

**Does Christianity best
explain reality?**

No!

**Gil Shapiro,
Spokesman Freethought Arizona**

The crux of the problem:

“Science and religion are incompatible because they have different methods for getting knowledge about reality; have different ways of assessing the reliability of that knowledge, and, in the end, arrive at conflicting conclusions about the universe.”

Faith vs. Fact, Prof. Jerry Coyne

The difference between...

Christians and scientists in explaining reality can be summarized in how each party would answer the question

“How would I know if I was wrong?”



**What is
Christianity?**



***Christianity* is:**

the faith/religion based on the person and teachings of Jesus Christ. Its beliefs and practices.

It is the world's largest religion with over 2.4 billion followers, or 33% of the global population.



And...

the belief that Jesus is simultaneously
God, His Son, and Holy Spirit...ie:
The Trinity

He is also the savior of humanity
whose coming as the Messiah (the
Christ) was prophesied in the Old
Testament.



So, the question at hand can be asked as...

Does the religion based on the person and teachings of Jesus Christ make plain and comprehensible everything that has existed, exists, or will exist?

If so, Christianity needs to...

**1) show that our reality
requires the existence
and action of a *specific*
God for its explanation.**



2) be consistent with what we already know, be independently testable (and have survived such tests), and make predictions that come true.



In other words, it must provide evidence that...

**the world works exactly
as expected if the
Christian God were in
charge of the universe.**



Could a Christian explanation of reality be correct? Of course!

...But, it must live up to the same standards as any other type of correct explanation.

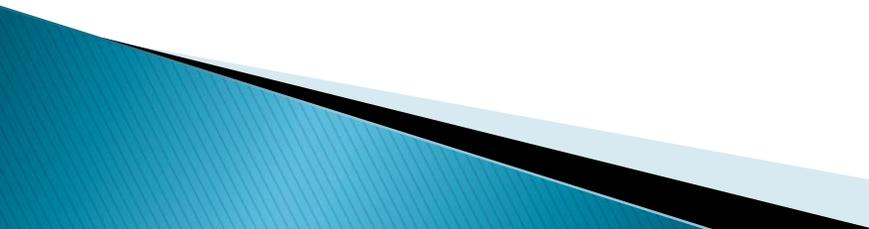


It must demonstrate:

explanatory power (how well it explains the facts).

explanatory scope (the number of facts it explains).

that its claims can be tested.

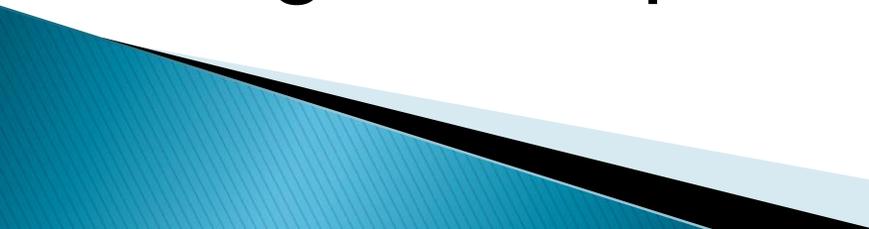


However, a reality check confirms...

That natural (scientific) explanations have had an excellent track record in explaining our reality.

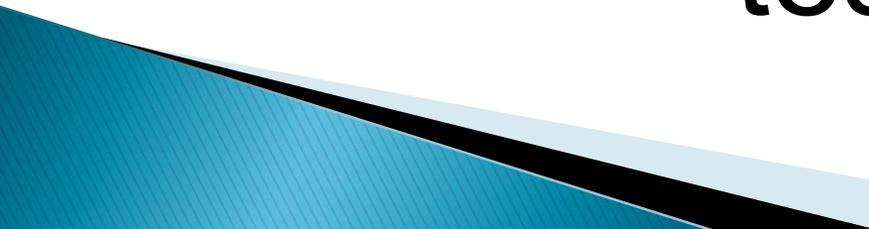
They work, they make sense, and have been consistently right.

They have systematically replaced religious explanations of reality.



No Christian explanations of reality, have proven to be correct.

Every one proposed has either failed or is not testable.



Some that have all failed:

Creationism/ID as a better model than Evolution by natural selection.

Diseases are caused by demons.

Dead bodies can be revived.



