

**TWO POINTS OF VIEW:
CHRISTIANITY AND ATHEISM**

By John Waddey and Others

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A NOTE TO THE READER

On March 30, 2002 my article, "To Believe or Not to Believe," was published in the **Arizona Republic** newspaper. The following correspondence ensued from that article. These letters are published on the assumption that others would enjoy seeing first hand just how the unbelieving world thinks and responds to God, Christ, the Bible, Christianity and Christian people. Also the responses offered to the charges and accusations of the unbelievers might be of some help to others who share the faith of Jesus Christ. I have left the spelling and grammatical errors uncorrected in the letters of my antagonists. JHW

TO BELIEVE OR NOT TO BELIEVE

John Waddey

Three percent of our population profess to be unbelievers. **Atheists** deny the existence of God. **Agnostics** cannot make up their minds if God exists. **Infidels** reject Christ and Christianity and **skeptics** doubt the existence, claims and prerogatives of God, Christ and the Bible. Though few in number, unbelievers are very vocal and evangelistic and occupy strategic positions in academia, journalism and the entertainment media.

A few may be doubters by nature, but the overwhelming majority are converts, won primarily while enrolled in schools of higher learning. There, unbelieving professors preach their unbelief to their captive audiences. Francis Bacon wisely observed, "Atheism is rather in the life, than in the heart of man." Rebels feel confined and restricted by the thought of a Higher Power to whom they must answer, so they deny His existence. Plato rightly wrote, "Atheism is a disease of the soul before it becomes an error of understanding." Voltaire's view was. "The atheists are, for the most part, impudent and misguided scholars who reason badly, and who, not being able to understand the Creation, the origin of evil, and other difficulties, have recourse to the hypothesis of the eternity of things and of inevitability."

But Why Are There So Few Atheists?

"There are so few atheists in the world because it takes more credulity to accept the atheistic position than most men can muster" (G. Kennedy). "To be an atheist requires an infinitely greater measure of faith than to receive all the great truths which atheism would deny" (Addison).

At death, an atheist is all dressed up with no place to go. In their unbelief, such folks cannot hope to be saved. "Without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto (God)" (Heb. 11:6).

RESPONSE OF MIKE ROSS, ATHEIST

(Editor's Note: Notice that Mr. Ross sent out the word to his network of fellow-unbelievers to respond to my letter. I need not comment about the literary quality of his letter). JHW

in the saturday, march 20, 2002 issue of the arizona republic in the religion section on page 6 a christian minister wrote a hatefull article on atheists. perhaps you can mail him, the religion editors at the republic and

the editor at the republic an email saying the article is a piece of krap and atheists are really nice people, smart people, who dont beleive that some magical guy who lives in the sky who created the world in 7 days, and since then has been micromanaging the lives of each and every one of the billions of people on earth. the article was titled "unbelievers have no place to go" some stuff from the article

3% of population is atheist (i think the correct number is 10% or more in the USA, and in europe its much higher. and in an article right next to this one people resonded to the question "what is your religion?" and 17% of the people answered - "NO RELIGION". this christian minister doesnt have any qualms about lying about his numbers) while few in numbers atheist are very vocal and evangelistic and occupy strategic positions in academia, journalism and the entertainment media. and most people become atheists they do so because they were taught so

while they were in a captive audience by the atheist in academia. (yea sure! i wish this were the case with atheists. the republic runs a religous page every week while us atheists get in one or two articles a year. and when is the last time you saw an atheist movie on TV -never) atheists are, for the most part, impudent and misguided scholars who reason badly, are not able to understand the creationwhy are their so few atheists? because it takes more credulity to accept the atheistic position than most men can muster. to be an atheist requires an infinitely greater measure of faith than to receive all the great truths which atheism would deny (faith? atheists dont have faith. atheists say prove it before i beleive it) at death an atheist is all dressed up with no place to go. (again thats a better statement for a christian. atheists are not planning on going anywhere after death while the christians think they are) -----

write these folks this guy is the jerk who wrote the article minister john waddey
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gabriel molina gabriel.molina@arizonarepublic.com religion news editor arizona republic 106 e baseline road mesa, az 85210 (602)444-7977 fax georgia geis georgia.geis@arizonarepublic.com religion briefs editor arizona republic arizona republic 106 e baseline road mesa, az 85210 (602)444-7977 fax editor arizona republic OPINIONS@ARIZONAREPUBLIC.COM OPINIONS@PNI.COM

"When the people fear their government, there is tyranny;
when the government fears the people, there is liberty "

Thomas Jefferson

Mike Ross, atheist

MY REPLY

Dear Mr. Ross:

I am pleased to see that you read my piece in the Arizona Republic and that it so moved you that you have taken time to write me, the paper and your network of unbelieving friends. It strikes me as strange that you are more angry with me and God than with Plato, Bacon or Voltaire whose descriptions of atheists I cited. If Christianity and its God is only a childish fable and a foolish superstition you really have nothing to fear from us. Folks waste no time railing against leprechauns and Santa Claus.

Remember that God who made you loves you and sent His Son to save you that you might live with him in eternity. We who follow Christ wish you no harm and will gladly share with you the precious faith we have found. Think about it. May you have a good day,

John Waddey, Christian

RESPONSE FROM MANUEL VALENCIA

To: Minister John Waddey

I am writing this letter in response to your article published in the Arizona Republic newspaper. Below you will find a copy of the letter I have sent to the Arizona Republic editorial staff. To you personally I want to say that I am disappointed that as a member of a supposedly open minded and inclusive organization you would engage in such scathing and inflammatory rhetoric. As an atheist, I have always felt that, (freedom OF religion) is just as important as (freedom FROM religion). And I would not for one second think of supporting any effort or legislation that would limit the freedoms of religious peoples in this world. What I can not understand is the continuous efforts made by people like you to berate, and limit my right to remain free from religion. Please try to take a more objective view next time you write an article.

Manuel Valencia

To: Editor Arizona Republic.

I am writing this letter in response to your article "unbelievers have no place to go" which you published in the Religion section of your newspaper, By John Waddey March 30, 2002. I am deeply offended by the erroneous views, half-truths, and gross errors in statistical quotations published in this article. First without entering the debate of whether Atheists or Religious people are right or wrong, it is not right for a publication such as yours to single out any one particular group for persecution, secular or religious. Had your article been aimed at any one particular religious sect, you would not have published it, how is it then OK to attack atheists, and their beliefs? In a society as plural and diverse as ours, it is not only divisive, but also irresponsible to suggest that any one group is wrong in their belief, especially when no harm is done to others in the observance, dissemination or execution of such beliefs. I suggest that you take a more objective approach to your publications, and attempt to take everyone's views into account before publishing such inflammatory, and useless articles in the future. I am canceling my subscription to your publication, and will boycott any product or service provided by the Gannett company in protest.

Sincerely.

Manuel Valencia
1905 E University Dr #263
Tempe, AZ. 85281

MY REPLY

Dear Manuel:

Thank you for reading my piece in the Arizona Republic and taking time to reply to me. Can you point out just one place in my article where I tried, suggested or hinted that your rights to be an unbeliever should be limited or that you should in any way be forced to believe? If you choose to reject God that is your privilege, but of course you must live and die with the consequences of that decision. Should you find that you have been misguided and mistaken in your choice, it will be a bit too late to rectify your situation. If Christianity is only a system of myths and childish fables you should have no fear of it.

Have you ever taken the time to read the Bible? Have you considered the case for faith in God? Should you ever wish to do so, I will be happy to correspond with you to that end. Whether or not you acknowledge Him, God still loves you and wishes to bless you and save you so that you might live with Him in eternity. Think on these things.

Sincerely,

John Waddey, Christian

RESPONSE OF DON KILBURG, Ph.D.

(This Response Was Sent to The Arizona Republic But Was Not Published).

John Waddey's guest commentary "Unbelievers have no place to go" (March 30, 2002) paints religious unbelievers as evangelistic, confused, rebellious, and unrestricted. With citation-less data and out of context quotes, Waddey argues that unbelievers have denying hearts, diseased souls, and misguided faith and reason. Here Waddey succeeds at little more than parading his own pent up "agnosti-phobia", while perpetuating deep misunderstanding and prejudice in a time of unprecedented religious fervor and bigotry.

Firstly, it is not that agnostics cannot "make up their minds" as Waddey states. Rather, agnostics choose to be open-minded about the very real possibility that there is in fact nothing supernatural about this world and nothing after death. Secondly, the extent to which believers "convert" to unbelief while enrolled in higher learning has at least as much to do with the advanced critical thinking skills obtainable with education as it does any preaching hobgoblin professors. Such "conversions" often involve conscious undoing of years of rote, one-sided religious indoctrination of the unwitting child's mind. Thirdly, the fact that a small percentage of the U.S. population professes unbelief in a god is both a reflection of the historical events of immigration as well as a testament to the power religion has over the masses. In such a climate, there are many uncounted closet unbelievers who recognize the enormous social stigma attached to unbelief. In most American locales coming out with your skepticism about religion will do nothing more than elicit pity or hatred.

Waddey's prejudice is explained by psychologists as a kind of "terror management". We will all die one day. There may be nothing after death. This is too much terror for most to bear. Consequences often come in the form of religious extremism and lashing out against those who are not persuaded by religion's lofty promises. Rather than pointing fingers at unbelievers, Waddey should thank them for providing a sobriety that tempers runaway religious fervor and reminds us to appreciate life here and now. Even if unbelievers have "no place to go" as Waddey claims, they are free to think beyond the limited confines of the dogma expressed in such commentaries.

Don Kilburg, Ph.D.

Professor of Psychology, Eastern Washington University

MY REPLY

Dear Dr. Kilburg:

I am pleased that you took time to read my piece on Atheism in the Arizona Republic and then took time to respond. Evidently you do not dispute that fact that at death those who disbelieve have no place to go....except to a waiting tomb or crematory furnace. As to your "terror management" approach, you cannot escape the fact that you will one day die and that you have not the vaguest notion of what lies beyond the grave. It may be nothingness, it may be punishment for such as refuse to accept God's mercy, or it may be eternal bliss for those who embrace the Savior. I have hope....you have none. If I am mistaken, I have lost nothing. If you are wrong you have lost everything.

