

# ATHEIST QUOTES

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## General Comments

The fact that a believer is happier than a skeptic is no more to the point than the fact that a drunken man is happier than a sober one. The happiness of credulity is a cheap and dangerous quality. - George Bernard Shaw

Faith means not wanting to know what is true. - Friedrich Nietzsche

I believe in God, only I spell it Nature. - Frank Lloyd Wright

We must question the story logic of having an all-knowing all-powerful God, who creates faulty Humans, and then blames them for his own mistakes. - Gene Roddenberry

To surrender to ignorance and call it God has always been premature, and it remains premature today. - Isaac Asimov

A man is accepted into a church for what he believes and he is turned out for what he knows. - Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain)

Religion is regarded by the common people as true, by the wise as false, and by the rulers as useful. - Seneca the Younger

Philosophy is questions that may never be answered. Religion is answers that may never be questioned. - Anonymous

Philosophy is a walk on a slippery rock. Religion is a lie in the fog. -Edie Brickell

If I were not an atheist, I would believe in a God who would choose to save people on the basis of the totality of their lives and not the pattern of their words. I think he would prefer an honest and righteous atheist to a TV preacher whose every word is God, God, God, and whose every deed is foul, foul, foul. - Isaac Asimov

Belief in the supernatural reflects a failure of the imagination. - Edward Abbey

With or without religion, you would have good people doing good things and evil people doing evil things. But for good people to do evil things, that takes religion. - Steven Weinberg

The world holds two classes of men - intelligent men without religion, and religious men without intelligence. - Abu'l Ala al Ma'arri

I distrust those people who know so well what God wants them to do because I notice it always coincides with their own desires. - Susan B. Anthony

The invisible and the non-existent look very much alike. - Delos B. McKown

Two hands working can do more than a thousand clasped in prayer. - Anonymous

Atheism leaves a man to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws, to reputation; all of which may be guides to an outward moral virtue, even if religion vanished; but religious superstition dismounts all these and erects an absolute monarchy in the minds of men. - Francis Bacon

The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully. - Richard Dawkins

A God who kept tinkering with the universe was absurd; a God who interfered with human freedom and creativity was tyrant. If God is seen as a self in a world of his own, an ego that relates to a thought, a cause separate from its effect. he becomes a being, not Being itself. An omnipotent, all-knowing tyrant is not so different from earthly dictators who make everything and everybody mere cogs in the machine which they controlled. An atheism that rejects such a God is amply justified. - Karen Armstrong

It is not as in the Bible, that God created man in his own image. But, on the contrary, man created God in his own image. - Ludwig Feuerbach

All the biblical miracles will at last disappear with the progress of science. - Matthew Arnold

Blind faith is an ironic gift to return to the Creator of human intelligence. - Anonymous

Be thankful that you have a life, and forsake your vain and presumptuous desire for a second one. - Richard Dawkins

What can be asserted without proof can be dismissed without proof. - Christopher Hitchens

In Christianity neither morality nor religion come into contact with reality at any point. - Friedrich Nietzsche

On the first day, man created God. - Anonymous

I contend that we are both atheists. I just believe in one fewer god than you do. When you understand why you dismiss all the other possible gods, you will understand why I dismiss yours. - Stephen Roberts

You do not need the Bible to justify love, but no better tool has been invented to justify hate. - Richard A. Weatherwax

To say that atheism requires faith is as dim-witted as saying that disbelief in pixies or leprechauns takes faith. Even if Einstein himself told me there was an elf on my shoulder, I would still ask for proof and I wouldn't be wrong to ask. - Geoff Mather

I do not fear death. I had been dead for billions and billions of years before I was born, and had not suffered the slightest inconvenience from it. - Mark Twain

Of all religions the Christian is without doubt the one which should inspire tolerance most, although up to now the Christians have been the most intolerant of all men.  
- Voltaire

And if there were a God, I think it very unlikely that He would have such an uneasy vanity as to be offended by those who doubt His existence. - Bertrand Russell

Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is not omnipotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Then whence cometh evil? Is he neither able nor willing? Then why call him God? - Epicurus

I'm a polyatheist - there are many gods I don't believe in. - Dan Fouts

If it turns out that there is a God, I don't think that he's evil. But the worst that you can say about him is that basically he's an underachiever. - Woody Allen

A lie is a lie even if everyone believes it. The truth is the truth even if nobody believes it. - David Stevens

Men rarely (if ever) manage to dream up a God superior to themselves. Most Gods have the manners and morals of a spoiled child. - Robert A Heinlein

I refuse to prove that I exist," says God, "for proof denies faith, and without faith I am nothing. - Douglas Adams

It ain't the parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand. - Mark Twain

He that will not reason is a bigot; he that cannot reason is a fool; he that dares not reason is a slave. - William Drummond

Which is it, is man one of God's blunders or is God one of man's? - Friedrich Nietzsche

Religion does three things quite effectively: Divides people, Controls people, Deludes people. - Carlespie Mary Alice McKinney

Religion has caused more misery to all of mankind in every stage of human history than any other single idea. - Anonymous

When a man is freed of religion, he has a better chance to live a normal and wholesome life. - Sigmund Freud

They felt that science would be corrosive to religious belief and they were worried about it. Damn it, I think they were right. It is corrosive to religious belief and it's a good thing. - Steven Weinberg

Take from the church the miraculous, the supernatural, the incomprehensible, the unreasonable, the impossible, the unknowable, the absurd, and nothing but a vacuum remains. - Robert G. Ingersoll

History teaches us that no other cause has brought more death than the word of god. - Giulian Buzila

We are all atheists about most of the gods that societies have ever believed in. Some of us just go one god further. - Richard Dawkins

A believer states everything must have a creator but fail to say how he was created. - Anonymous

"There are no atheists in foxholes" isn't an argument against atheism, it's an argument against foxholes. - James Morrow

People will then often say, 'But surely it's better to remain an Agnostic just in case?' This, to me, suggests such a level of silliness and muddle that I usually edge out of the conversation rather than get sucked into it. (If it turns out that I've been wrong all along, and there is in fact a god, and if it further turned out that this kind of

legalistic, cross-your-fingers-behind-your-back, Clintonian hair-splitting impressed him, then I think I would choose not to worship him anyway.) - Douglas Adams

Properly read, the bible is the most potent force for Atheism ever conceived. - Isaac Asimov

If all the Christians who have called other Christians “not really a Christian” were to vanish, there’d be no Christians left. - Anonymous

An atheist is a man who has no invisible means of support. - John Buchan

Gods don’t kill people. People with Gods kill people. - David Viaene

If God were suddenly condemned to live the life which He has inflicted upon men, He would kill Himself. - Alexandre Dumas

Atheism is nothing more than the noises reasonable people make when in the presence of religious dogma. - Sam Harris

