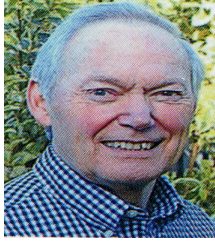


CHRISTIAN ANSWERS

OF AUSTIN, TEXAS
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DOES GOD BELIEVE IN ATHEISTS? Part I



Dr. John Blanchard

Co-founder of Christian Ministries, an internationally known Christian author, teacher and conference speaker. Nearly fifteen million copies of his publications are in print in some forty languages.

Here is a bench-mark by setting out what I mean when I use the word 'God' from here on. Put in a nutshell, I mean **'a unique, personal, plural, spiritual, eternally self-existent, transcendent, immanent, omniscient, immutable, holy, loving Being, the Creator and Ruler of the entire universe and the Judge of all mankind'**. Let me elaborate a little.

- By 'unique' I mean that there is only one God and that all other objects or ideas given that name are figments of misled imagination.
- By 'personal' I mean that God is not a 'thing' or 'power', influence or energy, but that lives, thinks, feels and acts.
- By 'plural' I mean that there are distinguishable personas within a single Godhead.
- By 'spiritual' I mean that God has no physical attributes or dimensions, that he does not have a body, or any characteristics that can be defined in terms of size or shape.
- By 'eternally self-existent' I mean that he has always had the power of being within himself and has neither beginning nor end.
- By 'transcendent' I mean that God is over and above all things, outside of time and space, completely distinct from the universe, and not

to be confused with it in any way.

- *By 'immanent' I mean that, while remaining separate from it in being and essence, he permeates the entire universe.
- *By 'omniscient' I mean that he knows everything, including the past, the present and the future.
- *By 'immutable' I mean that he is unchangeable in every aspect of his being.
- *By 'holy' I mean that he is utterly without blemish or deficiency in his being, essence or actions.
- *By 'loving' I mean that he cares for all of creation and that in a very special way he demonstrates his love to humanity and communicates this to individuals.
- *By 'Creator' I mean that by his own choice and power he brought into being all reality other than himself.
- *By 'Ruler' I mean that he is in sole and sovereign control of everything that exists or happens, and that nothing can prevent him doing as he pleases.
- *By 'Judge of all mankind' I mean that he alone determines the eternal destiny of every member of the human race.

Four things need to be said about this conception of God.

Firstly, it is not a shot in the dark, or a random collection of ideas, but reflects what has been consistently accepted by millions of people over thousands of years and is now held by the largest religious grouping the world has ever known. This does not necessarily say anything in its favor, but does at least give it some kind of perspective.

Secondly, it is no more than an outline, just sufficient to prevent the word 'God' from being so slippery that

nobody can get hold of it.

Thirdly, although it gives a clear indication of what I will mean when I use the word 'God' it is not necessarily what is always meant by the authors and speakers I will be quoting; this will be obvious in most cases.

Fourthly, fine-tuning the definition of God in this way will obviously produce more atheists than would settling for deity as being no more than a vague, supernatural principle or power.

THE OTHER SIDE

Accepting that theism is belief in the existence of God, what is atheism? Again, the answer is far from straightforward. A simple dictionary definition, based on the Greek words *a* (without) and *theos* (God) is 'disbelief in the existence of God or gods', but the history and use of the word are much more complex.

In ancient Greece the word 'atheist' was used to describe three groups of people: those who were impious or godless; those who were without supernatural help and those who did not accept the prevalent Greek idea of deity. The earliest Christians were often called atheists by their own contemporaries because they refused to accept the existence of the popular pagan deities of their time, and one religious group has sometimes accused another of atheism even when both claimed to believe in a supernatural being of whom at least part of our outline of who and what God is would be true.

Yet even these examples do not exhaust the uses of 'atheism'. Swami Vivekananda, an Indian who was instrumental in bringing Hinduism

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"exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict" (Titus 1:9)