Like other aggrieved plaintiffs in modern society you accuse your critics of have a phobia concerning your group. Such has worked well for others as they campaign for their place in the sun. But I am not sure "agnostiphobia" will get you the media attention that xenophobia or homophobia has for their proponents.

You dismiss those who question your position by implying that they are prejudiced and fail to understand your faith. I suspect that I have spent more time studying your point of you that you have mine.

Even though you are a Professor of Psychology you should not snub the observations of such wise men as Francis Bacon, Plato and Voltaire. Surely they knew as much about the subject as do you.

Although you choose to reject God, be assured that He still loves you and holds forth his hand of acceptance to you if you should ever come to believe in and accept Him as your Savior and Lord. Should you ever reach a point in life where you would like to know more about God and how to serve him, I will be glad to share with you the good news he has provided for that end.

I am sincerely,

John Waddey, Christian

RESPONSE OF E. A. FERRES

I'm writing in response to your article on "Atheists....." I don't read the Religion section but a Christian friend brought it to my attention. Apparently, what you said, it seems as though Atheism is a threat to your belief. Moreover, your data is incorrect regarding Atheists. You need to do your research a little bit more and take accurate notes. I'm Atheist and proud. Even though I'm an Atheist, I still respect other peoples' religion. I don't insult them but ask for proof. We

are not mean people but nice and intelligent. Moreover, how do you know what you believe is accurate?? It seems you don't question many things but accept most things. Is that gullible??

Not only that but you seem very narrow-minded too. Why do you discriminate?? I guess you learn that from the bible right?? You're a minister, you know what I'm talking about. Destroy those who don't follow the word of god or something like that. Man, that seems harsh. So I guess some religions teach hatred, violence, discrimination yet love, friendship, trust, etc. Isn't that contradiction?? Hmmm... I'm glad I'm an Atheist, at least I didn't learn to hate others. Here's a quote from a Roman philosopher, since you enjoy quotes, Lucius A. Seneca (4-65) "Religion is regarded by the common people as true, by the wise false, and by the rulers as useful" Isn't that true??

E. A. Ferres

MY REPLY

Dear E. A.:

I am glad that you took time to read my article in the Arizona Republic and then respond. Atheism is the antagonist of Christianity. The beliefs of atheists are antithetical to all that Christians believe. Contrary to your personal view the history of atheism is not one of peaceful co-existence with Christians. Other religions and atheism co-exist in many places but in most cases atheists are militantly opposed to Christianity. You might ask yourself why this is the case? The French Revolution and its Reign of Terror demonstrate how atheists behave toward Christians when in power as did the proponents of atheistic Communism where they gained power.

You say that you, “respect other people’s religion. I don’t insult them but ask for proof.” You may be a gentle, kind compassionate atheist, but evidently you are not widely read in the history and literature of atheism for it is filled with vitriolic, hateful, insulting lines regarding Christians, the Bible, the church and God.

As to why I believe and how I know it is accurate, I believe on the basis of reasonable evidence that God exists. On the basis of reasonable evidence I believe that Jesus is his divine Son. On the basis of reasonable evidence I believe that the Bible is a Book whose author is a spiritual person, greater and wiser than any man or group of men that have ever lived. Now ask yourself how do you know that what you believe is accurate? Your faith in no-god is based on assumptions rather than proofs.

Why do you suggest that I am narrow-minded? You have never met me. You have read only one piece that I have written. Is it narrow minded for you to reject Christianity in the same way that I reject your atheism? If not why? Why do you say that I discriminate. Is it discrimination for you to reject the beliefs and practices of witch doctors and shamans? If not why?

Would you please show me from the Bible where it says “to destroy those who don’t follow the word of god or something like that.” As a Christian I am taught to love my neighbor as myself (Matt. 22:39); to do good to all men (Gal. 6:10) to be good even to my enemies (Rom. 12:20) To pray for those who revile, persecute and say all manner of evil against me (Matt. 5:11). What does your moral code require of you? True, some religions, such as Islam teach hatred and violence, but that is like saying since some cats are killers (lions and tigers) therefore all cats are killers (house cats).

As a Christian I am glad that God gave you the ability and the freedom to believe in Him or to be an atheist. As a Christian citizen of America I am glad that you have the privilege to reject God without incurring persecution for so doing. I respect your right not to believe and to promote your views. I have the same rights as do you. You should not object to me expressing my point of view.

The wise English statesman, Edmund Burke, observed that, “True religion is the foundation of society, the basis on which all true civil government rests, and from which power derives its authority, laws their efficacy, and both their sanction. If it is once shaken by contempt, the whole fabric cannot be stable or lasting.” These thoughts are worthy of your consideration. Remember that it was not atheists who braved the stormy sea to plant civilization on this continent. The vast majority of those who sacrificed, fought and died to establish this free nation were believers in God. This faith our founding documents reflect. The convictions of those believing founders produced a society and Constitution which gives you the freedom to be an atheist. Do you feel any sense of gratitude towards them?

Although you presently refuse to recognize your Creator, Benefactor and Lord, the time may come when you

will have second thoughts. Should you ever wish to know about God and how you can find personal peace in him, I will be most happy to share the good news with you. Until that time I wish you the very best in all things. I am

Sincerely,

John Waddey, Christian

RESPONSE OF HUGH DUNNE

(This Letter Was Sent to the Arizona Republic But Not Published).

Dear Ms. Merrill,

I was disgusted and offended by the bigoted, intolerant rant by John Waddey which was published in today's Central Phoenix section. Appearing alongside a survey which revealed that 50% percent of Americans say that belief in God is not necessary to lead a moral life, and 17% of Arizonans are of no religion, this ignorant and intemperate screed was a slap in the face to thousands of decent, moral people, including, I am sure, many Arizona Republic subscribers who are now having second thoughts about renewing their subscriptions. I cannot imagine your newspaper publishing an article in a similar vein about Muslims, Hindus or any other group. Why are atheists considered fair game? It is not atheists who fly airlines into office buildings or molest altar boys, nor do they force their views down anyone's throat. What cause could Waddey possibly have to vent such spleen? Waddey's article contained nothing that we haven't had thrown in our faces a thousand times before by smug, supercilious, oh-so-moral Christians. The quotes of dubious authenticity, the laughable assertions about conspiracies of brainwashing by "evangelical" atheists, the snide sound-bites - there is absolutely nothing new here. I thought that the Republic, as the paper of record in Phoenix, had higher standards as to what was worth publishing.

I believe you owe your atheist readers an apology and an opportunity for rebuttal.

Sincerely,

Hugh Dunne

MY REPLY

Dear Mr. Dunne:

I am happy that you read my article in the Republic and that you took time to respond in such a kind considerate way.

Looking back over my article I see that I defined the various degrees of unbelief...surely you do not disagree with those words. Then I noted that most young adults lose their faith in the course of gaining their higher education. Do you question that? I then offered quotes from three brilliant, thinkers of the past: Francis

Bacon, Plato and Voltaire. The latter was France's most notable atheist. The only personal observation that I injected was that "at death an atheist has no place to go." Do you not agree with that? Surely you do not expect to go to the heaven revealed in the Bible, do you? My question is why are you so agitated and offended? Your letter reminds me of the type written by other activists for modern aggrieved groups. I must compliment you for your skillful use of sarcasm, ridicule and intimidation. Of course such does not substantiate your belief in no-god nor does it discredit the Christian premise.

You say my quotes are of "dubious authenticity." Do you deny they are correctly reported? It is true that it was not atheists who flew planes into buildings, but it was atheists who perpetrated the atrocities of the Communist tyranny in Russia, Eastern Europe, China, Laos and Cuba. It was atheists who created France's Reign of Terror. In Russia, where folks of your creed had seventy years of unfettered power to teach and impose their creed, they failed. Today a great revival of Christianity is sweeping that nation. I am sure this must be a great disappointment to you, but is it not better than what they previously had to endure?

You call my thoughts, "bigoted, intolerant rant...ignorant and intemperate screed...and spleen" You describe Christians as "smug, supercilious, oh-so-moral." If my article was a slap in your face just how should one describe your words? The only words in my piece that reflect on the character of atheists are those of the atheist Voltaire who said, "The atheists are, for the most part, impudent and misguided scholars who reason badly, and who, not being able to under the creation, the origin of evil, and other difficulties have recourse to the hypothesis of the eternity of things and of inevitability." He does question the reasoning ability of folks like you but he does not begin to reach your level of personal vindictiveness.

Even though you presently reject your Creator and refuse to acknowledge even His existence, be assured that He still loves you and extends his hand of mercy to you. Should you ever reach a point in your life where you wish to learn about Him and the great salvation that he offers you, I will be most happy to share that good news with you. Until that time, I wish you the very best in all things and remain,

Your friend and neighbor,

John Waddey, Christian

RESPONSE OF JOHN McCREADY

Mr. Waddey,

I thank you profusely for your obnoxious, misguided, mean-spirited, and above all, erroneous article the Arizona Republic saw fit to print in its 3/30 issue! Thanks to obnoxious, ignorant, and brain-dead Christians like you, my atheism is reinforced, and continues to GROW! By the way, when you wake up tomorrow, "Easter Sunday", ask yourself, "Did Jesus Come Back today"? If he didn't (and he won't-since someone who has about as much existence as Santa Claus CANNOT!), then I dedicate MONDAY, APRIL 1st (AKA-APRIL FOOLS DAY!) in your honor!

Atheistically Yours!

John McCready

MY REPLY

Dear Mr. McCready:

I am so pleased that you read my article in the Republic and that it touched you in such a remarkable way. I do not address you by your given name, "John", because it means "Jehovah is gracious." Sorry that you must forever bear that burden.

If God is nothing more than a Santa Claus fable then you have nothing to worry about.

I am a bit curious about what it takes for one to be "mean spirited." You describe Christians as "obnoxious, ignorant, and brain-dead." Is that mean-spirited? Or is it all right for atheists to be mean-spirited against Christians, but not for Christians to respond? I only quoted some brilliant men of the past as to how they perceived atheists. For example, Voltaire, the champion of French unbelief in a day when atheism reigned supreme in that land. Was he mistaken?