Some are untestable:

natural disasters: *God's punishment?*

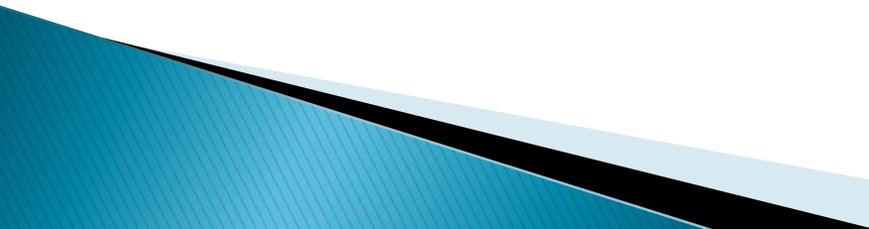
prayer responses: *Yes, No, Wait???*

Heaven or Hell: *No one's let us know.*

So,

if *all* Christian explanations have consistently failed over the course of history, doesn't that mean that Christianity *cannot* best explain reality?

Yes, that's probably the case...



Why is that right? Because, theistic explanations are *very* strange.

They assert a completely new *kind* of entity (a specific “God”) in a new *kind* of location (the Supernatural):

To wit: an indescribable and incomprehensible **being and place.**

This observation certainly applies:

“The weight of evidence for an extraordinary claim must be proportional to its strangeness.”



Therefore, Christians are duty bound to now provide...

- 1) ***convincing evidence*** that a supernatural realm exists, and within it, a particular deity;
- 2) describe in detail this supernatural realm and the deity within it;

3) make each comprehensible;

and,

4) give coherent reasons
why Christians alone have
unique access to each entity.



PREDICTIONS!

Explanations are tested, in part, by their predictions.



So, if the Christian God is...

all-powerful, -knowing, -good, -present, -
just, -merciful, -immutable, -holy, -
righteous, -sovereign, then this deity's
desires, intentions, values, goals and
actions should be consistent,
understandable and generally
predictable.

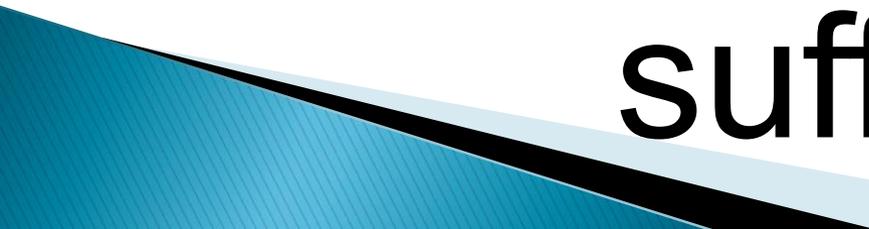
(ie: be a reflection of His attributes)



Christians now must predict how their God *would and would not act.*

For example, a fair and logical prediction based on His attributes would be that

He would not create or allow gratuitous suffering.



But, if this kind of suffering has always existed,

then either this God is irrational
(acting inconsistent with His attributes) or He does not exist.

(Therefore, this God claim is testable and falsifiable.)

“Rationality...

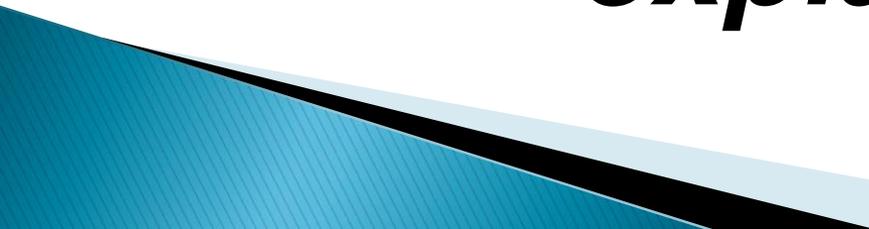
is the quality or the state of being reasonable; based on facts.

implies the conformity of one's beliefs with one's reasons to believe, or of one's actions with one's reasons for action.”



Christianity's God *should* be rational.

***If He is not acting
rationally, how could
humans determine His
actions are
understandable and
explanatory?***



Back to the question at hand:

**What does
Christianity need
to explain first?**



Let's start with two primary or essential questions all humans should ask about reality:

1) Why is there something rather than nothing?

2) What is it all about?