I don’t believe in God because I don’t believe in Mother Goose - Clarence Darrow

No philosophy, no religion, has ever brought so glad a message to the world as this good news of Atheism. - Annie Wood Besant

I refuse to believe in a god who is the primary cause of conflict in the world, preaches racism, sexism, homophobia, and ignorance, and then sends me to hell if I’m ‘bad’. - Mike Fuhrman

Faith does not give you the answers, it just stops you asking the questions. - Frater Ravus

Believing there is no God gives me more room for belief in family, people, love, truth, beauty, sex, Jell-o, and all the other things I can prove and that make this life the best life I will ever have. - Penn Jillette

“Belief in a cruel god makes a cruel man” – Thomas Paine

Absolute faith corrupts as absolutely as absolute power but absolute power is corrupt only in the hands of the absolutely faithful. - Anonymous

Gods are fragile things; they may be killed by a whiff of science or a dose of common sense. - Chapman Cohen

The inspiration of the bible depends on the ignorance of the person who reads it. - Robert G. Ingersoll

When one person suffers from a delusion, it is called insanity. When many people suffer from a delusion it is called religion. - Robert Pirsig

I wonder who got the shit job of scouring the planet for the 15000 species of butterfly or the 8800 species of ant they eventually took on board Noah’s Ark. But at least we got that magical rainbow for all their trouble. - Azura Skye

I have no need for religion, I have a conscience. - Anonymous

Man has always required an explanation for all of those things in the world he did not understand. If an explanation was not available, he created one. - Jim Crawford

I am against religion because it teaches us to be satisfied with not understanding the world. - Richard Dawkins

What has been Christianity's fruits? Superstition, Bigotry and Persecution. - James Madison

The characters and events depicted in the damn bible are fictitious. Any similarity to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental. - Penn and Teller

If god is the alpha and the omega. The beginning and the end, knows what has passed and what is to come, like it states in the bible, why do people pray and think it will make any difference. - Mark Fairclough

The finality of death is the coldest truth one must face. Religion makes the perfect distraction. - Anonymous

Religion is the opiate of the masses. - Karl Marx

If God created the world, then who created god? and who created whoever created god? So somewhere along the line something had to just be there. So why can't we just skip the idea of god and go straight to earth? - Ryan Hanson

If we expect God to subscribe to one religion at the exclusion of all the others, then we should expect damnation as a matter of chance. This should give Christians pause when expounding their religious beliefs, but it does not. - Sam Harris

Atheists will celebrate life, while you're in church celebrating death. - Anonymous

Animals do not have gods, they are smarter than that. - Ronnie Snow

"God gave us reason, not religion." –World Union of Deists

I have observed that the world has suffered far less from ignorance than from pretensions to knowledge. It is not skeptics or explorers but fanatics and ideologues who menace decency and progress. No agnostic ever burned anyone at the stake or tortured a pagan, a heretic, or an unbeliever. - Daniel Boorstin

I have never seen the slightest scientific proof of the religious ideas of heaven and hell, of future life for individuals, or of a personal God. So far as religion of the day is concerned, it is a damned fake... Religion is all bunk. - Thomas Edison

Fundamentalism, of any type, due to its prerequisite lack of intelligent thought, could prove to be the worst weapon of mass destruction, of all. - David J. Constable

To really be free, You need to be free in the mind. - Alexander Loutsis

Most religions prophecy the end of the world and then consistently work together to ensure that these prophecies come true. - Anonymous

Religion is like a virus that affects the behaviour of its host in such a way as to propagate itself further. - Jack Pritchard

Today's religion will be the future's mythology. Both believed at one time by many; but proved wrong by the clever. - Steven Crocker

The Bible - A Fairytale book of rules brainwashing millions. Obviously used to help create war, kill, hate, judge and discriminate. - Anonymous

Isn't it enough to see that a garden is beautiful without having to believe that there are fairies at the bottom of it too? - Douglas Adams

Religion is the impotence of the human mind to deal with occurrences it cannot understand" - Karl Marx

"The truth may be puzzling. It may take some work to grapple with. It may be counterintuitive. It may contradict deeply held prejudices. It may not be consonant with what we desperately want to be true. But our preferences do not determine what's true." –Carl Sagan

"For me, it is far better to grasp the Universe as it really is than to persist in delusion, however satisfying and reassuring." –Carl Sagan

"We've tended in our cosmologies to make things familiar. Despite all our best efforts, we've not been very inventive. In the West, Heaven is placid and fluffy, and Hell is like the inside of a volcano. In many stories, both realms are governed by dominance hierarchies headed by gods or devils. Monotheists talked about the king of kings. In every culture we imagined something like our own political system running the Universe. Few found the similarity suspicious." -Carl Sagan

"You can't convince a believer of anything; for their belief is not based on evidence, it's based on a deep seated need to believe." -Carl Sagan

"I cannot imagine a God who rewards and punishes the objects of his creation, whose purposes are modeled after our own — a God, in short, who is but a reflection of human frailty." –Albert Einstein

"A man's ethical behavior should be based effectually on sympathy, education, and social ties; no religious basis is necessary. Man would indeed be in a poor way if he had to be restrained by fear of punishment and hope of reward after death."-Albert Einstein

"A casual stroll through the lunatic asylum shows that faith does not prove anything." –Nietzsche

"We must respect the other fellow's religion, but only in the sense and to the extent that we respect his theory that his wife is beautiful and his children are smart." -Henry Mencken

"If I look over my life, every single step of maturing for me, every single one, has had the exact same common denominator, and that was accepting what was true over what I wished were true." –Julia Sweeney

"The most savage controversies are those about matters as to which there is no good evidence either way. Persecution is used in theology, not in arithmetic."  
– Bertrand Russell

"The whole conception of a God is a conception derived from the ancient oriental despotisms. It is a conception quite unworthy of free men.... We ought to stand up and look the world frankly in the face. We ought to make the best we can of the world, and if it is not so good as we wish, after all it will still be better than what these others have made of it in all these ages."  
– Bertrand Russell

"Religion is something left over from the infancy of our intelligence, it will fade away as we adopt reason and science as our guidelines." –Bertrand Russell

"When the doors of perception are cleansed, man will see things as they truly are, infinite."

-William Blake

"If you think education is expensive, try ignorance."

-Derek Bok - Harvard President

"Anyone who engages in the practice of psychotherapy confronts every day the devastation wrought by the teachings of religion."

-Nathaniel Branden, Ph.D.

Imagine the ego of the human race, to consider themselves so grand, as to warrant a creator worthy of praise.

-Robert Brunswick Jr.

For those who believe in God, most of the big questions are answered. But for those of us who can't readily accept the God formula, the big answers don't remain stone-written. We adjust to new conditions and discoveries. We are pliable. Love need not be a command or faith a dictum. I am my own God. We are here to unlearn the teachings of the church, state, and our educational system. We are here to drink beer. We are here to kill war. We are here to laugh at the odds and live our lives so well that Death will tremble to take us.

