence, and a good illustration of their approach
- While **they're** using the debunked cosmological argument they also power ahead in Chapter 3 to
 - Expose a silly mistake Einstein made by dividing by zero
 - Use innuendo to suggest that he had a hidden agenda not to admit that the universe had a beginning in **order to avoid the Bible's creation myth proven right**
 - Write about the "**overwhelming** evidence for the Big Bang and its consistency with the biblical account in **Genesis**"
 - Conclude that "**his** theory of General Relativity stands today as one of the strongest lines of evidence for a theistic **God**"!
- Apart from all the numerous invalid and unsound arguments they use along the way, the crux of their overall deductive argument about their creation myth (which is well-hidden within pages and pages of irrelevant scientific "**facts**") boils down to the following
 - Premise 1: The Biblical creation story claims there is a start to the universe
 - Premise 2: The latest science concluded that the universe had a start, with the Big Bang
 - Conclusion: Therefore, science proves the Biblical creation story is correct
- We'll assess this argument about their creation myth in Section 2.1.4 below, and the Kalam Cosmological argument in Section 2.1.5 below, after providing some relevant historical and scientific context first.

Modal Block 1: The Difference between Invalid and Unsound Arguments

A **valid argument** is when a conclusion flows from its 2 premises, regardless of whether the premises are true

A **sound argument**, is a valid argument, consisting of true premises too

Example 1, of a **valid and sound** argument:

Premise 1: All dogs are animals

Premise 2: Frankie is a dog

Conclusion: Frankie is an animal (valid and sound)

Example 2, of a **valid, but unsound** argument:

Premise 1: All pigs can fly

Premise 2: I am a pig

Conclusion: I can fly (valid, but unsound due to two false premises)

Example 3, of an **invalid and unsound** argument:

Premise 1: I am a man

Premise 2: I own a car

Conclusion: All men own cars (invalid and unsound, despite having two true premises). This type of logical fallacy is called a "non sequitur" (meaning "it does not follow"), because the conclusion does not follow from the two premises, even though both premises are true.

Faith-based arguments are sometimes valid but unsound, because they use false premises based on faith. Often they are both invalid and unsound.

212 Some Historical Perspective

Some historical and Biblical perspective before we assess the validity and soundness of their argument about science proving their creation myth correct and the Kalam Cosmological argument. These are the sort of facts I would have expected a critical investigation to look into, especially one "**starting** from a position of complete **skepticism**"

- The Biblical cosmology has a flat earth resting on 4 pillars at the centre of the geo-centric universe, with stars as small objects which can fall to earth
- The Biblical creation myth claims that light was created on day 1, plant life on day 3 and the sun (our source of light and essential for plant life) only on day 4



Galileo's "Dialogue"

- The Church persecuted the early scientists on these Biblical grounds. In 1616 the Roman Inquisition, presided over by Pope Paul V, prohibited heliocentrism advocated by Copernicus, and declared it as scientifically false and **theologically contrary to Scripture**. In 1632 Galileo published his famous "Dialogue concerning the Two Chief World Systems", in the form of a hypothetical dialogue between two fictitious characters. The Church convicted him as a suspected heretic for advocating a heliocentric solar system, he recanted (by stating that heliocentrism was not his personal view), and was kept under house arrest until his death in 1642. All his books were banned until 1822 [5] [6]
- Since the Enlightenment Christianity learned to ignore (or "reinterpret" as they like to call it) large parts of the Bible to fit in with the findings of science and the Enlightenment values being embraced by a civilizing world (from barbaric morality like slavery and burning witches alive to the disproven flat earth and geocentric cosmology)
 - A good example is Christianity largely rejecting the Big Bang theory when it was gradually being formulated and refined from the 1920s to the 1990s
 - These authors now apparently accept the Big Bang theory and essentially claim that it proves their creation myth because it also asserts a beginning for the universe
 - **An obvious question is why they don't just claim that their creation myth should not be taken literally like most "progressive" Christians do, and like they do with the flat earth cosmology (and many other passages)?**
 - Many other Christian fundamentalists still do not agree: "After the general acceptance of the big bang model a half century ago, some Christian apologists began to see the big bang in the Bible. Their reasoning was that since science has proved that the universe had a beginning, then there must be a Creator, and that Creator is the God of the Bible. However, at Answers in Genesis we have long recognized the incompatibility of the big bang with the creation account of Genesis 1. Therefore, we understand that the big bang model is just one of the many failed attempts of men to rationalize the existence of the world apart from God. Consequently, opposition to the big bang model has been the position of not only Answers in Genesis but also of other biblically based creation and apologetic ministries." [7]
- So we can see from these examples how Christians take one of 3 approaches to the ignorant cosmology and creation myth we find in the Bible:

- “Progressive” Christians now claiming all the problematic passages in the Bible should obviously not be taken literally anymore
- The real fundamentalists (like Answers in Genesis quoted above), claiming that the scientists are wrong, although I suspect that they will still largely ignore the flat-earth passages and most of the barbaric morality of the Bible)
- The hybrid approach of our authors
 - Accepting some of the science in a way that suits them, trying to reconcile it with the creation myth of the Bible, and projecting their god as somehow behind these new scientific findings
 - While not taking the flat-earth cosmology literally any longer (among many other passages)
- There is a multitude of fundamental contradictions between their creation myth and the Big Bang Theory. If they have something in common about the universe having a start (which is by no means certain, see see 2.1.3 and 2.1.4 below), this is an exceptionally minor and peripheral point of agreement. It is difficult to comprehend how anybody can try to reconcile them (apart from a need driven by faith)
- There are a large number of creation myths, many of them older than the Biblical creation myth and all of them also claim a start to the universe. Creation myths by definition tried to explain the origin of the observable world around us. Two examples:
 - The Enuma Elish is the oldest creation myth that has been preserved. It is the Babylonian creation myth dating from the 3rd millennium BCE in which the god Marduk is the creator of the universe. It is much older than the Biblical creation myth and there are some similarities between them [8]. As a matter of fact there are more similarities between these two creation myths than between the Biblical creation myth and the Big Bang theory
 - In the Hindu creation myth, Lord Brahma is the creator of the universe [9]



Lord Brahma, Hindu creator god [Image credit: dreamstime]

- It seems that the god of the Bible is implausible and much too small for the vast universe slowly being discovered by science. To mention just a few critical issues to ponder for those really wanting to do a critical investigation

- He knows nothing of the universe he supposedly created as he “revealed” a very crude and ignorant cosmology and creation myth (while knowing as an omniscient being that the Church would persecute the first scientists for this)
- He does not reveal anything not already known at the time
- He seems as barbaric as the Bronze Age barbarians who worshipped him
 - By issuing a plethora of barbaric commands (see some examples in 2.2 below)
 - He is not only utterly anthropomorphic (he is male, Moses saw his backside but not his face, etc.)
 - He also has very human flaws (big fits of rage while telling his followers not to succumb to anger, insecurities including feeling threatened by other gods, changing his mind, experiencing regret, a peculiar need for adulation, a strange obsession with the genitals and sex lives of one species on 1 planet, in an obscure galaxy among billions in 1 universe, etc)
- He spent a lot of time providing excruciatingly detailed ritual instructions how animals had to be burned regularly to please him. Really? That was a top priority when the creator of the entire universe/multiverse finally revealed himself to one species on 1 planet, in an obscure galaxy among billions in 1 universe?

213 Some Scientific Perspective

Some scientific perspective before we assess the logical validity and soundness of their deductive argument that science proves their creation myth correct and the Kalam Cosmological argument. This is also relevant for the cosmological argument and due to the time the authors spent on scientific “facts”

- It is fair to say that science still has a very long way to go, despite all its spectacular success and progress to date. There is so much we **don't** know yet, and especially when it comes to cosmology, one can only be humbled by the vastness and the complexity of the observable universe, never mind the huge unknown outside it