Christianity must explain:

**Why and how did their
God bring this state of
affairs into existence?**



Christians usually answer:

1) God *wanted* something rather than nothing. He wanted creation.

2) It's all about glorifying Jesus Christ as Lord & Savior, having a relationship with Him, repenting sins, and following the meaning and purpose He gave you.



Non-theists answer to 1&2:

1) We don't know.

2) We don't know.

(and, we're not going to make something up!)



The nature of the answers:

Christian answers are speculative and wishful.

Non-theists' answers are honest and humble because, to date, there ***are no*** rational explanations for “existence.”

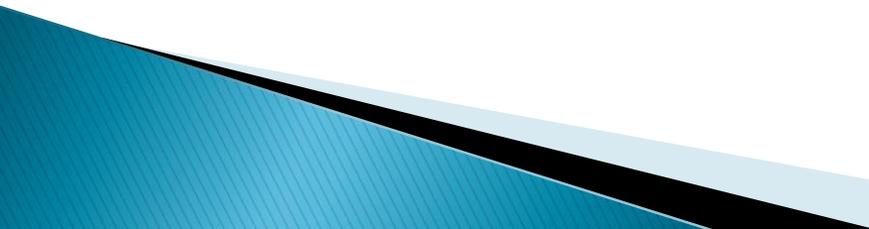
We can't know what we don't know!

Additionally...

The non-theists' answers show respect for the profound nature of these questions...

and the humility that humans possess only a limited knowledge capacity; and the answers to some questions may always be (unfortunately) unknowable.

Refreshing!



**We should all agree that
explanations are important and,**

if it's important,

it's worth

verifying!

So,

**What would make
Christian
explanations of
reality verifiable?**



If they were accurate...

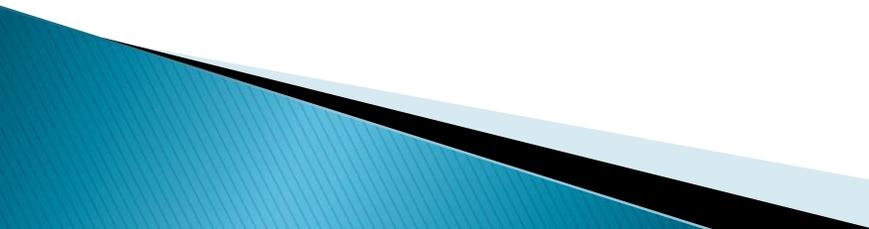
**scientifically,
historically,
experientially, and
theologically.**



But, they're not.



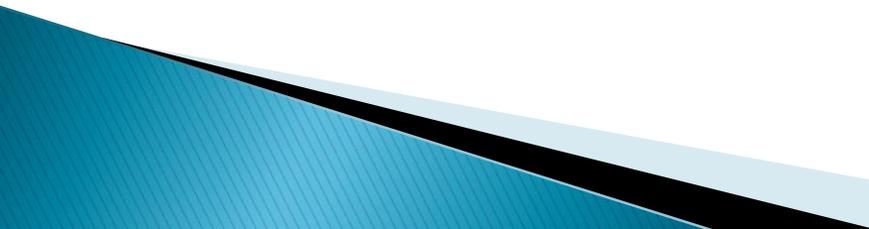
**Science has found no
evidence of deities or
supernatural realms:
preconditions for deities,
angels, devils, spirits,
heavens or hells.**



Science has not verified...

miracles

(supernatural
interventions in the
natural world both
claimed and predicted by
Christianity).



No verification of “Scientific” claims in the Bible such as...

a young earth, talking animals, a human becoming a pillar of salt, a worldwide flood, dead people returning to life, demons causing diseases etc.



Historical claims have also not been verified:

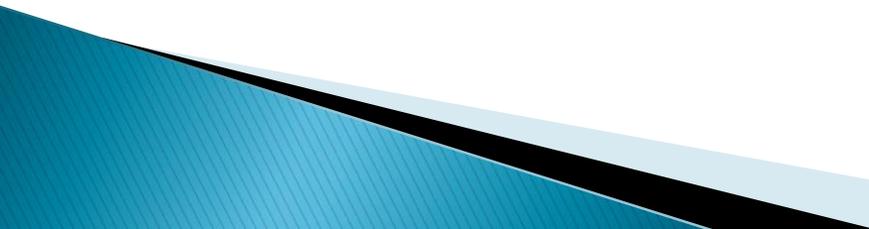
Plausible arguments can be made that the historical Jesus did not exist.

