

E B F

Evidence Based Faith

All the World is Mars



The Series

Week 1

Why liberal theology has led to shrinking congregations, Toronto Star, December 2016

As a researcher it's not often you make a discovery that flies in the face of conventional wisdom but, when we finished assessing our data, that's what happened. We found it is conservative theology — with its emphasis on the **factual truth of scripture and God's activity in the world** — that fuels church growth. Liberal theology leads to **decline**.



The Series

Week 1

How much faith do you need?

51%

“We both believe, and disbelieve a hundred times an hour....” **Emily Dickinson**

Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, “**I do believe**; help me overcome **my unbelief!**”

Mark 9:24

It's not the strength of your faith that matters, it's the object of your faith



The Series

Week 2

There has **NEVER** been any
historical, anthropological or
archeological discovery to bring into
doubt the narrative of the Old and
New Testaments



The Series

Week 3

“We pronounce, judge, and declare, that you, the said Galileo... have rendered yourself vehemently suspected by this Holy Office of **heresy**, that is, of having believed and held the doctrine (which is false and **contrary to the Holy and Divine Scriptures**) that the sun is the centre of the world, and that it does not move from east to west, and that the earth does move, and is not the centre of the world.” **June 22, 1633**

The Series

Week 4

Justice

“Not until I went into **the churches of America** and heard her pulpits flame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power.”

Effort

World religions are based on human effort

8 Fold Path, 5 Pillars, Karma

The Series

Week 4

Grace

The notion of God's love coming to us free of charge, no strings attached, **seems to go against every instinct of humanity**. The Buddhist eight-fold path, the Hindu doctrine of karma, the Jewish covenant, and the Muslim code of law -- each of these offers a way to earn approval. **Only Christianity dares to make God's love unconditional.**

“Grace teaches us that God loves because of who God is, not because of who we are.”



Wounded Theist

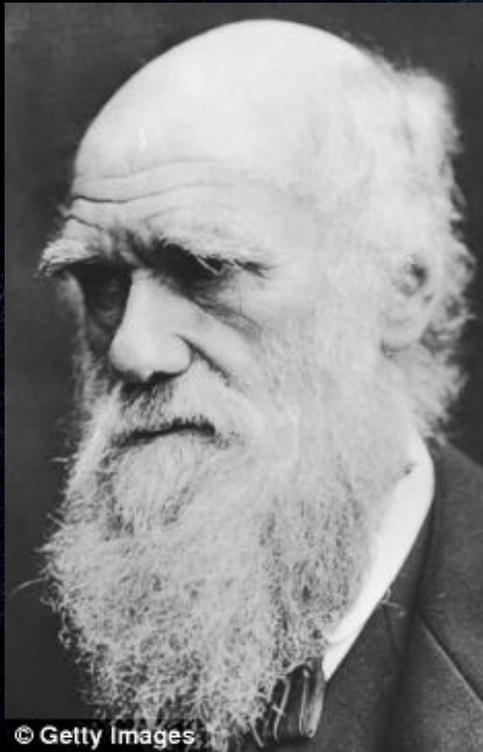
“The question, “where was God?” kept on asking itself to me as I tried to process what had happened.”

“The second death, which ultimately led to my exit from Christianity, was that of my father-in-law. After battling cancer for many years he passed away in November of 2008.”

“But in reality I never felt loved by God, I never received supernatural healing, I was constantly in severe depression, I felt like my life was not my own, I had lost all hope, I hated church and church people and I never experienced any power - instead I grew weak, and quite frankly, so did my God.”

“I left the church because I’m better at planning Bible studies than baby showers...but they only wanted me to plan baby showers.”

“We went to a church where they were holding a \$40,000 fundraiser... for a parking lot. And yes, they already had a completely functional parking lot, but they wanted a nicer parking lot.”



© Getty Images

Wounded Theist

Randal Keynes, a great, great grandson of Charles Darwin wrote a biography of Darwin entitled *Annie's Box* which focuses on Darwin's family life. In the book he claims: "After Annie's death, Charles set the Christian faith firmly behind him."

"It seems to me absurd to doubt that a man may be an ardent Theist & an evolutionist. ... In my most extreme fluctuations I have never been an atheist in the sense of denying the existence of a God. ... I think that generally (& more and more so as I grow older) but not always, that an **agnostic** would be the most correct description of my state of mind."

