

THE NOT SO NEW ATHEISM

OPEN IN PRAYER

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS: Are there any atheists in our gathering this evening... we want to let you know that you are welcome here... And we want to represent your position accurately and to get your feedback... we love to have an open, honest debate, and to weigh the evidence for or against the existence of God... I was there myself back in those wonderful college days... but we'll get to my story in a minute, but first...

1A **What is the new atheism?** Not really new but repackaged ancient pagan philosophy that rely solely upon reason and that the world and the universe has always existed (continuity of being) and that the Universe is all there is, was, or ever will be (Carl Sagan.. the original Cosmos). One of the earliest Greek atheist philosophers, Epicurus, was born in 341 BC in Athens. He established the school of philosophy known as Epicurianism. He was an important figure in the early development of the scientific methodology, insisting that nothing which cannot be tested through direct observation and defended through logical deduction should be believed.

He insisted that there were no gods to reward or punish humans after death, that the universe is infinite and eternal, and that all things are ultimately material in nature.

1B **Militant atheism.** Why this is dubbed "new" is that today's atheists (not all of course) are more militant, and aggressive in presenting their views via the internet, print materials, and even ads on large billboards which you may have seen. The new atheists believe this is a positive message and that religion, especially Christianity is not only destructive, by actually an evil form of brainwashing. The late Christopher Hitchens writes, "All religions and all churches are equally demented in their belief in divine intervention, divine intercession, or even in the existence of the divine in the first place" Richard Dawkins adds, "the great unmentionable evil at the center of our culture is Monotheism. From a barbaric Bronze Age text known as the Old Testament three anti-human religions have evolved: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam." Did you ever think your faith in Christ was evil and anti-human? Furthermore the new atheists believe they are intellectually superior.

2B **Intellectual superiority...** and in our generation, the current attitude of the intellectual elite on most college and university campuses today is reflected by former physics professor at Princeton University, Albert Einstein in the following quote:

"The word of God for me is nothing more then expression and product of human weakness. The Bible is a collection of honorable but still purely primitive legends which are nevertheless pretty childish."

3B **Graphics from the internet** that portray the new atheism and their "beliefs"

1C **Typical atheist sentiment:** religion has convinced people that there is an invisible man... Living in the sky, who watches everything you do every minute of every day. And the invisible man has a list of 10 specific things he doesn't want you to do. And

if you do any of these things, he will send you to a special place, of burning fire and smoke and torture and anguish for you to live forever. And suffer and burn and scream until the end of time.... but he loves you. He loves you and he needs money. George Carlin

atheists.org 2C **Typical atheist sentiment:** Who needs Christ during Christmas... nobody.

3C **Principles of the new atheism:**

All faith is folly including moderate faiths

Stop giving religion special treatment

Bible offers no answers to suffering

Religion is not the source of morality

The universe is matter and nothing more

Atheism is a positive philosophy

Atheism is growing, coming out of the closet

Godless societies happier, healthier

the facts 4C **Don't confuse me with the facts:** Religion... its like history class without

5C **A false dichotomy...** Fact is when Scientific evidence leads to a logical conclusion. Faith is when simple emotions lead to lots of confusion.

6C **Atheists Bibles:** The God delusion, God is not great, Letter to a Christian nation... the end of faith. Many of these publications are best sellers, demonstrating the popularity of this movement today.

7C **Atheists prayer:** Our brains, which art in our heads, treasured be thy name. Thy reasoning come. Thy best you can do be done on earth as it is. Give us this day new insight to help us resolve conflicts and ease pain. And lead us not into supernatural explanations; deliver us from denial of logic. For thine is the kingdom of reason, and even though thy powers are limited, and you're not always glorious, you are the best evolutionary adaption we have for helping this earth now and forever and ever. So be it.

8C **Typical atheistic belief:** The belief that there was nothing and nothing happened to nothing and then nothing magically exploded for no reason creating everything and then a bunch of everything magically rearranged itself for no reason whatsoever into self-replicating bits which then turned into dinosaurs. Makes perfect sense. And they call Christians illogical?

9C **Silly logic...** because we can't infer a designer in science no matter what it looks like.

