The Atheist's 'No False Scotsman' Fallacy

If you've had a few conversations with an atheist, you've probably heard of the "No True Scotsman" argument, which is a logical fallacy often aimed at born-again Christians. For those of you who may not know or remember what the argument is, let's take a look at a definition given by the *Logical Fallacies* website:

"The No True Scotsman fallacy involves discounting evidence that would refute a proposition, <u>concluding that it hasn't been falsified when in fact it has."</u>
-*Logical Fallacies*, "'No True Scotsman' Fallacy," retrieved Feb 23, 2017, [logicalfallacies.info/presumption/no-true-scotsman]

For most of you, that was probably more confusing than helpful, so I'll give a simple example using Haggis, a traditional Scottish dish:

- All Scotsmen eat haggis.
- Alex is a Scot, but he doesn't eat haggis.
- Therefore, Alex is not a true Scotsman.

Alex could have been a natural born citizen, and lived in Scotland his whole life, but on the basis that he doesn't like haggis, he is then accused of not being a "true" Scotsman. The statement that "all Scotsmen eat haggis" is false, and the core foundation of this fallacy is that **Alex is born a Scotsman**, which is not something his personal choices can change; even if he moves to another country and changes his nationality, he will remain a natural born Scotsman the rest of his life.

The problem I'm addressing is that atheists, in their willful ignorance, apply this fallacy to Christians. In fact, the *Logically Fallacious* website (based on a book) has a note beside the section on "No True Scotsman" that reads "<u>also known as: no true Christian</u>," and here is what atheist author Bo Bennett wrote:

"In 2011, Christian broadcaster, Harold Camping, (once again) predicted the end of the world via Jesus, and managed to get many Christians to join his alarmist campaign. During this time, and especially after the Armageddon date had passed, many Christian groups publicly declared that Camping is not a 'true Christian'. <u>On a personal note, I think Camping was and is as much of a Christian as any other self-proclaimed Christian</u> and religious/political/ethical beliefs aside, I admire him for having the cojones to make a falsifiable claim about his religious beliefs."
-Bo Bennett, "No True Scotsman," *Logically Fallacious*, retrieved Feb 23, 2017, [logicallyfallacious.com/tools/lp/Bo/LogicalFallacies/135/No-True-Scotsman]

There are numerous problems with this; the first being that any Christian student of the Bible could tell immediately that Camping was a false prophet *BEFORE* the timing of his prediction. Camping was a part of the "Pre-Tribulation" crowd that relies heavily on false doctrine and removes Scripture from the Bible in order to believe in a "feel-good" message, and such doctrine was never taught by the church prior to its invention in the late 18th century by a charismatic cult in England, and they adopted that idea from Jesuit authors from the 17th century. The Bible very clearly teaches a handful of events that must take place before Christ's return, and based on the gravity of those events, we are nowhere close to seeing those things come to pass yet.
(Read "Beginner's Guide: Tribulation and Rapture" here at creationliberty.com for more details.)

The Lord God took the crime of false prophets so seriously, they were executed in Jewish society, so at the very least, we can say God does not look favorably upon them:

But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, <u>which I have not commanded him to speak</u>, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, <u>even that prophet shall die</u>.
-Deuteronomy 18:20

Camping was nothing more than a liar, looking to start a following to glorify himself, but despite his lies, Bennett still believes that "*Camping was and is as much of a Christian as any other self-proclaimed Christian*." Though Bennett's book has over 300 logical fallacies, he forgot one which I am calling **the "No False Scotsman" fallacy, which is to believe that no one could ever lie about their beliefs**.

- If a man claims to be Scottish, he's a Scotsman.
- Alex claims to be Scottish.
- Therefore, Alex is a Scotsman.

Earlier in this article, I mentioned that Alex was a natural born Scotsman, and with being naturally born, he will have evidence to his Scottish origin. There will be eye-witness testimony from friends, family, and neighbors, and there may even be official state documentation of his Scottish citizenship. The point is that personal preferences (like eating haggis) do not determine one's place of birth, but likewise, personal preferences (like claiming to be Scottish) also do not determine one's place of birth because there has to be evidence of the claim.

