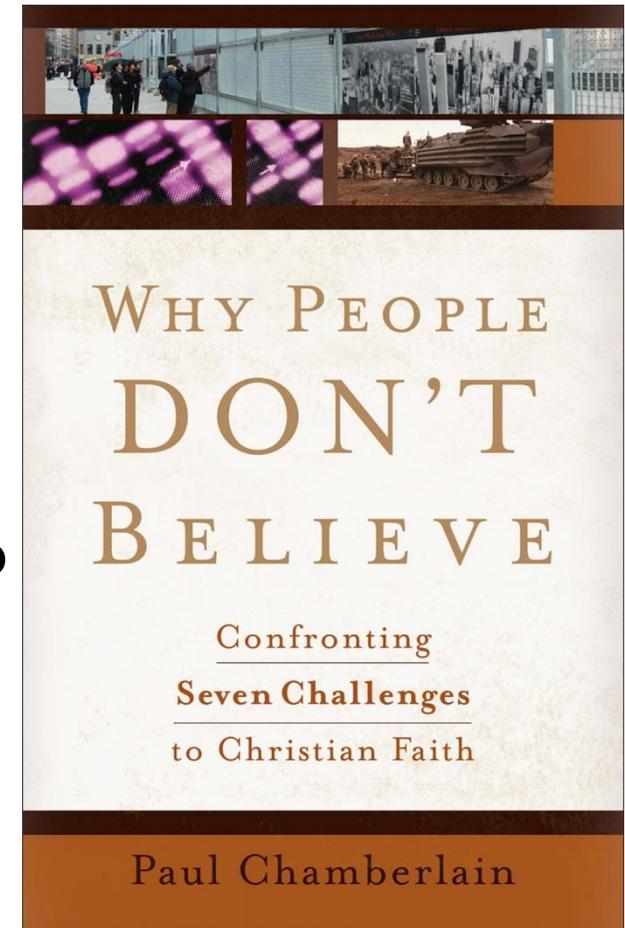


Impact Hour

February 7, 2016

Why People Don't Believe:

1. The Power of Religion
2. Reason To Fear
3. Religion and Violence: A Closer Look
4. Is Christianity Irrational and Devoid of Evidence?
5. Is Christianity Anti-Scientific?
6. Is Biblical Morality Appalling?
7. Living the Way Jesus Calls Us to Live
8. Christianity's Gifts to the World
9. Is There a Way Forward? True Religion



Two Areas of Need:

- The need for people of faith to hear and truly understand the concerns and challenges raised against religion
- The need to engage in thoughtful and frank dialogue with those who raise such objections

Three Aims of The Book:

- **Accurately** represent the concerns and challenges raised against religious faith, particularly those against Christianity
- Respond to those challenges
- Examine the many good and humane contributions Christianity has made to the world throughout the past two thousand years

“when these allegations are laid out in greater detail and Christians begin to catch a glimpse of the message and passion of the critics, they are usually shocked and bewildered.”

Paul Chamberlain

Why People Don't Believe, p.13

Reason to Fear

1. Religion breeds violence
2. Religion is irrational and lacks evidence for its claims
3. Religion is anti-scientific
4. Biblical morality is appalling and promotes violence
5. Religious teaching of an afterlife is scandalous and dangerous
6. Religion engenders intolerance and exclusivity
7. Religion leads believers to impose religious teachings on others

Charge 1: Religion Breeds Violence

New critics cite:

- September 11
- Suicide bombings
- Violent acts against abortion clinics
- Andrea Yates
- Inquisition
- Jews vs. Muslims (Palestine)
- Orthodox Serbians vs. Catholic Croats (Balkans)
- Protestants vs. Catholics (Northern Ireland)
- Muslims vs. Hindus (Kashmir)
- Muslims vs. Christians (Sudan)
- Muslims vs. Christians (Nigeria)

