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Why Questioning Everything Is the Smartest Thing You Can Do

@ Anthony Metivier December 2, 2024 Critical Thinking, Podcast

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Do you want to know why questioning everything is the best policy in life?



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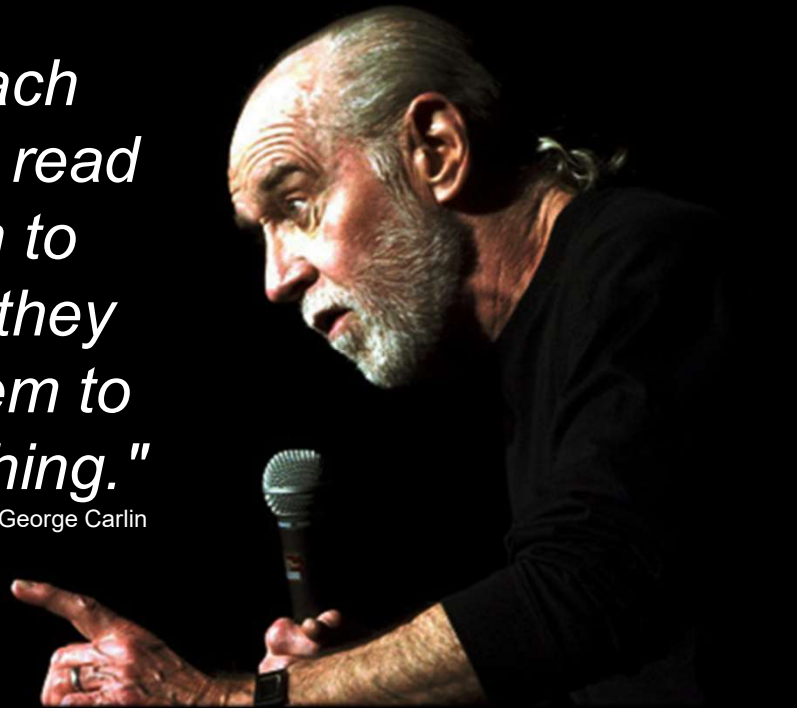
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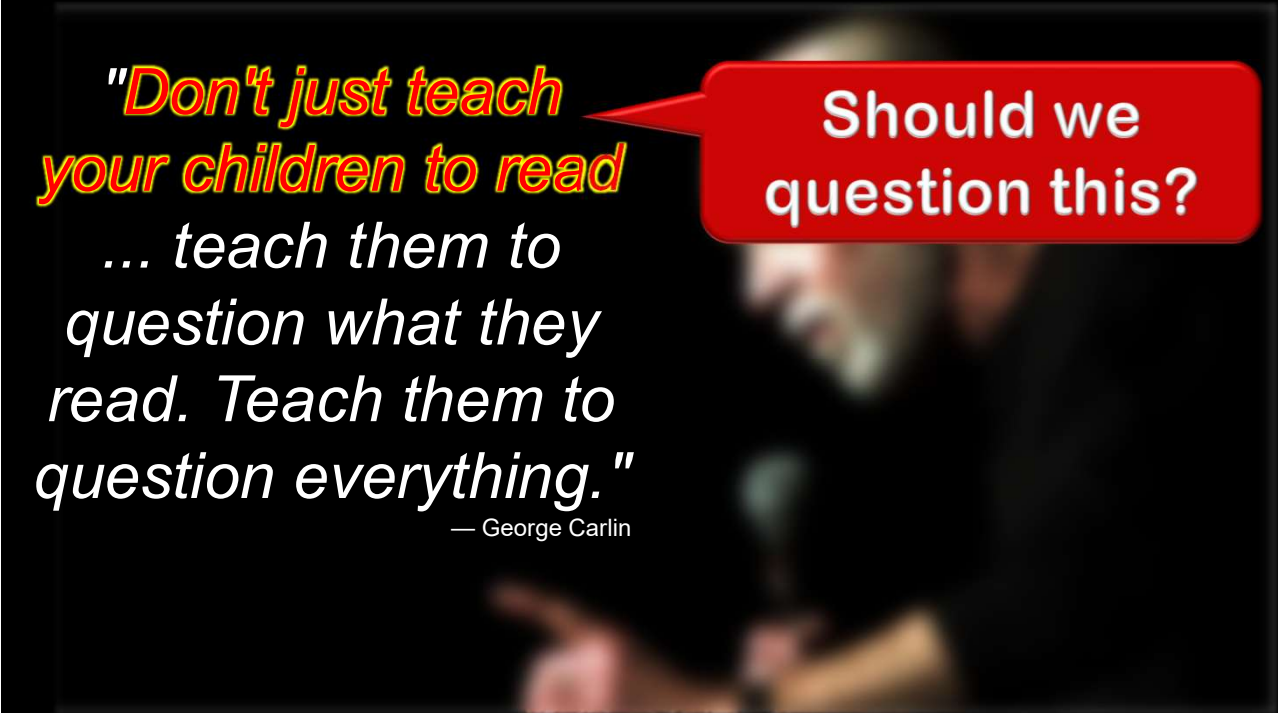




*"Don't just teach
your children to read
... teach them to
question what they
read. Teach them to
question everything."*

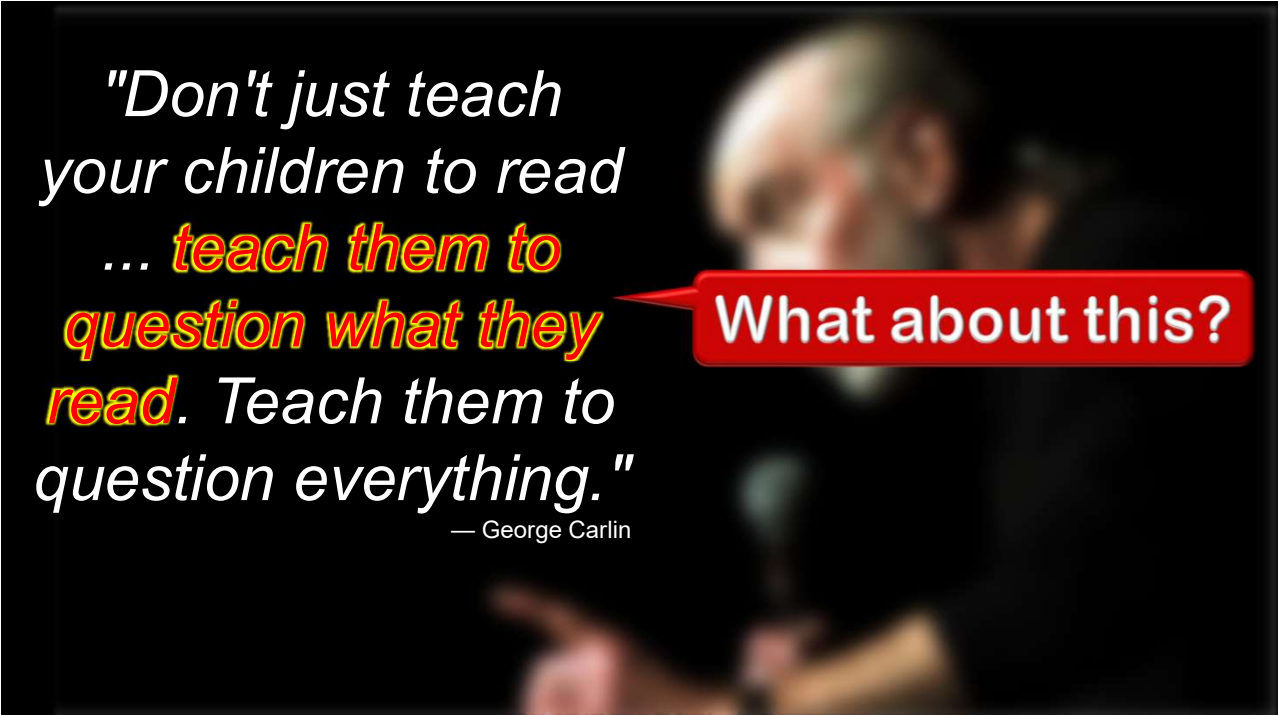
— George Carlin





"Don't just teach your children to read ... teach them to question what they read. Teach them to question everything."
— George Carlin

Should we question this?



"Don't just teach your children to read ... teach them to question what they read. Teach them to question everything."
— George Carlin

What about this?

*"Don't just teach
your children to read
... teach them to
question what they
read. Teach them to
question everything."*

— George Carlin

In effect, do you think George Carlin would want us to teach our children to question his claim that they should question everything?

*"Don't just teach
your children to read
... teach them to
question what they
read. Teach them to
question everything."*

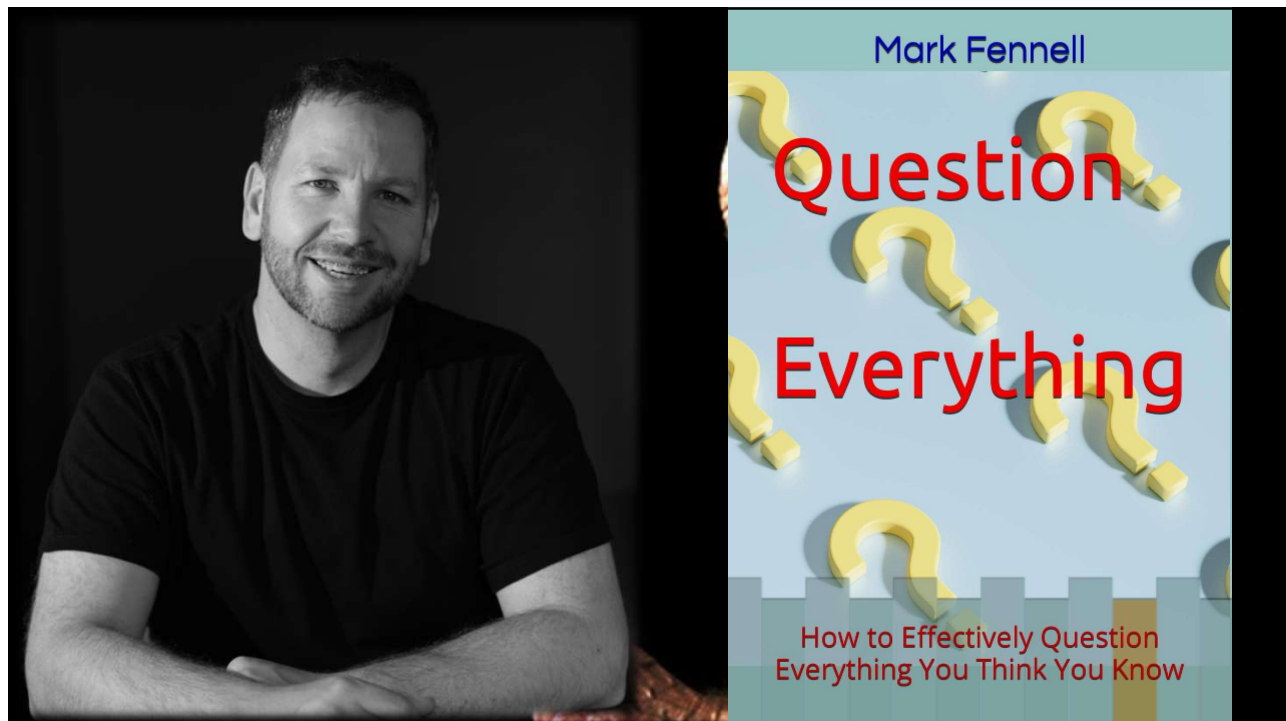
— George Carlin

Further, do you think there are some things, the very questioning of which is already to abrogate human knowing?

"Don't just teach your children to read ... teach them to question what they read. Teach them to question everything."

— George Carlin

For example, if we question whether humans can objectively know reality, how could we hope to discover the objectively real answer to the question?



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Mark Fennell

Question Everything

How to Effectively Question Everything You Think You Know

Question Everything: How to Effectively Question Everything You Think You Know Paperback – September 20, 2023
by Mark Fennell (Author)

[See all formats and editions](#)

The purpose of this book is to Guide you in the processes of Questioning your beliefs, and Eliminating Your Fears. During this process, you will become more joyful, and obtain everything you desire.

We encourage you to Question your life. Question your beliefs. Question what you have been told, about yourself and your world. Question everything...all of it.

For example, ask questions such as:
Am I truly happy?
Are my Beliefs getting my desires?
How can I have better relationships?

Which experts do I trust?
Who has my best interest?

How do I eliminate my fears?
How can I create the life I want?
Is it really possible to have a better world?

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Think You Know Paperback – September 20, 2023

by [Mark Fennell](#) (Author)

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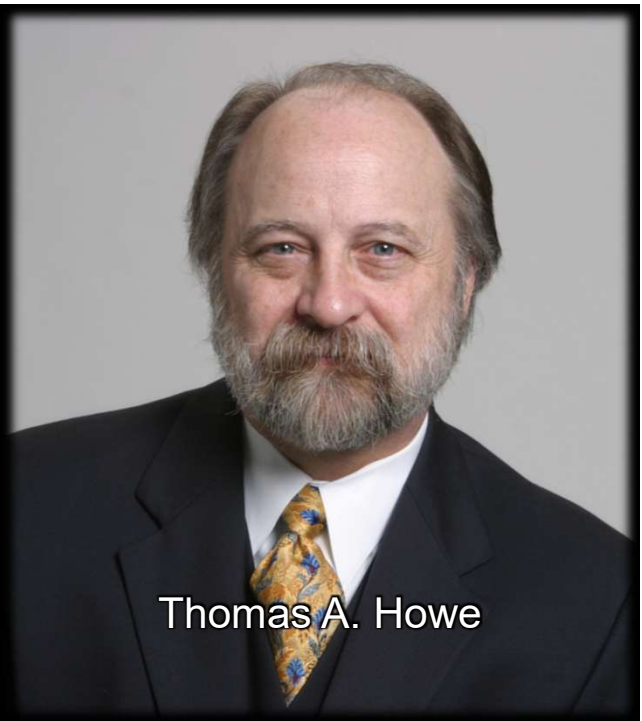
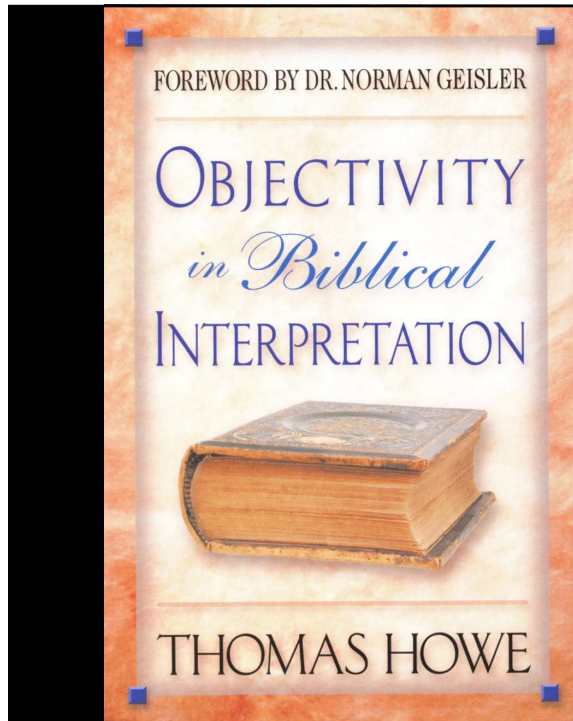
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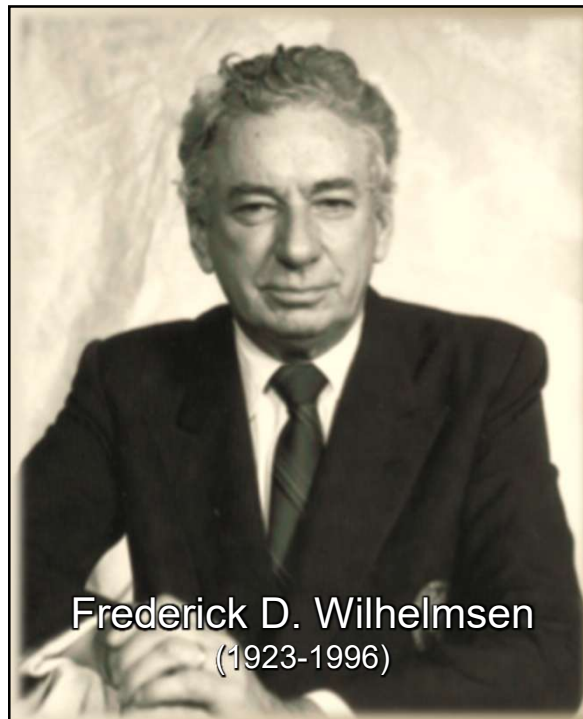
For example, ask questions such as:
Am I truly happy?
Are my Beliefs getting my desires?
How can I have better relationships?

Which experts do I trust?
Who has my best interest?

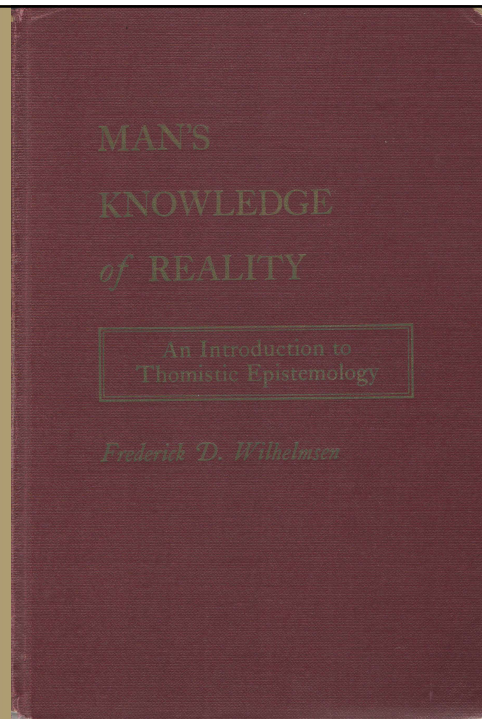
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How can I create the life I want?
Is it really possible to have a better world?

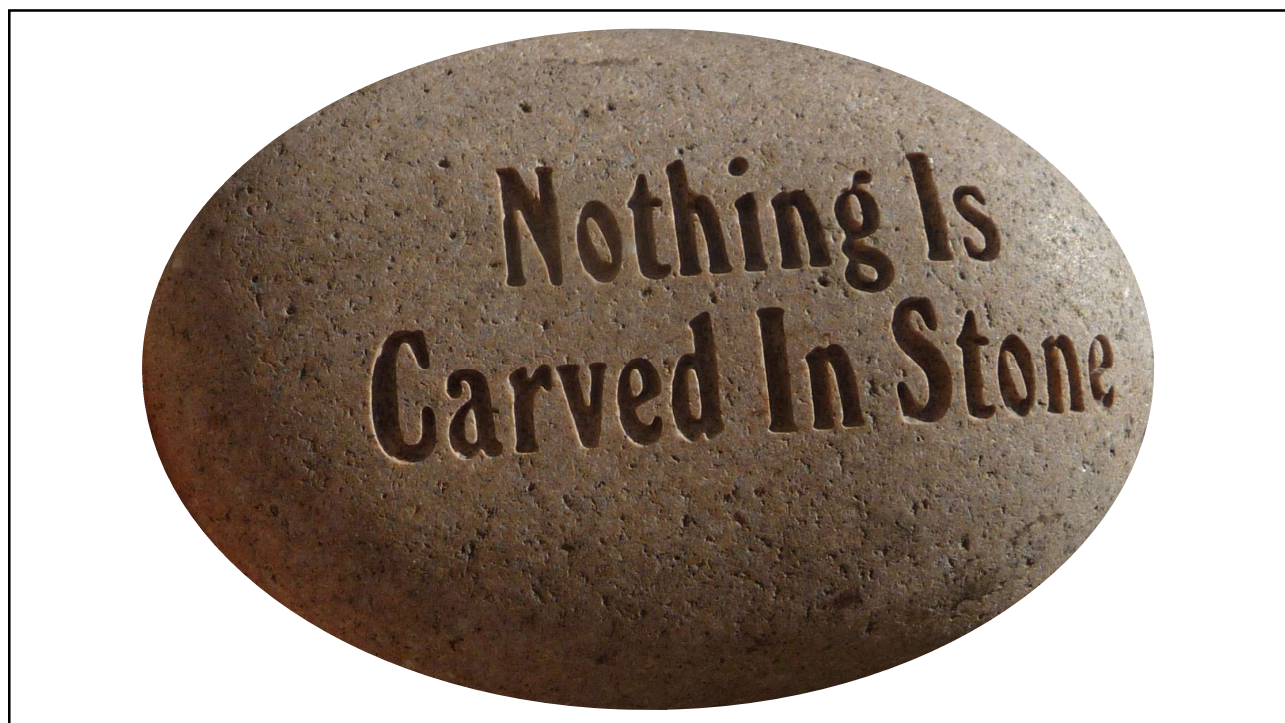
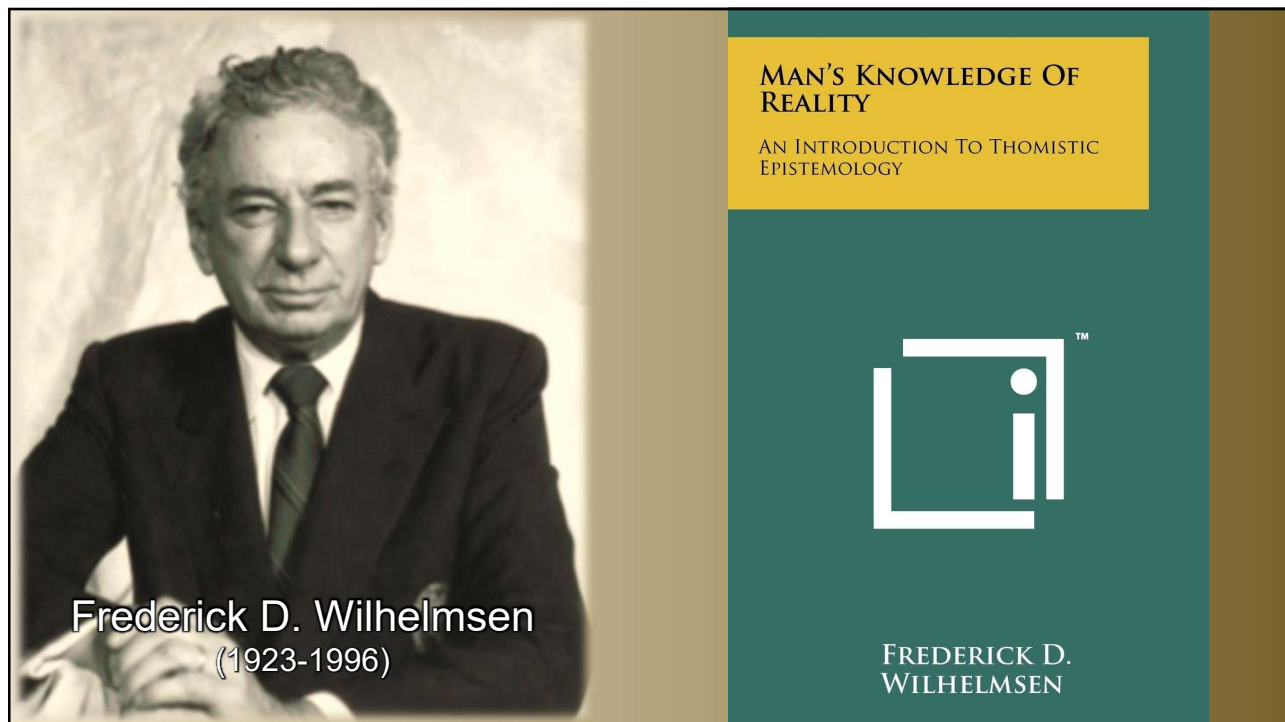


Thomas A. Howe

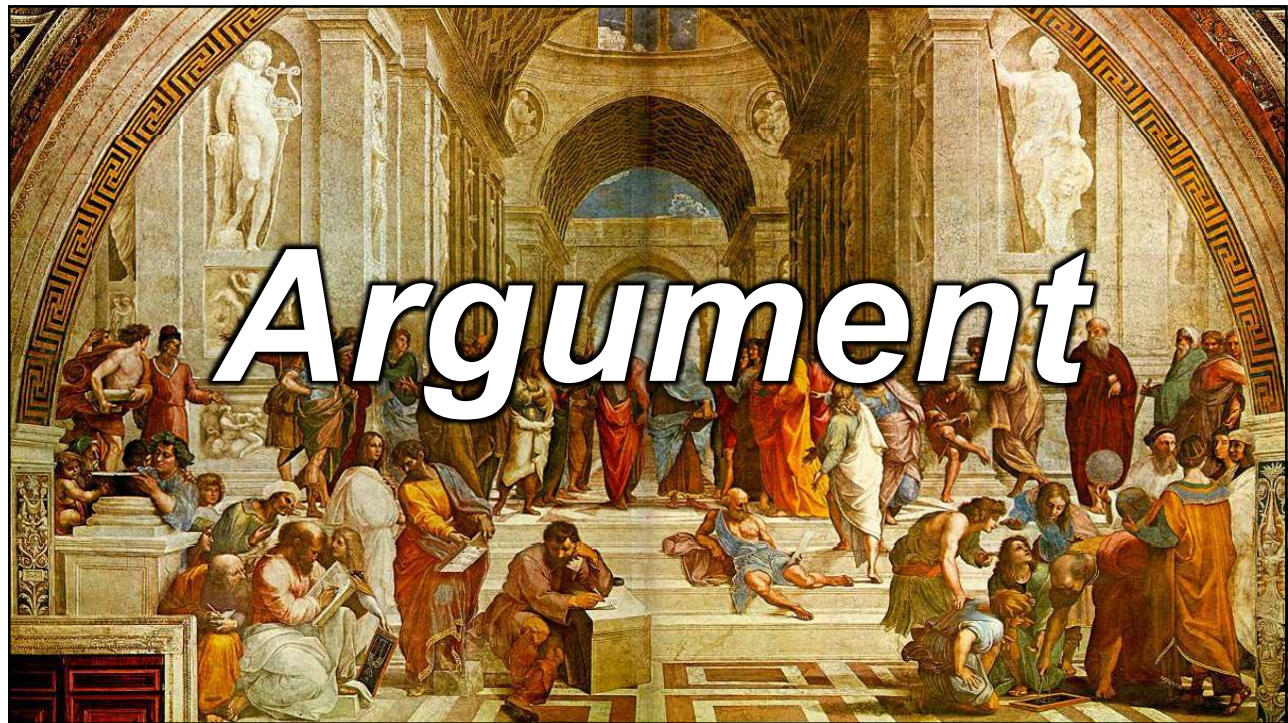


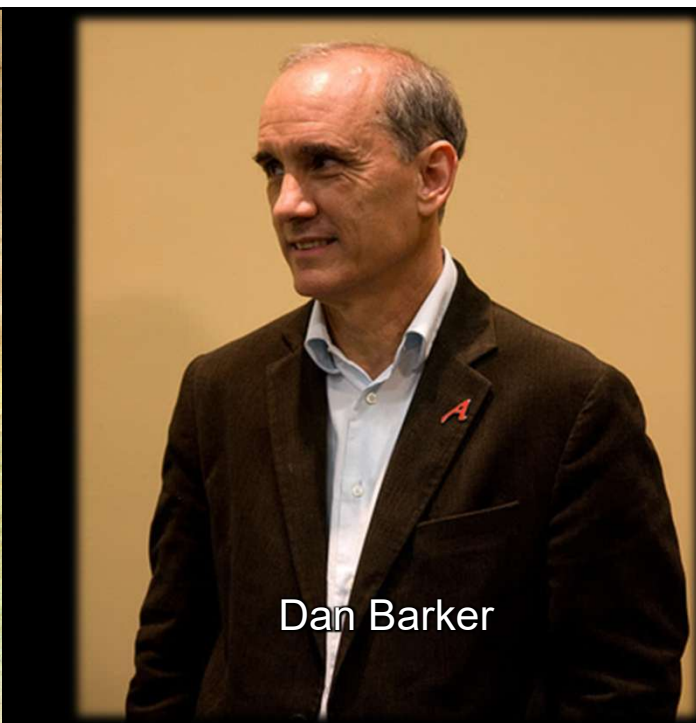
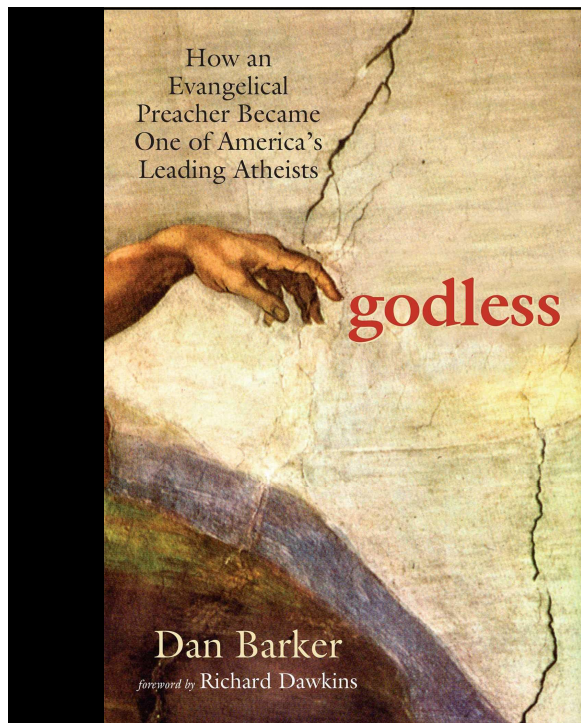
Frederick D. Wilhelmsen
(1923-1996)



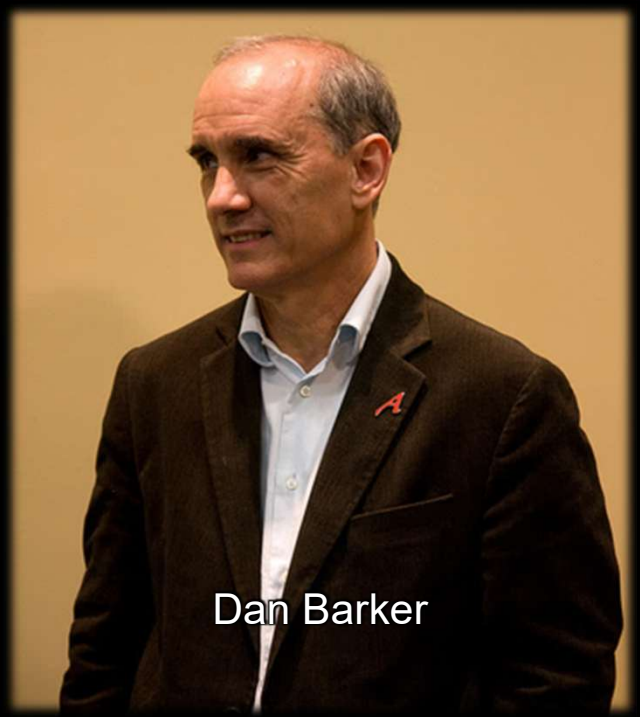


**self- refuting
statement**





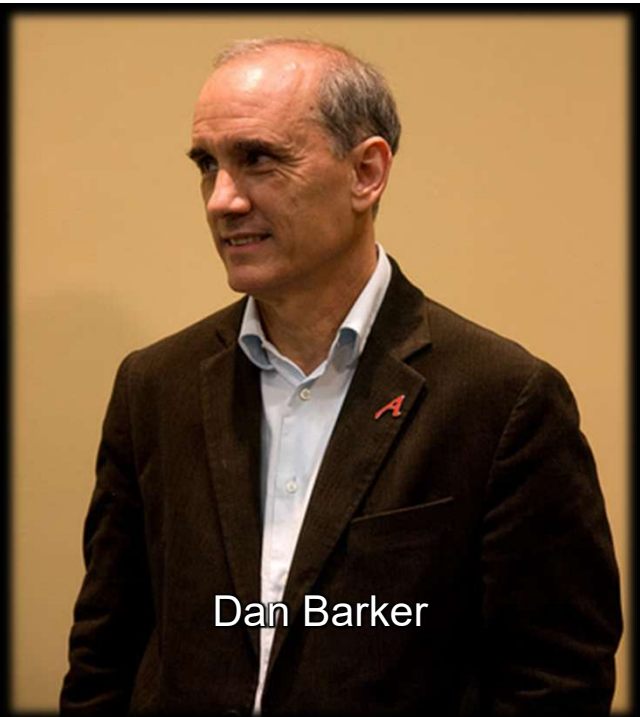
"Everything had a cause, and every cause is the effect of a previous cause. Something must have started it all. God ... is the eternal first cause ... the creator and sustainer of the universe.



Dan Barker

"The major premise of this argument 'everything had a cause,' is contradicted by the conclusion that 'God did not have a cause.' You can't have it both ways. If everything had to have a cause, then there could not be a first cause."

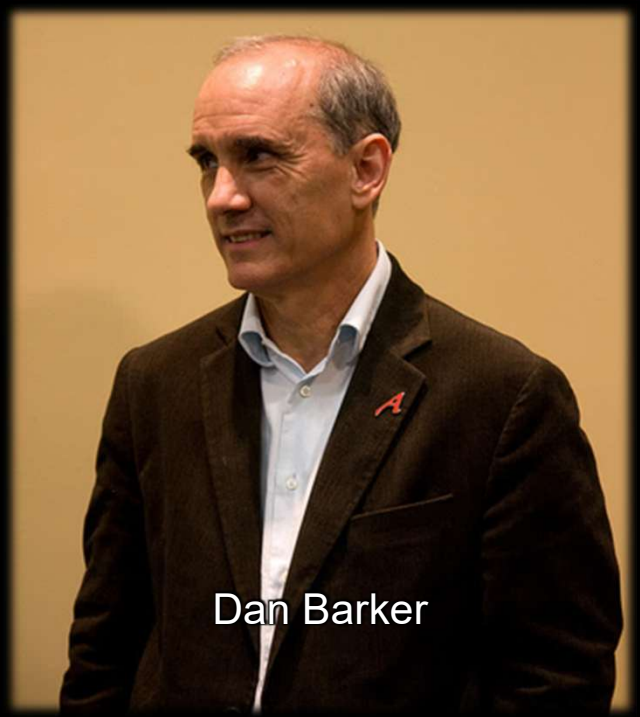
[Dan Barker, *Godless: How an Evangelical Preacher Became One of America's Leading Atheists* (Berkeley: Ulysses Press, 2008), 113-114]



Dan Barker

*"The old cosmological argument claimed that since **everything has a cause**, there must be a first cause, an 'unmoved first mover.'*
Today no theistic philosophers defend that primitive line because if everything needs a cause, so does God."

[Dan Barker, *Godless*, 130]



Dan Barker



Gordon Stein
(1941-1996)

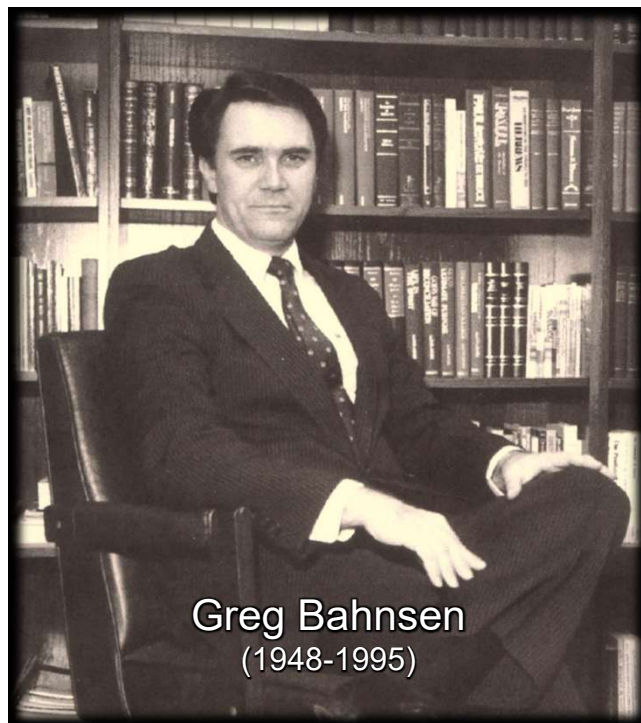
*"I want to quickly go over some of the eleven major proofs. They have been 900 years in the formulation, and during this 900 years, this is what people have basically come up with. ... **Everything must have a cause**, therefore the universe must have a cause, and that cause was God. God was the first or uncaused cause. ... This leads to a real logical bind for the theist, because, **if everything must have a cause, then God must have a cause.**"*



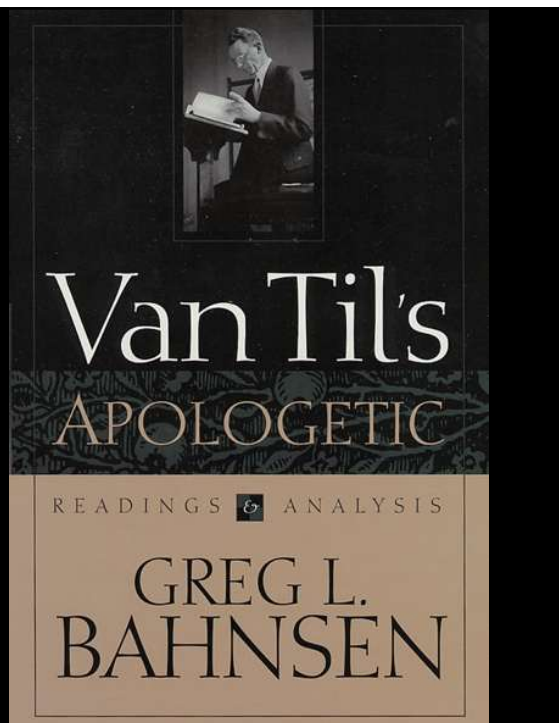
Gordon Stein
(1941-1996)

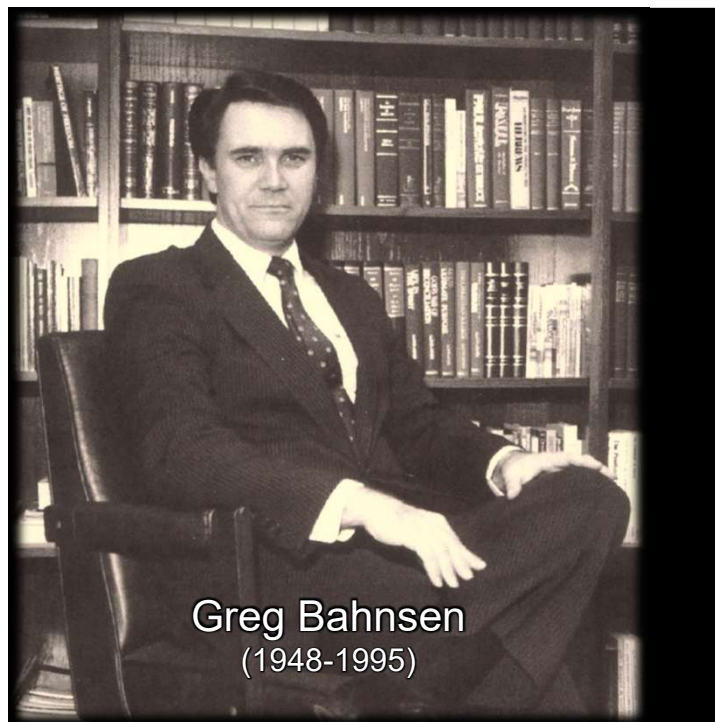
"If God had a cause, he cannot be the first or uncaused cause. If God did not have a cause, then not everything must have a cause. If not everything needs a cause, then perhaps the universe doesn't need a cause. Thus, there is a logical bind and the proof fails."

[*The Great Debate: Does God Exist?* Greg L. Bahnsen and Gordon Stein, University of California, Irvine, 1985]



Greg Bahnsen
(1948-1995)

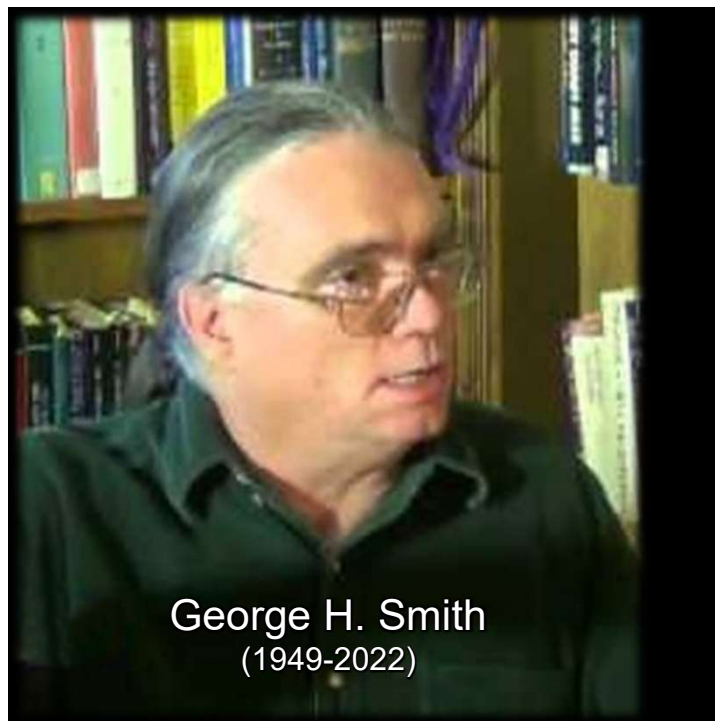




Greg Bahnsen
(1948-1995)

*"How should we understand the fundamental premise in the cosmological argument **'Everything has a cause'** (or 'Every object has an origin,' or, better, 'Every event has a cause')? If this is taken as a universal metaphysical principle ... then the embarrassing conclusion reached by the apologist would be that God too has a cause or origin."*


[Van Til's *Apologetic: Readings and Analysis* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1998), 617-618, emphasis in original]



George H. Smith
(1949-2022)

ATHEISM
THE CASE AGAINST GOD
BY GEORGE H. SMITH

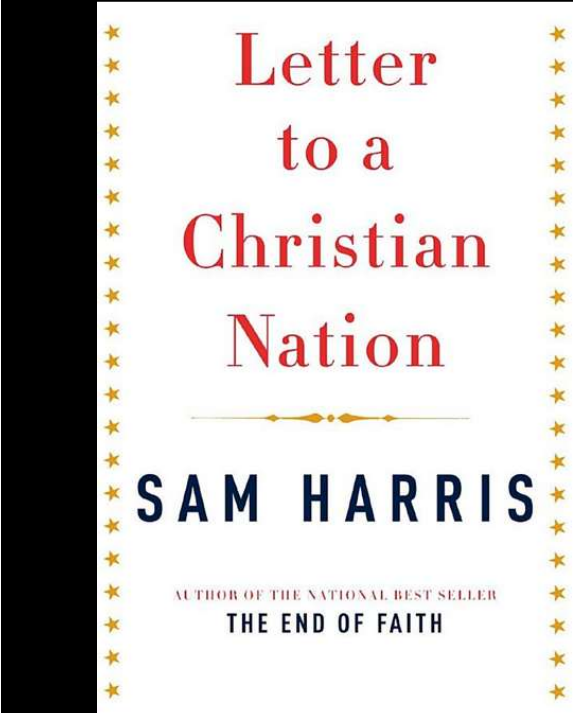
The Skeptic's Bookshelf



George H. Smith
(1949-2022)

*"Every existing thing has a **cause**, and every cause must be caused by a prior cause, which in turn must be caused by a still prior cause, and so on, until we reach one of two conclusions: (a) either we have an endless chain of causes—an infinite regress, or (b) there exists a first cause, a being that does not require a causal explanation."*

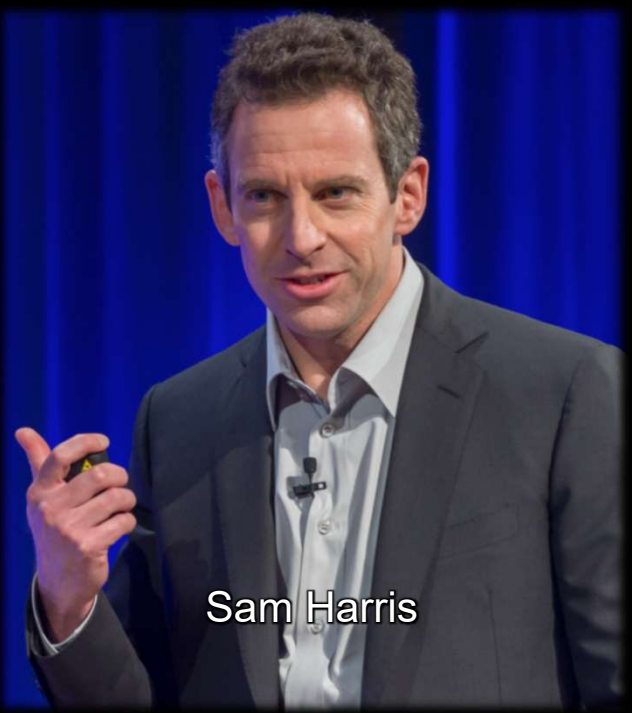
[George H. Smith, *Atheism: The Case Against God*, (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1979), 236]



Letter
to a
Christian
Nation

SAM HARRIS

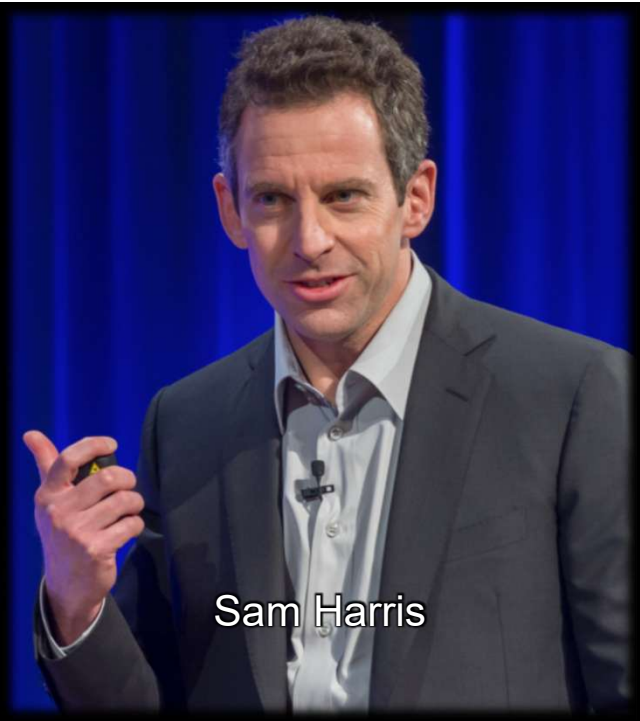
AUTHOR OF THE NATIONAL BEST SELLER
THE END OF FAITH



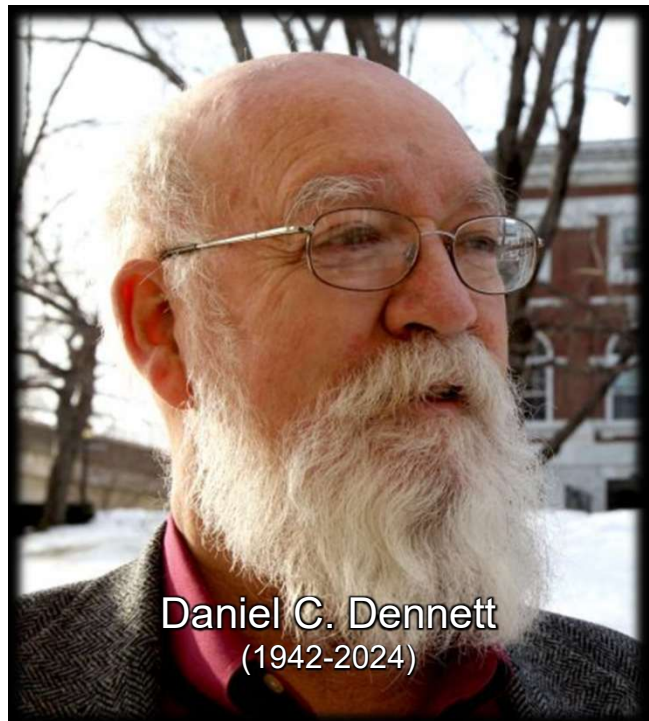
Sam Harris

"Everything that exists has a cause; space and time exist; space and time must, therefore, have been caused by something that stands outside of space and time, and the only thing that transcends space and time, and yet retains the power to create, is God."

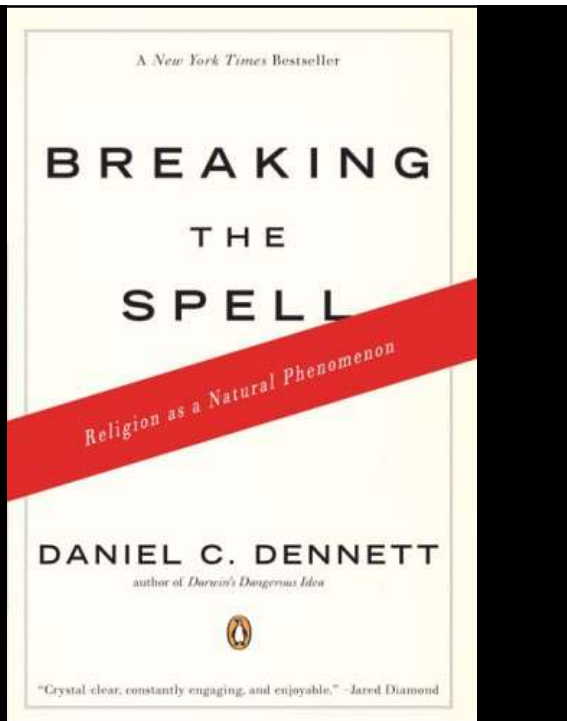
[Sam Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008), 72]



Sam Harris



Daniel C. Dennett
(1942-2024)



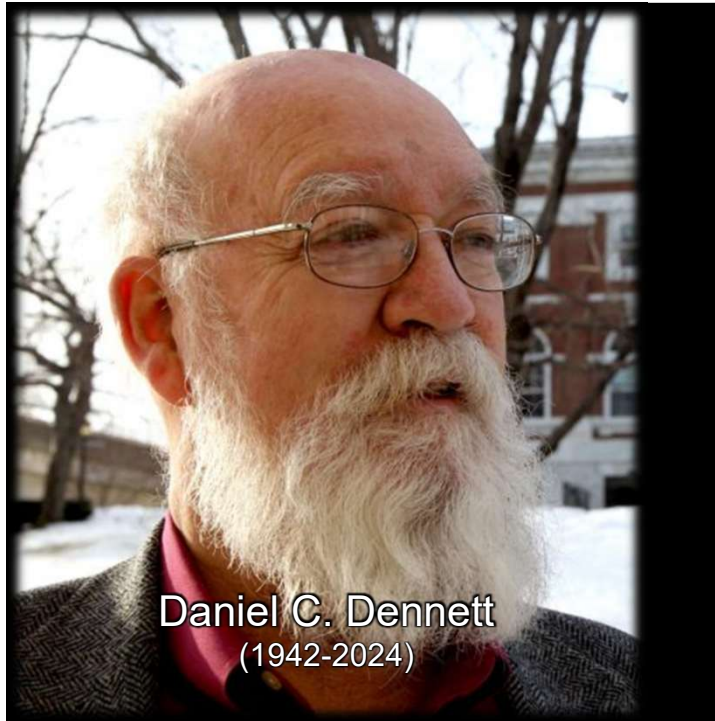
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Religion as a Natural Phenomenon

DANIEL C. DENNETT
*author of *Darwin's Dangerous Idea**

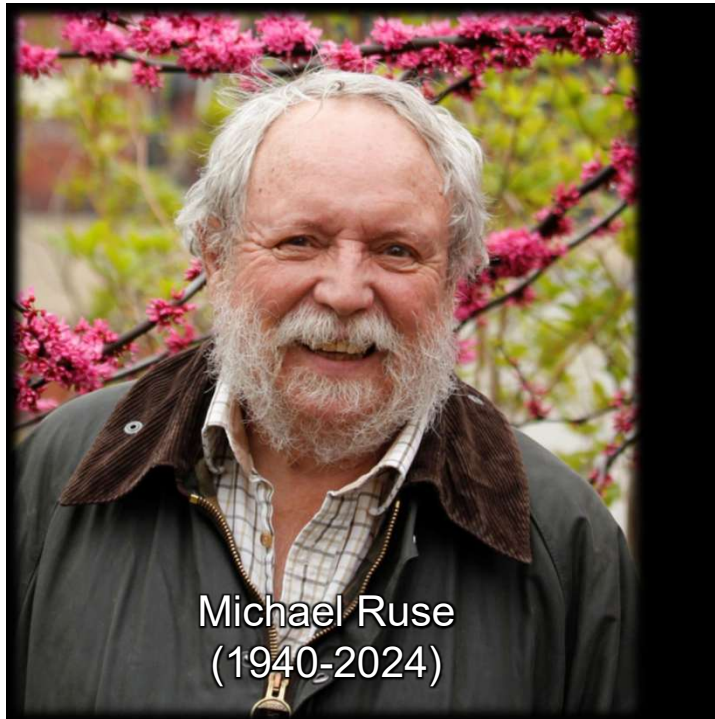
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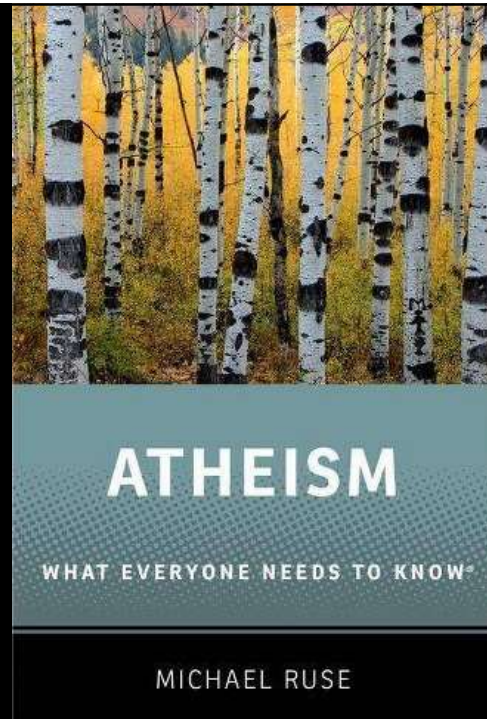
Daniel C. Dennett
(1942-2024)

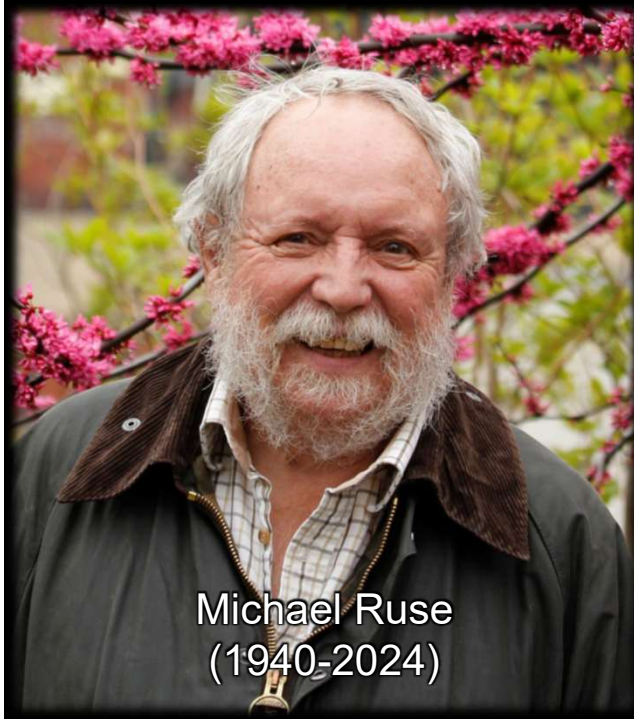
*"The Cosmological Argument, which in its simplest form states that since **everything must have a cause** the universe must have a cause—namely, God—doesn't stay simple for long."*

[Daniel C. Dennett, *Breaking the Spell*, (New York: Penguin Group, 2006), 242]



Michael Ruse
(1940-2024)





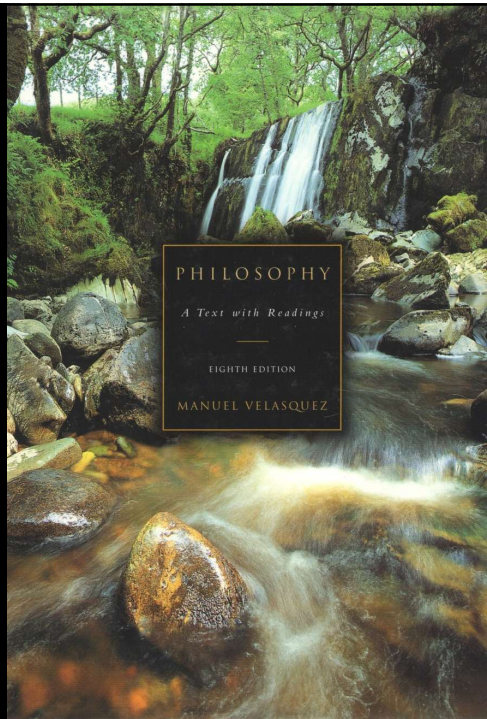
Michael Ruse
(1940-2024)

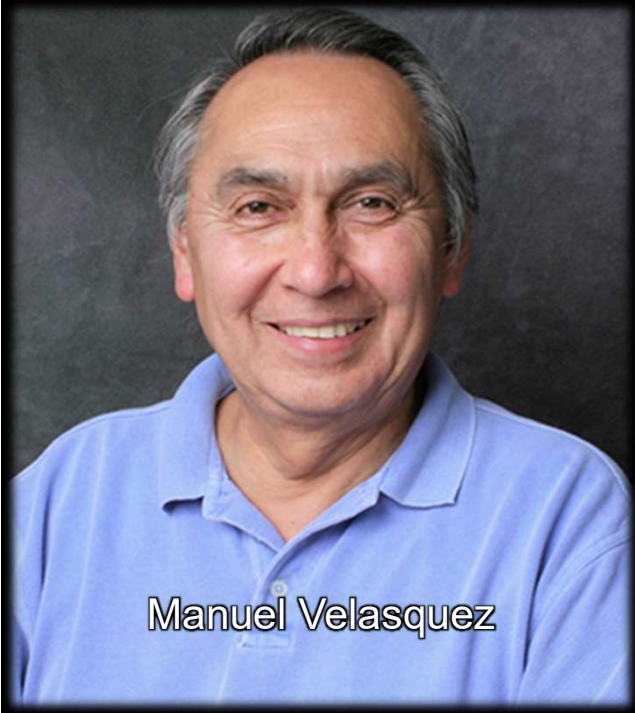
*"Again, we find an argument with somewhat different forms, but for our purposes, it is enough to focus on the central inference. **Everything has a cause.** There must therefore be a cause of the world. This is, or we call this, **God.**"*

[Michael Ruse, *Atheism: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 88-89]



Manuel Velasquez

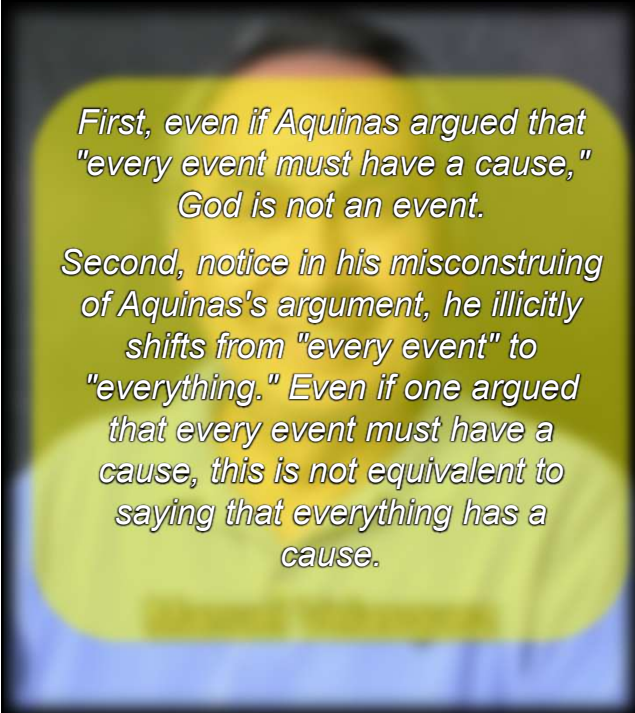




Manuel Velasquez

*"The second objection to the cosmological argument is that its conclusion is contradicted by its premise. To illustrate, Aquinas insists that **every event must have a cause**. But if this is so, why stop with God? The notion of an uncaused cause seems to contradict the assumption that **everything has a cause**."*

[Manuel Velasquez, *Philosophy: A Text with Readings* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 2002), 288]

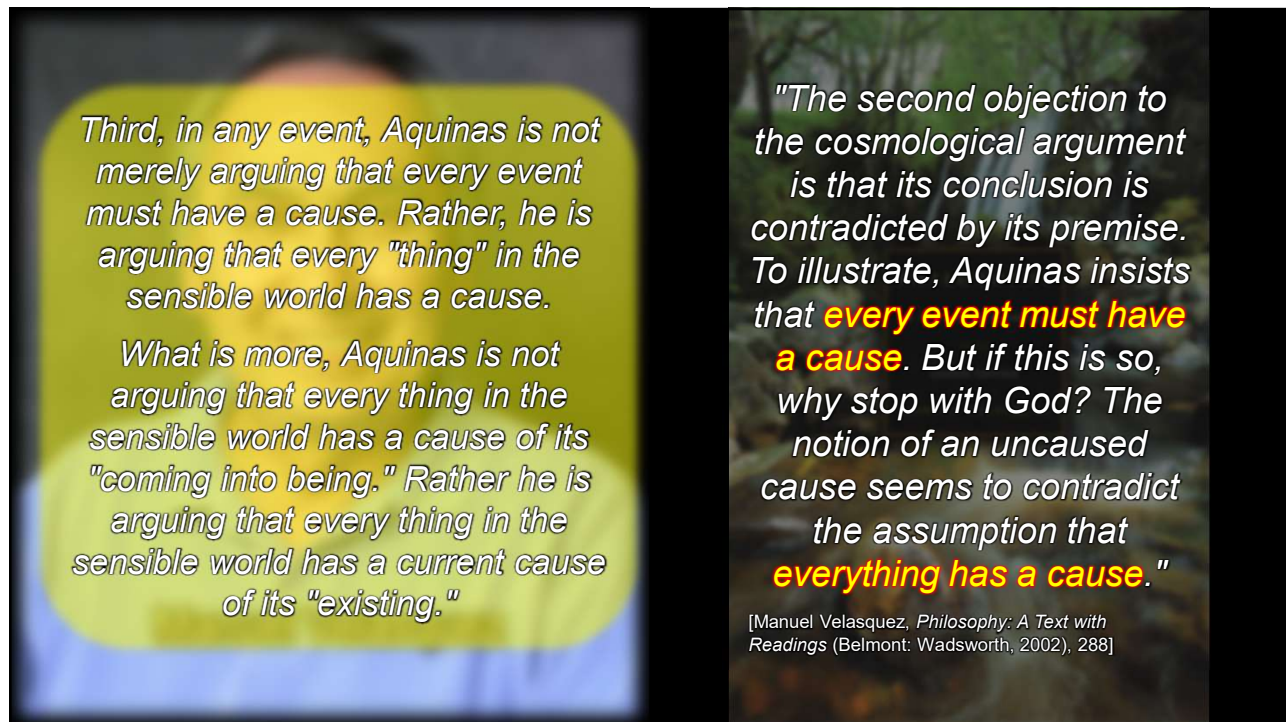


First, even if Aquinas argued that "every event must have a cause," God is not an event.

Second, notice in his misconstruing of Aquinas's argument, he illicitly shifts from "every event" to "everything." Even if one argued that every event must have a cause, this is not equivalent to saying that everything has a cause.