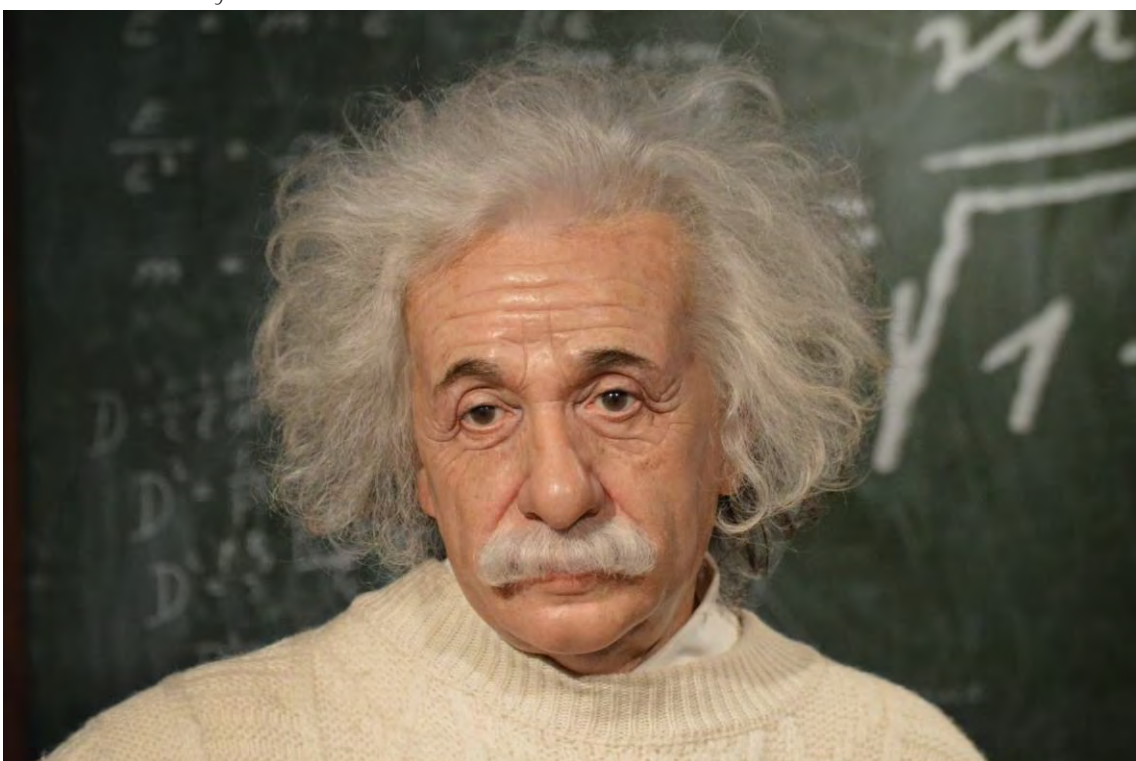


Deep space [Image credit: dreamstime]

- Although many people may interpret the Big Bang Theory as proving that the universe had a beginning, it seems to me that it is a more complex issue and that we simply **don't** know enough to make categorical statements about