(But, assuming he existed,) What he is purported to have said is speculative since there was no way to have accurately recorded him.

Some historical claims must also be scientifically true.

The resurrection of Jesus cannot be classified as only one form of truth; i.e. It cannot be a Christian truth without at the same time being a historical truth (unless language loses all of its meaning);

and, it cannot be
historically true
unless it is also
scientifically true.



Additionally, Christianity cannot best explain reality because...

The Gospels, its foundational documents, are based on hearsay;
of a man who spoke Aramaic;
whose supposed words were then translated into ancient Greek (Koiné);
then to Latin;
and then into 17th century English (that produced the King James Bible).

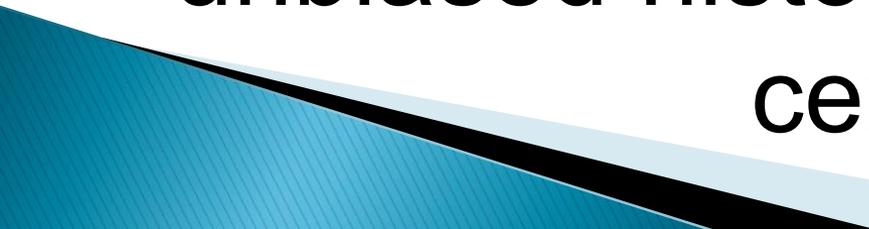
**What could go wrong there?
*Explanatory???***



And...

The original Gospels have never been found and their true authorship is unknown.

There was no corroboration of Jesus' life and actions by any unbiased historian in the entire 1st century(!)



Much of Christianity's dogma...

was not derived from scripture or revelation, but from a consensus of opinion designed to quell dissent within the church.

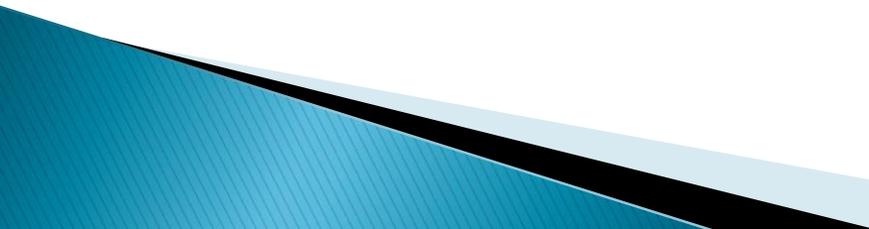
The Council of Nicaea, for instance, was convened by Emperor Constantine in 325 to settle issues about the divinity of Jesus and the reality of the Trinity.

Despite dissent, both issues were affirmed.



In other words,

**issues of
Christian “truth”
were settled *by*
*vote!***



As for verifying miracles...

Historians *cannot* verify miracles.

They can only describe what *most probably* happened.

And, miracles are the *least probable* things that could happen.



Experientially...

Our world (and, as far as we can tell, the rest of the universe) works exactly as expected if there were no intervening deities.

(and it works with an apparent total and exquisite indifference to all that exists)

Verified!

Righteous Christians do not necessarily lead healthier, happier or more fulfilled lives as would be expected if their God was true.



Verified!

Most Christians do not follow their deity's directives to commit murder and genocide, enslave fellow humans, torture, rape and destroy families. They override these orders because they *know better*.

Most of us do not do things “we know inside” are not moral to do.



Verified!

Human morality is a product of our culture and biology.

It is not based on religion.

(It's actually based on

secularism!)



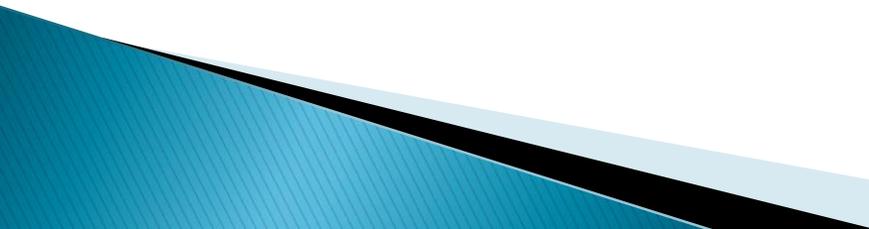
Theologically

Hundreds of *Christianities* within Christianity confirm this religion is subjective, segmented, and unstable.