As to Jesus' resurrection, above 500 people were eyewitnesses of his resurrection. Witnesses saw him alive after his crucifixion, they ate with him, some even touched him. He appeared repeatedly in different locations and circumstances. The witnesses were willing to die for that truth which they affirmed. You might wish to give some thought to what happened to the body of Jesus. The tomb was open and empty, of that there is no dispute. There are three possibilities. Either his friends took his body, or his enemies or God took it. His friends could not have done so for the tomb was sealed and guarded by Roman soldiers. His enemies would not have done so for they were determined that it not be stolen. That only leaves the other alternative. God took it.

Even though you reject Him, God still loves you. He gave his Son for you that you might be forgiven and live with Him in eternity. Should you ever wish to know more about Christ, I will be glad to share that good news with you.

Wishing you the very best in all things,

I am sincerely,

John Waddey, Christian

RESPONSE OF LINDA RAYMOND

Mr. Waddey,

Today's Arizona Republic published an most inflammatory column which you wrote. It contained several factual errors which I hope you will be good enough to consider correcting in a latter column. "Three percent of our population profess to be unbelievers." I should like to know what your source for this statement is. The 2000 US census shows that the number of people who claim no religion at all or none in particular outnumber Jews. You can see those numbers yourself on the census website, in the population stats <http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/01statab/pop.pdf>, see page 56). "Atheists deny the existence of God. Agnostics cannot make up their minds if God exists."

These are not related. Atheism is a lack of belief, while agnosticism is a lack of knowledge. A person can

be an atheistic agnostic if he thinks it is impossible to know for a fact a deity exists but sees no evidence of one, or he can be a theistic agnostic if he sees signs that could point to a deity without any proof. Atheists do not deny the existence of any god. Atheists simply do not believe any god exists. To deny something is an active thing; it requires belief that the thing in question exists. If it were proven beyond a shadow of a doubt a deity exists and someone then chose to not believe in it, then that person has indeed denied the existence of a god.

"Infidels reject Christ and Christianity, and skeptics doubt the existence, claims and prerogatives of God, Christ and the Bible." You are lumping atheists with non-Christians here, which is dishonest. The majority of the world does not recognize the divinity of Jesus, nor do they worship Yahweh. Moslems consider Jesus to be another prophet, subservient to Mohommed. Some Buddhists consider him to be just another prophet as well. Hindus don't recognize him as anything in particular, nor do Shintoists, Taoists or Wiccans, nor do any tribal religions of the Native Americans, and surely you're not going to suggest all Jews secretly believe that Jesus was in fact the messiah they were waiting for. What would drive you to say such a thing? As for the "prerogative of God, Christ and the Bible", there are none binding on any one other than Christians. Christians do not understand their bible applies to non-Christians with the same force the Lotus Sutras apply to non-Buddhists, or Shintoist's taboos to non-Shintoists.

"A few may be doubters by nature, but the overwhelming majority are converts, won primarily while enrolled in schools of higher learning. There, unbelieving professors preach their unbelief to their captive audience." May I ask what the source for this statement is? How does one teach non-belief? How does one preach something which does not exist?

Referring to the random quotes you added, why do you think the quotes you used were pertinent? The various quotes you offer mean nothing; anyone can say anything, but without proof, it is no more than an opinion.

"At death, an atheist is all dressed up with no place to go." Unless you claim to have objective proof of some form of afterlife, then you should realize everyone has no place to go after death.

Mr. Waddey, what it comes down to is the simple fact that you and those like you choose to believe a purely subjective reality. That is your prerogative, but it is divisive, hateful and just plain foolish to demonize those who do not march lockstep with you.

Linda Raymond

MY REPLY

Dear Ms. Raymond:

Thank you for taking time to read my article in the Arizona Republic and sharing your observations with me.

As to the percentage of Americans who profess to be unbelievers, I stand corrected. At the time I wrote that piece, some months back the number I had seen was three percent, since that time I saw that a more recent poll set the number at 4 percent. Your citation from the census report only says that the number of people "who claim no religion at all or none in particular". Does that equate to their rejection of the idea of a higher power?

Not necessarily so. I know lots of people with no religion who yet believe that there is a higher power.

You state that atheists do not deny the existence of any god. You may not, but there are many that deny that any god exists. Dr. Anthony Flew, a leading atheistic spokesman of England, publicly affirmed in a forum, "I know that God does not exist." I was there and heard him....and by the way saw him forced to concede that really he could not prove that which he affirmed.

You are correct in noting that the majority of the world does not recognize the divinity of Jesus nor do they worship Jehovah. You forgot to mention dedicated Communists. You stand in a large company in your unbelief. But unfortunately that does not make your faith or lack thereof correct.

Do you actually deny that many professors and other teachers in state and secular schools use their classrooms to promote their philosophical views and to chip away at if not openly attacked the Christian faith? If you do where did you get your higher education?

As a rather militant atheist, surely you do not question my statement that "at death an atheist ...has no place to go." You would not want to go the heaven revealed in the Bible. If you were taken there you would be the most miserable soul in the place. You would have to associate with all of those Christians and righteous Hebrews of old. You would have to bow in submission to God and confess his son Jesus. To be true to your faith you would not want to even consider the possibility of going to such an undesirable place.

You are correct in saying that I choose to believe. But you are mistaken in assuming my faith is purely subjective. I have evidence for my faith and my hope. That evidence has persuaded not just me but millions of others to believe that God is and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek after Him (Hebrews 11:6). I look at the cosmos and conclude that someone wiser and greater in power than anything known in this world must have created it. You must assume that the wonderful something that exists came from nothing...with no creative designer.

Even though you choose to reject your Creator, be assured that He does love you and extends to you his hand of mercy. Should you ever reach a point in life where you want to know about the salvation that he offers you I will be most happy to share that good news with you.

Until then, I wish you the very best in all things and remain,

Sincerely,

John Waddey, Christian

RESPONSE OF RICHARD DALIN

Mr. Waddey -

I have just read your column in the 3/30 Arizona Republican, and I'm moved to make a few comments.

Based on your definitions, I'm an atheist, an infidel and a skeptic. On the other hand, I'm not particularly evangelistic, and I don't occupy any sort of strategic position. I am a doubter by nature, so no conversion was necessary. Incidentally, when I went to college, we actually spent time trying to learn the various subjects we were being taught. I don't remember anybody evangelizing me to become an atheist. Do you have any actual statistics that would prove the majority of atheists to be converts who were subverted in college, or is this just

your opinion with no actual facts behind it?

It would delight me greatly if atheists did have the power you suggest. Since the United States of America is the most religious industrialized society on earth, our strategic positions don't seem to be doing us much good.

Well, the tenor of your article indicates that you're not actually amenable to reason, so I won't bother to refute any of your arguments (such as they are). Suffice it to say that I'm an atheist because, as far as I'm concerned, you theists have completely failed to provide even the slightest evidence for your postulate that some sort of supernatural deity exists, and I believe that the most likely reason for that failure is that no such deities actually do exist. I am open to the possibility that evidence may someday present itself, but I'm not holding my breath waiting for it.

Just another infidel,

Richard Dalin

MY REPLY

Dear Richard:

I am please that you took time to read my piece in the Arizona Republic and then took time to respond to it.

Atheism is not the natural state of the human mind. If it were then most people would be atheists because they were born that way. It is a learned faith in no-god just as one is taught or persuaded to believe in Notra Damas, Edgar Casey or Mohammed.

You ask for statistics about the number of converts made to atheism in higher education. Do you need statistics to show you that the flowers bloom in spring time? All you need to do is observe the fact. So with the militant unbelief that pervades most of our secular universities.

Although we have never met and it is likely that you have only read the one piece that I have written (mentioned above), you suggest that I am not "actually amenable to reason." Is that the way a scientifically trained mind reaches its conclusions? I would challenge you to step outside tonight and observe the heavens. Millions, perhaps billions of heavenly bodies moving in precise mathematical precision and then postulate where they might have come from! Remember it is a fact that, "from nothing comes nothing." Then explain what is the force that moves them and holds them in their proper orbit. Remember that, "for every effect there must be an adequate cause." What is the cause that set the universe in motion?

Although you reject God at this point in your life. You may be assured that he loves you and extends his hand of welcome to you should you ever be willing to place your faith and trust in Him. If you should someday wish to explore the reasons why you should believe in Him and what He expects of you if you wish to be saved, I will be happy to discuss those things with. you.

Wishing you the very best in all things, I am

Sincerely,

John Waddey, Christian

RESPONSE OF RICHARD MORRIS, J. D., Ph.D.

Dear Mr. Waddey:

I read your article, but I think you made some errors in presenting the position of atheists, theists, and agnostics. And, according the same issue of the Republic, in Anthem (which is supposed to be more religious than most communities) they reported it as 17% nonbelievers, not the 3% you cite. In any event, I thought I would pass along a few thoughts that came to mind when reading your article.

"Theism" is defined as the "belief in a god or gods." The term "theism" is sometimes used to designate the belief in a particular kind of god—the personal god of monotheism—but as used throughout this book, "theism" signifies the belief in any god or number of gods. The prefix "a" means "without," so the term "a-theism" literally means "without theism," or without belief in a god or gods. Atheism, therefore, is the simply the absence of theistic belief. One who does not believe in the existence of a god or supernatural being is properly designated as an atheist.

Atheism is sometimes defined as "the belief that there is no God of any kind,"⁸ or the claim that a god cannot exist. While these are categories of atheism, they do not exhaust the meaning of atheism—and they are somewhat misleading with respect to the basic nature of atheism. Atheism, in its basic form, is not a belief: it is the absence of belief. An atheist is not primarily a person who believes that a god does not exist; rather, he does not believe in the existence of a god.

"Theism" and "atheism" are descriptive terms: they specify the presence or absence of a belief in god. If a person is designated as a theist, this tells us that he believes in a god, not why he believes. If a person is designated as an atheist, this tells us that he does not believe in a god, not why he does not believe.

Just as the failure to believe in magic elves does not entail a code of living or a set of principles, so the failure to believe in a god does not imply any specific philosophical system. From the mere fact that a person is an atheist, one cannot infer that this person subscribes to any particular positive beliefs. One's positive convictions are quite distinct from the subject of atheism.

There are many reasons why one may not believe in the existence of a god: one may have never encountered the concept of god before, or one may consider the idea of a supernatural being to be absurd, or one may never have been presented with an intelligible definition of god, or one may think that there is no evidence to support the belief in a god. But regardless of the reason, if one does not believe in the existence of a god, one is an atheist; i.e., one is without theistic belief.