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THE GOSPEL IN BRIEF

There is one, and only one, eternal, true, holy God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Matt 28:19). He created everything by His word. God has told us the truth about Himself in the word He has given us, the Bible, which He commands us to obey. God is compassionate and just to all. God is pure and Holy; sin is destroyed in His presence (Numbers 14:18). However, we have all sinned, falling short in the evil we do, and the good we fail to do. Yet our problem is not just what we do, but also who we are; we are selfish, corrupt, and estranged from God. Because God is just, He will punish sin impartially, yet God still bestows his love to all men. So our Savior, Jesus, the only begotten Son of God (the God-man, John 1:1,14), was graciously sent to suffer and die on the cross for our sins and to purify us from all unrighteousness by the sacrifice of His body and blood. He was born of the virgin Mary, lived a sinless life, and was physically raised from the dead and ascended into heaven. Jesus will physically return to judge the world. God commands everyone to repent and to believe in Him. God's Spirit lives in each of us who believe in Him to guide us into truth, convict us of our sins, and to work in us to sanctify us to live a more holy life, pleasing our Lord. God's children will dwell forever with God, and those who reject Jesus will suffer eternal torment. There is no other way for anyone to come to God except through Jesus (Jn. 14:6). Please do not depend on anyone else, your own efforts, your religion, but simply put your faith in Christ our Master. So as Rom. 10:9 says, "That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart the God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." You are urged not to despise God's mercy but call out to the Lord and trust ONLY in Him.

(See also Acts 10:36-43)

THOUGHTS FROM THE DIRECTOR



Larry Wessels

I hope all is well with you since the last time we came visiting by way of your mail box. The Lord, by His grace, has blessed us with another year so here we go again with another newsletter to assist the saints in reaching others about the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Naturally, when sharing the Gospel with others, the very existence of God can be called into question in this post modern world we find ourselves in, where disbelief, skepticism, and doubt are rampant on all fronts. More often than not people will claim to believe in some kind of god but in the end (and after analysis) their god will not be the God as found in the Bible but will be some strange collection of borrowed imaginary details molded by makeshift philosophical systems popular in current society.

Our latest issue deals with atheism which, as we shall see by our lead article, goes far beyond what most people would understand about what atheism really is. Dr. John Blanchard, an outstanding Christian author and speaker, establishes the Biblical definition of God from his introduction, and then goes on to show that people who do not accept this Biblical definition are themselves "atheists" whether they go to the extremes of a Madelyn Murray O'Hair of the American Atheist Center or a Dan Barker of the Freedom from Religion Foundation or not (in other words the God of the Bible is the only God Who actually exists in reality, all other "gods" or atheistic evolutionary theories are non-existent falsehoods).

In this scheme of things, polytheists such as Mormons or Hindus would be atheists; monotheists such as Jehovah's Witnesses or Muslims who would deny that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh, one with the Father and the Holy Spirit in the nature of the Biblical Godhead would be atheists; those following all the bankrupt man-made philosophical systems of rationalism, materialism, existentialism, nihilism, etc. to some extent or another while claiming some form of religion would be atheists. Thus, only those believing in the Biblical presentation of God, by definition, would be true theists leaving the vast majority of mankind in the realm of outright atheism. As Christian evangelists, we can easily see that our work is cut out for us in presenting the Gospel to this majority of people. Fortunately for us, however, as we study God's word (II Timothy 2:15) and share it with others (Col. 4:4-6) we can have confidence that God will give the increase, not us (I Corinthians 3:6-7).

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN ANSWERS ?

Our ministry name is derived in part from I Peter 3:15 which states, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." (KJV). This is the goal of **Christian Answers** in an increasingly anti-Christian society here in America and throughout the world; giving answers and reasons why the Christian faith can be trusted and believed. Christians are to know what they believe and why they believe it.

The Biblical commands to "fight the good fight of faith" (I Tim. 6:12), to be "set for the defense of the gospel" (Phil. 1:17), to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3), to "be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict" (Titus 1:9), to "put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not" (Rev. 2:2), to "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves." (Matt. 7:15), to "examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good" (I Thess. 5:21), "with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 2:25), to follow the example of Paul and Apollos who "vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ." (Acts 18:28). These are but a few of the marching orders for the call to ministry, discernment and evangelism.

The inerrant Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17) whereby the gospel is preached, which is "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 1:16), is the weapon of our evangelism. As Hebrews 4:12 states, "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." This is the evangelical missionary methodology of **Christian Answers**— to bring the Biblical perspective to a culture that is almost completely ignorant of it; to bring Christian truth, Christian answers to those who, as the prophet Isaiah said, have made "lies...and falsehood" their refuge (Isa. 28:15); to smash lies and falsehoods with the "hammer" of God's word (Jer. 23:29); see also Proverbs 30:5-6, Psalm 138:2b, Isaiah 40:8, John 5:39-47, I Cor. 14:37, and Acts 17:11.