10C **How does Christianity differ from all other religions?**
does not fit into a religious box

testable

falsifiable

either true or false

can be proven by evidence... not a blind leap of faith

11C **Is your faith futile?**

Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then **our preaching is vain**, your **faith also is vain**. Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your **faith is worthless**; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men **most to be pitied**. 1 Cor 15:12-19

12C **Atheist motivation**: "No man will say, "There is no God" 'till he is so hardened in sin that it has become his interest that there should be none to call him to account." Matthew Henry

4B **SUMMARY** Definition: So let's summarize what we know so far:

1C **A Theism**.. from the greek compound of A negative, none or no, and theism, belief in God. So "the doctrine or belief that there is no God" and "the lack of belief in the existence of God or gods"

2C **The "new" Atheism**... as we mentioned earlier is an old form of paganism in new clothing, perhaps more militant and evangelical, but not really NEW in its basic beliefs. Defined by Wikipedia as "A social and political movement in favor of atheism and secularism promoted by a collection of modern atheist writers who have advocated the view that religion should **not simply be tolerated but should be countered**, criticized, and exposed by rational argument wherever it's influence arises.

3C **The major players**: Sometimes called the **4 horsemen of the non-apocalypse** atheists: **Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Daniel Dennett, and Sam Harris**. All would argue that Naturalism is sufficient to explain everything we observe in the universe, from the most distant galaxies to the origin of life, species, and the inner workings of the brain and consciousness. Nowhere, they argue, is it necessary to introduce God or the supernatural to understand reality. New atheists have been associated with the argument from Divine hiddenness and the idea that "absence of evidence is evidence of absence" when evidence can be expected.

2A **How to answer the New Atheists challenge**:

1B **Share your personal story** or testimony (very difficult to refute personal experience). My personal story from nominal Christianity... Agnosticism... Atheism... back to Agnosticism... to becoming a REAL Christian. As a student at the University of Texas, I began entertaining some serious doubts about the "God" hypothesis. I did consider myself an atheist for a time until I began to realize that I did not possess all (100%) of the knowledge in the universe and that God might exist outside of the tiny % of knowledge that I did possess up to that point. I then "morphed into agnosticism... and discovered there are 3 kinds of agnostics: 1. **Dogmatic**... I don't know and you don't know either... no one can know 2. **Disinterested**... I don't know and I don't care or 3. **Dissatisfied**... I don't know, but I would like to know. It was about that time that I came into contact with what I considered to be a group of genuine believers who claimed that they knew God in a personal way. This was astounding to me and out of a desire to prove them wrong, or a desire to see if what they were saying was true, I began to investigate the claims of Christ. I soon discovered for myself that there was **a lot of evidence** that the many things Christ claimed about Himself had to be true or He was **the greatest deceiver or madman** that the world had ever known. The clincher came when I stepped into the "spiritual" laboratory and invited this Jesus, Who claimed to have risen from the dead, into my life. The moment I said that prayer, a lightning bolt lit up the room and from that point on, my life has been different. I have been aware of God's presence in my life since that spring day in 1967

2B **Secondly, you must know what you believe and why** you believe it. 1 Peter 3:14-15 admonishes us... "Do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence"

3B **Thirdly, understand that everyone has a belief system**, a particular world view, and certain presuppositions they carry with them. There is no neutrality, no such thing as an unbiased belief system. The Atheist for example has a natural bias against the supernatural. Based on their belief system, they would say there is no knowledge outside of science and the natural world. Everything has to be explained in terms of natural, material cause and effect. All knowledge must be reduced to chemistry, physics, matter and energy. The supernatural world to the Atheist simply does not exist. Simply and gently point out to your Atheist friends that **this is a biased belief system that requires faith** and cannot be proven by any scientific method.

4B **Understand the 7 BIG questions** that all worldviews attempt to answer:

1C **Basic reality**...

Christian view: Triune God as revealed in the Bible

Atheist view: No God, no mind, no living creative personality behind the universe. Universe is all there is... cold, stark, harsh reality is that we are all alone

2C **External reality**...

Christian view: The created order (heaven and earth), beauty, design in nature, reflects the nature of God

Atheist view: Nature, animals, plants, complexity a product of time and chance

3C Human beings...

Christian view: special creation in the image of God (fallen yet redeemable)

Atheist view: No "mannishness", nothing special that sets man apart from the animal world, a biological machine, no spiritual nature or soul

4C Death...

Christian view: soul lives eternally but not all in same place

Atheist view: Return to dust, the self (if there such a thing) ceases to exist. No eternal life

5C Knowledge...

Christian view: mind and external world correspond to each other in true justified belief

Atheist view: Narrow definition.. only what can be perceived through the 5 senses.. nothing outside the physical universe

6C Values...