In this context, theism and atheism exhaust all possible alternatives with regard to the belief in a god: one is either a theist or an atheist; there is no other choice. One either accepts the proposition "god exists" as true, or one does not. One either believes in a supernatural being, or one does not. There is no third option or middle ground. This immediately raises the question of agnosticism, which has traditionally been offered as a third alternative to theism and atheism.

Properly considered, agnosticism is not a third alternative to theism and atheism because it is concerned with a different aspect of religious belief. Theism and atheism refer to the presence or absence of belief in a god; agnosticism refers to the impossibility of knowledge with regard to a god or supernatural being. The term "agnostic" does not, in itself, indicate whether or not one believes in a god. Agnosticism can be either theistic or atheistic. The agnostic theist believes in the existence of god, but maintains that the nature

of god is unknowable. The medieval Jewish philosopher, Maimonides, is an example of this position. He believed in god, but refused to ascribe positive attributes to this god on the basis that these attributes would introduce plurality into the divine nature—a procedure that would, Maimonides believed, lead to polytheism. 11 According to the religious agnostic, we can state that god is, but—due to the unknowable nature of the supernatural—we cannot state what god is.

Like his theistic cousin, the agnostic atheist maintains that any supernatural realm is inherently unknowable by the human mind, but this agnostic suspends his judgment one step further back. For the agnostic atheist, not only is the nature of any supernatural being unknowable, but the existence of any supernatural being is unknowable as well. We cannot have knowledge of the unknowable; therefore, concludes this agnostic, we cannot have knowledge of god*s existence. Because this variety of agnostic does not subscribe to theistic belief, he qualifies as an atheist.

Since our offices are so close, we will probably bump into each other around town. Have a happy Easter.

Very truly yours,

Richard W. Morris, J.D., Ph.D. Attorney at Law

MY REPLY

Dear Mr. Morris:

Thank you for taking time to read my article and sharing your thoughts with me. I do appreciate the legal distinctions you suggested as to the definitions of atheist, agnostic, etc.

There are in fact large numbers of atheists who, far from being gentle, passive philosophers who wrestle with profound questions, use their stations in life to promote their views and who take special delight in undermining the faith the young charges who are under their influence.

Of the several letters I have received in response to my article only yours and one other was an intelligent, reasoned discussion of the topic at hand. For that I commend you.

Hopefully we will have occasion to meet someday. Until then, I remain,

Respectfully yours,

John Waddey, Christian

RESPONSE FROM SCOTT SIMPSON

Hey John,

I read your hate-piece in the newspaper, Saturday. I am quite taken aback and satisfied to finally read a cult-leader admit that uneducated, weak-minded people are best suited for religion. I've always found that the more educated a person becomes, the more self-esteem we develop and the more we can believe in ourselves to get by in life. Children, the weak-minded, and the brain-addled are easily taken in by the various religious cults (such as the whole christian cult) because it helps guide them through life. Cults provide these people with a special little fairy tale that they can follow. Cults also provide a bit of false esteem to these people, enabling them to belittle "unbelievers" and to feel superior to someone....to anyone! Persons without true self-esteem need a boogey man to blame their problems on, even if, as your false facts imply, just 3% of the American population portrays themselves as "non-believers". That number is, of course, much higher since many "non-believers" are too intimidated by the violent tendencies of cult members to answer honestly. Instead, you see 17 to 20 percent of respondents claim to "non-religious".

You have quite a scam going on! I'd be amazed if you believed a tenth of what you say. What a life you have created...you have a cushy, inside job requiring no heavy lifting, no education, little original thought, and you can spread your bitterness through your addle-minded sheep.

Thanks so much for finally admitting the truth through your column! However, your silly paranoia is revealed in the outdated and disproved comment: "Though few in number, unbelievers are very vocal and evangelistic and occupy strategic positions in academia, journalism and the entertainment media." Goodness, where is Joseph McCarthy when you need him?

Scott B. Simpson

MY REPLY

Dear Scott:

Thank you for taking time to read my article in the Arizona Republic and then writing me you kind and courteous remarks.

Looking over my piece I fail to see why you are so agitated about it. First, I defined the various degrees or kinds of unbelief. Surely that is not offensive to you. Then I mentioned that most people lose their faith in God during their years on campus in pursuit of higher education. You seem to verify that conclusion by saying "I've always found that the more educated a person becomes, the more self-esteem we develop and the more we can believe in ourselves to get by in life." I then cited the views of three brilliant scholars from the past on atheism. Do you discount the intelligence or learning of Sir. Francis Bacon, or Plato or Voltaire? Voltaire was France's most notable atheist. Surely he was not a weak-minded, brain-addled cult member. The only quote that in any way could be viewed as critical of atheists is that of Voltaire. He said, "The atheists are, for the most part, impudent and misguided scholars who reason badly, and who, not being able to understand the creation, the origin of evil, and other difficulties have recourse to the hypothesis of the eternity of things and of inevitability." But his words cannot compare with yours for sarcasm, insult and vitriol. Perhaps you could explain why my piece is a "hate-piece" but when you describe Christians as "uneducated, weak-minded...brain-addled" you evidently do not think that to be "hate" language. By the way just how do

you know that I "have a cushy, inside job requiring no heavy lifting, no education, little original thought....?" Did it offend you that I said, "At death, an atheist is all dressed up with no place to go?" Surely you do not want or expect to go to heaven when you die, do you? If by chance you had to go, you would surely be the most miserable fellow there. You would have to associate with millions of Christians and bow in submission before God and confess your faith in Christ. That would be just too much to ask of one who devoted his life to bashing God and those who believe in Him. Wouldn't it?

One thing I learn some time back...while in school, was that "blusterous, sarcastic, bombastic attacks on an opponent never answered an argument or proved a proposition."

If 17-20 per cent of respondents claim to be "non-religious" that does not prove that they are atheists who say there is no God. It only says that they are not practicing any kind of religion at that point in time.

Whether you realize or admit it or not, atheists do in fact have a religion. They believe in "no-god." Their standard is themselves. Their savior is themselves. Their mission is to promote their beliefs and recruit others to them. They have a destiny...although it is only the grave.

Although you presently refuse to acknowledge your Creator be assured that He still loves you and extends his hand of mercy to you. Should you ever reach a point in life where you desire to learn about Him and how you might serve him, I will be most happy to share with you the good news He has given us. Until that time, I wish you the very best in all things, and remain,

Sincerely,

John Waddey, Christian

RESPONSE FROM STACY TITTSWORTH

Mr. Waddey:

I was surprised to read a copy of the mean-spirited and intolerant letter blasting secularists in my own state newspaper, though bigotry is unfortunately not that uncommon nowadays. I was also saddened that in these times where Americans are trying to pull together and show unity more words of nastiness and hate should appear toward a particular group of Americans that is just as hard-working, intelligent, sensitive, patriotic and charitable than any other. In fact, I am slow to respond to you because of a walk-a-thon I just finished this weekend, but then you would not have expected that from me, since I am one of the atheists you spoke of in your article printed Saturday, March 20, 2002 in the Arizona Republic that you characterize as, "...impudent and misguided scholars who reason badly...".

How surprised I was to learn that the author of the hateful article directed against atheists was a minister--an avowed witness for a god who is supposed to be about love and acceptance. Is part of your strategy to win others to Christ degrading them and questioning their intelligence, honesty and good will?? If not, you may want to rethink putting such terrible articles in public papers for all to read. My Christian family members were appalled by the article and it's tone, telling me this is not what Christians are about and mocking others is not the message Christ gave, but they are not Church of Christ and perhaps interpret the bible as a more accepting, loving, tolerant doctrine than your sect. I will have to inquire directly to COC to find that out, or perhaps mockery and hate is just your personal take on the lessons of Christ. Either way, the article was divisive and hurtful and I ask that you reconsider this, as I said before in these times when unity, support and

fellowship are so important. On a more personal level, I ask that you look into your heart and see the damage to yourself that hatred and intolerance can do. You are destroying yourself and violating the messages of your own god and Jesus by following this path to bigotry and can experience so much more joy and happiness if you open yourself to love and acceptance of your fellow men. I hope you will take a moment to read and consider this and release yourself from the shackles of hatred.

Stacy Tittsworth

MY REPLY

Dear Ms. Tittsworth:

I am pleased that you took time to read my article in the Arizona Republic and respond to it. May I ask just why you were so surprised to read my article in the Republic? Is that paper only to reflect the thoughts and ideas of those who hold a secular faith? Why is it bigotry to express views contrary to atheism but not bigotry when unbelievers express views contrary to Christianity? Such does happen you know. In what way does my article about the merits of Atheism interfere with our nation pulling together? Did you cease to express your convictions about atheism when the terrorists attacked us?

Your objection to the words that, "atheists are, for the most part, impudent and misguided scholars who reason badly..." are misdirected. Voltaire was himself the prince of France's atheists. Would you not think he was in a position to know and make such an assessment of his unbelieving peers? I simply quoted that celebrated atheist. Perhaps you should be angry at him.

Why did it surprise you that the author of the article was a minister? Just what is it that ministers are supposed to write? And how are they supposed to express their thoughts? Where is this standard for ministers to be found? My purpose in writing the article was not to win atheists to Christ but to discuss one of the many alternative attitudes towards faith in God that exist in our society. Why are you so sensitive about me challenging your belief in no-god? I do not know you, I made no personal attack on your character. If you write a piece challenging the faith I hold I would not take it as a personal affront. Actually you are simply reflecting the tactics of the thought police of political correctness who seek to silence any opposition to their secular views by feigned outrage and charges of persecution and bigotry against those who dare express a point of view unacceptable to them. While some churches have succumbed to the dictates of the PC folks, not all of us have.

As to us standing united in the defense of our country, I am ready to stand beside any American, be he or she Buddhist, Hindu, Voodooist, Republican, Democrat or atheist, but I do not pretend that all of those points of view are the same or that they are equally true or beneficial. Do you?

Your closing paragraph is a marvelous personal exhortation to repent and embrace your way of expressing the message of God. You would make a good spokesperson for some brand of religion. Certainly not Christianity of course, but perhaps the atheistic brand of Buddhism, or the Unitarian faith which welcomes atheists in their fellowship. On the other hand, Jesus, the Son of God, publicly rebuked the leaders of Judaism saying, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! ...Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgement of hell?" (Matt. 23:29-33). Paul wrote "and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them..." (Eph. 5:11). The charge to Christian ministers is "preach the word,...reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching..." (II Tim. 4:2).