*"The second objection to the cosmological argument is that its conclusion is contradicted by its premise. To illustrate, Aquinas insists that **every event must have a cause**. But if this is so, why stop with God? The notion of an uncaused cause seems to contradict the assumption that **everything has a cause**."*

[Manuel Velasquez, *Philosophy: A Text with Readings* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 2002), 288]

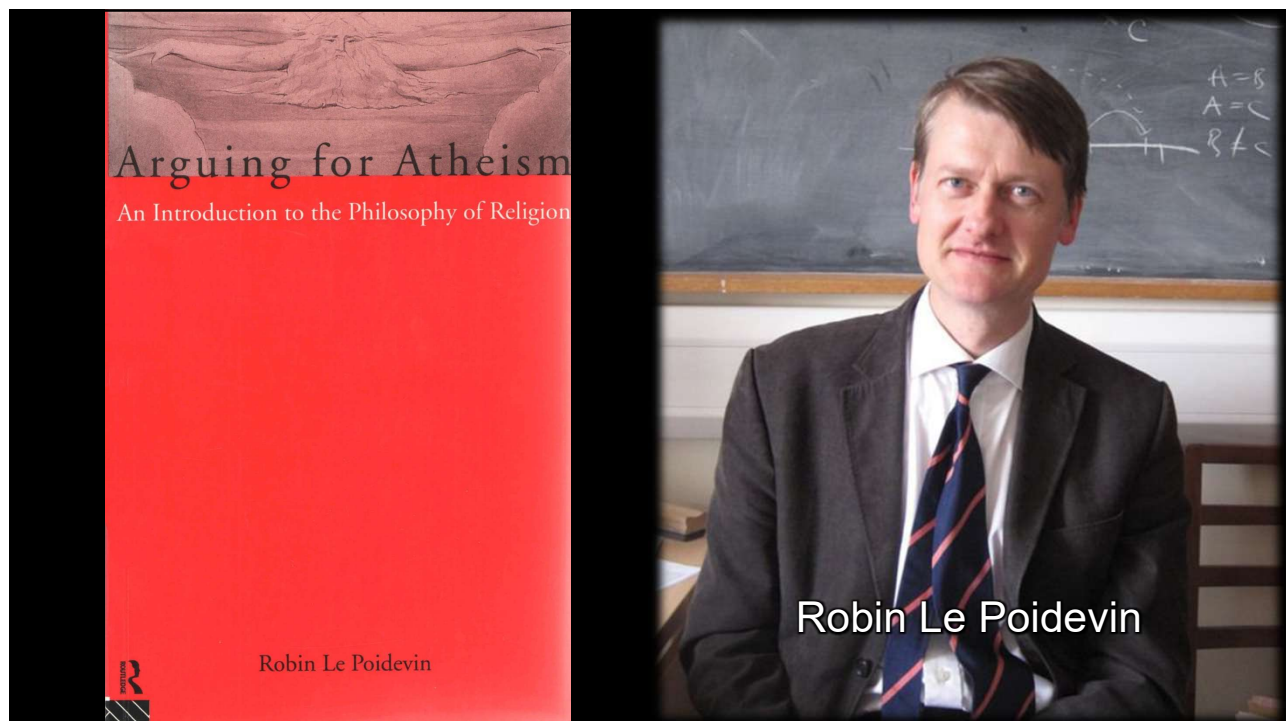


Third, in any event, Aquinas is not merely arguing that every event must have a cause. Rather, he is arguing that every "thing" in the sensible world has a cause.

What is more, Aquinas is not arguing that every thing in the sensible world has a cause of its "coming into being." Rather he is arguing that every thing in the sensible world has a current cause of its "existing."

"The second objection to the cosmological argument is that its conclusion is contradicted by its premise. To illustrate, Aquinas insists that **every event must have a cause**. But if this is so, why stop with God? The notion of an uncaused cause seems to contradict the assumption that **everything has a cause**."

[Manuel Velasquez, *Philosophy: A Text with Readings* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 2002), 288]



Arguing for Atheism
An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion

Robin Le Poidevin

Robin Le Poidevin

*"In this chapter we shall look at three versions of the cosmological argument. The first I shall call the basic cosmological argument, because the other two are modifications of it. It goes as follows. ... 1. **Anything that exists has a cause of its existence.** 2. Nothing can be the cause of its own existence. The universe exists. Therefore: The universe has a cause of its existence which lies outside the universe."*

[Robin Le Poidevin, *Arguing for Atheism: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (London: Routledge, 1996), 4, emphasis in original]



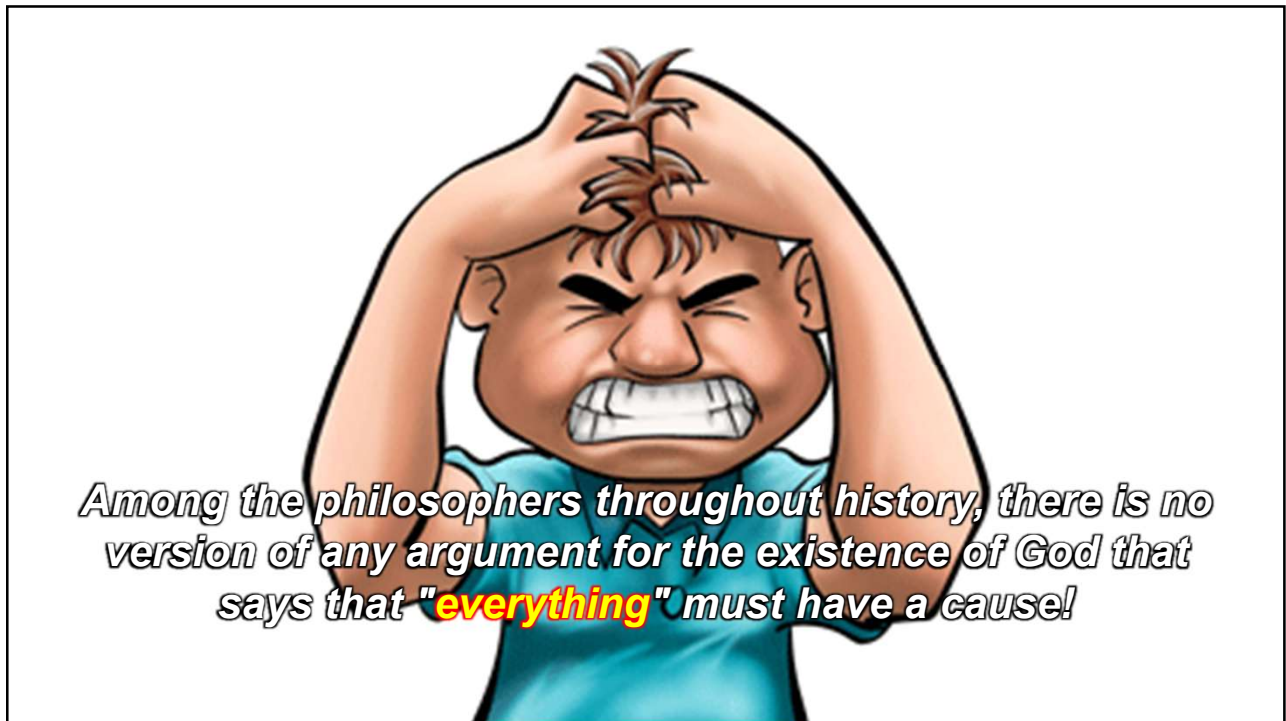
Robin Le Poidevin

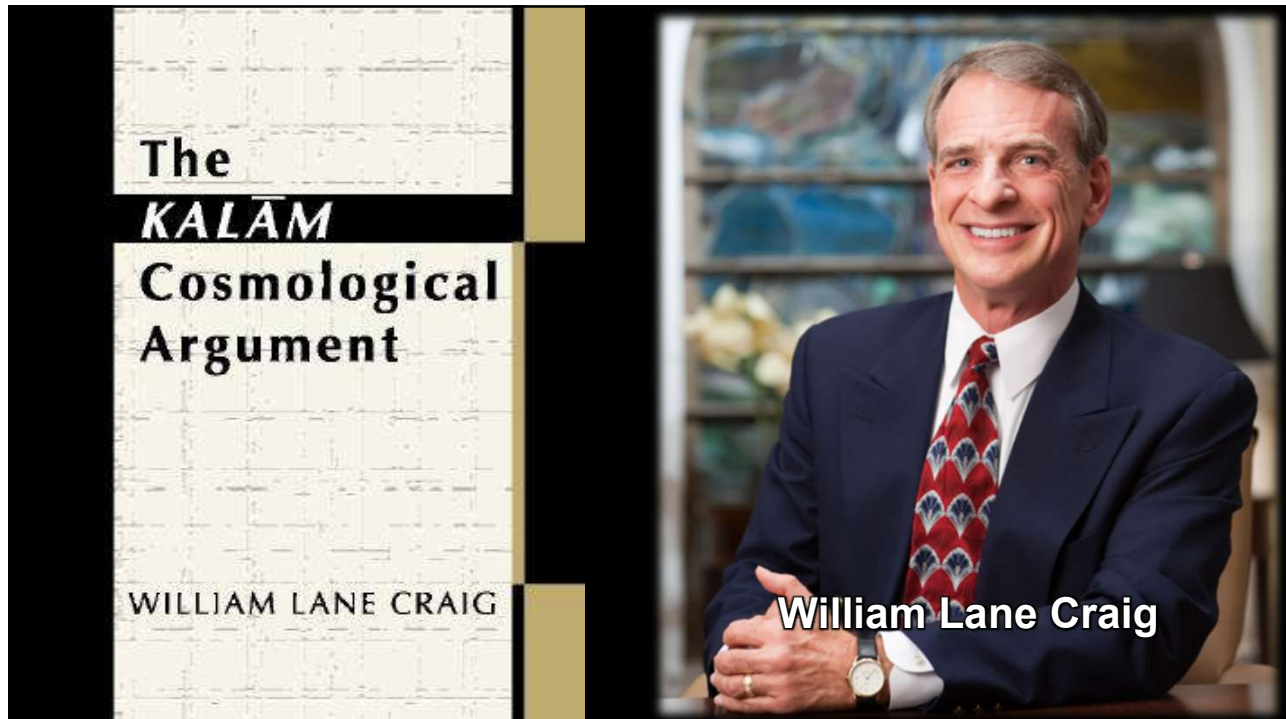
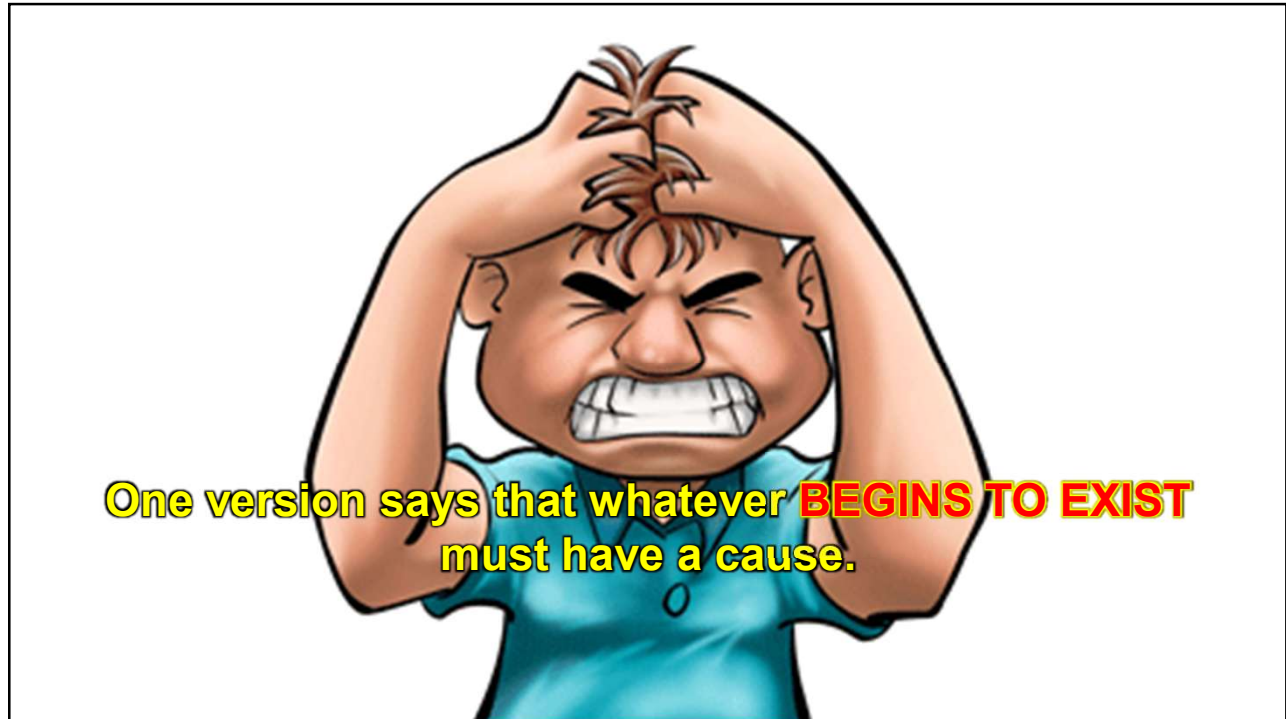
"Although no one has defended a cosmological argument of precisely this form, it provides a useful stepping-stone to the other, more sophisticated versions."

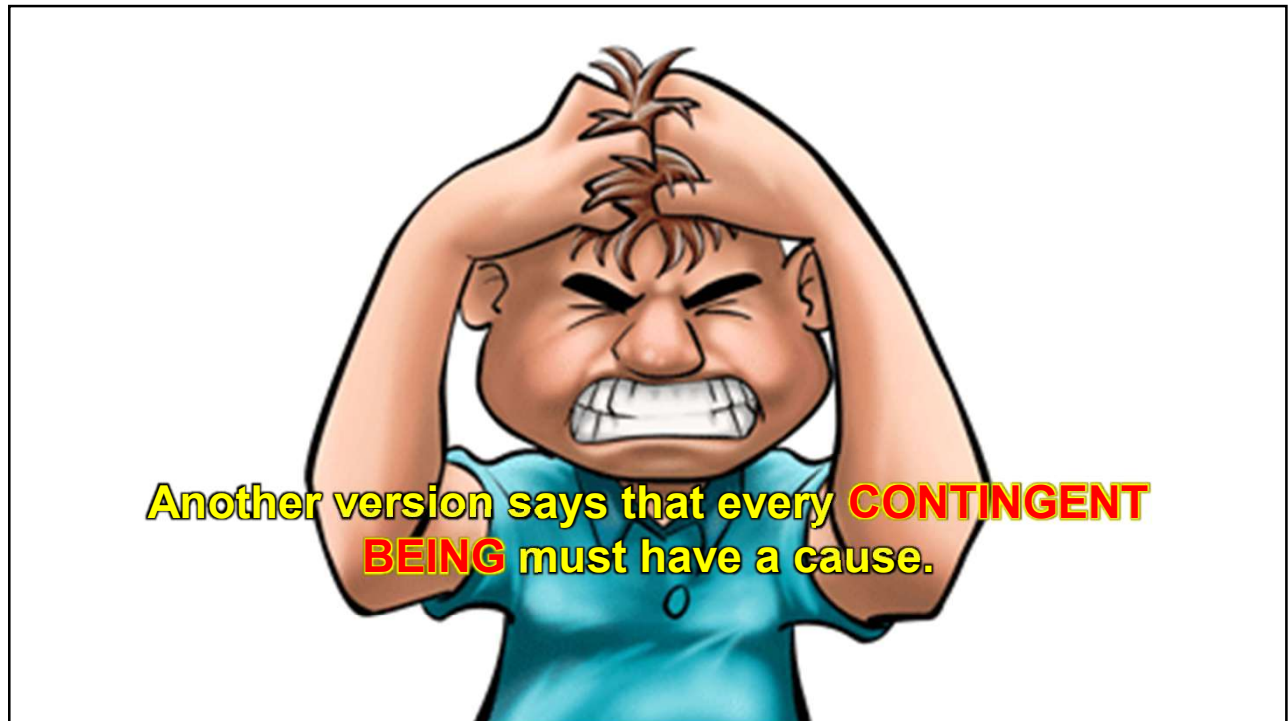
[Robin Le Poidevin, *Arguing for Atheism: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (London: Routledge, 1996), 4]



Robin Le Poidevin







"No respectable theologian or theistic philosopher has ever made the claim, 'everything has a cause.' Yet various new atheists have proceeded to attack that straw man of their own making.



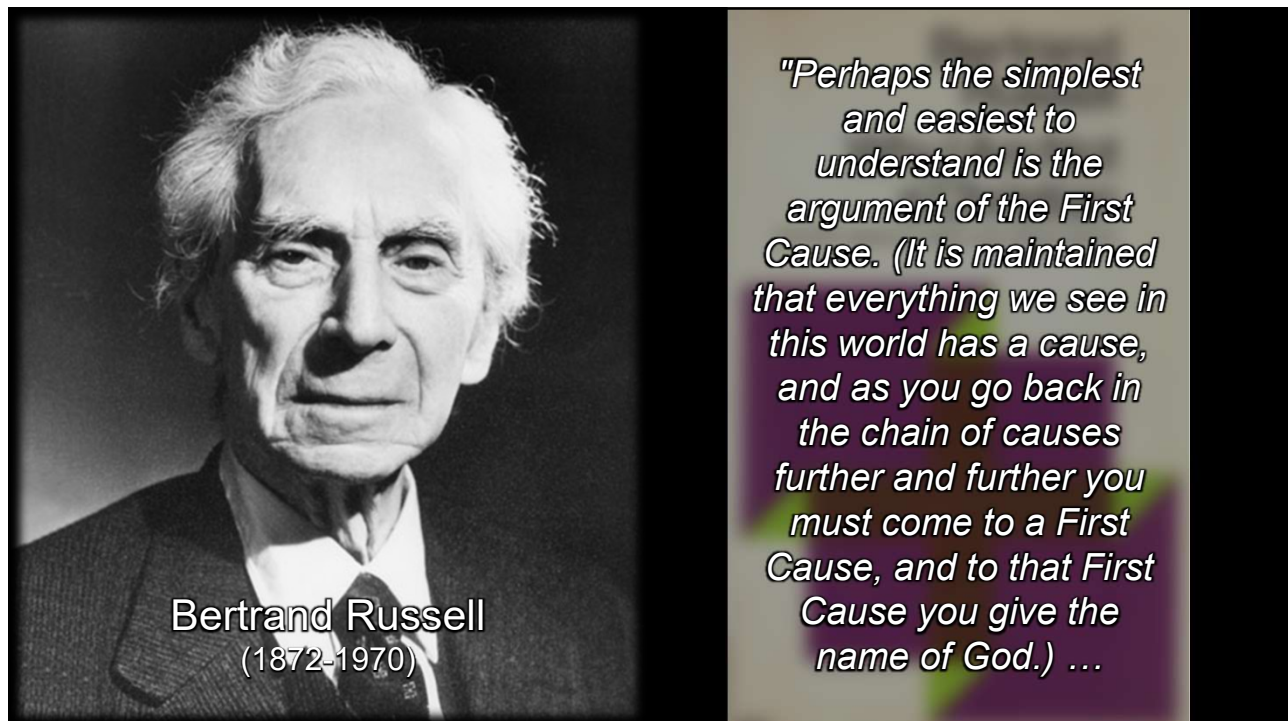
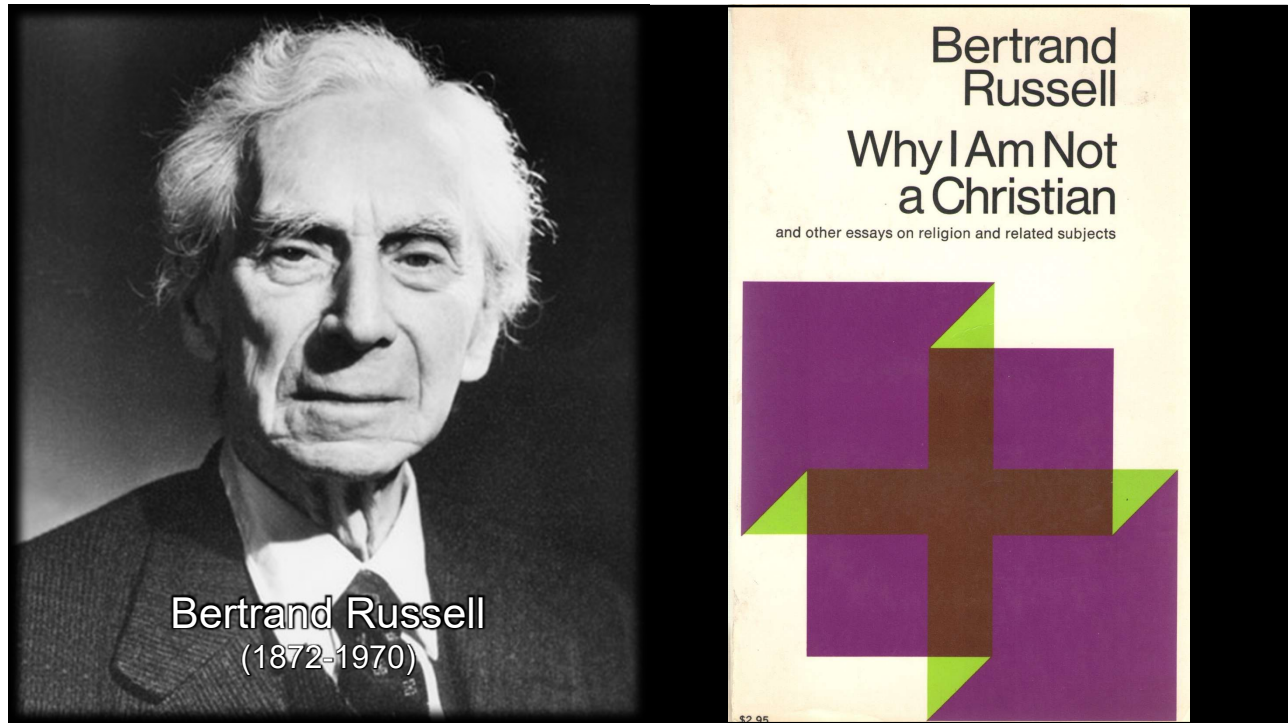
Jeffery Jay Lowder

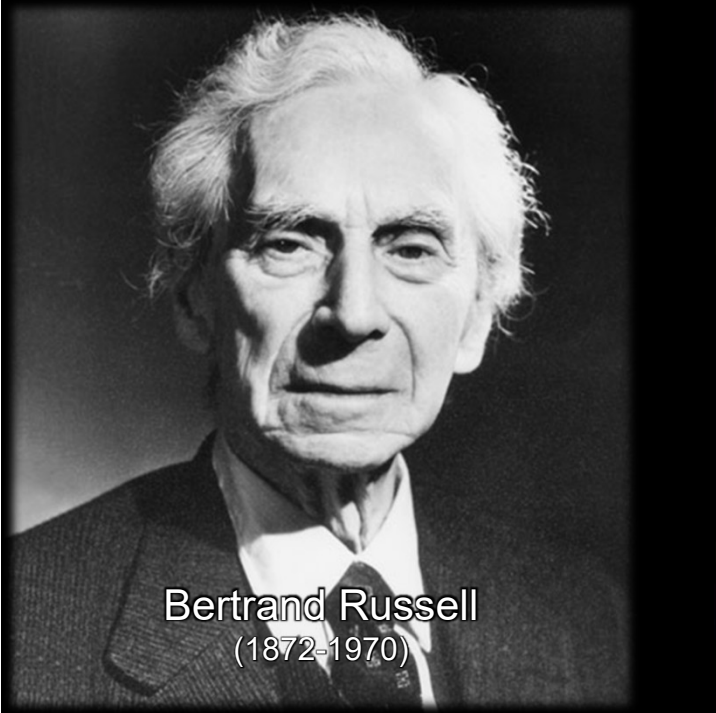
*"I remember, when reading The God Delusion by Richard Dawkins, where he attacked that straw man and cringing. There are many different cosmological arguments for God's existence and **none of them rely upon the stupid claim, 'everything has a cause.'**"*

[<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/secularoutpost/2014/02/17/feser-insults-readers-of-www-infidels-org/#comment-1248907824>, accessed 02/06/21. This article evidently has been removed from Patheos.]



Jeffery Jay Lowder



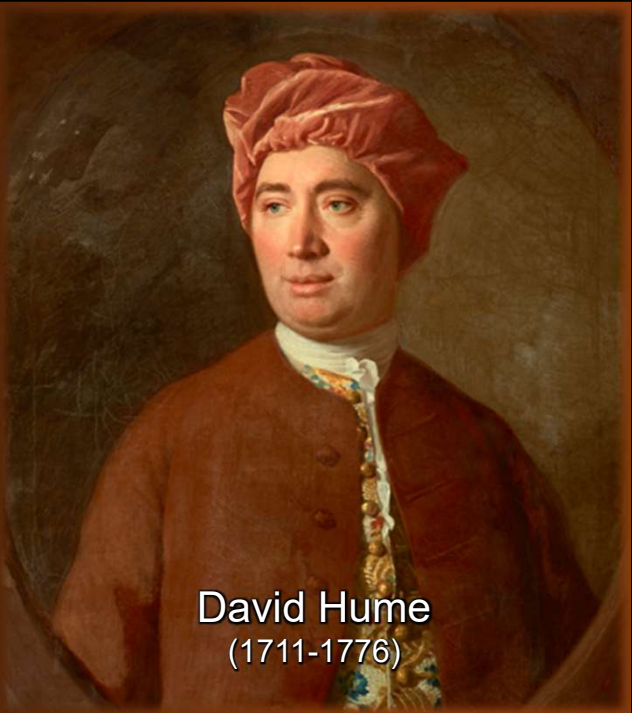


Bertrand Russell
(1872-1970)

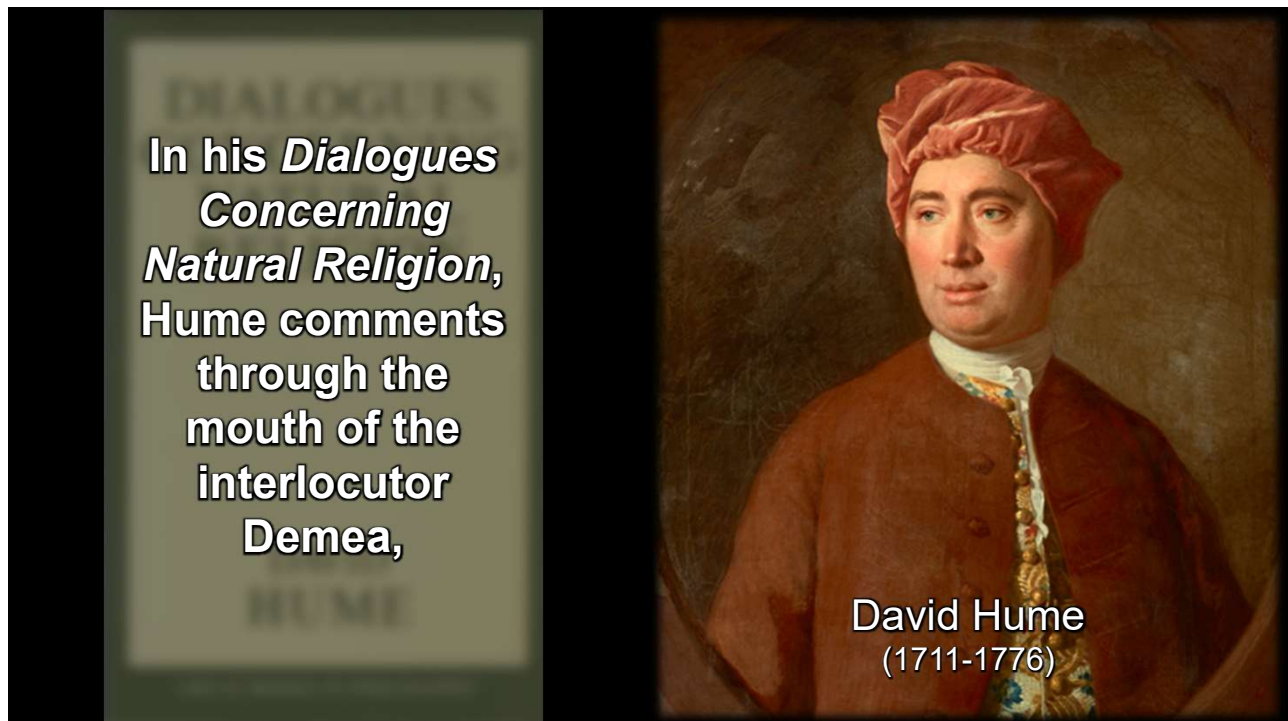
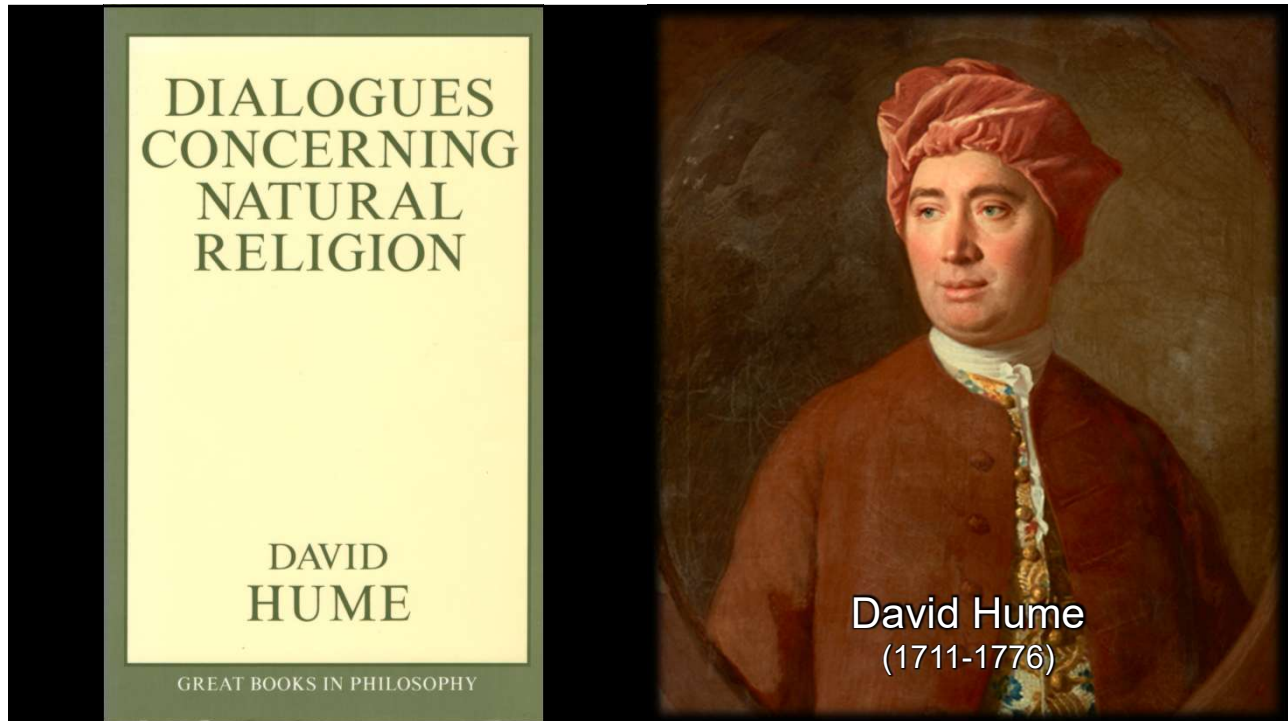
*"That very simple sentence showed me, as I still think; the fallacy in the argument of the First Cause. **If everything must have a cause, then God must have a cause.**"*

[Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), 6-7]

These atheists are perhaps taking their cue from the famous Scottish philosopher David Hume.



David Hume
(1711-1776)

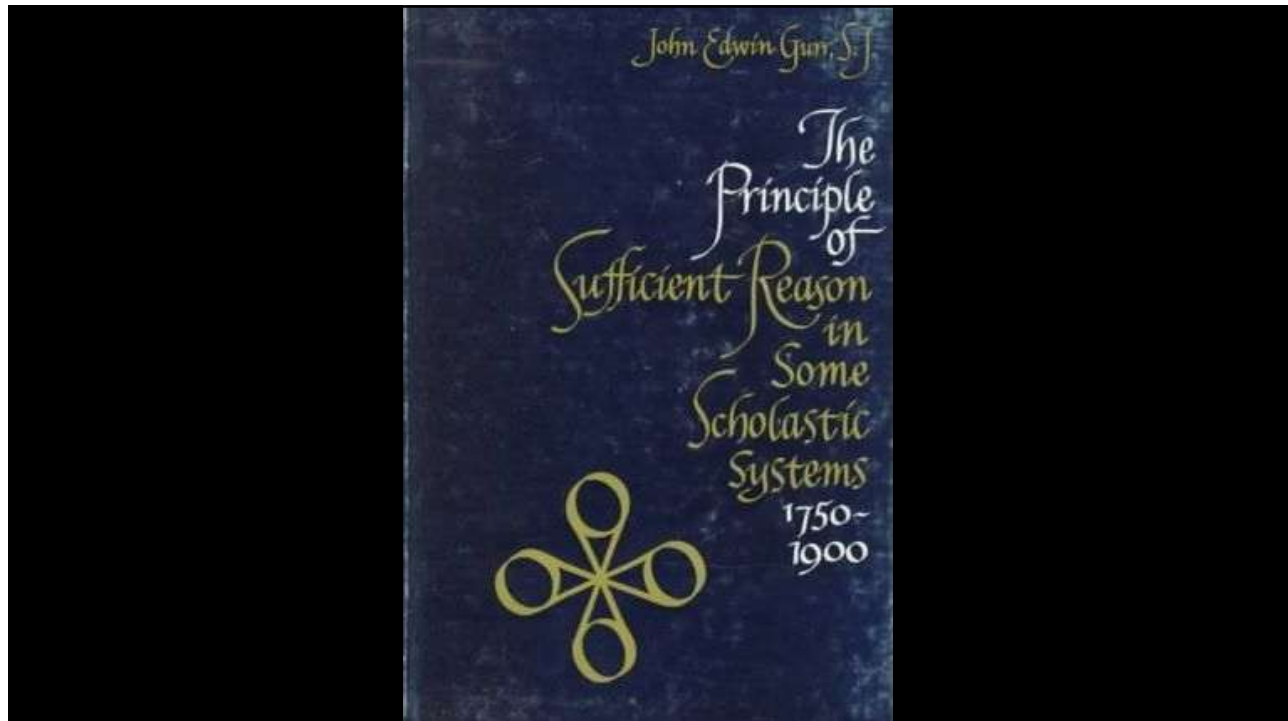


"Whatever exists must have a cause or reason of its existence; it being absolutely impossible for anything to produce itself, or be the cause of its own existence."

[Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion (Amherst: Prometheus, 1989), 73]



David Hume
(1711-1776)



*"What was it, then,
which determined
Something to exist
rather than
Nothing, and
bestowed being on
a particular
possibility,
exclusive of the
rest?"*



David Hume
(1711-1776)

*"External causes,
there are supposed
to be none. Chance
is a word without a
meaning. Was it
Nothing? But that
can never produce
any thing.*



David Hume
(1711-1776)

*"We must, therefore, have recourse to a necessarily existent Being, who carries the **REASON** of his existence in himself,*



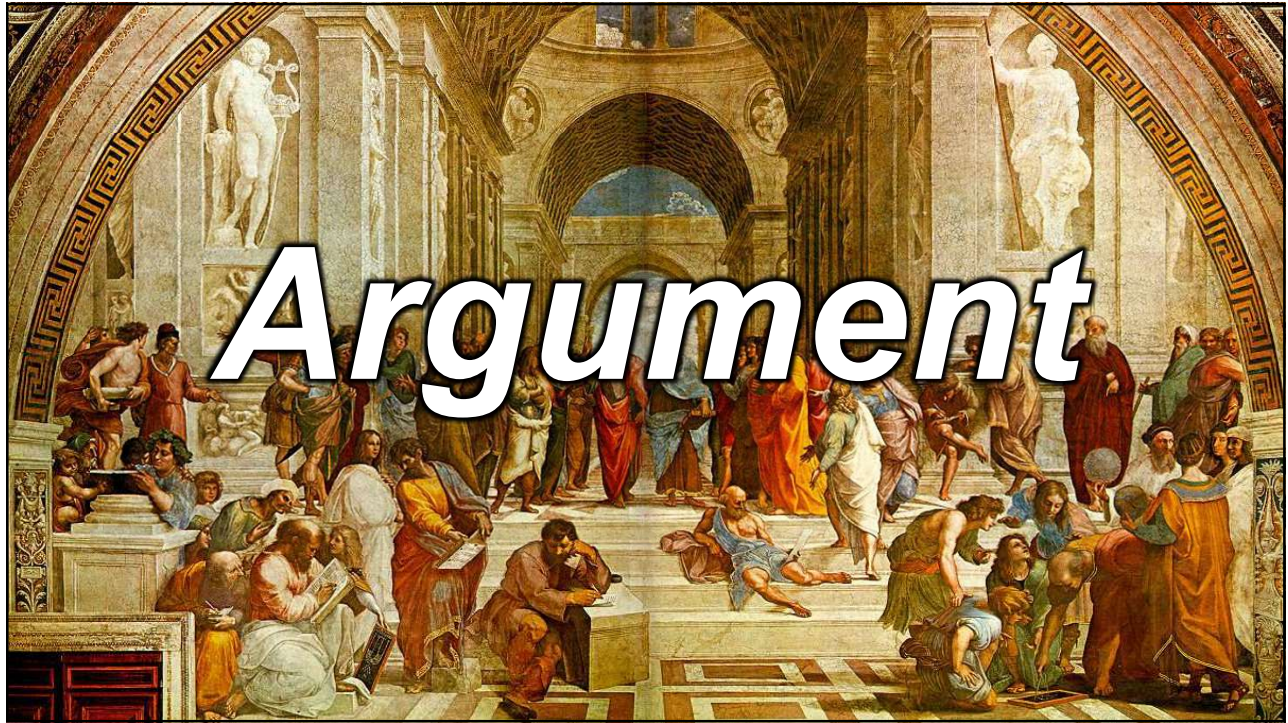
David Hume
(1711-1776)

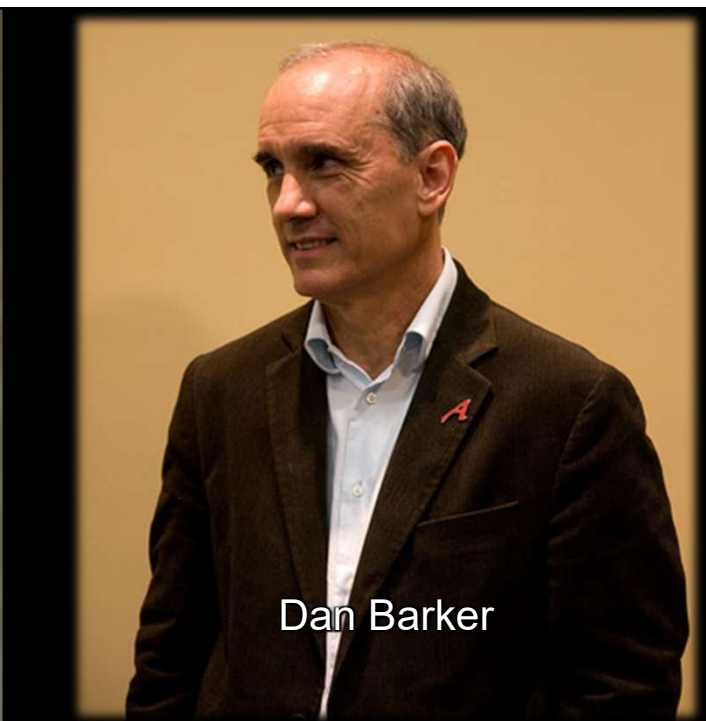
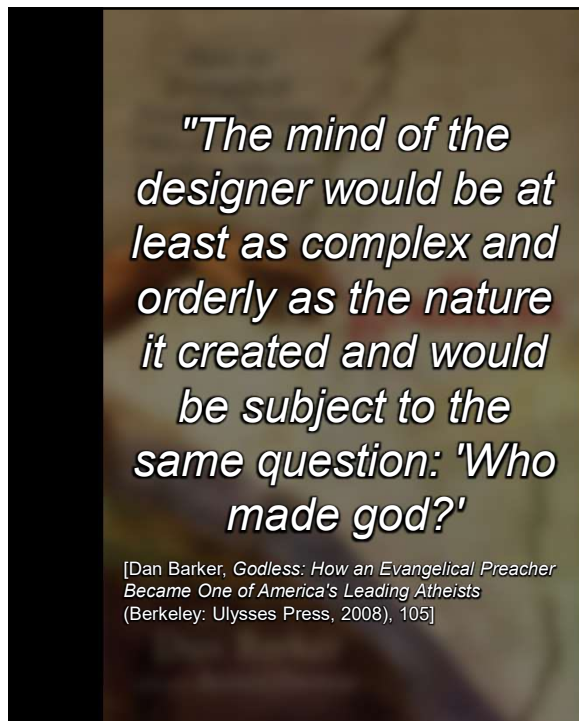
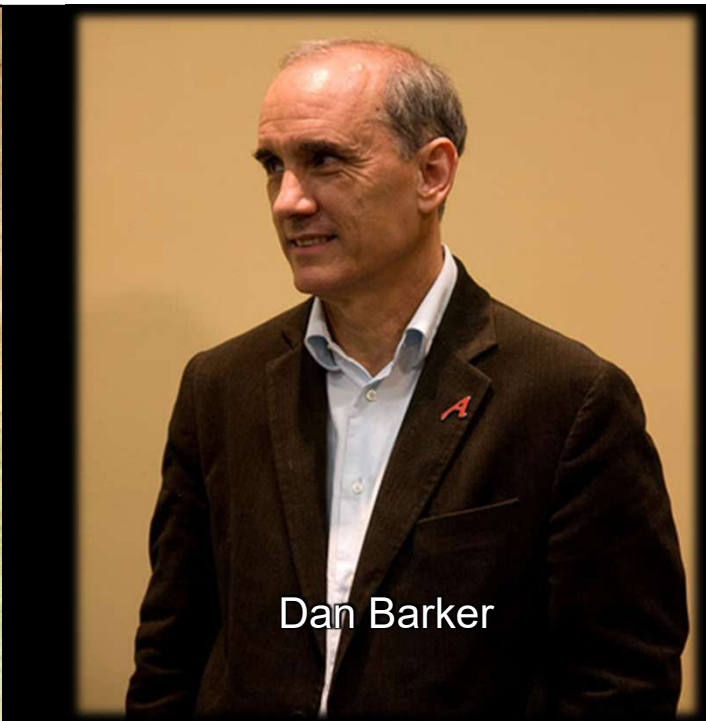
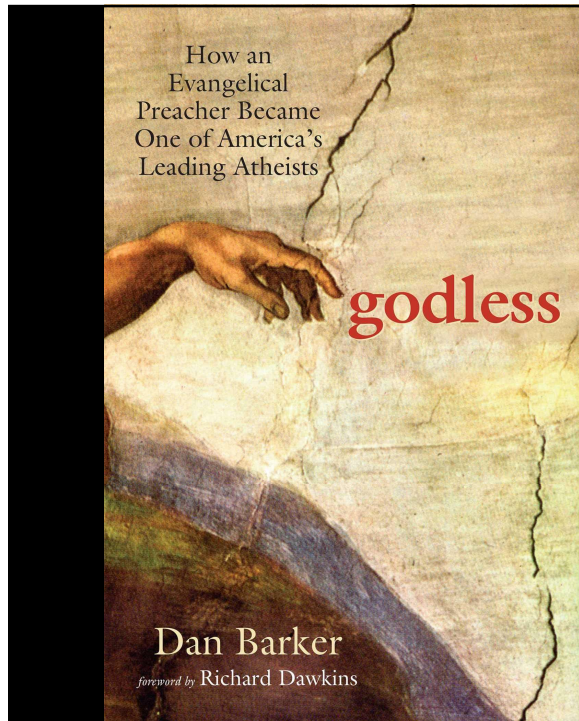
"and who cannot be supposed not to exist, without an express contradiction. There is, consequently, such a Being; that is, there is a Deity."

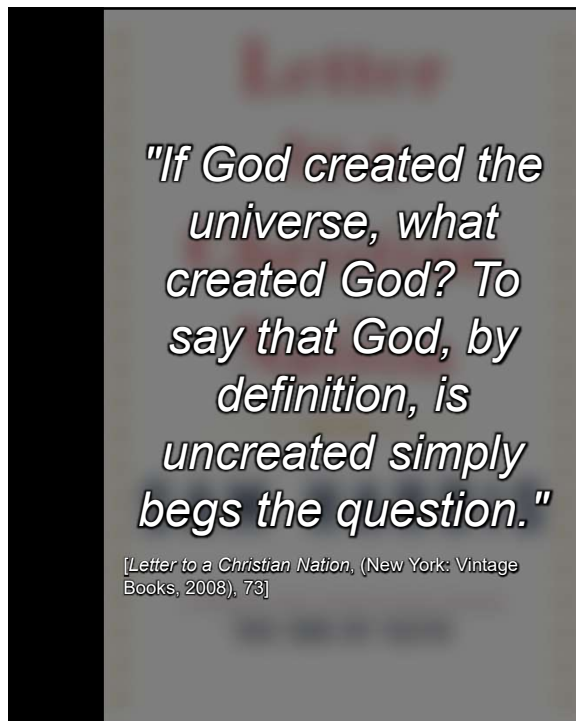
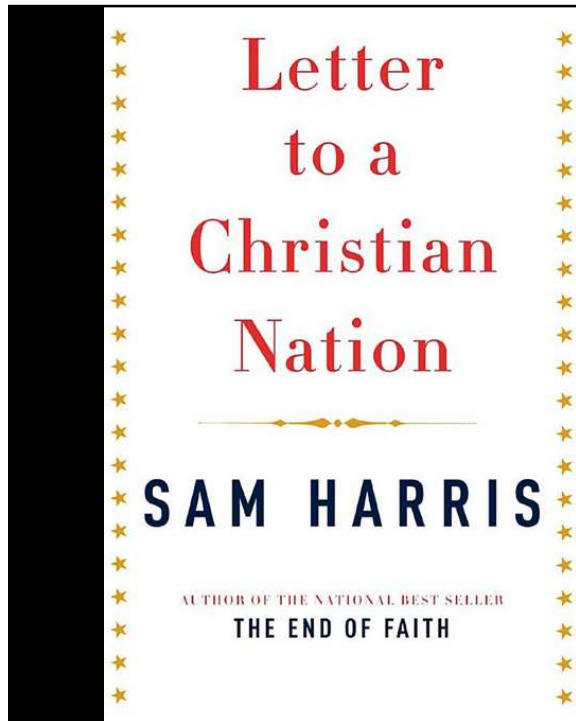
[Dialogues, 74]

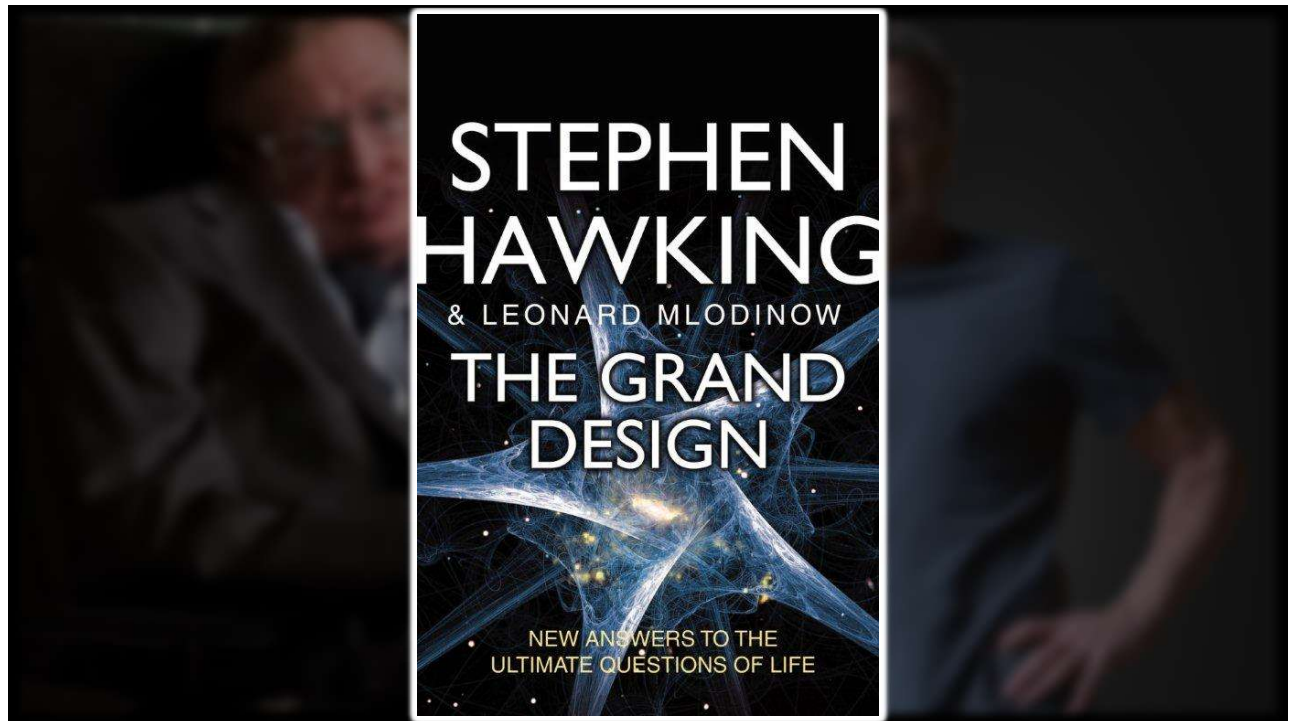


David Hume
(1711-1776)



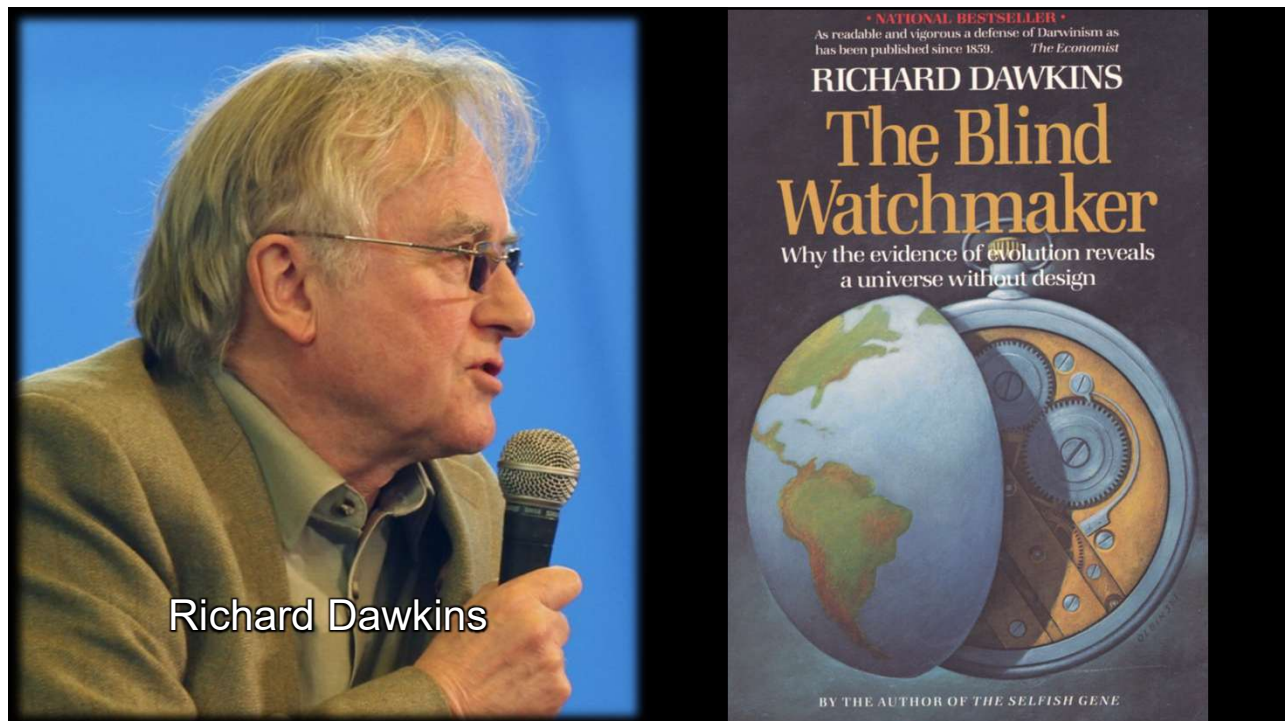


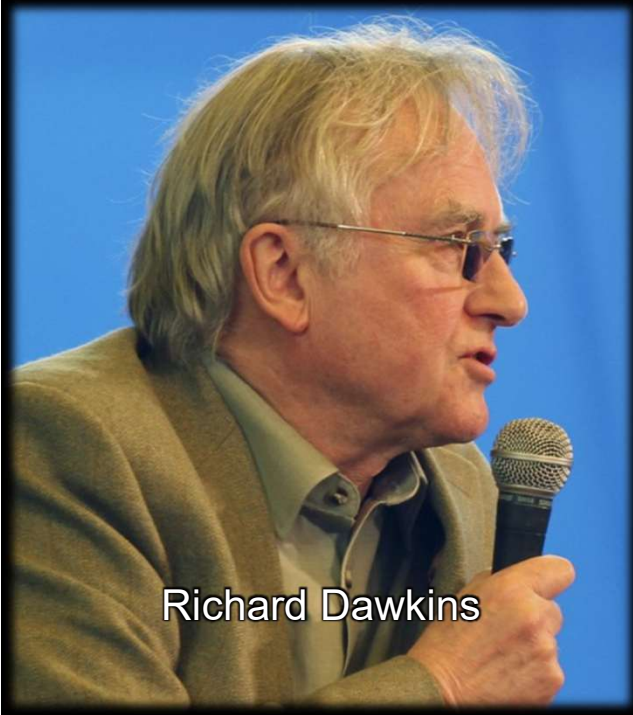




"How can we understand the world in which we find ourselves? How does the universe behave? What is the nature of reality? Where did all this come from? Did the universe need a creator? ... Traditionally these are questions for philosophy, but **philosophy is dead. Philosophy has not kept up with modern developments in science, particularly physics."**

[Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow, *The Grand Design* (New York: Bantam Books, 2010), 5]





Richard Dawkins

"To explain the origin of the DNA/protein machine by invoking a supernatural Designer is to explain precisely nothing, for it leaves unexplained the origin of the Designer."

[Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker: Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe Without Design* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1987), 141]



Even if it was the case that we could not explain the origin of the designer or of God, it does not follow from this that positing God "explains precisely nothing."



Suppose we got an intelligent message from outer space.



It would be completely reasonable to posit the existence of intelligent life as the cause even if we knew nothing else about this life.



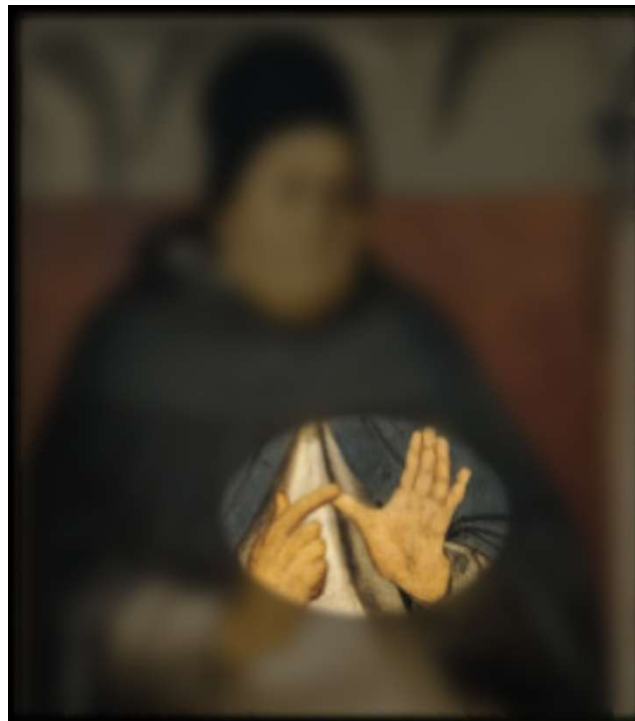
In any event, while there may be some debate as to how much of the nature of God is demonstrated by the scientific arguments,





Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

**the Aristotelian /
Thomistic
arguments
demonstrate not
only the existence
of God, but all of
His classical
attributes as well.**

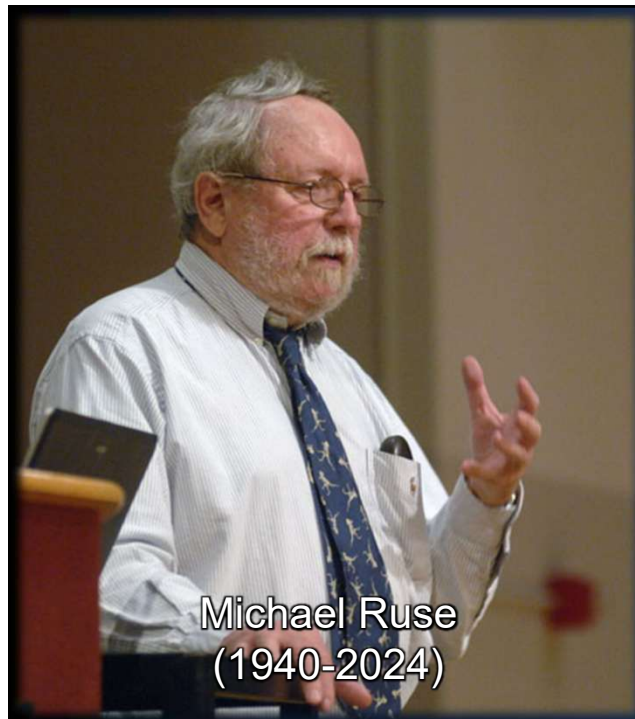


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Michael Ruse
(1940-2024)

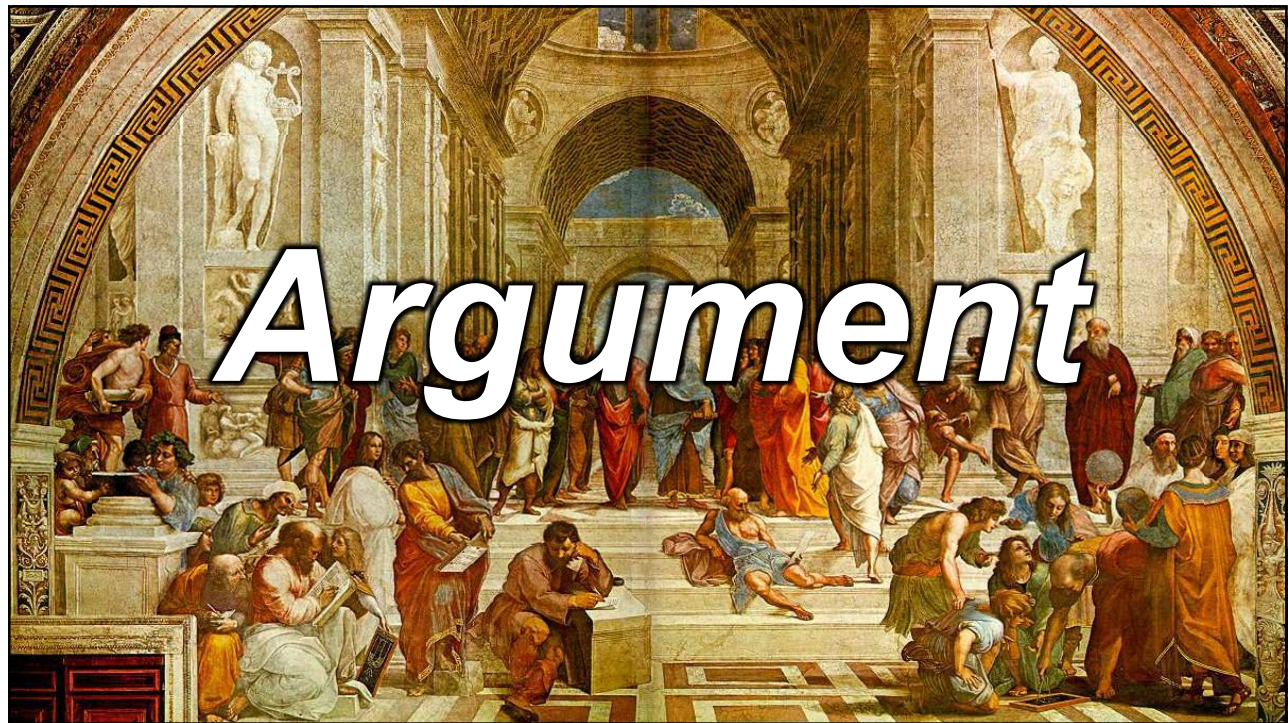
*"I have written that The God
Delusion made me ashamed to
be an atheist and I meant it.
Trying to understand how God
could need no cause, Christians
claim that God exists necessarily.
I have taken the effort to try to
understand what that means.*

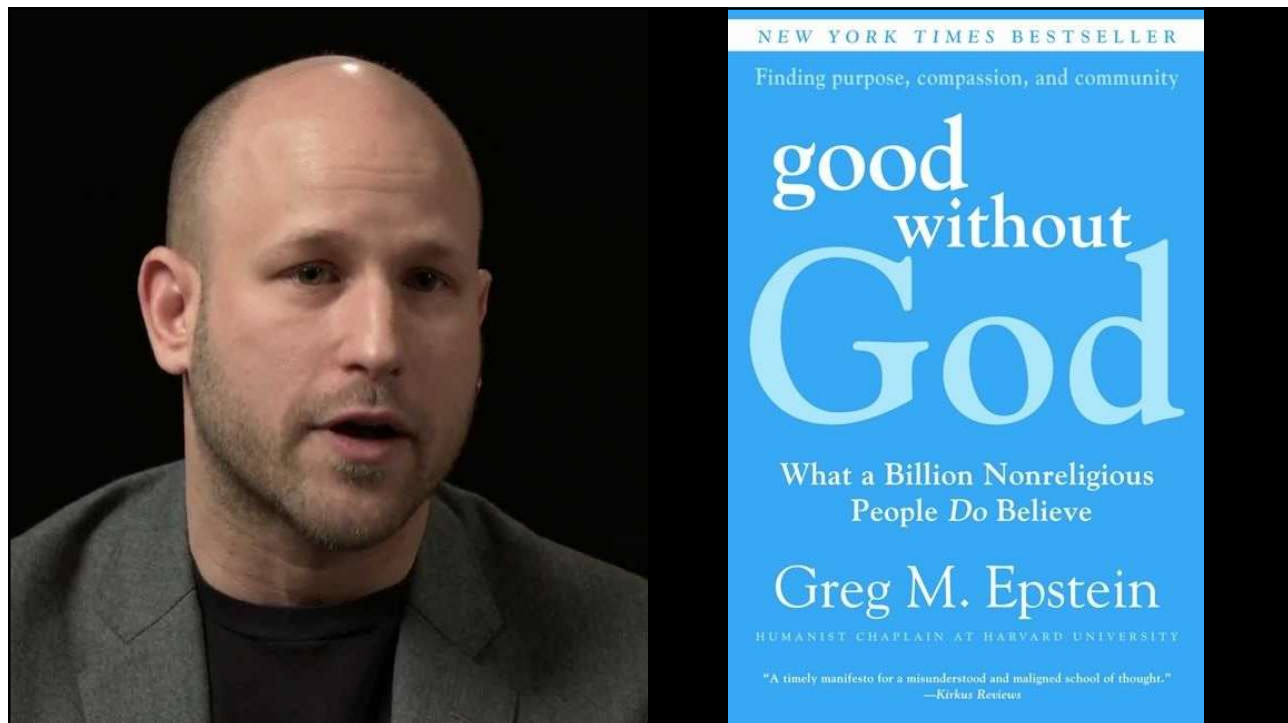
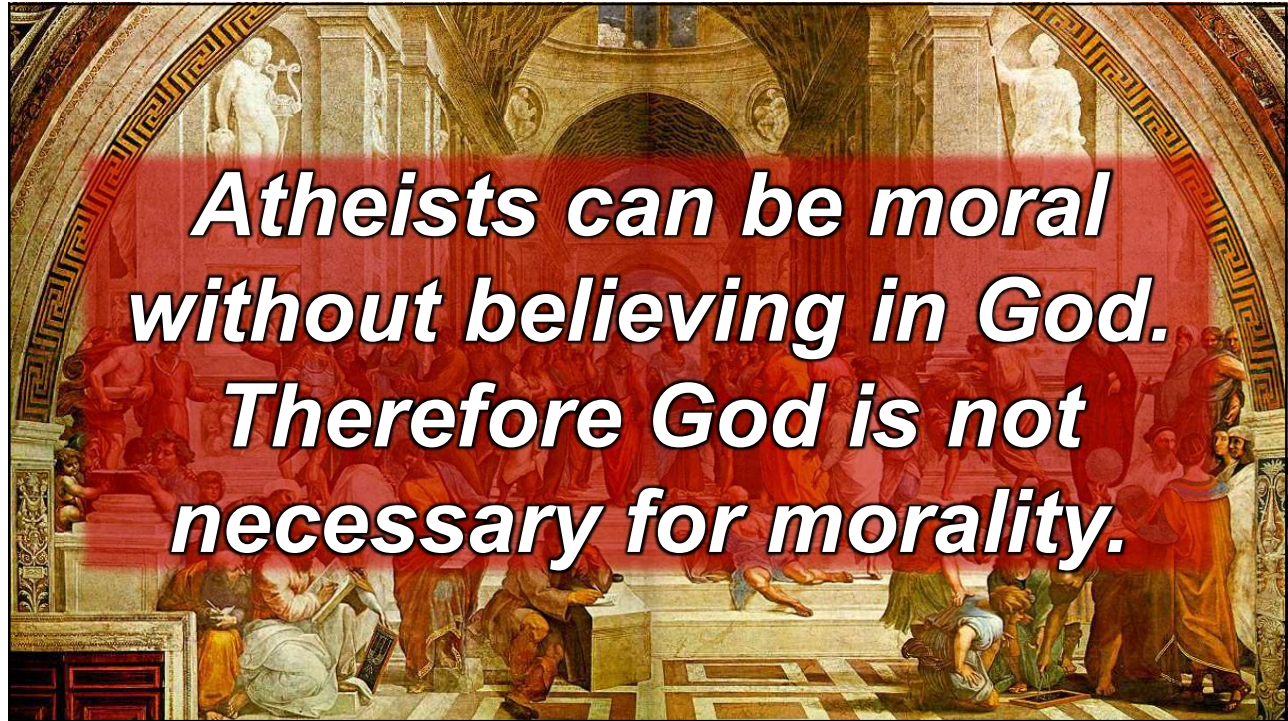


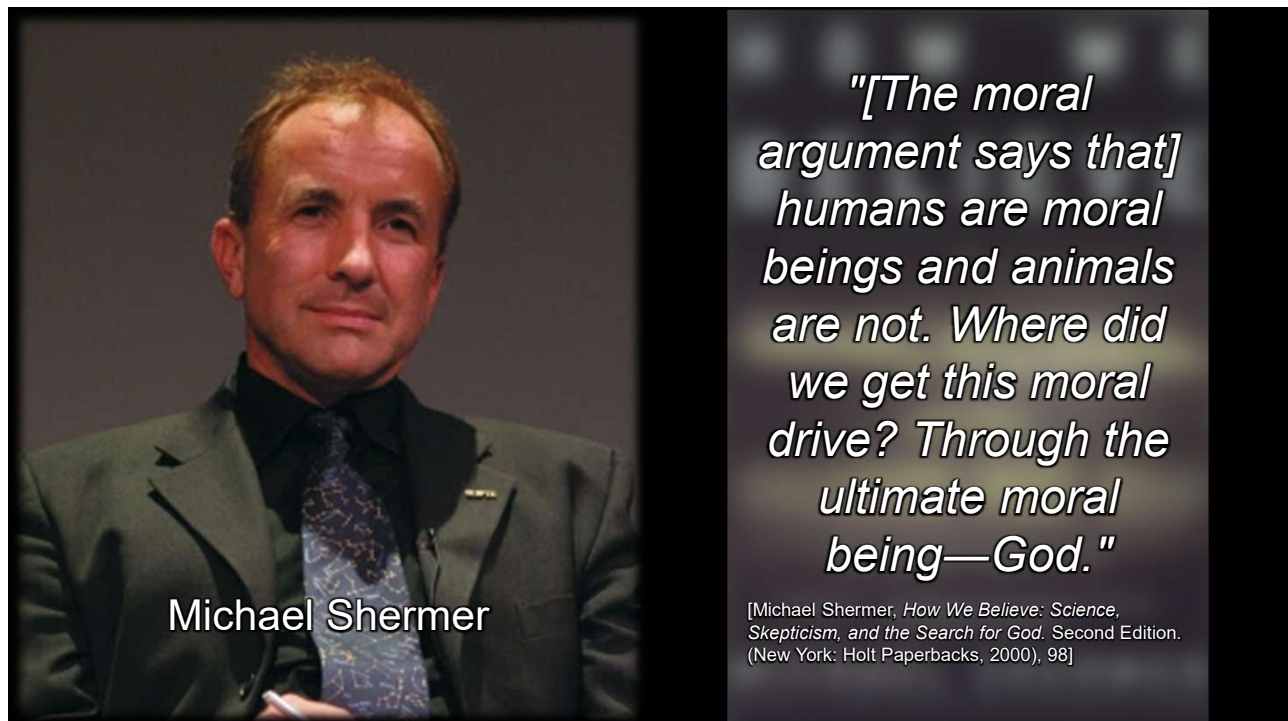
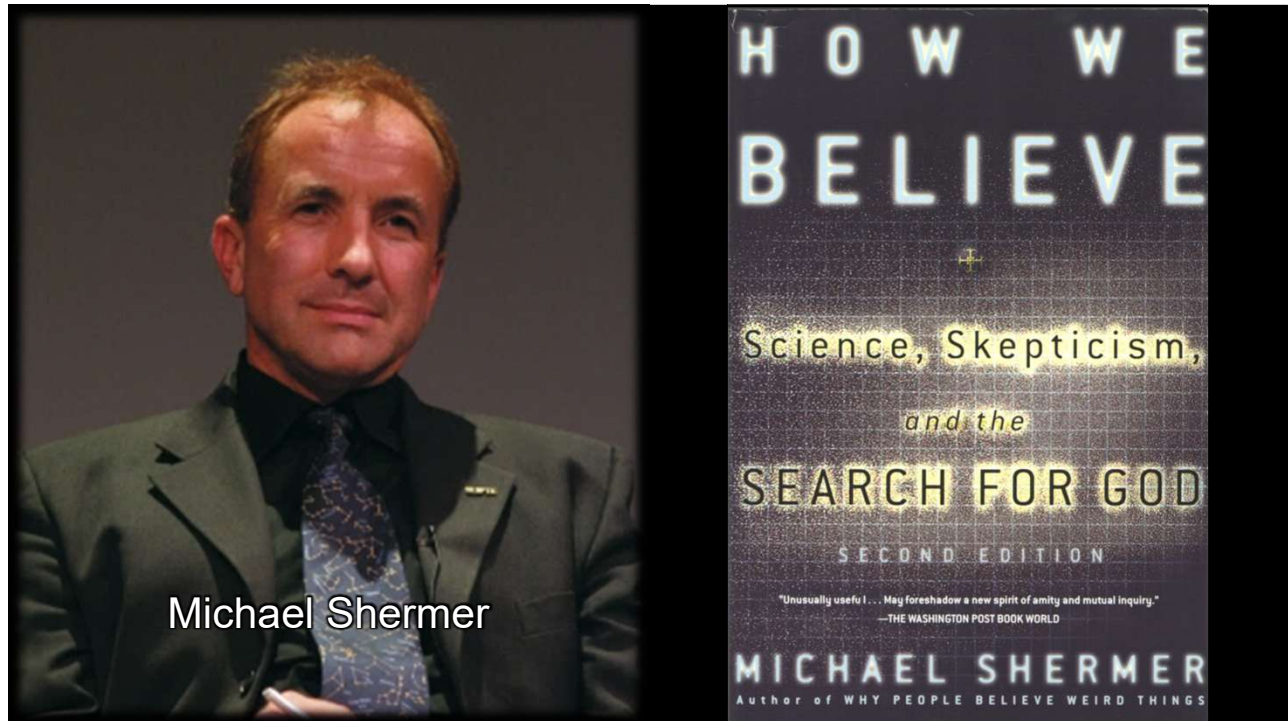
Michael Ruse
(1940-2024)

"Dawkins and company are ignorant of such claims and positively contemptuous of those who even try to understand them, let alone believe them. Thus, like a first-year undergraduate, he can happily go around asking loudly, 'What caused God?' as though he had made some momentous philosophical discovery."