-Charles Bukowski

"When a man ceases to believe in god, he does not believe in nothing. He believes in everything."

-G.K. Chesterson

"It may be that our role on this planet is not to worship God, but to create him."

-Arthur C. Clarke

"Gods are fragile things; they may be killed by a whiff of science or a dose of common sense."

-Chapman Cohen

"I do not believe in god because I do not believe in Mother Goose."

-Clarence Darrow

"I think; therefore I am."

-Rene Descartes

"Men have never fully used [their] powers to advance the good in life, because they have waited upon some power external to themselves and to nature to do the work they are responsible for doing."

-John Dewey

"A man's ethical behavior should be based effectually on sympathy, education, and social ties; no religious basis is necessary. Man would indeed be in a poor way if he had to be restrained by fear of punishment and hope of reward after death."

-Albert Einstein

"The gods can either take away evil from the world and will not, or, being willing to do so, cannot; or they neither can nor will, or lastly, they are both able and willing. If they have the will to remove evil and cannot, then they are not omnipotent. If they can, but will not, than they are not benevolent. If they are neither able nor willing, then they are neither omnipotent nor benevolent. Lastly, if they are both able and willing to annihilate evil, how does it exist?"

-Epicures, 300 B.C.

"If 50 million people believe a foolish thing, it is still a foolish thing"

-Anatole France

"The way to see by faith is to shut the eye of reason."

-Ben Franklin Poor Richard's Almanack, 1758

"Not only is there nothing to be gained by believing an untruth, but there is everything to lose when we sacrifice the indispensable tool of reason on the altar of superstition."

-Freedom From Religion Foundation

"In the long run nothing can withstand reason and experience, and the contradiction religion offers to both is only too palpable."

-Sigmund Freud

"I do not feel obliged to believe that the same God who endowed us with sense, reason, and intellect, had intended for us to forgo their use."

-Galileo Galilei

"Agnosticism simply means that a man shall not say he knows or believes that for which he has no grounds for professing to believe."

-Thomas Henry Huxley

"I believe in an America where religious intolerance will someday end... where every man has the same right to attend or not attend the church of his choice."

-Pres. John F. Kennedy

"The church says the earth is flat, but I know that it is round, for I have seen the shadow on the moon, and I have more faith in a shadow than in the church."

-Robert Green Ingersoll (or Ferdinand Magellan?)

"I count religion but a childish toy,  
And hold there is no sin but ignorance."

-Christopher Marlowe

"I respect faith, but doubt is what gets you an education."

-Wilson Mizner

"One would like to believe that people who think of themselves as devout Christians would also behave in a manner that is in accordance with Christian ethics. But pastorally and existentially, I know that this is not the case, and never has been."

-John Neuhaus, in San Jose Mercury News

Faith: not wanting to know what is true.

-Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche

"I cannot believe in a God who wants to be praised all the time."

-Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche

"In Christianity neither morality nor religion come into contact with reality at any point."

-Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche

"The man of the future who will redeem us not only from the hitherto reigning ideal but also from that which was bound to grow out of it, the great nausea, the will to nothingness, nihilism; this bell stroke of noon and of the great decision that liberates the will again and restores its goal to the earth and his hope to man; this Antichrist and anti-nihilist; this victor over God and nothingness - he must come one day."

-Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche

"Religion has caused more misery to all men in every state of human history than any other single idea."

-Madelyn Murray O'Hair

"No God ever gave any man anything, nor ever answered any prayer at any time -- nor ever will."

-Madelyn Murray O'Hair

"What I don't like about bible thumpers, or any cult for that matter, is the arrogance exhibited with impunity by them as they perform their socially accepted public displays of schizophrenic indulgence with the goal of influencing weak-minded individuals, mostly young impressionable children, to join in activities that brainwash them into thinking a certain way so as to restrict their ability to freely reason, to police their own thoughts and become willing slaves, to not take responsibility for their own actions, and to be unquestioningly subservient to the will of a silent invisible entity whose thoughts and wishes are supposedly passed down through the overly exaggerated, un-provable, inconsistent, babblings of an old book that can only be deciphered correctly by someone who claims to be in direct contact with this entity, and who is undoubtedly either the most schizophrenic, or the most deviant member of the group. I see religion, all religion, as evil, and its minions as zombies."

-Steve Pinkston

"Better to be unborn than untaught, for ignorance is the root of all misfortune."

-Plato

"I just believe in one fewer god than you do. When you understand why you dismiss all the other gods you will understand why I dismiss yours."

-Stephen F. Roberts

"We must question the story logic of having an all-knowing, all-powerful God, who creates faulty humans, and then blames them for his own mistakes."

-Gene Roddenberry

"Indifference to religion, due to thought, strengthens character,"

-W.T. Root, Prof. of Psychology at Univ. of Pittsburgh, after examining 1,916 prisoners.

"Men fear thought as they fear nothing else on earth, more than ruin, more even than death...Thought is subversive and revolutionary, destructive and terrible, thought is merciless to privilege, established institutions, and comfortable habit. Thought looks into the pit of hell and is not afraid. Thought is great and swift and free, the light of the world, and the chief glory of man."

-Bertrand Russell

"It is far better to grasp the Universe as it really is than to persist in delusion, however satisfying and reassuring."

-Carl Sagan

"I would love to believe that when I die I will live again, that some thinking, feeling, remembering part of me will continue. But as much as I want to believe that, and despite the ancient and worldwide cultural traditions that assert an afterlife, I know of nothing to suggest that it is more than wishful thinking."

-Carl Sagan --The Demon-Haunted World

"The world is so exquisite, with so much love and moral depth, that there is no reason to deceive ourselves with pretty stories for which there's little good evidence. Far better, it seems to me, in our vulnerability, is to look Death in the eye and to be grateful every day for the brief but magnificent opportunity that life provides."  
-Carl Sagan --Billions and Billions

"This above all: to thine own self be true."  
-William Shakespeare (Polonius)

"The Devil can cite scripture for his purpose."  
-William Shakespeare

"All religions are founded on the fear of the many and the cleverness of the few."  
-Stendhal

"I'm sickened by all religions. Religion has divided people. I don't think there's any difference between the pope wearing a large hat and parading around with a smoking purse and an African painting his face white and praying to a rock."  
-Howard Stern

"It's an incredible con job when you think about it, to believe something now in exchange for something after death. Even corporations with their reward systems don't try to make it posthumous."  
-Gloria Steinem

"I was getting tired about what the preacher called Christian. Anything he did was Christian, and the people in the church believed it, too. If he stole some book he didn't like from the library, or made the radio station play only part of the day on Sunday, or took somebody off to the state poor home, he called it Christian. I never had much religious training, and I never went to Sunday school because we didn't belong to the church when I was old enough to go, but I thought I knew what believing in Christ meant, and it wasn't half the things the preacher did."  
-John Kennedy Toole -- The Neon Bible