Christian Answers utilizes all outreach that God allows us including television, radio, audio CDs, video DVDs, speaking engagements, and the printed page. The materials we have been able to produce have been used by churches, Bible teachers, Christian apologists, laymen and others as well as those seeking life in Christ.

We are not afraid to stand up for Jesus Christ in public forums or wherever the Lord leads. Of course this type of ministry is not for the faint of heart and very often leads to the same type of suffering and persecution

Our ministry is "exempt from federal income tax under section 501 (a) of the Internal Revenue Code as an organization described in section 501 (c) (3) by the Internal Revenue Service". Donations to our ministry are tax deductible, therefore those who contribute will receive a donation receipt good on your US income tax. This applies to donations only, not sales. We are legally registered in the state of Texas.

to the West, once said, 'Just as certain world religions say that people who do not believe in a personal God outside themselves are atheists, we say that a person who does not believe in himself is an atheist. Not believing in the splendor of one's own soul is what we call an atheist.'²³

It would simplify things if we could settle for the general idea that atheism is the rejection of theism, but the difficulty of pinning down the meaning of theism makes the issue a lot more complicated than that. As long as our concept of God is sufficiently vague, our first proposition –that only a minority of people are atheists –is already proved. However, if we define God in the way I have suggested, our second proposition, which says that most people in the world are atheists, comes into play.

The evidence of modern archaeology is that religion has not evolved upwards, but degenerated from monotheism to pantheism and polytheism, then from these to animism and atheism, a finding confirmed by the Scottish academic Andrew Lang in *The Making of Religion*. "Of the existence of a belief in the Supreme Being among primitive tribes there is as good evidence as we possess for any fact in the ethnographic region."⁶ In *History of Sanskrit Literature*, the Oriental expert Max Muller, recognized as the founder of the science of the history of religions, came to the conclusion: "There is a monotheism that precedes the polytheism of the Veda; and even the invocations of the innumerable gods, the remembrance of a God, one and infinite, breaks through the mist of idolatrous phraseology like the blue sky that is hidden by passing clouds."⁷ In *The Religion of Ancient Egypt*, Sir Flinders Petrie, universally acknowledged as one of the world's leading Egyptologists, claimed, "Wherever we can trace back polytheism to its earliest stages, we find that it results from combinations of monotheism."⁸ In *Semitic Mythology*, The Oxford intellectual Stephen Langdon, one of the greatest experts in his field, said, "In my opinion the history of the oldest civilization of man is a rapid decline from monotheism to extreme polytheism and widespread belief in evil spirits. It is in a very true sense the history of the fall of man."⁹

There is no convincing evidence for any development in nature religions from animism through polytheism to monotheism. The idea that religion itself is something man invented has proved just as baseless. When the British naturalist Charles Darwin went to Tierra del Fuego in 1833, he believed that he had discovered aborigines with no religion at all. There are atheists today who still lean heavily on this, in spite of the fact that a scholar who went to the region after Darwin, and spent many years learning the language, history and customs of the Fuegians, reported that their idea of God was well developed and that he found "*no evidence that there was ever a time when he was not known to them.*"¹⁰

The same overall picture emerges in studies centered on the traditions of the oldest civilizations known to man: original belief in a 'High God', followed by degeneration into polytheism, animism and other corrupt religious notions.

To trace all the currents in the ebb and flow of man's religious thinking over the centuries is beyond anyone's ability, but it is possible to track down some of the people whose ideas not only made a marked contemporary impact but still affect the way many people think today on the issue of the existence of God. On point before we begin: animism, pantheism, polytheism (and some of the other '-isms' we shall touch on as we go along) are usually treated as facets of theism, but I will treat them as aspects of atheism on the grounds that they fail to square with the definition of God proposed in the introduction.

OTHER FORMS OF ATHEISM:

1. Pantheism: Stripped down to its bare essentials, **pantheism** is the idea that God is everything and everything is God. To put it even more concisely, all that there is *is* God. This makes it easy to see why **pantheism** can properly be called a form of atheism, because if God is everything in general, he is nothing in particular.

Although **pantheism** is one of the earliest philosophical theories known to man, it mixes well with modern, man-centered religious concepts, not least because it gets rid of a God to whom we are morally answerable.