[<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2009/nov/02/atheism-dawkins-ruse>, accessed 11/24/23]



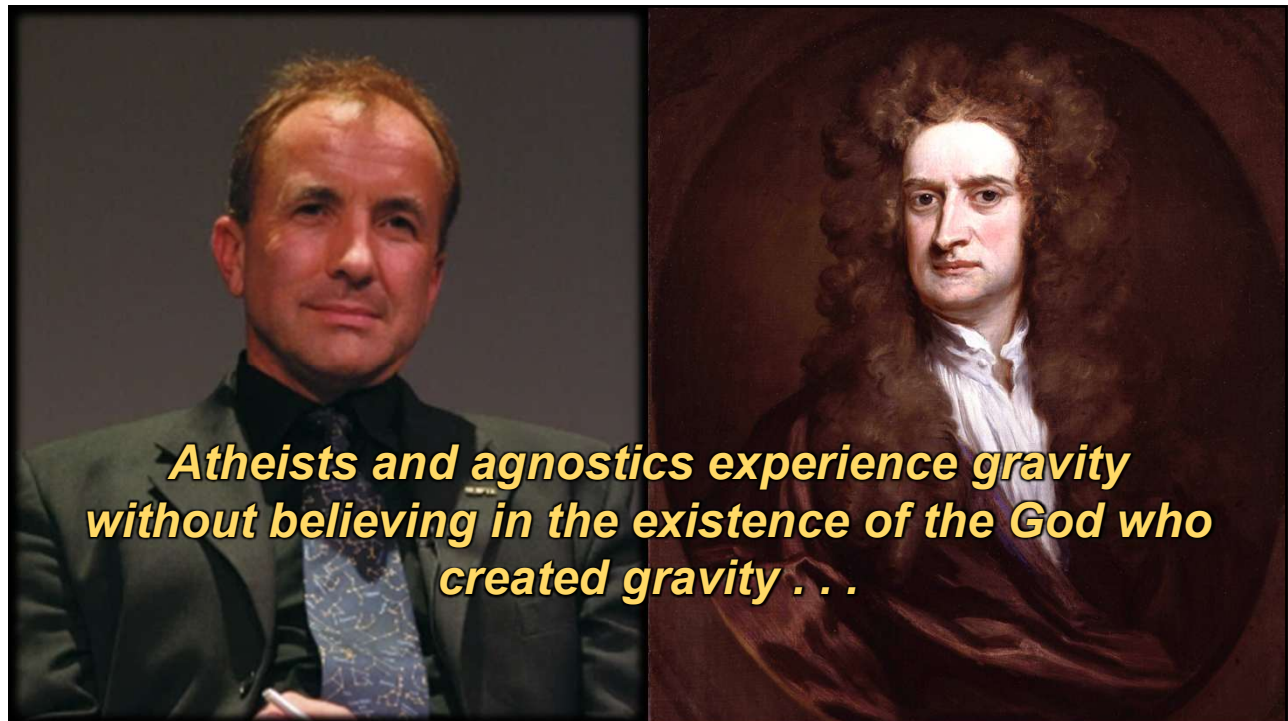




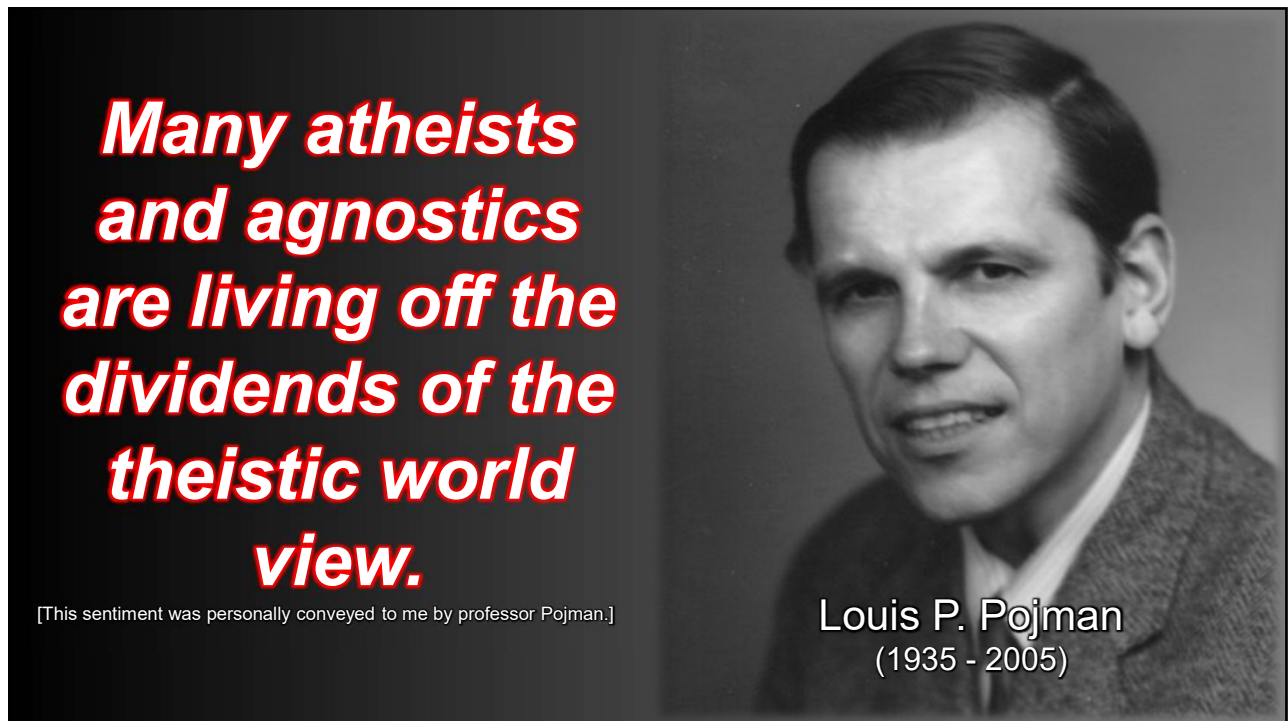
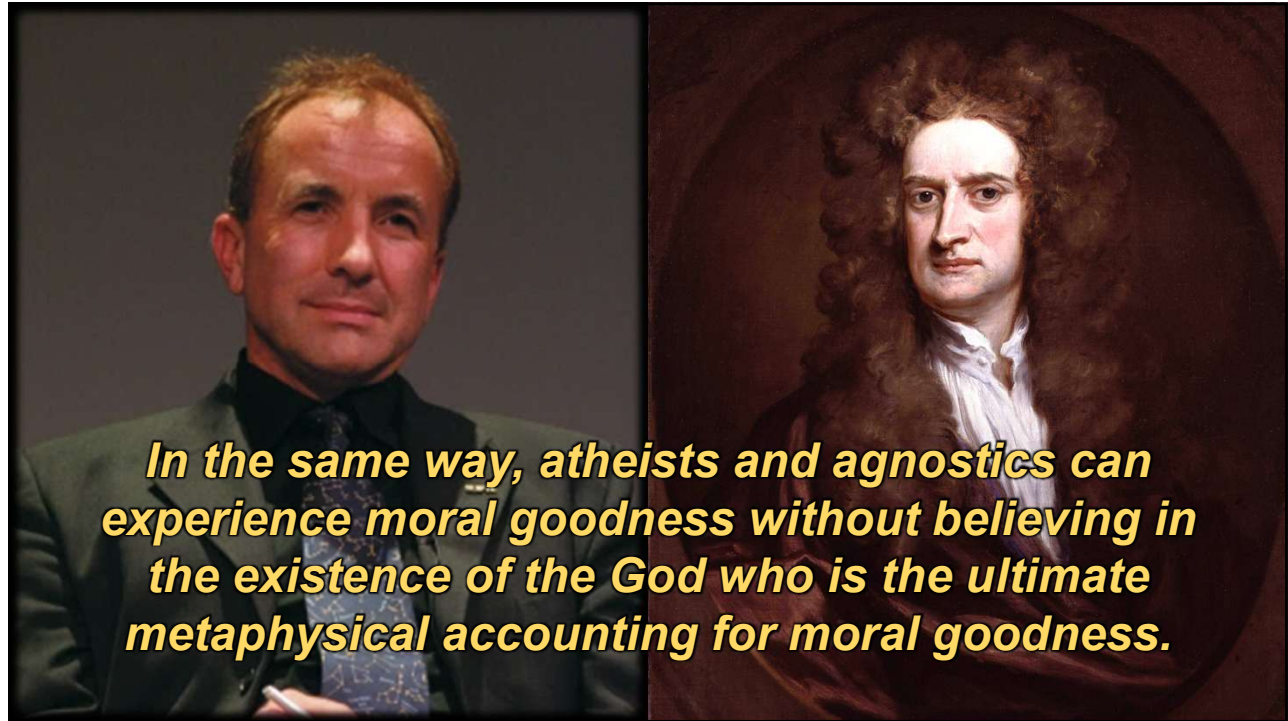


The issue is not whether an atheist or agnostic can **BE OR ACT** morally good.

Rather, the issue is whether the atheist or agnostic can **ULTIMATELY ACCOUNT FOR** being or acting morally good.



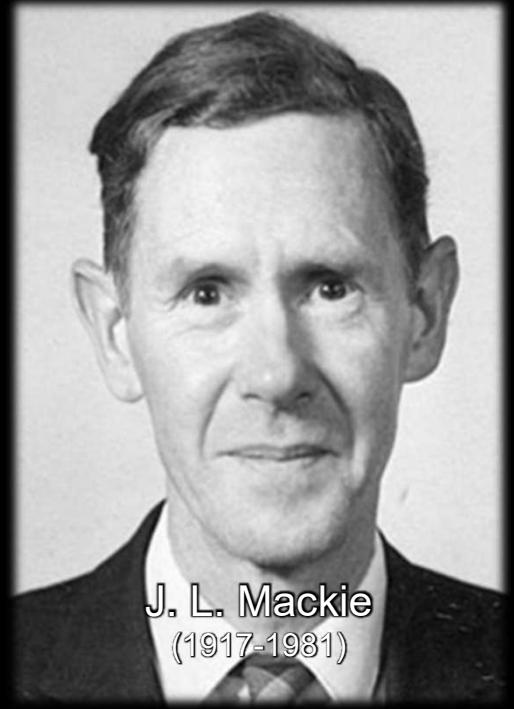
Atheists and agnostics experience gravity without believing in the existence of the God who created gravity . . .



J.L. Mackie

THE MIRACLE OF THEISM

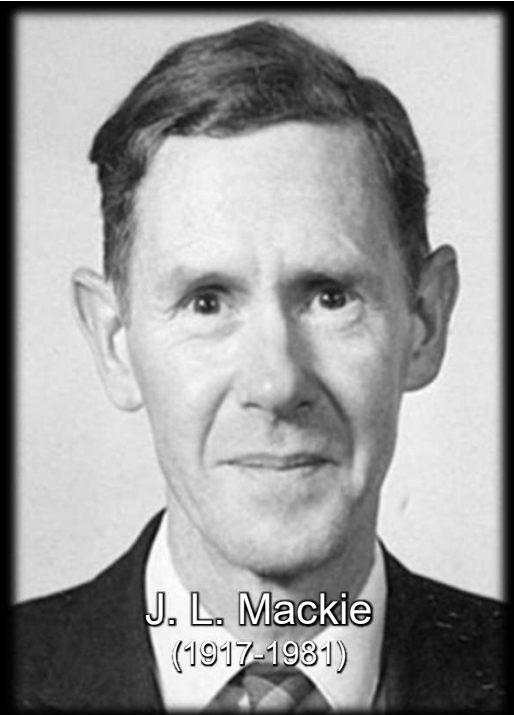
Arguments for
and against the
Existence of
God



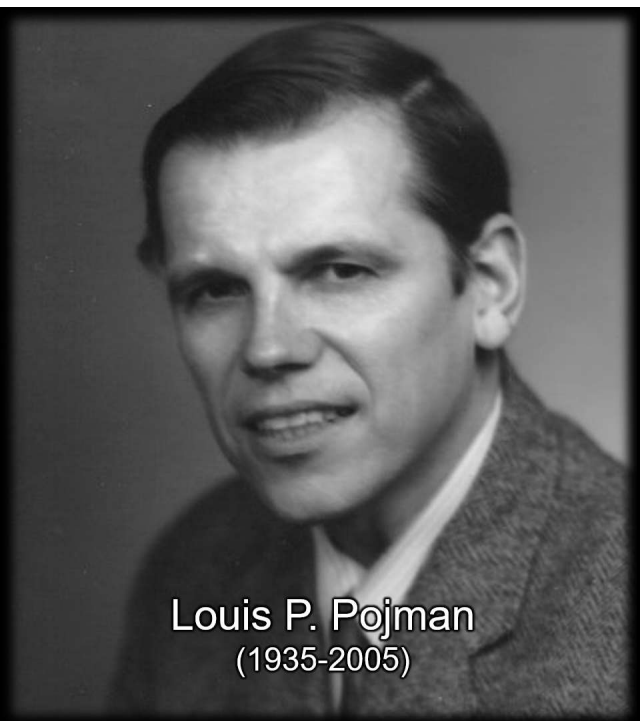
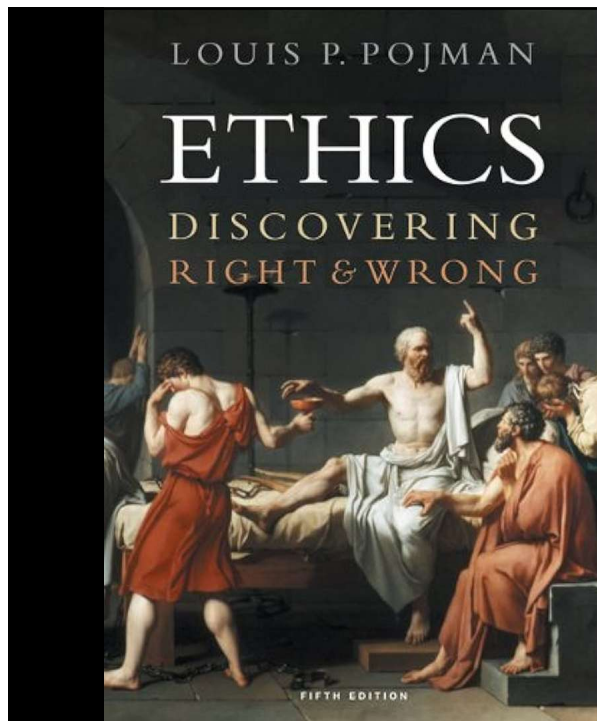
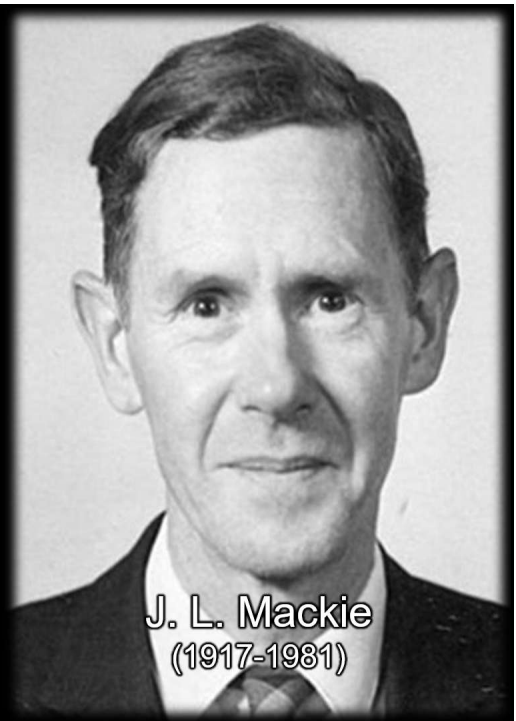
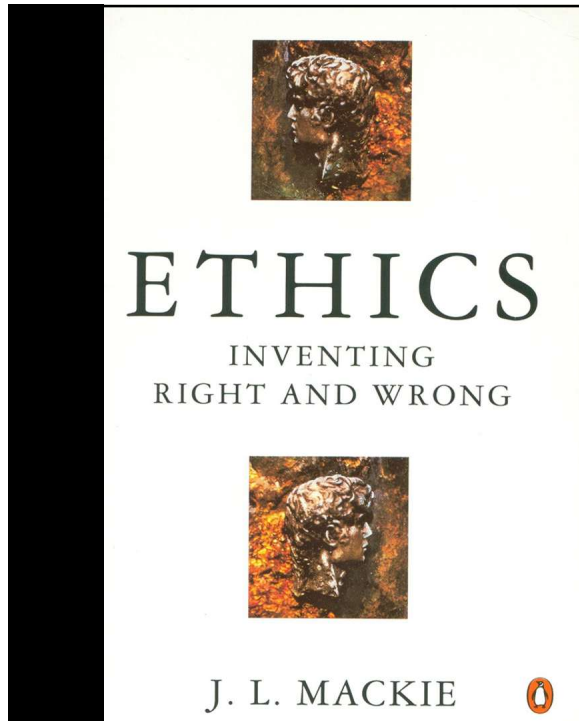
J. L. Mackie
(1917-1981)

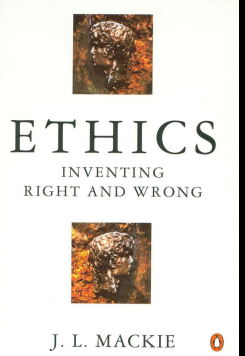
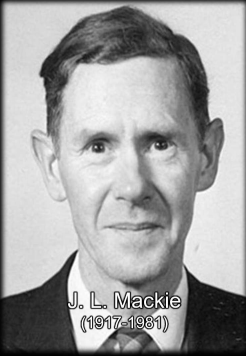
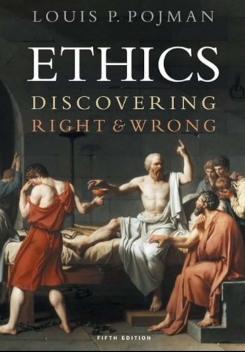
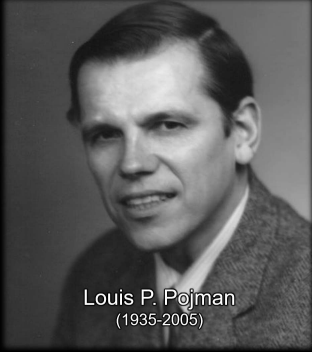
"Objectively intrinsically prescriptive features [i.e., moral properties], supervening upon natural ones, constitute so odd a cluster of qualities and relations that they are most unlikely to have arisen in the ordinary course of events, without an all-powerful god to create them."

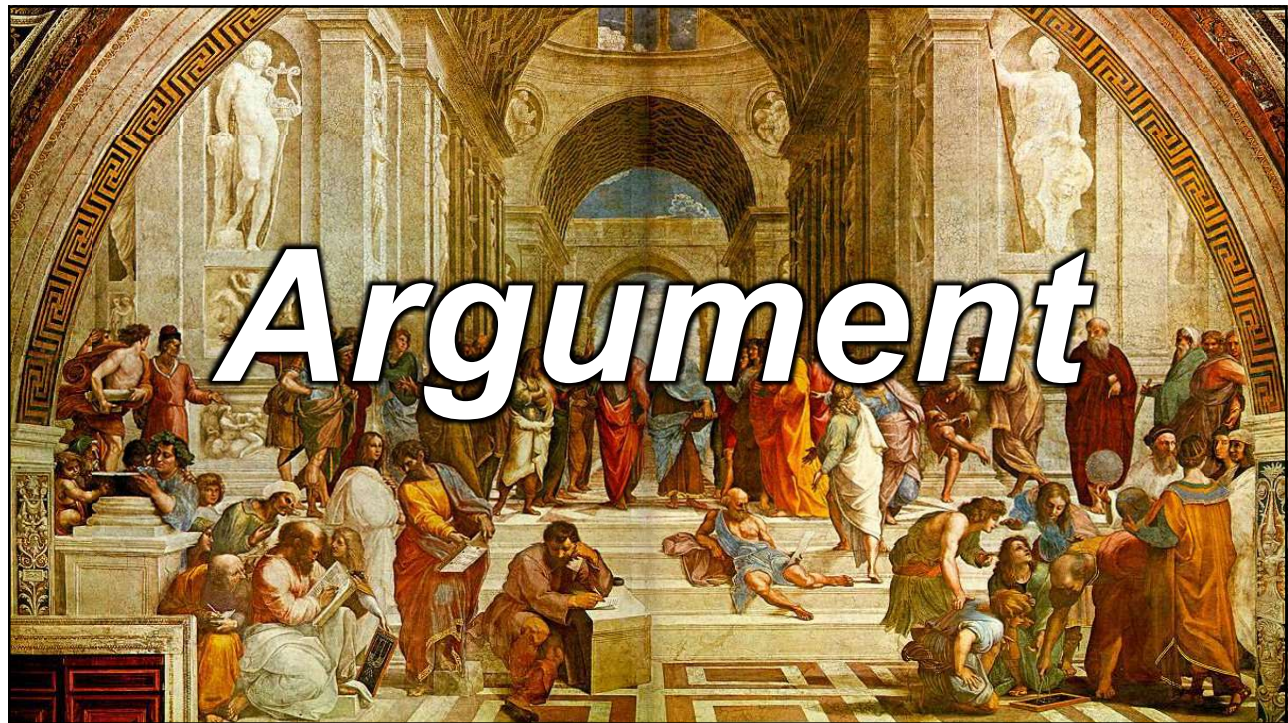
[J. L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism: Arguments For and Against the Existence of God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 115]

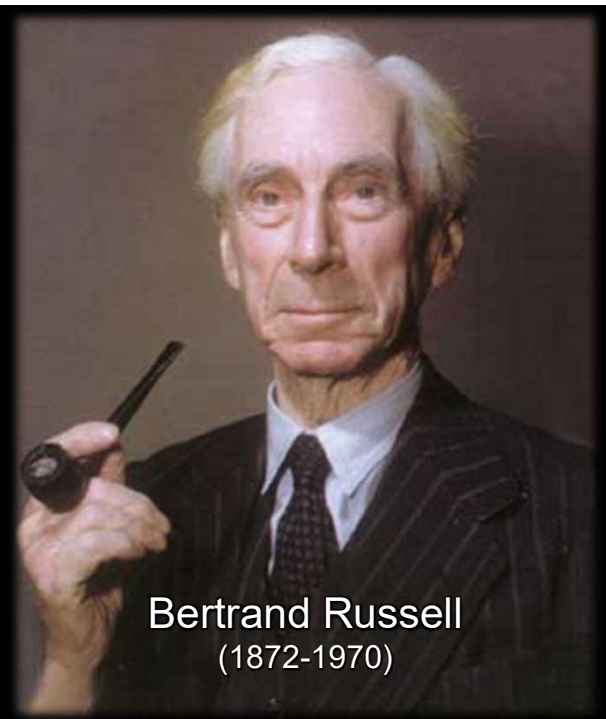
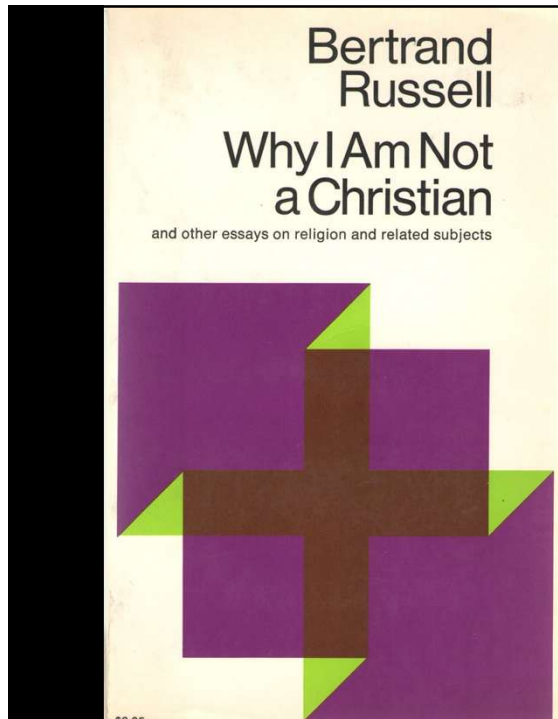
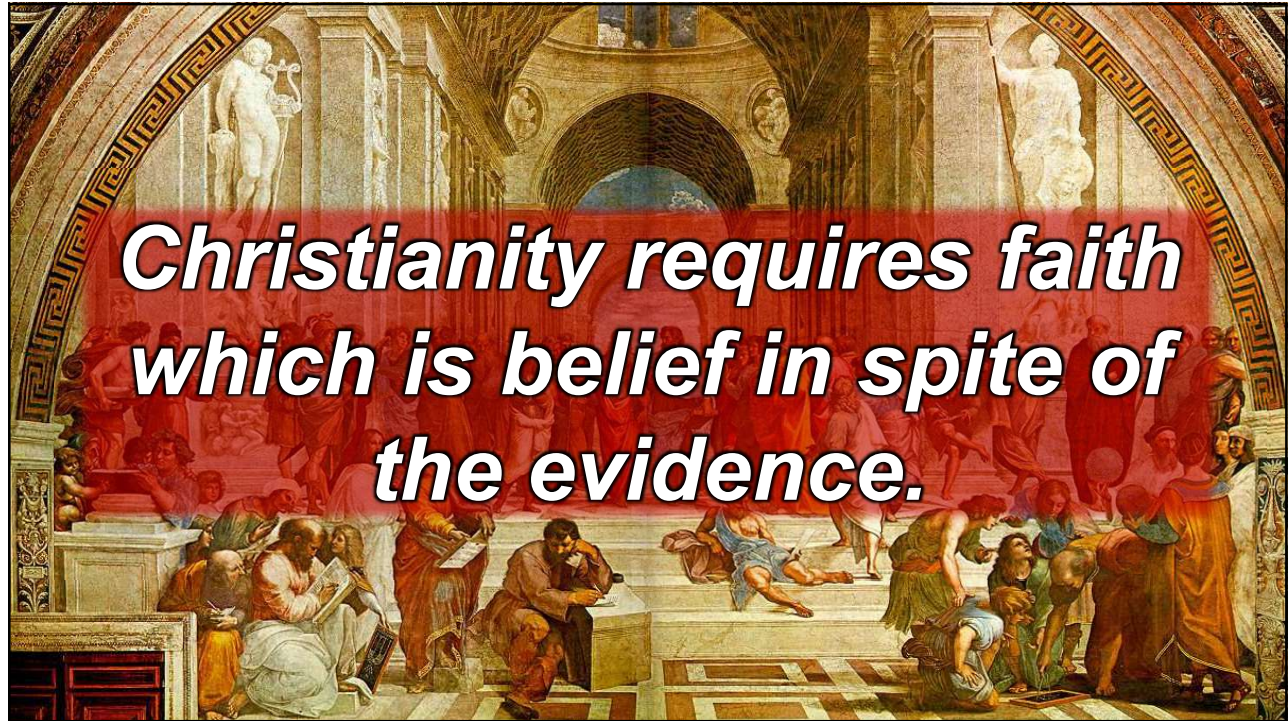


J. L. Mackie
(1917-1981)



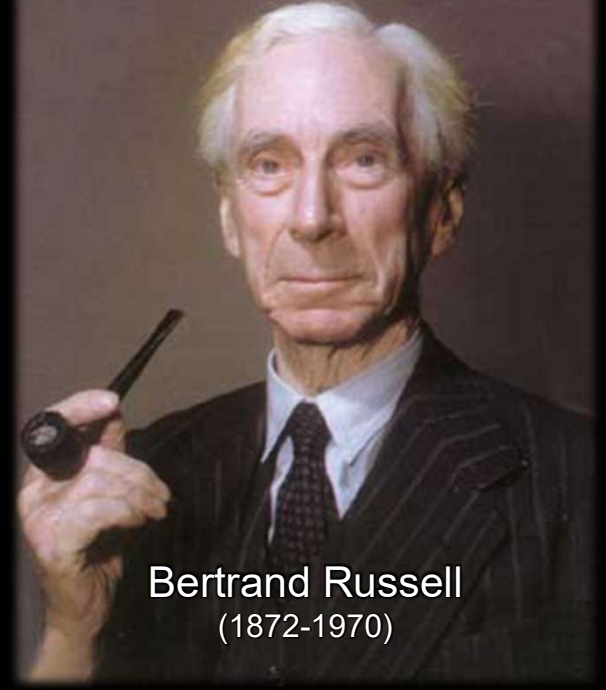
 <p>ETHICS INVENTING RIGHT AND WRONG J. L. MACKIE</p>	 <p>J. L. Mackie (1917-1981)</p>	<p>INVENTING RIGHT AND WRONG</p>
 <p>LOUIS P. POJMAN ETHICS DISCOVERING RIGHT & WRONG FIFTH EDITION</p>	 <p>Louis P. Pojman (1935-2005)</p>	<p>DISCOVERING RIGHT & WRONG</p>



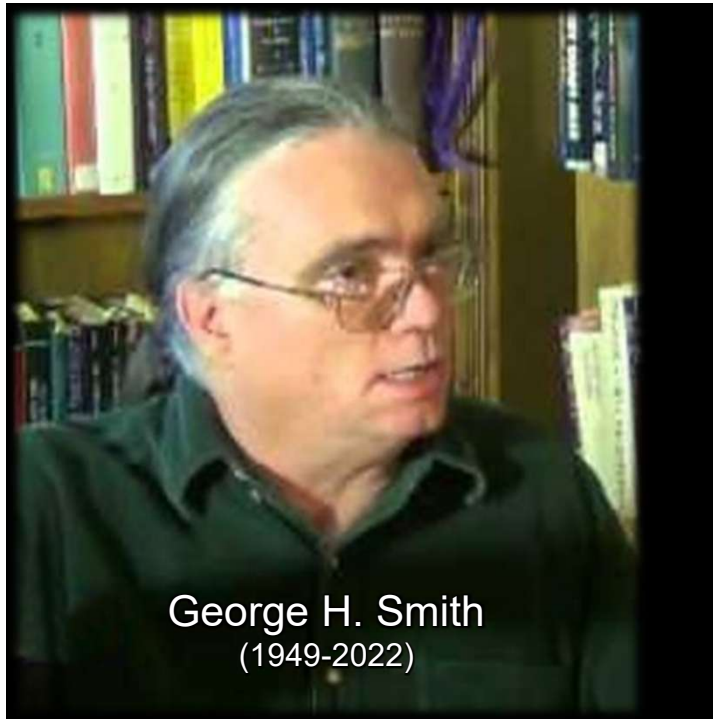


"As regards the kind of belief: it is thought virtuous to have Faith—that is to say, to have a conviction which cannot be shaken by contrary evidence. Or, if contrary evidence might induce doubt, it is held that contrary evidence must be suppressed."

[Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), from the preface, p. vi]



Bertrand Russell
(1872-1970)



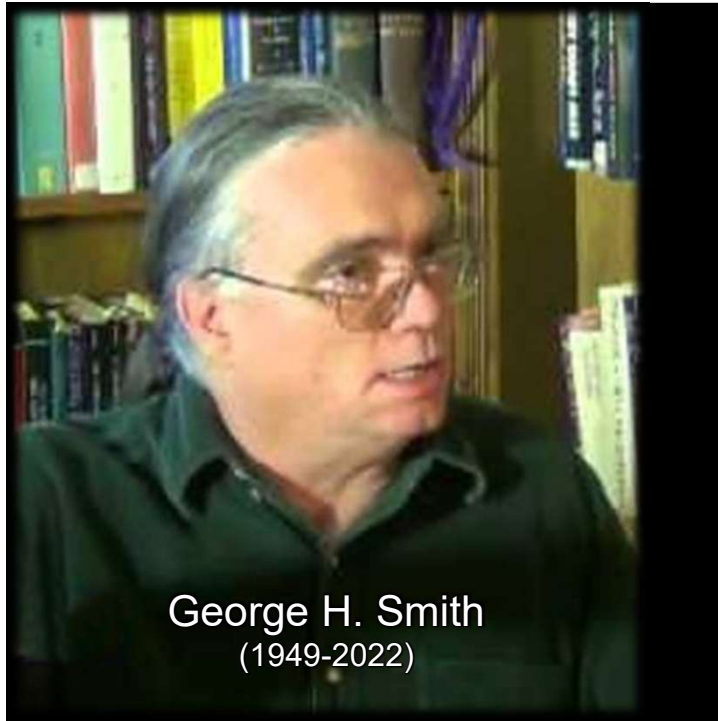
George H. Smith
(1949-2022)

ATHEISM

THE CASE AGAINST GOD

BY GEORGE H. SMITH

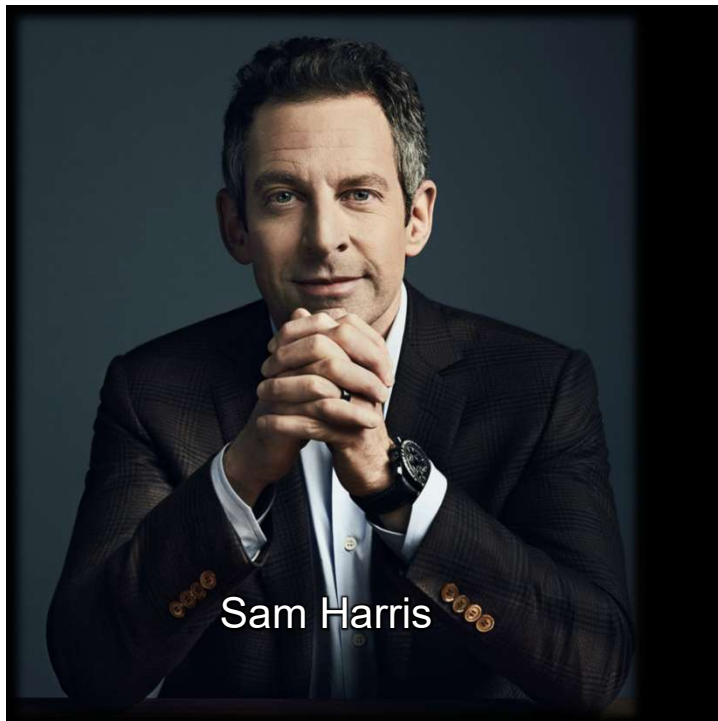
The Skeptic's Bookshelf



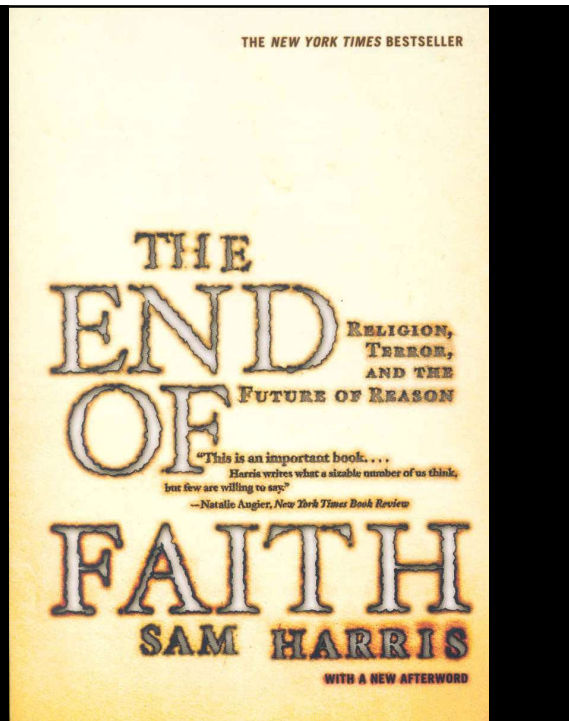
George H. Smith
(1949-2022)


"Reason and faith are opposite, two mutually exclusive terms: there is no reconciliation or common ground. Faith is belief without, or in spite of reason."

[George H. Smith, *Atheism: The Case Against God* (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1979), 98]



Sam Harris






Sam Harris

"Religious faith is the belief in historical and metaphysical propositions without sufficient evidence."

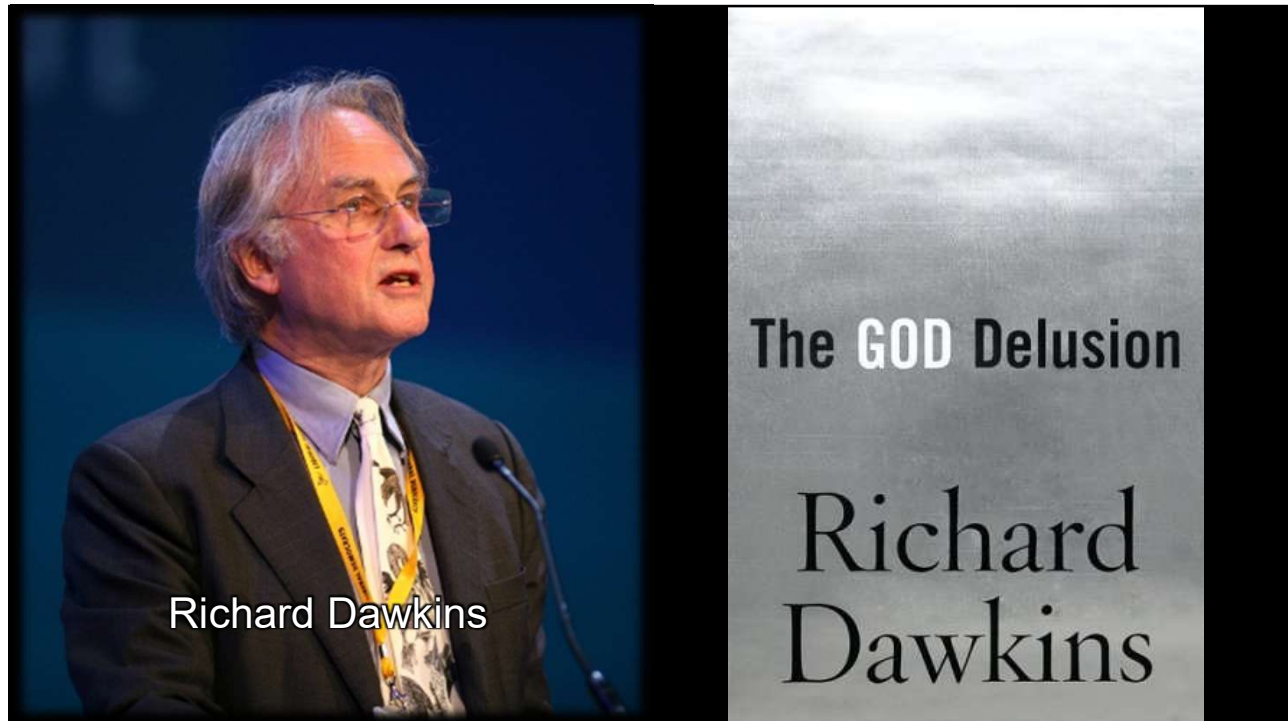
[Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 232]



Sam Harris

"Faith is the mortar that fills the cracks in the evidence and the gaps in the logic, and thus it is faith that keeps the whole terrible edifice of religious certainty still looming dangerously over our world."

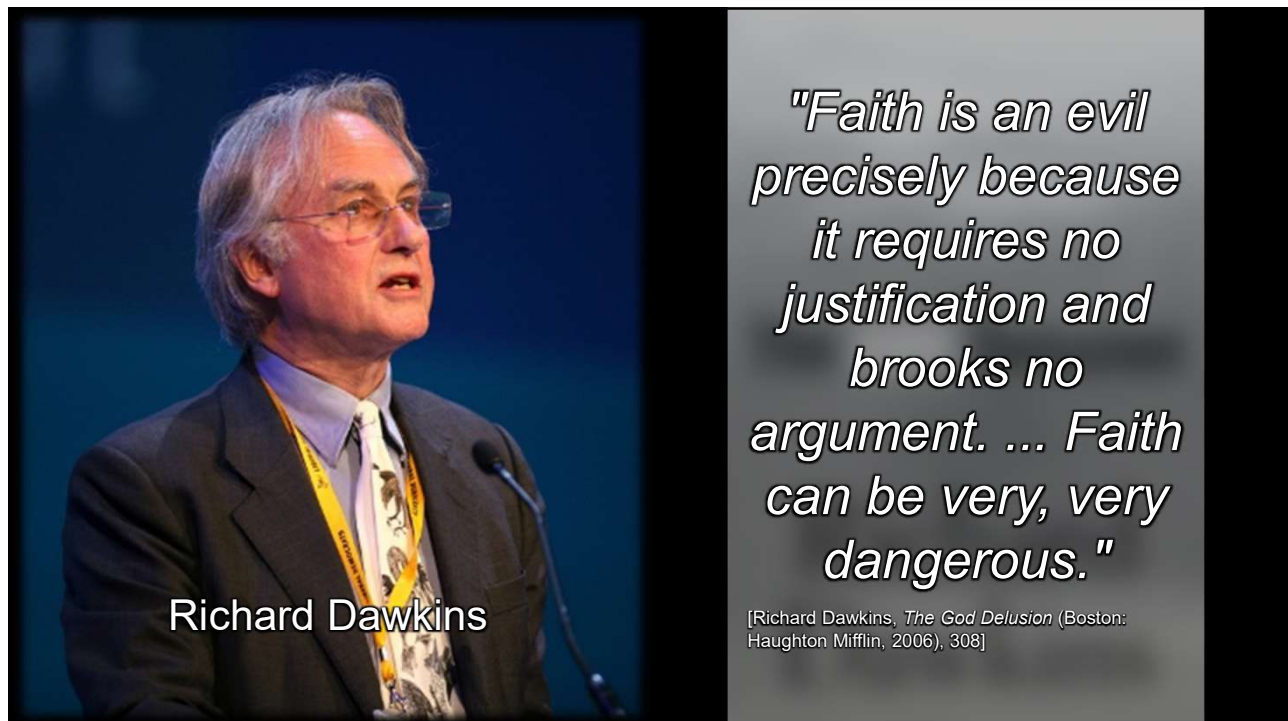
[Harris, *The End of Faith*, 233]



Richard Dawkins

The **GOD** Delusion

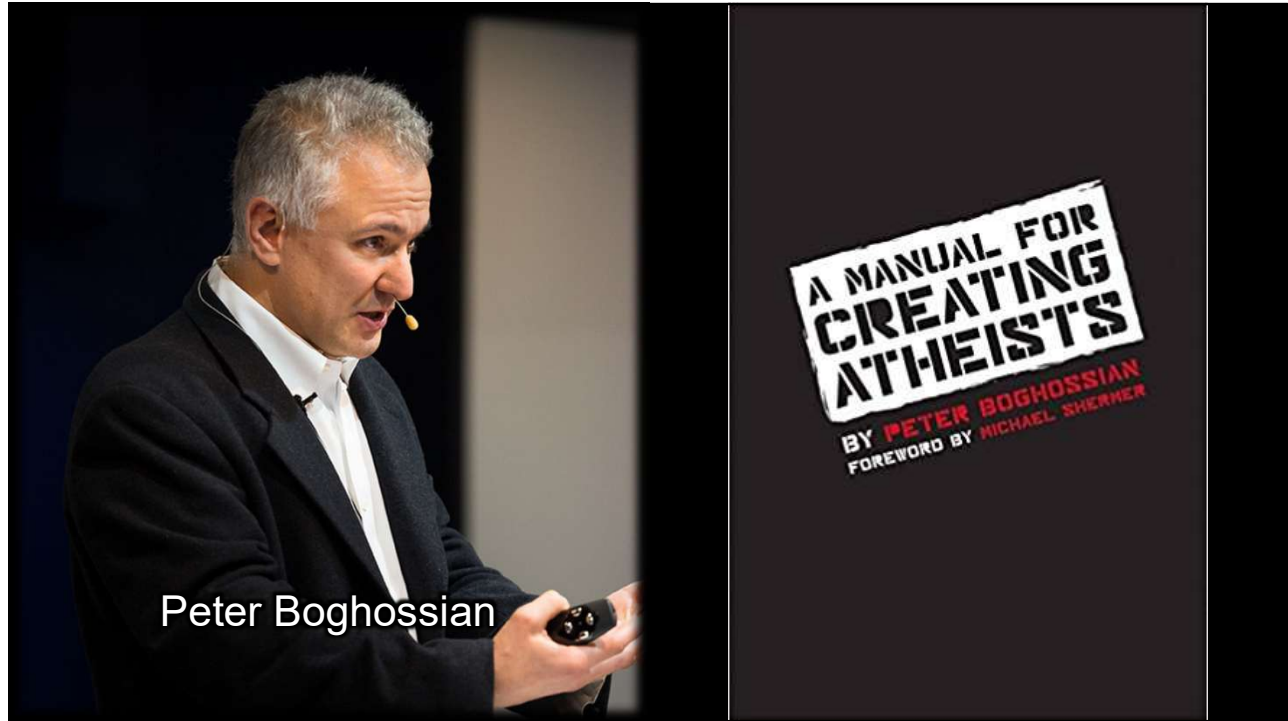
Richard
Dawkins



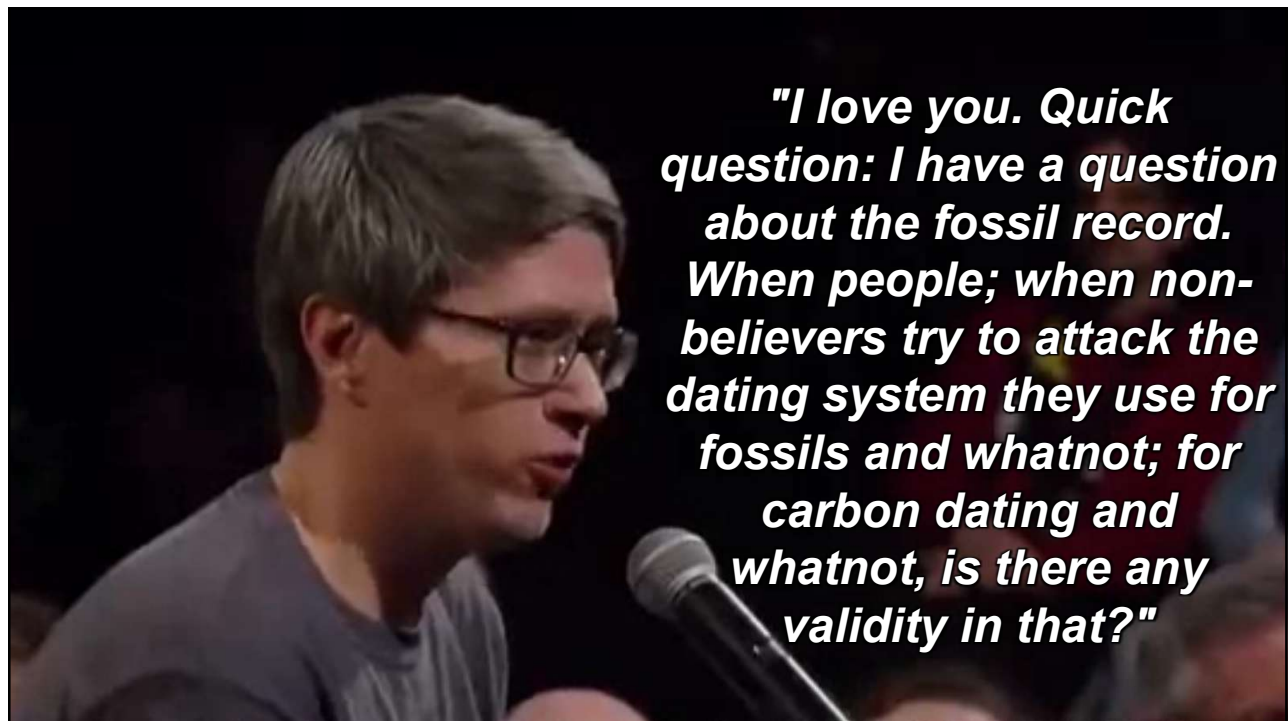
Richard Dawkins

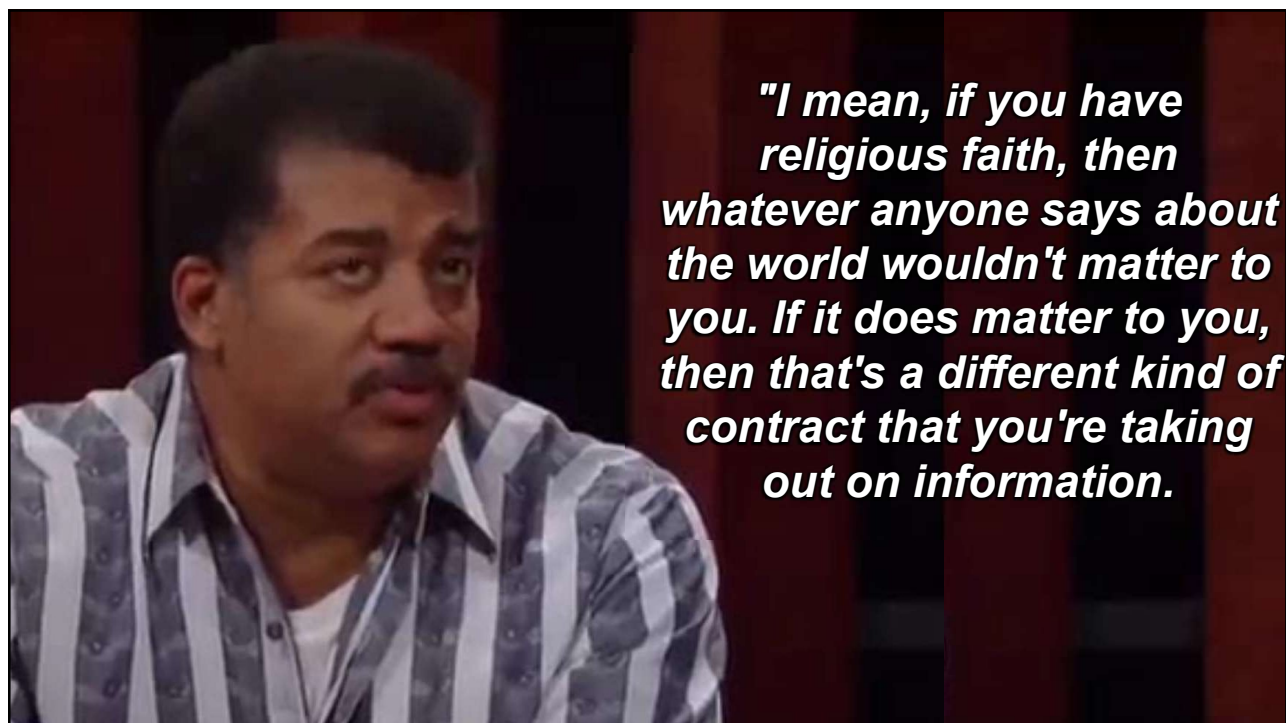
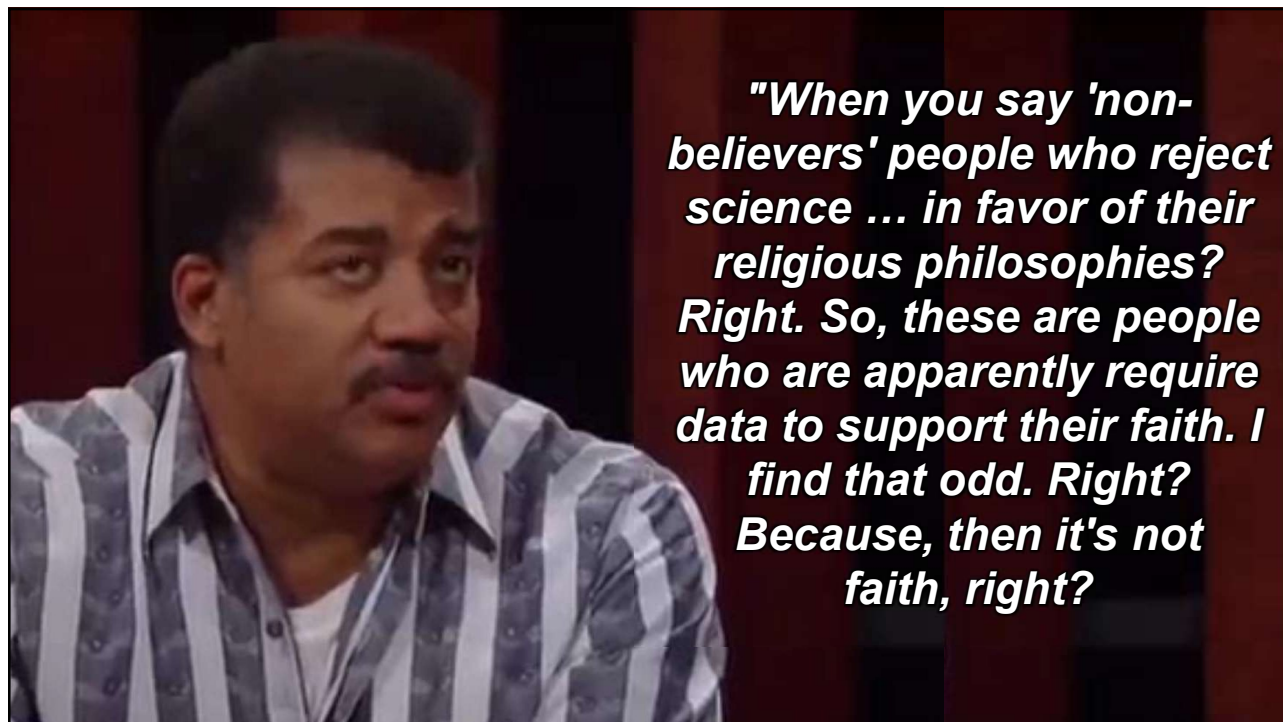
"Faith is an evil precisely because it requires no justification and brooks no argument. ... Faith can be very, very dangerous."

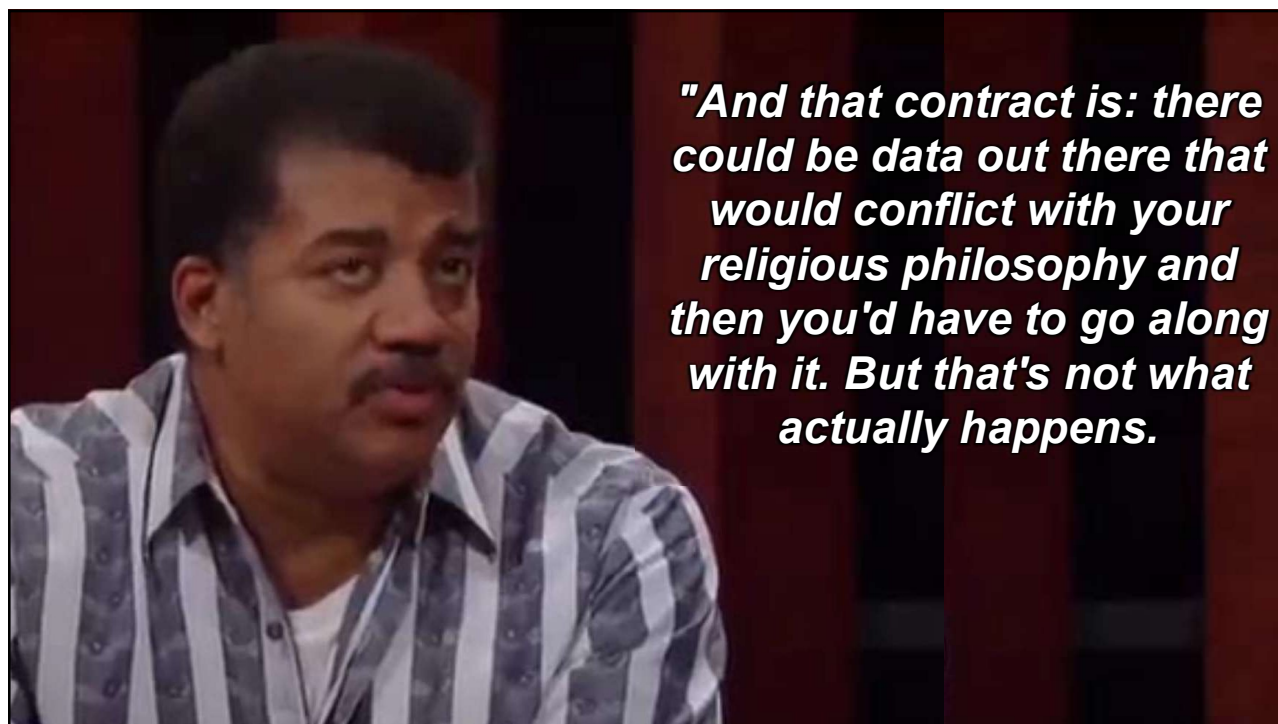
[Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 308]



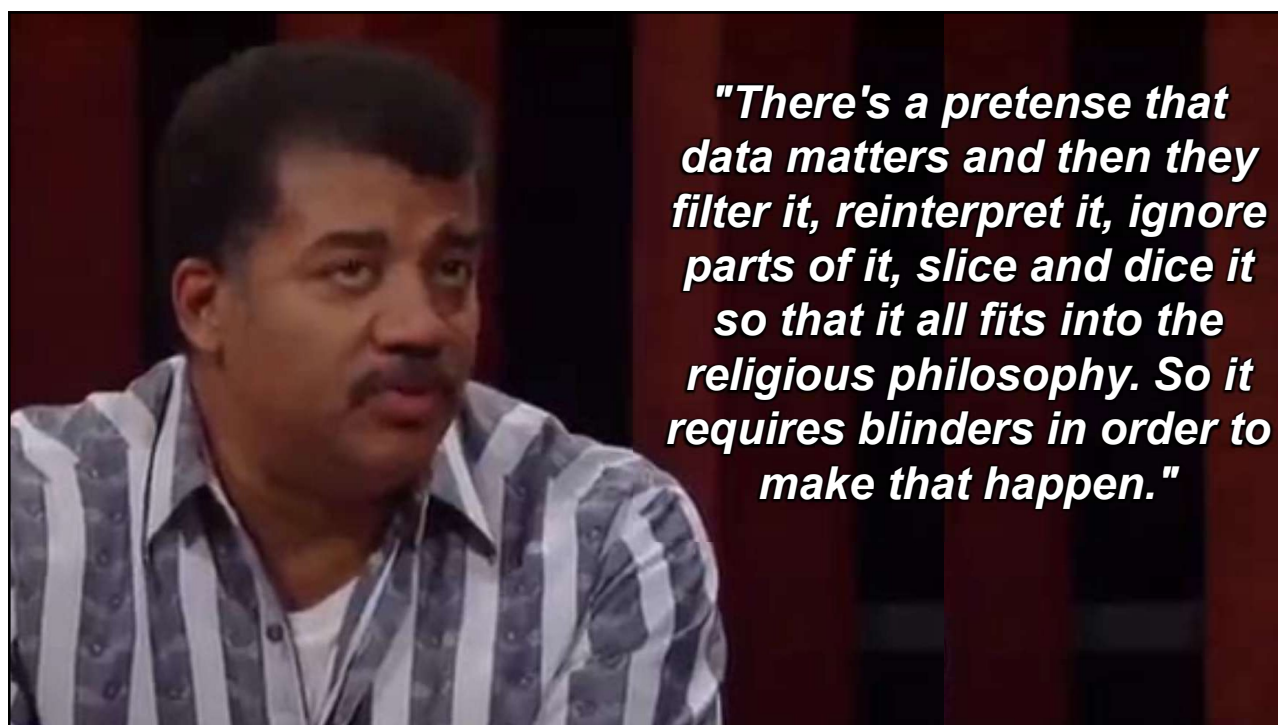
Neil deGrasse Tyson on Religion and Faith







"And that contract is: there could be data out there that would conflict with your religious philosophy and then you'd have to go along with it. But that's not what actually happens."