(ie: It is like a house of cards built on quicksand.)

Verified (by common sense)!

**Evil and suffering
cannot be
explained if the
Christian God is
rational.**



An appeal to logic:

An all-knowing, -powerful, -good, -just, -loving and -merciful deity would not have created a world with earthquakes, volcanos, plagues, free will, and the “Law of the Jungle” (etc) if He ***knew (as he had to)*** his creation (animal and human) would suffer terribly.

This is another testable issue!

Indeed, why does He allow it
to continue to occur?

Can't He stop it?

He's *God* right?

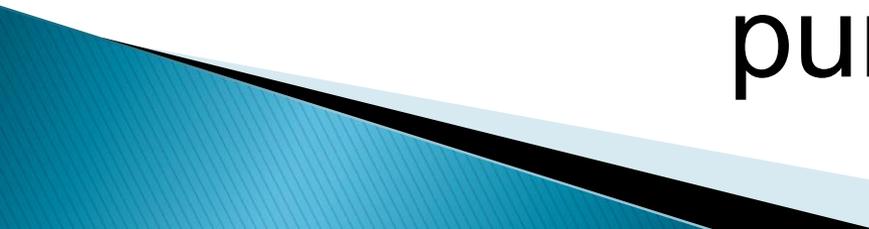


Christianity's explanations for evil and suffering are incoherent and incomprehensible

They include:

“We all deserve evil and suffering because we are all sinners.”

“We do not know God's ultimate purpose.”



“We live in a speck of time
compared to an eternity in
heaven.”

“Man has been given free
will.”

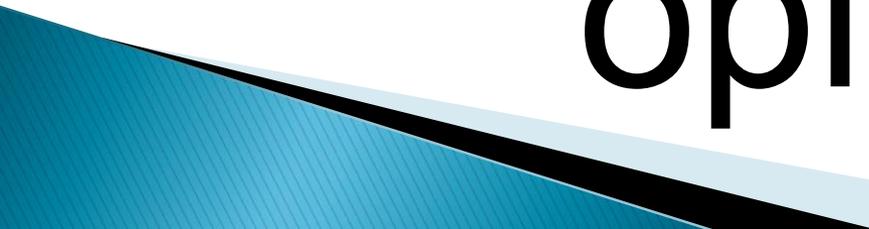


These explanations
are all unimpressive
and frankly insulting
to human
intelligence.



**Christianity's shortcoming, in
this regard,**

**is that it cannot
provide more
than beliefs or
opinions**



Why? Because, its theological foundation, faith-based thinking..
only leads to beliefs and opinions (fixed ideas that lack certainty) and not factual knowledge.

Beliefs and opinions are poor substitutes for ***factual knowledge*** (justified true beliefs or accurate statements about reality).

Christianity's other dilemma: It can't self-check or verify its beliefs are true when...

unlike science, that has further testing, peer review, reproducibility, falsifiability etc., there are no mechanisms within the faith itself to confirm its own claims.

(It also does not accept outside criticisms.)

It places faith (belief in the absence of evidence) *over* reason (science) as a source of knowledge about our real world and how it works?

RELIABILITY?

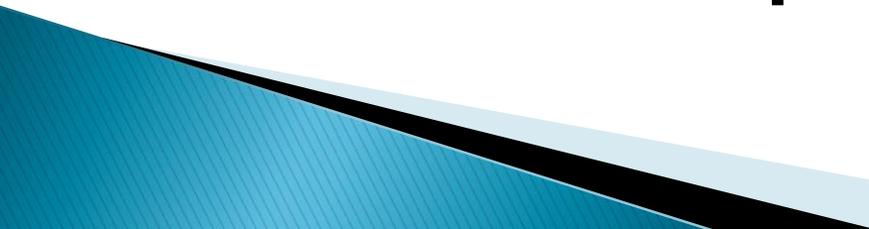


Christian explanations are..

based on faith, dogma, authority and “confirmation bias” (the tendency to see as true what you want to be true).

Christianity mistakes and confuses beliefs for facts.

Therefore, it cannot be explanatory.



Christianity's fatal flaw is that it...