If there is no distinction between God and the world, between God and self and between self and the world, what is the basis for objective truth? If God and the universe are one, what is the source of human freedom? If we are nothing more than drops in a cosmic ocean, where do countless millions of people get their irresistible sense of individuality and personal identity? Where in nature can we discover a rationale for ethical principles? If we are part of nature, how can we have any moral dimension? How do we explain the existence of evil, alienation and ignorance? If these things are illusions, how can they at one and the same time be part of an indivisible whole? Kreeft and Tacelli add this clincher: "If all is one, as pantheism claims, and if manyness is an illusion, where did the illusion come from? If all is a dream, who is the dreamer? Would a perfect God dream an imperfect dream? And if an imperfect, unenlightened human mind is the dreamer of this illusion of manyness, then these non-divine minds do exist, and not everything is God; thus pantheism is abandoned."⁴⁶

Paul Johnson comes to the conclusion that pantheism is the negation of belief, an escape, a cop-out from all the difficulties of theology.⁴⁷

2. Panentheism: In passing, we should also include a note on **panentheism**, which is a kind of compromise between theism and pantheism. **Panentheism** denies on the one hand that God is eternal and transcendent, yet it does not identify him with the material universe. Instead, God and the universe are dependent on each other; God needs the world, because he exists only as its vital force, and the world needs God, because it cannot exist without his vitalizing power. In this scheme of things, God is no longer the Creator, but merely some kind of cosmic energy, and questions as to how the material world came into being and why it exists are ignored.

Anselm (1033-1109 A.D.), who served as Archbishop of Canterbury for the last sixteen years of his life, was the first great theologian of the Middle Ages. Using ideas from Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus, he gave philosophy a distinct role within theology. Leaning on Plato's idea that thought was more real than objects in the physical, external world, Anselm defined God as 'that than which no greater can be conceived' (by 'greater'

Anselm meant 'more perfect') and aimed to show not only that faith was perfectly reasonable, but that God was infinitely greater than the conception his fellow monks had in mind. In Anselm's view, God is perfect in every way; existence is a perfection; therefore God exists. This so-called 'ontological argument' (from the Greek words *ontos* –the present participle of *einai*, 'to be' - and *logos*, 'word' or 'reason') has been playground and battlefield to theologians and philosophers ever since [while refuting panentheism].

3. Skepticism:

Even the famous skeptical philosopher David Hume came to see that his ideas were leading him down a miserable cul-de-sac, which is where huge areas of modern society are to be found. Using another picture, the British humanist Kathleen Nott says that among all the great philosophers, Hume 'hung his nose as far as any over the nihilistic abyss'.⁴¹ At one point he wrote, " I am affrighted and confounded with that forlorn solitude in which I am placed by my philosophy."⁴² As another points out, 'Skepticism in knowledge may be a nice game to play, but there is no way one can live on the basis of it.'⁴³ Nor is it any help when one comes to die. A woman who attended Hume on his deathbed is reported to have said that when his friends were with him he was cheerful, 'even to frivolity', but that whenever he was alone he was often overwhelmed with 'unutterable gloom' and had, in his hours of depression, declared that he had been in search of light all his life, but was now in greater darkness than ever.⁴⁴

4. Metaphysical Rationalism:

In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, German philosopher Immanuel Kant mounted a blistering attack on the traditional proofs for the existence of God, and dismissed the arguments from natural theology as 'null and void',⁵⁶ so that by the time he had bricked God away behind the wall dividing the noumenal and the phenomenal he seemed to many to have dispensed with him altogether. It is said that when he returned home one day and asked his

servant why he was crying, the servant replied, 'You have taken away my God.'

Yet this was certainly not Kant's intention, and in his *Critique of Practical Reason* he argued that while pure reason was unable to establish God's existence, there was an area of human experience that demanded it. He said that everybody possessed a 'categorical imperative', a sense of duty or 'oughtness', and that this undeniable moral law presupposed three things –freedom, immortality and God.

Kant's pervasive influence over present-day thinking is partly because many people have fallen for what logicians call 'the argument from authority', in this case the idea that Kant's reputation is sufficient to guarantee the validity of his thesis. This is clearly not good enough, and in many areas his teaching has been shown to be fatally flawed. If everything our senses pick up is conditioned by our minds, how can we have clear and certain knowledge about anything? What evidence is there for his assertion that the human mind is the creator and sustainer of knowledge? How can we say that we are ignorant about ultimate reality unless we know something about it? How did Kant know that there was an invisible realm to which none of us has access? Ravi Zacharias makes an important point: 'To say, as Kant did, that one cannot cross the line of appearances is to cross the line in order to say it.'⁶⁰ Again, although Kant claimed to have torpedoed the traditional arguments for the existence of God, it has rightly been said that 'What he put in their place was scarcely more seaworthy.'⁶¹