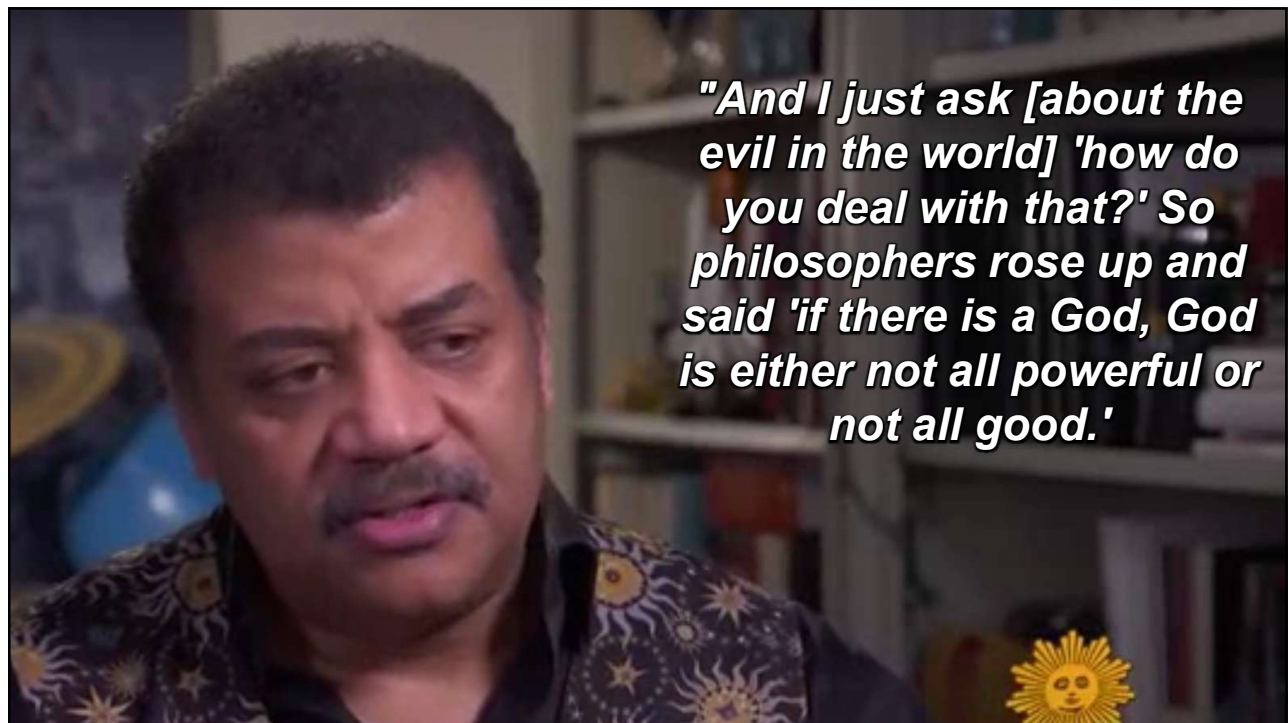
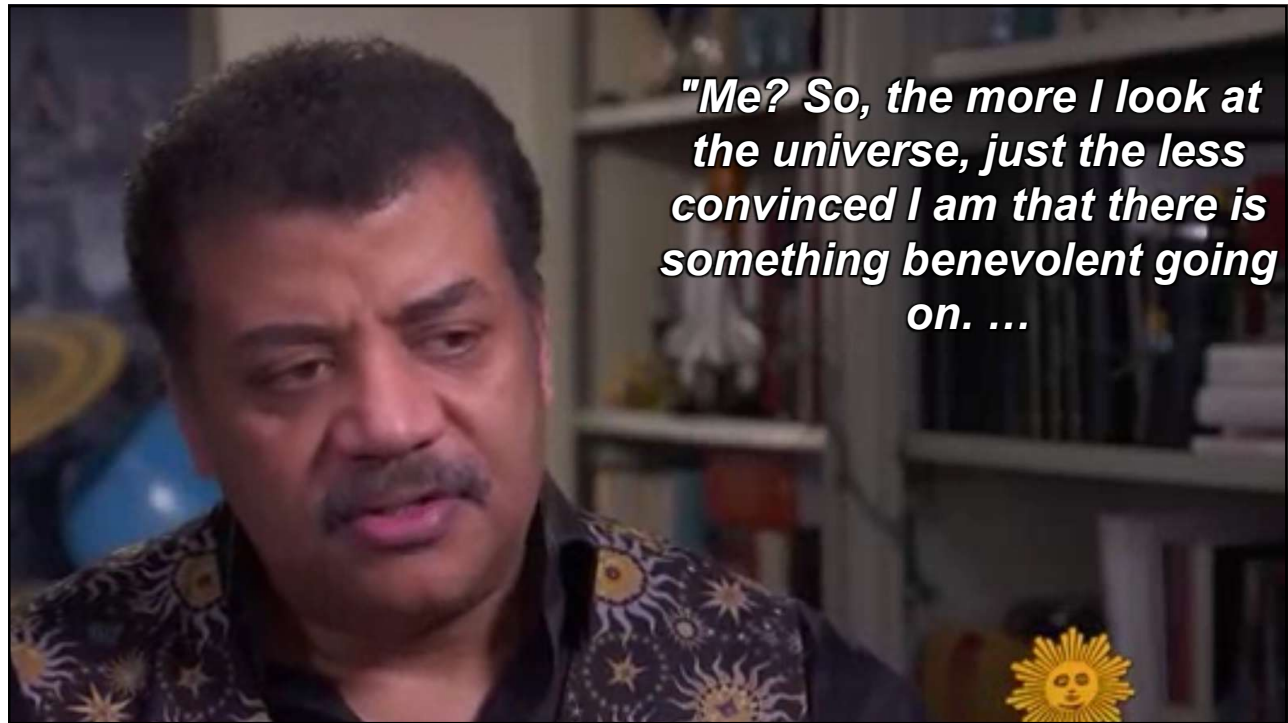


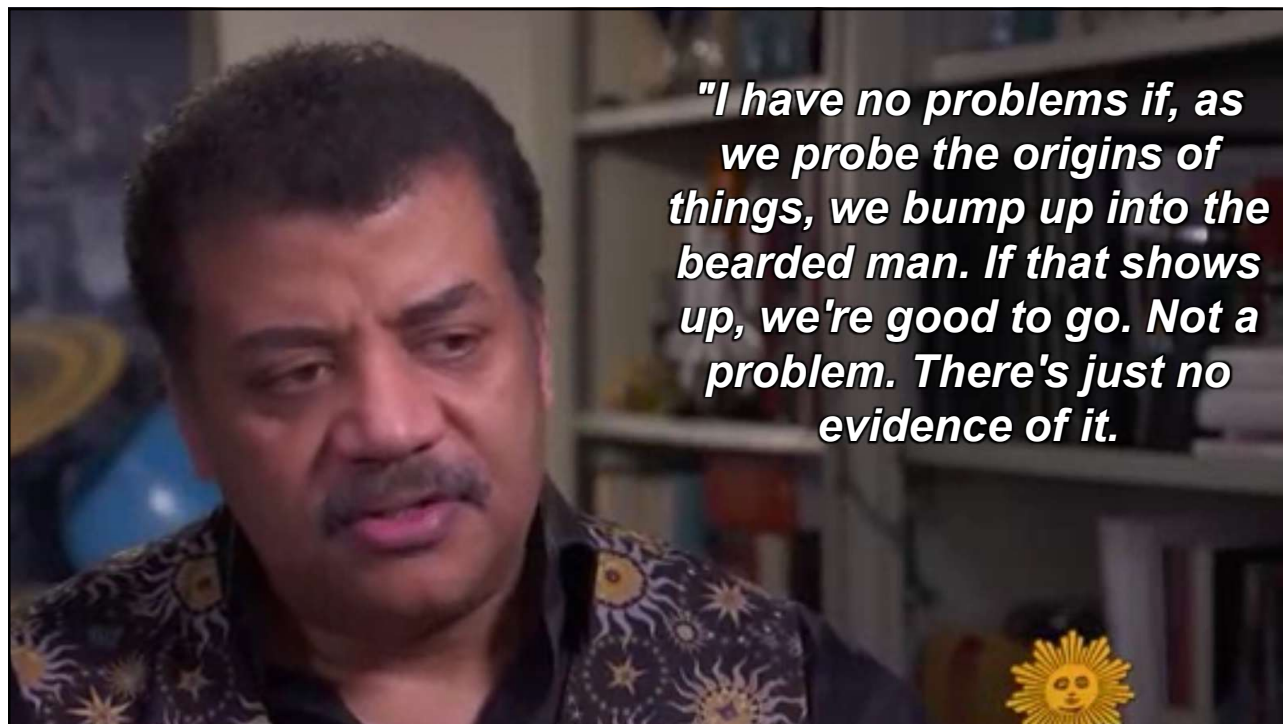
"There's a pretense that data matters and then they filter it, reinterpret it, ignore parts of it, slice and dice it so that it all fits into the religious philosophy. So it requires blinders in order to make that happen."

Neil deGrasse Tyson on God

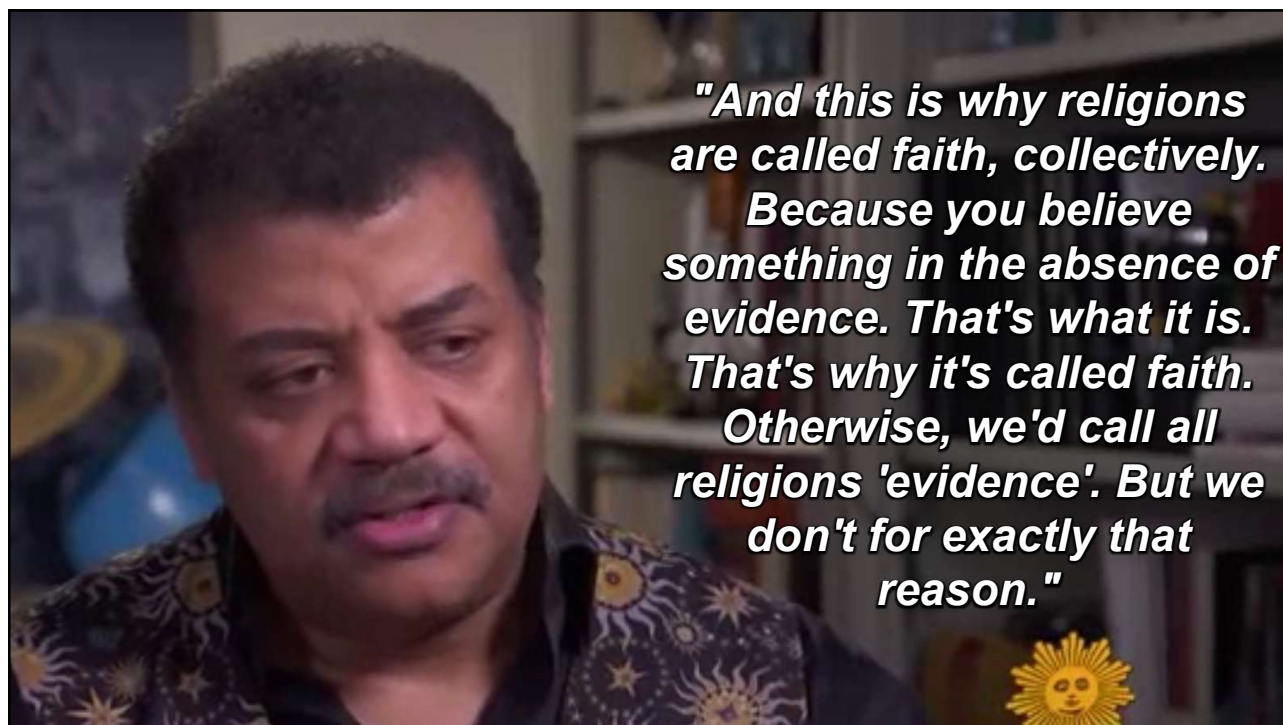
*"Do you
believe in
God;
Creator:?"*

source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l0nXG02tpDw&t=13s>,
accessed 02/09/22





"I have no problems if, as we probe the origins of things, we bump up into the bearded man. If that shows up, we're good to go. Not a problem. There's just no evidence of it."



"And this is why religions are called faith, collectively. Because you believe something in the absence of evidence. That's what it is. That's why it's called faith. Otherwise, we'd call all religions 'evidence'. But we don't for exactly that reason."



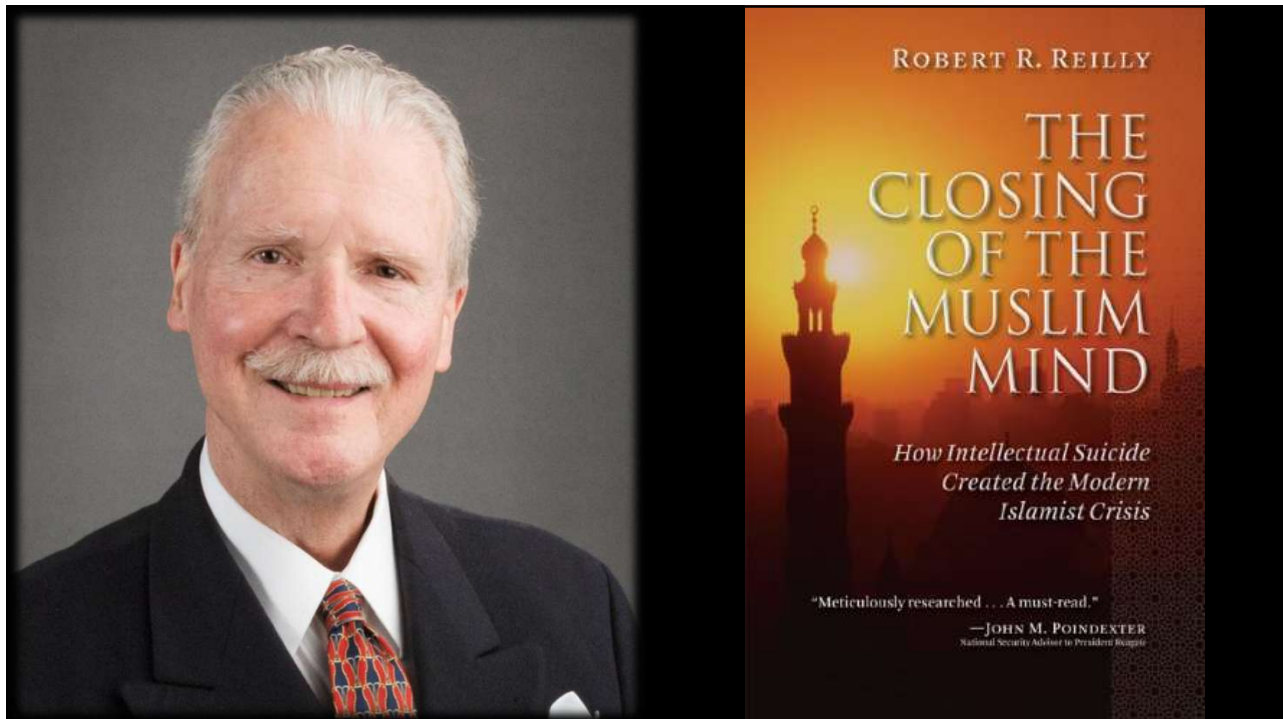
It may be true that some Christians have been part of the problem by how they view the role of reason in the life of the soul.

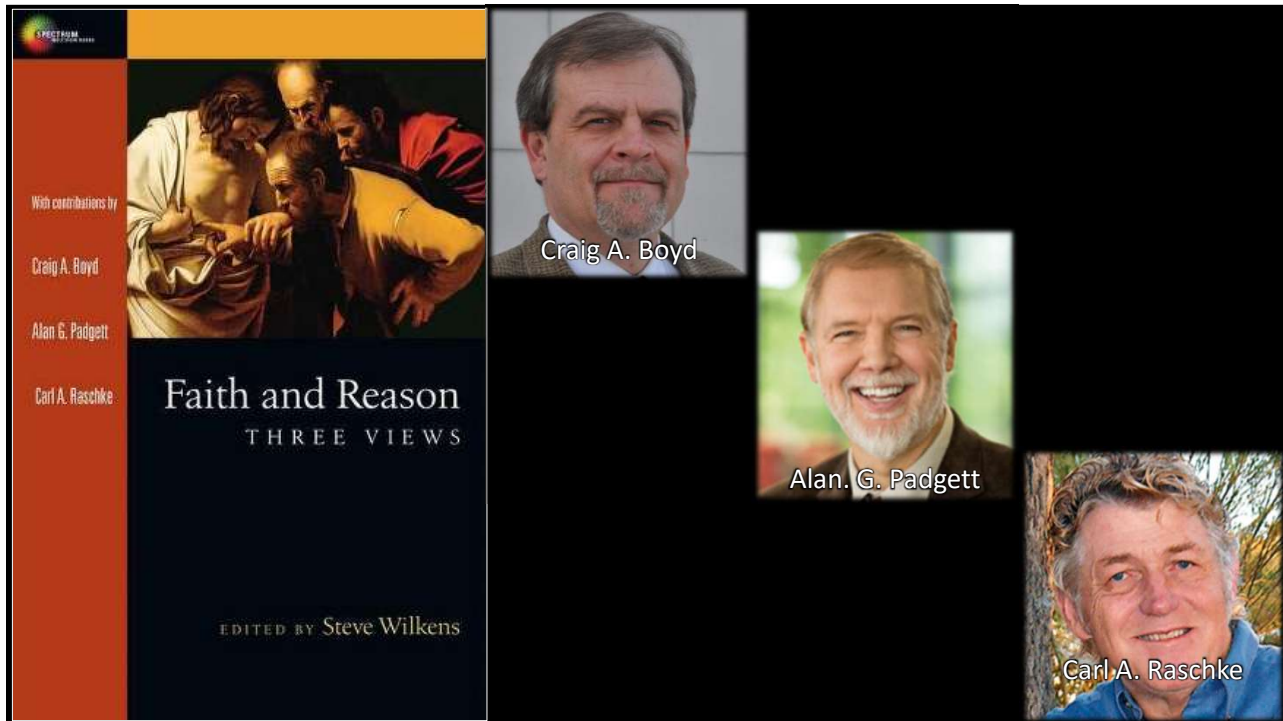
This is so only because they have failed to understand the proper relationship between faith and reason.



∞ Uses of the Term 'Faith' ∞

- COMMON: synonymous with the term 'religion', e.g., the Christian faith
- THEOLOGICAL: theological virtue, "... for by grace are you saved through faith ..." (Eph. 2:8)
- EPISTEMOLOGICAL: relevant to how we come to know reality and hold certain beliefs

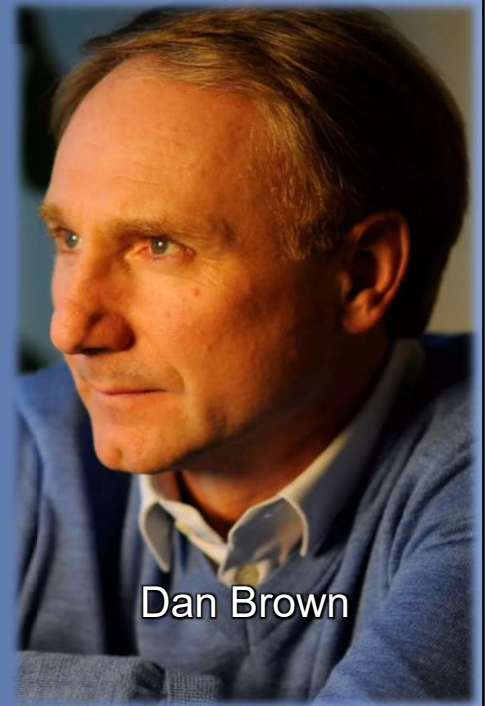




~~Faith is believing in something when
common sense tells you not to."~~



"I really wasn't sure where to turn. Where science offered exciting proofs of its claims, whether it was photos, equations, visible evidence, **religion** was a lot more demanding. It constantly wanted me to **accept everything on faith**. As I'm sure you're aware, faith takes a fair amount of effort."



Dan Brown

"I really wasn't sure where to turn. Where science offered exciting proof of its claims, whether it was photos, equations or visible evidence, **religion** was a lot more demanding. It constantly wanted me to **accept everything on faith**. As I'm sure you're aware, faith takes a fair amount of effort."

Do we as Christians maintain that Christianity (as a religion) wants one to "accept everything on faith"?

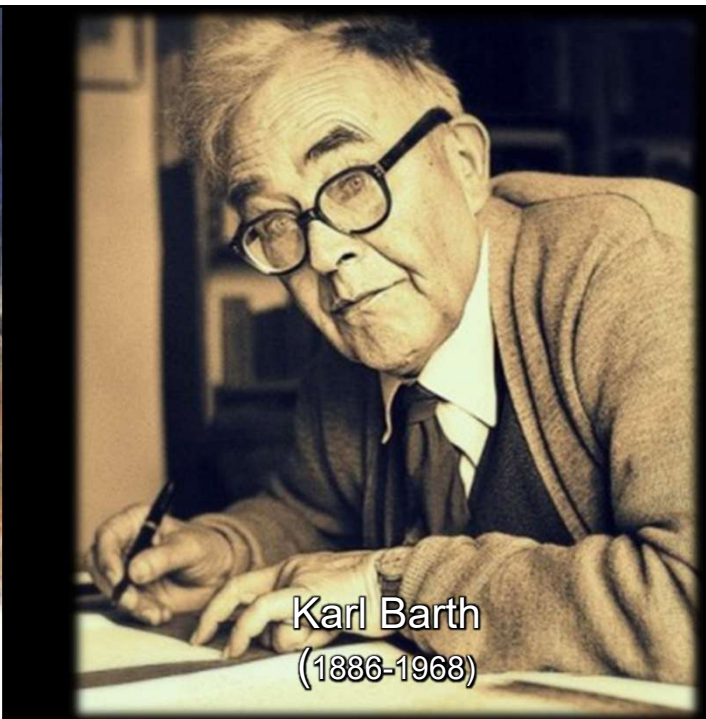
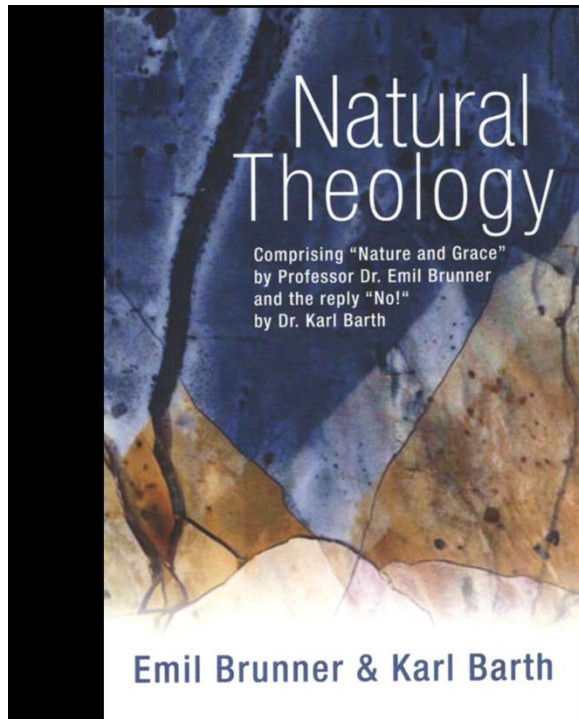
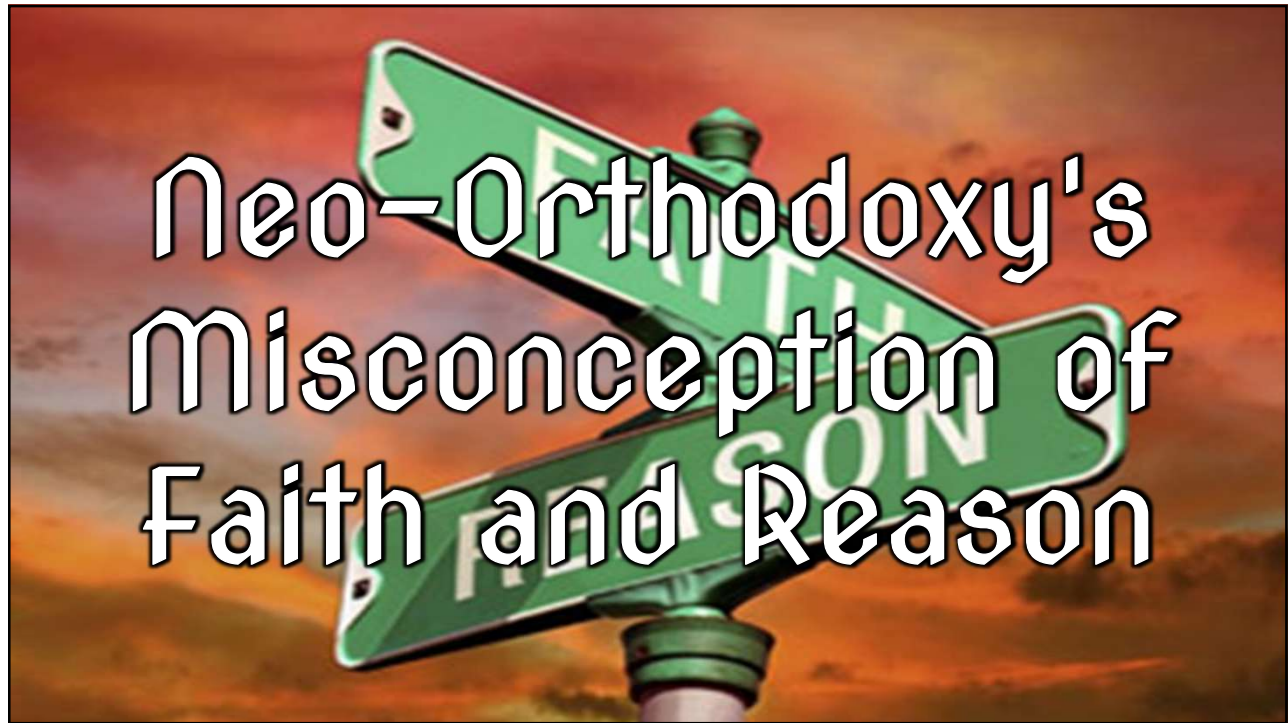
Popular Misconception

Reason

truth
facts
outer
public
rational
thoughts
objective
science
true for all

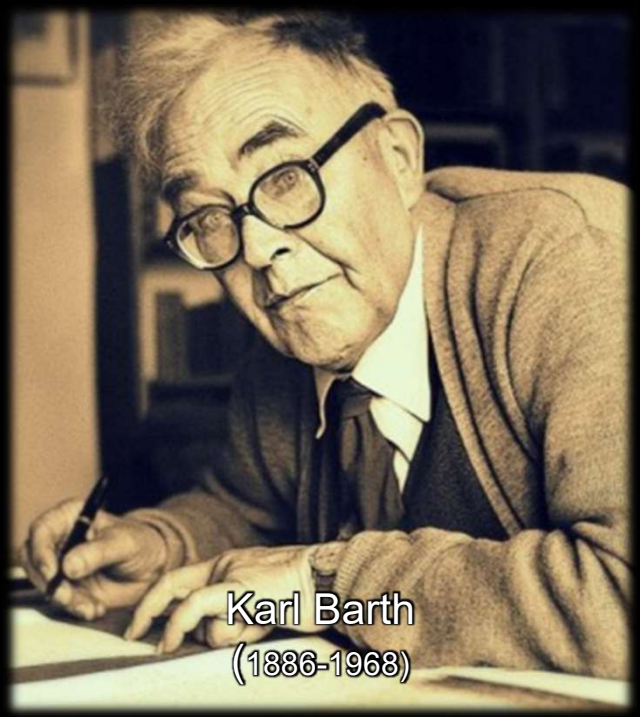
Faith

opinion
values
inner
private
emotional
feelings
subjective
religion
true for me



If one occupies oneself with real theology one can pass by so-called **natural theology** only as one would pass by an abyss into which it is inadvisable to step if one does not want to fall. All one can do is to turn one's back upon it as upon the great temptation and source or error, by having nothing to do with it ... "

[Karl Barth, "No!" trans. Peter Fraenkel, in *Natural Theology: Comprising "Nature and Grace" by Professor Dr. Emil Brunner and the Reply "No!" by Dr. Karl Barth* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock: 2002), 75]



Karl Barth
(1886-1968)

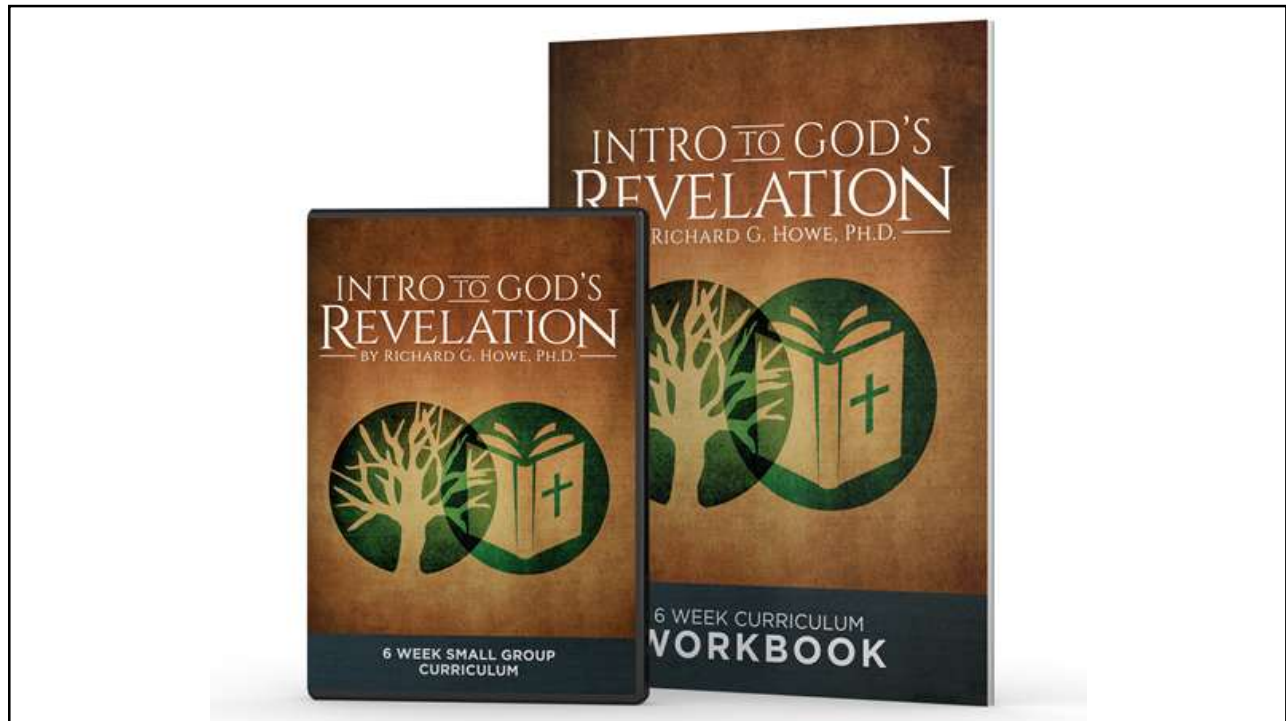
If one occupies oneself with real theology one can pass by so-called **natural theology** only as one would pass by an abyss into which it is inadvisable to step if one does not want to fall. All one can do is to turn one's back upon it as upon the great temptation and source or error, by having nothing to do with it ... "

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Natural Theology arises from God's General Revelation.

General Revelation: God's revelation of His existence and certain attributes to mankind through His creation.

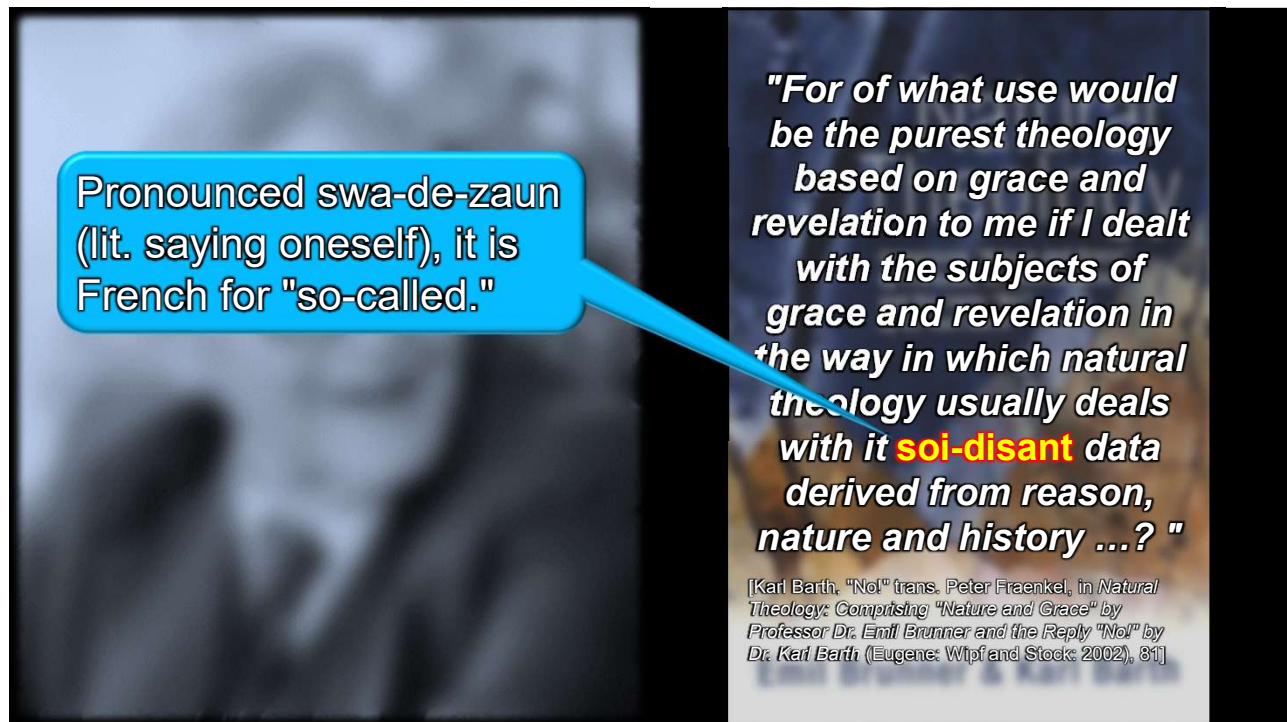
Special Revelation: God's revelation of Himself through His prophets and apostles and ultimate through His taking on human nature in the Incarnation in Jesus Christ.



Karl Barth
(1886-1968)

"For of what use would be the purest theology based on grace and revelation to me if I dealt with the subjects of grace and revelation in the way in which natural theology usually deals with it soi-disant data derived from reason, nature and history ...? "

[Karl Barth, "No!" trans. Peter Fraenkel, in *Natural Theology: Comprising "Nature and Grace" by Professor Dr. Emil Brunner and the Reply "No!" by Dr. Karl Barth* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock: 2002), 81]

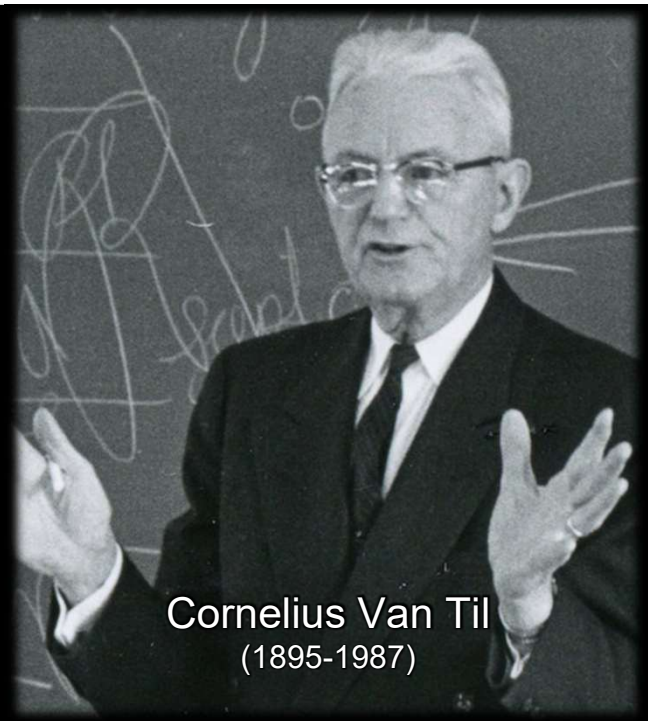
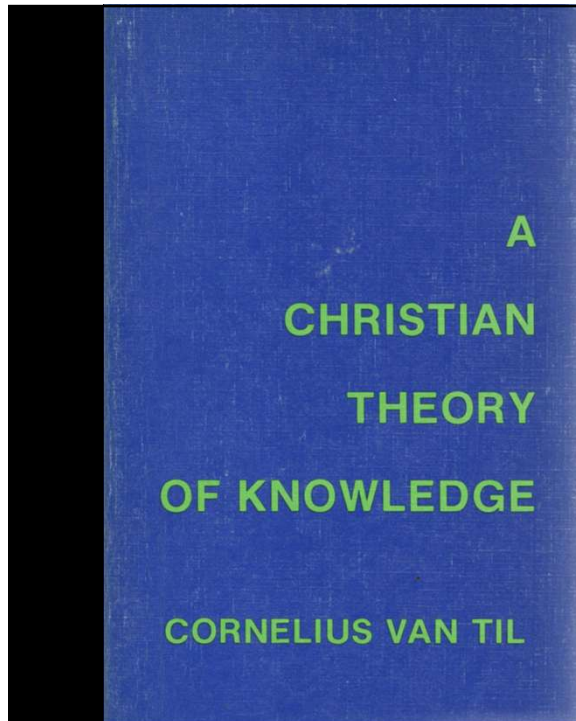


Pronounced swa-de-zaun (lit. saying oneself), it is French for "so-called."

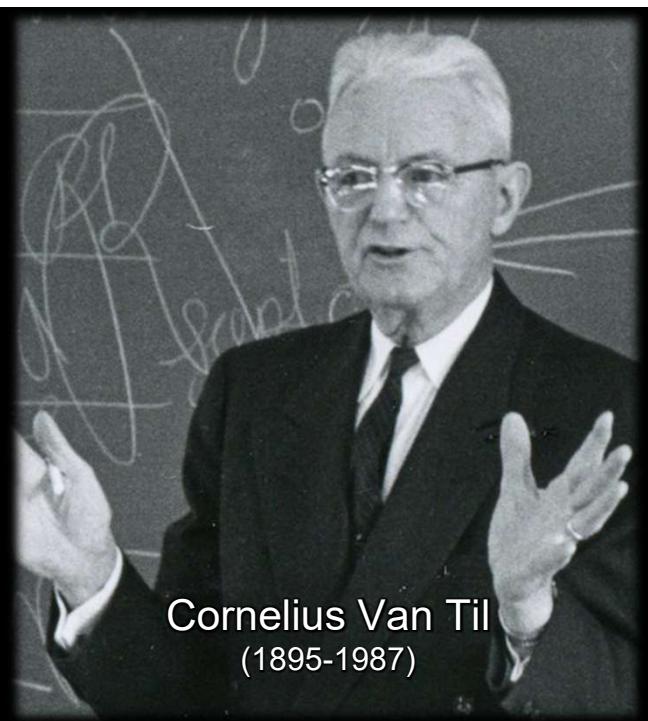
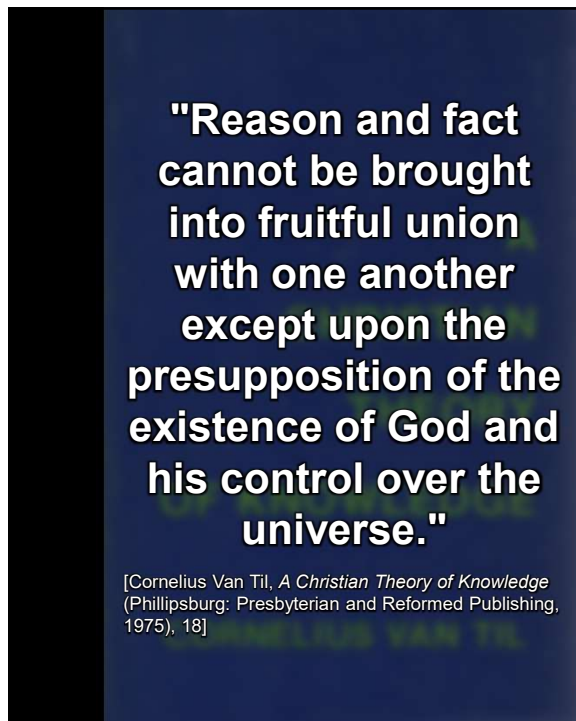
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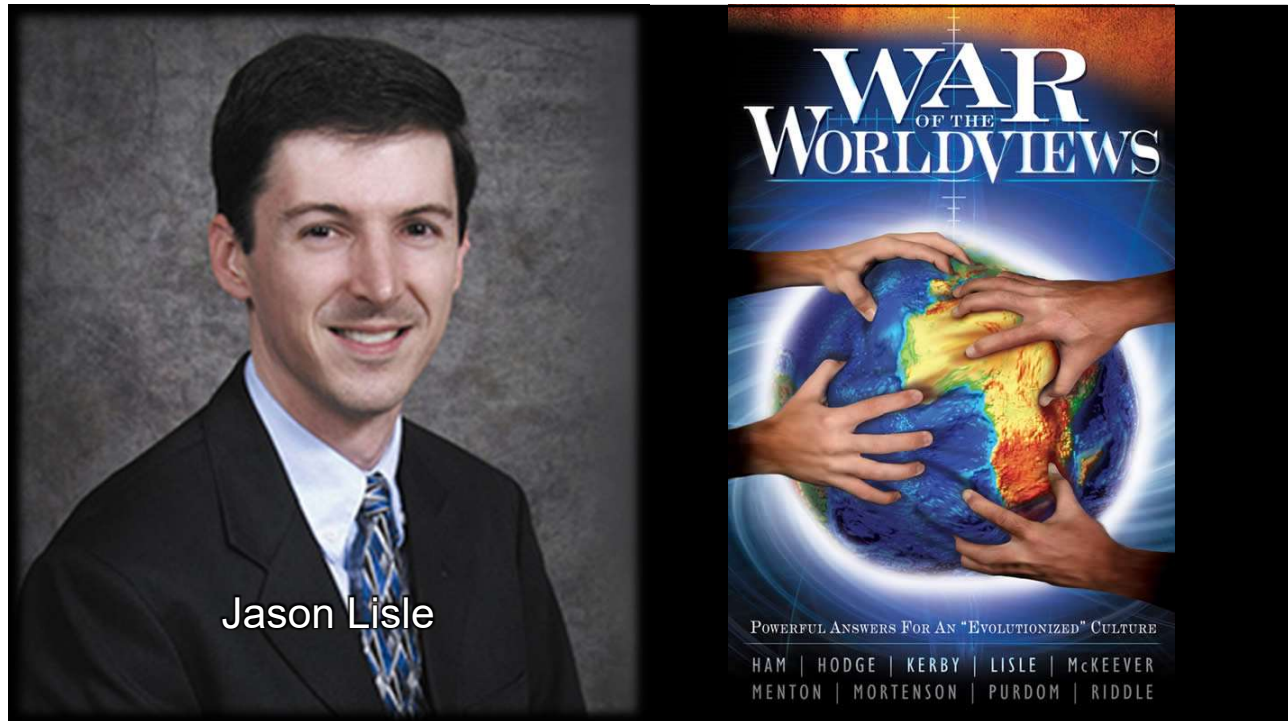




Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1987)



Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1987)





Jason Lisle

Answers IN GENESIS

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Faith vs. Reason

by Dr. Jason Lisle on October 1, 2010; last featured May 19, 2012

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Some Christians have the idea that faith and reason are in conflict, divided by some unbridgeable chasm. They think that one takes over where the other leaves off. In reality, faith and reason work together seamlessly to help us know and love our Maker.

Many Christians perceive a conflict between reason and faith. On the one hand, God tells us to reason (Isaiah 1:18). We are to have a good reason for what we believe, and we are to be always ready to share that reason with other people (1 Peter 3:15). So we attempt to show unbelievers that our belief in the Scriptures is reasonable, justified, and logically defensible. The Bible makes sense.

On the other hand, we are supposed to have faith. We are supposed to trust God and not lean on our own understanding (Proverbs 3:5). The Bible tells us that the "just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17; Galatians 2:11). It seems that we are supposed to trust God regardless of whether His words make sense to our understanding.

So, which is it? Are we to live by reason or by faith? Are we supposed to rely upon our intellect, drawing rational conclusions, adding up those things that don't make sense? Or are we to accept the teachings of Scripture without regard to logic and reason, even if it does not make any sense?

This apparent conflict troubles many people. But it stems from a critical misconception about the meaning of both faith and reason. When both terms are properly defined in their biblical context, any apparent conflict disappears. Yes, we are to have good reasons for what

THE APPARENT CONFLICT BETWEEN FAITH AND REASON TROUBLES MANY PEOPLE



Jason Lisle

"Faith is a prerequisite for reason. In order to reason about anything we must have faith that there are laws of logic which correctly prescribe the correct chain of reasoning. Since laws of logic cannot be observed with the senses, our confidence in them is a type of faith."

[Jason Lisle, "Faith and Reason," <https://answersingenesis.org/apologetics/faith-vs-reason/>, accessed 11/24/23]



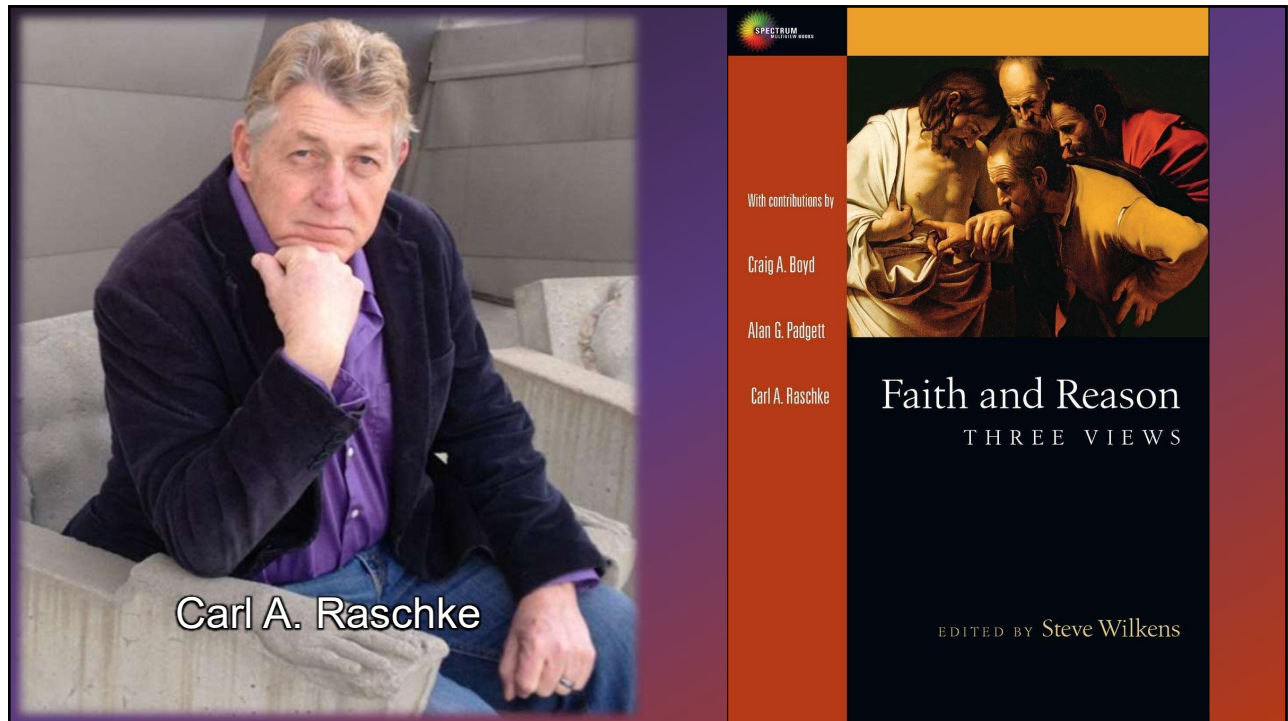
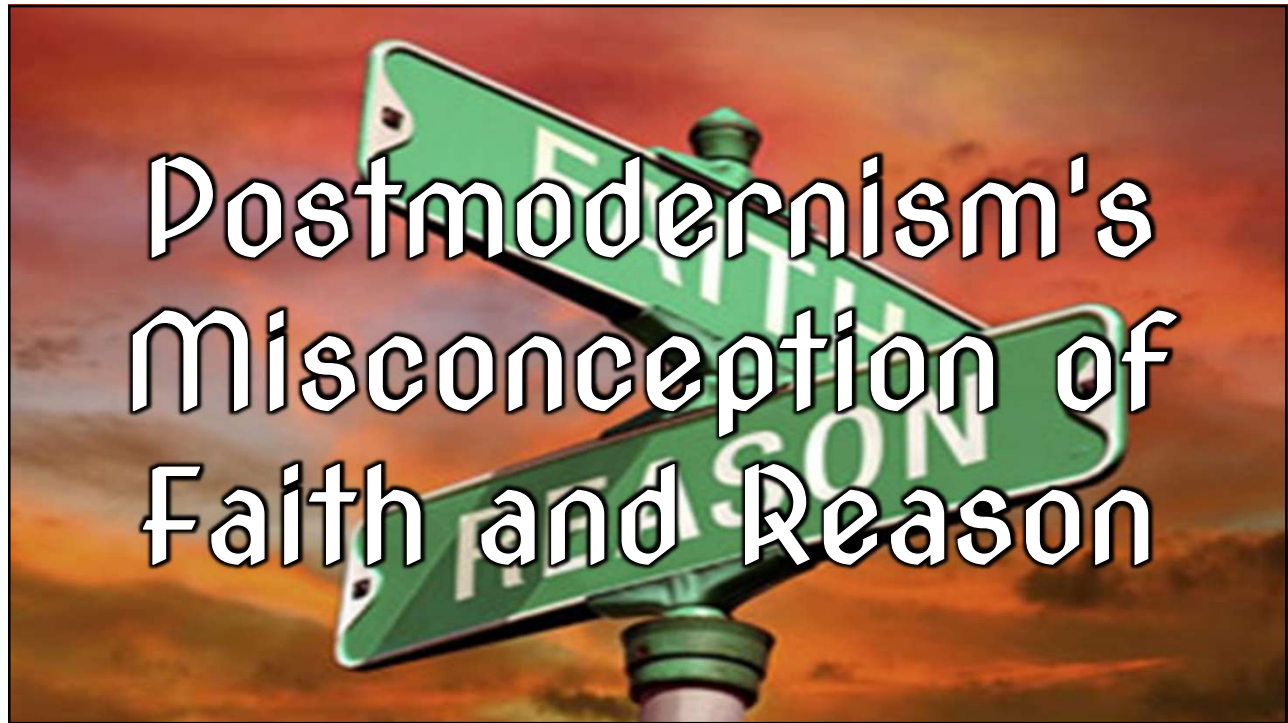
*"Faith is a prerequisite for reason. In order to reason about anything we must have **faith that there are laws of logic** which correctly prescribe the correct chain of reasoning. **Since laws of logic cannot be observed with the senses, our confidence in them is a type of faith.**"*


[Jason Lisle, "Faith and Reason," <https://answersingenesis.org/apologetics/faith-vs-reason/>, accessed 11/24/23]

Lisle is confusing having faith that X is true with X being self-evidently or undeniably true.

*"Faith is a prerequisite for reason. In order to reason about anything we must have **faith that there are laws of logic** which correctly prescribe the correct chain of reasoning. **Since laws of logic cannot be observed with the senses, our confidence in them is a type of faith.**"*

[Jason Lisle, "Faith and Reason," <https://answersingenesis.org/apologetics/faith-vs-reason/>, accessed 11/24/23]






Carl A. Raschke

"Faith, as well as what we call reason, are not incompatible but belong to separate orders of significance. ... Faith is neither irrational nor suprarational. It has nothing to do with 'reason' per se. ... God does not speak in syllogisms or make philosophical claims that require the fallible human intellect to demonstrate them."


[Carl A. Raschke, "Faith and Philosophy in Tension," in Steve Wilkins, ed., *Faith and Philosophy: Three Views* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014), 63, emphasis in original]



Carl A. Raschke

"Meaning is ultimately determined by how the intricate structures of communication work together in an overarching manner, and it is up to the interpreter to provide a new framework of discourse in which what was first written or spoken can be fleshed out. The 'truth' of a text can be discerned in its deployability within a particular set of life circumstances."


[Carl A. Raschke, "Faith and Philosophy in Tension," in Steve Wilkins, ed., *Faith and Philosophy: Three Views* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014), 61, emphasis in original]



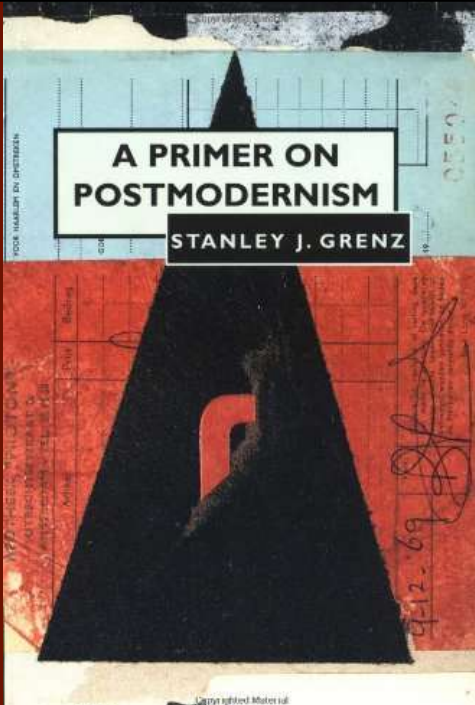
Carl A. Raschke

"Propositional logic, whether exercised for the clarification of terms in a formal argument or to prove the validity of some simple assertion, is inadequate to make sense out of the 'revealed' truth of Scripture for one compelling reason: it speaks to the disinterested intellect, whereas God through his Word speaks to the whole person, including the human heart and what in both ancient Greek and later Christian philosophy is known as synderesis, or 'conscience.'"

[Carl A. Raschke, "Faith and Philosophy in Tension," in Steve Wilkins, ed., *Faith and Philosophy: Three Views* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014), 61, emphasis in original]




Stanley J. Grenz
(1950-2005)




A PRIMER ON POSTMODERNISM
STANLEY J. GRENZ

9-12-69



Stanley J. Grenz
(1950-2005)


"In contrast to the modern ideal of the dispassionate observer, we affirm the postmodern discovery that no observer can stand outside the historical process. Nor can we gain universal, culturally neutral knowledge as unconditioned specialists."



Stanley J. Grenz
(1950-2005)

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If what Grenz says is true, then his own statement itself does not come from an observer who stands "outside the historical process" and, thus, the statement is not itself "neutral knowledge" coming from an "unconditioned specialist."



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Since this is the case, why should we believe that it is objectively true?



Stanley J. Grenz
(1950-2005)

"On the contrary, we are participants in our historical and cultural context, and all our intellectual endeavors are unavoidably conditioned by that participation."

[Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 166]




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[Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 166]

If "all our intellectual endeavors" are "unavoidably conditioned" then Grenz's own statement is itself "unavoidably conditioned."

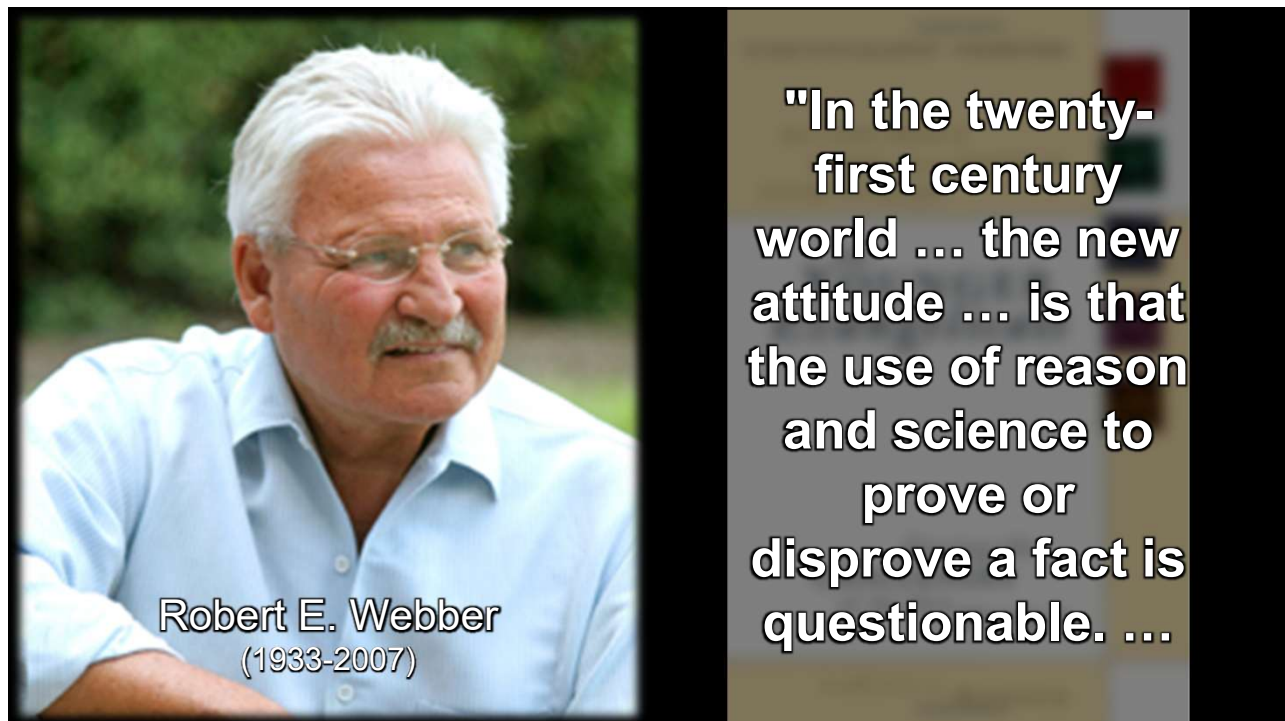
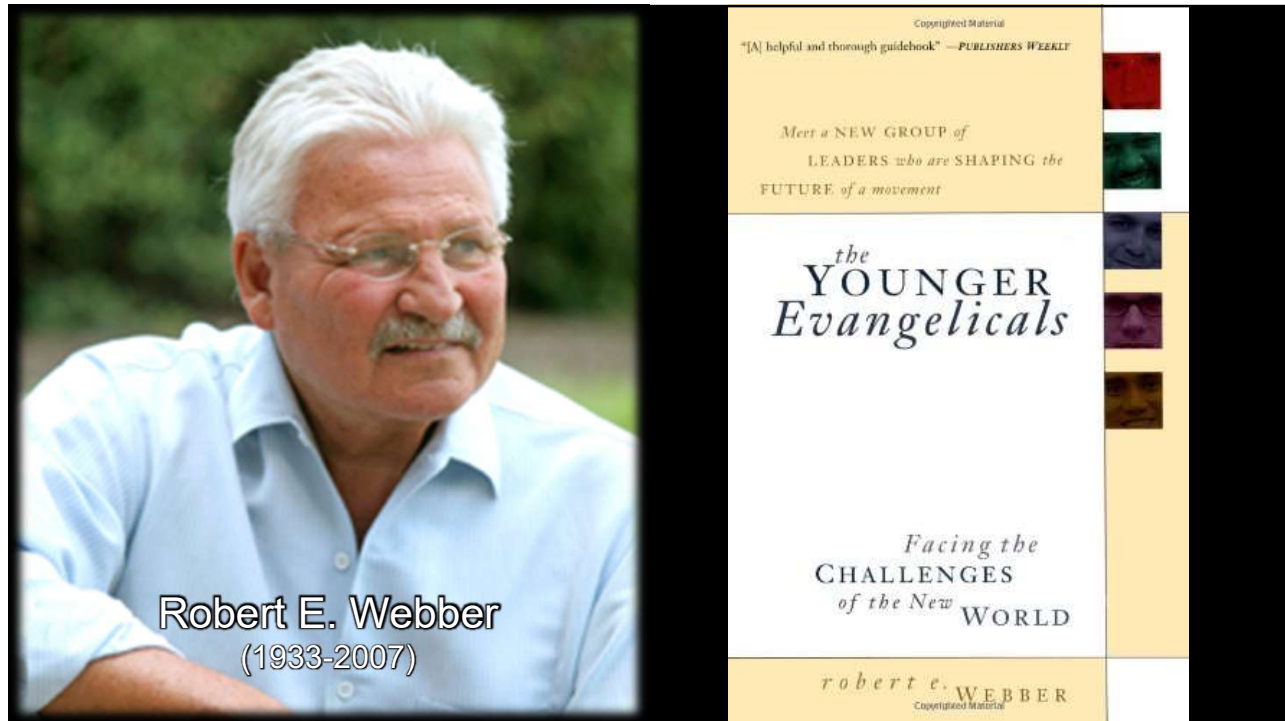
But if his statement is "unavoidably conditioned," then why should we take it as objectively true?

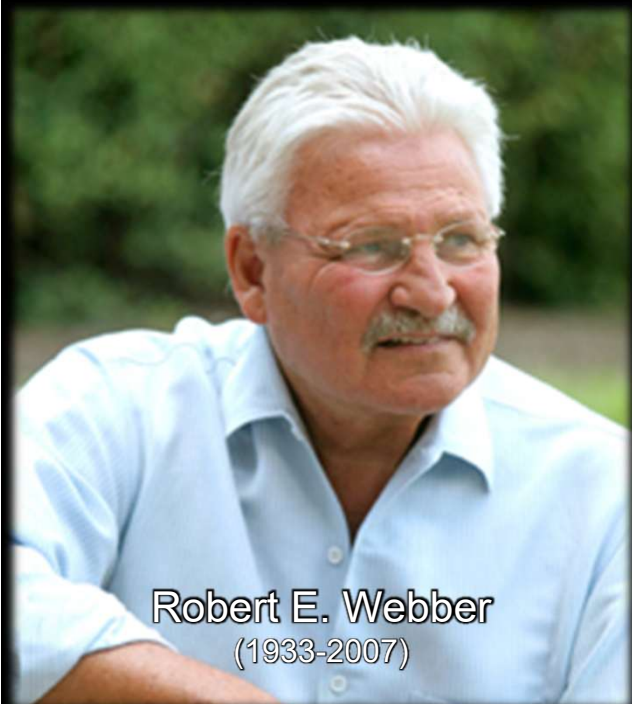


Dan McGee

*"Postmodernism stresses the distinction between objectivity of facts, versus objectivity of knowledge or people. It accepts the possible existence of facts outside human context, but argues that **all knowledge is mediated** by an individual and that the experiences, **biases**, beliefs, and identity of that individual **necessarily influence how they mediate any knowledge.**"*

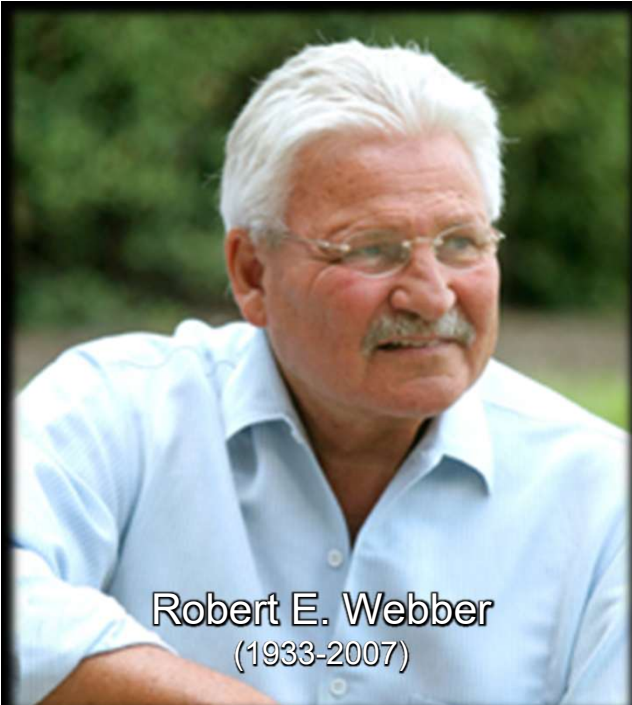
[Dan McGee, "Truth and Postmodernism" downloaded from <https://medium.com/@danmcgee/truth-and-postmodernism-816ea9b3007a>, 11/24/23]





Robert E. Webber
(1933-2007)

**"This ... points
... to the
postmodern
conclusion that
we deal with
'interpreted
facts.' ...**



Robert E. Webber
(1933-2007)

**"In the
postmodern
world, both
believers and
nonbelievers are
people of faith."**

[Robert E. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 84]

Saturday, 10 March 2018

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HOMILETICS INTERVIEW: Robert E. Webber

What Younger Evangelicals Want—and Are Getting!