Charles Darwin, Letter to John Fordyce, 7 May 1879

Wounded Theist

“By further reflecting that the clearest evidence would be requisite to make any sane man believe in the miracles by which Christianity is supported,—**that the more we know of the fixed laws of nature the more incredible do miracles become**,—that the men at that time were ignorant and credulous to a degree almost incomprehensible by us,—that the Gospels cannot be proved to have been written simultaneously with the events,—that they differ in many important details, far too important as it seemed to me to be admitted as the usual inaccuracies of eyewitnesses;—by such reflections as these, which I give not as having the least novelty or value, but as they influenced me, I gradually came to disbelieve in Christianity as a divine revelation.”

The autobiography of Charles Darwin, 1809-1882

The Unknown God

“agnosto theo”

“Altar to an
unknown god” 1st
BC. Museo Palatino
(Palatine Museum).
Rome, Italy



Athens was the subject of a terrible plague and the city elders were at a loss to know how to abate it. They believed the city was under a curse because they were guilty of treachery against the followers of Cylon, who were slayed after they had been promised an amnesty. They had tried sacrificial offerings but to no avail. Turning to the Oracle for wisdom, the priestess said **there was another god who remained unappeased for their treachery**. Who was this unknown god? The priestess did not know but advised that they should send a ship to the island of Crete and fetch a man called **Epimenides** who would know how to appease the offended god.

Diogenes Laertius



Athens was already known as the city of philosophers but what amazed Epimenides as he arrived in Athens from Piraeus was that the approach road was lined with the images of many gods; **gods in their hundreds collected from the theologies of the peoples surrounding them.**

Epimenides postulated that indeed there must still be a god unknown to them great enough and good enough to do something about the plague if they invoked his help. But, the elders questioned, how could they call upon a god whose name is unknown? **Epimenides responded any god good and great enough to do something about the plague is probable also great and good enough to smile on their ignorance if they acknowledged their ignorance and called upon him.**

Epimenides advised the elders to seek a sign from the unknown god. He told them to graze a flock of healthy sheep of different colours, some white, some black on the grassy slope of Mars Hill. He then prayed something on the lines of...

“O thou unknown god! Behold the plague afflicting the city. And if indeed you feel compassion to forgive and help us, behold the flock of sheep. Reveal your willingness to respond, **I plead, by causing any sheep that pleases you to lie upon the grass instead of grazing.** Choose white if white pleases; black if black delights. And those you choose we sacrifice to you – **acknowledging our pitiful ignorance of your name**”



Although it was early morning when the sheep were at their hungriest and therefore unlikely to stop grazing, before long some sheep settled down to rest and these were separated from the remainder of the flock for the sacrificial offering. Epimenides ordered stonemasons to construct altars on each animal's resting place.

On each, following Epimenides' instructions, they inscribed the words "agnosto theo" meaning "to an unknown god".

Within a week, the Athenians stricken by the plague recovered.

Acts 17

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly **distressed** to see that the city was **full of idols.** vs 16

The definition of idolatry, according to Webster, is “the worship of idols or excessive devotion to, or reverence for some person or thing.” An idol is anything that replaces the one, true God.

Acts 17

Luke tells us that Paul's spirit was moved when he saw this. He was provoked. **The Greek word is the word from which we get out word paroxysm.** Paul felt an intense paroxysm of the spirit, a storm within, as he saw the city given over to idolatry. Each idol revealed that these men and women of Athens had a great capacity for God. They knew there was something beyond man, and they were seeking for it. But each idol also revealed a twisting, a distorting, of that capacity, a sabotaging of it.

Acts 17

A group of **Epicurean** and **Stoic** philosophers began to debate with him. Some of them asked, “What is this babbler trying to say?” Others remarked, “He seems to be advocating **foreign gods.**” vs 18

Epicurean they adopted a mentality that believed **pleasure was the main purpose of life.** In simple terminology these Epicureans basically worshiped themselves.

The Stoics hold that emotions like fear or envy (or impassioned sexual attachments, or passionate love of anything whatsoever) either were, or **arose from, false judgements.**

Acts 17

For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an **unknown god**. So **you are ignorant of the very thing you worship**—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you. **vs 23**

“foreign God”

Stoicism (Zeno of Citium)-3rd Century BC

Epicureanism (Epicurus)-3rd Century BC

Epimenides-6th Century BC

“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. **And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else...**God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him**, though he is not far from any one of us. ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’ **vs 25-28****



“Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.”

vs 29-30