Kant's model of philosophy was built around a number of stupendous assertions, but many of them were clearly mistaken, and his case is seriously weakened by the way he studiously ignored powerful evidence which contradicted it. As Colin Brown points out, 'His method was rather like writing a book about the Himalayas with the deliberate intention of ignoring Mount Everest.'⁶²

5. Materialism:

For the famous German philosopher Ludwig Von Feuerbach, nature was totally and exclusively physical; the supernatural and spiritual did not exist. He was a full-blown materialist; in his own words, 'There is nothing beyond nature and man...any solution that seeks to go beyond the boundaries of nature and man is worthless.'²⁴

Then what did Feuerbach see as the nature and value of religion? Accepting that, in contrast to animals, man is self-conscious, he claimed that religion was merely 'the dream of the human mind'.

At the height of his career, Feuerbach was one of the most celebrated philosophers in Europe, and 20,000 people attended his funeral. Since his death, millions have taken on board the ideas he put forward, yet although much of what he wrote showed unusual and helpful insight into the nature of religion, the basic structure he built wobbles when even the slightest pressure is applied.

*Firstly, it is logically invalid to say that an object of human wishes or desires has no real, objective existence beyond the mind of the person who wishes or desires it. We may at times long for things that do not exist, but to say that nothing we long for exists outside of our longing for it is absurd. As the nineteenth-century scholar Eduard von Hartmann pointed out, 'It is perfectly true that nothing exists merely because we wish it, but it is not true that something cannot exist if we wish it. Feuerbach's entire critique of religion and the proof of his atheism, however, rest upon this single argument –a logical fallacy.'²

* Secondly, how can the argument that theists invent God's existence to support their wishes provide evidence that he does not exist? How can anything disprove the existence of God?

* Thirdly, the argument that the existence of God is nothing more than wish-fulfillment on the part of the theist can boomerang. Might it not be more to the point to suggest that the non-existence of God (certainly of a sovereign, holy God to whom mankind

is answerable) could be wish fulfillment on the part of the atheist? Surely there is more than a grain of truth in the saying that the atheist cannot find God for the same reason the thief cannot find a policeman?

* Fourthly, it is important to remember that Feuerbach launched his attack on theism for personal reasons (his brother had been mistreated), not because he had any philosophical, theological or rational evidence that God did not exist.

* Fifthly, by lumping all religions together Feuerbach overlooked the fact that there are some –Buddhism for example –which deny the existence of a personal God.

* Sixthly, if man is wrapped into valueless nature, what is his basis for distinguishing between right and wrong? Feuerbach's reply was to say, 'Man is a god to man.' This may sound elevating and liberating, but at a personal level it amounts to nothing more than 'every man for himself' and is a recipe for social, moral and ethical chaos. Feuerbach reached for philosophical gold, but left us with a handful of dross.

6. Marxism:

Marxism claims that human beings are completely material, biological entities, and are in that sense on the same level as animals, but what explanation does it offer for their spiritual self-awareness, or for their longing for the transcendent? If man is really nothing more than matter, where does he get his conscience, willpower, creative impulses, aspirations, creativity, hope and imagination, or concepts such as love and beauty?

Where is the proof for Karl Marx's fundamental assertion that religion is imaginary, nothing more than a projected longing, an idea which is absolutely basic to his communistic model?

If changing the system would cause the nothing of religion to fade from people's minds as a matter of course, why did Communist dictators in the USSR and elsewhere find it necessary to close down countless thousands of churches and other places of worship, brutalize religious leaders, force atheism on to the educational curriculum

and slaughter millions of believers?

* If the state is self-sufficient, self-justifying and a law unto itself, where does this leave individual freedom of thought and direction?

* If there is no God, and no other absolute beyond the existence of matter, how can there be any ultimate source of truth as a reference point by which an objective system of law and order can be assessed?

The Black Book of Communism, written by a group of left-wing historians and published in 1997, puts the number of victims since the Russian Revolution eighty years earlier at between eighty-five million and 100 million.⁴⁸

7. Existentialism:

The *Chamber's Dictionary* says, existentialism is, 'a term covering a number or related philosophical doctrines denying objective universal values and holding that people, as free moral agents, must create values for themselves through actions and must accept ultimate responsibility for those actions in a seemingly meaningless universe.'

* Although existentialism brilliantly reveals the human predicament, it provides no solutions. What can it offer the insecure, the lonely, the guilty and the fearful?