Robert E. Webber is the William R. and Geraldyn B. Myers Professor of Ministry at Northern Seminary in Lombard, Illinois, one of the only seminaries in the country that offers a Master's and a Doctorate in worship and which has intentional studies that integrate worship and spirituality into the program. He is also the President of the Institute For Worship Studies which offers a MWS (Masters of Worship Studies) and a DWS (Doctor of Worship Studies). He is also Professor of Theology Emeritus at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

Dr. Webber has lectured on worship in nearly every denomination and fellowship, and has authored or edited more than 40 books on worship including the eight-volume work, *The Complete Library of Christian Worship*. His most recent books include: *Planning Blended Worship* (Abingdon, 1998), *Ancient-Future Faith* (Baker, 1999), and *Journey to Jesus* (Abingdon, 2001).

His latest book, *The Younger Evangelical* (Baker, 2002), is attracting broad attention and interest because of its incisive look at a new emerging leadership in the church, while at the same time pausing to look at the leadership models of the 20th-century church.

Dr. Webber was scheduled to speak at a conference in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on Radical Orthodoxy, where Homiletics was to meet up with him for this interview. But he called a few days before the conference to say that he had had back surgery and wouldn't be there. So we met with him in his home in Wheaton, where in the kitchen, and in a straight-back chair, he gladly and graciously discussed his observations about a church that is in the midst of change and the Younger Evangelicals who are leading the way.

Homiletics: To start, we should probably clarify the categories you develop for evangelicals in the 20th century and the early 21st century. You identify traditional, pragmatic and Younger Evangelicals. What defines these groups?

Webber: The underlying idea of these three groups is that evangelicalism seems to follow the curvature of culture and reflects culture. And if you look back over the last 50-60 years, culture has actually gone through three very distinct groupings: Boomers, Gen-Xers and now Millennials. It seems to me that as evangelicalism encounters each cultural shift that each cultural shift as they integrate with it gives a different shape and form, not so much to the message, but to the way in which the message itself is



Robert E. Webber

Other Homiletics Interviews:

Preaching Is an Incarnational Event
— **Richard Ward**

Jesus and the Consumerist Culture
— **Tyler Wigg Stevenson**

Taking God to Work — **David Miller**

Why Things Are the Way They Are
— **Paul Shepherd**

Let's Try to Keep the China on the Table — **N.T. Wright**

Stitching Together the Patchwork Family® — **Barbara Carnal**

HOMILETICS

What Younger Evangelicals Want—and Are Getting!

Homiletics: So then, the Traditional Evangelicals function within a modern worldview that is rationalistic, and propositional.


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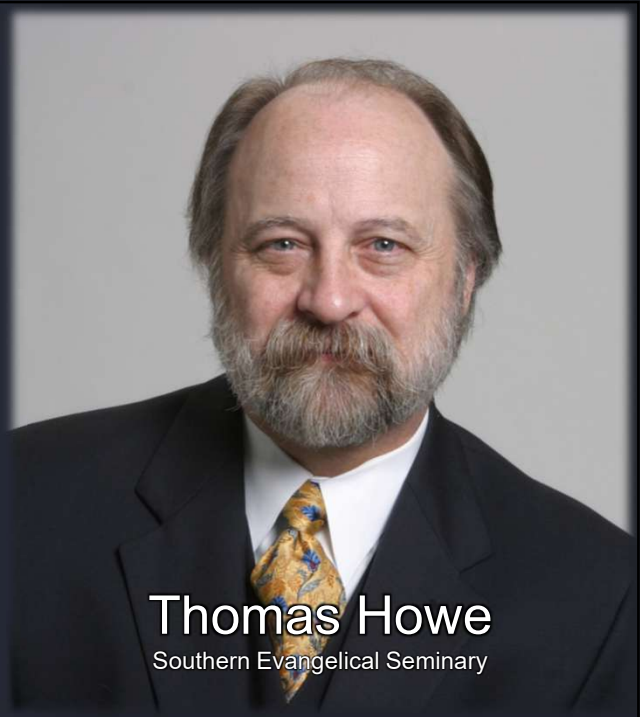
Webber: "That probably is the most distinguishing feature of the Traditionalists. They've been shaped by the **Enlightenment**. So they work with **modern philosophy**, a modern understanding of science, history, sociology. They're **modernist**, and so they interpret the Christian faith through these **modern categories**."

Webber: "And what's very interesting about Traditional Evangelicals is that the categories through which they interpret the Christian faith are almost regarded as sacred, almost as sacred as the Christian faith itself. So if you say, 'Well, I don't believe in evidential apologetics,' there's something wrong with you."

[<http://www.homileticonline.com/subscriber/interviews/webber.asp>, accessed 09/05/20. This interview apparently has been deleted by Homiletics Online.]

“I’ve got more than eighty hermeneutics books in my library. They go back to the mid-eighteen hundreds. But I can take anyone of those hermeneutics books that has been published by an evangelical since 1960 ... and I could find you at least one quote in there where they deny the possibility of ... objectivity in interpretation.”

[Thomas A. Howe, “Postmodernism” audio tape, Southern Evangelical Seminary, National Conference on Christian Apologetics]



Thomas Howe
Southern Evangelical Seminary

**BIBLICAL
INTERPRETATION**

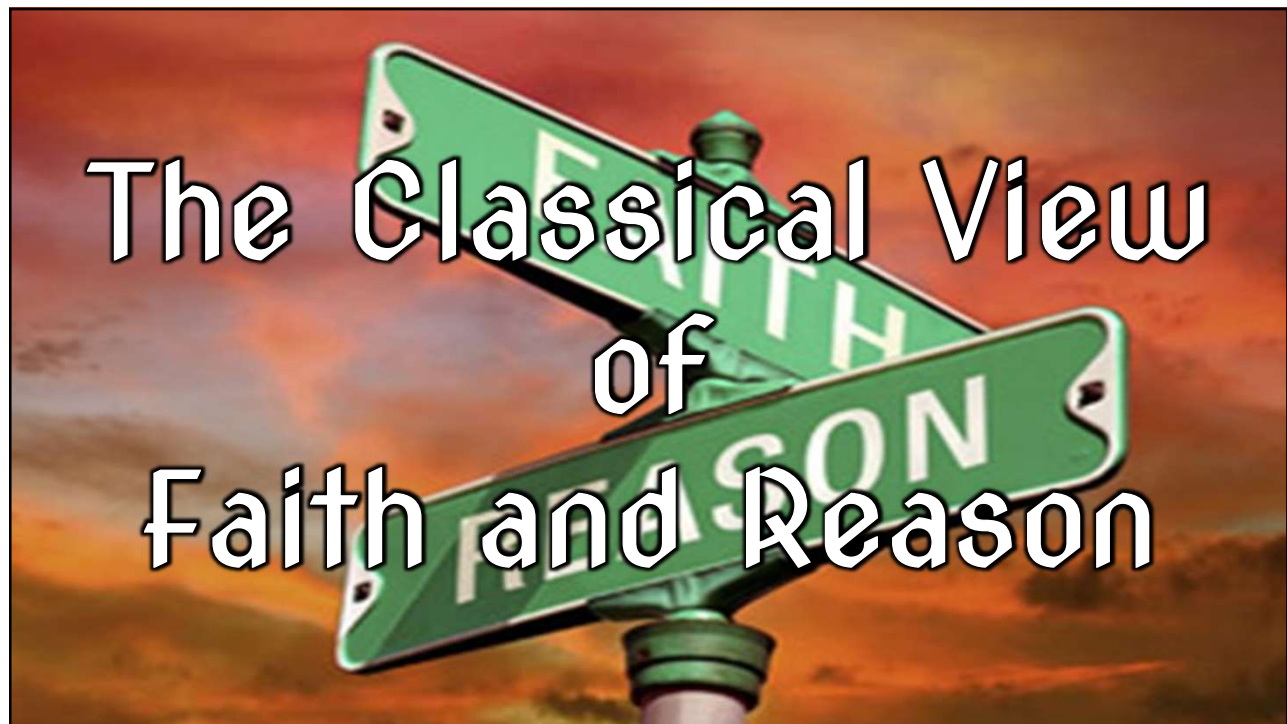


*An
Integrated
Approach*

W. Randolph Tate

“There is no such thing as a pure reading, an objective interpretation.”

[W. Randolph Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 165]



Classical View of Faith and Reason

Reason

Believing something on the basis of demonstration.

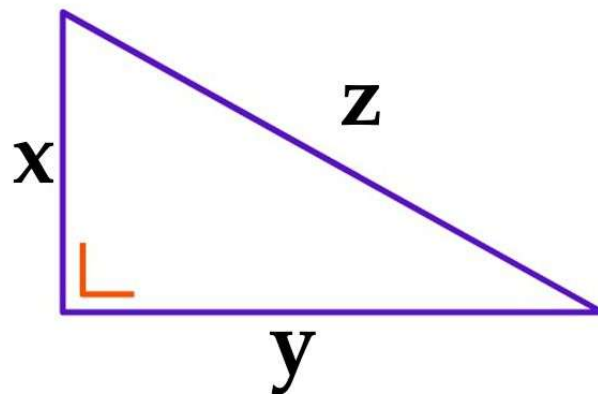
Faith

Believing something on the basis of authority.

***Consider
Fermat's
Last Theorem.***

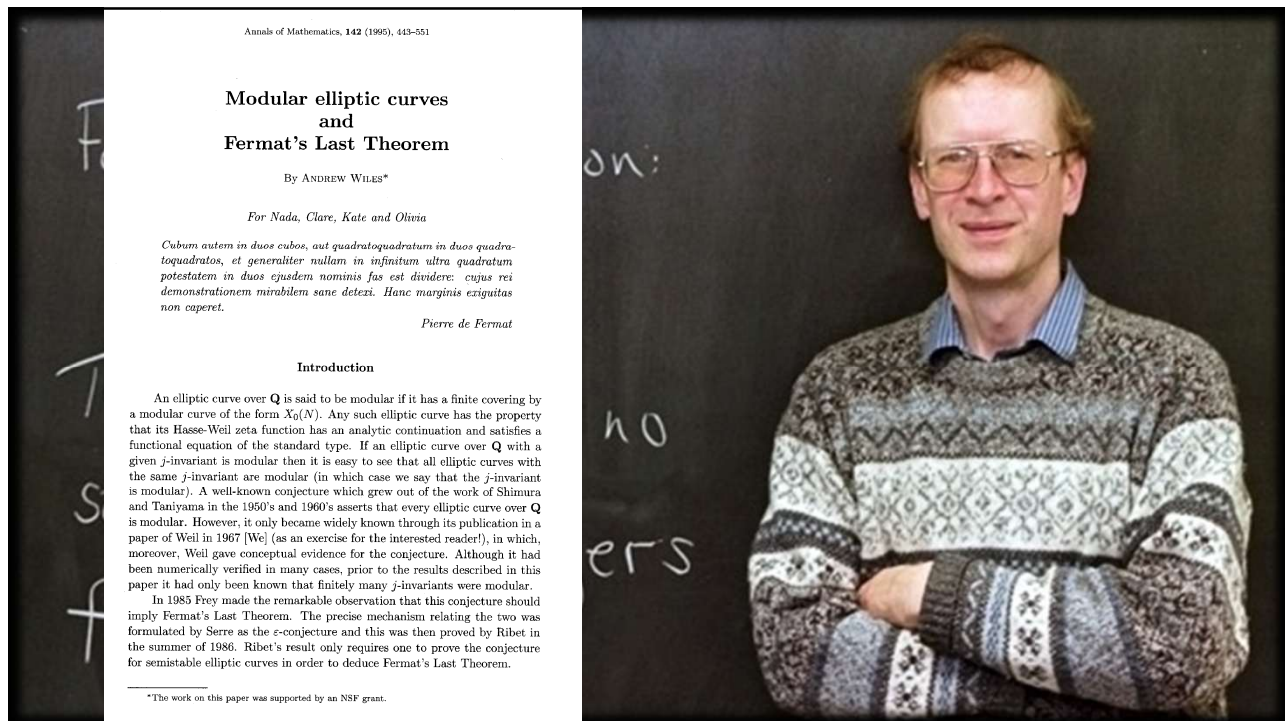
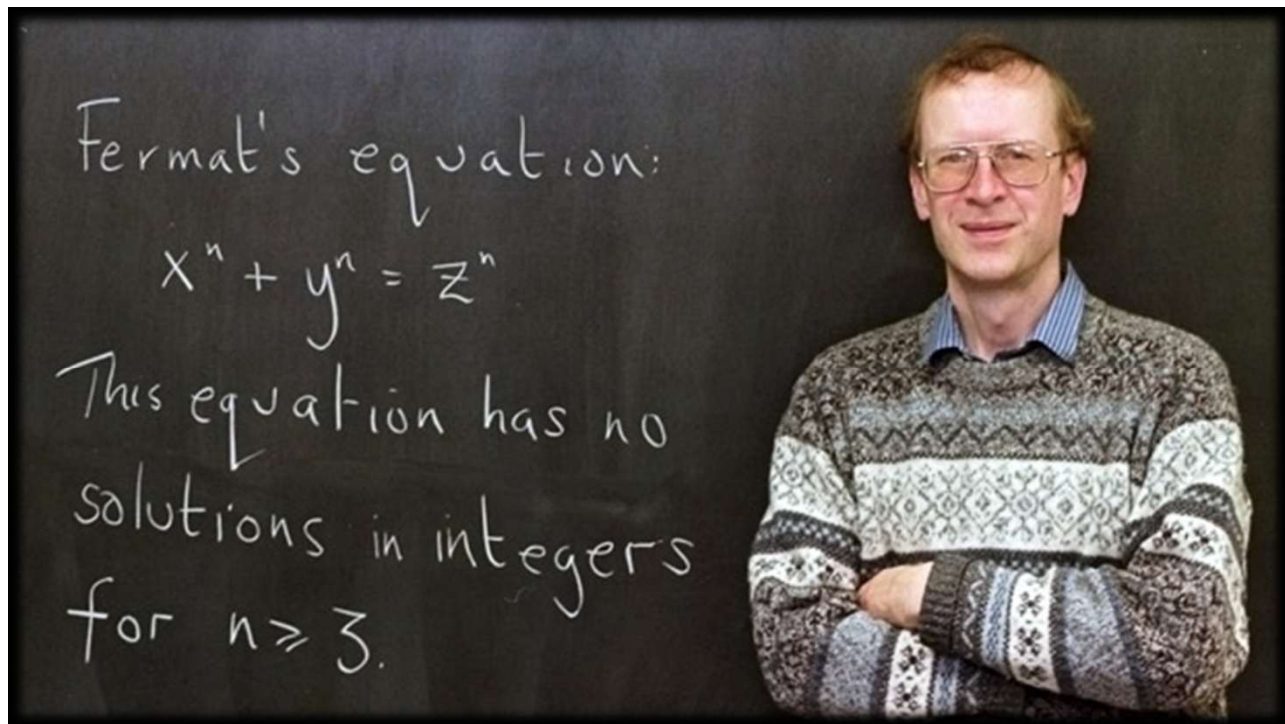


**Pierre de Fermat
(1601-1665)**



Pythagorean Theorem

$$x^2 + y^2 = z^2$$



Classical View of Faith and Reason

Reason

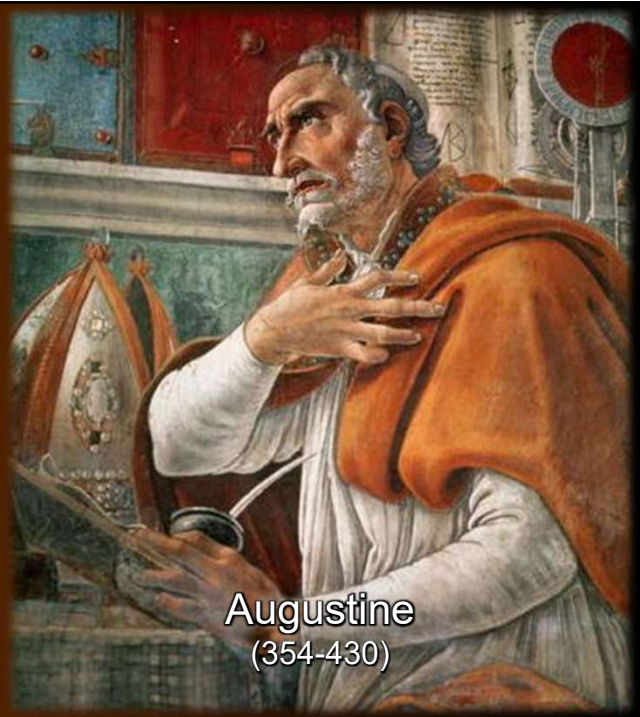
Believing something on the basis of demonstration.

Faith

Believing something on the basis of Divine authority.

"For who cannot see that thinking [reason] is prior to believing [faith]? For no one believes anything unless he has first thought that it is to be believed.

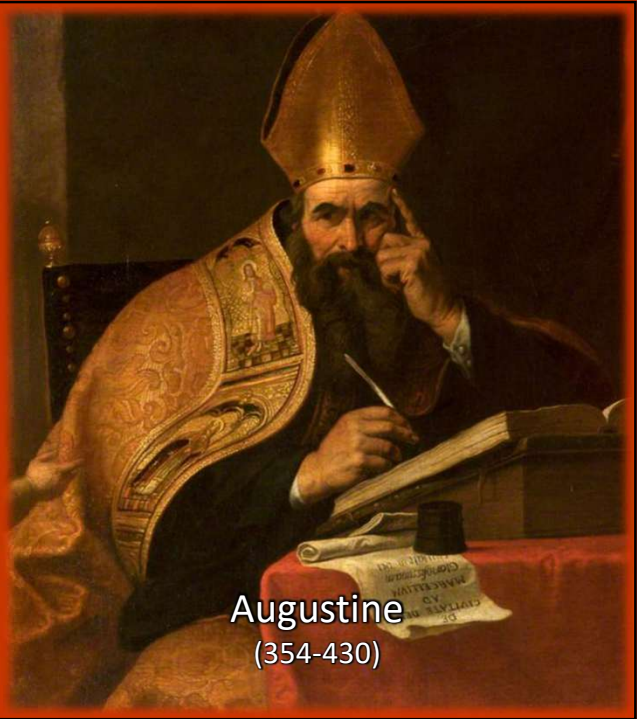
[On the Predestination of the Saints, 5, as cited in Norman L. Geisler, ed. What Augustine Says (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982), 13]



Augustine
(354-430)

"Heaven forbid, after all, that God should hate in us that by which he made us more excellent than the other animals. Heaven forbid, I say, that we should believe in such a way that we do not accept or seek a rational account, since we could not even believe if we did not have rational souls."

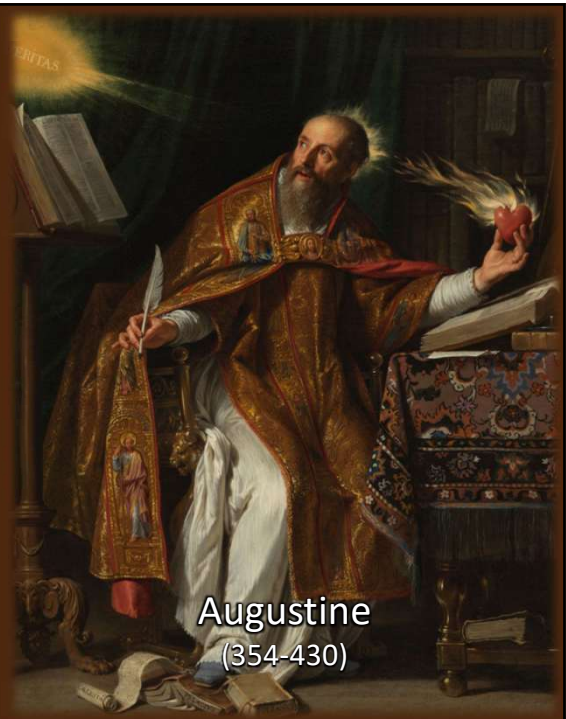
[Letter 120, in *Letters 100-155* (Vol. II/2), trans. Roland Teske (Hyde Park: New City Press), p. 131]



Augustine
(354-430)

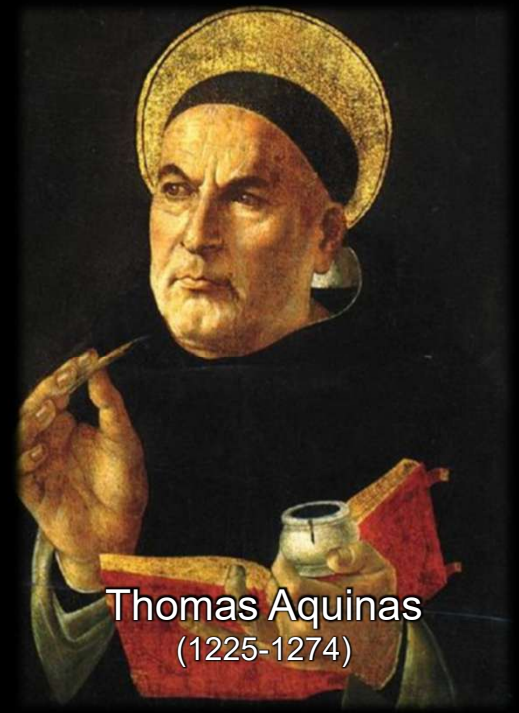
"In certain matters, therefore, pertaining to the teaching of salvation, which we cannot grasp by reason, but which we will be able to at some point, faith precedes reason so that the heart may be purified in order that it may receive and sustain the light of the great reason, which is, of course, a demand of reason!"

[Letter 120, Teske, p. 131]



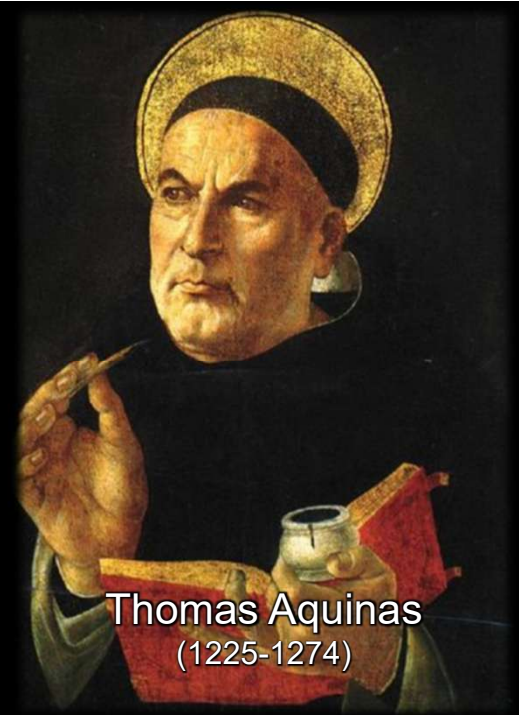
Augustine
(354-430)

"Those things are said to be present to the understanding which do not exceed its capacity so that the gaze of understanding may be fixed on them. For a person gives assent to such things because of the witness of his own understanding and not because of someone else's testimony."



Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

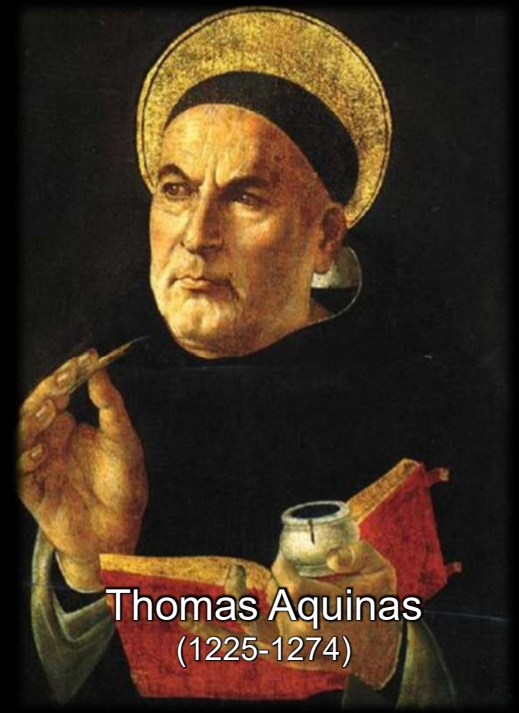
"Those things, however, which are beyond the power of our understanding are said to be absent from the senses of the mind. Hence, our understanding cannot be fixed on them."



Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

"As a result, we cannot assent to them on our own witness, but on that of someone else. These things are properly called the objects of faith."

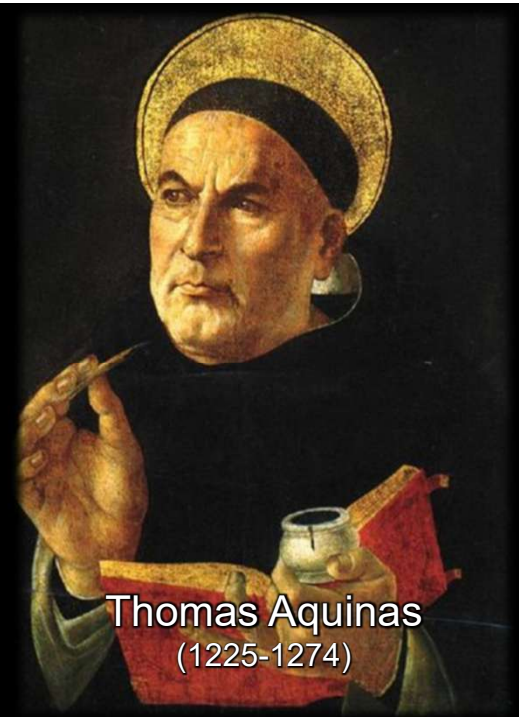
[*Truth*, QXIV, Art. 9, reply, trans. James V. McGlynn (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 249-250]



Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

"One who believes [i.e., has faith] gives assent to things that are proposed to him by another person, and which he himself does not see."

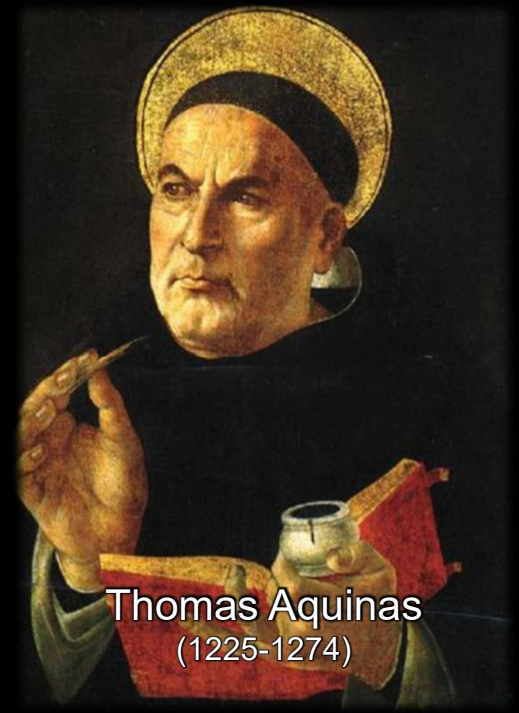
[*Truth*, QXIV, Art. 9, reply, trans. James V. McGlynn (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 249-250]



Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

"Since man can only know the things that he does not see himself by taking them from another who does see them, and since faith is among the things we do not see, the knowledge of the objects of faith must be handed on by one who sees them himself. Now, this one is God, Who perfectly comprehends Himself, and naturally sees His essence."

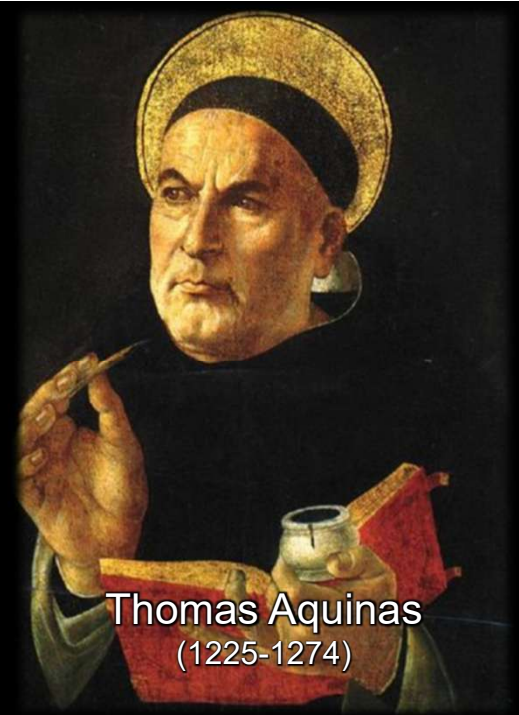
[SCG, 3, 154 [1], trans. Vernon J. Bourke, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press), 239]



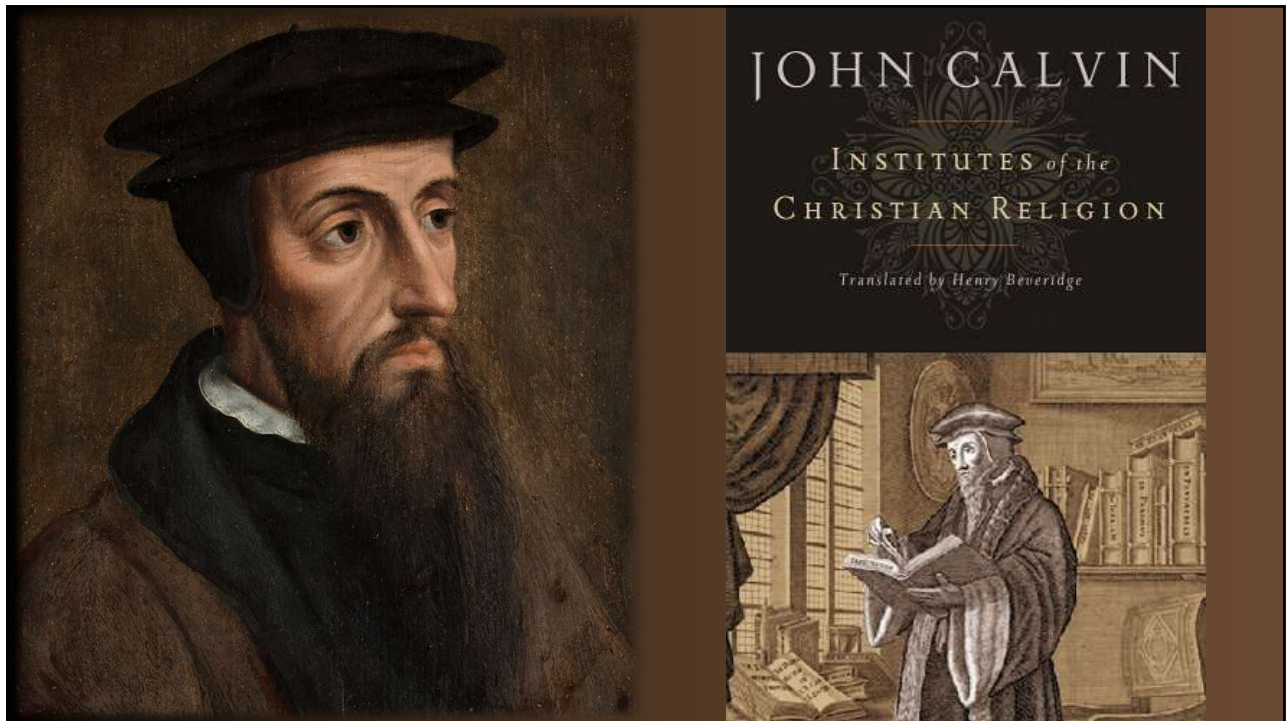
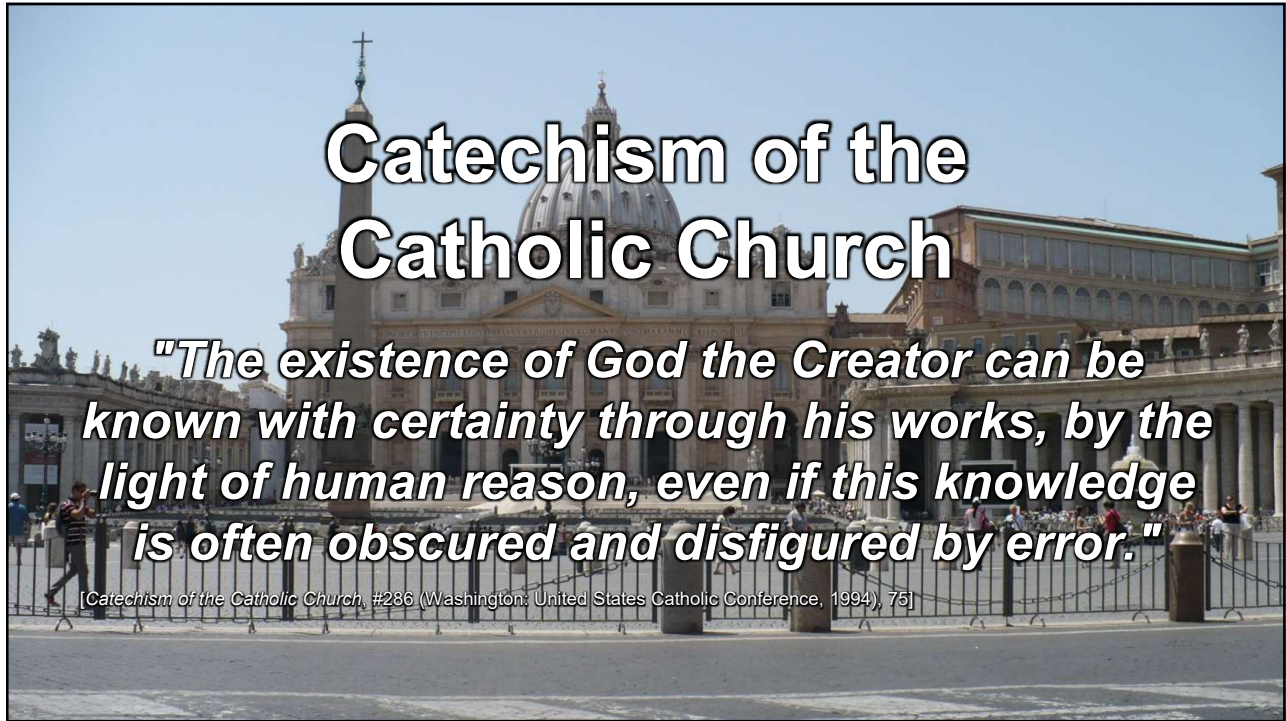
Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

"There are some intelligible truths to which the efficacy of the agent intellect extends, like the principles we naturally know and the conclusions we deduce from them. In order to know them we do not need a new intellectual light; the light endowed by nature suffices. There are some truths, however, which do not come within the range of these principles, like the truths of faith, which transcend the faculty of reason, also future contingents and other matters of this sort. The human mind cannot know these without being divinely illumined by a new light supplementing the natural light."

[Faith, Reason and Theology: Questions I-IV of His Commentary on the De Trinitate of Boethius, trans. Armand Maurer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1987), 17]



Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

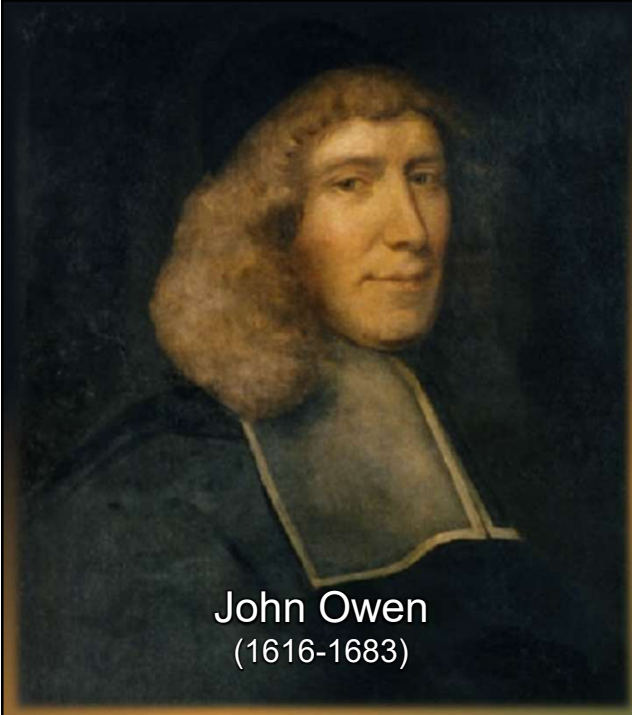




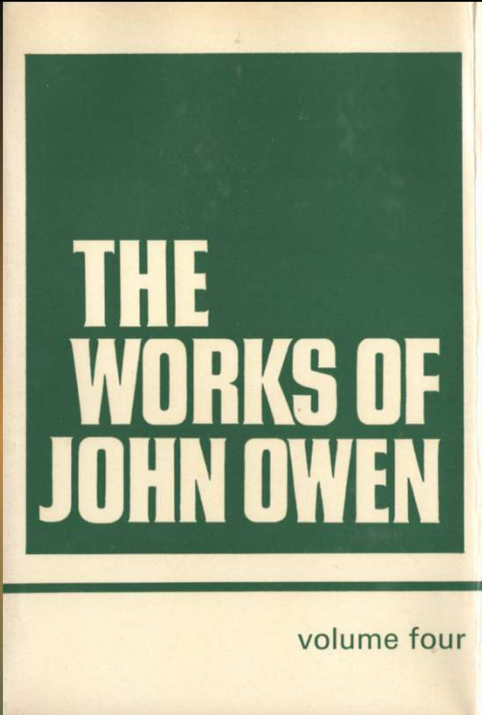
John Calvin
(1509-1564)

"Therefore in reading the profane authors, the admirable light of truth displayed in them should remind us, that the human mind, however much fallen and perverted from its original integrity, is still adorned and invested with admirable gifts from its Creator."

[*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2.2.15, trans. Henry Beveridge, (Grand Rapids: William B. Erdmans), 236]

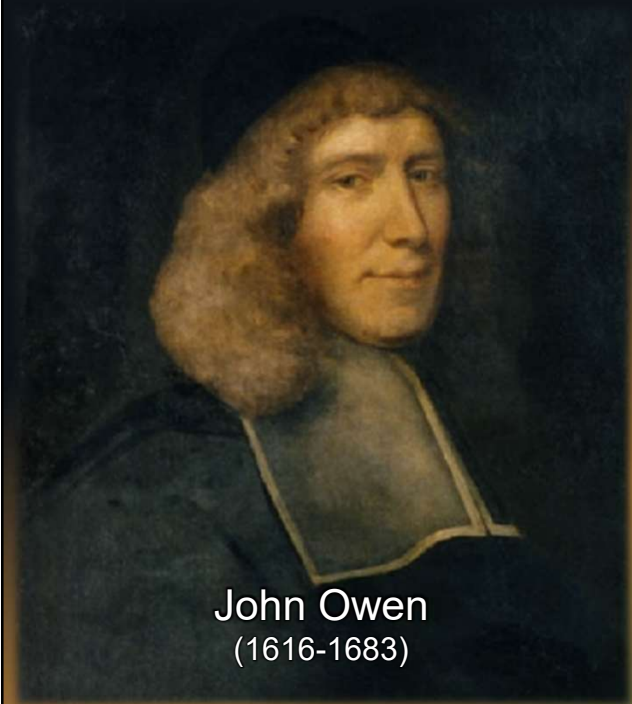


John Owen
(1616-1683)



THE WORKS OF JOHN OWEN

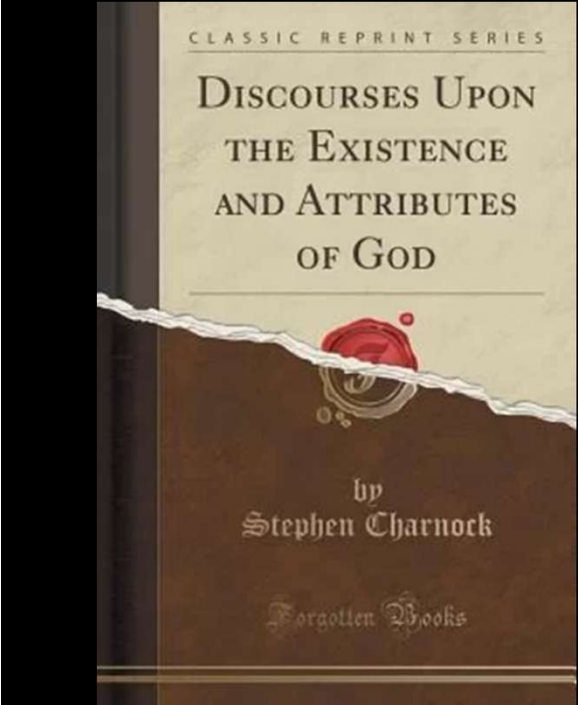
volume four



John Owen
(1616-1683)

"There are sundry cogent arguments, which are taken from external considerations of the Scripture, that evince it on rational grounds to be from God. ... and ... are... necessary unto the confirmation of our faith herein against temptations, oppositions, and objections."

[John Owen, "The Reason of Faith," in *The Works of John Owen*, vol. 4, (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1967), 20]




CLASSIC REPRINT SERIES

**DISCOURSES UPON
THE EXISTENCE
AND ATTRIBUTES
OF GOD**

by
Stephen Charnock

Forgotten Books



Stephen Charnock
(1628-1680)

"Men that will not listen to Scripture ... cannot easily deny natural reason There is a natural as well as a revealed knowledge, and the book of the creatures is legible in declaring the being of a God"

[Stephen Charnock, *Discourses upon the Existence and Attributes of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 27.]



Stephen Charnock
(1628-1680)

"God in regard of his existence is not only the discovery of faith, but of reason. God hath revealed not only his being, but some sparks of his eternal power and godhead in his works, as well as in his word. ... It is a discovery of our reason ... and an object of our faith ... it is an article of our faith and an article of our reason."

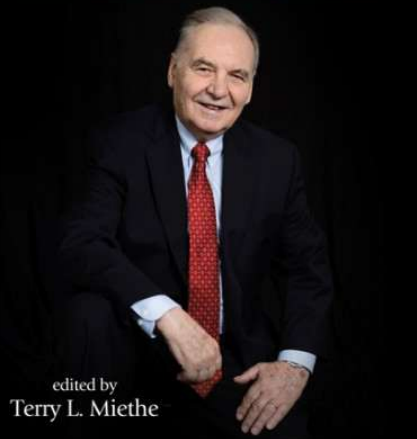
[Stephen Charnock, *Discourses upon the Existence and Attributes of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 27.]



Stephen Charnock
(1628-1680)

I Am Put Here for the Defense of the Gospel

Dr. Norman L. Geisler: A Festschrift in His Honor



edited by
Terry L. Miethe

CHAPTER 12

Defending the Handmaid

How Theology Needs Philosophy

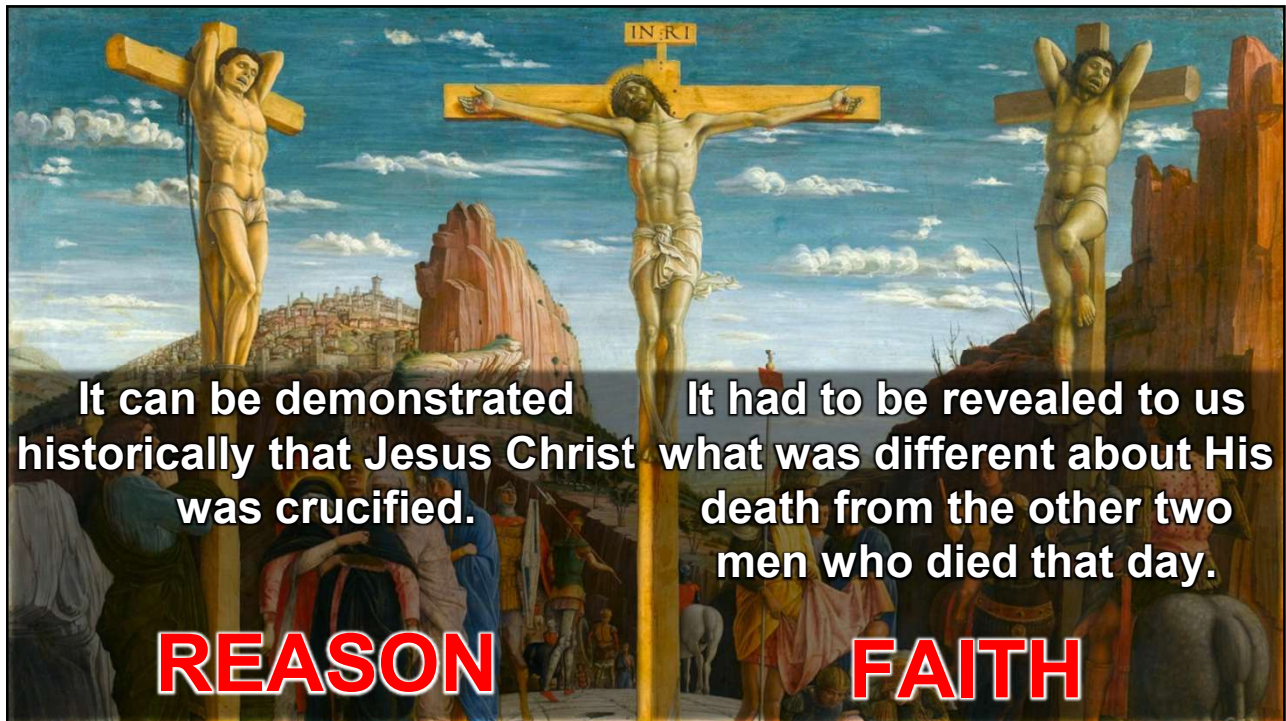
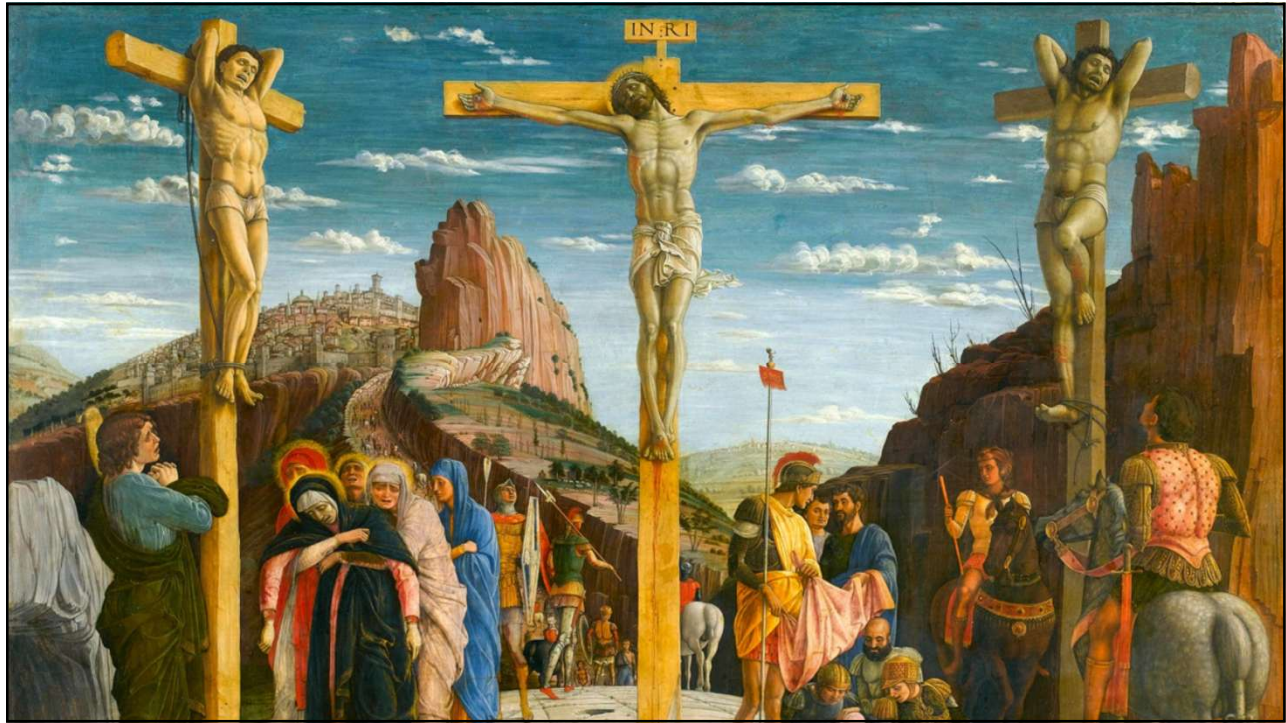
by Richard G. Howe

Prolegomena

How Norman Geisler Helped Me in the Direction of My Life

I WAS LED TO Christ in high school by Christian friends of mine. I grew spiritually about as much as one might expect a teenager to grow, becoming involved with my youth group at church and pursuing my interesting in drumming. After graduation, I headed to the community college to study music. I tell people that I learned enough music to annoy everyone around me. When it came time to consider senior college, Christian friends of mine told me that one could go to college and study the Bible. This sounded like a tremendous prospect to me, so off I went. I attended my denomination's flagship Christian college in my state. It was my first encounter with theological liberalism. My church had not prepared me to wrestle with issues like Higher Criticism. As a result, I intellectually lost my faith in college. Looking back on that experience, I saw a range of responses among my friends who were confronted with the same intellectual challenges. Some of my friends with whom I had prayed in high school mockingly "asked Jesus to come out of their hearts" and repudiated their Christianity altogether. Others embraced the skepticism of the critical methods and settled for a more mainstream liberal Christianity. Neither of these options seemed possible for me. I was not capable of completely abandoning my faith, as shipwrecked as it was. But neither was I comfortable with any sort of liberal theology. Others of my friends tried to amputate their intellect from their faith and reject any attempt to come to terms with the challenges and questions posed by critical thinking. That, too, was not appealing to me. I knew that I could not embrace a faith that would not stand up to reason. With this, I lived in dissonance for over a year.

The short version of the story has me being intellectually rescued by a handful of apologists. Through their books and lectures, God brought into my life people like Josh McDowell, R. C. Sproul, and Norman Geisler. To this mix were added the insights and maturity of older brothers who had since come to the Lord. Being back on track, I began to consider the continued direction of my education. A short stint at a local

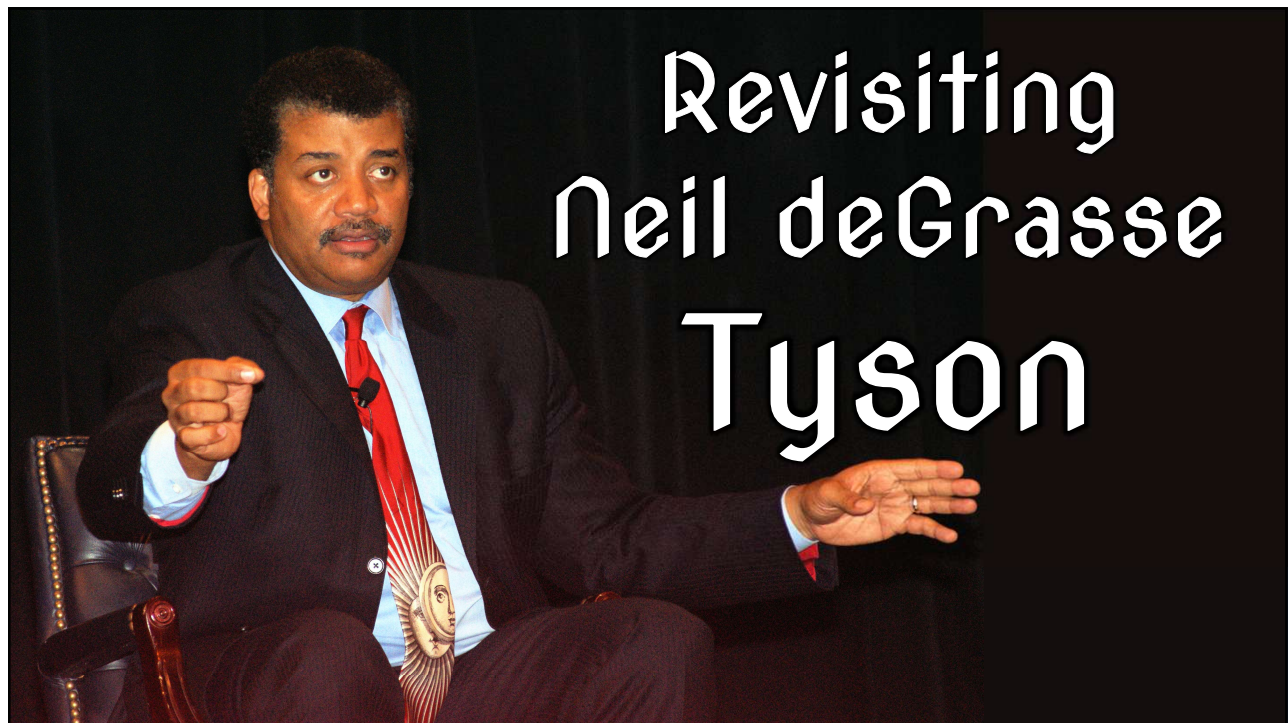
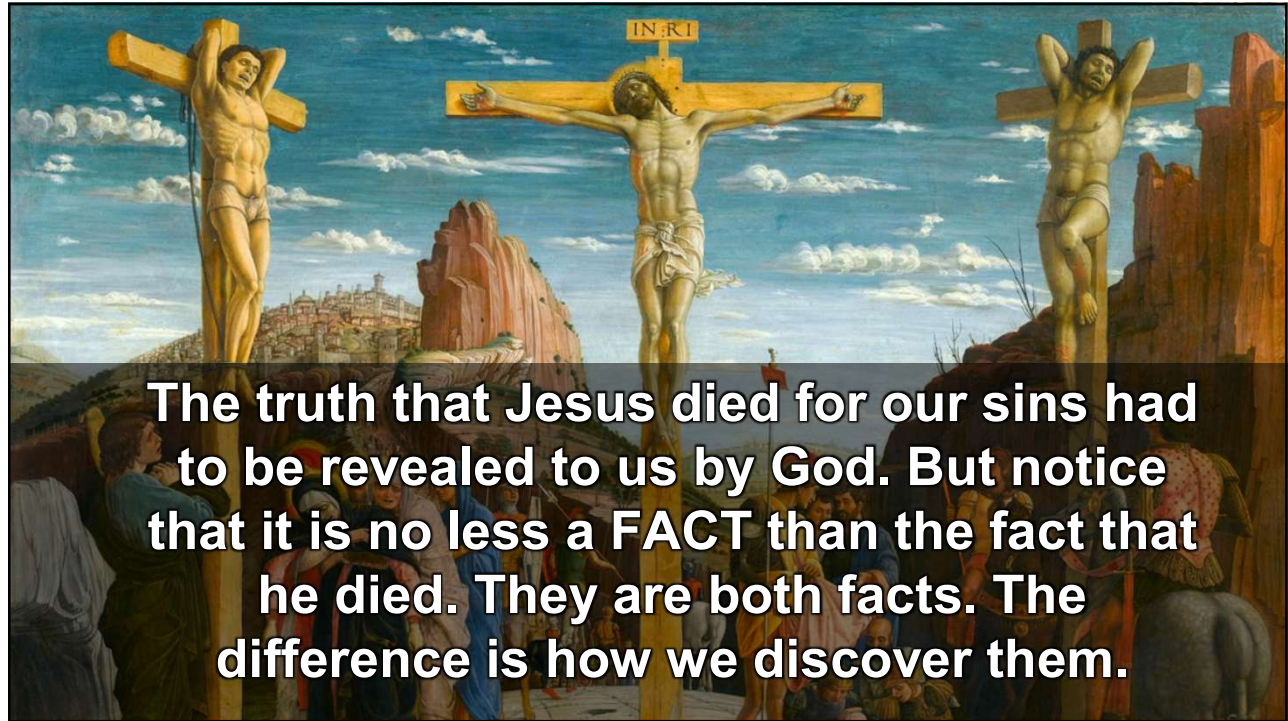


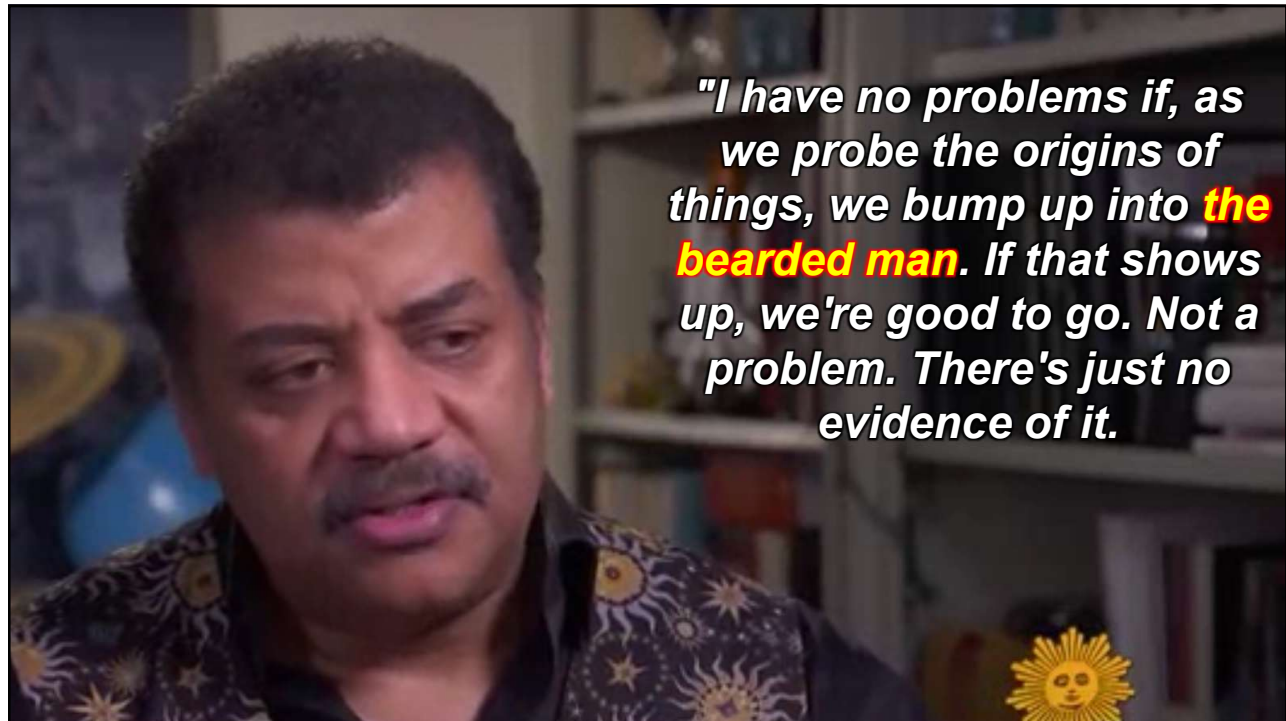
It can be demonstrated historically that Jesus Christ was crucified.

REASON

It had to be revealed to us what was different about His death from the other two men who died that day.

FAITH



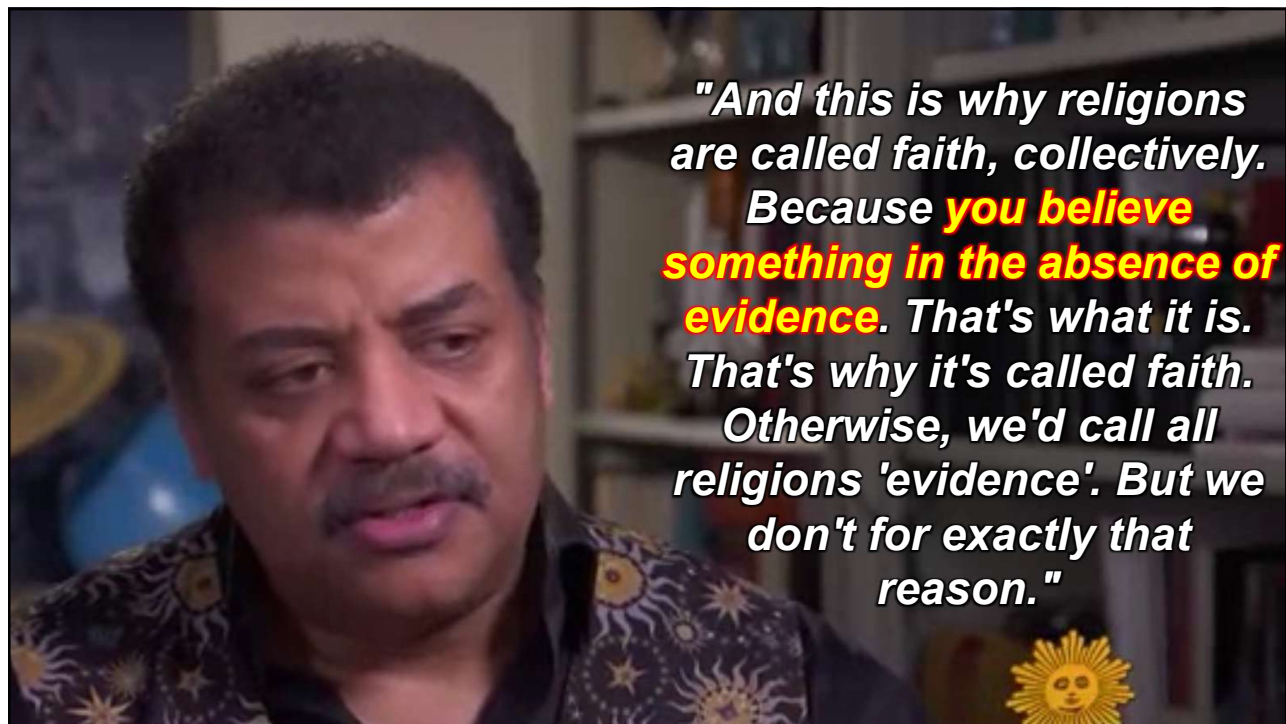


Notice the ad hominem / straw man fallacy. The argument Christian apologists are making has nothing to do with the existence of any "bearded man."

Imagine how offended Tyson would be if a Christian tried to refute evolution with the silly argument "if humans evolved from monkeys, why are there still monkeys!?"

Christians no more contend for the existence of a "bearded man" than evolutionists contend that humans evolved from monkeys.