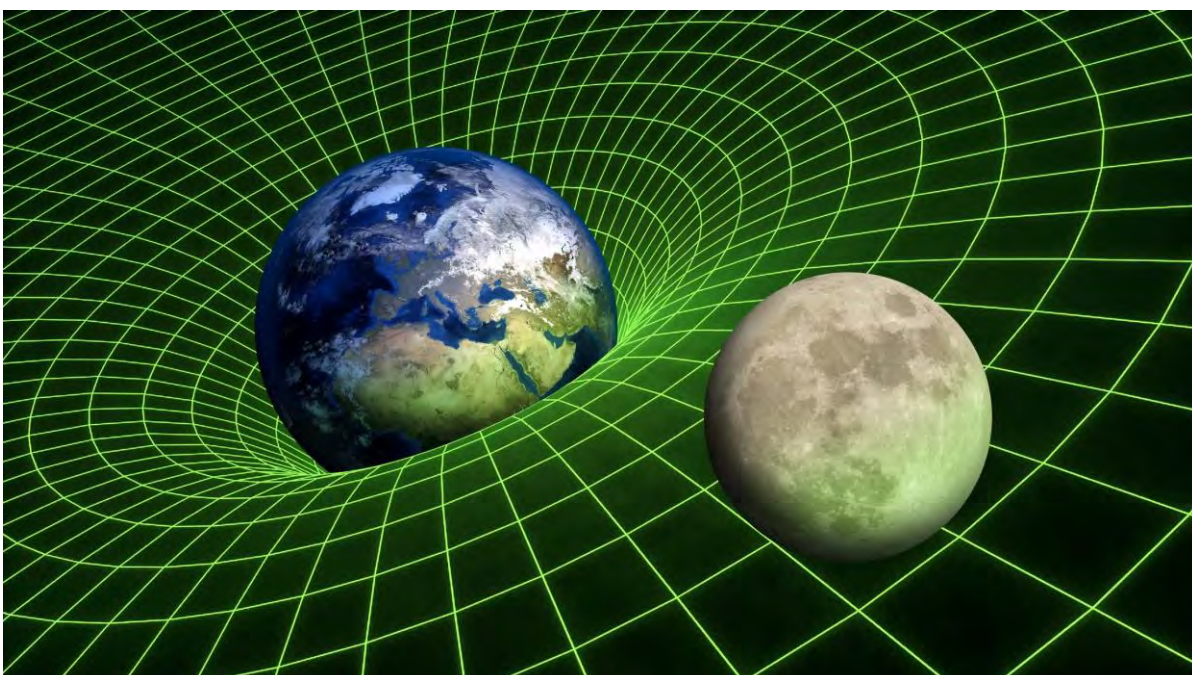
it at this point in time

- I **don't** have any bias in this regard and whatever science concludes is all the same to me. I **don't** think it has any big Philosophical significance
- My point is simply that there is far too much we **don't** know yet, especially about something which happened about 13.82 billion years ago and still falls outside the observable universe (which only goes to about 380,000 years after the Big Bang). **I'll** highlight a few specific issues in this regard
- There are two highly successful Physics theories: **Einstein's** General Theory of Relativity (on the macro level) and Quantum Field Theory (on the micro level). Both have been successful in modelling complex Physics problems, as well as correctly explaining and predicting empirical observations, like **Einstein's** theory which correctly predicted gravitational waves only detected in 2015, 60 years after his death
 - The main headache for Physics is to integrate these two theories into a "**theory of everything**", as they both seem correct but incompatible
 - In the 67 years since **Einstein's** death this was not achieved yet, despite major efforts by people like Stephen Hawking
 - When Physicists finally make this breakthrough, it will probably lead to another major paradigm shift in Physics, like the heliocentric Copernican Revolution, the mechanistic Newtonian Paradigm, and **Einstein's** Relativity Paradigm
 - Physicists are doing exciting research and theorizing with String Theory, M-Theory and Loop Quantum Gravity, but it is still early days
 - A successful new paradigm is likely to shed significant new light on cosmology in general and the Big Bang Theory specifically
- Many developments and numerous world-class Physicists made a contribution to formulation and the refinement of the Big Bang Theory as it stands today. The 20th century was an especially productive period in Physics. **I'm** just briefly listing the key ones, which are most relevant for our discussion
 - **Einstein's** General Theory of Relativity (1915) [10] about the relativity of time and the spacetime continuum. His cosmology was static and he introduced a cosmological constant in an effort to explain why it is not unstable. It is astonishing just how revolutionary his new insights were
 - Edward **Hubble's** discovery in 1929 that there are millions of galaxies and that the universe is not static, but these galaxies are moving further apart from one another [11]. He was an Astronomer at the Mount Wilson Observatory in California



Albert Einstein [Image credit: dreamstime]

- After several discussions with the most influential Astrophysicists of his generation, in April 1931 in a report to the Prussian Academy of Sciences, Einstein accepted the new evidence that he was wrong about a static universe, denounced his cosmological constant and supported an expanding universe [12]. For our non-scientific authors retroactively casting doubt on Einstein motives for not immediately accepting the expanding universe (the term Big Bang was only coined in 1949 by Hoyle), this was revolutionary new thinking on a highly complex topic, there were many flaws with the initial theory of an expanding universe, including **Hubble's** first calculation of the universe as only 2 billion years old (younger than the known age of our solar system at the time). There does not seem to be anything which they **don't** view through the lens of their faith, and **they're** much more skeptical about top scientists and their motives, than their own motives, and their religion and all its flaws
- During the 1940s and 1950s there were two competing cosmology theories, the Steady State Universe (with Hoyle, Gold and Bondi as the main proponents) and the Big Bang Theory. The Steady State Theory did not model a Static Universe, but an expanding one with continued creation of new stars, to keep the average distance between galaxies the same. It was modelled as an infinite and eternal universe and was very different from the Big Bang Theory
- The Cosmic Microwave Background (CMB), predicted by Ralph Alpher and other scientists in 1948, and finally detected by Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson in 1965 [13]. The large amount of background radiation observed was consistent with the Big Bang Theory and by the late 1960s it became the accepted theory based on the evidence
- An important refinement of the Big Bang Theory came in 1979 when Alan Guth (a Particle Physicist at Cornell University) published his Cosmic Inflation Theory. This entails a rapid expansion in a fraction of a second very early in the Big Bang, which solved a number of observational problems, like the flat and homogenous nature of the observable universe [14]. Most Physicists accept some variation of cosmic inflation theory today. Guth also pointed out more recently that most cosmic inflation models conclude multiple universes
- The Big Bang Theory came from extrapolating **Einstein's** General Theory of Relativity and the expanding universe back into time, with the universe becoming smaller, denser and hotter, which quite successfully explained many observations like the Cosmic Microwave Background (CMB)
 - Although it is accepted as virtually incontrovertible that the universe gets smaller, denser and hotter the further back in time you go, it cannot be extrapolated all the way back to a singularity (which is a mathematical construct). It looks like it can only be extrapolated back to about 10^{-32} seconds after the Big Bang. Our current Physics theories and our current technology are not sufficient to accommodate this as several Astrophysicists and Theoretical Physicists pointed out [15]
 - **We simply don't know what happened in that very early part and "before" the Big Bang. It is questionable to even talk about "before"**