"Say what you will about the sweet miracle of unquestioning faith. I consider the capacity for it terrifying."  
-Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

"Life is a comedy for those who think and a tragedy for those who feel."  
-Horace Walpole

"Truth in matters of religion is simply the opinion that has survived."  
-Oscar Wilde

"I was driving alone one day and I saw a hitchhiker with a sign saying Heaven. So I hit him."  
-Steven Wright

"Fundamentalists are like the fir trees in German forests: they cannot stand alone, and are only stable when crowded together, branches locked with those of their brothers. That is why we must always fear them, because they will always hate us for our individualism."  
-Brent Yaciw

"Although the time of death is approaching me, I am not afraid of dying and going to Hell or (what would be considerably worse) going to the popularized version of Heaven. I expect death to be nothingness and, for removing me from all possible fears of death, I am thankful to atheism." –Isaac Asimov

"I have something to say to the religionist who feels atheists never say anything positive: You are an intelligent human being. Your life is valuable for its own sake. You are not second-class in the universe, deriving meaning and purpose from some other mind. You are not inherently evil -- you are inherently human, possessing the positive rational potential to help make this a world of morality, peace and joy. Trust yourself." –Dan Barker, Author of "Losing Faith in Faith"

"No philosophy, no religion, has ever brought so glad a message to the world as this good news of Atheism." - Annie Wood Besant

## **Random Thoughts**

"If god has spoken, why is the world not convinced?"

“I don’t know. And neither do you.”

"If god doesn't like the way I live, Let him tell me, not you."

"Faith is deciding to allow yourself to believe something your intellect would otherwise cause you to reject -- otherwise there's no need for faith."

There are none more ignorant and useless, than they that seek answers on their knees, with their eyes closed.

Several thousand years ago, a small tribe of ignorant near-savages wrote various collections of myths, wild tales, lies, and gibberish. Over the centuries, these stories were embroidered, garbled, mutilated, and torn into small pieces that were then repeatedly shuffled. Finally, this material was badly translated into several languages successively. The resultant text, creationists feel, is the best guide to this complex and technical subject.

The religion of one age is the literary entertainment of the next.

To the philosophic eye, the vices of the clergy are far less dangerous than their virtues.

The mind of the fundamentalist is like the pupil of the eye: the more light you pour on it, the more it will contract.

Theology: The study of elaborate verbal disguises for non-ideas.

Humanity's first sin was faith; the first virtue was doubt.

Any belief worth having must survive doubt.

## **Odd Perspectives**

Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day; teach a man to fish and he will eat for a lifetime; give a man religion and he will die praying for a fish. - Anonymous

"No, I don't know that Atheists should be considered as citizens, nor should they be considered as patriots. This is one nation under God." -George W. Bush

Atheism is a non-prophet organization. - George Carlin

"In the 'bullshit department' a businessman can't hold a candle to a clergyman."

-George Carlin

"When it comes to bullshit...bigtime, major league bullshit...you have to stand in awe of the all-time champion of false promises and exaggerated claims...religion."

-George Carlin

"Religion has actually convinced people that there's an invisible man living in the sky who watches everything you do, every minute of every day. And the invisible man has a special list of 10 things he does not want you to do. And if you do any of these 10 things he has a special place full of fire and smoke and burning and torture and anguish where he will send you to live and suffer and burn and choke and scream and cry for ever and ever until the end of time...but he loves you."

-George Carlin

Not only is there no god, but try getting a plumber on weekends. - Woody Allen

Religions are like pills, which must be swallowed whole without chewing. – Anonymous

Since the Bible and the church are obviously mistaken in telling us where we came from, how can we trust them to tell us where we are going? - Anonymous

"Organized religion: The world's largest pyramid scheme."

-Bernard Katz

Jesus hardly made the greatest sacrifice. He knew he would be resurrected anyway.

- Anonymous

It will yet be the proud boast of women that they never contributed a line to the Bible.

- George W. Foote

"I've been reading an Alabama newspaper that one man shot another man because he beat him in a Bible-quoting competition."

-Richard Dawkins

Calling Atheism a religion is like calling bald a hair color.

- Don Hirschberg

"We have just enough religion to make us hate but not enough religion to make us love one another"

-Jonathan Swift

"If the lord had meant us to have faith, he'd have given us lobotomies."

-Zlatko

As far as I can tell from studying the scriptures, all you do in heaven is pretty much just sit around all day and praise the Lord. I don't know about you, but I think that after the first, oh, I don't know, 50,000,000 years of that I'd start to get a little bored. - Rick Reynolds

God should be executed for crimes against humanity. - Bryan Emmanuel Gutierrez

Remember, Jesus would rather constantly shame gays than let orphans have a family. - Steven Colbert

What's "God"? Well, you know, when you want something really bad and you close your eyes and you wish for it? God's the guy that ignores you. - Steve Buscemi (From the movie "The Island")

"Organized religion is like organized crime; it preys on peoples' weaknesses, generates huge profits for its operators, and is almost impossible to eradicate."

-Author Unknown

"I am treated as evil by those who feel persecuted because they are not allowed to force me to believe as they do."

-Author Unknown

"Christian Fundamentalism: The doctrine that there is an absolutely powerful, infinitely knowledgeable, universe spanning entity that is deeply and personally concerned about my sex life."

-Author Unknown

"Could a being create the fifty billion galaxies, each with two hundred billion stars, then rejoice in the smell of burning goat flesh?"

- Ron Patterson

"I believe in the cosmos. All of us are linked to the cosmos. So nature is my god. To me, nature is sacred. Trees are my temples and forests are my cathedrals. Being at one with nature."

-Mikhail Gorbachev

## **Elizabeth Cady Stanton** **American suffragist (1815-1902)**

"The Bible and the Church have been the greatest stumbling blocks in the way of women's emancipation."

"The bible teaches that woman brought sin and death into the world, that she precipitated the fall of the race, that she was arraigned before the judgment seat of Heaven, tried, condemned and sentenced. Marriage for her was to be a condition of bondage, maternity a period of suffering and anguish, and in silence and subjection, she was to play the role of a dependent on man's bounty for all her material wants, and for all the information she might desire...Here is the Bible position of woman briefly summed up."

She wrote of the Bible, "I found nothing grand in the history of the Jews nor in the morals inculcated in the Pentateuch. Surely the writers had a very low idea of the nature of their god. They made him not only anthropomorphic, but of the very lowest type, jealous and revengeful, loving violence rather than mercy. I know of no other books that so fully teach the subjection and degradation of women." [*Women Without Superstition*]

## **Robert G. Ingersoll** **American politician and lecturer** **(1833-1899)**

"With soap, baptism is a good thing."

"The inspiration of the Bible depends on the ignorance of the person who reads it."

"Fear believes—courage doubts. Fear falls up the earth and prays--- courage stands erect and thinks. Fear is barbarism---courage is civilization. Fear believes in witchcraft, devils and ghosts. Fear is religion, courage is science."