*"I have no problems if, as we probe the origins of things, we bump up into **the bearded man**. If that shows up, we're good to go. Not a problem. There's just no evidence of it.*

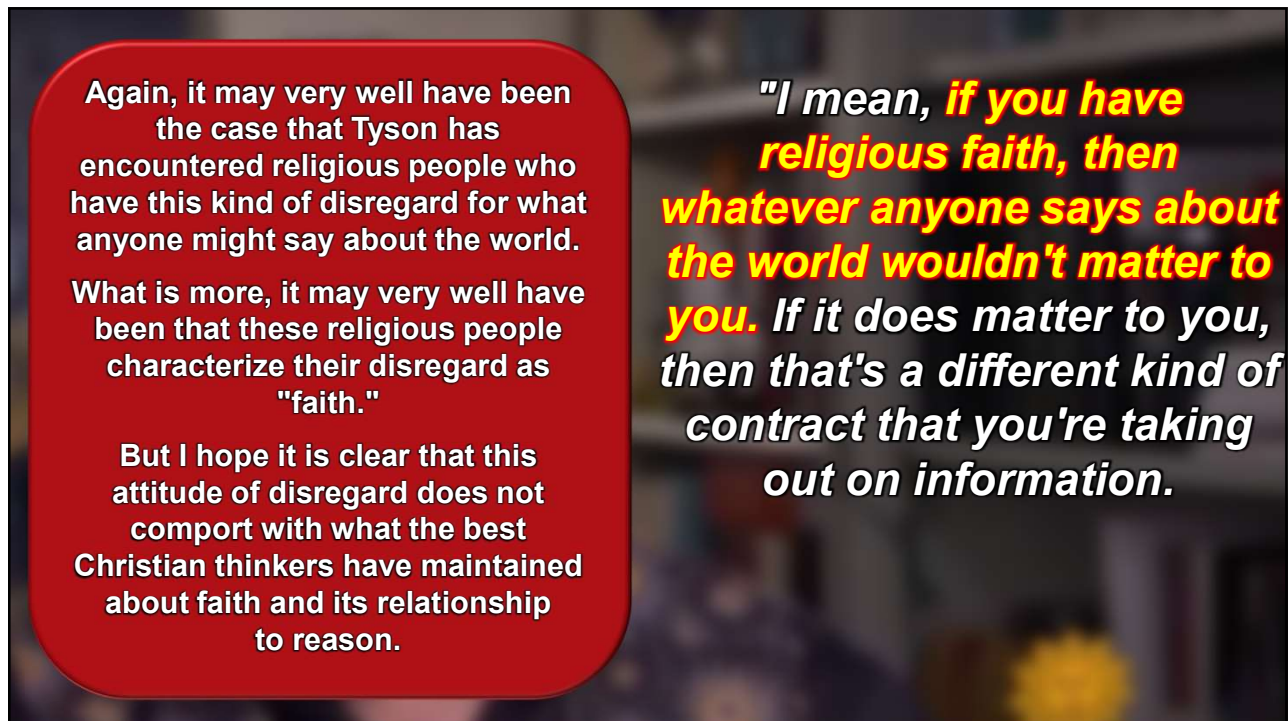
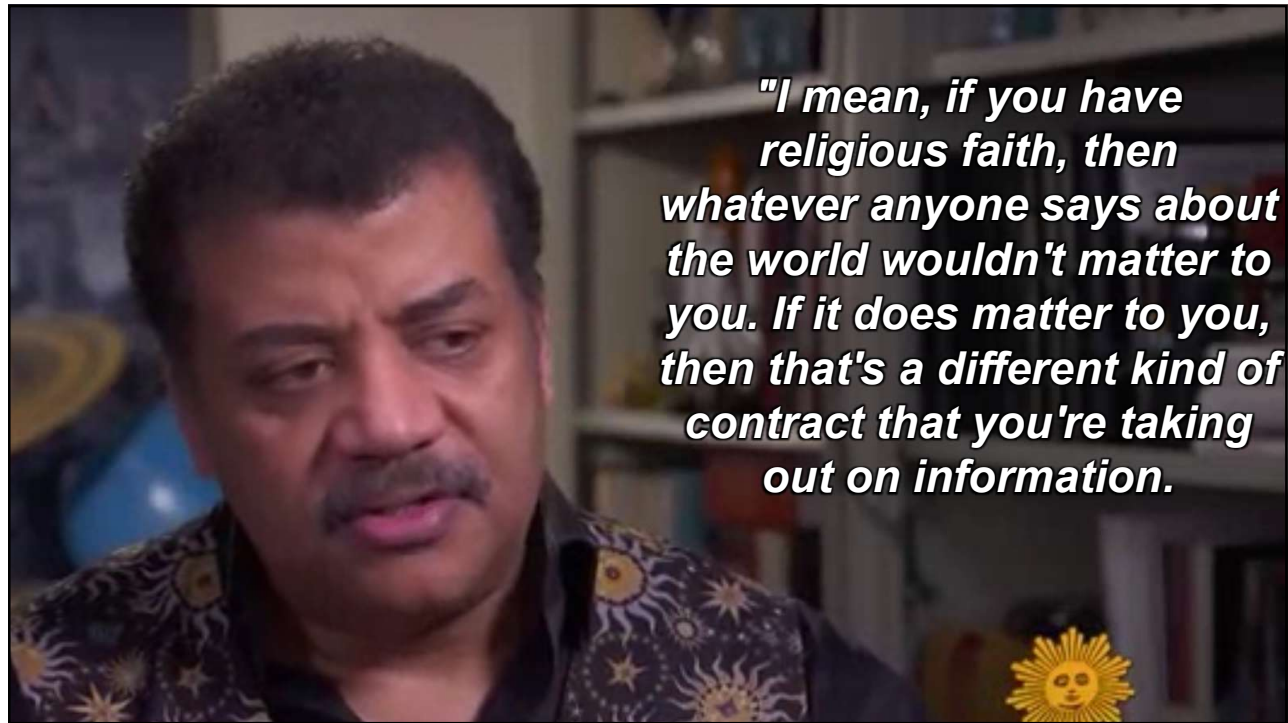


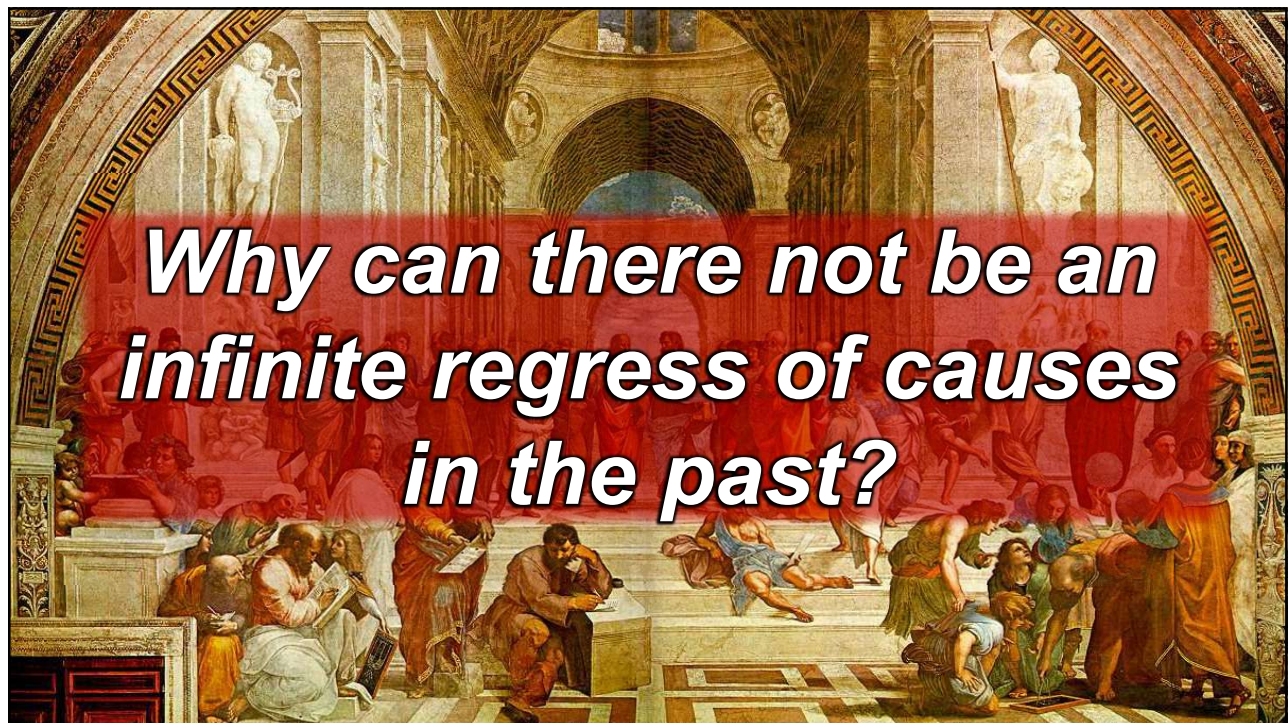
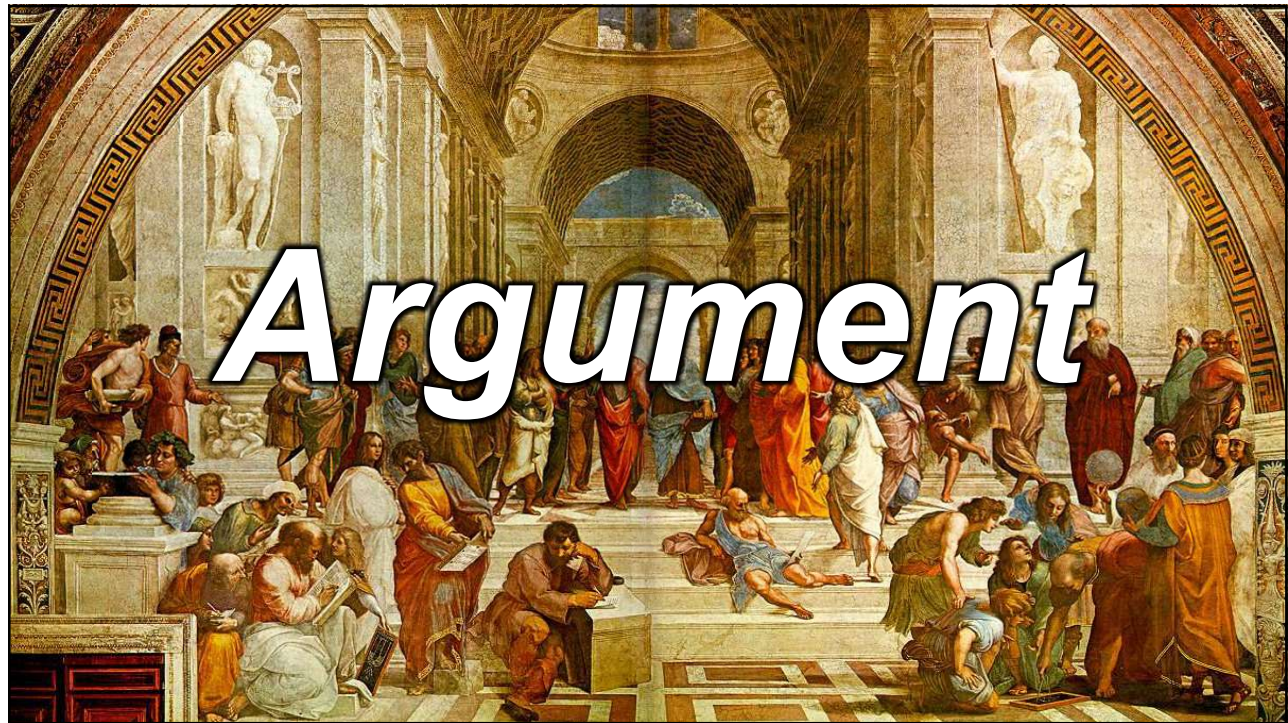
Granted Tyson may very well have engaged Christians who have the view that the Christian notion of 'faith' means believing in something in the absence of evidence.

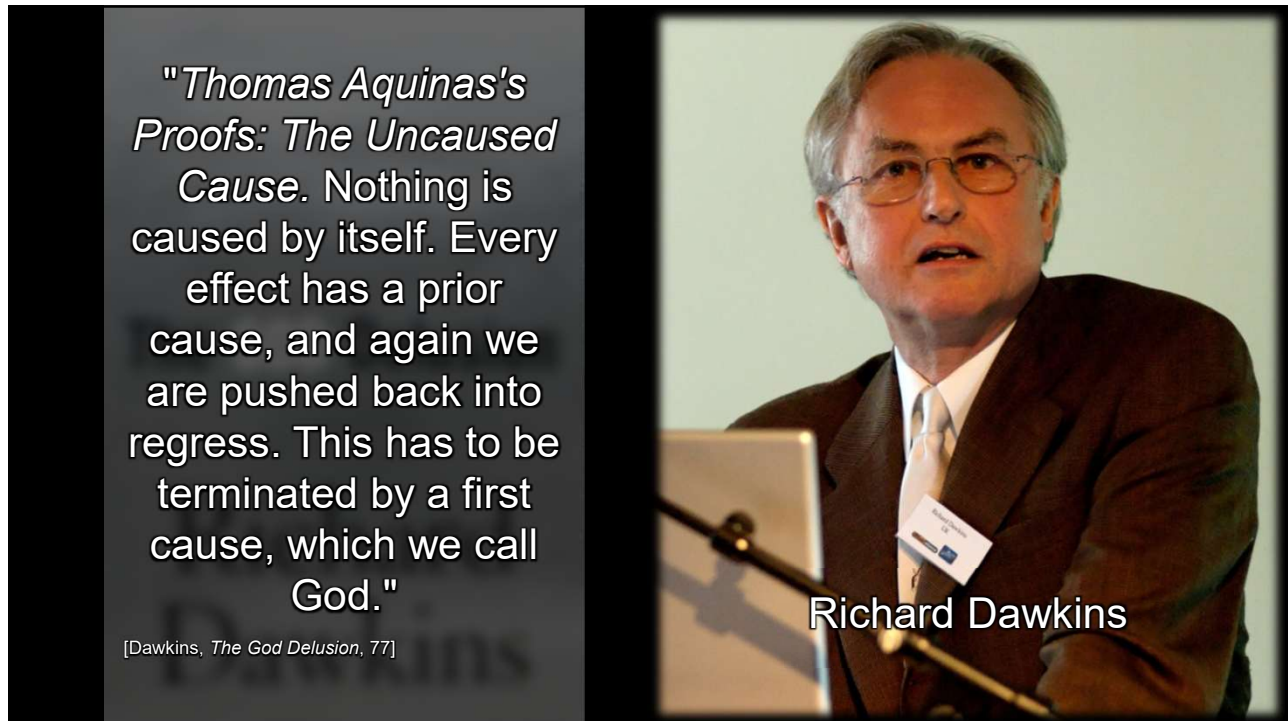
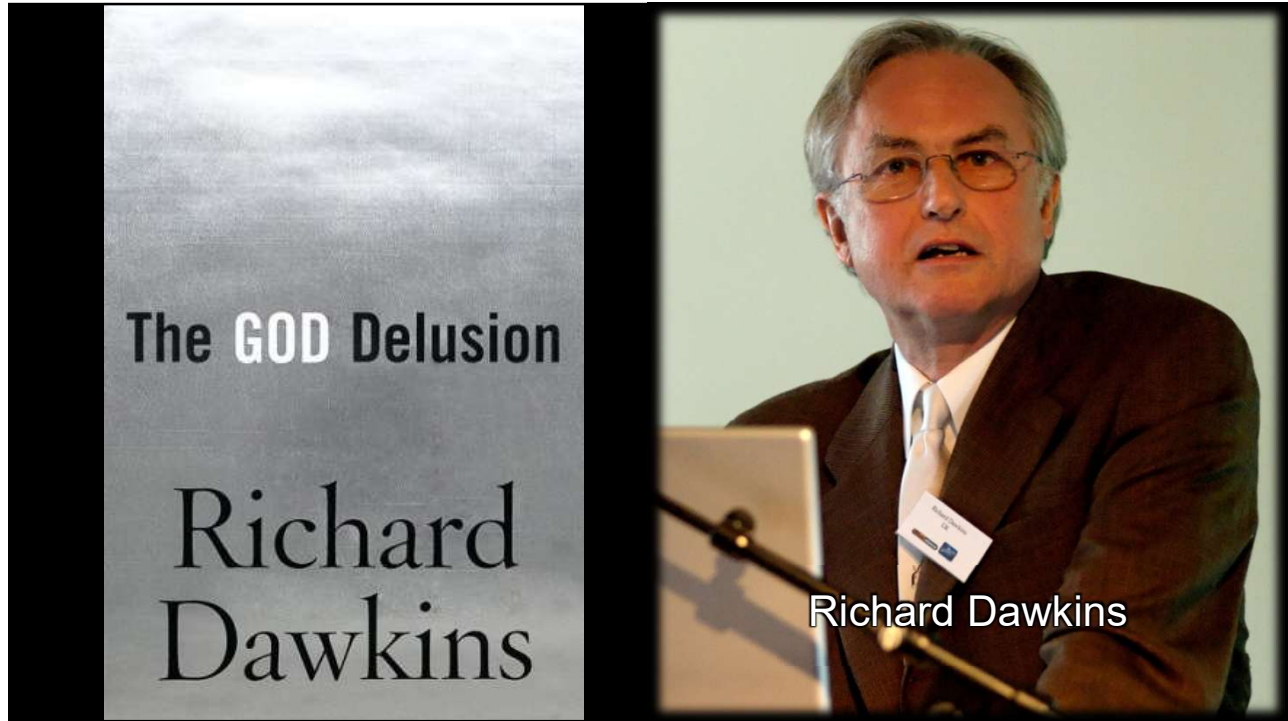
I hope to show that the classical / traditional view of faith says no such thing.

As a scholar, Tyson should have taken the time to try to understand the best and strongest version of the Christian notion of faith before he tried to give any critique.

*"And this is why religions are called faith, collectively. Because **you believe something in the absence of evidence**. That's what it is. That's why it's called faith. Otherwise, we'd call all religions 'evidence'. But we don't for exactly that reason."*







"All three of these arguments [by Aquinas] rely upon the idea of a regress and invoke God to terminate it. They make the entirely unwarranted assumption that God himself is immune to the regress."

[Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 77]



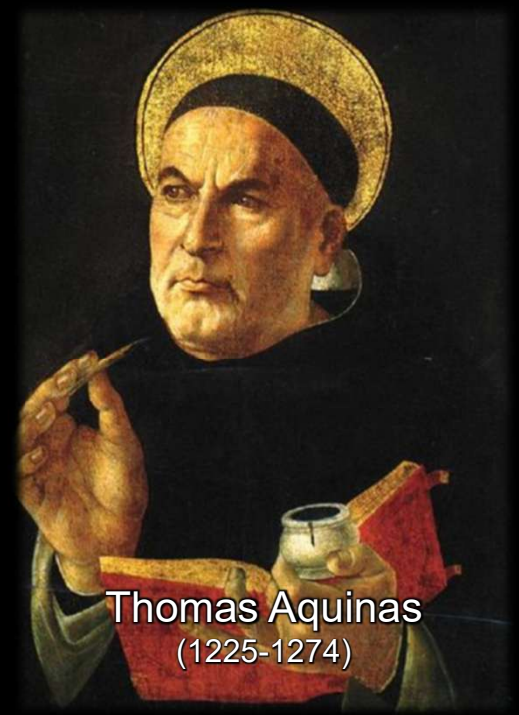
Richard Dawkins



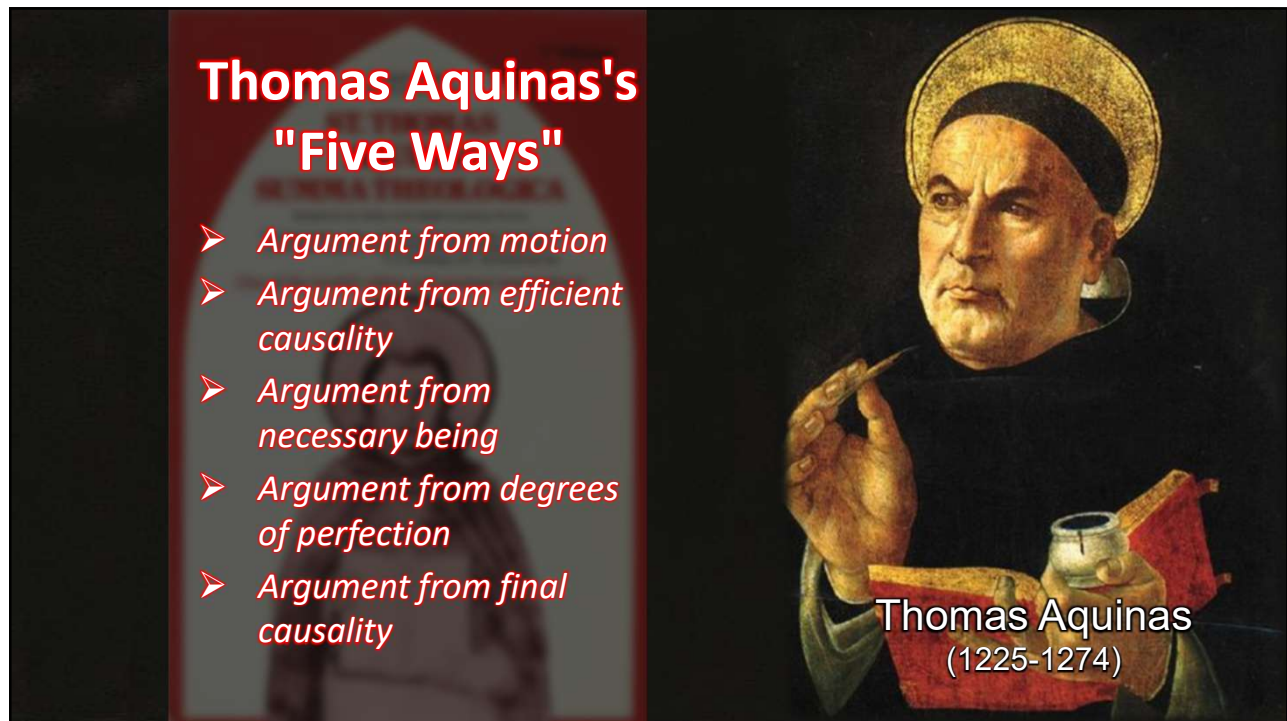
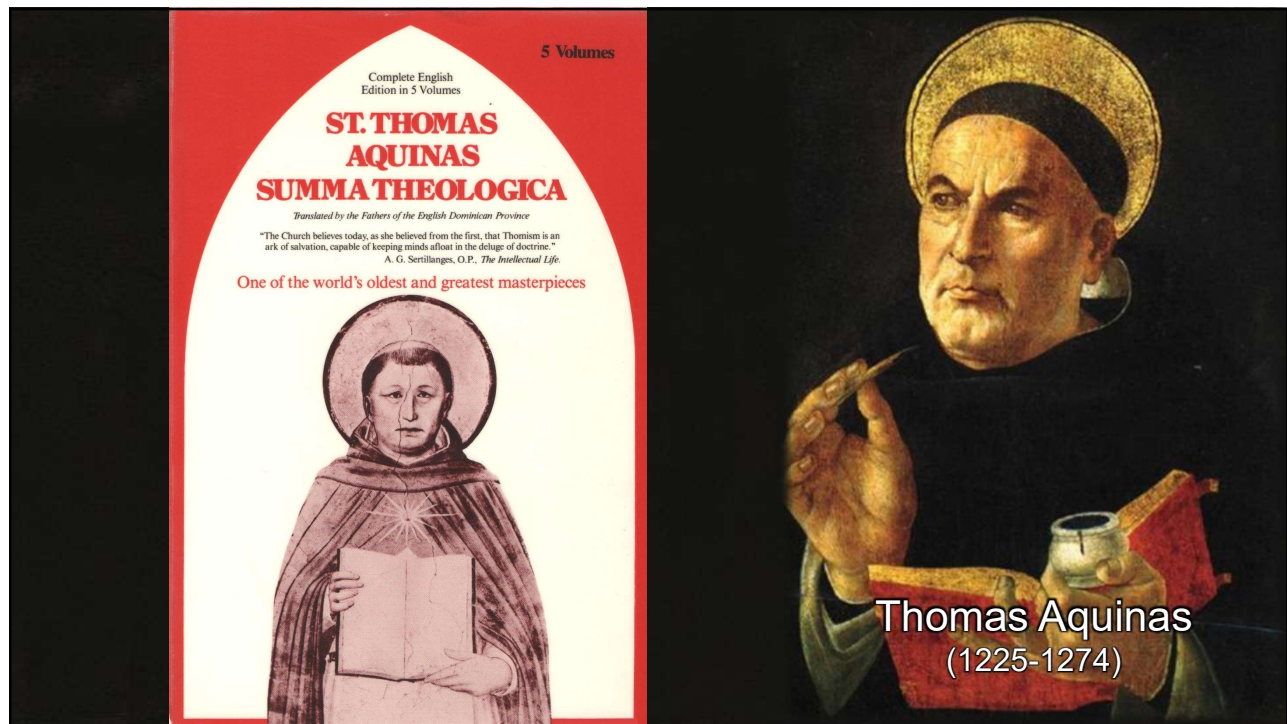
While it is true that Aquinas uses the expression "this cannot go on to infinity" in his famous arguments for God's existence ...

"... There must be a reality that is the cause of being for all other things, because it is pure being. If this were not so, we would go on to infinity in causes, for everything that is not pure being has a cause of its being, as has been said."

On Being and Essence, IV, §7, trans. Maurer, 56-57

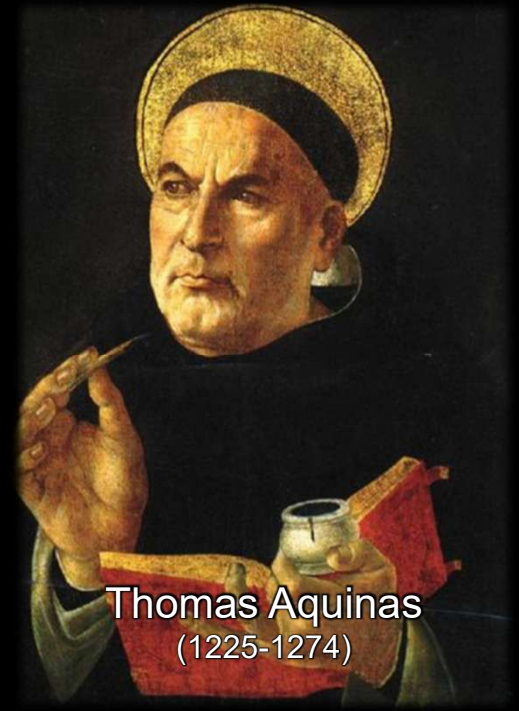


Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)



∞ First Way ∞

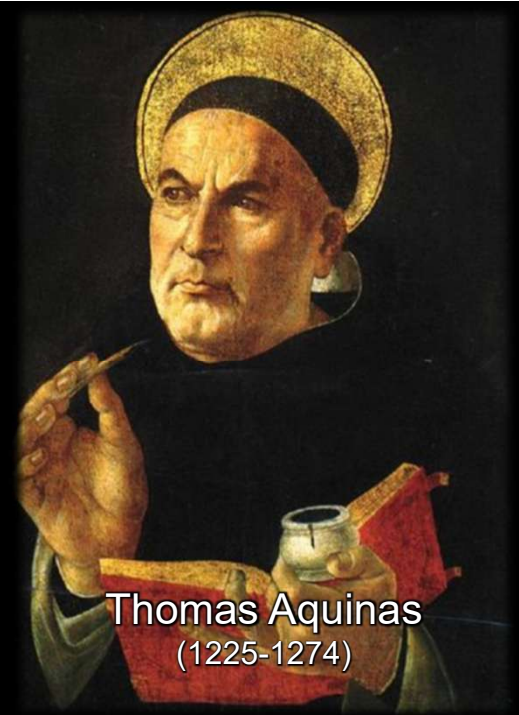
"If that by which it is put in motion be itself put in motion, then this also must needs be put in motion by another, and that by another again. **But this cannot go on to infinity**, because then there would be no first mover ..."



Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

∞ Second Way ∞

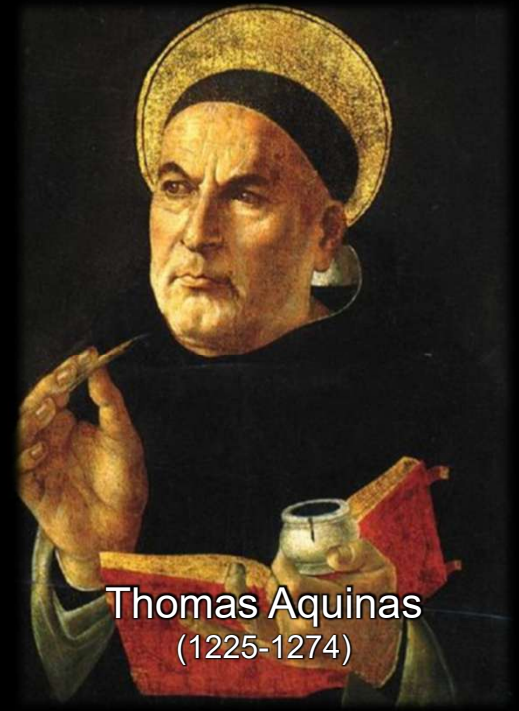
"Now in efficient causes, **it is not possible to go on to infinity**, because in all efficient causes following in order, the first is the cause of the intermediate cause."



Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

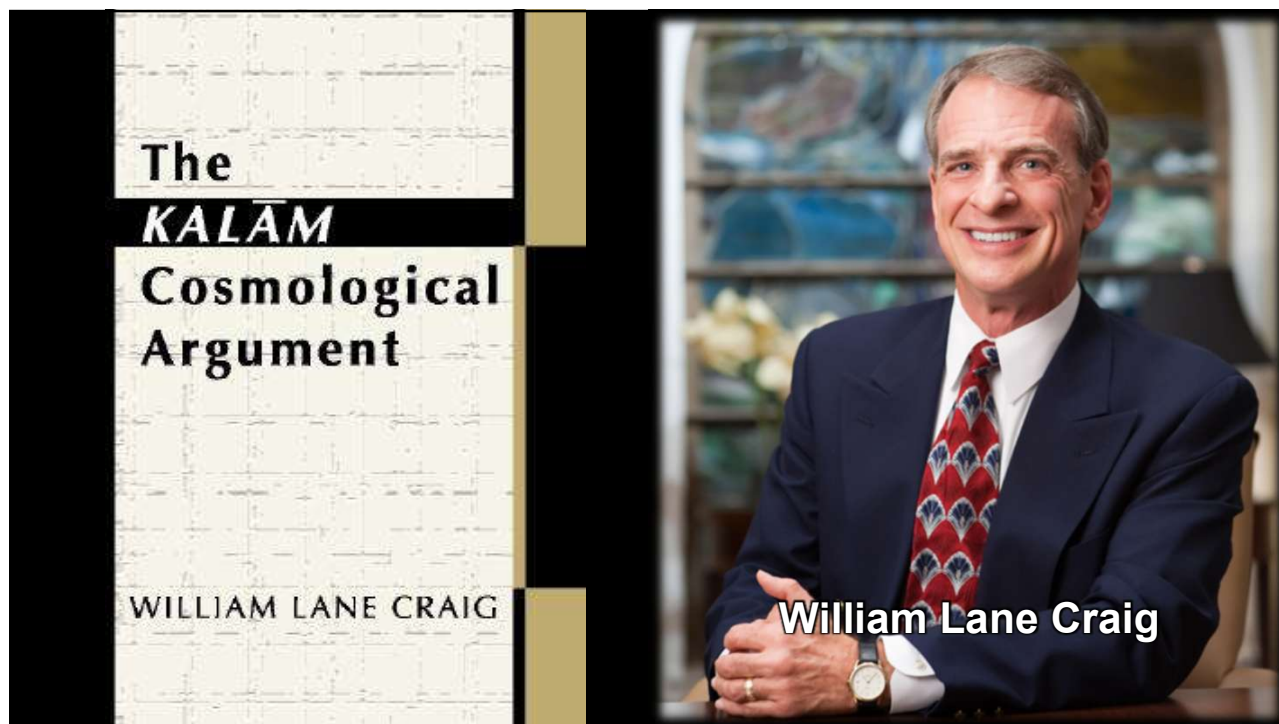
☞ Third Way ☞

"But every necessary thing either has its necessity caused by another, or not. Now **it is impossible to go on to infinity** in necessary things which have their necessity caused by another, as has been already proved in regard to efficient causes."



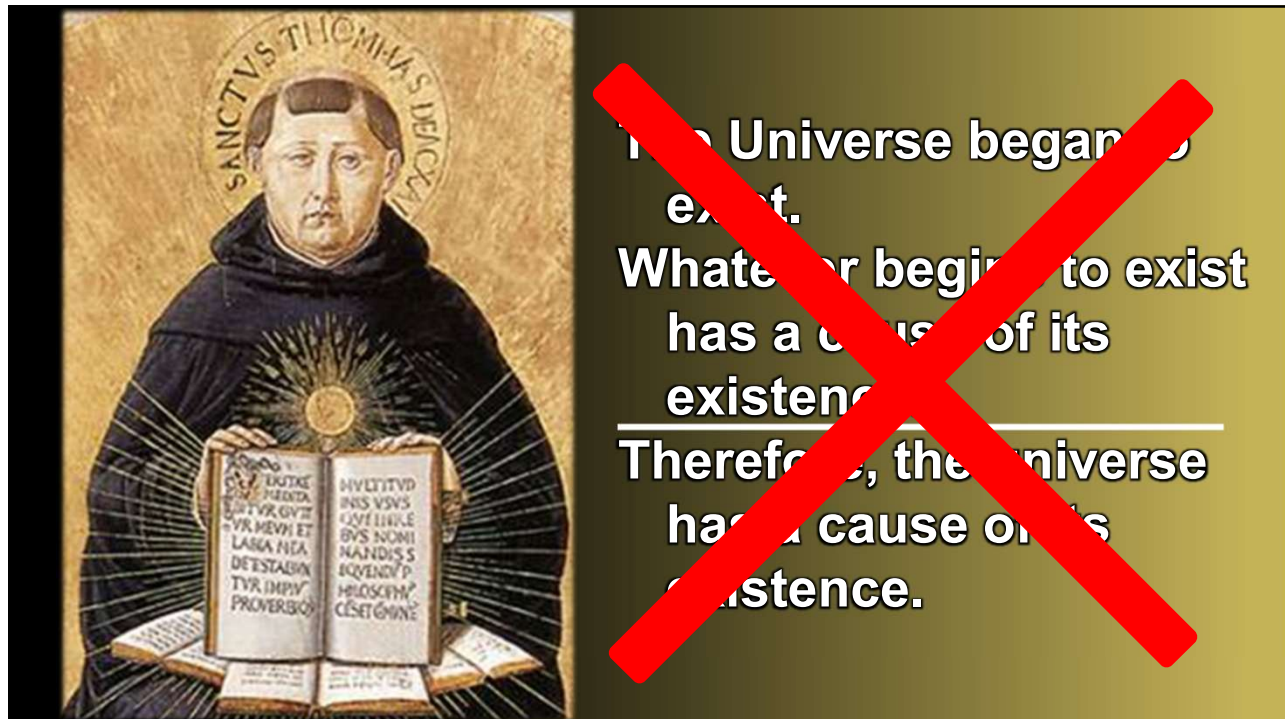
Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

Dawkins is mistaken in assuming that Aquinas is making an infinite regress argument like the Kalam Cosmological Argument.



<p>The <i>KALAM</i> Cosmological Argument</p> <p>WILLIAM LANE CRAIG</p>	<p>The Universe began to exist. Whatever begins to exist has a cause of its existence. <hr/>Therefore, the universe has a cause of its existence.</p>
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But this is not at all what Aquinas is arguing when he is denying the possibility of an infinite regress.



Note carefully the logic of the argument. Aquinas is not arguing:

"Since there cannot be a infinite regress, there must be a first cause."

Rather, he is arguing:

Since there must be first cause, there cannot be an infinite regress."

Note carefully the logic of the argument. Aquinas is not arguing:

"Since there cannot be a infinite regress, there must be a **first cause**."

Rather, he is arguing:

Since there must be **first cause**, there cannot be an infinite regress."

It is important to realize that the notion of 'first' here is not temporal but metaphysical.

Not: If (since) there cannot be an infinite regress, there must be a first cause. There cannot be an infinite regress. Therefore, there is a first cause.

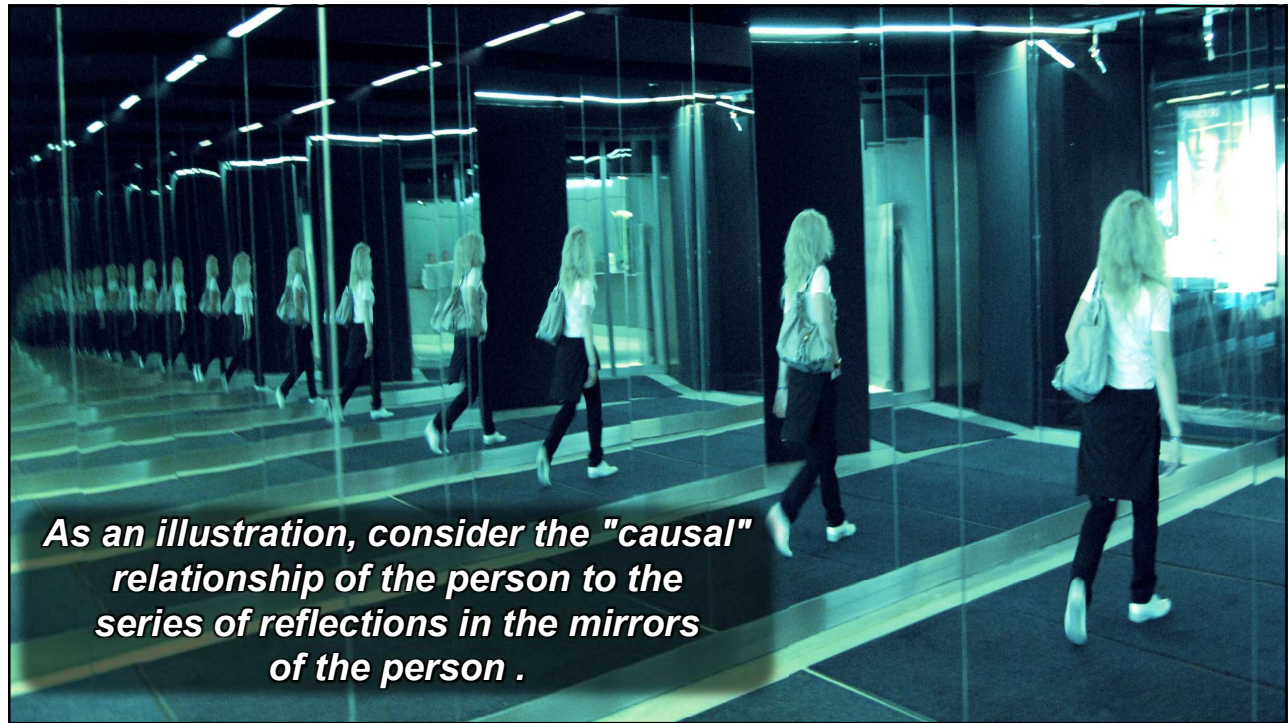
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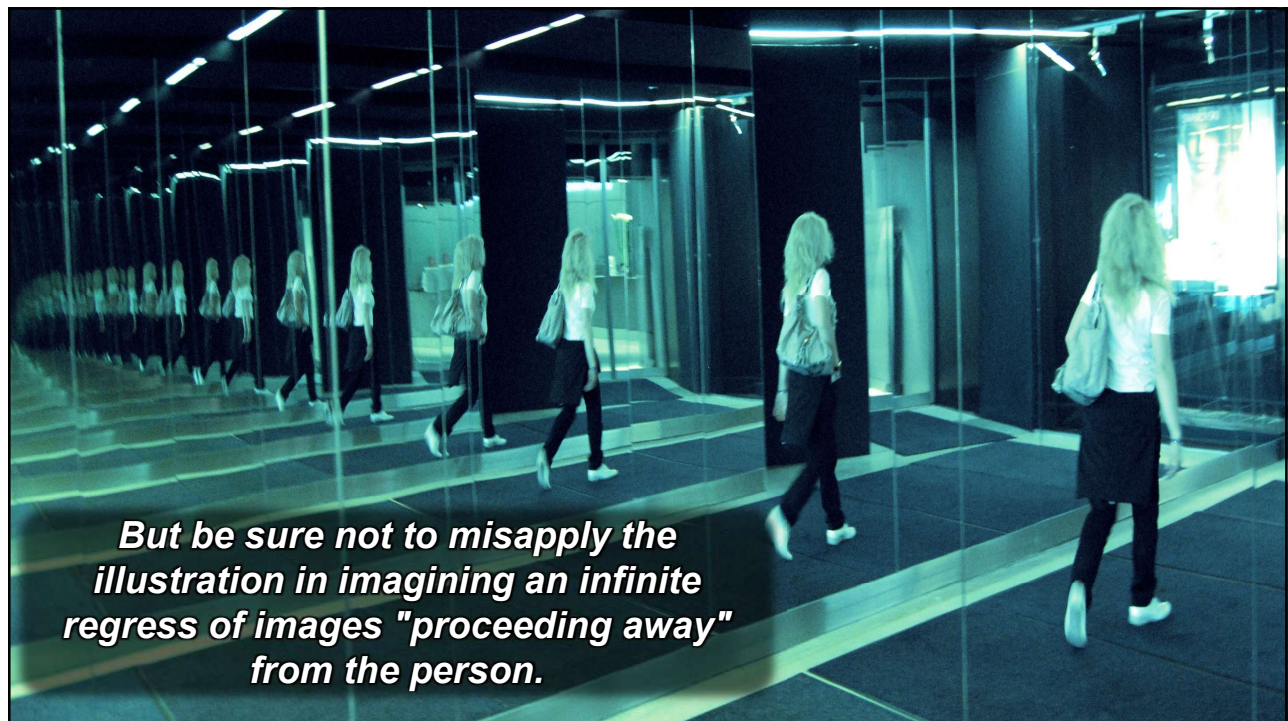
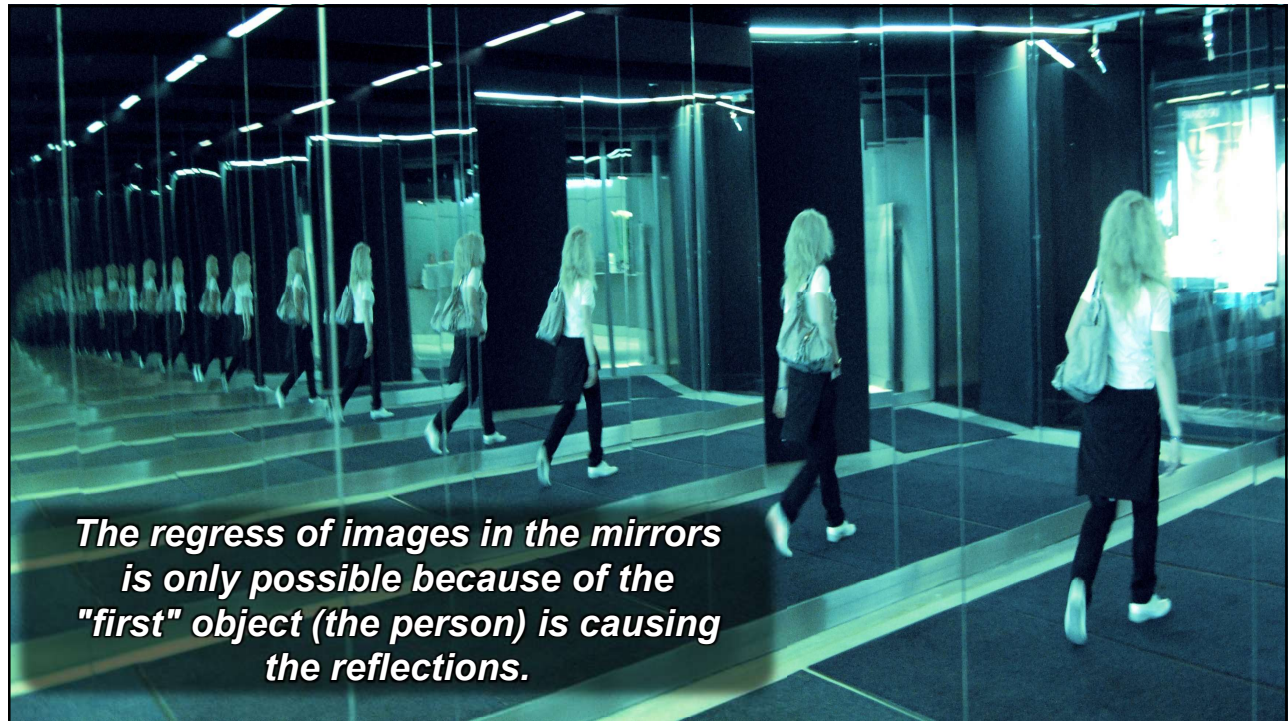
$$2. \sim IR / \therefore F$$

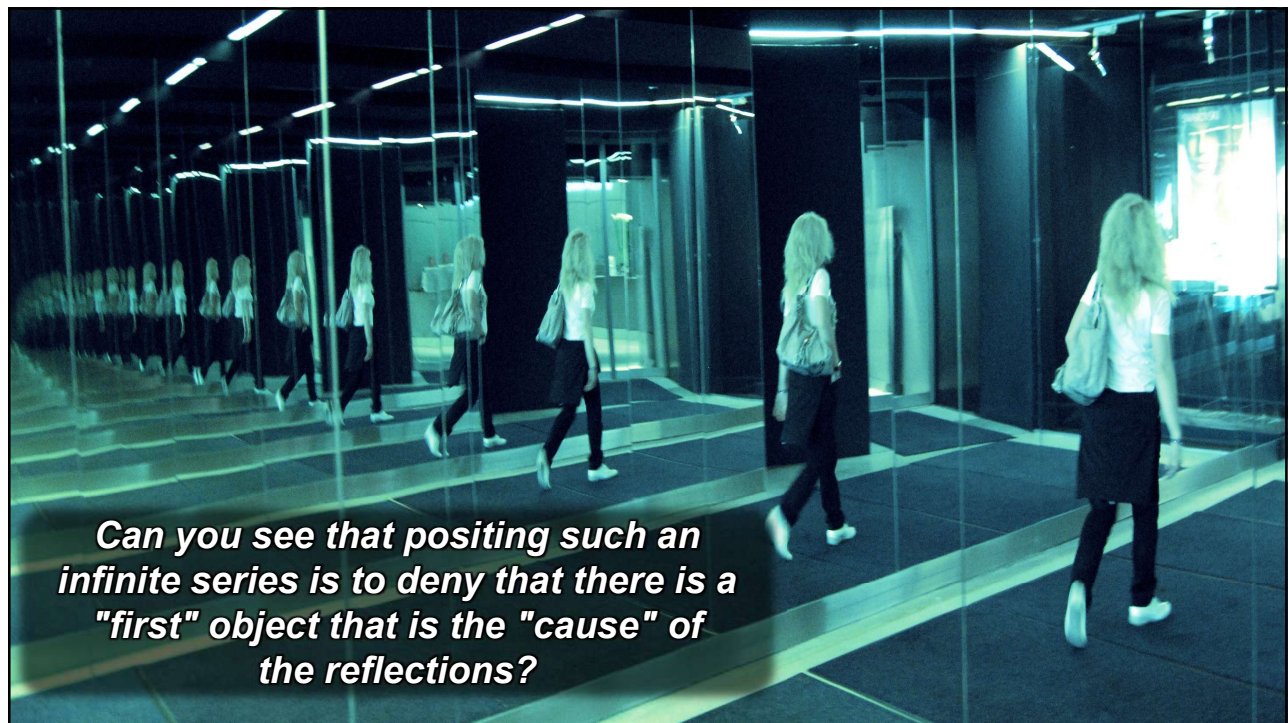
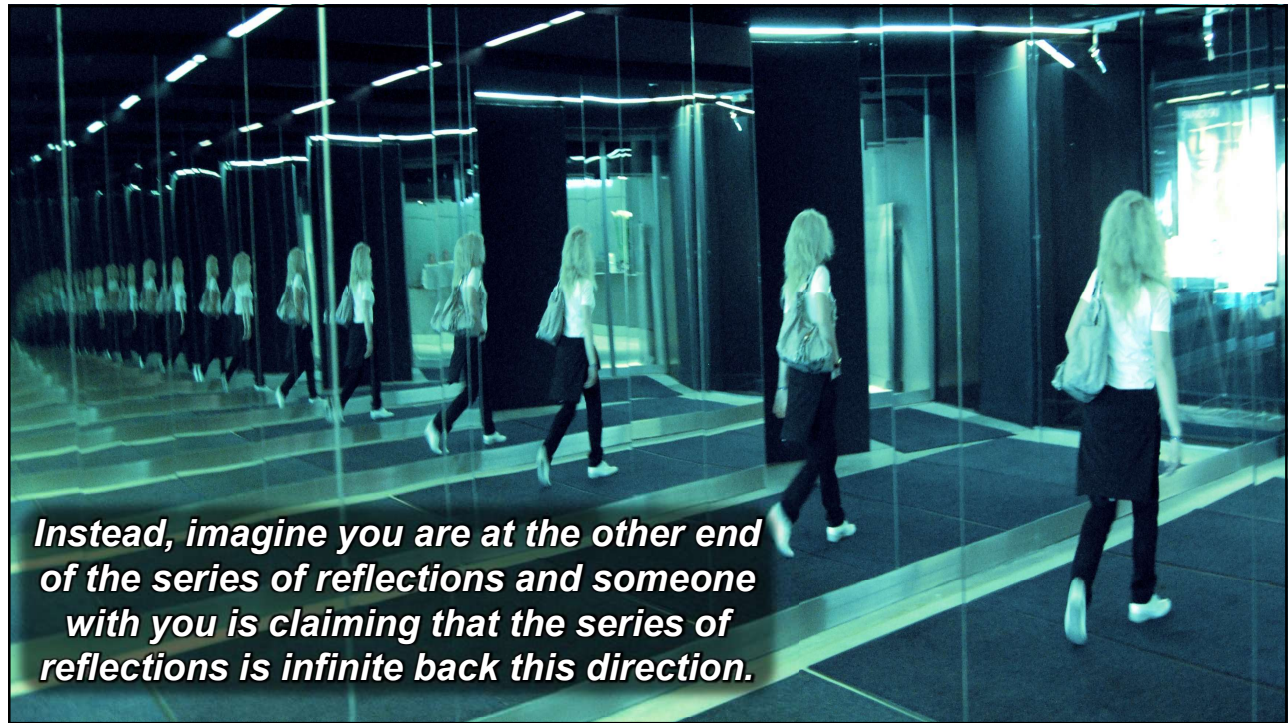
Rather: If (since) there is a first cause, there cannot be an infinite regress. There is a first cause. Therefore, there cannot be an infinite regress.

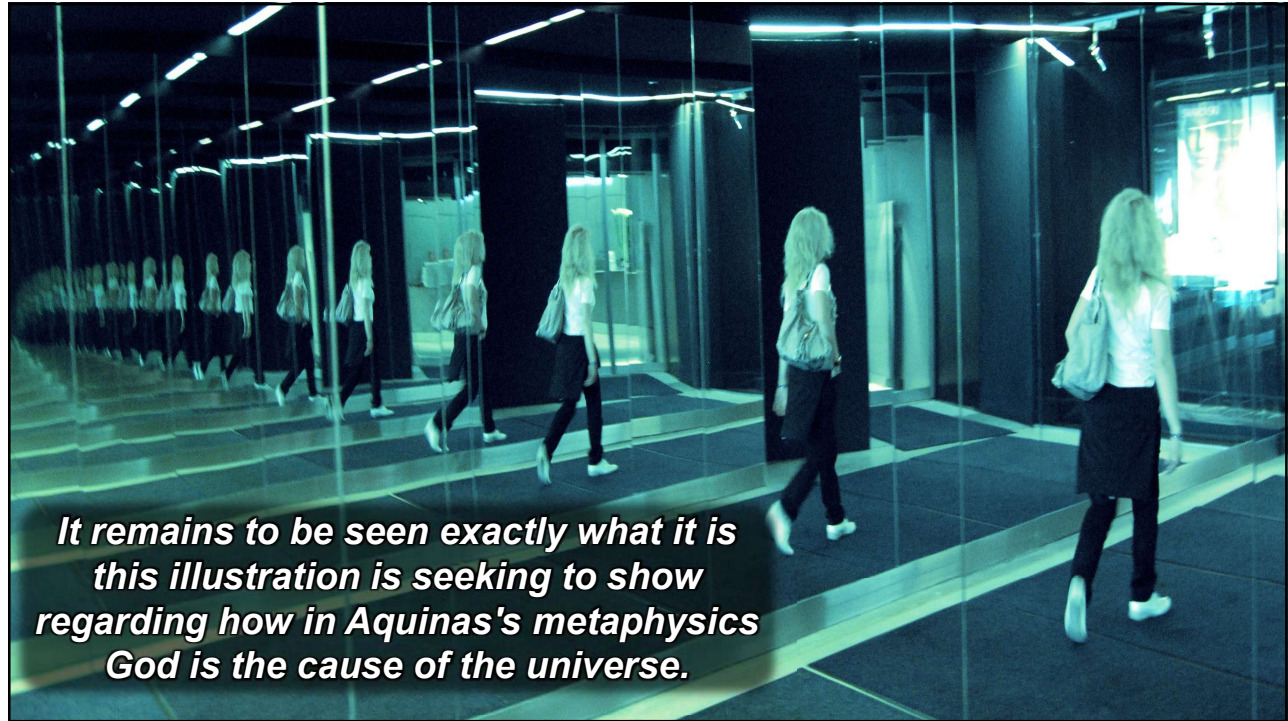
$$1. IR \supset \sim F$$

$$2. F / \therefore \sim IR$$

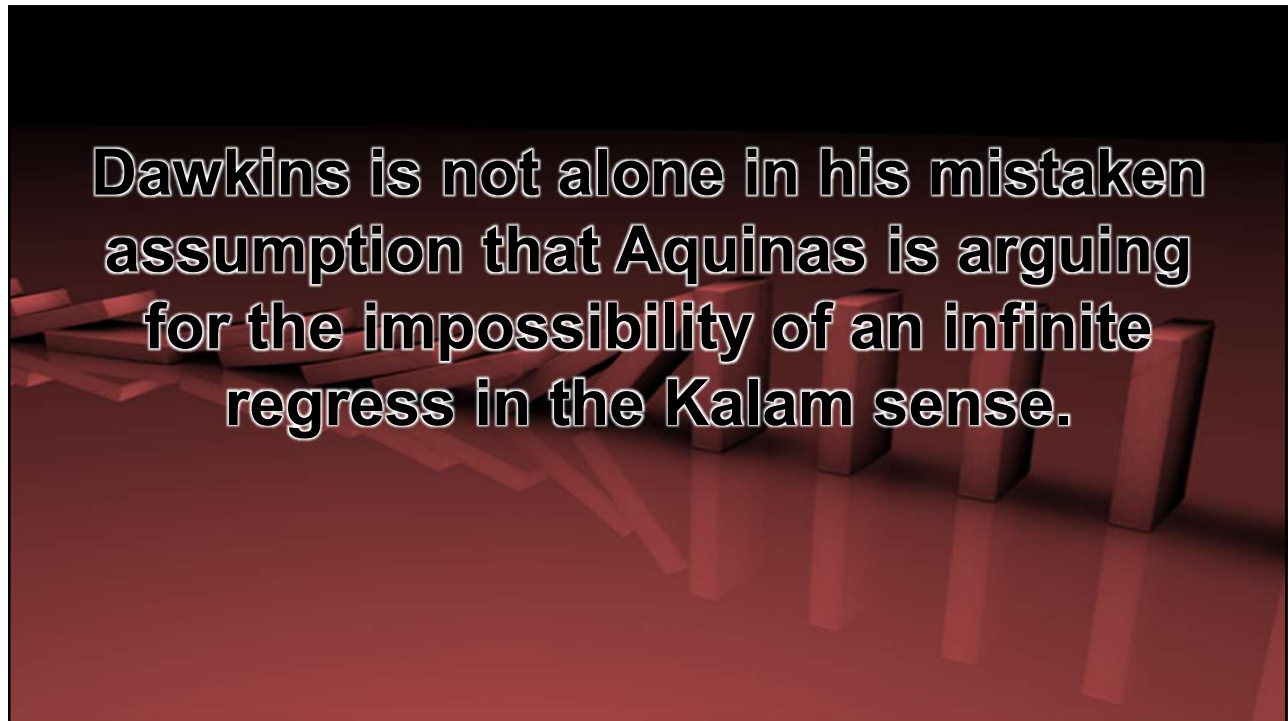




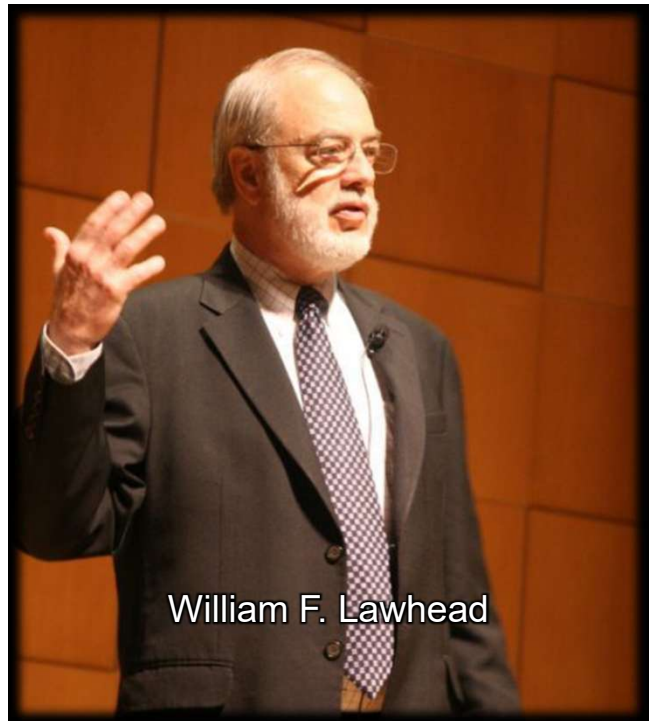




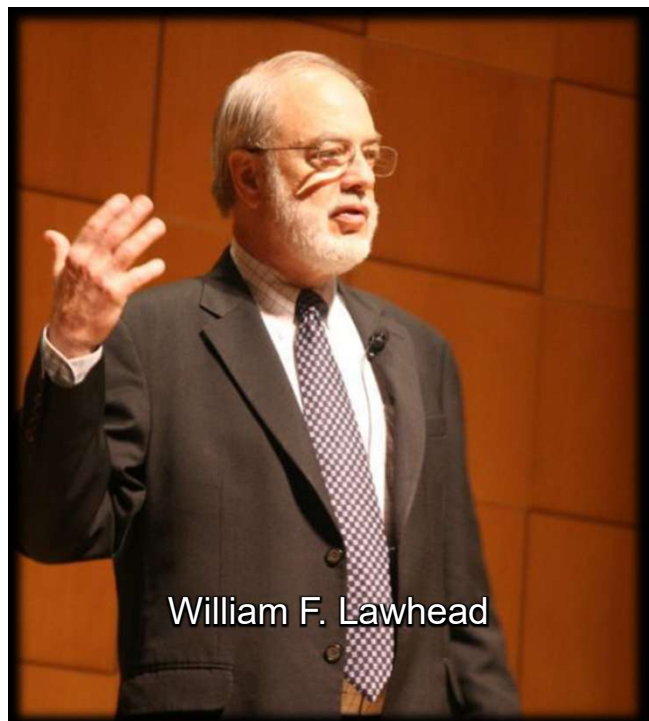
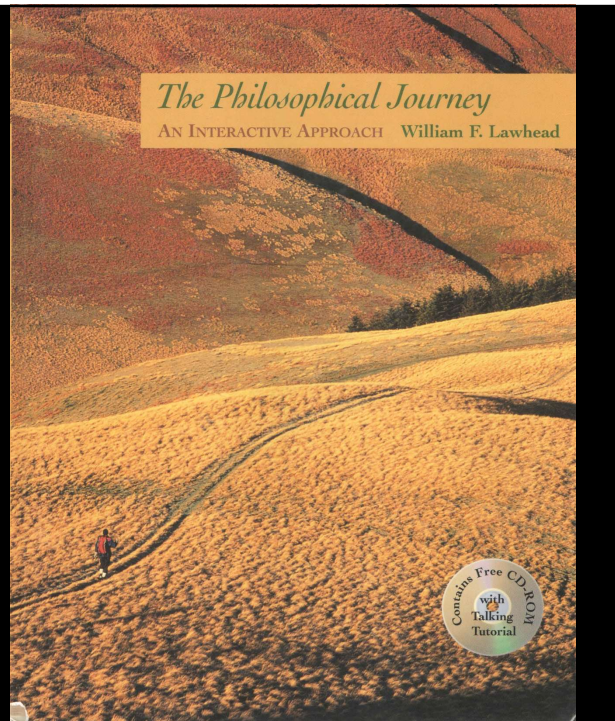
It remains to be seen exactly what it is this illustration is seeking to show regarding how in Aquinas's metaphysics God is the cause of the universe.



Dawkins is not alone in his mistaken assumption that Aquinas is arguing for the impossibility of an infinite regress in the Kalam sense.



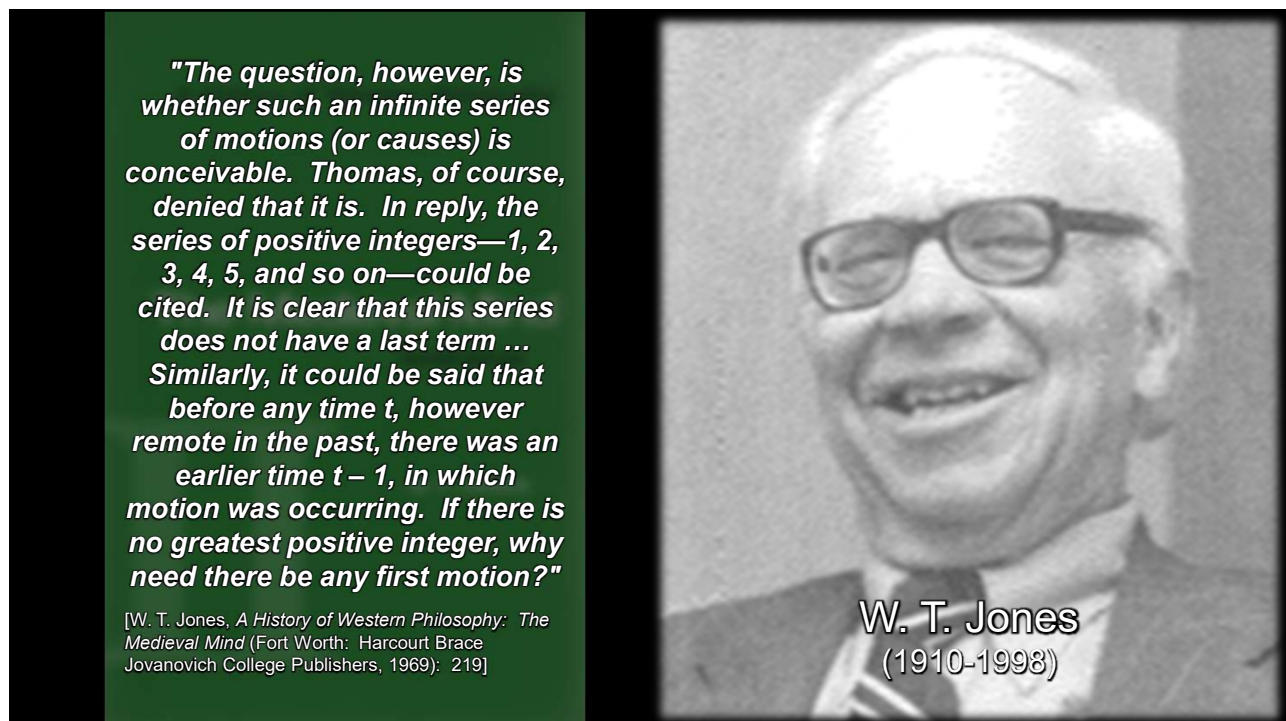
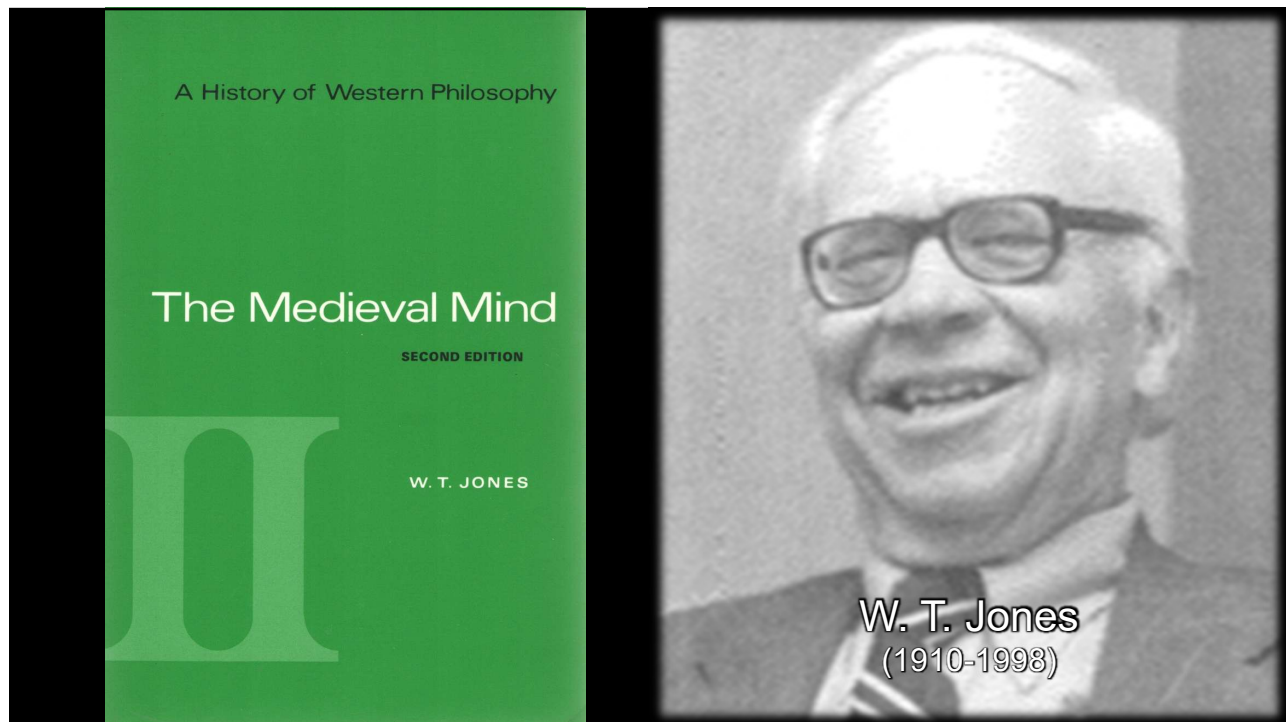
William F. Lawhead

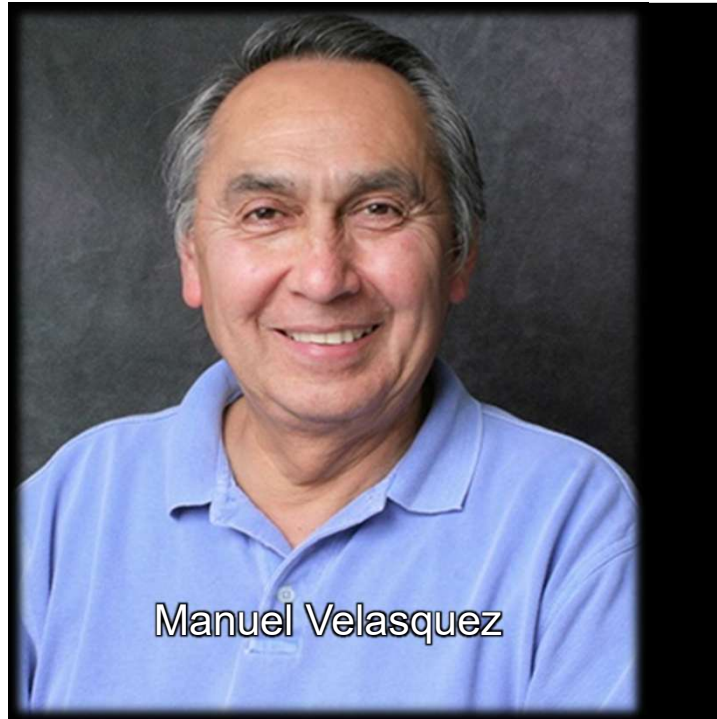


William F. Lawhead

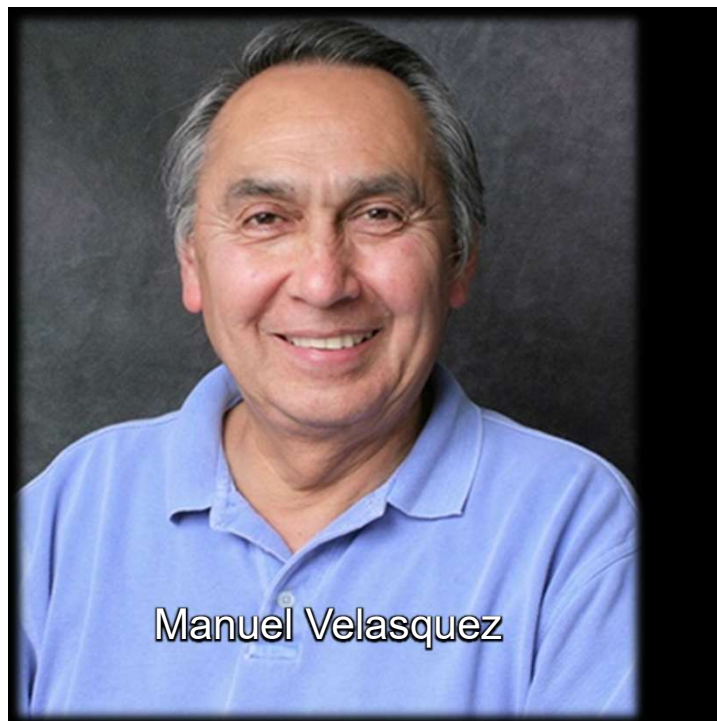
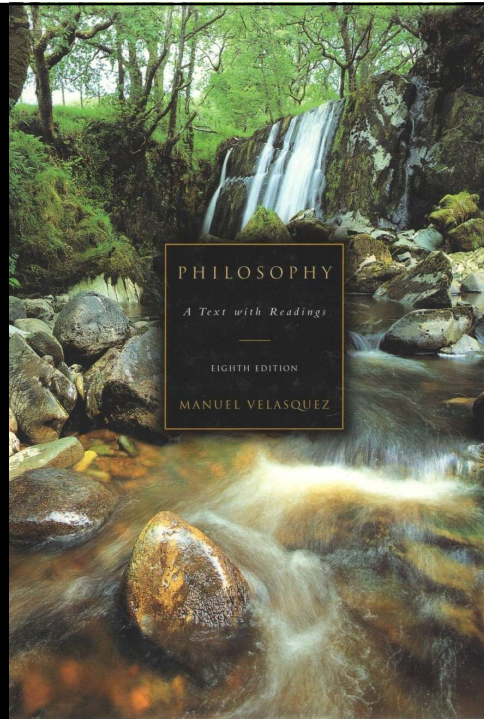
"Critics have had the most problems with the third premise of Aquinas's [second way] argument. Why can't there be an infinite series of causes? Isn't the series of whole numbers an infinite series?"

