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# The Religious Case Against Belief James P Carse

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understanding of the role religion plays in human life and the trajectory of faith in modern times. Why has God become incredible? Why is it that atheists and theists alike now think and speak about God in a way that veers so profoundly from the thinking of our ancestors? Moving from the Paleolithic Age to the present, Karen Armstrong details the lengths to which humankind has gone to experience a sacred reality that it called God, Brahman, Nirvana, Allah, or Dao. She examines the

diminished impulse toward religion in our own time when a significant number of people either want nothing to do with God or question the efficacy of faith. With her trademark depth of knowledge and profound insight, Armstrong elucidates how the changing world has necessarily altered the importance of religion at both societal and individual levels. And she makes a powerful, convincing argument for structuring a faith that speaks to the needs of our dangerously polarized age.

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The Religion Clauses  
Pitchstone Publishing  
(US&CA)  
Throughout American history, views on the proper relationship between the state and religion have been deeply divided. And, with recent changes in the composition of the Supreme Court, First Amendment law concerning religion is likely to change dramatically in the years ahead. In *The Religion Clauses*, Erwin Chemerinsky and Howard Gillman, two of America's leading constitutional scholars, begin by explaining how freedom of religion is enshrined in the First Amendment through two provisions. They defend a robust view of both clauses and work from the premise that the establishment clause is best understood, in the words of Thomas

Jefferson, as creating a wall separating church and state. After examining all the major approaches to the meaning of the Constitution's religion clauses, they contend that the best approaches are for the government to be strictly secular and for there to be no special exemptions for religious people from neutral and general laws that others must obey. In an America that is only becoming more diverse with respect to religion, this is not only the fairest approach, but the one most in tune with what the First Amendment actually prescribes. Both a pithy primer on the meaning of the religion clauses and a broad-ranging indictment of the Court's misinterpretation of them in recent years, *The Religion Clauses* shows how a separationist approach is

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most consistent with the concerns of the founders who drafted the Constitution and with the needs of a religiously pluralistic society in the 21st century.

### Science and Religion in India

Simon and Schuster

Christopher Hitchens, described in the London Observer as “ one of the most prolific, as well as brilliant, journalists of our time ” takes on his biggest subject yet – the increasingly dangerous role of religion in the world. In the tradition of Bertrand Russell ’ s *Why I Am Not a Christian* and Sam Harris ’ s recent bestseller, *The End Of Faith*, Christopher Hitchens makes the ultimate case against religion. With a close and erudite reading of the major religious texts, he documents the ways in which religion is a man-made wish, a cause of dangerous sexual repression, and a distortion of our origins in the cosmos. With eloquent clarity, Hitchens frames the argument for a more secular life based on science and reason, in which hell is replaced by the Hubble Telescope ’ s awesome

view of the universe, and Moses and the burning bush give way to the beauty and symmetry of the double helix.

### Faith and Its Critics A&C

Black

Who and what did Jesus believe himself to be? And who really founded Christianity? How old are Christian doctrines and where did they come from? Was Christ the God a divinity created from several existing Middle Eastern gods? Is there such a thing as orthodox Christianity when so many denominations call themselves orthodox yet disagree on important matters of doctrine? Which parts of what we think we know about Christianity are facts and which parts are fictions? How did the Christian priesthood arise? How were key stories such as the nativity created? *Beyond Belief* seeks

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answers to these questions. The author looks at claims made by Christian leaders over the centuries and analyses them in the light of modern scholarship. Erudite yet easy to read, authoritative yet mischievous, the book's scope is wide, from biblical times to the present day, from America to China, covering all major denominations and spanning many different academic disciplines. Many of the conclusions reached will shock devout believers. Whatever one's own religious beliefs, the Christian Churches provide huge amounts of material for the enquiring mind. To a large extent, the history of the Western World over the last 2,000 years is the history of the Christian Church. Repercussions from crusades that took place over 900 years ago

still shake the Middle East and the Western world. Echoes of the division of the Roman Empire in early Christian times, 800 years before the crusades, also reverberate to the present day.

**The God Argument** Oxford University Press  
The New York Times bestseller – a “crystal-clear, constantly engaging” (Jared Diamond) exploration of the role that religious belief plays in our lives and our interactions. For all the thousands of books that have been written about religion, few until this one have attempted to examine it scientifically: to ask why—and how—it has shaped so many lives so strongly. Is religion a product of blind evolutionary instinct or rational choice? Is it truly the best way to live a moral

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life? Ranging through biology, history, and psychology, Daniel C. Dennett charts religion's evolution from "wild" folk belief to "domesticated" dogma. Not an antireligious screed but an unblinking look beneath the veil of orthodoxy, *Breaking the Spell* will be read and debated by believers and skeptics alike.