"Hands that help are far better than lips that pray."

"Ministers say that they teach charity. That is natural. They live on hand-outs. All beggars teach that others should give."

"For the most part we inherit our opinions. We are the heirs of habits and mental customs. Our beliefs, like the fashion of our garments, depend on where we were born. We are molded and fashioned by our surroundings. Environment is a sculptor -- a painter. If we had been born in Constantinople, then most of us would have said: 'There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet.' If our parents had lived on the banks of the Ganges, we would have been worshipers of Siva, longing for the heaven of Nirvana. As a rule, children love their parents, believe what they teach, and take great pride in saying that the religion of mother is good enough for them."

"The clergy know that I know that they know that they do not know."

"All who doubted or denied would be lost. -- To live a moral and honest life - to keep your contracts, to take care of wife and child – to make a happy home - to be a good citizen - a patriot - a just and thoughtful man – was simply a respectable way of going to hell."

"God did not reward men for being honest, generous and brave, but for the act of faith. Without faith, all the so-called virtues were sins. And the men who practiced these virtues, without faith, deserved to suffer eternal pain. All of these comforting and reasonable things were taught by the ministers in their pulpits -- by teachers in Sunday schools and by parents at home. The children were victims. They were assaulted in the cradle -- in their mother's arms. Then, the schoolmaster carried on the war against their natural sense, and all the books they read were filled with the same impossible truths. The poor children were helpless. The atmosphere they breathed was filled with lies -- lies that mingled with their blood. "

"Why should I allow that same God to tell me how to raise my kids, who had to drown His own?"

## **Arguments For and Against God(s)**

Through the years many philosophers have tried to provide proofs for and against of God's existence that go beyond appeal to ancient scripture (such as the Bible) or Personal Religious Belief. The main arguments are as follows:

### **Ontological:**

It is possible to imagine a perfect being. Therefore a perfect being must exist.

### **Causal:**

Everything must have a cause. It is impossible to continue backwards to infinity with one thing being caused by another, there must have been a first cause, a beginning. That cause must have been God.

### **Design:**

Animals, plants and planets show clear signs of being designed for specific ends, therefore there must have been a designer. A watch found on the beach, with its many moving parts is far too complex to have come into being by accident, without a maker. The world is far more complex than a watch therefore it must have a designer.

### **Modern design:**

The Anthropic Cosmological Principle. The laws of the universe seem to have been framed in such a way that stars and planets will form and life can emerge. Many constants of nature appear to be very finely tuned for this, and the odds against this happening by chance are astronomical.

### **Experiential:**

A very large number of people claim to have personal religious experiences of God.

### **Pragmatic:**

Human societies require ethics to survive. Ethics are more effectively enforced if people fear God and Hell and hope for Heaven.

### **Pascals Wager:**

Whether there is a god or there isn't. If you believe in God, and God exists, then you win big time and go to heaven. If you don't believe in God, and God exists, you lose big time and go to hell. If there is no god, then you haven't lost much by believing. So you should believe in God, because it's simply the best bet.

**Each of the above arguments above works on its own, and should be judged independently. As they do not interchange with or reinforce the other arguments.**

## **The Main Arguments Against the Existence of God**

### **Ontological:**

You cannot imagine a thing into existence.

### **Causal:**

If everything must have a cause what created god? i.e. If the universe was created by god who created god another god? And what of that god? Was he created by yet another? Ad infinitum. And that being the case why do you need a god at all.

### **Design:**

The principles of self-organization and evolution provide complete explanations for apparent design.

### **Modern design:**

The odds against *all* possible universes are equally astronomical, yet one of them must be the actual universe. Moreover, if there are very many universes, then some of these will contain the possibility of life. Even if valid, the anthropic cosmological principle guarantees only that stars and planets and life will emerge - not intelligent life. In its weak form, the anthropic cosmological principle merely states that if we are here to observe the universe, it follows that the universe must have properties that permit intelligent life to emerge.

### **Experiential:**

We cannot assume that everything imagined in mental experiences (which include dreams, hallucinations etc) actually exists. Such experiences cannot be repeated, tested or publicly verified. Mystical and other personal experiences can be explained by other causes.

### **Pragmatic:**

The usefulness of a belief does not prove its truth (nor does its popularity). In any case, many societies have thrived without these beliefs, while crime has thrived in theistic societies believing in heaven and hell.

### **Pascal's Wager:**

An omnipotent god would hardly let a believer into heaven who only professed to believe in order to cash in, but didn't truly believe.

### **Evil**

Because evil, pain, disease, injustice, inequalities and natural disasters exist, God cannot be all-powerful also loving and good in the human sense of these words.

### **Multiplicity**

Since the Gods of various religions differ widely in their characteristics, only one of these religions, or none, can be right about God.

### **Occam's Razor**

Since God is invisible, and the universe is no different than if he did not exist, it is simpler to assume he does not exist.

## **Notes on Buddhism**

For the first time in the history of the world, Buddhism proclaimed a salvation which each individual could gain from him or herself, in this world, during this life, without any least reference to God, or to gods either great or small.

**(Aldous Huxley)**

But man does need God. Vedanta defines God as Brahman, which is beyond all duality, plurality and beyond all categories of thought; yet including these. But the Vedantic concept of God is difficult for the common man to understand. It is beyond those who are incapable of abstract thinking, for it is impossible for them to establish an effective living relationship with what is formless, infinite, transcendent, that Brahman is. Such people need a personal God with whom they establish a personal relationship- a father, mother, master, goddess, beloved, friend. Lord Krishna, a human incarnation of God, is closer to the heart of common man than Brahman could be. For unless the infinite is conceived in the finite form of a personal God, devotion will be lacking in depth and intensity. The senses need a form, a concrete something that can be held, touched and adored. **(Sudhakar S.D, 1988. I Am All)**

..The real God is not to be sought in idols and symbols, in temples or churches.

The truth of the matter is that the purified man is God himself, for he has become one with universal life. The

purified man is the self-realised man. He has not to await answers from God, for he has no questions to ask. He himself is the answer to all questions; his life itself is a benediction.

(Sudhakar S.D, 1988. I Am All)

Deep Ecology is rooted in a perception of reality that goes beyond the scientific framework to an intuitive awareness of the oneness of all life, the interdependence of its multiple manifestations and its cycles of change and transformation. When the concept of the human spirit is understood in this sense, its mode of consciousness in which the individual feels connected to the cosmos as a whole, it becomes clear that ecological awareness is truly spiritual. Indeed the idea of the individual being linked to the cosmos is expressed in the Latin root of the word **religion, religare (to bind strongly)**, as well as the Sanskrit **yoga**, which means **union**.