- **Einstein's** Theory of Relativity shows there is no fixed reference point for time in the universe, that space and time forms a continuum and that gravity impacts it as well (gravitational time dilation)
- If there was a single Big Bang, did spacetime (and therefor time) possibly originate with it?
- The entire concept of time is highly complex and getting more complex as Physics progresses. It certainly is much more complex than the simple linear concept of time in everyday language
- There are other complications for the simple cause and effect assumptions used by the cosmological arguments:
 - We **don't** know for sure if laws of physics which apply to all objects in the universe apply to the universe itself and we **haven't** observed other universes yet to make comparisons. For example, no object in the universe can travel faster than the speed of light, but the expansion of the universe (the growth of spacetime itself) exceeds the speed of light
 - Although cause and effect apply to classic Physics and everyday objects, the quantum world is much more complex and puzzling. Quantum objects **don't** have predictable causes and effects, but are based on probabilities
 - Lucien Hardy is a British-Canadian Quantum Physicist working on indefinite causality [16].
 - Lawrence Krauss, American Theoretical Physicist and Cosmologist, shows that particles often drop in and out of existence [17]
 - And quantum fluctuations have been detected directly for the first time in 2015: **"According to quantum mechanics, a vacuum isn't empty at all. It's actually filled with quantum energy and particles that blink in and out of existence for a fleeting moment - strange signals that are known as quantum fluctuations."** [18]
 - This is still controversial and far from settled, but that is the whole point
 - Was the very early stage universe possibly a quantum object?
 - Is **"nothing"** really nothing and where does that come from?
 - Empirical Science can never be conclusively proven with deduction. Anything can be falsified in future with new information or encountering exceptions
 - **I'm** not arguing against cause and effect, **I'm** cautioning against opportunistic dogmatic cockiness about scientific knowledge, especially when one is not a scientist and has a blatant agenda

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- New theories may support not extrapolating back to a singularity and there are already interesting new theorizing about multiple universes in several multiverses, eternal cosmic inflation, cyclic universes, etc. [19] [20] [21]
 - Paul Steinhardt, Director of the Princeton Centre of Theoretical Physics, and Neil Turok, Theoretical Physicist at Cambridge addressed some of the current issues of cosmic inflation with their Cyclic Universe Theory. According to this theory the Big Bang was not the start of our universe, but that multiple universes go through cycles of Big Bangs and Big Crunches
 - Roger Penrose, Theoretical Physicist at Oxford who won the Nobel Prize in Physics in 2020 for his work on black holes, is also a supporter of Cyclic Universes
- For those with an interest in Cosmology, here are links to two excellent YouTube Channels [22] [23], as we **can't** even scratch the surface in this article and I don't have the expertise either



Hubble Space Telescope [Image credit: dreamstime]

- So the Big Bang may, or may not, have been the start of the universe and Cosmologists are very aware of the complexities, the challenges, the limits of our current knowledge and the provisional nature of science as they continue their research and debates. Our current knowledge of Cosmology is but in its infancy
 - With time **we're** likely to find new and improved answers
 - Until then we just have to make do with what we know. Dogmatic thinking and pretend certainty at the edge of existing knowledge serve no purpose
 - There is also a chance that we may never find answers to some of these highly complex issues so far back in the distant past
 - Or we may destroy our planet and/or our species, before we reach these answers and enough wisdom to co-exist on this planet
- But trust two Evangelical Theology Professors to be certain; certain that the universe had a beginning with the Big Bang, that their god somehow is responsible for that and that the current science also proves their very crude and contradictory creation myth correct
 - Why do some people have such a need for certainty? Why **can't** they live with the uncertainty of our existing provisional scientific knowledge?
 - **It reminds me of a Bertrand Russell quote: "The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves, and wiser people so full of doubts"**

"The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves, and wiser people so full of doubts" - Bertrand Russell

- In the 17th century the Church was certain that heliocentrism was scientifically wrong and a heresy (while they still supported slavery), by the 20th century they accepted heliocentrism and walked away from the Biblical flat earth, but most were certain that the Big Bang Theory was wrong and incompatible with the Bible. Today some Christians accept the Big Bang theory and are certain their god is actually behind it, others are certain the Big Bang Theory is incompatible with the Bible, just like some eventually started to accept evolution (and are certain their god is the cause of Evolution) while others are certain it is not compatible with the Bible.

A very enlightening example from 1956 when the Steady State Theory (which postulated an infinite and eternal universe) still had strong support, is that many Christians then claimed that this theory supported their god: **"Did the steady-state theory really make God unnecessary? Theologians were quick to point out that an infinitely old universe was in no way incompatible with Christian belief, such as Saint Thomas had pointed out centuries ago. In *Christian Theology and Natural Science*, a book from 1956 written at the height of the cosmological controversy, the physics-trained priest and philosopher Eric Mascall argued that the question of a cosmic beginning was of little concern to Christian theology. He even suggested that the steady-state theory with its postulate of continual matter creation might be interpreted as support of the Christian notion of an ever-active God who was transcendent as well as immanent. Several later theologians have made the same point, namely that the old idea of *creatio continua* fits remarkably well with the classical steady-state theory of Hoyle and his allies. In a sense, the theory was baptized."** [24]

And after the Big Bang Theory became widely accepted, they saw reasons why that instead supports their god (after resisting it for a while)

A few things are noteworthy

- Their need for certainty
- Their vehement differences, with all of them very certain of their views
- The role faith place in all their reasoning, whether they acknowledge that or not
- The opportunism to continue changing as they slowly and reluctantly follow science to various degrees, while continuing to project their god behind newly discovered laws of Physics (which they once disagreed with)
- How they effectively make their views unfalsifiable, while ironically continuing to change without admitting error and without a method for falsification.