Believe me, I harbor no hatred for you, nor do I wish you the least harm. If you were hungry I would feed you, if you were thirsty I would give you a drink. I cherish the freedoms we are afforded in our great nation, to hold and express whatever faith or lack thereof we choose. As Jefferson so eloquently put it, We are "endowed by our Creator" with those inalienable rights...but then, you do not believe in a Creator, do you? Sorry about that.

Presently you refuse to acknowledge your Creator, Provider and Savior. The day may come however when you will see things differently. Be assured that God loves you and extends his hand of mercy to you even while you are rejecting Him. Should you ever wish to learn more of His way to peace and happiness I will be honored to share the good news with you. Until that time I am,

Sincerely,

John Waddey, Christian

RESPONSE OF W. K. ROBB

To: JOHNWADDEY

Regarding your narrow view of differing opinions, my uncle, for example, claims to be a atheist--he is a dentist and has for the last 30 years gone to Mexico and to the homeless shelters and has done dental work for free. He has done more charitable work than most of the "religious" and church going people that I know. He is more "religious" than many of you hypocrites who condemn others for not believing as you do --i.e. if one doesn't "accept Christ" one won't be "saved"-- Are other religions like Judiasm, Hinduism, etc. inferior? I can imagine that you think so. What about the many ministers of God that are now being outed for child molestation? Where is your vitriolic tirade against them??

"Schools of higher learning" produce people with reasoning power. They question "blind faith" and who rationally know that evolution is a science; who question the Catholic intolerance for birth control, who know that fundamentalists like you preach intolerance for homosexuals, atheists and agnostics. Why don't you criticize the T.V. "ministers of God" who use God to further their own means. Who prey on ignorant and needy people who need religion as a crutch, to give most of their earnings to the "cause"?? Where is your vitriolic tirade against them?? How dare you say that atheists and agnostics are impudent and misguided (even though you quote Voltiaire) and how dare you say they won't be "saved"--Jews and other non-Christians, according to your narrow beliefs won't be "saved" either--nor homosexulas, nor anybody else that doesn't believe as you do. You may want to follow Jesus's view of tolerance and love. You would be a better minister that way...

MY REPLY

Dear Mr. Robb:

I am happy that you took time to read my article in the Arizona Republic and share with me your thoughts about it.

You uncle sounds like a very charitable man. I am sure that the folks he has provided care for are grateful for

his kindness. Looking over my article I cannot find anything in it that questioned the morals or manners of you, your uncle or any other atheist. Did you find such a criticism?

Just as there are some bad atheists, like those in Communist Russia and France's Reign of Terror, there are some bad followers of Christ. I do not justify them or excuse them. I have written articles addressing their failures; So also, the T.V. ministers who use religion to enrich themselves. See the attached articles on these subjects.

Do you really think that those who occupy seats in schools of higher learning, and their students, are free from some unfounded beliefs, superstitions and prejudices and preferences? If so, perhaps you would do well to look at some of the ideas that flow from those sources.

I can understand how you as an atheist can reject anything I might have to say, but surely you do not excuse with a wave of the hand such brilliant thinkers as Francis Bacon, Plato and Voltaire. The latter, after all, still stands as France's most celebrated atheist.

I wonder why you are concerned about what I think about the salvation of Jews, Hindus, etc. since you do not believe that any of them will be saved. You say, "How dare you say that atheists and agnostics are impudent and misguided....and how dare you say they won't be saved..." If you sir are an atheist, you do not want to be saved. You would be the most miserable fellow in heaven with all of those Christians and a God to whom you had to bow in submission.

God himself has set the standard of morality that he expects of the human race. Atheists reject that Biblical standard as do other folks that you have mentioned. They will have to deal their Creator and Judge as to their final resting place.

It is kind of you to refer me to Jesus as the one I should follow. Be assured that I attempt to do so in my weak, stumbling way. Jesus did say however, "Except ye believe that I am he (i.e., the Son of God), ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). Earlier he said, that if you die in your sins, you cannot go where he has gone, i.e., to heaven (John 8:21). Sorry about that.

Although you have chosen to reject God, be assured that he still loves you and extends to you the hand of mercy. He only asks that you, in faith, yield your will to him. Should you ever reach a point in life that you would like to know more about how you could find peace in Him, I will be glad to share that good news with you.

Wishing you the very best in all things,

I am sincerely,

John Waddey

RESPONSE OF CARL LOFSTED

Mr. Waddey,

Three percent of our population profess to be unbelievers. Atheists deny the existence of God. Agnostics cannot make up their minds if God exists.

Infidels reject Christ and Christianity, and skeptics doubt the existence, claims and prerogatives of God, Christ and the Bible.

In one sentence you have managed to make abundantly clear what you think of a world of people who don't see things just exactly the way you do. I don't know if it was your intent to exclude 2/3 rds of the world population in your contempt, but your approach to a world view is consistent with the likes of Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell who consistently fail to see beyond their own limited concepts. The following may surprise you as I strongly doubt you did any thing but except, without research, someone else's figures regarding the numbers of non-Christians in the world. That is if you didn't just pull something out of the air that sounded good. As you can plainly see, 66% of the world would be classed by you as infidels. Of course we all understand you had not even considered that other religions exist when you made your statement of fact. By-the-way, you can verify the authenticity of the above graph by looking at <http://www.adherents.com>. I check my sources.

Though few in number, unbelievers are very vocal and evangelistic and occupy strategic positions in academia, journalism and the entertainment media. Also, we understand you are referring to the dreaded nonbelievers living next door to us all, the very people you don't recognize because they go to work everyday, raise healthy children, mow their lawns, and generally get along in society. It will no doubt cause you great anxiety to realize that there are nearly half as many non-religious as there are Christians. Not to mention that many Buddhists consider themselves atheists. Unfortunately, this nearly 20% of the world population is not nearly as recognized as you claim. I can understand your fearful reaction though. When one looks at the 33% Christian population and factor out what the Falwells would call the fringe Christian cults such as the Mormons, the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Eastern Orthodox, the Quakers, the Seventh Day Adventists, and the Catholics, the Real Christians are left with an insignificant minority. But I will do the Christian thing and forgive you for your short sightedness.

Regards,
Carl W. Lofsted
4408 Cedar Ave. N.
Keizer, OR 97303

MY REPLY

Dear Mr. Lofsted:

I am pleased that you took time to read and respond to my article on Atheism in the **Arizona Republic**

Why should it trouble you that I view Christianity as the only true way to worship and serve Jehovah? Being an atheist you hold that you and your fellow atheists are right and that all who believe in any kind of a higher power are wrong. If such is all right for you, why is it wrong for me? Does that mean that you hold "in contempt" those who believe in, worship and serve that which you reject?

I observe that you hold up Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson as examples of those who cannot “see beyond their own limited concepts.” That is very near to my quote from Voltaire, the atheist, who observed that some of his fellow unbelievers were “misguided scholars who reason badly...”

While we Christians see the world of other religions as mistaken in their beliefs and therefore in need of the truth which Jesus said would make them free (John 8:32), we do not hold them in contempt. We love and care for their well-being, therefore we share with them our faith and urge them to accept the truth regarding Jehovah and his Son Jesus. We extend to them Christian benevolence, sharing our food with them when they are hungry, sending medical missionaries to care for their illnesses and providing for them schools and homes for their orphan children. What kind of benevolent work does your fellowship of atheists provide for such people?

All the atheists who responded to my piece were agitated by my statement of three per cent who profess to be unbelievers. To inflate their numbers all have claimed fellowship with other groups of non-Christians such as deists, agnostics, secularists and Buddhists. By the way, you failed to claim the several million Communists whose official position and policy is atheism. Perhaps you could explain this sensitivity to my statement which is of only minor significance. Is this part of the “network’s” response instructions?

You really do not insult me by attempting to show how few faithful Christians there may be in the world. When Christianity began it only numbered 131 disciples. Yet it was God’s appointed way and all the rest of humanity stood in need of its saving truth. Thus Christ taught them to go preach the gospel to every creature. “He that believe and is baptized shall be saved, but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned” (Mark 16:15-16). When Christians were a hated, persecuted minority in Rome they were right and Nero, Diocletian and Domitian and their disciples were wrong. Likewise when Christians were a hated, persecuted minority in Communist Russia, China, Cuba, Laos, etc. they were right and the Communists hordes were wrong.

It is so kind of you to offer to forgive my shortsightedness, be assured that I will do the same for you.

Although today you refuse to acknowledged your Creator, Provider and Savior, you should remember that he loves you and extends his hand of mercy to you. Should the day come that you realize your need for His divine help, I will be happy to share with you the good news of how you can serve him and receive His blessing. Until then, I remain,

Sincerely,

John Waddey, Christian

MR. LOFSTED’S SECOND RESPONSE

Mr. Waddey,

>>>I am pleased that you took time to read and respond to my article on Atheism in the Arizona Republic<<<

I am equally pleased that you took the time to respond. Frankly, I did not expect you to do so. I see I have misjudged you, and regret my hasty opinion. The truth is, the timber of your article appeared to be one of a narrow minded person engaged in thoughtless hyperbole and I was inclined to give in to my feelings of indignation over the assumptive arrogance I thought I saw therein. Thank you for the opportunity to do as I should have done, and delay my response for a time when my reason prevailed.

>>>Why should it trouble you that I view Christianity as the only true way to worship and serve Jehovah? Being an atheist you hold that you and your fellow atheists are right and that all who believe in any kind of a higher power are wrong. If such is all right for you why is it wrong for me? Does that mean that you hold

"in contempt" those who believe in, worship and serve that which you reject?<<<

You are right to call me on this point. I should have been more clear about my reaction. How could I reasonably care about what ever you believe? In truth, I do not. Not that it would matter to you, but you have my complete approval to serve any god you may wish. I suppose it was it was what appeared to be your superior attitude toward others that troubled me. You seemed to assume too much to suit me. For example you are wrong to assume I am an atheist.

>>>I observe that you hold up Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson as examples of those who cannot "see beyond their own limited concepts." That is very near to my quote from Voltaire, the atheist, who observed that some of his fellow unbelievers were "misguided scholars who reason badly..."