(Fritjof Capra)

## **Thomas Jefferson**

**[1743-1826] 3rd American president, author, scientist, architect, educator, and diplomat. Deist, avid separationist.**

"Question with boldness even the existence of God; because, if there be one, he must more approve of the homage of reason than that of blindfolded fear." *1787 letter to his nephew*

"I do not find in orthodox Christianity one redeeming feature." *Unknown*

"Religions are all alike - founded upon fables and mythologies." *Unknown*

"To talk of immaterial existences is to talk of nothings. To say that the human soul, angels, God, are immaterial, is to say they are nothings, or that there is no God, no angels, no soul. I cannot reason otherwise: but I believe I am supported in my creed of materialism by Locke, Tracy, and Stewart. At what age of the Christian church this heresy of immaterialism, this masked atheism, crept in, I do not know. But a heresy it certainly is. Jesus told us indeed that 'God is a spirit,' but he has not defined what a spirit is, nor said that it is not matter. And the ancient fathers generally, if not universally, held it to be matter: light and thin indeed, an ethereal gas; but still matter." *letter to John Adams, August 15, 1820*

"Millions of innocent men, women, and children, since the introduction of Christianity, have been burned, tortured, fined, and imprisoned, yet we have not advanced one inch toward uniformity. What has been the effect of coercion? To make one half of the world fools and the other half hypocrites." *Notes on Virginia*

"History, I believe, furnishes no example of a priest-ridden people maintaining a free civil government. This marks the lowest grade of ignorance of which their civil as well as religious leaders will always avail themselves for their own purposes" *Letter to von Humboldt, 1813*

"The day will come when the mystical generation of Jesus, by the Supreme Being as His father, in the womb of a virgin will be classed with the fable of the generation of Minerva in the brain of Jupiter." *Letter to John Adams, April 11, 1823*

"In every country and in every age, the priest has been hostile to liberty. He is always in alliance with the despot, abetting his abuses in return for protection to his own" *Letter to H. Spafford, 1814*

"But a short time elapsed after the death of the great reformer of the Jewish religion, before his principles were departed from by those who professed to be his special servants, and perverted into an engine for enslaving mankind, and aggrandizing their oppressors in Church and State." *in a letter to S. Kercheval, 1810*

"...an amendment was proposed by inserting the words, 'Jesus Christ...the holy author of our religion,' which was rejected 'By a great majority in proof that they meant to comprehend, within the mantle of its protection, the Jew and the Gentile, the Christian and the Mohammedan, the Hindoo and the Infidel of every denomination.'" *From Jefferson's biography*

"I never told my religion, nor scrutinized that of another. I never attempted to make a convert, nor wished to change another's creed. I have judged others' religions by their lives, for it is from our lives and not our words that our religions must be read."

"Christianity is the most perverted system that ever shone on man."

"The authors of the gospels were unlettered and ignorant men and the teachings of Jesus have come to us mutilated, misstated and unintelligible."

"The legitimate powers of government extend to such acts only as are injurious to others. But it does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods or no God."

"It is not to be understood that I am with him [Jesus] in all his doctrines. I am a Materialist."

## **John Adams**

**[1735-1826] 2d President of the United States**

"The divinity of Jesus is made a convenient cover for absurdity."

"The government of the United States is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion." *Treaty of Tripoly, article 11*

"Let the human mind loose. It must be loose. It will be loose. Superstition and dogmatism cannot confine it."

"But how has it happened that millions of fables, tales, legends, have been blended with both Jewish and Christian revelation that have made them the most bloody religion that ever existed."

"What havoc has been made of books through every century of the Christian era? Where are fifty gospels condemned as spurious by the bull of Pope Gelasius? Where are forty wagon-loads of Hebrew manuscripts burned in France, by order of another pope, because of suspected heresy? Remember the Index Expurgato-rius, the Inquisition, the stake, the axe, the halter, and the guillotine; and, oh! horrible, the rack! This is as bad, if not worse, than a slow fire. Nor should the Lion's Mouth be forgotten. Have you considered that system of holy lies and pious frauds that has raged and triumphed for 1,500 years." *letter to John Taylor, 1814, quoted in In God We Trust and 2000 Years of Disbelief*

"The question before the human race is, whether the God of nature shall govern the world by his own laws, or whether priests and kings shall rule it by fictitious miracles." *letter to Thomas Jefferson, June 20, 1815*

"The question before the human race is, whether the God of nature shall govern the world by his own laws, or whether priests and kings shall rule it by fictitious miracles?" *Letter to Thomas Jefferson, June 20, 1815*

"As I understand the Christian religion, it was, and is, a revelation. But how has it happened that millions of fables, tales, legends, have been blended with both Jewish and Christian revelation that have made them the most bloody religion that ever existed?" *letter to F.A. Van der Kamp, December 27, 1816*

"God is an essence that we know nothing of. Until this awful blasphemy is got rid of, there never will be any liberal science in the world." *"this awful blasphemy" that he refers to is the myth of the Incarnation of Christ, from Ira D. Card*

"Let the human mind loose. It must be loose. It will be loose. Superstition and dogmatism cannot confine it." *letter to his son, John Quincy Adams, November 13, 1816, from James A. Haught, ed., 2000 Years of Di*

"It will never be pretended that any persons employed in that service [formation of the American governments] had interviews with the gods, or were in any degree under the influence of Heaven..."

## **Mark Twain** **[1835-1910] American author and humorist**

"Faith is believing something you know ain't true."

"'In God We Trust.' I don't believe it would sound any better if it were true."

"It ain't the parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand."

"Religion consists in a set of things which the average man thinks he believes and wishes he was certain of."

"There is no other life; life itself is only a vision and a dream for nothing exists but space and you. If there was an all-powerful God, he would have made all good, and no bad." *Mark Twain in Eruption*

"Our Bible reveals to us the character of our god with minute and remorseless exactness... It is perhaps the most damnatory biography that exists in print anywhere. It makes Nero an angel of light and leading by contrast" *Reflections on Religion, 1906*

"O Lord our God, help us tear their soldiers to bloody shreds with our shells; help us to cover their smiling fields with the pale forms of their patriot dead; help us to drown the thunder of the guns with the shrieks of their wounded, writhing in pain; help us to lay waste their humble homes with a hurricane of fire; help us to wring the hearts of their unoffending widows with unavailing grief; help us to turn them out roofless with their little children to wander unfriended the wastes of their desolated land in rags and hunger and thirst, sports of the sun flames of summer and the icy winds of winter, broken in spirit, worn with travail, imploring Thee for the refuge of the grave and denied it..." *"The War Prayer"*

"[The Bible is] a mass of fables and traditions, mere mythology." *Mark Twain and the Bible*

"Man is a marvelous curiosity ... he thinks he is the Creator's pet ... he even believes the Creator loves him; has a passion for him; sits up nights to admire him; yes and watch over him and keep him out of trouble. He prays to him and thinks He listens. Isn't it a quaint idea." *Letters from the Earth*

"If there is a God, he is a malign thug."