[William F. Lawhead, *The Philosophical Journey: An Interactive Approach*, 2 ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003): 321.]





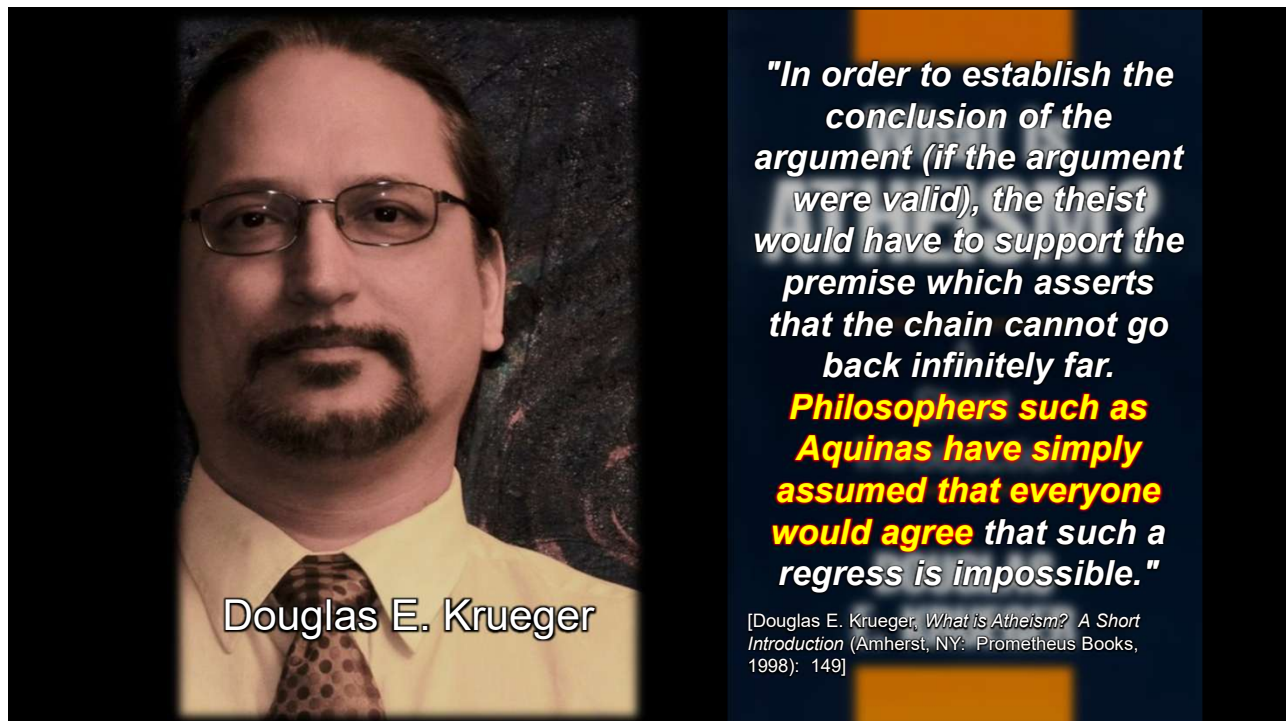
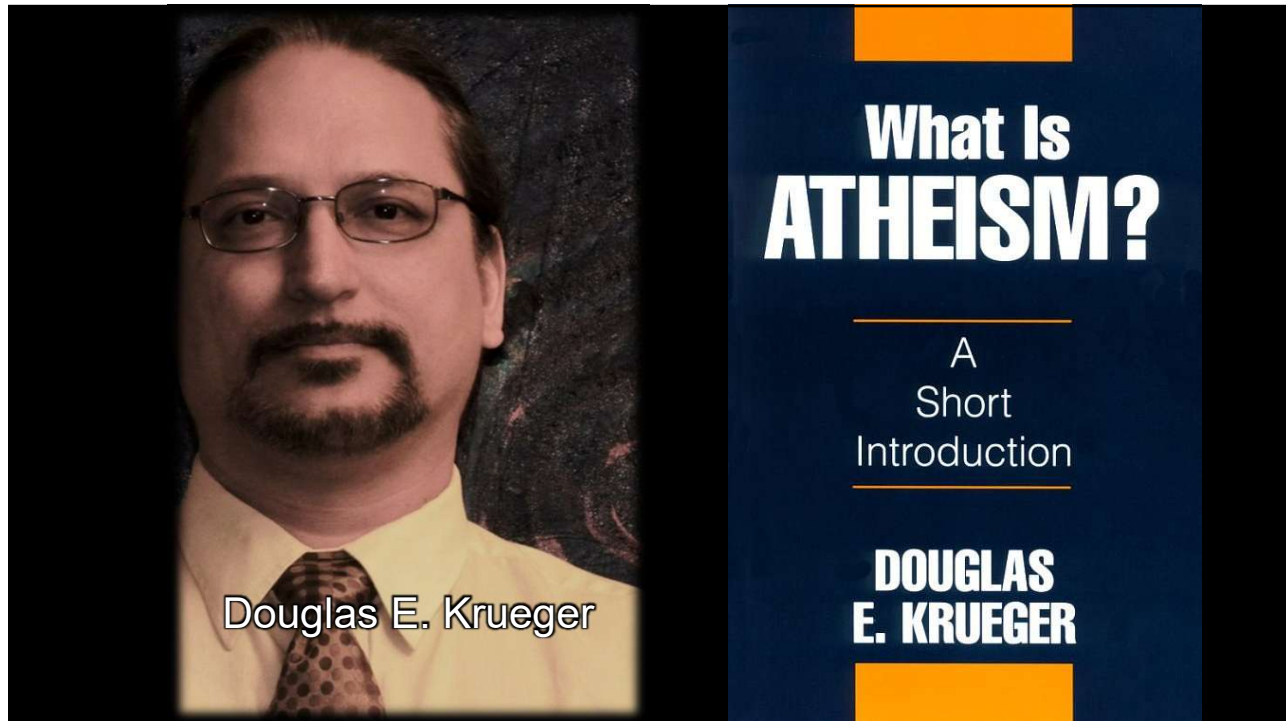
Manuel Velasquez

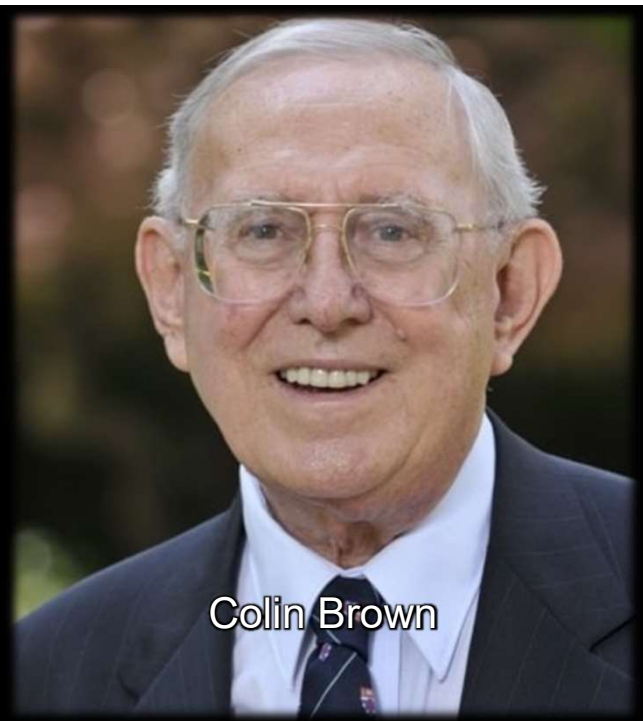
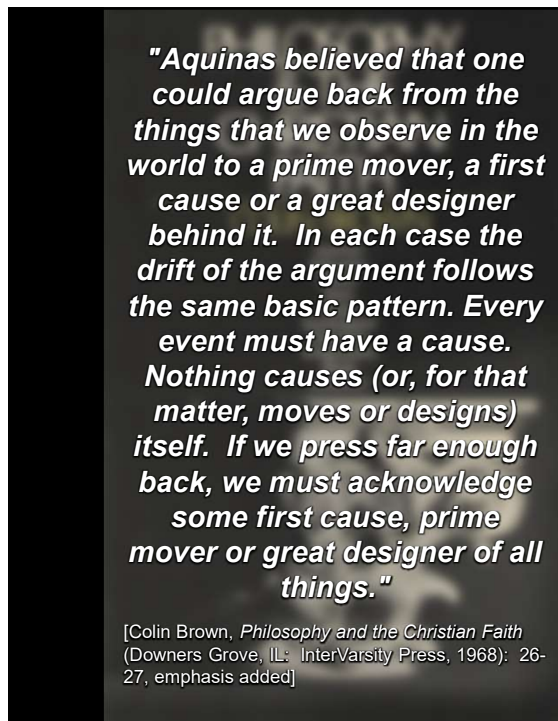
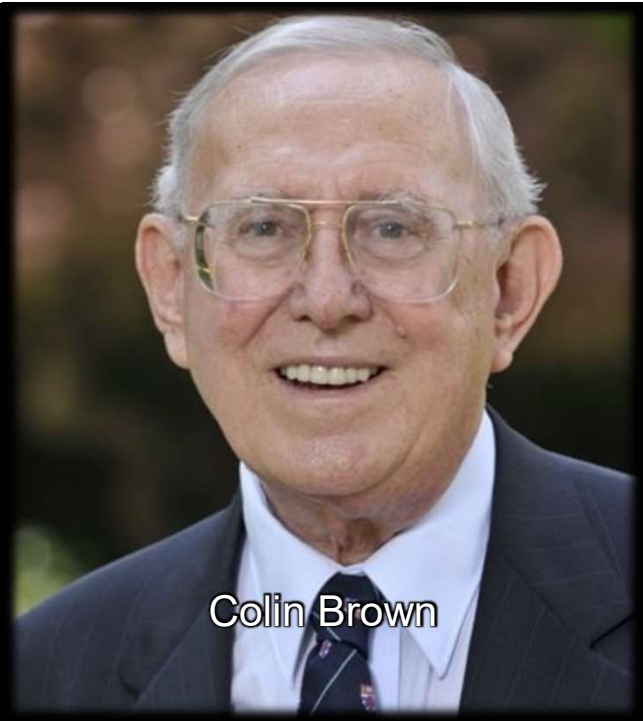
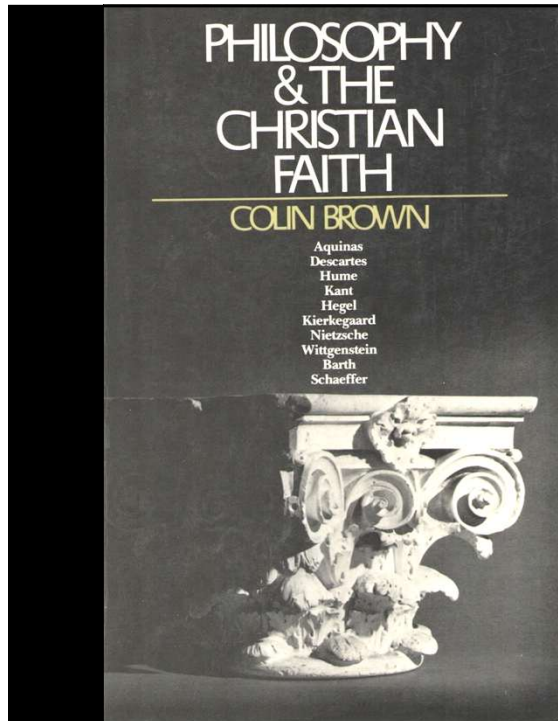


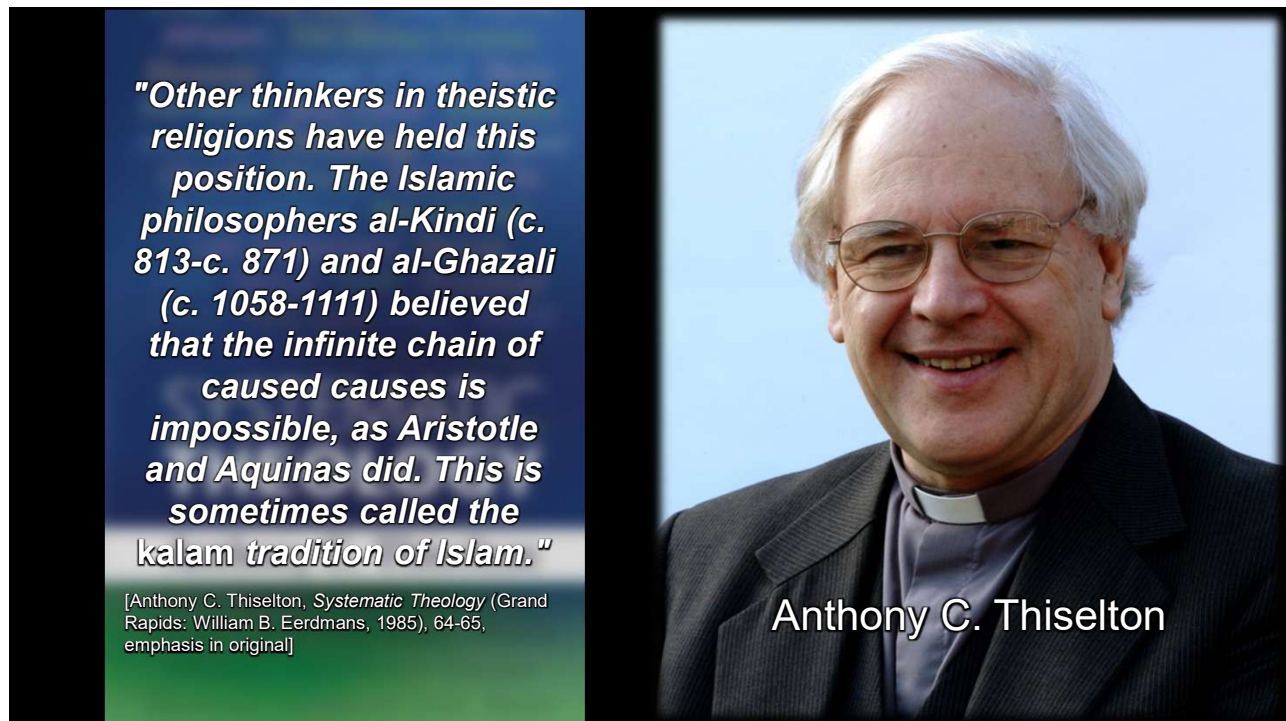
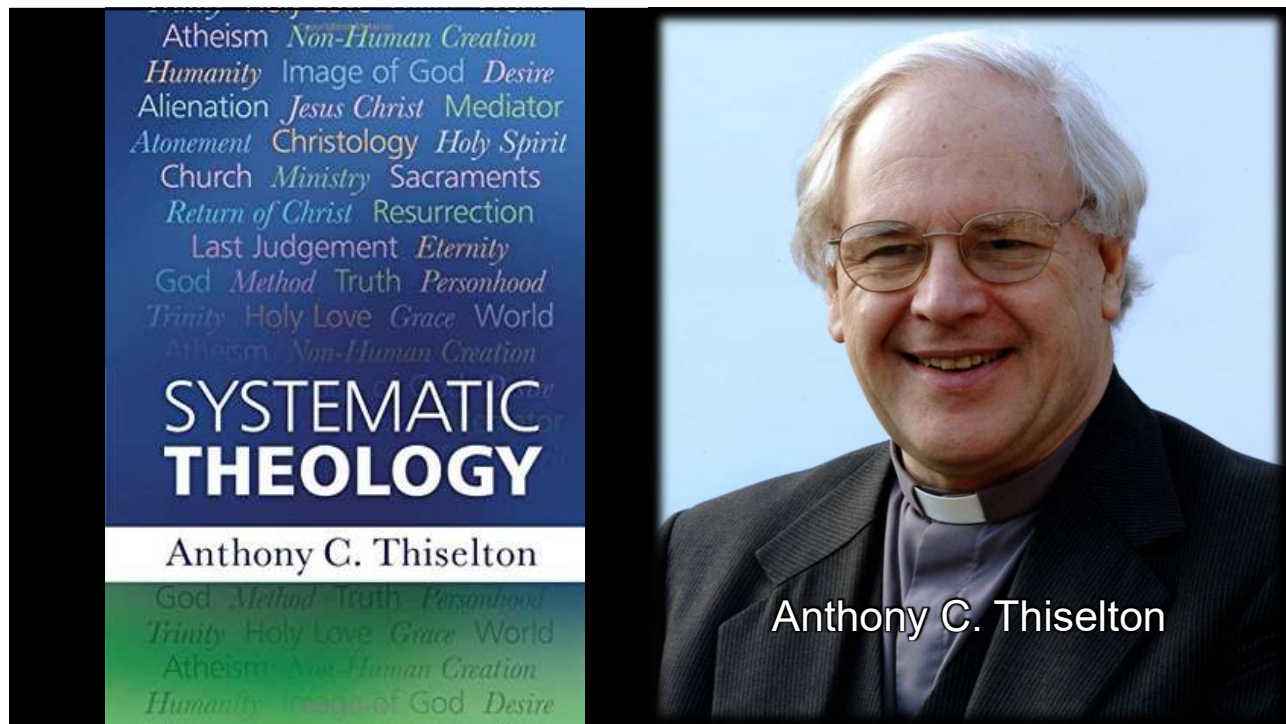
Manuel Velasquez

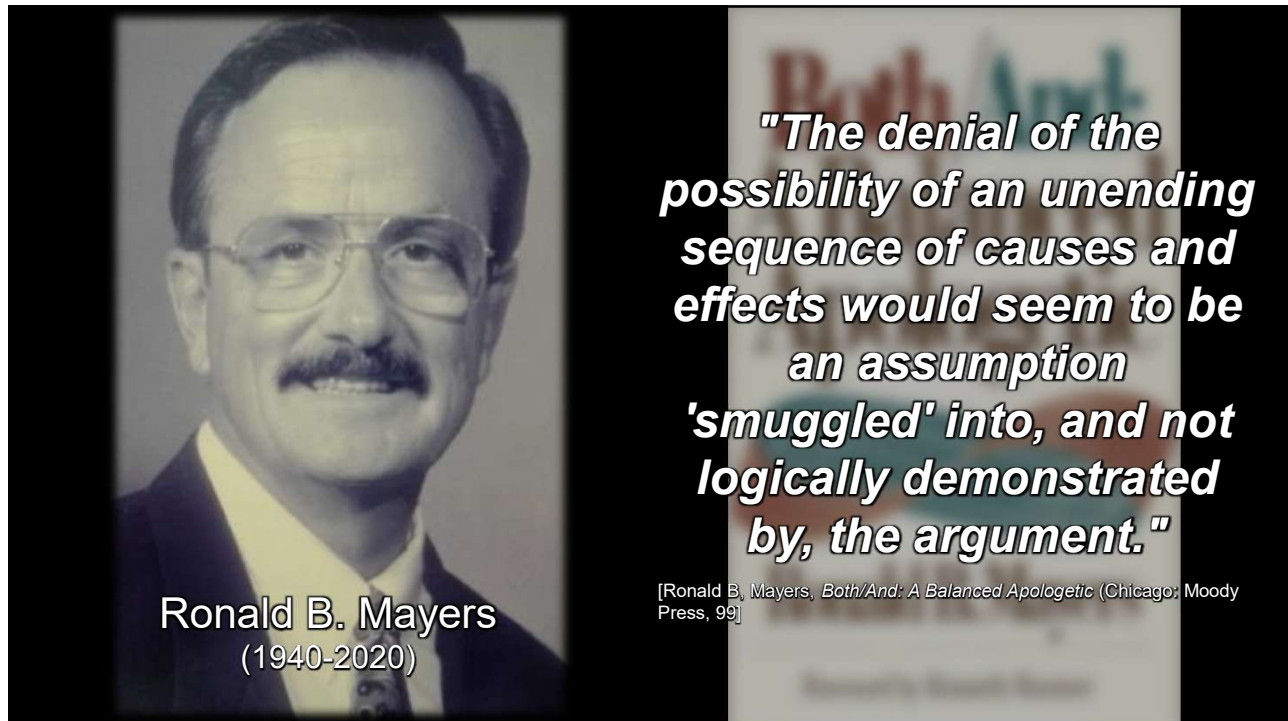
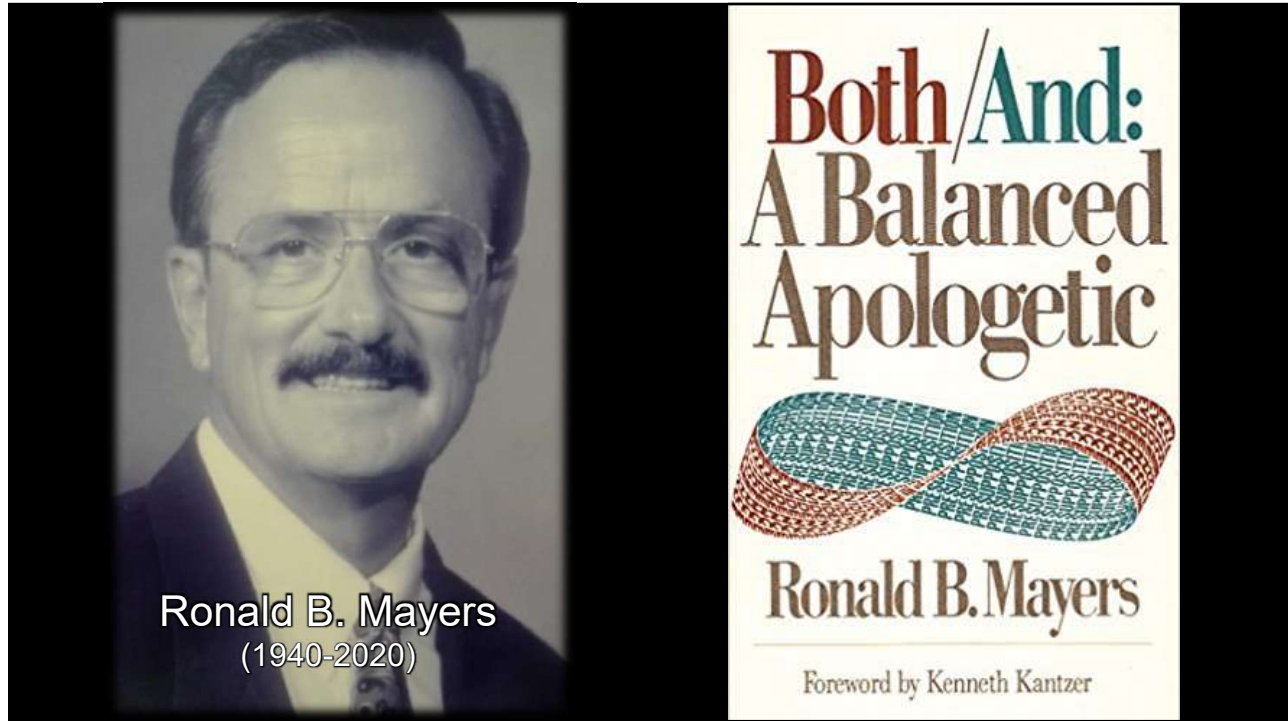
"Philosophers have raised two key objections to this [Thomistic] cosmological argument. The first concerns its contention that there can be no infinite regress in the causal sequences of the universe. But why not? Isn't it possible that the universe has simply existed forever and that things in it have simply been moving forever?"

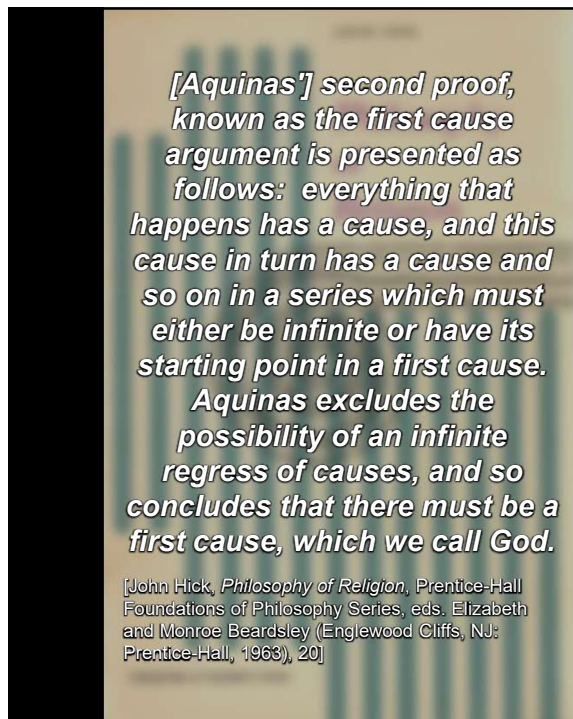
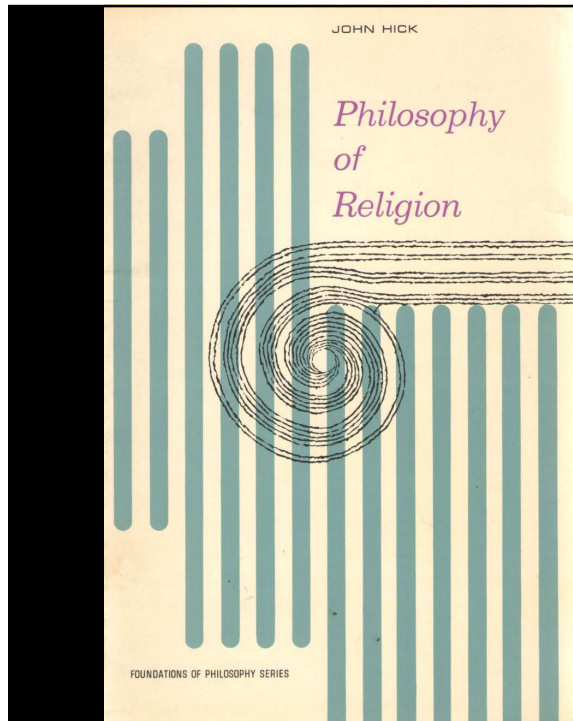
[Manuel Velasquez, *Philosophy: A Text with Readings*, 8 ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2002): 286, emphasis added]











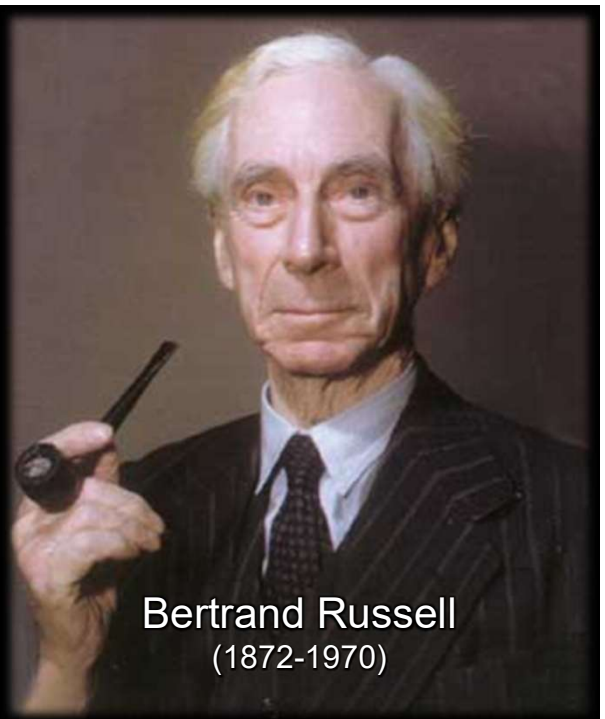
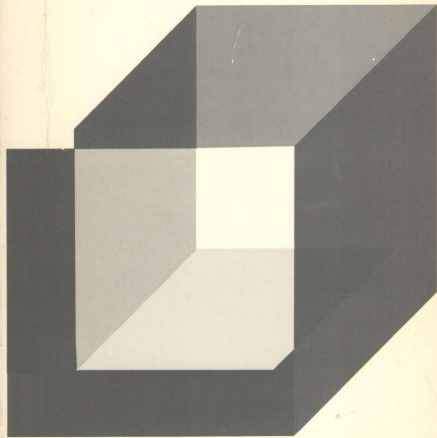
"The weakness of the [Second Way] argument as Aquinas states it lies in the difficulty (which he himself elsewhere acknowledges) of excluding as impossible an endless regress of events requiring no beginning."

[Hick, *Philosophy of Religion*, 21]



John Hick
(1922-2012)

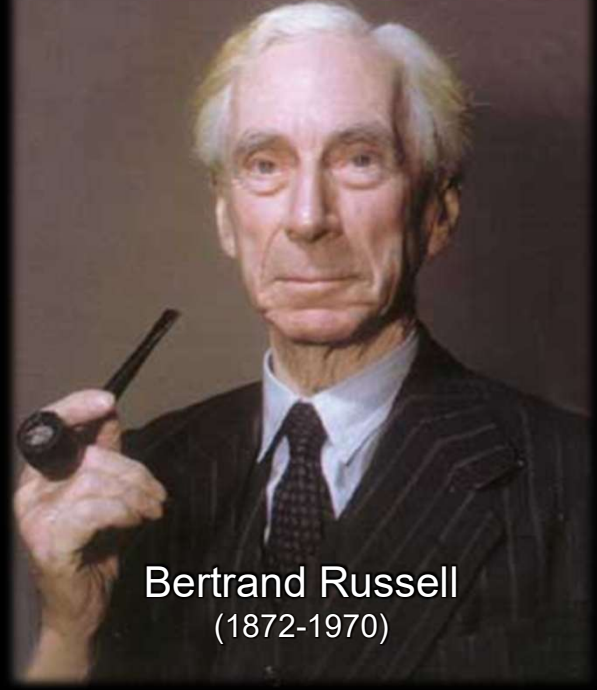
Bertrand
Russell
A History of
Western
Philosophy



Bertrand Russell
(1872-1970)

"In the Summa Theologiae, five proofs of God's existence are given. ... The Argument of the First Cause ... depends upon the impossibility of an infinite regress."

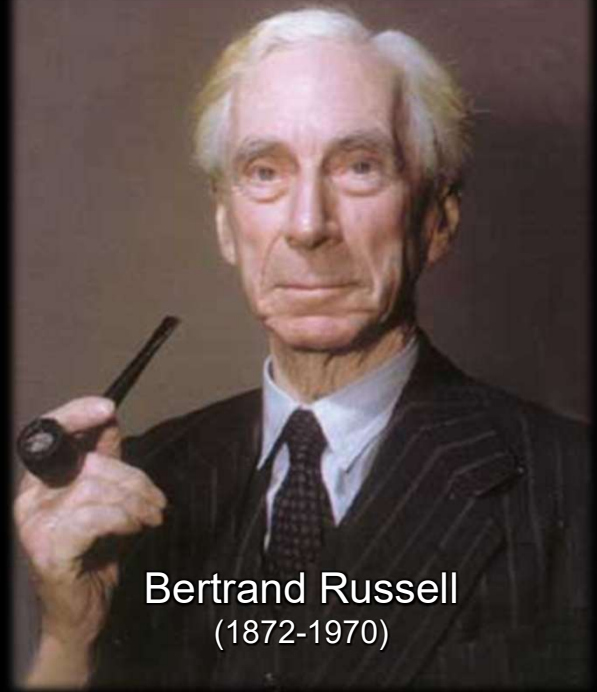
[Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972): 455. See also his *Why I Am Not a Christian and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957): 6-7.]



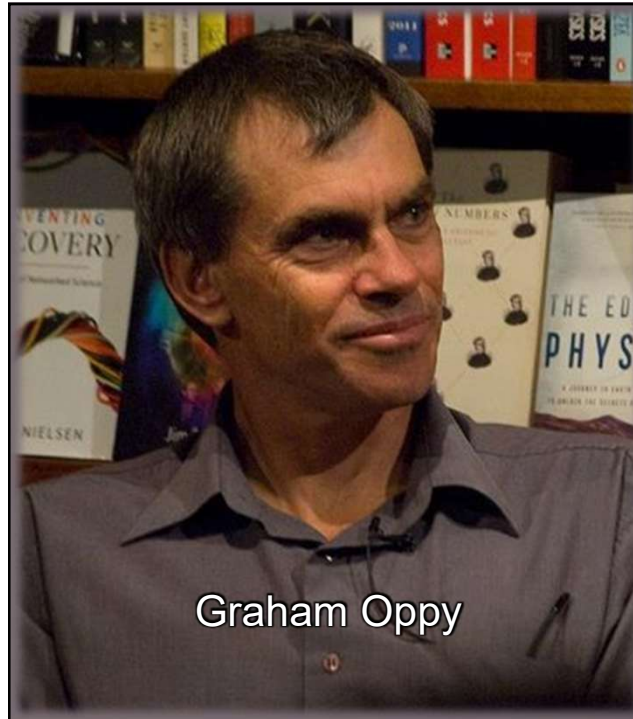
Bertrand Russell
(1872-1970)

"Take again the arguments professing to prove the existence of God. All of these, except the one from teleology in lifeless things, depend upon the supposed impossibility of a series having no first term. Every mathematician know that there is no such impossibility; the series of negative integers ending with minus one is an instance to the contrary."

[Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972): 462]

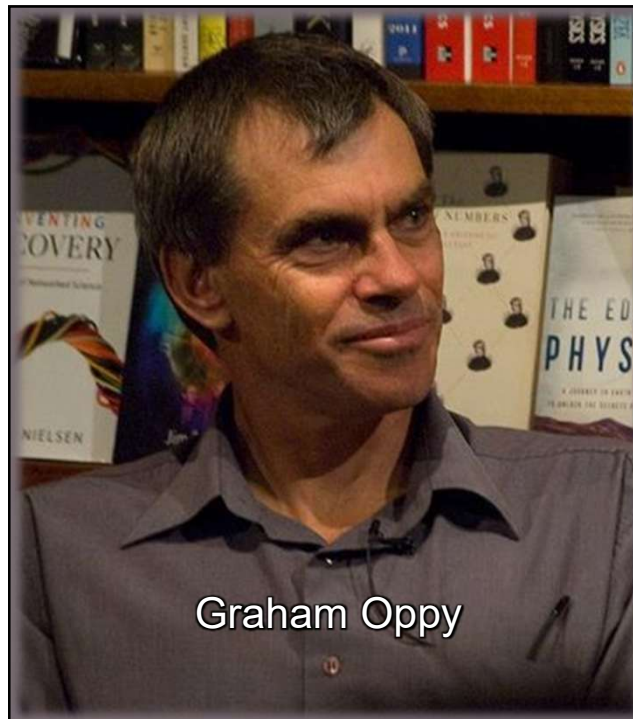


Bertrand Russell
(1872-1970)



Graham Oppy

In his examination of Thomas Aquinas's *Second Way*, Oppy remarks: "It is very hard to see how one could construct a cogent argument for the claim that there cannot be an infinite regress of efficient causes. Perhaps one might hope to argue from Big Bang cosmology to the claim that there *is* no infinite regress of efficient causation, but—as we shall go on to argue in connection with the *kalām* syllogism—



Graham Oppy

"it seems to be the case both that there can be infinite regresses of efficient causation within Big Bang universes and that efficient causation can extend 'through' the initial singularity in Big Bang universes. If this is right, then it is hard to see how one could hope to mount an *empirical* argument for the claim that there is no infinite regress of efficient causation in our world."

[Graham Oppy, *Arguing about Gods* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 101]

Note that Oppy assumes that the infinite regress of Aquinas's cosmological argument is the same as the infinite regress of the Kalam cosmological argument.

In his examination of Thomas Aquinas's *Second Way*, Oppy remarks: "It is very hard to see how one could construct a cogent argument for the claim that there cannot be an infinite regress of efficient causes. Perhaps one might hope to argue from Big Bang cosmology to the claim that there *is* no infinite regress of efficient causation, but—as we shall go on to argue in connection with the *kalām* syllogism—

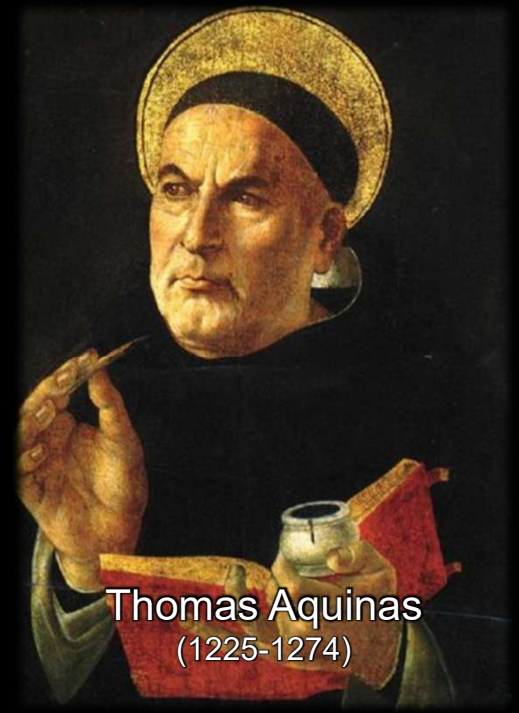
Further, note that Oppy characterizes the issue as empirical (in the modern sense of 'empirical') rather than as metaphysical (in the classical sense of 'empirical').

"it seems to be the case both that there can be infinite regresses of efficient causation within Big Bang universes and that efficient causation can extend 'through' the initial singularity in Big Bang universes. If this is right, then it is hard to see how one could hope to mount an *empirical* argument for the claim that there is no infinite regress of efficient causation in our world."

[Graham Oppy, *Arguing about Gods* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 101]

"Our knowledge, taking its start from things, proceeds in this order. First, it begins in sense; second, it is completed in the intellect."

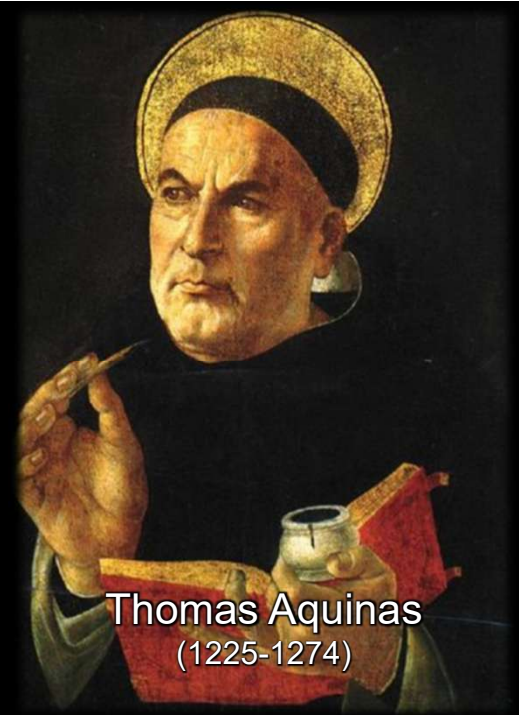
[Thomas Aquinas, *Truth*, I, 11, trans. Mulligan, 48, in *Truth* (3 vols), vol. 1 trans. Robert W. Mulligan (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1952); vol. 2 trans. James V. McGlynn (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1953); vol. 3. trans. Robert W. Schmidt (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1954). The three volumes were reprinted as *Truth* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994)]



Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

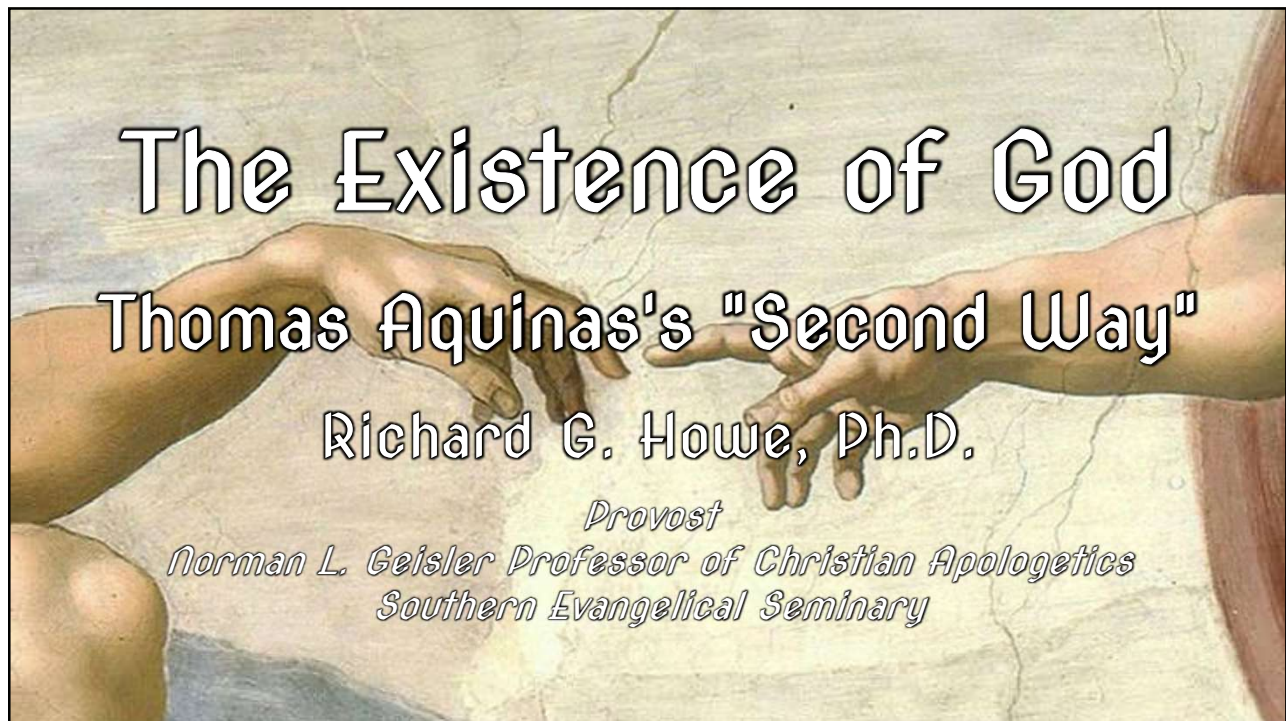
"The knowledge which we have by natural reason contains two things: images derived from the sensible object; and the natural intelligible light, enabling us to abstract from them intelligible conceptions."

[Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, Q. 12, art. 13, Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster: Christian Classics), p. 59]



Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

*It is my contention that all of these
are misunderstanding Aquinas and
that Aquinas is not making a Kalam
type of argument.*



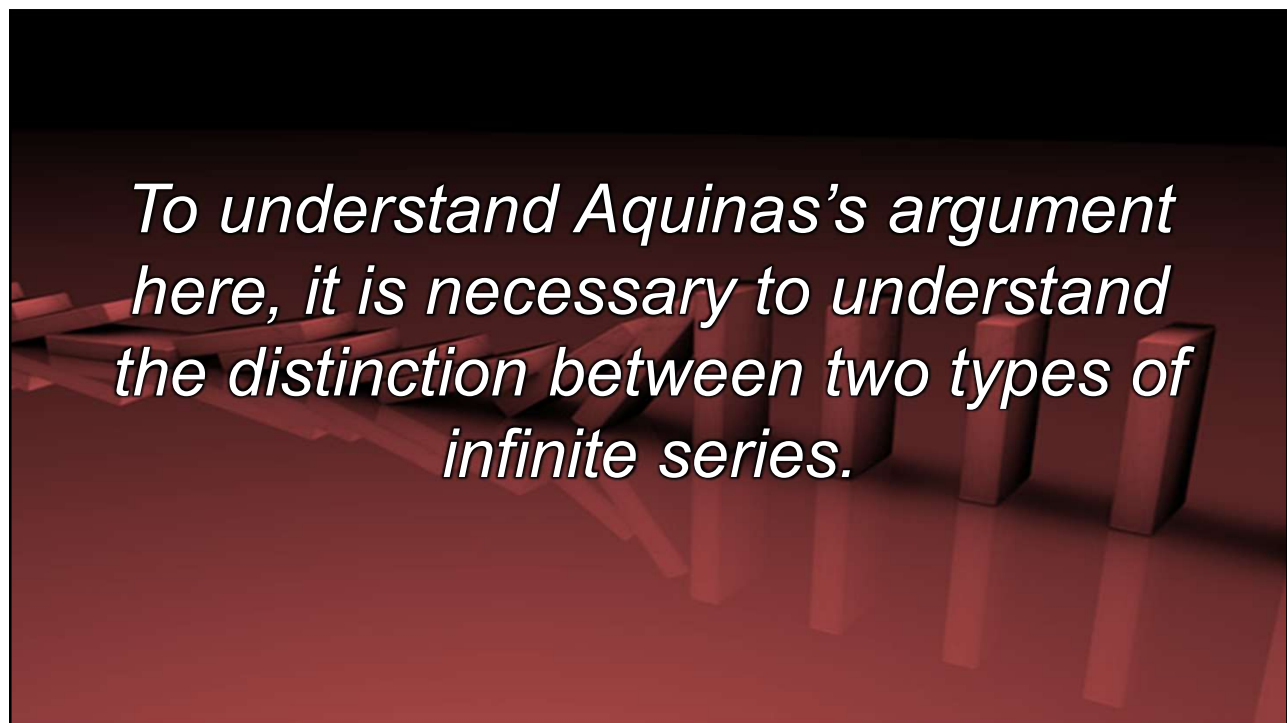
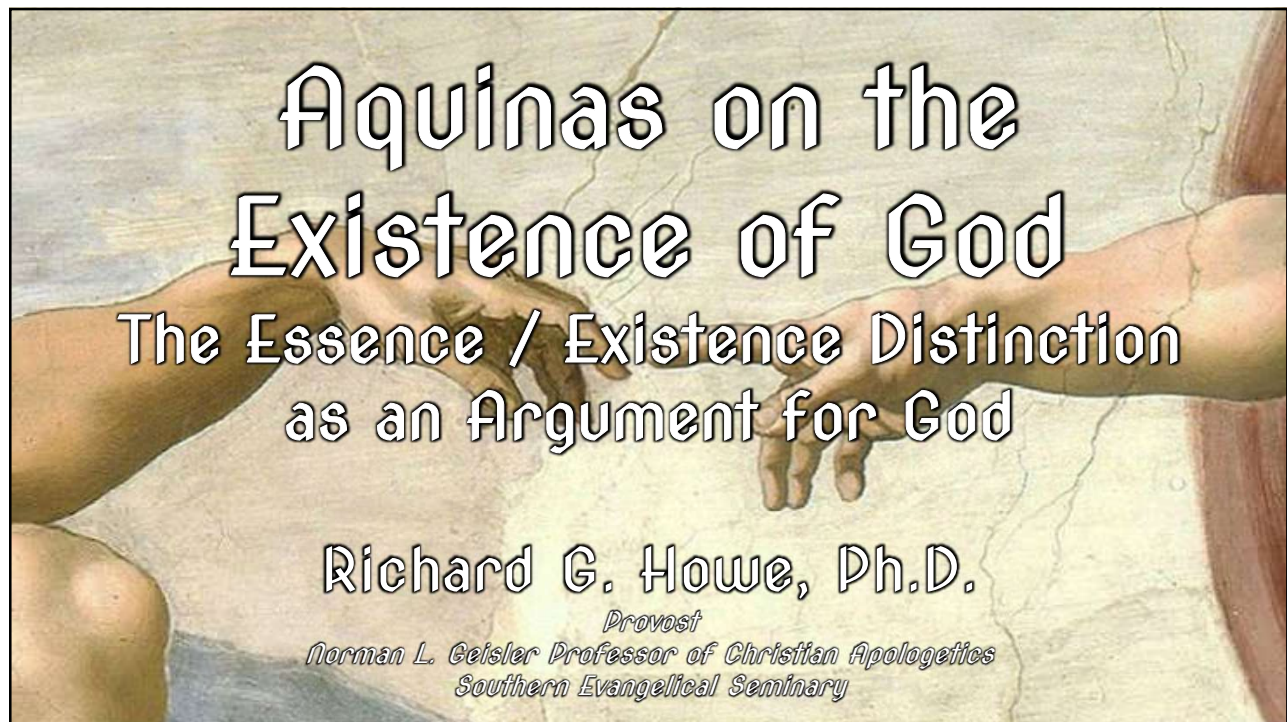
The Existence of God

Thomas Aquinas's "Second Way"

Richard G. Howe, Ph.D.

Provost

*Norman L. Geisler Professor of Christian Apologetics
Southern Evangelical Seminary*





Christian Apologetics Journal, 8:1 (Spring 2009)
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**TWO NOTIONS OF THE INFINITE IN
THOMAS AQUINAS' *SUMMA THEOLOGIAE*
I, QUESTIONS 2 AND 46**

Richard G. Howe, Ph.D.

Near the beginning of his *Summa Theologiae*, the thirteenth century Dominican monk, Thomas Aquinas, claims that "the existence of God can be proved in five ways."¹ These arguments are regularly referred to as his *Five Ways* and are for many perhaps the most familiar reading from Thomas. Of particular interest for my purposes are the first three of these *Five Ways* in which Thomas clearly denies the possibility of "going on to infinity."² I have discovered that a number of

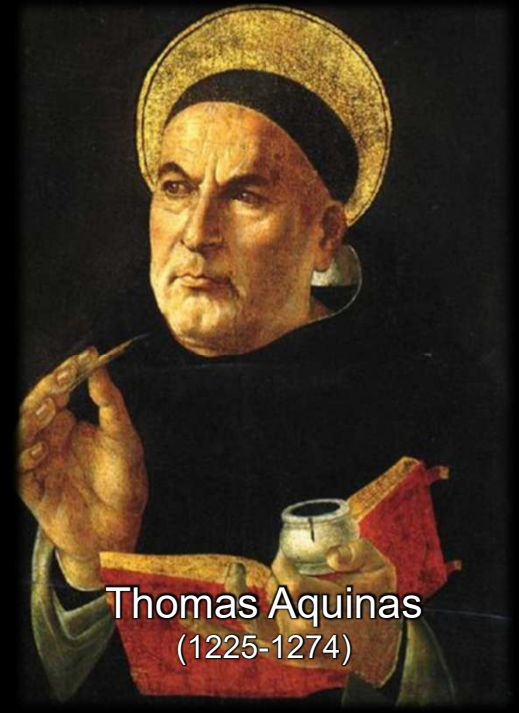
¹ *Deum esse quinque viis probari potest*, Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, 2.
² All English translations are from *Summa Theologiae of St. Thomas Aquinas*, translated by Father of the English Dominican Province (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1981). Thomas acknowledges that certain of these arguments are not completely original with him. They are found for example in Aristotle's *Physics* VII, 1 241^a24 and *Metaphysics* XII, 7 1072^a23. Though the *Five Ways* are Thomas' most famous arguments for God's existence, certain ones of them are expanded with greater detail in other of his works, including his *Summa Contra Gentiles* I, 13.

³ *procedere per se ad infinitum*

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"In efficient causes it is impossible to proceed to infinity *per se* — thus, there cannot be an infinite number of causes that are *per se* required for a certain effect. ... But it is not impossible to proceed to infinity *accidentally* as regards efficient causes ..."

[*Summa Theologiae* 1, Q, 46, ii, ad 7]



Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

infinitum per accidens
(accidental infinite)

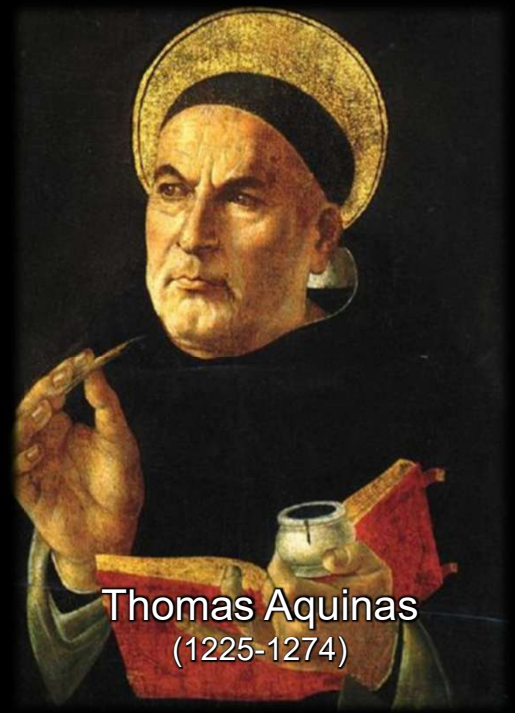
VS.

infinitum per se
(per se infinite)



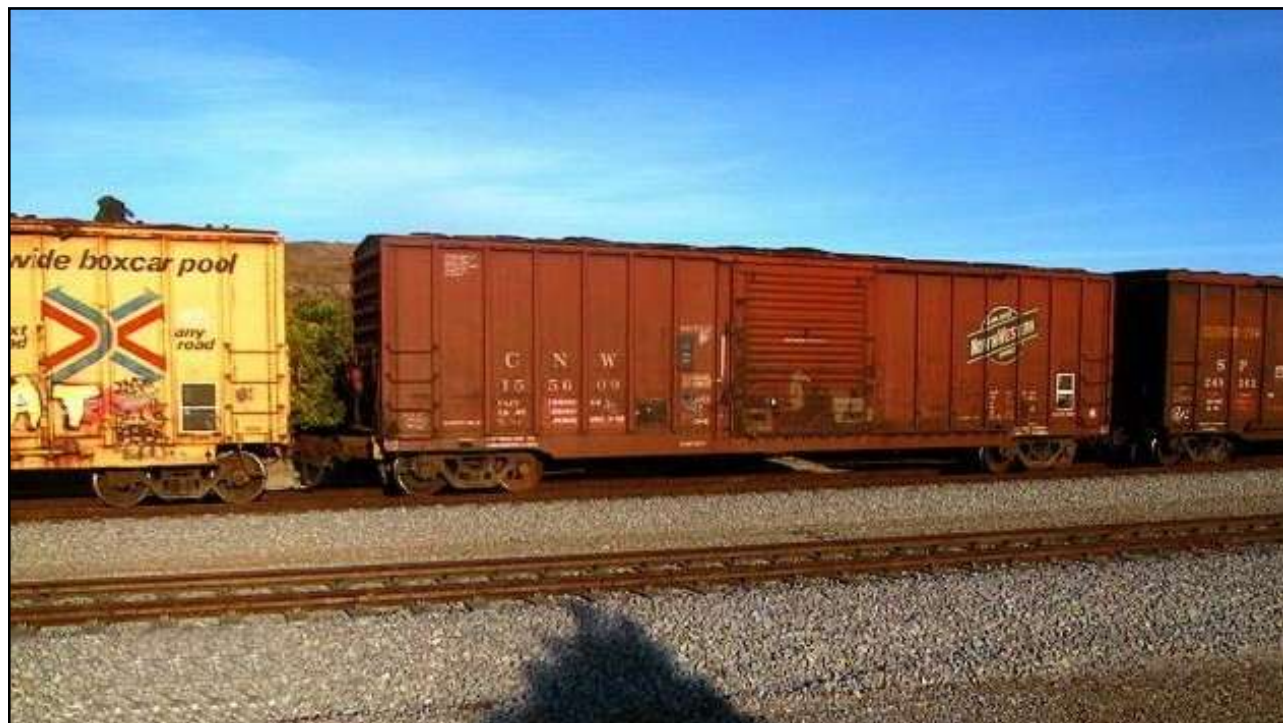
"It is accidental to this particular man as generator to be generated by another man; for he generates as a man, and not as the son of another man."

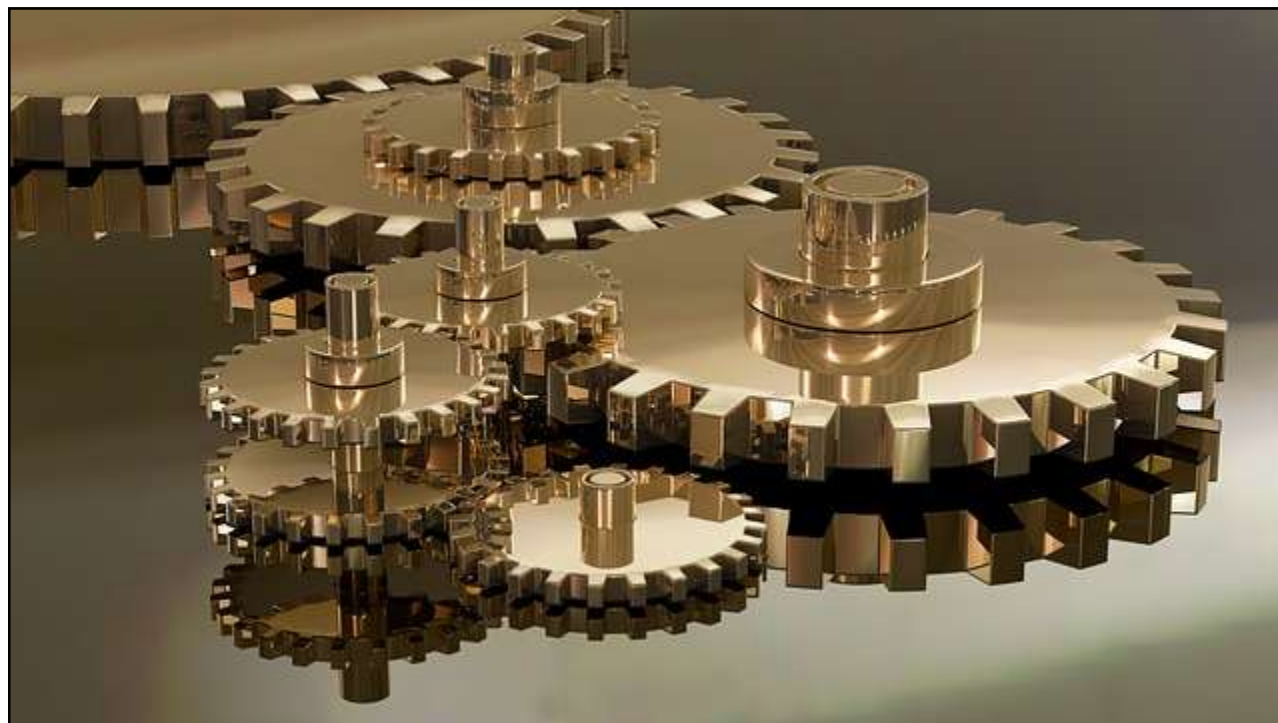
[*Summa Theologiae* 1, Q, 46, ii, ad 7]



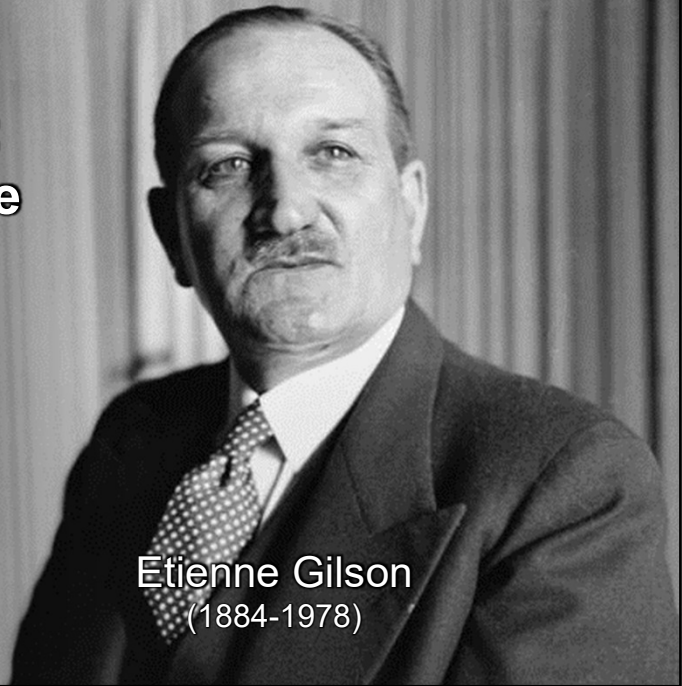
Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)





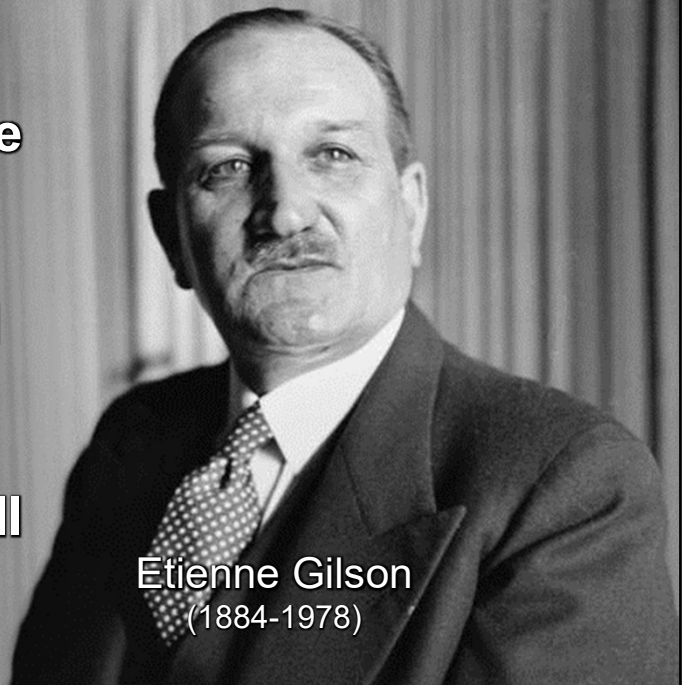


"The proof in no way considers movement as a present reality the existence of which requires an efficient cause in the past, which is God.