I am sure Mr. Robertson and Mr. Falwell will appreciate your coming to their defense, as for me, I prefer to let their words resonate in the public forum where they will continue to draw the attention they so richly deserve.

Interesting that you enjoy using quotations to illuminate your points. It happens that your above quote is taken from Voltaire's Dictionnaire philosophic published in 1764. It he is discussing the comparison so often made between atheism and idolatry. (In his time.) He says, in context: The atheists are for the most part impudent and misguided scholars who reason badly, and who not being able to understand the creation, the origin of evil, and other difficulties, have recourse to the hypothesis of the eternity of things and of inevitability.

Voltaire is describing his thoughts regarding atheists and is saying in his opinion, atheists are unable to reason properly because of their materialistic views. In fact, Voltaire wrote two sections of his dictionary devoted to his opinion of what he saw as the atheist view of the universe. A view he did not agree with. Voltaire was a deist, not an atheist. He was, like you, a believer in God. Of course, Voltaire was anything but a Christian, hence your eagerness to label him an atheist. Off hand, I would say, it doesn't pay to rely on those fundamentalist sites that specialize in handy quotes for Christian debate.

>>>While we Christians see the world of other religions as mistaken in their beliefs and therefore in need of the truth which Jesus said would make them free (John 8:32), we do not hold them in contempt. We love and care for their well-being,<<<

The Golden Rule? I have often wondered why the Golden Rule doesn't apply at the higherarchical levels of world religion. It has occurred to me for some time that this horrific mess our world is in could be quickly eliminated if the religious leaders of our world would sit down together and apply the golden rule to each other. Imagine each one pledging to the other their mutual respect and their solemn vow not to interfere in another religions sovereign beliefs. After all, tolerance requires nothing from us except that we each so deeply value our own rights that we would not even think of depriving another of his.

>>> therefore we share with them our faith and urge them to accept the truth regarding Jehovah and his Son Jesus.<<<

I see. Probably the other religions of the world think the same way as the Christians. I guess that is why, though they all have the power to end the violence and death in a stroke, we are not about to see an end to it.

>>> We extend to them Christian benevolence, sharing our food with them when they are hungry, sending medical missionaries to care for their illnesses and providing for them schools and homes for their orphan children. What kind of benevolent work does your fellowship of atheists provide for such people?<<<

Surely you are not suggesting atheists and other unbelievers don't contribute to charities, help with world relief, or otherwise contribute to the world and local community? Are you?

>>>All the atheists who responded to my piece were agitated by my statement of three per cent who profess to be unbelievers.<<<

I certainly don't know what the atheists wrote to you, but as you saw in the attachment I sent you, the unbelievers you referred to specifically included your infidels, that is every one but the Christians, by your own definition, and specifically, the nonreligious (that includes atheists) is listed as 14%. Just how do you wish to identify nonreligious.

>>> To inflate their numbers all have claimed fellowship with other groups of non-Christians such as deists,

agnostics, secularists and Buddhists. By the way, you failed to claim the several million Communists whose official position and policy is atheism.<<<

I suppose the 14% nonreligious does include those still nonreligious that live in the former Communist block countries, I don't know specifically. What is your point? You have just switched the discussion from religious affiliation to politics. If anyone is guilty of inflating things...

>>> Perhaps you could explain this sensitivity to my statement which is of only minor significance. Is this part of the "network's" response instructions?<<<

I agree your statement was of minor significance, but your point was that unbelievers make up only 3% of the population, and though vocal, didn't deserve a voice in our society. I suppose others, like me, were under the impression that you were deliberately trying to mislead in your statement and simply wanted to set the record straight. I know that was my only motivation. I assure you I have responded with my own words. I receive instructions from no one. Please explain yourself. Did you get more of a response than you are used too? Perhaps, in the future, you should confine your remarks to the safety of the pulpit.

>>> You really do not insult me by attempting to show how few faithful Christians there may be in the world. When Christianity began it only numbered 131 disciples. Yet it was God's appointed way and all the rest of humanity stood in need of its saving truth. Thus Christ taught them to go preach the gospel to every creature. "He that believe and is baptized shall be saved, but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16). When Christians were a hated, persecuted minority in Rome they were right and Nero, Diocletian and Domitian and their disciples were wrong. Likewise when Christians were a hated, persecuted minority in Communist Russia, China, Cuba, Laos, etc. they were right and the Communists hordes were wrong.<<<

I hereby acknowledge the above obligatory proselytizing statement, followed by the standard declaration of Christian historical persecution, but given the record of Christian atrocities beginning with less than charitable treatment of the Gnostics, through the crusades, and the current ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina, I would say, over time, The Christians gave as well as they received. In the least.

>>> It is so kind of you to offer to forgive my shortsightedness, be assured that I will do the same for you.<<<

Thank you.

>>> Although today you refuse to acknowledge your Creator, Provider and Savior, you should remember that he loves you and extends his hand of mercy to you. Should the day come that you realize your need for His divine help, I will be happy to share with you the good news of how you can serve him and receive His blessing.<<<

I assure you I do acknowledge my creator, and am filled to capacity with good news. But, thanks for your personal thoughtfulness.

Sincerely,

Carl W. Lofsted, one of your unbelievers

MY REPLY

Dear Mr. Lofsted:

I am in receipt of your letter of April 12 and appreciate the thoughts you shared. Of the several letters I have received only two of you have engaged in an unimpassioned, reasonable discussion of our differences. For that I commend you.

I suspect that the reason you "misjudged" me is that you mistakenly assumed that all who claim to be Christians are associated with such organizations as the Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox and similar religious

bodies. Long before there were any such religious denominations there was basic and simple Christianity; a church without political ambition or power; a church which was known for its simplicity and the purity of life of its members. Christ was its only head and his New Testament its only law. While groups such as the Roman Catholic, Orthodox and other denominations have some primitive connections with the Christianity established by Jesus, they are the result of numerous mutations that have left them with but faint resemblance to the church revealed in the New Testament. Most notably is the fact that they strive for and in some cases have achieved political power which is totally contrary to the principles of Christ's church. Having abandoned most of the original aspects of the faith, they have often resorted to persecution to enforced their ways upon unwilling people. But in so doing they were in rebellion to Christ and his Way. His blessings are upon the peacemakers (Matt. 5:9). I repudiate and condemn any and all churches and church men who have followed this path.

Having said the above, that does not mean that as a Christian citizen I do not have the right to express my point of view; to work to persuade my fellow citizens to embrace the Christian way, not only in worship but also in the moral and social aspects of our corporate and social life.

Although I do not share all the religious beliefs of Mr. Robertson and Falwell, I do believe they have the same right to use the media to propagate their views as do the secularists who control the major networks. It is my opinion that they are so hated and vilified because they dare to set forth a point of view that is so contrary to the secularist view that currently dominates our society...and they do so in the name of Christianity.

Freedom of religion means that members of the various world religions have the same right to propagate their doctrines as do Christians and secularists. I do find it rather galling that the Muslims who have flooded into our country take full advantage of the freedom of speech and religion we afford them but would not extend the same privilege to a Christian in the lands where they control the government.

I did not say nor suggest that atheists, "Don't contribute to charities...etc." I am sure that some individuals do so. But I have yet to see a hospital, orphanage, home for unwed mothers, home for the aged and other types of benevolent institutions that was established by groups of atheists. Perhaps you can explain why this is so.

Your statement that leaders of the various religions of the world "have the power to end the violence and death in a stroke" is unrealistic. Even if such leaders wished to do so, none of them have the power, influence or ability to control all of their adherents, any more than Yassar Arafat can control all the Palestinian terrorists. Once minds are poisoned with hate and inflamed with the zeal to hurt and destroy those of a different belief or practice, whether in politics or religion, it takes years, even generations of teaching and leadership to bring about a peaceful co-existence.

Neither did I say or suggest that unbelievers do not "deserve a voice in our society." But the impression clearly abounds that the secularists who dominate and control most of the media and other positions of intellectual influence think that Christians do not deserve a voice in our society. Your statement that "you should confine your remarks to the safety of the pulpit" reenforces that impression.

Including your letter, I have received 13 responses from unbelievers to my piece. I do not find the number shocking nor frightening. I am not intimidated. Frankly I enjoy the intellectual challenge such letters present.

Again I will state that true followers of Christ have never resorted to political or military force to impose their beliefs and practices upon anyone. Those who have, have done so in defiance of the will of Jesus. For the record, the Serbs who warred against the Muslims in Bosnia, were led by the hard-line Communists from the days of Tito. The religious fears and prejudices of the common folks were exploited by those leaders whose

religion is officially atheistic.

By the way what is the name of the creator which you acknowledge?

Wishing you the very best in all things. I am

Sincerely,

John Waddey, Christian

RESPONSE FROM FRANK ATKIN

Mr. Waddey:

I read with interest your article regarding atheists. I feel a response is in order. First, I would like to clear up the misconception that atheists deny the existence of God. This would be attempting to prove a negative and therefore illogical. The notion that atheists deny God's existence is perpetuated by religionists who prefer dishonestly to make the atheist appear irrational. An atheist is simply one who is without belief in a god or gods. The definition for agnosticism is redundant to atheism and they are therefore essentially the same. Neither deny the existence and both are skeptical of the existence.

Unbelieving professors preaching unbelief were not in my experience in college. Other than in religion based universities, religiosity is simply not part of the syllabus. Not promoting a religion does not equate to preaching unbelief. And Francis Bacon is probably best known for his ad hominem attacks toward atheists. His understanding of atheism was quite limited. The quotation by Voltaire is a bit curious since he was probably the most outspoken critic of Christianity of his time. Kennedy and Addison would have us believe that blind faith in the unknown is preferable to logic and scientific research. Why are there so few atheists? For a number of reasons. The vast majority of people are weak in science literacy and organized religion aggressively indoctrinates children before they reach the age of reason. Religionists strive as much as possible to inject religion into schools and government. Proselytizing programs abound on television and radio. With little to restrict their growth, churches flourish and prosper as no business could except the business of religion. Society is inundated with religion and with little opposition to religious dogma, many succumb to its influence.

To be an atheist requires faith? Nothing could be further from the truth. To be an atheist, one would reject any idea which was based solely on faith. Moreover, the atheist accepts or rejects an idea with the aid of reason and scientific research. And at death, the atheist has nowhere to go. As much as the notion may be appealing, atheists have no reason to believe in an afterlife. I did like Carl Sagan's version that as our particles eventually disperse into the cosmos we become 'star stuff'.