Mr. Clemens was once asked whether he feared death. He said that he did not, in view of the fact that he had been dead for billions and billions of years before he was born, and had not suffered the slightest inconvenience from it.

"[The Bible] has noble poetry in it... and some good morals and a wealth of obscenity, and upwards of a thousand lies."

"In religion and politics people's beliefs and convictions are in almost every case gotten at second-hand, and without examination, from authorities who have not themselves examined the questions at issue but have taken them at second-hand from other non-examiners, whose opinions about them were not worth a brass farthing."  
*Autobiography of Mark Twain by Samuel Clemens*

## Deism

Deism is the recognition of a universal creative force greater than that demonstrated by mankind, supported by personal observation of laws and designs in nature and the universe, perpetuated and validated by the innate ability of human reason coupled with the rejection of claims made by individuals and organized religions of having received special divine revelation.

### The Beauty of Deism

by Robert L. Johnson

A positive approach to life is always more rewarding and motivating than a negative outlook. People all have an individual choice to embrace either the positive or the negative, regardless of their situation. By choosing and dwelling on the negative, people often paralyze themselves. It seems one depressing and negative thought spawns two or three more. It soon becomes an endless and apparently overwhelming negative cycle. I believe the Christian mind-set that is so eager to accept guilt and original sin, as well as the additional unnatural idea of redemption by proxy, is much to blame for the suffering of millions of people who allow themselves to be victims of negativity.

The insane and unreasonable ideas which abound in Christianity and Judaism are effectively neutralized and eliminated by the reason-friendly openness which permeates Deism. In place of Christianity's vacillating god of the Old and New Testaments, Deism offers an idea of a Creator as unchangeable as the laws of Nature. A Creator incapable of such misery producing acts as the extermination of men, women, children and even of unborn babies by drowning. Deism happily rejects the Passover horror story which depicts God killing the first-born of all the Egyptians, and even the first born of their animals, because Pharaoh did not do what the Bible god allegedly (according to Exodus 11:10) made impossible for him to do (releasing the Jews).

### THE DEISTIC IDEA OF GOD

In contrast to the ideas of God endorsed and promoted by the various revealed religions, ranging anywhere from killing babies in the Old Testament to suggesting the practice of "turning the other cheek" in the New Testament, Deism offers a very simple non-dogmatic concept of God: an eternal entity whose power is equal to his/her will.

With the quality of being eternal, the entity of God obviously would have no beginning or end. Albert Einstein's theory of general relativity predicted places in the universe void of time, so the idea of eternalness is not unreasonable. As humanity learns more about science and the universe, our concepts of the Creator will correspondingly grow. This is the only way we can learn more about God: through the honest study of the Creator's creation, not through contradictory books written by men but claiming inspiration and revelation from God.

The antiquated practice of forming an idea of God based on purely past material experience, such as referring to God as "King", is also rejected by Deism. The extremely limited picture of God as the jealous and paranoid king of kings sitting on his throne upset that his subjects were going to reach "heaven" by building a brick tower is due to the limited vision which the Bible writers had of both the Creator and of the universe.

This fear the Bible god had of the Tower of Babel is based on fear of humanities acquisition of knowledge. The Creator the Deist venerates invites all of us to learn as much as possible about absolutely everything, for this is the best way to learn about God.

Another problem with the idea of God as promoted by the revealed religions of Christianity, Judaism and Islam is its depiction of God as a man. By limiting God to the status of a man, women are consciously and subconsciously relegated to a lesser standing in society. After all, if God is characterized as a man, then men are closer to God than women. Perhaps this accounts for the multiple instances of women bashing found throughout the various "holy books." By limiting the advancement of women through their subjugation to men, revealed religion has limited the advancement and progress of all of society. And a very sad element of this anti-progress mind-set, advanced by revealed religion, is that it claims God as its author.

## **DEISM REJECTS VIOLENCE**

All religions claim they reject violence. History, of course, proves them wrong. From the grotesque horror stories of slaughter and rape at the alleged command of God found throughout the Old Testament, to the claimed words of Jesus regarding bringing not peace but a sword, to the blood soaked Inquisition through religiously approved contemporary wars, revealed religion goes happily hand in hand with violence and war.

Deism's rejection of divine revelation excludes it from falling into the same violence promoting business that the revealed religions are in. There are no written words from the Almighty that can be twisted to sanctify one human being killing another. This makes Deism less useful to the ambitions of the power-elites. Could this be why very few people are aware of Deism and of the Deistic influence of the Enlightenment and the American Revolution?

Nuclear realities have made the waging of war an unacceptable proposition. War was never justifiable, it only exposed man's mental limitations at being able to formulate a workable solution to a problem. However, in the nuclear age humanity's ignorance can lead to the extermination of civilization and life itself on our planet. The shallow chauvinism of the various revealed religions take us all one step closer to that irreversible catastrophe. Deism, by its reliance on reason and rejection of violence, serves as a block to the apocalyptic nightmare that is so central to the major revealed religions.

## **DEISM'S APPRECIATION OF LIFE AND BEAUTY**

One of the best roads to happiness is to greatly appreciate the positive things in life. In spite of many obstacles that everyone has in their lives that need to be overcome, the fact remains there is much to be thankful for. To quote Thomas Paine:

"But if objects for gratitude and admiration are our desire, do they not present themselves every hour to our eyes? Do we not see a fair creation prepared to receive us the instant we are born - a world furnished to our hands, that cost us nothing? Is it we that light up the sun, that pour down the rain, and fill the earth with abundance? Whether we sleep or wake, the vast machinery of the universe still goes on."

From personal experience I know if my problems seem overwhelming, all I need to do is *force* myself to only think of the positive things in life and my spirits are soon picked up and fortified. I not only feel better, but my mind is cleared and solutions to the problems flow much smoother. And the more often I use this method the easier it becomes.

Many people express anger at God for disease, natural disasters and war. Yet it is within humanities power to eliminate and/or neutralize all of these. By studying the principles of Nature we have already eradicated many diseases and protected ourselves from much of Nature's fury. If we didn't let our egos, selfishness and fear get in the way, just think of how far we could be by now. Every invention and discovery we have today, could have

been in effect 2,000 to 5,000 years ago. For the fact is, the principles those inventions and discoveries are based on were in effect from before the evolution of mankind. We could be enjoying a virtually disease free, peaceful progressive society extending well beyond our planet Earth. It still isn't too late. As we generate a peaceful worldwide religious revolution through Deism and the World Union of Deists we will bring about the emancipation of the individual's mind and spirit. The soul of society will then be lifted to a new level, never before thought possible. A level of progress and international cooperation that will make warfare just an archaic oddity of the dark, superstitious past.