Christian view: Revealed moral absolutes rooted in God's nature, 10 commandments

Atheist view: No moral facts, only opinions. Developed through societal discourse, whatever is "best" for the majority

7C History...

Christian view: Linear moving towards culmination under direction of sovereign, loving God

Atheist view: Cyclical with no real direction or purpose

3A The dilemma of atheism (assume Atheism is true) if no God then...

1B No accounting for origins continuity of being... evolution not a new theory... Every ancient civilization has had their own creation story. For example, Enuma Elish, the Babylonian creation myth and all the other ancient pagan texts, without exception, begin with pre-existing matter or material. And modern day evolutionary theory is no different. Only the God of the Bible creates out of nothing... ex nihilo. Modern cosmologists actually believe that the entire ordered universe evolved out of a "quantum fluctuation in a primeval state of nothingness". Modern origin-of-life biochemists have faith that dead chemical elements in a primordial soup generated complex living cells against infinitely impossible odds. And many anthropologists today insist that chattering chimpanzee-like hominids were miraculously transmuted into intelligent, spiritual human beings... all in spite of the fact that true science utterly repudiates every aspect of this impossible evolutionary fantasy.

2B No meaning or purpose to life Scientists tell us that the universe originated in a big bang about 15 billion years ago. What if the Big Bang had never occurred? What if the universe, and see you and I, never existed? What difference would it make? If the

universe is doomed to die anyway, in the end it makes no difference whether the universe ever existed at all! The same is true of the human race. Mankind is a doomed race in a dying universe. As William Lane Craig has stated, "because the human race will eventually cease to exist it makes no difference whether it ever did exist. Mankind is thus no more significant than a swarm of mosquitoes or a barnyard of pigs, for their end is all the same. The same blind cosmic process that coughed them up in the first place will eventually swallow them all again." The honest atheist must sooner or later come to this conclusion.

So when Stephen J. Gould was asked by Parade magazine why we are here this is what he said "We are here because one odd group of fishes had a peculiar fin anatomy that could transform into legs for terrestrial creatures, because the Earth never froze entirely during an Ice Age, because a small and tenuous species arising in Africa a quarter of a million years ago managed so far to survive by hook or by crook. We may yearn for a higher answer but it does not exist"

3B **No absolutes... no truly objective truth** C.S. Lewis (Mere Christianity, p. 25) puts it this way "The moment you say that one set of moral ideas can be better than another, you are, in fact, measuring them both by a standard, saying that one of them conforms to that standard more nearly than the other. But the standard that measures two things is something different from either. You are in fact comparing them both with some Real Morality, admitting that there is such a thing as a real Right, independent of what people think, and that some people's ideas get nearer to that real Right than others. Or put it this way, if your moral ideas can be truer, and those of the Nazi's less true, there must be something-some Real Morality for them to be true about."

4B **No moral values... no facts, only opinions** If there is no God, then there can be no objective standards of right or wrong. Moral values are simply expressions of one's own individual taste or the products of socio-biological evolution and conditioning. In a world without God, there can be no objective right or wrong, only culturally relative values. This means it is impossible to condemn war, oppression, or crime as evil, or praise brotherhood, sacrifice, compassion, and love as good. In a universe without God, good and evil simply do not exist.

5B **No free will** ... Think of it this way... if man is nothing more than a complex biological machine no different from the animal kingdom except in degree of complexity then there is no soul or ghost in the machine that has the capacity to act independently from the machine. Pure evolutionary theory does not allow any kind of free agency or a mind that is distinct from the physical organ we call the brain with it's billions of nerve cells or neurons that depend on chemicals to function properly. If our minds simply emerged from matter without the direction of a superior intelligence, then why should we trust our minds as being rational or true? Would anyone trust a printout of a computer if he knew it was programmed by random forces without a mind behind it? Darwin himself was troubled by this aspect of his own theory in trying to explain the origin of mind through natural selection.

6B **No such thing as real existential evil** ...For real evil to exist there must be such a thing as real goodness to compare it to. Otherwise there would be no reason to call anything evil. If there is no God, then there is no real source of absolute standards of right or wrong. Moral values are simply expressions of one's own individual taste as I mentioned before, therefore evil cannot be defined except in a relative context. So then any modern day Hitler could stand up with persuasive oratory skills and convince the masses that one particular group of people, or an ethnicity, or those of a particular religious persuasion should be exterminated for the good of mankind. And that viewpoint could not be considered evil in a society taken over by moral relativism.