Frank L. Atkin

MY REPLY

Dear Mr. Atkin:

Thank you for taking time to read my piece about atheists. While you may not wish to deny God's existence, I heard Dr. Anthony Flew, England's foremost champion of atheism, publicly affirm, "I know that God does not exist." He did so in a public debate with Dr. Thomas Warren, a Christian, at Texas A.& M. University. The debate was published. Of course you are right he could not prove his proposition and ended up taking the agnostic view that he was unsure of the fact. Dr. Wallace Matson of Florida also argued this proposition with Dr. Warren, to the same fate.

Frankly we who believe in God do not need to "make the atheist appear irrational." An atheist does a capital job of that by his own reasoning. For example:

- * An atheist must believe that something came from nothing.
- * He must believe that life came from non-life; that rocks and dirt produced living things.
- * He must believe that chaos and disorder produced order without intelligent guidance.
- * He must believe that there can be effect without adequate cause.
- * He believes that all the marvelous design in the cosmos is the result of a cosmic explosion, an accident rather than the product of an intelligent designer.
- * He is sure of a fact that he cannot prove; i.e., that God does not exist. He has not, he cannot possibly have examined all the evidence that might prove that there is a God.

I wonder if you are pitting your educational, scientific and philosophical accomplishments against those of Francis Bacon? You would do well to read a biographical sketch of his life and accomplishments.

Your complaint about organized religion aggressively indoctrinating children before they reach the age of reason is fatuous. For the last 40 years every American child that attended public school has been subjected to a subtle indoctrination in secularism. The curriculum is designed to implant the conviction in his mind that religion and a Supernatural Being has no place in the life of modern man and society. The only religion he is exposed to is that of secularism and scientism. While less than half of all the children spend an hour per week in Sunday School, the majority of them spend 6 hours per day, nine months of every year, from age 5 through 17 in our secular educational system. The marvel is that so few of them become atheists.

You complain that "With little to restrict their growth, churches flourish and prosper as no business could except the business of religion." Do I detect a groan of resentment that churches cannot be restricted so they will not continue to grow? Atheist who controlled Russia, China, Cuba, Laos, Cambodia and Viet Nam did impose sever restrictions on churches and sought to eliminate them even by violence. Strangely, when the atheistic system of Communism collapsed in Russia and Eastern Europe, the people rushed to embrace the very Christianity the tyrants had tried to extinguish.

Your understanding of the faith we have in God is faulty. It is upon the basis of reasonable evidence that I believe in God. Faith comes by observation. "The heavens declare the glory of God, the firmament showeth his handiwork" (Ps. 19:1). Faith comes by hearing the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17). Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11:1). I think you are a bit optimistic in asserting that "the atheist accepts an idea with the aid of reason and scientific research." While such may well be the method of some, there are plenty of others who first choose a life style that pleases them but puts them at odds with a righteous God to whom they must give account. They cope with this unpleasant idea by denying that such an unpleasant Person might exist.

You may prefer Carl Sagan's romantic notion that you will one day become "star stuff." If there is no God, there is no immortal spirit, there is no life beyond the grave and your destiny is to become food for worms and nourishment for weeds.

Today you put your faith and trust in science and your human wisdom. You reject the One who has given you life and made every earthly provision for you. There may well come a time when your circumstances will force you to reevaluate your thinking. Be assured that God loves you in spite of your rejection of Him. He extends his hand to you at all times to come and feast at his table. Should you ever wish to know more about Him and his will for your life, I will be happy to share that good news with you.

Wishing you the very best in all things, I am

Sincerely,

John Waddey, Christian

THE LETTERS THAT FOLLOW ARE MY REPLIES TO ARTICLES THAT ATHEISTS HAD WRITTEN

MY REPLY TO MR. JOHN QUATRONE, AGNOSTIC

Dear Editor:

I read in the Daily News Sun the blustery diatribe against God and Christianity by Mr. John Quatrone. As best as I can make out, he is an agnostic who wishes the European explorers and settlers had not come to America. If that were so great an evil, is his presence here a continuation of that evil? Without documentation, he asserts that "Christian churches" killed and enslaved 900,000 "American Natives." I can not understand how they enslaved all those whom they had first killed. He ponders why any them (aboriginals or Blacks?) would "remain a Christian today?" It truly would be most difficult for those killed to remain Christians this long. (Just for comparison, the atheistic governments of Russia and China killed some 250 million of their subjects in the name of their religion and China is still working on her project).

The gentleman, asserts that the ideas of soul and god are pagan. True, most pagans believe in one or more supreme beings and think of themselves as having a life beyond this. This does not however prove that they originated those ideas. Communists believe in atheism. Does that proved they originated that belief? He charges that one "can never prove (that God) exists. I wonder if Mr. Q. would affirm that "he knows that God does not exist?" As an agnostic, by definition, he is not sure about the existence of God. He can only hope, wish and assert that there is no god, but he can never know for sure! Before he could know there is no God he would have to know everything there is to know in all the cosmos, and personally go everywhere in the cosmos to establish his case. Further he would have to do so simultaneously, lest the one place he did not go, and the one thing he did not know, prove the existence of God. Otherwise, while he was here God might be there, or while he was there God might be here. The one thing he failed to know might be the very thing that proved God's existence. But if could know everything and be everywhere at the same time he would have demonstrated that there is at least one all wise and omnipresent being in the world...and that by definition is a god.

Mr. Q. wrongly asserts that emperor Constantine, in 325 A.D., gave Jesus his godly status. I'm not sure where he got his information, but in 63 A.D. Paul wrote that Jesus "existed in the form of God" (Phil. 2:5-6), and in 90 A.D. John the Apostle wrote that Jesus, the Word of God, was God in the flesh (John. 1:1-3, 14).

He suggests that we (evidently the Federal government), have money for "Christian Schools" but none for our poor citizens. He did not cite his sources, but anyone who reads the newspaper knows that unbelievers of our nation make sure that no government funds go to Christian schools and each year we channel \$74.5 billion tax dollars into the support of our poor citizens. He would like for us to "apply the rule of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas." If he would cite that rule to us, perhaps we could consider the possibility.

If Mr. Quatrone is the best spokesman the local unbelievers have we have nothing to fear.

John Waddey, Christian

MY REPLY TO MR. GEORGE BLAESI

Dear Editor:

With you indulgence, I will respond to Mr. George Blaesi's piece, "**It Depends on Your Definition of Religion.**" First he seeks a proper definition of religion. Webster defines it as (1) "The service and worship of God or the supernatural; (2) Commitment or devotion to religious faith or observance (3) A personal set or institutional system of religious attitudes, beliefs and practices; (4) A cause, principle, or system of beliefs held to with ardor and faith." In the New Testament, the Greek word *theosebeia* describes the reverential worship of God. Jesus told a Samaritan woman that she worshiped that which "ye know not." He proceeded to tell her that God was seeking true worshipers who would worship him in spirit and in truth (John 4:22-24). James speaks of pure religion which consists of being helpful to the poor and keeping oneself unspotted from the world (Jas. 1:27). When Paul engaged in conversation with the philosophers in Athens, he told them that their worship of the "Unknown God" was done in ignorance. He proceeded to tell them about Jehovah, the God of creation, and his Son Jesus (Acts 17:23-31). Plutarch defined religion as "the mean between atheism and superstition." From this we learn that there is both true and false religion and pure and impure religion. True and beneficial religion stands between the denials of atheism and the excesses of religious fanaticism.

Mr. B cites Bertrand Russell who said "It really does not matter so much what a person believes, so long as he does not altogether believe it." Mr. Russell's religion was atheism. He did not follow his own advice for he frequently wrote advocating his anti-Christian views. One of his most famous works was, "**Why I Am Not A Christian**" (1957). Building upon Russell's thought, Mr. B says that, "any person who thinks he is right to the exclusion of all others is implanted with a dangerous seed...that person has become a fanatic and is likely to be disruptive to society." Only in matters of religion does Mr. B believe this to be so. Does he believe that $2 + 2 = \text{four}$? How strongly does he believe it? What would he say of those who disagree with him? Does he believe that Nazism was equal to Americanism? Does he believe that in pharmacology it is not necessary to fill the prescription exactly as the doctor said to do? Does he believe that in paying his bills it is not important to be exact in the amount remitted? What of chemical formulas or laws of physics? Like many modern thinkers, Mr. B. tries to live in a two storied world. On the first floor, where he does his daily business, he knows that there is right and a wrong way of doing certain things. The rules and laws have to be obeyed if one is to get along. But when it comes to religion he climbs the stairs to the second floor where feelings take precedence and what one believes is not really important. On the second floor, whatever one does, he must not take Christianity seriously and try to follow its precepts loyally.

We Christians see the world through a single lense, whether it be for math, science or faith. We have a divine standard to which we appeal. It is the Bible. Jesus said it is truth (John 17:17). Those systems, doctrines and practices which fall short of that we identify as false. Just as all people reject a scale that says a 14 oz steak equals a pound.

Christians are not Muslim fundamentalists. We do not make war on those who dissent or who do not choose to believe. We gladly leave all the judging to our God. He has appointed a day in which he shall judge the world (Acts 17:30) and we all will give account of ourselves to Him (Rom. 14:12). Remember, the Christians of America have not persecuted Jews, Muslims or Atheists nor will we. If however we lived in Iran, or China we would be persecuted.

John Waddey

MY REPLY TO P. K. AND TRUTHSEEKER

(P. K. stands for Preacher's Kid, a woman turned atheist and Truthseeker her comrade in unbelief. They responded to my thoughts about the Muslim terrorist attack and how God rules in the affairs of nations).

Dear P. K. and Truthseeker:

It is evident that neither of you believe or accept the Scripture as having any relevance to what is happening in our world. I do. So we really don't have much of a basis to conduct an intelligent discussion. T. S. says "Not everyone in this country is like you." That is true, some 3 percent of Americans identify themselves as atheists although the amount of noise they make sometimes fools folks into thinking they are more numerous. It is also true that not everyone who acknowledges God or who occasionally goes to church believes as I do. But as it is in scientific research, it really doesn't matter what one thinks about a matter, it all depends on the facts. In the Bible we have the facts about how God works in the affairs of men and nations. Whether you accept that information or not does not alter the message. When you are dead and gone, the Bible will still be here, still speaking God's message to humanity. When you stand before God in judgement, The words that Jesus spoke will judge you (John 12:48).