Charge 2: Religion is Irrational and Lacks Evidence for its Claims

- Lack of evidence is no obstacle, not testable
- No way to determine superiority/inferiority of religious beliefs
- Impervious to debate/discussion
- Glorify unquestionable obedience
- Not just peripheral, extend to core beliefs
- Belief in the existence of God should be seen as a scientific hypothesis
- Discoverable in principle, if not in practice
- Believers have a deep hostility toward evidence
- Believers shift burden of proof to atheists
- God's existence is not provable

Charge 3: Religion Is Anti-Scientific

- Truth is in a holy book, the holy book is true
- If evidence contradicts book, throw out evidence
- Religious beliefs are “beyond the scope of rational discourse”
- Religious beliefs “float entirely free of reason and evidence”
- Religions offer “no valid mechanism by which their core beliefs can be tested and revised”

Charge 4: Biblical Morality is Appalling and Promotes Violence

- Appalling commands given by God
- Worse than Hitler, worse than Satan
- Biblical morality is immoral, therefore God of the Bible is immoral
- God violates his own commands
- Blaming people for natural catastrophes
- Capital punishment for:
 - Cursing one's parents
 - Adultery
 - Homosexuality

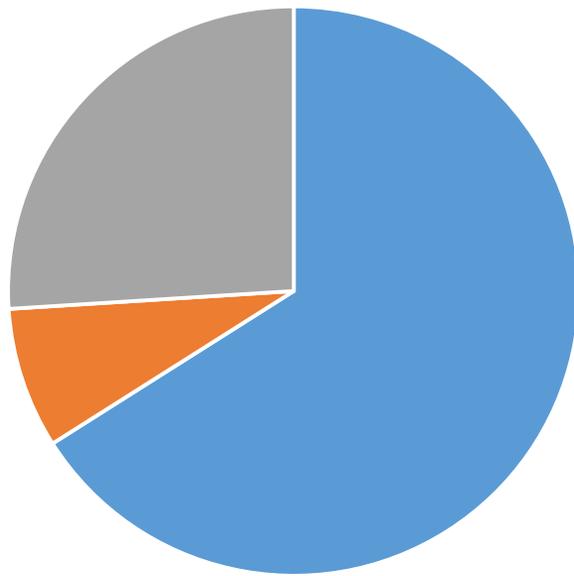
Charge 4: Biblical Morality is Appalling and Promotes Violence

- Midianites
- God intervened with Abraham sacrificing Isaac but not with Jephthah's daughter
- Tamarin Study

Charge 4: Biblical Morality is Appalling and Promotes Violence

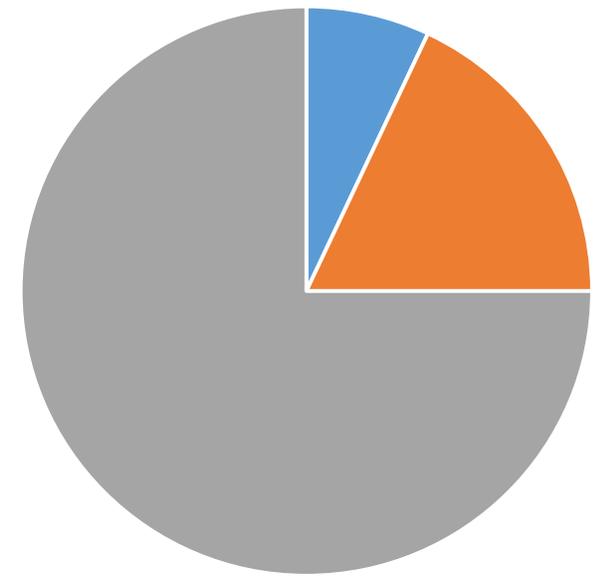
Tamarin Study:

Joshua/Israelites



■ Total Approval ■ Partial Approval
■ Total Disapproval ■

Gen. Lin/Ancient China

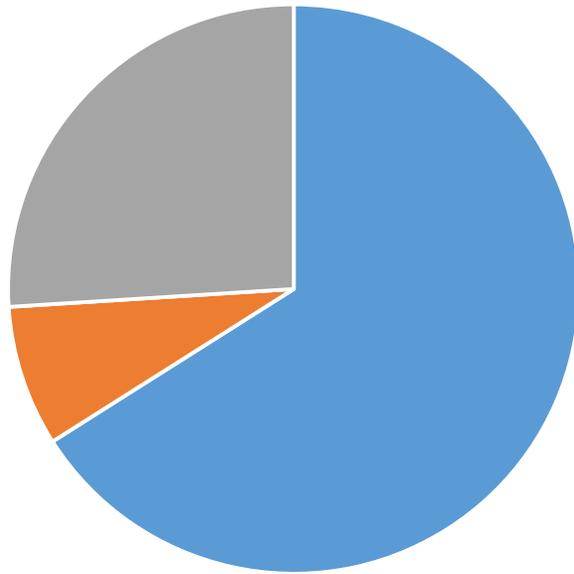


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Charge 4: Biblical Morality is Appalling and Promotes Violence

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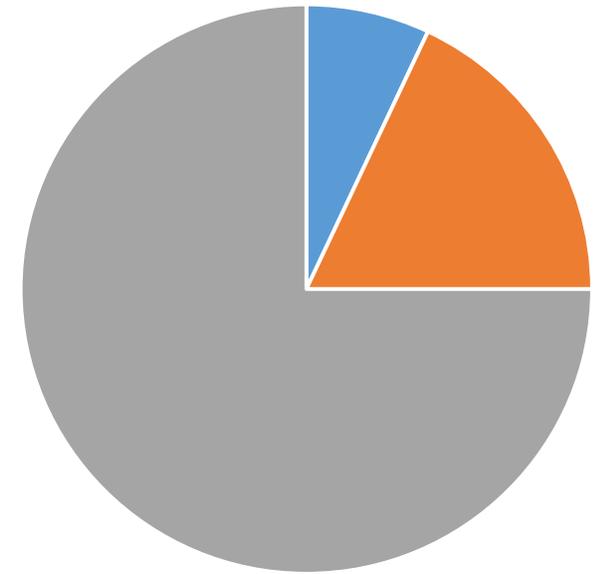
Joshua/Israelites



■ Total Approval ■ Partial Approval
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When religious loyalties were removed, most children agreed with the moral judgements that most humans would make: that Joshua's action was barbaric genocide.

Gen. Lin/Ancient China



■ Total Approval ■ Partial Approval
■ Total Disapproval ■

Charge 5: Religious Teaching of an Afterlife is Scandalous and Dangerous

- Threatens human survival
- Martyrdom for a better afterlife
- Michael O'nefray, *In Defense of Atheism*: “Devalues the only life we have and makes us too prone to violence”

Charge 6: Religion Engenders Intolerance and Exclusivity

- Belief in an absolute truth
- Absolutism
- I'm right, you're wrong!
- Absolute truth has been the prime cause of:
 - Racism
 - Bigotry
 - War
 - Imperialism
 - Marginalization of minorities
- Religion is a major cause of division among humans
- Harris: "Intolerance is intrinsic to every creed."
- Tolerance/inclusivity are now highly valued in the western world, solution: reject absolute truth

Charge 7: Religion Leads Believers to Impose Religious Teachings on Others

- Once religious teachings are regarded as absolutely true and good for all people, it is a small step to be willing to impose them on others
- Dawkins: “American Taliban” Garry Potter: “when the Christian majority takes over this country, there will be no Satanic churches, no more free distribution of pornography, no more talk of rights for homosexuals....”
- Randall Terry: warning to physicians who provide abortions: “When I, or people like me, are running the country, you’d better flee, because we will find you, we will try you, and we’ll execute you.”

Charge 7: Religion Leads Believers to Impose Religious Teachings on Others

- Dawkins: These people are not psychopaths, they are good, moral people guided by God
- Dangerously religious
- Christian government officials looking forward to nuclear war as a way to speed up Jesus' second coming

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