4A **Summary points:**

1B **Atheism is not new** ... Atheistic beliefs can be traced back to ancient Greek philosophers such as Epicurus

2B **Atheism is a morally bankrupt godless philosophy** that requires an incredible amount of faith to sustain... This requires a faith decision and commitment to naturalism as an underlying presupposition or worldview. And I can prove what I just stated by quoting from a Harvard trained evolutionary Biologist:

"Our willingness to except scientific claims that are against common sense is the key to an understanding of the real struggle between science and the supernatural. We take the side of science in spite of the patent absurdity of some of it's constructs, in spite of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just so stories, because we have a prior commitment a commitment to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but on the contrary, that we are forced by our a priori adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated, moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a divine foot in the door." Harvard trained biologist, Richard Lewontin

3B **Honest atheists must live with a great amount of tension**... It is very difficult to live your life if you know there is no ultimate purpose or reason for your existence other than to propagate the human race. Romans 1 gives us insight into the psyche of the average atheist. Romans 1:20 tells us that since the creation of the world, God's invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. They have suppressed the truth that is directly in front of them. The Atheists' apologetic, the defense of their faith in Atheism is to suppress the truth. If you understand this, you have a real advantage in sharing your faith with the average atheist. You simply lead them to the logical conclusion of **their** belief that if God does not exist.. THEN

4B **Not all atheists are contentious and argumentative** and many are open to honest debate and discussion and would like have a personal relationship with God if they thought it were possible. They don't want to live in a world where there is only

relative truth and values and no real ultimate purpose in life. You see God has given to every man woman and child a God consciousness as John states in chapter one of his gospel.. Christ is the light that has come into the world that has enlightened **every one**, but we have suppressed the truth by our own rebellious nature. Every atheist has a defense mechanism, that prevents them from seeing or hearing the truth of the gospel.

5B **Can win the argument but lose a soul**.. as we approach our non-Christian friends and neighbors we must not be argumentative and have the right attitude. We should bathe our discussions in prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to guide us and give us the right words to say. As the apostle Paul admonishes us: the Lord's bondservant must not be quarrelsome but...be kind, patient, and gentle. "Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person." (Colossians 4:6)

5A **Your faith is not futile**:

1B **Don't worry about having all the answers**... "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they *were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself *would not contain the books that *would be written." (Jn 21:25)... you have enough to lead another to faith in Christ... Share your testimony... share the gospel... "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." (Jn 20:30-31)

2B **Ask a simple question** ... If it were possible, would you like to know God in a personal way? Are you willing to investigate the evidence? (Pascals wager) Challenge them to read the gospel of John with an open mind.

3B **Go back to the basics**... A simple choice: Author Randy Alcorn gives us two creation stories and asks us if it matters which one is true..

In the secular account, "You are a descendent of a tiny cell of primordial protoplasm washed up on an empty beach 3 1/2 billion years ago. You are the blind and arbitrary product of time, chance, and natural forces. You are a mere grab bag of atomic particles, a conglomeration of genetic substance. You exist on a tiny planet in minute solar system in an empty corner of a meaningless universe. You are a purely biological entity, different only in degree but not in kind from a microbe, virus, or amoeba. You have no essence beyond your body, and at death you will cease to exist entirely. In short you came from nothing and are going nowhere."

In the Christian view, by contrast, "You are the special creation of a good and all powerful God. You are created in his image, with the capacity to think, feel, and worship that sets you above all other life forms. You differ from the animals not simply in degree but in kind. Not only is your kind unique, but you are unique among your kind. Your

creator loves you so much and so intensely desires your companionship and affection that he has a perfect plan for your life. In addition, God gave the life of his only Son that you might spend eternity with him. If you are willing to accept the gift of salvation, you can become a child of God."

Which of these two creation stories is easier to believe?

4B **The greatest apologetic of all: LOVE** "But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels. The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will. (2 Tim 2:23-26)

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Postscript: How things have changed...

Quote from the NEA (National Education Association) "...if the study of the Bible is to be excluded from all state schools; if the inculcation of the principles of Christianity is to have no place in the daily program; if the worship of God is to form no part of the general exercises of these public elementary schools; then the good of the state would be better served by restoring all schools to church control." 1892

Quote from John Dewey, architect of modern education "...faith in the prayer-hearing God is an unproved and outmoded faith. There is no God and there is no soul. Hence, there are no needs for the props of traditional religion. With dogma and creed excluded, then immutable truth is also dead and buried. There is no room for fixed, natural law or moral absolutes." *The Closing of the American Heart* Nash