It is noteworthy how Christians effectively make their views unfalsifiable, while ironically continuing to change without admitting error and without a method for falsification

2.1.4 Assessing their Deductive Argument about their Creation Myth

- Now back to their argument that science proves their creation myth correct. A deductive argument can have two true premises and still have an invalid conclusion if this conclusion does not follow from the two premises. This type of logical fallacy is called a **"non sequitur"**, which means **"it does not follow"** (see the Modal Block 1 under 2.1.1 above for more details)
 - Premise 1 is true, their Bible indeed claims that the universe had a beginning
 - Premise 2 may or may not be true. We **don't** know for sure yet. But even if it is true their conclusion by no means follow from these two true premises. It is a completely invalid (and unsound) argument and a good example of a logical fallacy
 - And if it was a valid argument it could be used to prove any creation myth correct
- There is absolutely no **"overwhelming** evidence for the Big Bang and its consistency with the biblical account in **Genesis", quite the contrary. We've seen**
 - The crude and ignorant Biblical creation myth has virtually nothing in common with the current Big Bang theory, and much more with other creation myths
 - Christianity initially persecuted the first scientists for concluding heliocentrism and largely opposed the Big Bang theory

- The Biblical flat-earth cosmology has been fully disproved by science, and the authors are quiet about that
- Another technique they use here is to present a large number of scientific “facts” to:
 - Create the impression that these “facts” support their argument
 - Pretend **they’re** really scientific in their reasoning
 - Hide the crux of their invalid argument among all these irrelevant “facts”
- **I’m not an Astrophysicist and cannot vouch for the accuracy of all their statements. I also neither have the interest nor the time to fact-check them. However, I can state the following in this regard:**
 - I doubt that the facts they present are all accurate. The supposed dividing by zero error and the nefarious agenda they ascribe to Einstein, combined with all the strawman characters and arguments in the book, cast sufficient doubt on the biased way they use facts and their very obvious agenda. As an aside, it is interesting how people with the biggest agendas, see hidden agendas everywhere
 - Even if all their facts should be correct, it is irrelevant because they draw invalid conclusions from the facts
 - World-class Astrophysicists, Theoretical Physicists, Cosmologists and Particle Physicists like Neil DeGrasse Tyson, Coel Hellier, Lawrence Krauss, or Brian Cox, will all have a good laugh about these faith-based claims [25] [26] [27] [28]

214 Assessing the Kalam Cosmological Argument

- The abstract Kalam Cosmological Argument is valid but unsound, because it is by no means certain that its 2 premises are true
 - Premise 1: Everything that begins to exist has a cause
 - So far it holds true for all known objects we observed inside the universe. Deduction used for empirical science, can never prove anything conclusively. It can always be falsified in future with new information
 - **We’ve** seen that cause and effect is much more complex, especially when it comes to the Big Bang and Quantum Physics
 - This may hold true in future, but we **can’t** say for sure
 - Premise 2: The universe began to exist
 - **We’ve seen from a brief overview of current Cosmology, that it is far too early to make categorical statements about the start of our universe/multiverse**
 - The Big Bang may have been the start of the universe or not. **We’ll** have to see what current research into cyclic universes, multiverses, eternal cosmic inflation, etc discovers
 - Having said that, **I’m** not averse to a finding that it had a beginning. It may be the case, we just **can’t** be too cocky about our claims
- It is no problem whatsoever if both premises should be true. Even if there is a sound conclusion that the universe has a cause there is absolutely no link between the cause of the universe and the barbaric god we encounter in the Bible (neither logically nor empirically)
 - A cause by no means equates to a supernatural cause. If it had a cause **we’re** likely to find the scientific **explanation with time. And even if we don’t it is still no argument for any god hypothesis**
 - The claims of the authors (that their god is the cause of the universe, and that he did not have a beginning or a cause) are unsubstantiated faith-based claims. **It’s** pure speculation
 - And even if there was a supernatural cause (for **argument’s** sake), which god was the cause? Why is it Yahweh and not Allah or Brahma? Why is it not an unknown divine being (without all the barbaric flaws of the Biblical god) whom we **haven’t** encountered yet? How would we know?
 - **We’ve** seen in 2.1.2 that the god of the Bible is a highly unlikely creator of the universe.