* A famous French existentialist, John-Paul Sartre argues that man can be autonomous only if there is no God, but how can this be proved without first demonstrating that God does not exist?

* Sartre claims that getting rid of God makes genuine morality possible, but might it not be easier to show that Sartre's morality makes the non-existence of God *necessary*? In other words, does it not seem that Sartre's denial of God is wishful thinking?

* Sartre stands firmly against the existence of any objective values, but shoots himself in the foot by insisting that becoming 'authentic' (by asserting one's own freedom and creating one's own meaning) is creditable. But how can we call anything creditable if there is no objective standard by which to judge it?

* If pessimistic existentialism is right to say that everything is meaningless, would this not include its claim that

this is the case? If not, what else might be excluded from the claim?

* If our actions have no ultimate meaning, why should giving to charity be considered more worthy than robbing a bank? Morally speaking, what do the words 'better' and 'worse' mean?

* If everyone practiced atheistic existentialism and 'did his own thing', surely the result would be total and universal anarchy. Does any existentialist seriously believe that he could live in such a world?

8. Nihilism:

The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines nihilism as, "negative doctrines, total rejection of current beliefs, in religion and morals" and "skepticism that denies all existence."

Firstly, nihilism begins by assuming that God does not exist, or at least that the concept of God is no longer respectable for modern thinkers. The major assumption, that God does not exist, has the same effect on nihilism that it has on so many of the other philosophies we have examined –it holes itself below the water-line. To make such a controlling assumption without producing any evidence cannot be taken seriously; it simply makes no sense. The idea that the concept of God can no longer be believed by today's thinkers is just as unreliable, because it flies in the face of the facts.

Secondly, it is equally untrue that values do not exist. On 13 March 1996, Thomas Hamilton walked into Dunblane Primary School in Scotland, made his way to the gym, fired 105 bullets and killed sixteen children and their teacher. All but one of the children were five years old. Is there anyone – even the most entrenched nihilist – who would deny that what Hamilton did was wrong? And if the nihilist agrees that it was wrong, is he not ruling out the idea that there are no values? What is more, how can the nihilist say that truth does not exist when he claims that the statement he is making is true? Let me press the point. The nihilist says, 'There are no absolutes.' Is that statement absolute? If so, his premise is false. If not, his whole argument collapses. The nihilist is in a 'no-

win' situation.

Thirdly, no nihilist can consistently live as if there was no rational or moral order. A nihilist stepping out in front of moving traffic might not enjoy a long life during which to promote nihilism! Would a nihilist be happy to accept someone stealing his car, raping his wife, abducting his child or damaging his property on the basis that moral values were non-existent? Would it not be in the best interests of the nihilist if others rejected nihilism and treated him with the kind of respect that a moral law demands?

Nihilism is a philosophical, moral and practical dead-end. Far from showing that God does not exist, what it does (unintentionally of course) is to demonstrate the futility of finding any meaning in the universe as a whole, and in human life in particular, apart from the existence of God and the relationship which he bears to his creation. As John Frame concludes, 'The choice is between God and chaos. God and nothing, God and insanity.'²⁷

9. Religious Movements:

Watching television at home in Guernsey in the early 1960s, I heard the well-known Jewish philosopher Martin Buber make a statement which has remained embedded in my mind ever since: **'Nothing so tends to mask the face of God as religion. It can be a substitute for God himself.'** I have long since forgotten the context in which Buber was speaking, but his statement warns us that following some form of religion cannot automatically be equated with finding God.

To include religious movements in an overall summary of atheism may seem either reckless or ridiculous, but I am doing so in the context of the concept of 'God' outlined in the introduction. With this in mind, it can be shown that many of the world's religious movements have concepts of God which are in one way or another at variance with this, while others have those which bear little or no resemblance to it.

10. Scientism:

Scientism is not true science but begins by repudiating all that cannot be reduced to the physical and studied by means of the scientific method. It is a

commitment to materialism first and this then shapes the science in such a way that no supernatural explanation can be entertained.

