



Who Is An Atheist?

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"Samuel [Champlain] has seen other men of the church become as this one: to them, their own insight becomes dogma. Indeed it seems a perversion common to all leadership..."

- *The Order of Good Cheer*, Bill Gaston novelist, House of Anansi Press, 2008

An atheist is someone who can't believe that something exists that is greater than himself and more mysterious than he can understand.

An agnostic is someone who suspects the atheist may be right, but is prepared to reserve judgment until he gets more evidence, though he usually isn't prepared to look for the evidence himself.

Which is the greater sinner?

Neither. The whole concept of sinning was invented by religions whose main purpose was and is to control the behaviour of their followers. Establishing "superhuman" control over who qualifies as a sinner and who is a devoted follower who toes the line with regard to all rules of behaviour is one of the most effective ways to control the lives of others.

What's wrong with being an atheist? For one thing, atheists are the objects of scorn and prejudice from those who profess to be religious. For another, atheists have no rules of conduct to break, so they can't feel guilt at sinning, as religious people do because virtually every one of them breaks their religion's code of conduct on a regular and frequent basis. The religionists can always console themselves that atheists are worse.

But are atheists terrible people? My experience with atheists is limited and the number of people I have spoken to about their personal experiences with atheists is relatively small, but atheists seem to be among the most spiritually healthy and morally and ethically straight and well balanced of all the people I have met in my life. In short, atheists stand among the most upright and civic minded people among us.

It is as morally wrong to hate or take action against atheists as it is to commit acts or speak prejudicially against people of a different skin colour, nationality or religion. Yet the most

bigotted and prejudiced people are those strongly attached to their religion.

Atheists seem to say that "God doesn't exist." Yet what they really say is that the God that is portrayed by advocates of every religion ever created could not possibly exist. The God of the Christians, for example, is contradictory, indecisive, prejudicial, favours one group over others, brutal, aggressive and peace loving at once and vindictive, based on the Bible and Christian history. Atheists claim that doesn't make sense.

Religionists make no attempt to associate what we in the 21st century know about the mystical and miraculous with their explanation (definition) of God. The Church of Rome designates saints, for example, based on events it cannot explain by any other method than as "miracles" after the death of a well known good person. Yet don't try to find a non-Catholic among the saints, even though events of a miraculous nature occur in association with living and dead people who are not church members. How could the God of the Christians enact miracles through non-Christians if Christianity is the only means to salvation, as the Christians claim? Religions began in the early days when humans gathered in small bands, then tribes. The religion of each tribe worked because it answered unanswerable questions. That situation in itself should be enough to tell everyone that the religion is or was fictitious. But it didn't and it doesn't today. Adherents are asked to "have faith" because the mysterious answers came through someone who claimed to have gotten them directly from God.

If claims such as those made by religions were made in television commercials, about any product or service other than something related to God, the advertisers would be stopped and possibly charged with making false and unsupportable claims. It's a crime, unless your claim has something to do with God.

The atheist says "This is wrong." The agnostic cries "Huh?"

While we try to expurgate prejudice from our societies, religions themselves are the sole sources and support systems for prejudice and bigotry. Each religion could easily eliminate prejudice from its teachings, but that would require it to admit that it is not superior to all other religions. Religions, like snake oil salesmen of the past, require their followers to believe that their product is the best, the only true, safe and superior one. This engenders and foments hatred and prejudice.

Religionists never ask atheists why they do not believe the precepts of a particular religion. More importantly, they never ask atheists what they do believe, as that would be risky since the atheists may well have an excellent reply to which the religionists cannot offer a defence or counter argument.

For all the majority of people know, atheists may be the most spiritually upstanding people in the community. Some atheists may even have a better explanation about what God is and the mystery of what we exist than the religions have offered.

But no one will ask an atheist what he or she believes. And if someone does, the religions will make sure that the atheist is socially ostracized and "unfortunately no longer employable." Historically, that's how it works. Remember the trials of the "witches" of Salem, Massachusetts,

in 1692? The evidence, like the charges themselves, were totally fictitious. History abounds with similar and brutal examples.

The followers of every religion can give explanations for the same mysteries. They all believe these explanations equally strongly and fervently. Every religion is built on story upon story, each one created to give the teller power over the listener that he would not have otherwise. Those who make up the stories and those who retell them get paid for repeating them.

Unfortunately, reality is never allow to impinge itself on these stories, on these religions. Too bad, as the truth is so much more glorious and amazing than the religionists could imagine. Truth and reality have no major roles to play in religion. Religions ask their followers to have faith that the old stories are true, no matter how contradictory, how unsensible they are and how much evidence exists to disprove them.

We should not wonder that television has become such a powerful religious medium and its leaders such powerful manipulators of public belief.

Bill Allin

Turning It Around: Causes and Cures for Today's Epidemic Social Problems, a guidebook for parents and teachers who want to grow children who have the knowledge and skills to avoid having their beliefs manipulated by skilled propagandists.

Learn more at

<http://billallin.com>