Look! It's the real Elvis Presley! I know it's him because he told me he was!

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ATHEIST REASONING

An Example of the Atheist's "No False Scotsman" Fallacy

Let's suppose a man fell, hit his head, and entered into a coma, but when he woke up, he believed and claimed he was Elvis Presley. Just because he *CLAIMS* to be Elvis Presley, doesn't automatically make him Elvis Presley, and likewise, just because a man *CLAIMS* to be a Christian, doesn't automatically make him a Christian.

The fallacy atheists commonly use looks like this:

- Any man who claims to believe in Christianity is a Christian.
- Harold claims to believe in Christianity.
- Therefore, Harold is a Christian.

It's fascinating to me that atheists, who claim to be so reasonable and logical, would simply believe what they're told without any additional thought. If a man told an atheist he was a rocket scientist, but the man didn't know how to do basic division, would atheists just believe him because he *CLAIMED* to be a rocket scientist?

For example, after reading some of the articles on my website, no atheist has ever assumed I was an atheist, and even if I said I was an atheist, my words and actions do not give enough evidence for them to believe it. If I claimed to be an atheist while still holding on to the beliefs that I maintain on this website, then I would be a liar and should not be believed because I would have provided no evidence to what an atheist is supposed to be.

The reason that atheists so often use the "No False Scotsman" fallacy is that they don't want to have to do the work of looking at Scripture to figure out how the Bible defines a Christian. A good example are the Pharisees and Sadducees, which were seen as the most esteemed followers of God in Jewish society during the days Christ walked amongst them, however, they were not of God, rebuked by Christ in numerous places for being wicked deceivers, and Christ warned His students to beware of something important:

Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.
-Matthew 16:6

At first, Christ's disciples talked amongst each other about what He meant by "leaven," and they thought they hadn't brought enough bread for their trip. However, this took place right after Christ fed 5,000 people from a lunch box, and so he asked:

How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.
-Matthew 16:11-12

This topic deals with false converts in the church; meaning there are people who claim to be believers on the Christian God of the Bible, but are not. In fact, the Bible teaches very clearly that, as time goes on, there would be many people (Mat 7:21-23) who would claim to be of Christ, but are not, and I highly suggest for Christians to read our article "False Converts & Eternal Security" to get all the Scripture on that, because the Lord Jesus Christ explains to us that all the parables He taught require a foundational understanding of false converts before they can be interpreted correctly.

When Harold Camping made the claim about a 2011 return of Jesus, he lied. The man is a liar. He lied about the Lord Jesus Christ because he didn't read the Word of God to gain understanding, and the Bible says Camping can't understand it anyway because he's not of God:

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.
-1 Corinthians 2:14

If a man claiming to be a Christian does something deceptive, it's easier for an atheist to simply say Christianity is evil by using that man as an example, than to learn the truth and confess the man is lying about being a Christian. In fact, this is the core of most atheism because roughly 90% of the atheists I've spoken with were former Catholics.

The Catholic Church is a pagan institution that was invented by Rome; it has never had anything to do with Christianity. However, the Catholic Church *CLAIMS* to be Christian, and therefore, atheists (along with the rest of the world) falsely believe they are Christians, so when they talk about "Christianity," people like me get blamed for the Inquisition.
(Read "Corruptions of Christianity: Catholicism" here at creationliberty.com for more details; this article includes information on the Bible's prophecy that the Catholic Church would be the harlot to bathe herself in the blood of the true Christians.)

For example, atheist Mark Humphrys, under the title "Killings for Christianity," writes:
"The Church started killing unbelievers as early as the 4th century. The killing (often with torture) of heretics, church splinter groups, dissenters, atheists, agnostics, deists, pagans, infidels and unbelievers was supported by almost all mainstream Christian theology for over a thousand years, starting with the intolerant St. Augustine (died 430 AD)."
-Mark Humphrys, "Killings for Christianity," retrieved Feb 23, 2017, [markhumphrys.com/christianity.killings.html]

The "Church" he's referring to is the Catholic Church (i.e. St. Augustine was Catholic, not Christian). Humphrys refers to Catholicism as "*mainstream Christian theology*," but it is not *BIBLICAL* Christian theology; the difference between them is tradition versus the actual doctrines Christ taught in Scripture.