The contemporary British author and one-time atheist Robert Frost summarizes the alternative: 'If the scientist prefers to suggest that there is no "God", no "Creator", and no "first cause", what does atheism offer him intellectually? The atheist must, of necessity, believe that matter without mind created reason and logic. Matter without intelligence created understanding and comprehension. Matter without morals created complex ethical codes and legal systems. Matter without conscience created a sense of right and wrong. Matter without emotion created skills and art, music, drama, architecture, comedy, literature and dance. Matter without design created in humankind an insatiable hunger for meaning and purpose.'¹²⁴

We can take this one step further. As human beings, we depend on elements in the universe for our existence, yet what it takes for the universe to exist cannot be identical with the universe itself or with any part of it. Surely this pushes us toward the idea of an infinite, transcendent and creative source? After a long career in research and the political aspects of science, John Wright says, **'The very nature of the universe which modern science reveals encourages a belief in God. It does not prove God exists in any strict, logical sense. But the balance certainly tilts in favor of a reasoned faith.'**¹²⁵

Critics of the arguments from design say that it is not rational to argue from our known world to one which is unknown. Why not? If there is no natural explanation for the origin and form of the universe as we know it, why is it irrational or illogical to presume that explanation is supernatural? Without a finite cause of the effects we see all around, why not suppose that there must be an infinite one?

For centuries, we have been learning through science about the nature of our universe, and our growing scientific knowledge is steadily whittling away the possibility that the universe came

into being by chance, of that it must necessarily exist as it does. We can settle for the fact that if something exists now, one of the things must be true of it: it is either eternal, created by something that is eternal, or self-created. The first option clashes with the Second Law of Thermodynamics, since an eternal universe would have dissipated all its energy long ago. The third clashes not only with the First Law of Thermodynamics, but also with the law of contradiction, because in order to create itself it would have to exist before it existed, to be and not to be at the same time, a proposition which is scientifically and philosophically ridiculous. This leaves the second option, and the God posited in the introduction satisfies all the necessary criteria.

A growing number of scientists in many disciplines are turning in this direction and being drawn to the conclusion that divine intelligence preceded and planned the natural universe and the laws by which it is governed. Although not attached to any religious tradition, Paul Davies writes, 'The delicate fine-tuning in the values of the constants, necessary so that the various different branches of physics can dovetail so felicitously, might be attributed to God. It is hard to resist the impression that the present structure of the universe, apparently so sensitive to minor alterations in the numbers, has been rather carefully thought out.'¹²⁸ Stephen Hawking goes even further: 'It would be very difficult to explain why the universe should have begun in just this way, *except as the act of a God who intended to create beings like us*'¹²⁹ (emphasis added).

**All footnotes can be found in John Blanchard's book, Does God Believe in Atheists? published by Evangelical Press, Faverdale North Industrial Estate, Darlington. DL3 0PH. England.*

Does God Believe in Atheists?

This outstanding 656 page reference work refuting the religion of atheism by author John Blanchard is a must for every serious Christian evangelist. This is by far the best book available on this subject.

BK-54, \$32.00 + S&H, 656pp.

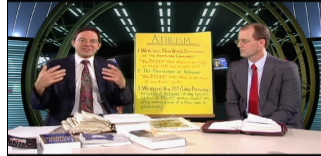
TOPICAL VIDEOS

Hear experts and apologists analyze these topics (perfect for study groups or as a witnessing tool to share with others). You may choose any four of the 28 minute videos below for the single price of \$6.00. Catalog identification is CATV. For example, if you wish to order Bahaiism, "Church of Christ", Mormonism, and Islam; list on order form as CATV- 1, 13, 8, and 2. Four videos on one VHS tape for one low price of \$6.00. DVD copies of these topics are only available in increments of 4: #1-#4, #5-#8, #9-#12, #13-#16, #17-#20, #21-#24 only, with no variation, \$6.00 each.

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20. Demon Possession (Dr. Thomas Ice)
21. Roman Catholicism #1 (Rob Zins, Th.M.)
22. Roman Catholicism #2 (Rob Zins Th.M.)
23. The Da Vinci Code (Morrison & Wessels)
24. Darwin's Evolution Religion (Dr. M. Girouard)

DEBATE WITH THE ATHEISTS

"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 1:21-22

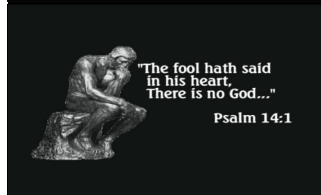


"God is dead..."

Quotes from national radio debates.



Madalyn Murray O'Hair



Psalm 14:1



Scenes from *Debate with the Atheists*

Larry Wessels and Steve Morrison debate actual audio clips by leading atheists during public forums in this fascinating television presentation. Hear how atheists present their case against God and how their arguments can easily be defeated. Atheists Madalyn Murray O'Hair, Brian Lynch (from the American Atheist Center), as well as Dan Barker and Sheila Thompson (both from the Freedom from Religion Foundation) state why God does not exist. This is a classic exchange between those who love God and those who hate Him.