It speaks volumes about you that you hate Jerry Falwell even more than you hate the Muslim terrorists who without warning attacked and killed some 3,000 of your fellow-Americans. Who has Mr. Falwell ever harmed? For years he has spoken against certain sinful practices common in contemporary American life...and cited scripture to show God's disapproval. For that you hate him.

When you show utter contempt and disregard for God and his divine Word, then you say to the Ruler of the Universe, I do not need or want your help or protection in my life. Be assure that He will oblige you. But having rejected God, you will be on poor footing to call upon him when disaster strikes you.

The terrorists are certainly guilty for the great crimes they have committed. God will hold them accountable and so should our nation. That however does not make America's moral decadence good or excusable. Our nation needs to return to God and his standard for righteous living. The law of cause and effect applies to nations as well as to physics. Whatsoever a man (or nation) sows that shall he also reap Gal. 6:7).

P. K.: Rather than the Bible being a Jewish interpretation of history, it is God's revelation of and explanation of his working in human history. Since He is creator and ruler of all nations, his message is not ethnocentric. Do yourself a favor and read it. You will be wiser for so doing and faulty impressions you hold about it will vanish.

John Waddey

MY SECOND REPLY TO P.K., A FEMALE ATHEIST

Dear P.K.

Now we know you are no male; that you are in rebellion to the faith you learned and lived in your younger days. We know you are tough and enjoy combat; both physical and intellectual. We know you are very proud of your education and want to set the world straight on profound matters such as belief in God, Christianity and the Bible. In gaining your four black belts in martial arts you failed to learn two important lessons from your masters: 1). To respect your opponents, and 2). Never to try to beat-up on those who are not your equals. You are a female version of the school yard bullies we used to see. They devoted themselves to terrorizing the little guys they knew could not stand up to them. Bullies sooner or later meet up with someone who is their match.

In spite of all your talk about your logic and reasoning the contents of your responses have been nothing but posturing. Our readers know that there is a marked difference between sophistry and sound, logical argumentation.

Evidence for the existence of God is seen in the design that fills the universe. Your eye is a marvel of design. But where there is design there must be a designer, an intelligent being who designed it. The flag our astronauts left on the moon is proof that intelligent life has been there. If you were privileged to visit the moon and saw it, would you say that flag evolved? or that it was the result of a cosmic accident?

You can speak. Where did you learn to do so? You learned from those who raised you. And where did they learn to speak? Follow the trail of humanity back to the first human being. Who taught him to speak? Remember a child who is born deaf never learns to speak, unless some intelligent person teaches him.

You asked who caused God? He is the uncaused One. He has forever existed. He is the eternal God (Deut. 33:27). This should pose no problem for you must admit that either Mind or matter is eternal. But the second law of thermodynamics demonstrates that all matter is in the process of breaking down. If the universe were eternal it would already have run down and dissolved. But mind is not subject to that law. God is Spirit (John 4:24). He is the first Cause that created all that is.

The Roman Catholic church instigated and maintained the Inquisition. That evil system of persecution alone proves that church to be something other than the Church that Jesus built. His church feeds the hungry, helps the weak and sick, cares for the fatherless and widow...it does not persecute anyone...including hostile critics like you. Nor would I offer any excuse for the misguided people of Salem who executed those whom they thought to be witches. It was an age when much ignorance and superstition abounded. But surely you do know that there are many folks who claim to be witches and warlocks. I have met some of them. So there is such a thing, whether they have any devilish power or not. Right?

You mention your subtle sarcasm. I assure you your sarcasm is not the least bit subtle. In fact it is your primary weapon and not a very effective one. Cute, sarcastic replies are not answers or arguments. They are better reserved for TV sit-coms.

You do not understand the message of the Bible. In those serious studies you claim to have made, you obviously did not have a course in Hermeneutics (How to Study and Understand the Bible). You mistakenly assert it teaches a flat or square earth. But in Is. 40:22 the prophet says, "It is he that sitteth above the circle of the earth..." Job 26:7 tells us "He hangeth the earth upon nothing."

You suggest that believers are "superstitious and lazy who want easy answers and are afraid to stand against the unknown without believing they have help of some sort..." You evidently are not aware that many of the great discoveries that made our modern scientific age possible were made by men who not only believed in

God and the Bible but also were open followers of the Christ. From what the atheists of the Communist World did, it seems to me they were the ones who were afraid to let their captives know about God and the Bible.

As to the Pilgrim fathers, who were Puritans, it certainly did matter who they worshiped? They came to find a place where they could worship and serve Jehovah as followers of Jesus. You should read the Mayflower Compact and John Winthrop's "Modell(sic) of Christian Charity" in which he describes the Christian community they established. "Each would-be settlement first formed itself into a church and elected a pastor...When they found the site God seemed to have for them, the first building they built was their church" (Marshall and Manuel, **From Sea to Shining Sea**, p. 23).

You may now beat your hammer upon the Sacred Anvil. But be sure it will be standing when you have finished your few years on this earth. May God open your eyes that you may see the Truth that will make you free.

John Waddey

A REPLY TO SCOTT HUNTER

Dear Mr. Hunter:

In response to your recent piece in the **Arizona Republic**, "**Religious 'Tolerance Doesn't Include Dissent,'**" I offer the following comments. Religious freedom is alive and well in America where Christianity flourishes. On the other hand it was non-existent in the Soviet Empire under their official atheistic system of Communism. It is still dead in Communist China and Cuba which are dominating by institutional atheism.

Of course churches are immersed in centuries old tradition. After all, Christianity had its beginning 1970 years ago. All nations, institutions and even families have their traditions. Unless those traditions violate the intentions of the founder or are harmful to others, then they are harmless.

While it is true that some religions tolerate no dissent, the very existence of over at thousand different kinds of churches, all living in peaceful co-existence in our nation, is proof of their tolerance and the falsity of your charge.

You make a common mistake of confusing the persecutions of the corrupt, medieval Roman Catholic Church with the Christianity of Jesus revealed in the New Testament. The Catholic church did in fact persecute Jews, Christians, Muslims and anyone else who refused to submit to its authoritarian power. Christ forbade his disciples to use violence even in his defense (Matt. 26:52). He teaches us to love our enemies and do them good (Matt. 5:43-44). But you must accept the fact that atheists who dominated the French Revolution instituted a reign of terror in which thousands perished. They especially directed their hatred and violence towards churches and preachers as did your fellow atheists in Soviet Russia and China. A very wise sage once observed that those who live in glass houses can ill-afford to cast stones. I make no apologies for misguided followers of Jesus who have persecuted or harmed others. They were wrong and stand condemned by the gospel of Christ. It obliges us to "work that which is good towards all men" (Gal. 6:10) and to "abstain from the very appearance of evil" (I Thess. 5:22). Our Lord expects us to live harmless lives before folks like you who despise His faith (Phil. 2:14-16).

You make the sweeping assertion that "numerous sects and cults have risen...which were established to extract money from individuals..." First cults and sects are not necessarily "Christian." Christ founded his church, i.e., his family of disciples on this earth (Matt. 16:16-18). He founded no cult or sect. They are the products of men. While some may have had evil intentions of enriching themselves, many have sacrificed their time, energy and money with little or no personal reward. Its is uncharitable of you (to say the least) to accuse "many of them" of "extracting money." This is something you cannot know.

You complain that there is no "freedom of religion within religions." You are wrong again. One always has

the freedom to leave any church with which he does not agree. Remember there is no persecution here in America. Churches are entitled to the same privileges as civic clubs, political organizations, civil rights groups and the ACLU. If a person does not subscribe to the accepted beliefs, standards and practices of a church, he does not have to stay. He does not have the right to force his unacceptable views on the body and cause disruption. He has the right to leave and associate himself with a group that does share his views, or to start his own organization.

As to your charge about churches “attempting to force prayer or the Ten Commandments into schools,” you must be too young to know that until 40 years ago public schools routinely had prayers, Bible reading, courses in the Bible and even Christian ministers to speak at their graduations. It was unbelievers, such as you, who imposed their anti-Christian influence on our public schools. Advocacy groups for atheism such as the ACLU continue this project of purging America’s schools of all Christian influence.

Christians not only claim to teach tolerance, we both teach and practice it. We respect your right to criticize things sacred to us. The question is do you respect our right to challenge your position?

You boldly demand that we produce our god. When God’s Son took human form and came and lived among us, unbelievers rejected and murdered him. There is no reason to think that you would respond more favorable if he appeared today. Scripture tells us no man hath seen God and lived (Ex. 33:20). That you have not seen him does not prove He does not exist. You have not seen your great, great, great grandparents but I can assure you they did in fact live. You are evidence of that fact. Your existence is also proof that someone of superhuman intelligence and power created the first human pair. God is a Spirit (John 4:24). Spirits by their very nature are not visible to unaided human eyes. That does not mean they do not exist. You cannot see an atom. Nor can you see the abstract virtues of love, loyalty and patriotism, but these undeniably do exist. Although I cannot produce a visible demonstration of Jehovah God, I can point you to evidences of his existence. Look at the heavens on a clear night. “The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork” (Ps. 19:1). The honest mind is forced to ask, “Who made them?” Just as a human foot print in the sand would prove another human being had preceded you, so the creation is undeniable evidence of a Creator.

The highlight of your essay is, “**Religions should be required to actually produce their gods...or be forever prohibited from proclaiming that there are such beings.**” So now we see who is intolerant and willing to force others to conform to his religious views. You my friend are the proverbial pot who called the kettle black. This then is the real nature of your religion. (Yes, you do have a religion to which you devote your time and energy). It is an “ism”, i.e., a doctrine, and your object of worship is “A Theos” the non-existing god. You seem to be as passionate about your religion as I am about mine.

Your strike me as one who has likely never read the Bible for himself. You must have had little or no serious contacts with genuine Christians and a Bible believing church. You are fighting against a straw man, the creation of your own imagination. You rail against that which you neither know nor comprehend.

Should you care to truly know and understand God’s message for your life, I will be glad to sit down and study the Bible with you. You would be amazed at the wonderful truths you would find therein.

I am sincerely,

John Waddey, Christian

The End