Beyond Belief National Geographic Books

Current debate about religion seems to be going nowhere. Atheists persist with their arguments, many plausible and some unanswerable, but they make no impact on believers. Defenders of religion find atheists equally unwilling to cede ground. Noting that religion is not what atheists think it is, Tim Crane offers a way out of this stalemate.

Penguin

"Does a god exist? This question has undoubtedly been asked, in one form or another, since man has had the ability to communicate. . . Thousands of volumes have been written on the subject of a god, and the vast majority have answered the questions with a resounding 'Yes!' " "You are about to read a minority viewpoint." With this intriguing introduction, George H. Smith sets out to demolish what he considers the most widespread and destructive of all the myths devised by man - the concept of a supreme being. With painstaking scholarship and rigorous arguments, Mr. Smith examines, dissects, and refutes the myriad "proofs" offered by theists - the defenses of sophisticated, professional theologians, as well as the average religious layman. He explores the

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historical and psychological havoc wrought by religion in general - and concludes that religious belief cannot have any place in the life of modern, rational man. "It is not my purpose to convert people to atheism . . . (but to) demonstrate that the belief in God is irrational to the point of absurdity. If a person wishes to continue believing in a god, that is his prerogative, but he can no longer excuse his belief in the name of reason and moral necessity."

*Religious Belief* Garnet Pub Limited

Women have made great strides toward equal rights over the past hundred years, especially in the West. But when considering the ongoing fight over reproductive rights and equal pay—and the prevalence of sexual violence and domestic abuse—it is clear that a

significant gap still exists. With scripture often cited as justification for the marginalization of women, it is time to acknowledge that one of the final barriers to full equality for women is religion. Much has been written about the great strides humankind has made in knocking down many long-held religious beliefs, whether related to the age of the earth or the origin of the species. But religion's negative impact on women has been less studied and discussed. This book is a step toward changing that. Twenty-two women from a variety of backgrounds and Judeo-Christian traditions share their personal stories about how they came to abandon organized religion, and how they discovered life after moving away from religious and supernatural beliefs. Their words serve both as a

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celebration of all who have taken similar steps under the weight of thousands of years of religious history—and as a source of inspiration for those individuals, especially women, who have deep doubts about their own belief traditions but who don't yet know how to embrace life without falling back on religion.

*God Is Not Great* Oxford University Press

*Evidence and Religious Belief* features eleven new essays on the question of whether religious belief must be based on evidence in order to be rational. Leading philosophers in the field discuss the demand for evidence, the ways in which available evidence differs from person to person, and the current arguments for and against religious belief.

## **The Case for God**

McClelland & Stewart  
Heralded as the

exponents of a 'new atheism', critics of religion are highly visible in today's media, and include the household names of Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett and Sam Harris. David Fergusson explains their work in its historical perspective, drawing comparisons with earlier forms of atheism.

Responding to the critics through conversations on the credibility of religious belief, Darwinism, morality, fundamentalism, and our approach to reading sacred texts, he establishes a compelling case for the practical and theoretical validity of faith in the contemporary world. An invitation to engage in a rich dialogue, *Faith and Its Critics* supports an informed and



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constructive exchange of ideas rather than a contest between two sides of the debate. Fergusson encourages faith communities to undertake patient engagement with their critics, to acknowledge the place for change and development in their self-understanding whilst resisting the reductive explanations of the new atheism.

*The Religious Case Against Belief* HarperCollins UK

The growth of science and a correspondingly scientific way of looking at evidence have for the last three centuries slowly been gaining ground over religious explanations of the cosmos and mankind's place in it. However, not only is secularism now under renewed attack from religious fundamentalism, but it has also been widely claimed that the scientific evidence itself points strongly to a universe

deliberately fine-tuned for life to evolve in it. In addition, certain aspects of human life, like consciousness and the ability to recognise the existence of universal moral standards, seem completely resistant to evolutionary explanation. In this book Colin Howson analyses in detail the evidence which is claimed to support belief in God's existence and argues that the claim is not well-founded. Moreover, there is very compelling evidence that an all-powerful, all-knowing God not only does not exist but cannot exist, a conclusion both surprising and provocative. Critiques of God Routledge A New York Times bestseller people can believe in—by "a pioneer of the new urban Christians" (Christianity Today) and the "C.S. Lewis for the 21st century" (Newsweek). Timothy Keller, the founding pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City,

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addresses the frequent doubts that skeptics, and even ardent believers, have about religion. Using literature, philosophy, real-life conversations, and potent reasoning, Keller explains how the belief in a Christian God is, in fact, a sound and rational one. To true believers he offers a solid platform on which to stand their ground against the backlash to religion created by the Age of Skepticism. And to skeptics, atheists, and agnostics, he provides a challenging argument for pursuing the reason for God.