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Inside This Issue:
Topic: Religion of Atheism

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page 2: Types of Atheism
page 7: Debate with the Atheists
page 8: Letters from the Frontline

“exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict” (Titus1:9)

LETTERS FROM THE FRONTLINE



Hello Christian Answers,

I just wanted to mention that I got the package you sent me. Wow, your video catalogue really looks nice! I can't believe it! All that stuff you have in there and the pictures, the way you put them together, really works well. I am very impressed. I did not realize you had so many video titles. Good job. I am really impressed. Take care.

A.G. (LIC, NY)

To Christian Answers,

Love the site. Has helped out in a few debates. I too see apologetics as a great way to witness but not the only way. I also believe in using the law to show we are sinful and just WHY we need Jesus. The key for me is to suit the evangelizing to the individual. The law is great for those who think they are good enough to get into heaven through good works. Apologetics are great for those who intellectually have a problem with the Bible. Each person is different and I don't limit myself to one way of evangelizing. Again, thanks for the website. God Bless.

M.M. (from the web)

Dear friends at Christian Answers,

You are performing a worthy service to God's people and may you continue! Sincerely in Christ.

J.K. (Holly, MI)

Dear Larry,

Thanks for the great tapes. I will be mailing out your check tomorrow, Lord willing. In Christ.

A.S. (from the web)

Dear Larry,

Greetings in His precious name from Northern Ireland. I was looking at some past newsletters and I was wondering if the videos advertised would now be available on DVD? If so, I would be interested in obtaining the following four: 1. Bahaim 8. Church of Christ 15. Nation of Islam 16. Islam. Maybe you could email me back and let me know if they are available and I can let you know where to send them. Yours in Christ.

Dear Brother Steve,

I have been in receipt of "Christian Answers" for quite some time now and appreciate how informative the articles have been over the years. We originally exchanged newsletters back in the late 80's and early 90's as we have counseled many who have Roman Catholic backgrounds.

This email is in response to two articles, Pt. 1 & Pt. 2, titled "Using the Word of God in Muslim Evangelism" published in recent issues. I would ask permission to publish the same on my website, which contains several articles on Islam. I needed to write an article of similar content, but now feel that I would be only 'reinventing the wheel' so to speak, and wasting precious time, as the work has already been done! No monetary gain would be derived from the publishing of same. Many thanks for your consideration. Every blessing to you and the ministry members.

Dr. F. G. (Australia)

Dear Sir,

I recently received your leaflet (*Outreach to the Lost*) and was really impressed with it. I would love to order on DVD your topical videos (1-24) on the different religions—the reason I am not returning the leaflet filled in is because I am sending it to a friend of mine to read. My reason for writing to you is that my soon to be son-in-law is reading the *Da Vinci Code* as well as Edgar Casey (not sure of the spelling) the psychic.—his brother whom I believe is an atheist—is the cause of this—I am terribly worried as I believe he will lead my daughter down the wrong path and that they will be very unhappy. He was brought up in a Catholic home and never attended church regularly—only on Easter and Christmas. Do you have any literature or perhaps DVDs on the above subjects which I would be more than grateful to purchase for him. Your response would be much appreciated.

E.S. (Plantation, FL)

Christian Answers' Website CD is free for the asking.

Christian Debater Guide

**ANGRY ATHEISTS
ON THE WAR PATH**



Richard Dawkins

"The Big Story" on Fox News web site for December 22 was John Gibson's report on Atheists' "War On Religion." Following is an excerpt: "As for the larger issue of religiosity in America, I must say there has been a big push from the angry atheists this year and they want more than a simple ban on Santa. Books by Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris have been high on the best-seller list for weeks now, indicating tens of thousands of people have bought these books. Dawkins and Harris and others are arguing that religion is such a terrible influence on society that no reasonable person would continue to be a believer, and that atheists should shun even moderate or liberal religionists because they enable fundamentalists. The atheists take aim at all religion, but Christians are the big target because the largest group of people in this country self identify as Christian. Dawkins is even sponsoring something called 'The Blasphemy Challenge' in which young people renounce their belief in God or Jesus on camera and the renunciations are posted on the Internet for all to see. The new angry atheists believe you shouldn't be allowed to teach your children religion because kids are impressionable and don't know how to resist indoctrination."