## **WHAT BEING A DEIST DEMANDS**

Being a Deist demands that we truly believe, to the depths of our souls, that the spiritual philosophy of Deism will definitely make our own lives better and that it will make the world a better place. Once we realize this, it becomes obvious that the old outdated religious views of revealed religion must be overcome by peaceful means. This entails a lot of work, sacrifice and giving on the individual's part. The revealed religions are so entrenched in society it will take a prolonged herculean effort on our part to pry their fingers from the throat and pockets of society. Once we do this by educating their rank and file, as well as by bringing in the millions of people who believe in God but don't endorse any particular religion, the power the revealed religions now yield will wither and society will get stronger. This requires each and everyone of us to make special efforts and sacrifices in both time and money. It's only logical that we must do and give more than those on the side of revealed religion are doing and giving to their cause.

Individual Deists can also make a big difference by telling their friends and family about Deism and the World Union of Deists. This is often the most effective type of advertising and does much to make Deism a household word.

## **Pantheism**

Richard Dawkins, in his book *The God Delusion*, has described Pantheism as “sexed-up atheism.” That may seem flippant, but it is accurate. Of all religious or spiritual traditions, Pantheism - the approach of Einstein, Hawking and many other scientists - is the only one that passes the muster of the world's most militant atheist.

So what's the difference between Atheism and Pantheism? As far as disbelief in supernatural beings, forces or realms, there is no difference. World Pantheism also shares the respect for evidence, science, and logic that's typical of atheism.

However, Pantheism goes further, and adds to atheism an embracing, positive and reverential feeling about our lives on planet Earth, our place in Nature and the wider Universe, and uses nature as our basis for dealing with stress, grief and bereavement. It's a form of spirituality that is totally compatible with science. Indeed, since science is our best way of exploring the Universe, respect for the scientific method and fascination with the discoveries of science are an integral part of World Pantheism.

If you are looking for atheist groups or freethought groups or brights groups and email lists, and if you would like ones that do a lot more than just attack religion, then you may well find World Pantheism the place you were looking for.

### **Why go beyond straight atheism?**

Does atheism need sexing up? As such, atheism answers only a single question: is there a creator God, or not? That's an important question, but if your answer is "no" it is only a starting point. You may have reached that viewpoint based on your respect for logic, evidence and science, and those too are vital values. Yet after you've

reached that initial "no God" answer, all the other important questions in life, all the options for mental and emotional wholeness and social and environmental harmony, remain open.

If atheism, humanism and naturalism are to advance, then they need approaches that don't simply leave the individual alone in the face of an increasingly threatening physical, social and international environment. They need ways of life that offer as rich a range of benefits as traditional religious ones.

Atheism is advancing. Growing numbers of people, across almost all nations, declare themselves to be non-religious or atheistic. Atheistic books on religion, like those of Dawkins, Sam Harris or Christopher Hitchens, are best-sellers.

But so far atheism and atheist groups have focused on attacking conventional religions, especially the Western theistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It's true that these religions often come with high costs: submission to written or priestly authority, belief in terrifying concepts such as demons, Apocalypse, Last Judgment and Hell, or the drive to impose one's beliefs or religious values on other people. In many cases they give cachet and endurance to backward, repressive or destructive social values, developed in agrarian societies many centuries ago. And it's valuable to highlight these costs.

### **The attractions of religion**

But negative critiques will not suffice. There are many motives beyond fear or habit why people hold fast to old religions or convert to new ones. There are many reasons besides ignorance and folly why they make religion the center of their personal and social lives.

Religions are not just a confidence trick on the part of prophets and preachers, or a self-destructive aberration on the part of believers. They have had social survival value in the past, and they continue to provide individual and personal benefits today, and these benefits are the source of their continuing numerical strength.

Religions provide communities of mutual support.

They overcome existential isolation and alienation, giving people a meaning for their lives and a sense of their place in the universe and nature.

They provide remedies for grief at the death of loved ones, and for the fear of one's own death.

They combat the feeling of helplessness in a threatening world full of crime, conflict and disaster.

These benefits show up in the form of better health and longer life.

Of course, if you're buying these benefits at the price of abandoning logic, ignoring evidence, believing in contradictions and impossibilities, teaching your children to fear a God who is getting ready to destroy the planet, signing on for social values that repress the rights of others, let alone sacrificing your life to slaughter those who disagree with you, then maybe the price is too high.

### **A naturalistic spirituality**

Are these negatives an inevitable part of the bargain? They may well be an inevitable part of belief in the unbelievable or of uncritical adherence to ancient scriptures.

But is it impossible to get the benefits that conventional religions offer, without giving up one penny of the value offered by reason, science, and progressive respect for the human rights of everyone? Don't we need approaches that offer the same range of advantages as supernatural religions – but without the costs?

Can there be such a thing as a religion without god, an atheistic religion or a religious atheism? The Buddhism of the Pali scriptures does not have a God or gods. Nor does the Taoism of Lao Tzu or ChuangTzu.

Can there be such a thing as a completely naturalistic form of "spirituality" with no supernatural elements?

At World Pantheism we have been exploring this possibility since the beginning of 2000 CE. We do so through our global and local mailing lists, through our magazine *Pan*, and through a growing number of local groups. We have lists about scientific and philosophical ideas, as well as about practical ways of developing our naturalistic spirituality. You can find links to these on our main page.

Our completely naturalistic Pantheism does not believe in any supernatural beings, forces or realms and is fully compatible with atheism and skepticism. As Richard Dawkins writes:

Pantheists don't believe in a supernatural God at all, but use the word God as a nonsupernatural synonym for Nature, or for the Universe, or for the lawfulness that governs its workings.

In practice, while a significant minority of our members like and use the word God to express the depth of their feelings for Nature and the wider Universe, the majority do not use the word about their own beliefs.

There are other names for similar approaches, such as religious naturalism or naturalistic paganism. We have gone with Pantheism simply because it's the best known, and has a long pedigree.

## Final Quotes

### Lucretius

[To Venus as Nature, mother of all things:] You alone govern the nature of things. Without you nothing emerges into the light of day, without you nothing is joyous or lovely.

### D'Holbach

Nature! sovereign of all beings! and you its adorable daughters, virtue, reason, truth! be forever our only Divinities. To you are due the world's incense and homage.

### Hume

It were better, never to look beyond the present material world. By supposing it to contain the principle of its order within itself, we really assert it to be God; and the sooner we arrive at that divinity, the better.

### Shelley

There Is No God. This negation must be understood solely to affect a creative Deity. The hypothesis of a pervading Spirit co-eternal with the universe remains unshaken.

### Einstein

I do not believe in a personal God. If something is in me which can be called religious then it is the unbounded admiration for the structure of the world so far as our science can reveal it.

### Sagan

A religion old or new, that stressed the magnificence of the universe as revealed by modern science, might be able to draw forth reserves of reverence and awe hardly tapped by the conventional faiths. Sooner or later, such a religion will emerge.

### Hawking

Larry King: Do you believe in God?

Stephen Hawking: Yes, if by God is meant the embodiment of the laws of the universe.