Starts with a ***conclusion(!)***:

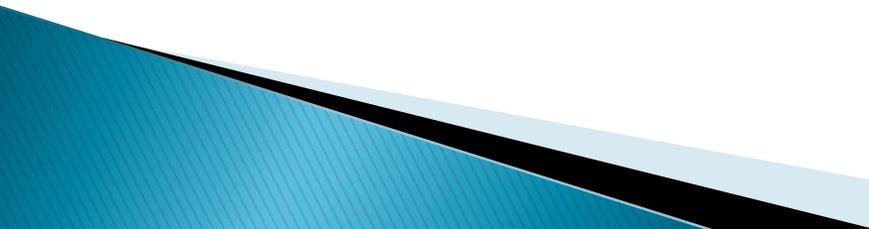
That a specific **deity** (existence unproven) → **Revelation** (subjective) → **Scripture** (inerrant, without error) because this deity (existence unproven) is infallible (incapable of error)

→ **Doctrine**

Doctrine is belief and opinion,
not factual knowledge.

Simple definition of *doctrine*

“a set of ideas or beliefs that are taught or believed to be true”



Caution!

Teaching ideas and beliefs *as fact* is
INDOCTRINATION.

Teaching fact as fact is
EDUCATION!

BTW: Our camp does not teach secular humanism as fact but as a worldview philosophy or life stance to consider as the most logical and useful one to live by.



Christianity...

has no *pathway* to factual
knowledge
yet
pretends that it does!



Faith is an imposter.

**It is not what it
appears to be and
doesn't deliver
what it promises.**



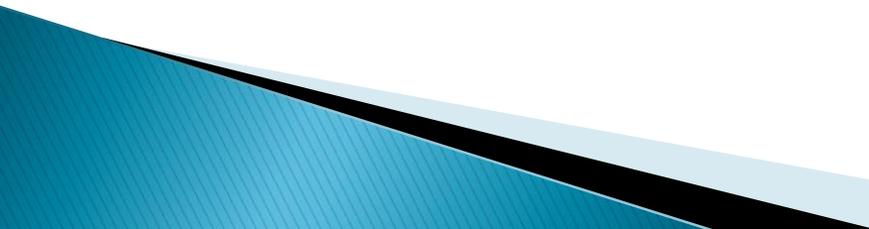
Therefore,

**The best
explanations of
reality are based on
*factual knowledge.***



Factual knowledge trumps belief because...

A person having factual knowledge has a justified affirmation of something, an accurate (or at least a better understanding) of reality.



IMPORTANCE?

Factual knowledge is as close as humans can come to possessing a certainty or a (scientific) truth.



A proven pathway to factual knowledge.

The Scientific Method!

Non-theists trust **reason-based thinking** as embodied in the scientific method:

Observation →

Hypothesis/Belief → Testing

→ Conclusion*

because

reason, as embodied in this approach, has proven reliable (over and over again) to provide factual knowledge.



What is “reason?”

(...The foundation of science)

the power of the mind to think and understand in a logical way.

specifically, the power of comprehending, inferring, or thinking especially in orderly rational ways

the proper exercise of the mind

the sum of the intellectual powers



The scientific method is honest

It is objective: It follows facts.

It is neutral: It does not have an agenda.

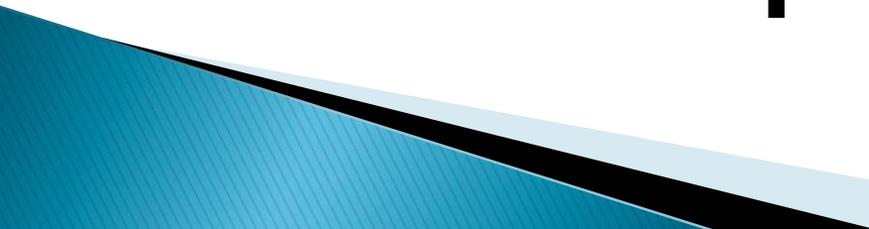


It is a pathway to explain and understand reality that is universally accepted because of its history of getting it right.

Conclusions can change or be rejected pending new facts or information.



**In summary, the secular humanist position is that...
reason-based thinking is the correct way to think because its conclusions are testable, reproducible, and falsifiable. It can make predictions. Its conclusions are explanatory.**



Also...

Its conclusions have survived the severest scrutiny and best rational criticisms.