Humphrys correctly mentions torture and murder by the Catholic Church, and the Lord Jesus Christ did not teach His church to do these things:

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;
-Matthew 5:44

So when the Bible teaches men to love, pray for, and bless them that curse and hate us, but then an organization like the Catholic Church proceeds to torture, rape, and murder people who curse and hate their organization, *AND* those who do *NOT* curse and hate Catholics (because conveniently, atheists don't point out that Christians were also executed by the Catholic Church), how can we then call the Catholic Church a Christian entity? It was the Catholic Church that was doing the persecuting. Catholicism is not Christian at all, but because they *CLAIM* to be Christians, and have done so many viciously dark and wicked deeds over the past 1700 years, it's convenient for an atheist to foolishly use Catholicism as an example to condemn true Christians who provide actual evidence of their Christianity by teaching and following the doctrines of Christ.

The Christian studies the Word of God to learn the doctrines of Christ.

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.
-2 Timothy 2:15

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.
-Romans 10:17

The Christian works to change his life so he can adhere to the doctrines of Christ.

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.
-James 2:26

The Christian exposes the evil works and lying words of men, like Catholics or atheists, and refuses to unite with them in their causes.

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.
-Ephesians 5:11

The Christian sanctifies himself (i.e. sets himself apart) from the sinful pleasures of the world.

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?... Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,
-2 Corinthians 6:14-17

There are more details beyond these few examples, but the point is that these are evidences that should be seen in a veteran Christian. If we see torture and murder, like in the Catholic Church, or lies, like the "prophecies" of Harold Camping, and the teaching false doctrines, like the Pharisees, then we are seeing people who only claim with their mouths to be of Christ, but in their hearts, they have nothing to do with Him:

This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.
-Matthew 15:8

Jesus Christ warned that wolves would enter in among the sheep in disguise:

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.
-Matthew 7:15

Sheep's clothing means that they will appear unto men to be Christians, but they are hiding the truth, which can only be discerned by close inspection.

A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit... Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.
-Matthew 7:18-20

When inspecting fruit, you have to use multiple senses, not just look at it from afar off. At a distance, an apple can appear to look red and juicy, but on closer inspection, the other side is rotten and eaten by worms. Sometimes I've had a beautiful orange that looks amazingly delicious, but when I opened up the peel, it stunk horribly because it was rotting on the inside. The atheist doesn't bother to inspect the fruits of these wicked men and women only because it's easier just to believe someone's *CLAIM* to Christianity and accuse the Christian God of the Bible of being evil, rather than to have to investigate and search out the truth of the matter.

These wolves in costume need to come to repentance (i.e. godly sorrow in humility) before they can acknowledge the truth, just as atheists need to come to repentance to acknowledge their own sin of lying and deceiving others.
(Read "Is Repentance Part of Salvation?" here at creationliberty.com for more details.)

Once more from the Logical Fallacies website:
"The No True Scotsman fallacy involves discounting evidence that would refute a proposition, concluding that it hasn't been falsified when in fact it has."
-Logical Fallacies, "'No True Scotsman' Fallacy," retrieved Feb 23, 2017, [logicalfallacies.info/presumption/no-true-scotsman]

The fallacy this author is pointing out is that someone is denying evidence that contradicts their personal belief, but in the instance of the atheists and false Christians, they are denying evidence that contradicts someone's *CLAIM* to a personal belief. The next time an atheist might accuse you of the "No True Scotsman" fallacy, you can point out the embarrassment of their "No False Scotsman" fallacy by simply explaining to them that they are, in child-like fashion, automatically believing whatever they're told without looking at the facts.

Finally, the Bible tells us that there is no such thing as an atheist, which makes every atheist a liar:
*For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, **when they knew God, they glorified him not as God**, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,*
-Romans 1:20-22

To answer Bennett's foolish and baseless accusation of a "no true Christian" fallacy, I would say the Lord God accuses him of the "no true atheist" fallacy in that a true atheist doesn't exist.