22 Other Examples of their Approach

22.1 The Moral Argument and Human Rights



Moses and the Stone Tablets with the Ten Commandments, Brussels Cathedral [Image credit: iStock]

- In Chapter 7, where they cover the Moral Argument, they also assert that the Moral Law is undeniable, that we know it by our reactions, that it forms the basis of human rights and that it is of course from their god. In Appendix I they address the issue "If God, Why Evil?" in which they also simply assert objective Christian morality
 - They love to make categoric claims, which they either do not substantiate or substantiate purely by faith
 - The Moral argument has been debunked and is logically invalid (like all 5 classical proofs for any **god's** existence)
 - Even if it was valid it could be used to prove the existence of any god. Historical examples of other gods who were regarded as the ultimate lawgiver: Shamash, the Babylonian god of justice, Zeus, Tyr, the son of Odin and the Norse god of war, and Allah
 - Selecting their god as the abstract/theoretical lawgiver is an unsubstantiated faith-based claim, and the reason they find evidence for him everywhere is down to their faith again
 - I dealt with the Moral Argument in Section 11 of this article and the entire article does an in-depth analysis of Christian claims to an Objective Morality. Christian Morality is not objective in the slightest. It is not only a completely subjective Moral Theory, it is quite arbitrary as it continues to change and reinterpret the Bible to stay relevant and acceptable in a civilizing world:
[The CSF Morality Series, Part 2: Does Christianity have an Objective Morality? – The CSF](#)
- In Appendix II they claim that Christianity "can justify absolute human rights because it affirms that those rights are given to us by **God**" and in this regard they seem quite proud of the US Declaration of Independence
 - More faith-based premises, which are in conflict with the historical record. The Bible does not advocate any of the core human rights we now accept and value in Western Civilization: Individual Liberty, Equality, Freedom of Speech, not even Freedom of Religion

- As a matter of fact Christianity advocated the opposite on Biblical grounds, brutally suppressed these values and strongly resisted their emergence. The Bible, and Christianity for most of its history have an atrocious track record on human rights. I covered this comprehensively and in-depth in this article:

[The CSF Morality Series, Part 4: The Supposed "Judeo-Christian" Foundation of Western Civilization – The CSF](#)

222 Natural Revelation

In Chapter 8 they take the Moral Argument one step further to the so-called "Natural Revelation"

- They came to the following two conclusions based on the Moral Argument:
 - "From the Moral Argument we know that God is absolutely morally pure (He is the unchangeable standard of morality by which all actions are measured)"
 - "Now here is the amazing truth about these findings: the theistic God we have discovered is consistent with the God of the Bible, but we have discovered him without use of the Bible."
- Amazing indeed, to see just how completely fallaciously they argue
 - They use their faith, which is based on a very selective current interpretation of the Bible, to claim their god is this lawgiver, so they most certainly used the Bible to get to their conclusions
 - At the same time (and quite ironically), they also have to ignore large parts of the Bible to assert that this theoretical, abstract god who is "absolutely morally pure" and "the unchangeable standard of morality" is "consistent with the God of the Bible"



Burning witches alive at the stake (Ex 22:18) [Image credit: dreamstime]

- Yep, the god of the Bible is supposedly "**absolutely morally pure**". That god who issued a plethora of cruel and barbaric commands (after first issuing a "**Thou shalt not kill**" command)
 - Like killing your own kids for being disrespectful (Ex 21: 17) or disobedient (Deut 21: 20-21)
 - Or killing your own family without mercy if they **don't** worship him (Deut 13: 6 – 10) [he clearly had no time for freedom of religion either]

- Or how to keep slaves and allowing you to assault and kill your slaves as long as they **don't** die on the same day (Ex 21: 20-21)
- Or killing gays (Lev 18: 22) [still used by many Evangelicals today as they cherry-pick the Bible]
- Or killing adulterers (Lev 20: 10, Deut 22: 22) [not used by Evangelicals today]
- Or killing people for working, or just picking up sticks, on the Sabbath (Ex 31: 14-15, Ex 35: 2-3, Num 15: 32-36)
- Or burning witches alive (Ex 22: 18)
- Or several genocides (Ezekiel 16 1-6, I Sam 15: 1-23, Num 31: 1-54)
- And that same god, who now apparently no longer requires any of these barbaric acts without ever explicitly letting us know, is supposedly **"the unchangeable standard of morality"**. Amazing indeed.

23 Miracles

Once they **"proved"** theism (and the existence of their god) with a series of unsound faith-based arguments, they waste no time to draw further invalid conclusions [29]:

- For example, **"If God exists, then miracles are possible"** and **"Miracles can be used to confirm a message from God"** (which becomes a very useful technique to introduce more faith-based evidence). They also warn people not to be confused between divine miracles and **"Satanic signs"**, which I assume can only be distinguished based on their faith
- And why **don't** we see any new miracles today? Well, simply because god does not need to do any new revelations
 - Not a single critical question from our two critical-thinking authors about the likelihood that **"miracles"** were just regarded as plausible in a superstitious, pre-scientific age where the scientific method, a host of scientific technology and a high enough level of education were not available to scrutinize and challenge these primitive claims of miracles
 - As George Carlin pointed out, if there was DNA testing available in the first century the Virgin Birth story would not have gained any traction
 - Several other gods claimed a divine father and human mother too, like Apollo and Dionysus. These types of claims were credible (and not uncommon) in a pre-scientific world. Today, not so much
 - It seems other gods also stopped performing miracles with the advent of science and technology.