**Objecting to God** OUP  
Oxford

This book addresses the different forms that religious belief can take. Two primary forms are discussed: propositional or doctrinal belief, and belief in God. Religious

belief in God, whose affective content is trust in God, it is seen, opens for believers a relationship to God defined by trust in God. The book addresses the issue of the relation between belief and faith, the issue of what Søren Kierkegaard called the subjectivity of faith, and the issue of the relation between religious belief and religious experience. After the introductory chapter the book continues with a chapter in which features and forms of belief allowed by the general concept of belief are presented. Several of these forms and features are related to the features of religious belief examined in succeeding chapters. The book's final chapter examines God-

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relationships in the Christian tradition that de-emphasize belief and are not defined by belief.

Bad Faith Penguin Books

Because of the design of our minds. That is Justin Barrett's simple answer to the question of his title. With rich evidence from cognitive science but without technical language, psychologist Barrett shows that belief in God is an almost inevitable consequence of the kind of minds we have. Most of what we believe comes from mental tools working below our conscious awareness. And what we believe consciously is in large part driven by these unconscious beliefs. Barrett demonstrates that beliefs in gods match up well with these automatic assumptions; beliefs in an all-knowing, all-powerful God match up even better. Barrett goes on to explain why beliefs like religious beliefs are so widespread and why it is very difficult for our minds to think

without them. Anyone who wants a concise, clear, and scientific explanation of why anyone would believe in God should pick up Barrett's book.

What If I'm an Atheist?

Oxford University Press

"There are at least two kinds of games," states James Carse as he begins this extraordinary book. "One could be called finite; the other infinite." Finite games are the familiar contests of everyday life; they are played in order to be won, which is when they end. But infinite games are more mysterious. Their object is not winning, but ensuring the continuation of play. The rules may change, the boundaries may change, even the participants may change—as long as the game is never allowed to come to an end. What are infinite games? How do they affect the ways we play our finite

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games? What are we doing when we play—finitely or infinitely? And how can infinite games affect the ways in which we live our lives? Carse explores these questions with stunning elegance, teasing out of his distinctions a universe of observation and insight, noting where and why and how we play, finitely and infinitely. He surveys our world—from the finite games of the playing field and playing board to the infinite games found in culture and religion—leaving all we think we know illuminated and transformed. Along the way, Carse finds new ways of understanding everything from how an actress portrays a role, to how we engage in sex, from the nature of evil, to the nature of science. Finite games, he shows, may offer wealth and status, power and glory. But infinite games offer

something far more subtle and far grander. Carse has written a book rich in insight and aphorism. Already an international literary event, *Finite and Infinite Games* is certain to be argued about and celebrated for years to come. Reading it is the first step in learning to play the infinite game.

[Evidence and Religious Belief](#) Cambridge University Press

The first book to deal with all the arguments against religion and, equally important, to put forward an alternative - humanism  
*Why Would Anyone Believe in God?* Springer Nature

When Jesus said, “Suffer the children,” faith healing is not what he had in mind

*How Violence Shapes Religion* Freedom from Religion Fndtn

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In this book, Graham Oppy examines arguments for and against the existence of God. He shows that none of these arguments is powerful enough to change the minds of reasonable participants in debates on the question of the existence of God. His conclusion is supported by detailed analyses of the arguments as well as by the development of a theory about the purpose of arguments and the criteria that should be used in judging whether or not arguments are successful. Oppy discusses the work of a wide array of philosophers, including Anselm, Aquinas, Descartes, Locke, Leibniz, Kant, Hume and, more recently, Plantinga, Dembski, White, Dawkins, Bergman, Gale and Pruss. *When Atheism Becomes Religion* Cambridge University Press

These specially written essays show that philosophy of religion is fertile ground for the application of probabilistic thinking. The authors examine central topics in the field: the status of evidence relating to the question of the existence of God; the rationality of religious belief; and the epistemic significance of religious disagreement.