Étienne Gilson
(1884-1978)

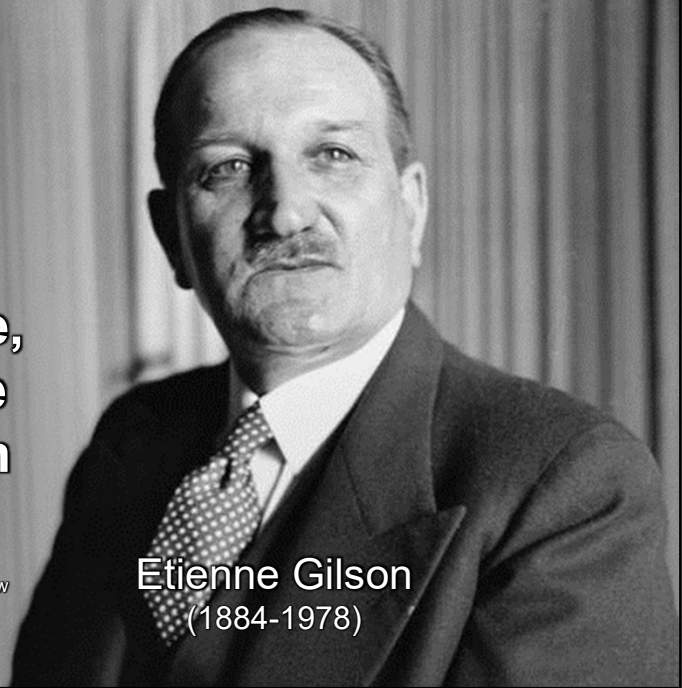
"It aims simply at establishing that in the universe as actually given, movement, as actually given, would be unintelligible without a first Mover communicating it to all things.



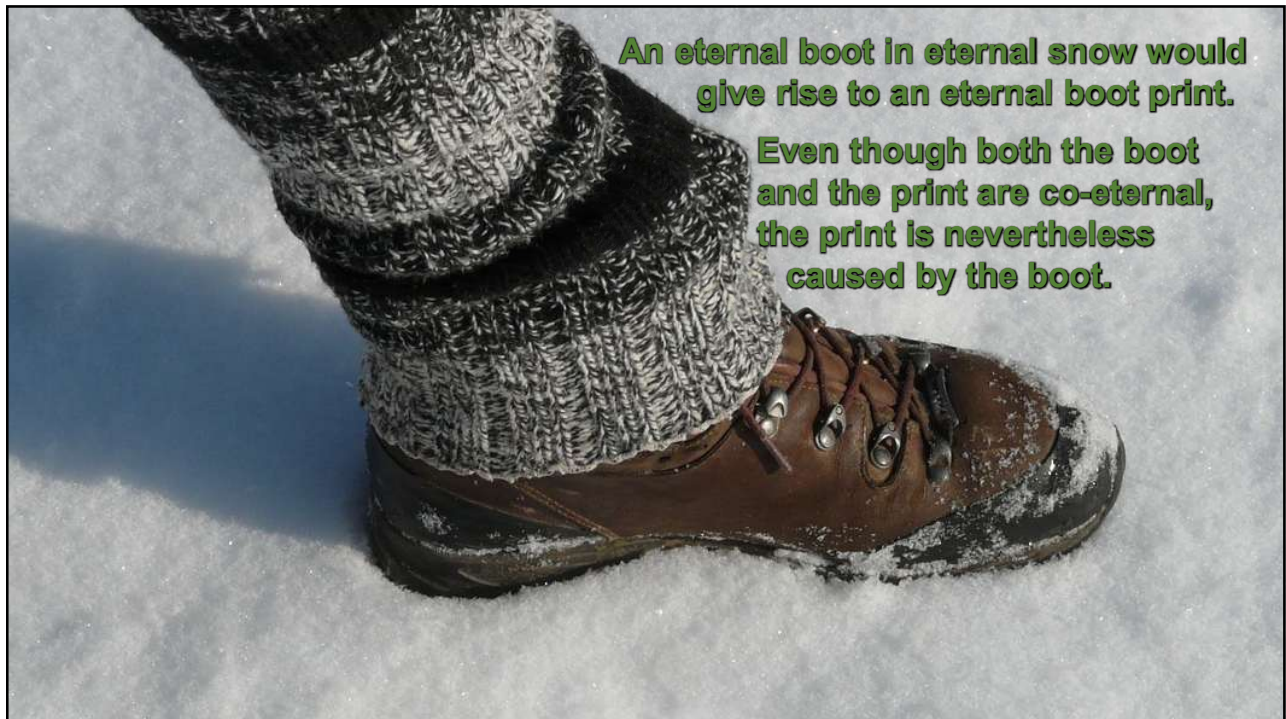
Étienne Gilson
(1884-1978)

"In other words the impossibility of an infinite regress must not be taken as an infinite regress in time, but as applying to the present consideration of the universe."

[*The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Edward Bullough (New York: Dorset Press, n.d.), p. 76]

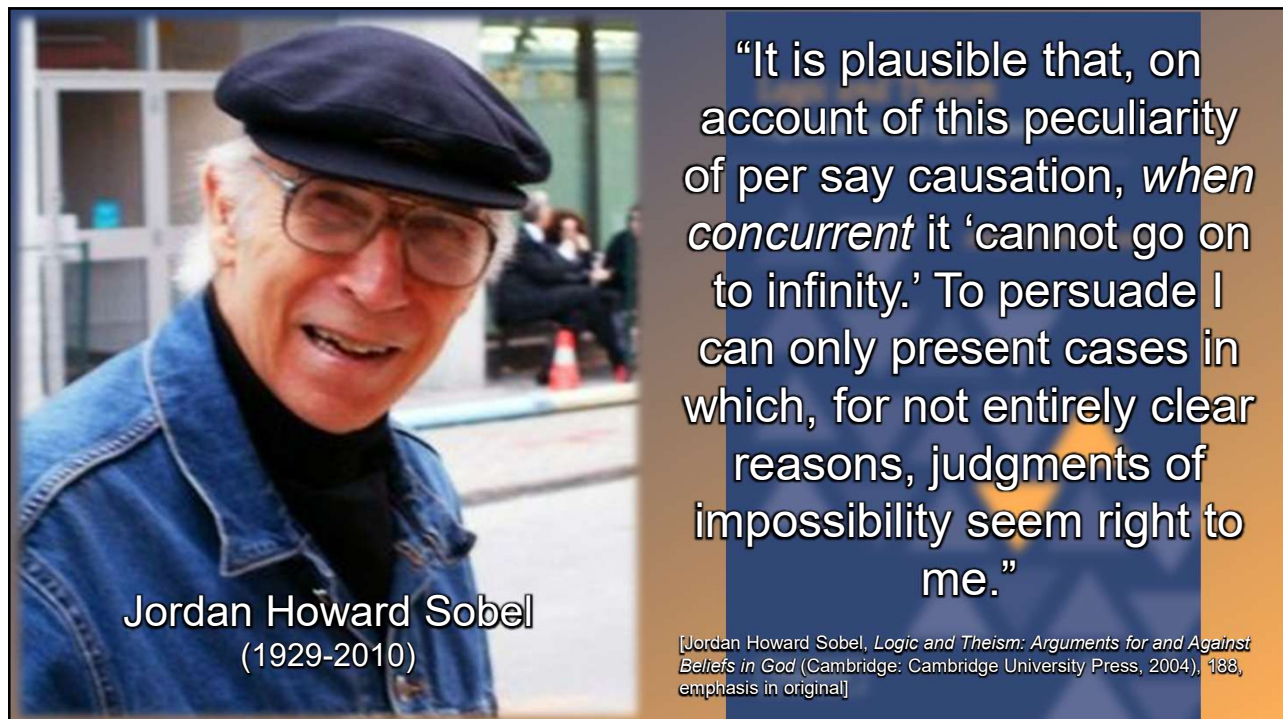
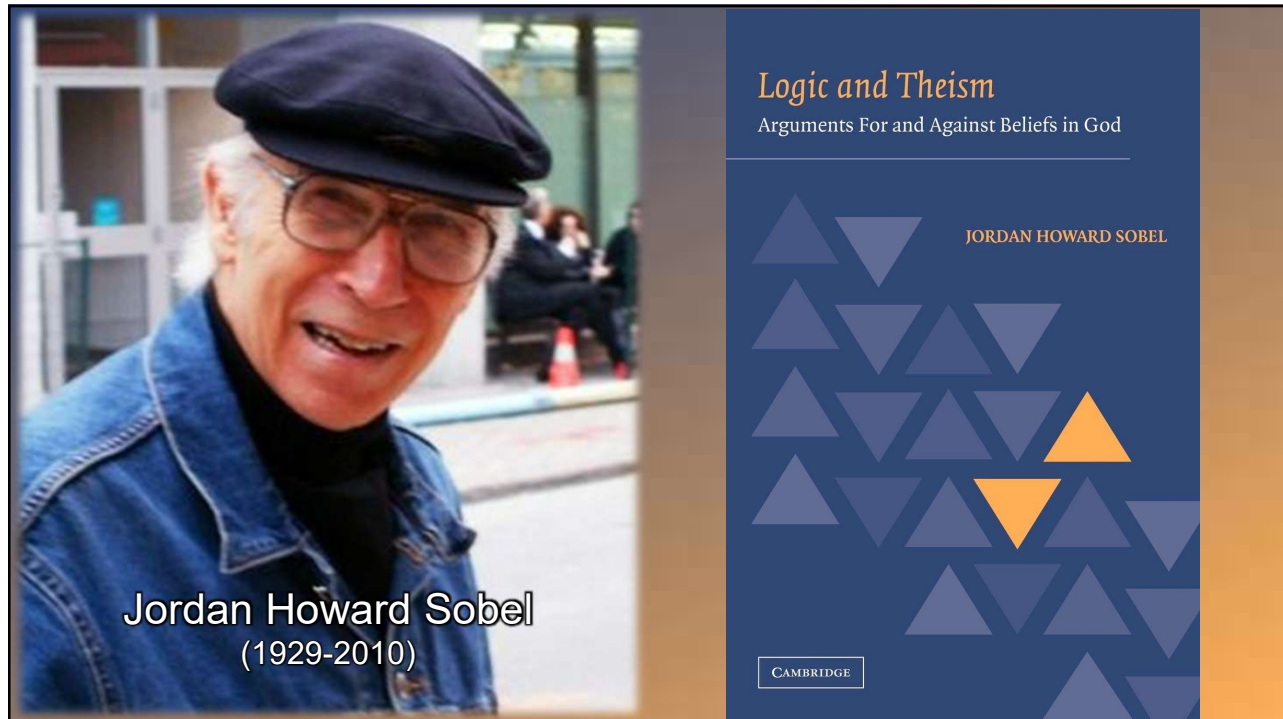


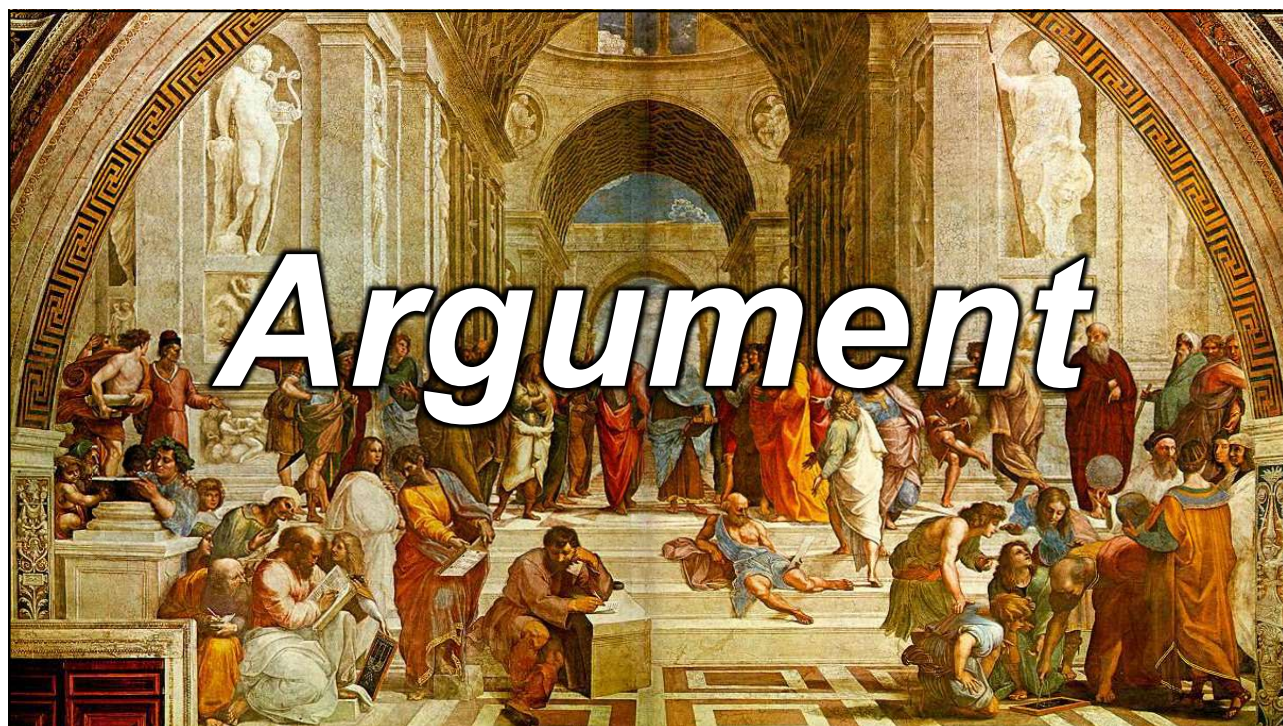
Étienne Gilson
(1884-1978)



An eternal boot in eternal snow would give rise to an eternal boot print.

Even though both the boot and the print are co-eternal, the print is nevertheless caused by the boot.





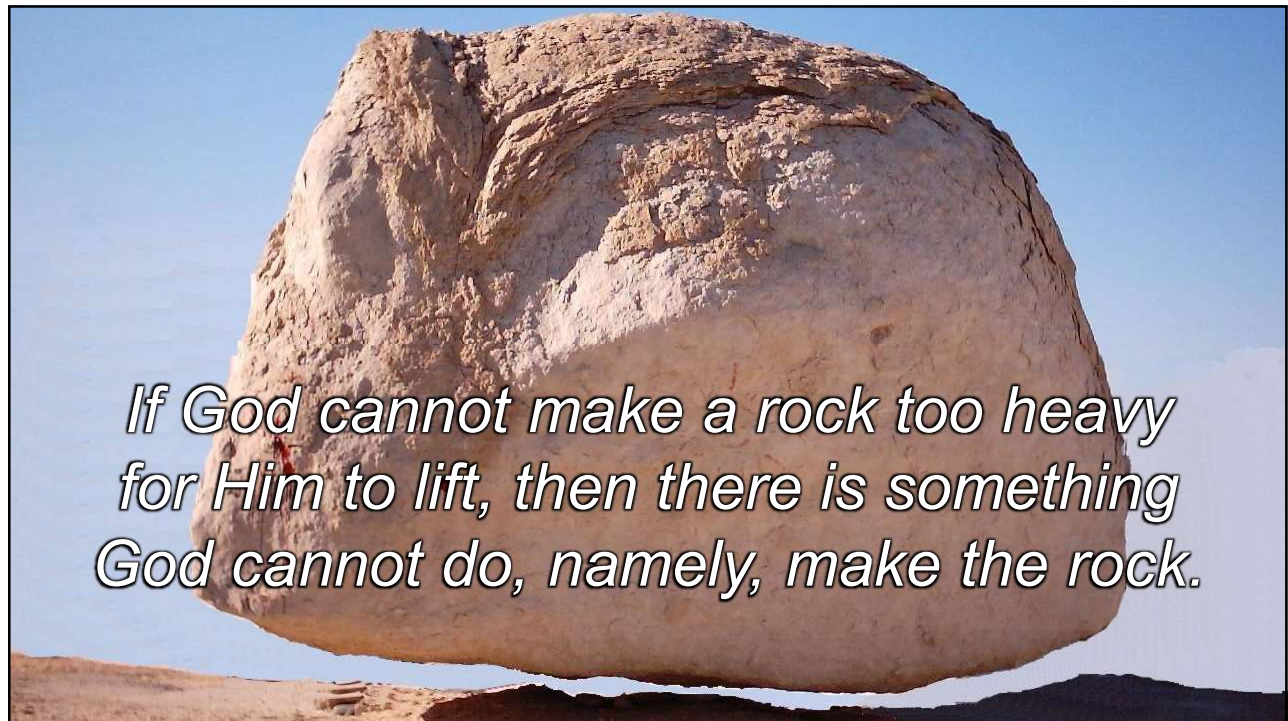
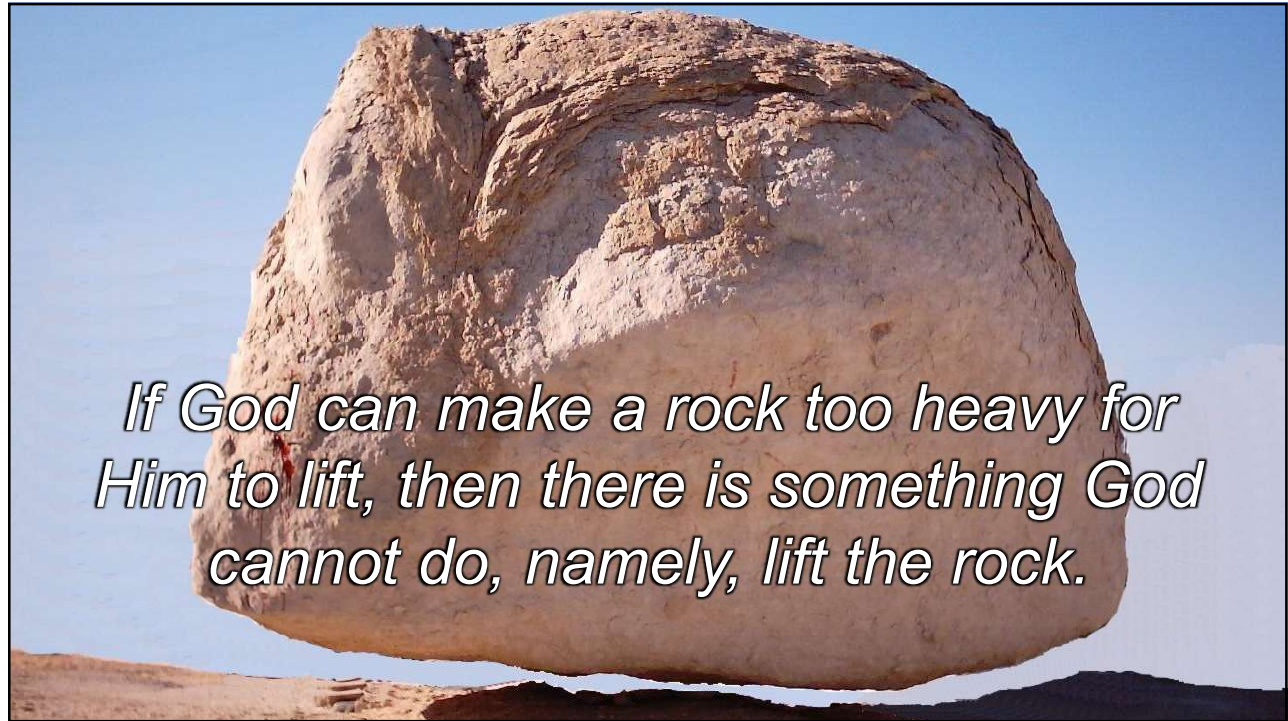
Homer Simpson's Version:

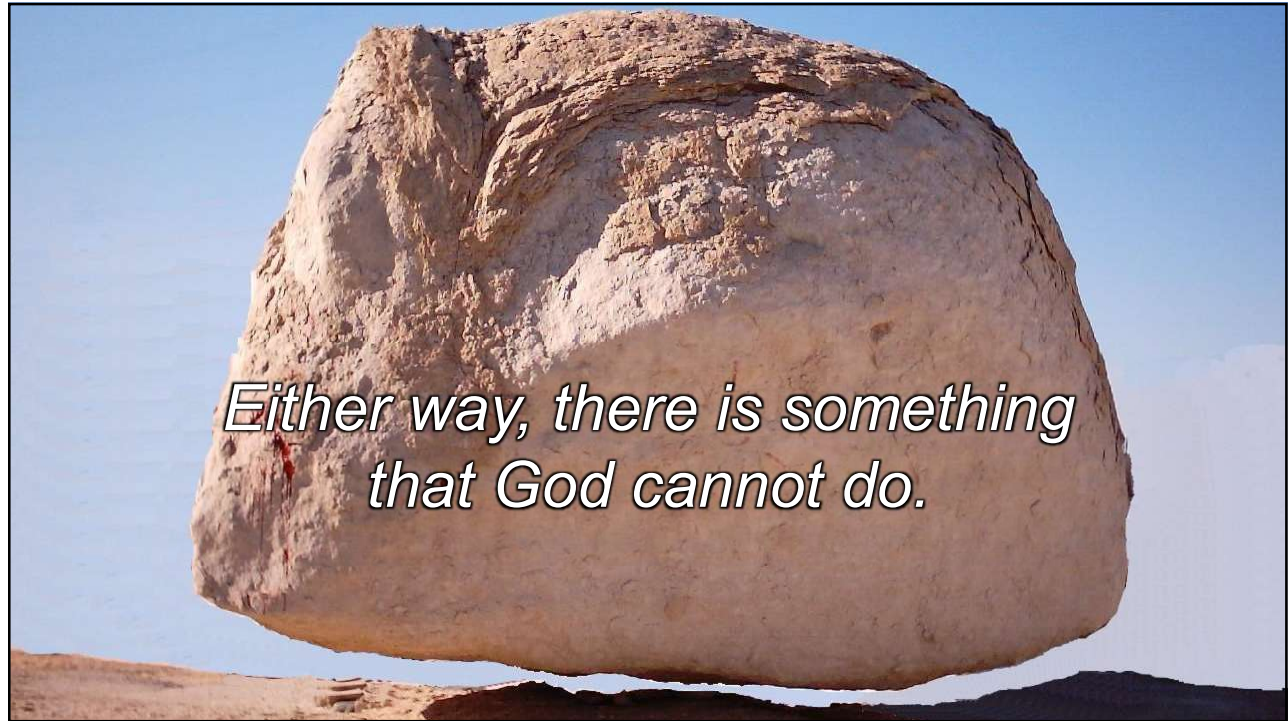
*"Can Jesus microwave
His taco too hot for Him
to eat it?"*



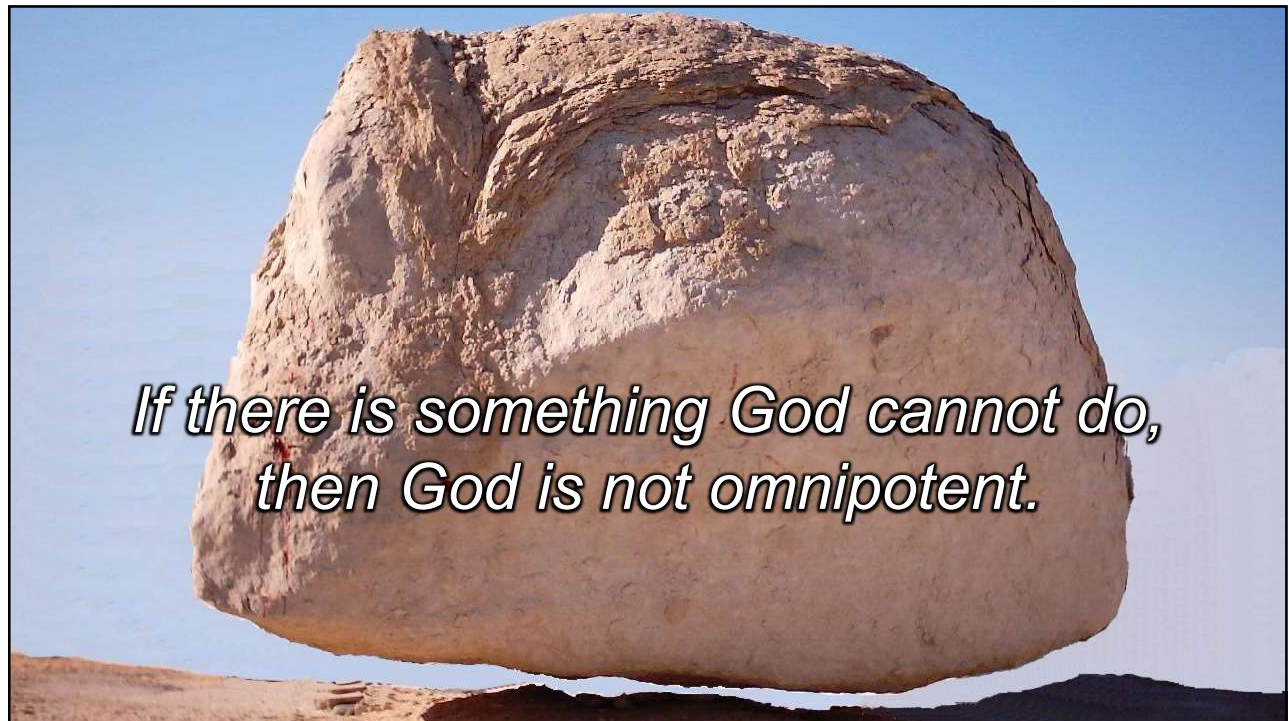
*The question is
supposed to
highlight a
logical problem for
God's omnipotence.*



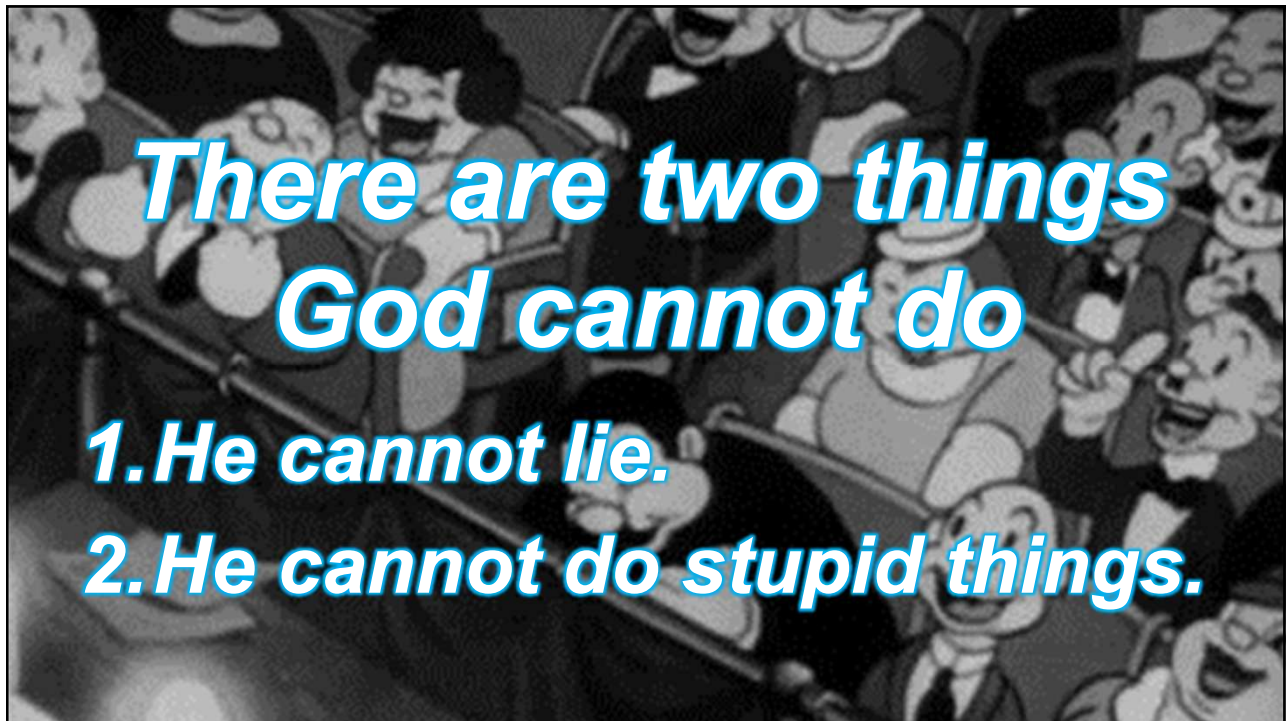


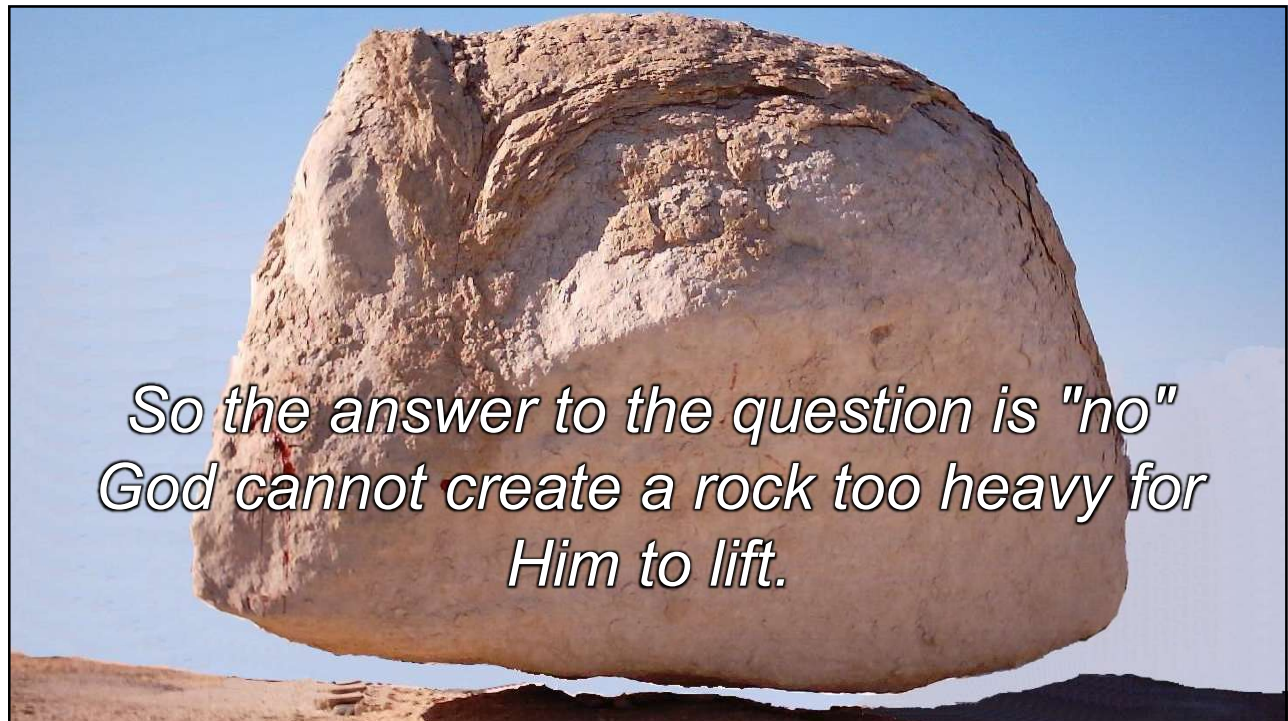
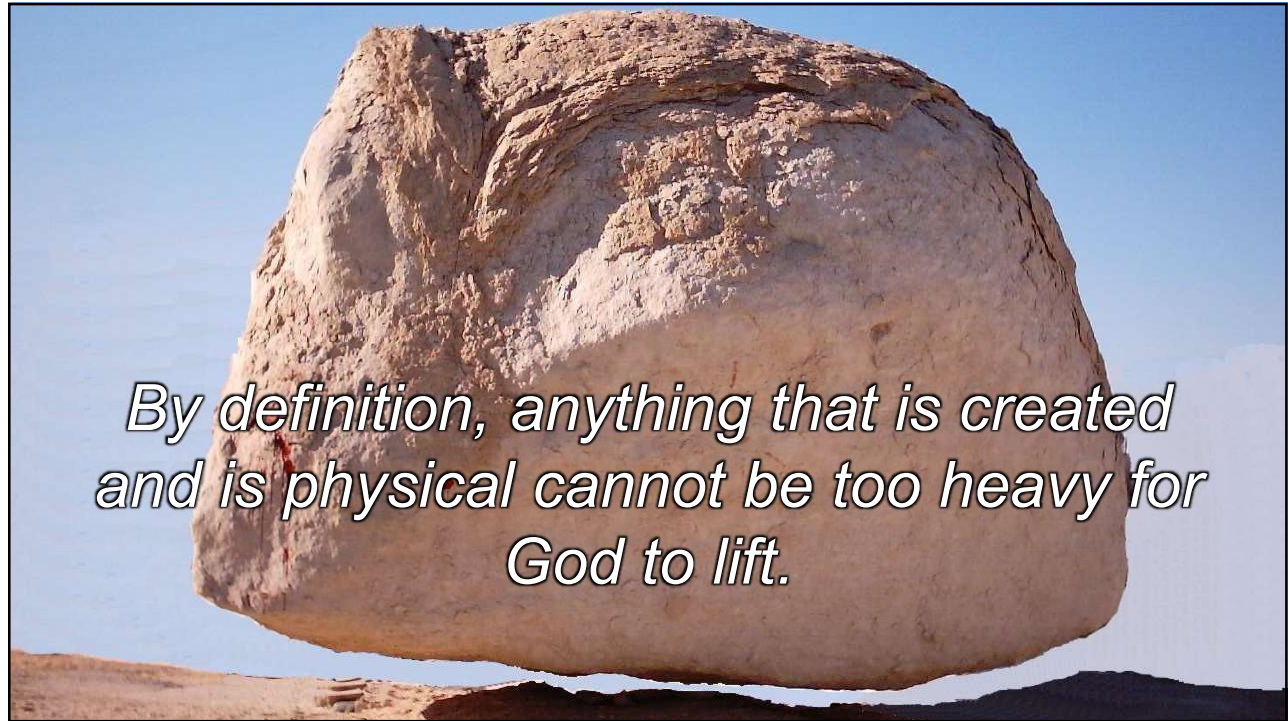


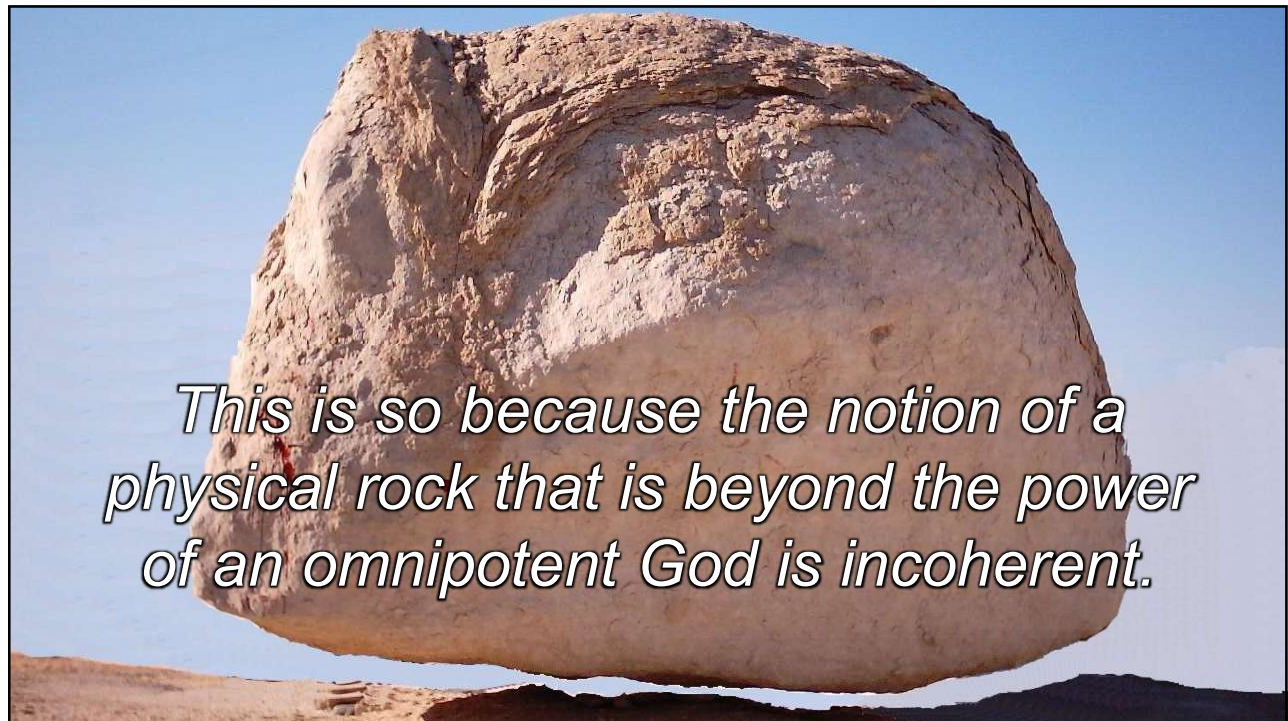
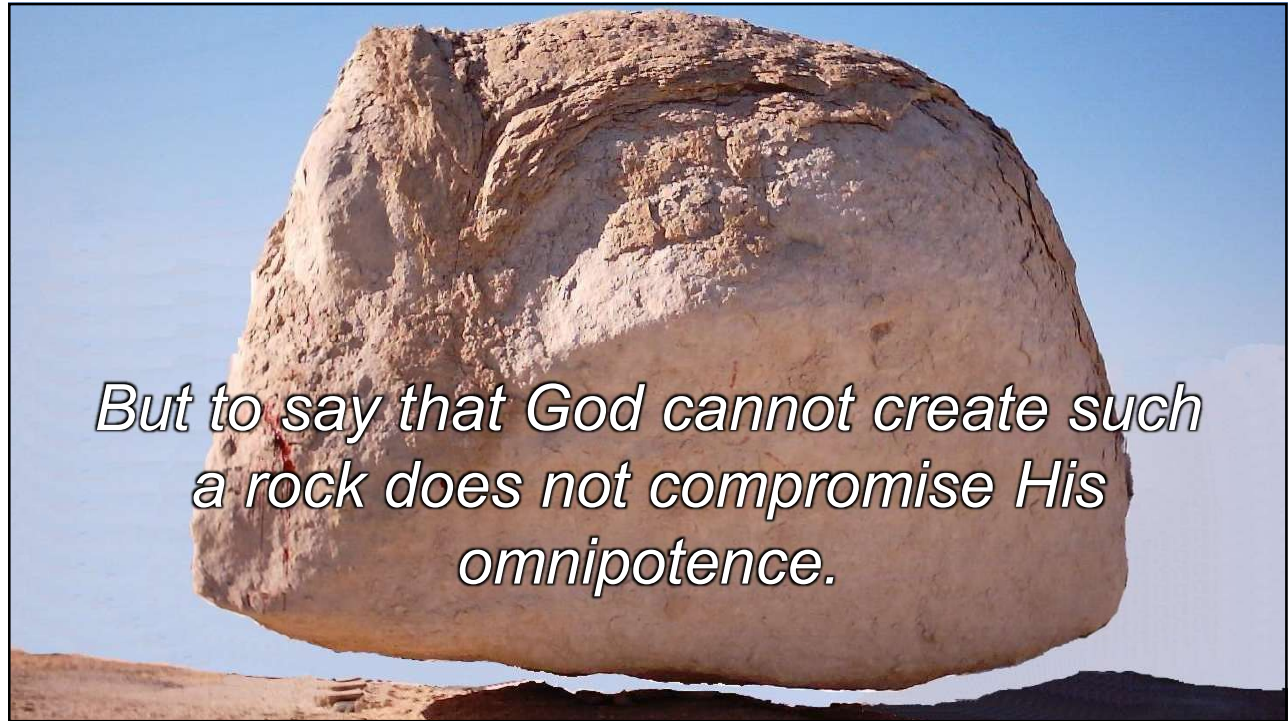
*Either way, there is something
that God cannot do.*



*If there is something God cannot do,
then God is not omnipotent.*

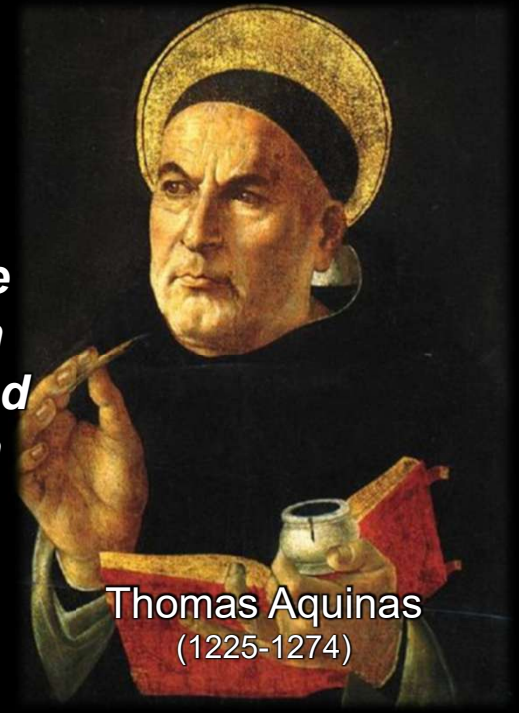






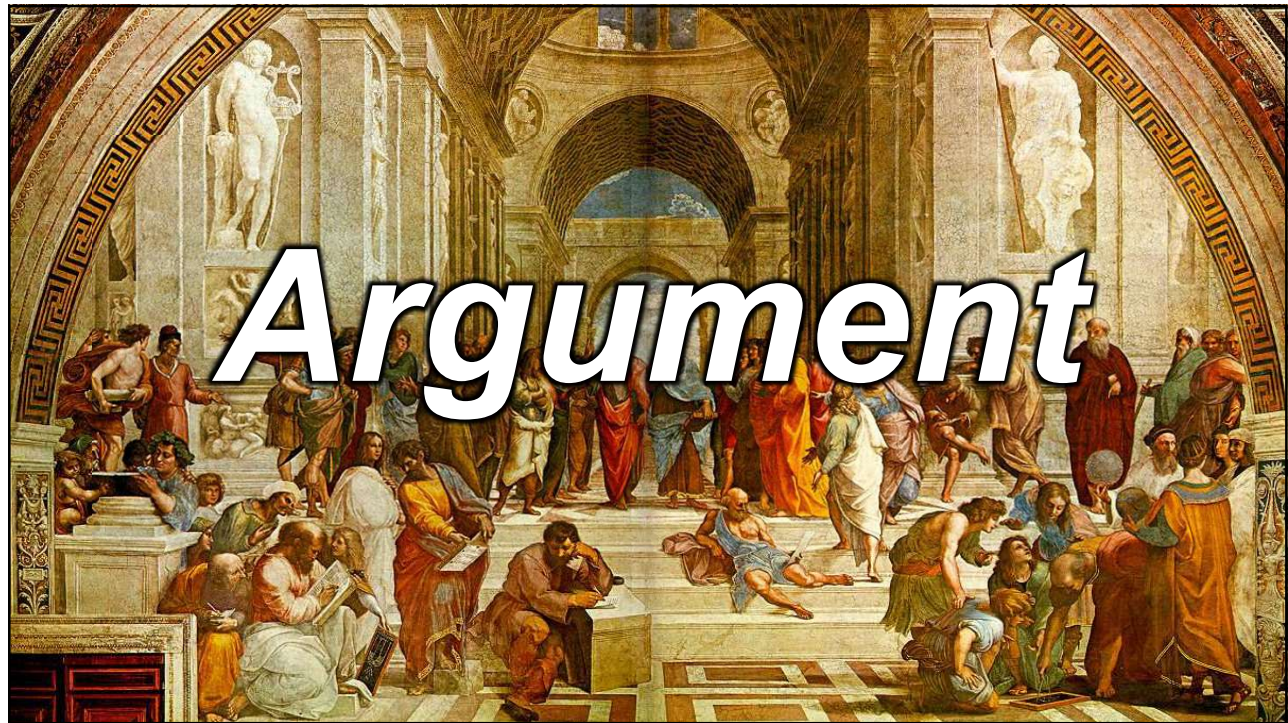
"A thing is called absolutely possible, not in relation to any power, but from the sole habitude of the terms which are not repugnant to each other; in which sense possible is opposed to impossible, as appears from the Philosopher [Metaph. v, text. 17]."

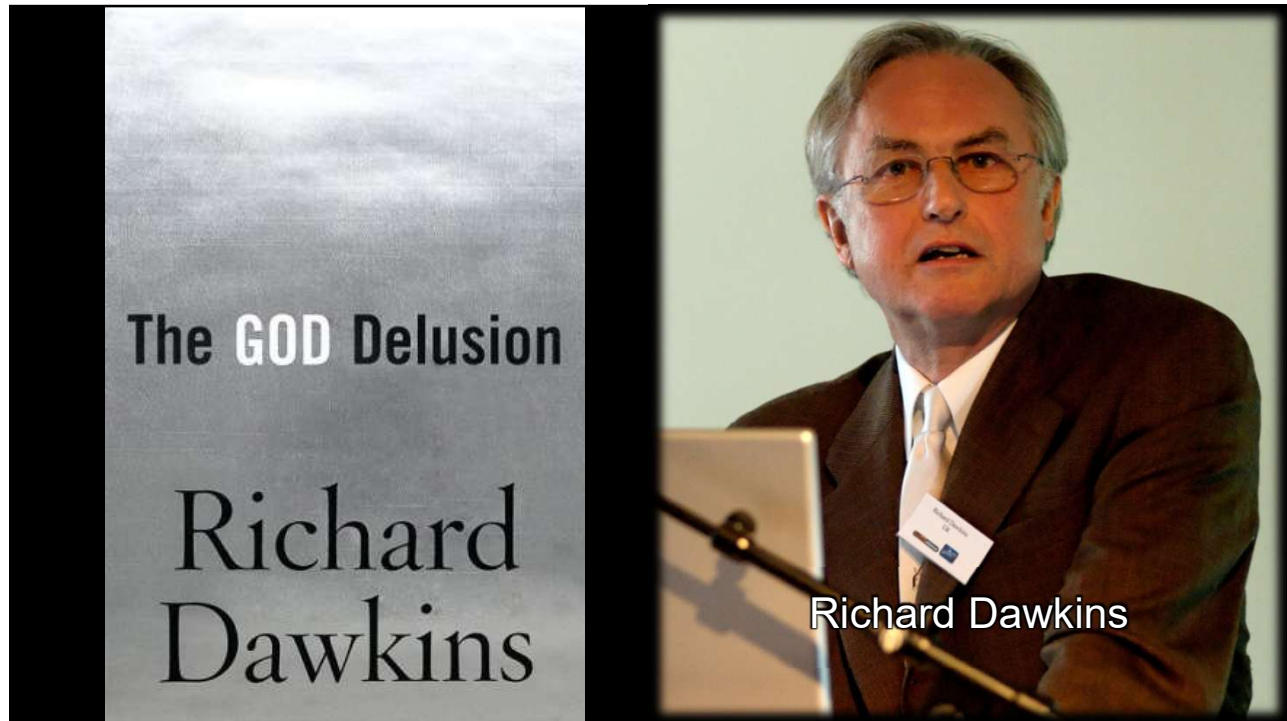
[S7, I, Q46, art. 1, ad. 1]

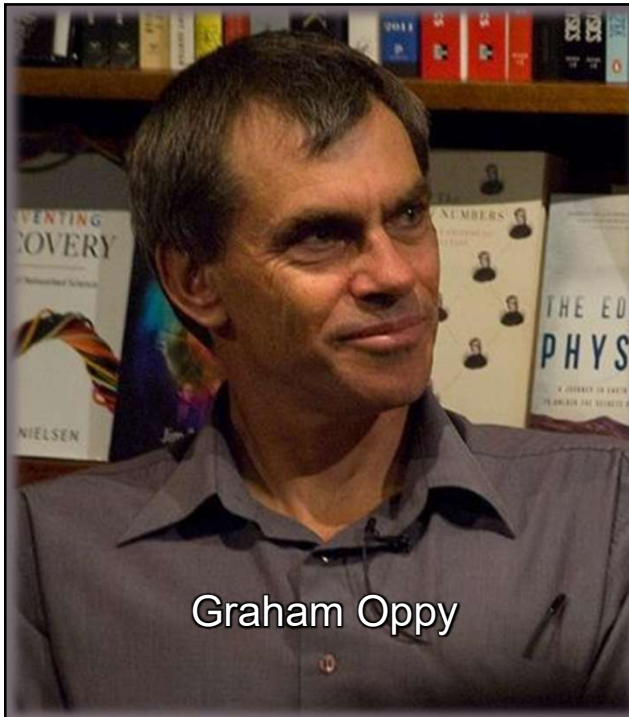
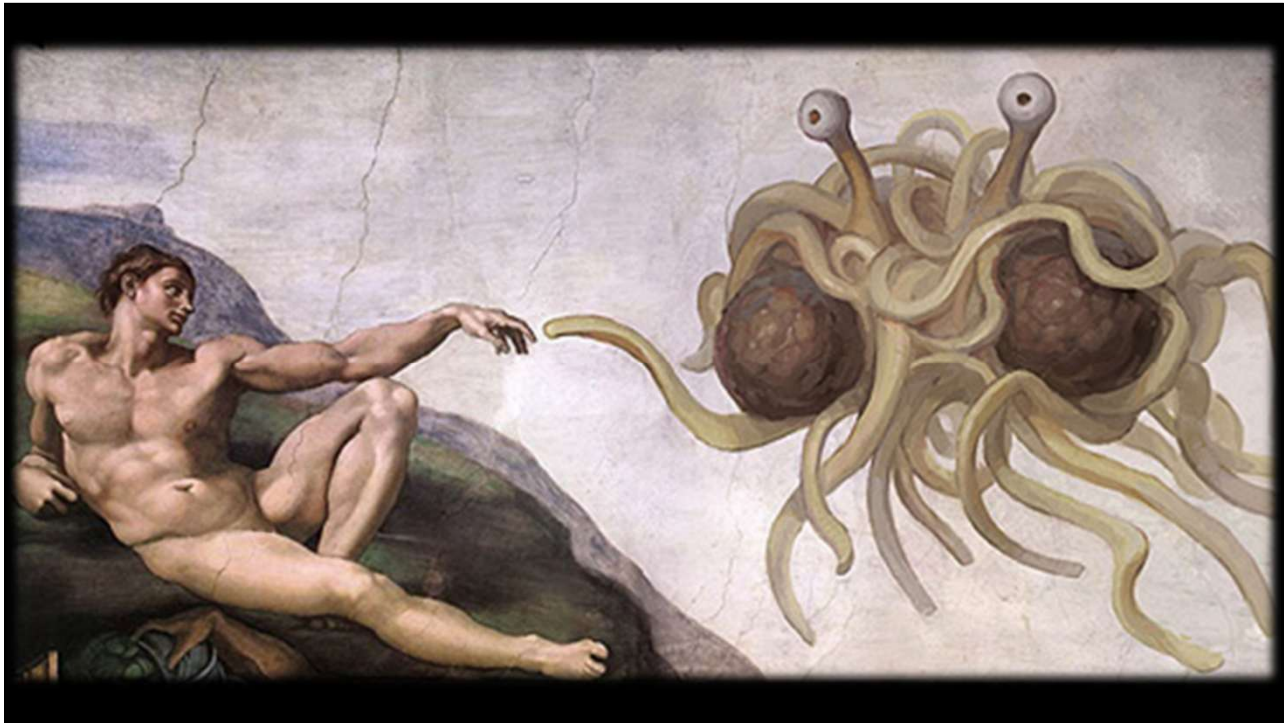


Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)





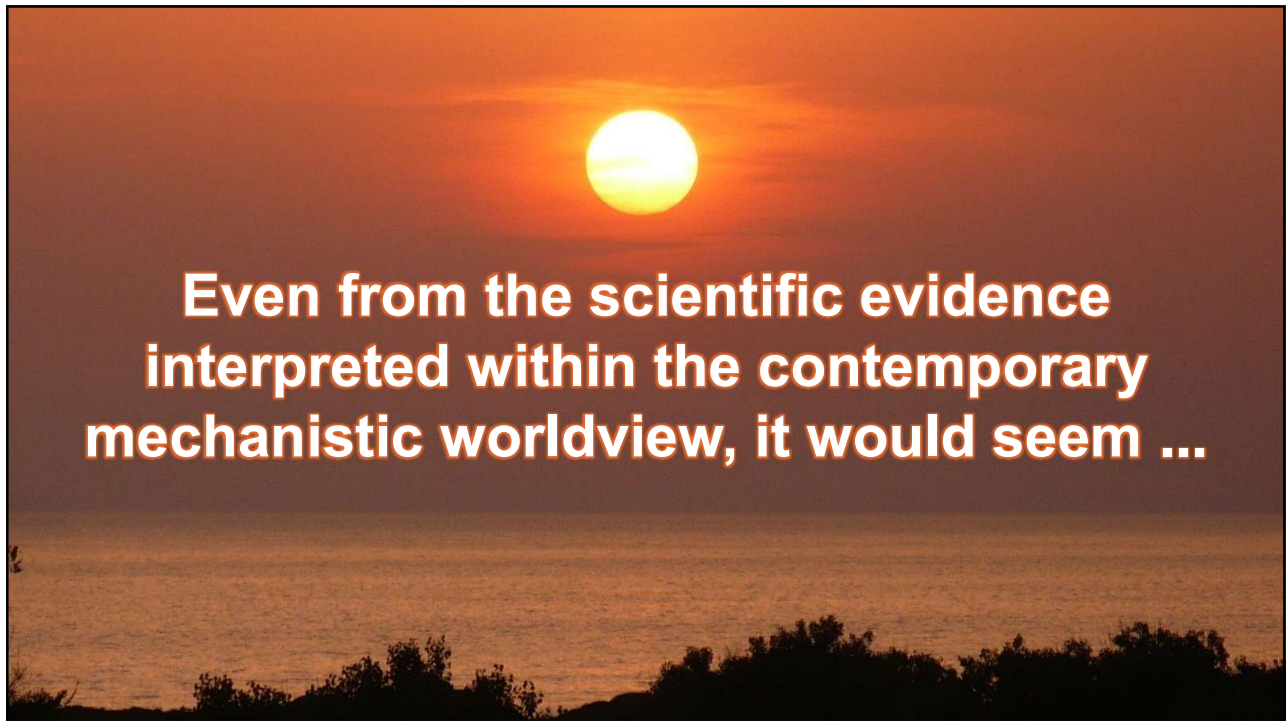


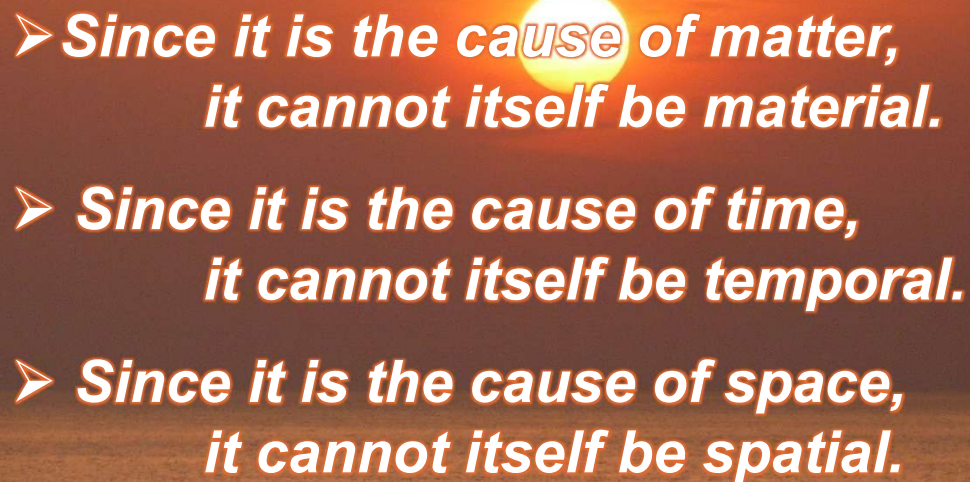


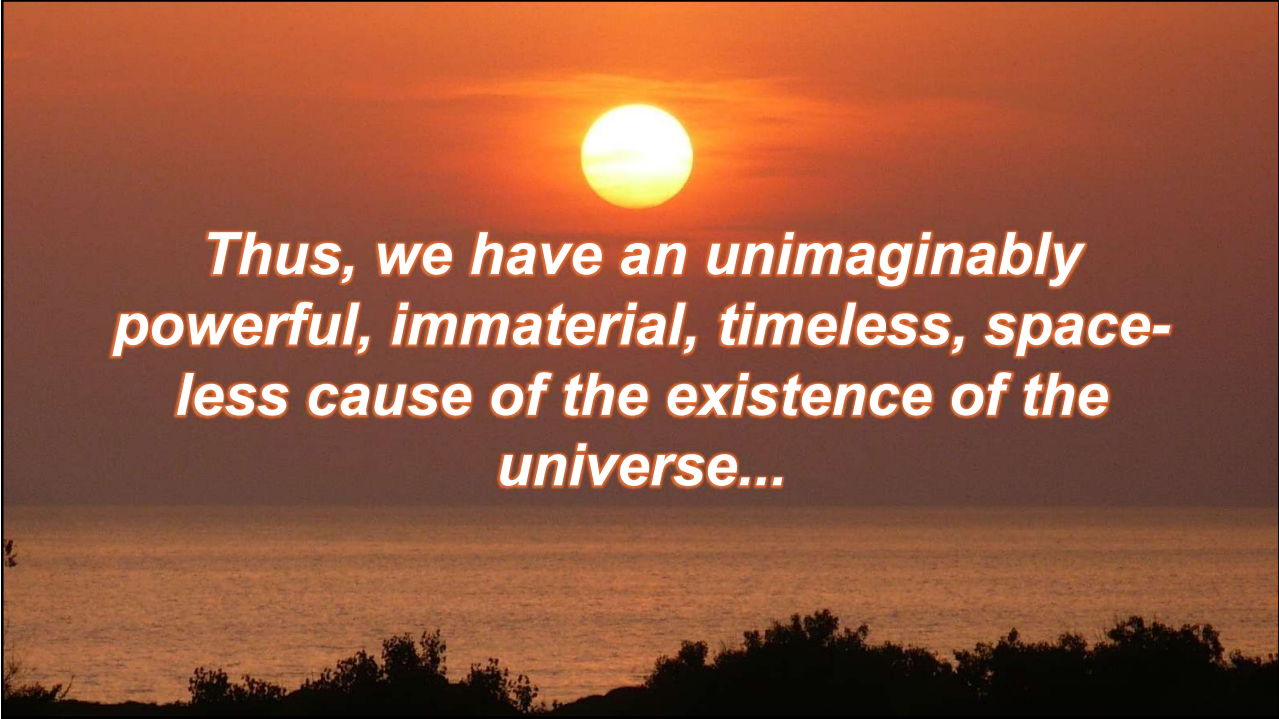
Graham Oppy

"A final characteristic of cosmological arguments is that they typically issue in conclusions that—at least *prima facie*—are only very doubtfully of genuine religious significance. Even if, for examples, one can establish that there is an efficient cause for the existence of the visible (physical) universe, it is not at all clear why one should suppose that this efficient cause can be identified with the creative activity of any of the gods whose existence is postulated in extant world religions."

[Graham Oppy, *Arguing about Gods* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 98]

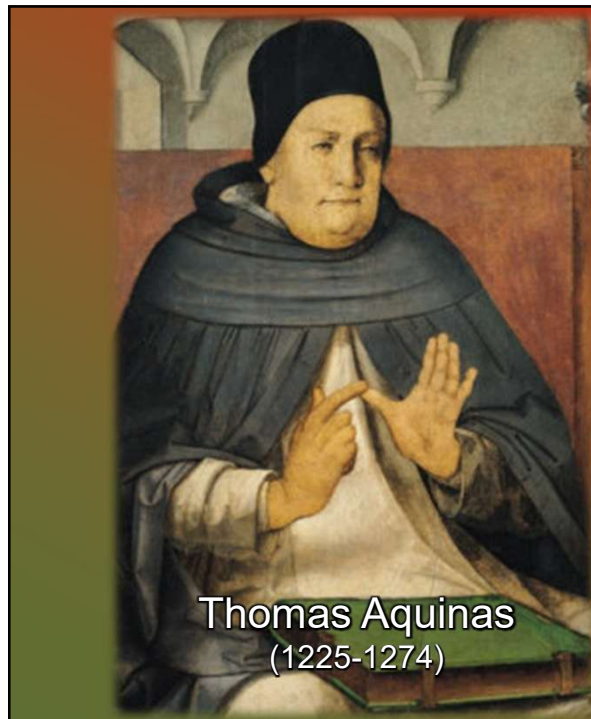


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- A sunset scene with a bright sun low on the horizon over a body of water, with dark silhouettes of trees in the foreground. The text is overlaid in white with a red outline.
- *Since it is the cause of matter,
it cannot itself be material.*
 - *Since it is the cause of time,
it cannot itself be temporal.*
 - *Since it is the cause of space,
it cannot itself be spatial.*

A sunset scene with a bright sun low on the horizon over a body of water, with dark silhouettes of trees in the foreground. The text is overlaid in white with a red outline.

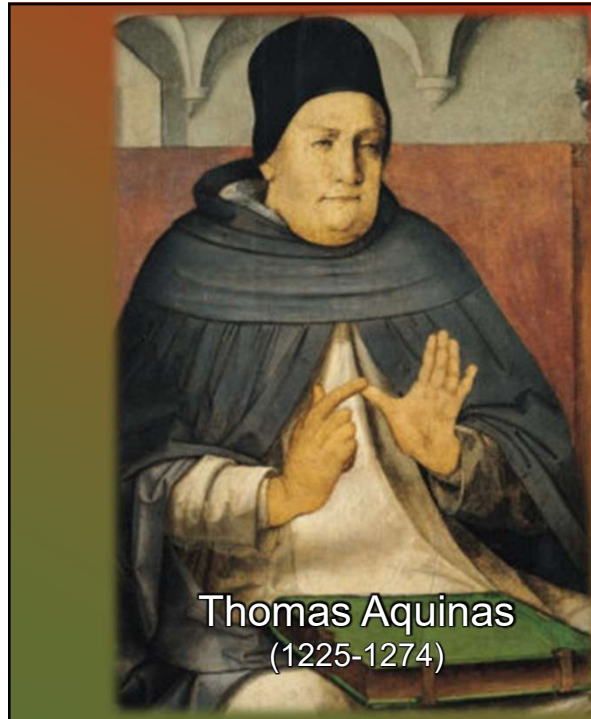
*Thus, we have an unimaginably
powerful, immaterial, timeless, space-
less cause of the existence of the
universe...*

While there may be some debate as to how much the scientific arguments can demonstrate the nature and attributes of God,



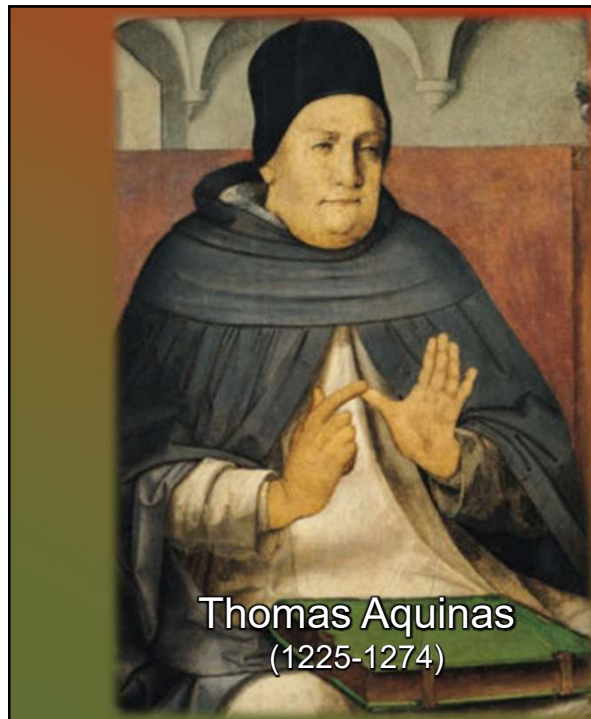
Thomas Aquinas
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The Thomistic arguments not only demonstrate the existence of God, but demonstrate all of His classical attributes as well.



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