As George Carlin pointed out, if there was DNA testing available in the first century the Virgin Birth story would not have gained any traction



Strawman [Image credit: dreamstime]

2.2.4 Strawmen

- Appendix I (“If God, Why Evil?”) is such an exceptionally poor section that it requires some attention. It is a highly relevant and complex topic presenting theism with insurmountable challenges
 - The format of this appendix is a dialogue between a “logical” Christian and a hapless atheist. This hypothetical “conversation” is one big strawman argument
 - For example, they present two pieces of “evidence” that their god is infinitely powerful: the fact that he is referred to as “almighty” 56 times in the Bible and that we “also” know from scientific evidence that he created this universe out of “nothing”. The bar for finding evidence in support of their faith is set extremely low
 - They make light of this substantial issue by using light-hearted sports metaphors and ignoring the really tough questions
 - Despite these enormous flaws, the Christian is painted as relentlessly using logic and presenting evidence forcing the atheist to state “I must admit that your intellectual answers make some sense”!

The entire book is littered with anecdotes about dimwitted “atheist professors” (and a few “liberal theology professors”), all with nefarious hidden agendas, but they turn out to be no match for our two heroes writing this book... So easy to defeat all these strawman characters and arguments!

- The entire book is littered with anecdotes about dimwitted “atheist professors” (and a few “liberal theology professors”), all with nefarious hidden agendas, but they turn out to be no match for our two heroes writing this book. In Chapter 3 there is an encounter with such a strawman “Physics professor”
 - The authors show that they **don’t** have a clue what philosophical materialism is, when they quickly and easily destroy it with this pseudo-argument: ““If everything is **material**,” I asked, “**then** what is a scientific theory? After all, the theory about everything being material **isn’t** material; **it’s** not made out of **molecules**””
 - And with this utterly ignorant question they supposedly forced the dimwitted “Physics professor” to acknowledge (to their great surprise) that:
 - “A theory is **magic**”
 - And his basis for saying that is “**faith**”!
 - So easy to defeat all these strawman characters and arguments!

3 Conclusion



[Image credit: dreamstime]

- This book has no starting position of skepticism at all and no critical investigation, but rather lots of invalid and unsound faith-based arguments - rationalizations presented with the pretense of rational evidence. It is a good example of pretend critical thinking which is guided by faith every step of the way

This book is a good example of pretend critical thinking which is guided by faith every step of the way... There seems to be a strong inverse correlation between the very low level of critical thinking and the high level of certainty and smugness the authors exhibit

- There seems to be a strong inverse correlation between the very low level of critical thinking and the high level of certainty and smugness the authors exhibit, which reminds me of a Bertrand Russell quote: **"The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves, and wiser people so full of doubts"**
- I agree with the authors on one thing: that we can assess the facts about their religion to determine whether there is any probability of it being true:
 - We can assess the content of the Bible, the history of the Bible, the canon history of the Bible, the dogma history of Christianity, the general history of Christianity, the ever-changing morality of Christianity, how well the claims of the Bible explain reality, the light science shed on the Biblical claims about the natural world, applying logic to Christian claims, etc. None of these offers a rational case for Christianity

I critically investigated all of them meticulously and with intellectual integrity while still being a Christian and working on my PhD in Theology, and that is what led me to leave Christianity. So I certainly do not agree with their easy conclusions proving Christianity **"beyond reasonable doubt"**, quite the opposite. I can write a whole book about all the evidence pointing to the extremely low probability of the Biblical and Christian claims being true, and will publish an article about this in Quarter 1, 2023 **"Bringing Rational Scrutiny to your own Religious Tradition"**

- So we have Christians who experience doubt being intimidated by the threat of hell they were raised with, which causes the book under discussion resonating with them by assuring them their faith is proven with a 95%+ probability using a long series of invalid and unsound arguments. No wonder we continue to hear this argument, but there is another side to this coin
- With Christianity declining **“at rapid pace”** [30] one can understand their anxiety to defend their faith, but one also has to wonder if the low level of Christian apologetics is a contributing factor to this decline. I cannot imagine anybody with real critical questions finding this book credible or useful, but only those who already believe or are just looking for easy reassurances
 - To be fair, there are no strong rational arguments for Christianity, but I would still argue if you cannot reach the growing number of Christians experiencing legitimate doubts with more honest, balanced and credible answers than these, your efforts will be counter-productive
 - And as the decline of Christianity is speeding up, it seems more and more Christians find the fear of hell less intimidating, partially due to less intense/effective indoctrination.

Author: JJ Brits

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Next CSF Article

“Preaching without Faith” by Dr Gerhard Bothma, scheduled for 23 Dec 2022

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