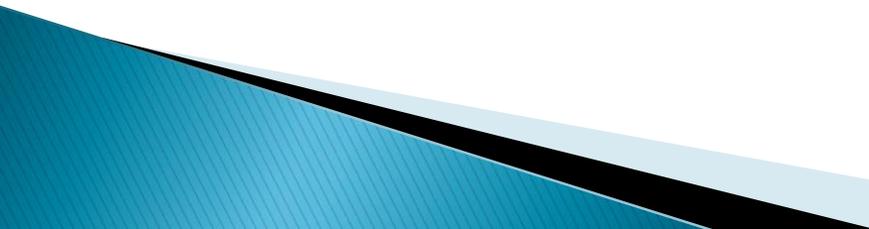
Reason-based thinking, as embodied in the scientific method, is **TRUSTWORTHY!**



What evidence verifies reason-based thinking is trustworthy?

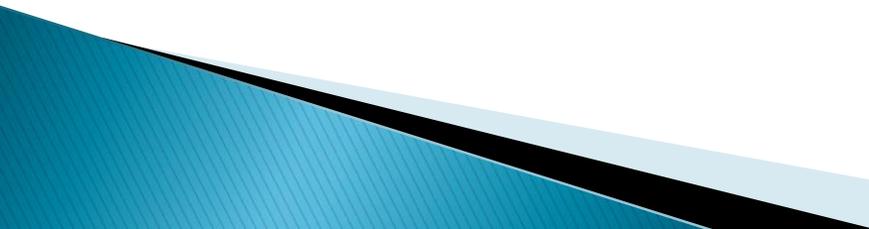
It has brought us all the trappings of modernity: medicine, engineering, agriculture, cars/planes/trains, roads/bridges/tunnels etc.

IT WORKS!



Reality check

*****Nations which have the highest living standard and which self-report as the happiest are secular.
(i.e. based on the factual knowledge.)**



Since and because of 9/11...

Hundreds of books have been written on the incoherencies, contradictions, and questionable origins and claims of Christianity.

**The same cannot be said
of science.**



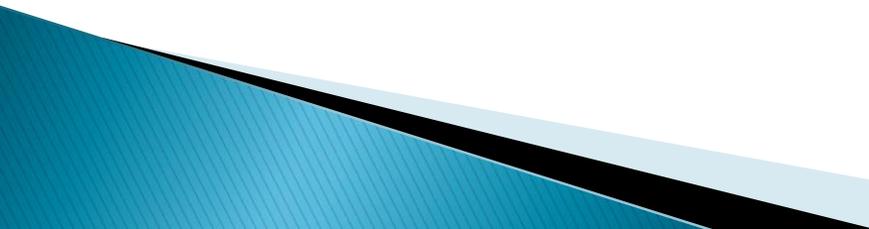
“ ‘Knowledge’ acquired by religion is at odds not only with scientific knowledge but with that professed by other religions.”

“In the end, religion’s method, unlike those of science, are useless for understanding reality”

▶ From *Faith vs. Fact* (Prof. Jerry Coyne)

The question to pose to Christians about whether their religion best explains reality is this:

Does it really matter whether what you believe about Christianity's explanatory power is true—or don't you care?



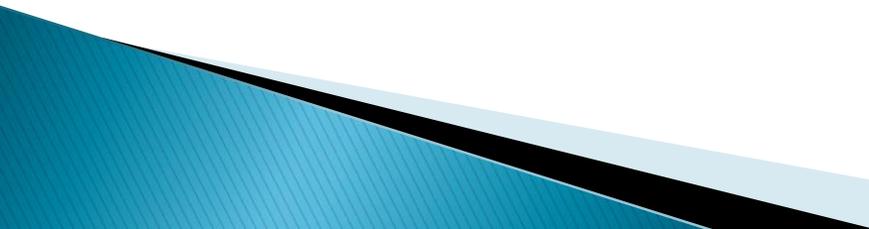
If it *does* matter, then you must justify your beliefs by verifying them as factual knowledge.

If it *doesn't*, then you must justify why belief is better than factual knowledge for explaining reality.



What worldview best explains reality (ie: the real world)?

While there is no one source that is perfect, the worldview based on reason, experience and (the power of) science is the best choice for explaining and understanding our reality.



That worldview, in my opinion, is

Secular Humanism







