



WHAT BELIEVERS BELIEVE ABOUT ATHEISTS

It has been said that if you really want to know what people think of you, look at what they are willing to believe about you. So what do believers believe about atheists? What do they believe about why atheists don't believe in any deities? According to apologeticspress.org,

"a person may have grown up with parents who didn't believe in God. They never went to Sunday school or church, never read the Bible, and never taught their children to do these things. Therefore, the child—like the parents—doesn't believe in God."

This really suggests three reasons for atheism: 1) being taught atheism by their parents, 2) not being taught theism by their parents, and 3) never having heard of god(s). To do #1 effectively, though, it is necessary or at least helpful to refer to the Bible and other "holy" books. Indeed, a critical reading of the Bible has produced many atheists. #2, while it is possible to raise children without ever mentioning god(s), it is next to impossible when the culture is saturated with it. Theistic practices like prayer are officially promulgated, politicians routinely – obligatorily, it seems – call on God to bless the nation, and believers are continually and energetically engaged in co-opting the power of government to promote their doctrines and observances. For similar reasons, #3 is just as fatuous an "explanation" for the existence of atheists. It may also be, says apologeticspress.org:

"a person may have gone to college and was taught that evolution is true and that God isn't needed since 'nature' can account for everything. When this happens, belief in evolution takes the place of belief in God."

Now, it is true that education, especially in the sciences, tends to erode theistic beliefs, simply because so many such beliefs – those connected with biblical literalism in particular – are contrary to facts and reason. Natural explanations do account for a great deal, if not all, of "everything." And such explanations continue to expand and improve, especially as their explanatory power accommodates and even predicts new evidence. But neither science nor evolution "take the place" of theism. Theists who accept the findings of science prove this. Even for

atheists, science does not establish human ethical standards or create meaning and purpose in life.

Notice, too, that the "explanation" says that atheists have been "taught that evolution is true." This is a bit like saying that when people refuse to believe that the moon is made of green cheese it is only because they have been "taught that the moon is made of rock." In fact, people who learn about the moon come to understand what it is made of and why it is not green cheese. The reason it isn't stated this way is because the fiction must be maintained that atheism is just as much an arbitrary supposition as theism.

But these are all rather "intellectual" issues. They don't explain why atheists insist on living outside of the social norm of god belief in this, a "Christian Nation" that is "under God" and in which even the coins and currency proclaim "In God We Trust." According to apologeticspress.org, the most telling reason there are atheists is because:

"some people are too stubborn or have too much pride. They don't want to obey God, but instead want to 'do their own thing.' If they believe in God, they can't do that anymore. So they simply decide not to believe in God. Fourth, some people want to live a sinful life. They want to 'do drugs,' smoke, drink, or engage in sex before marriage. And they don't want God telling them they shouldn't. Therefore, they choose not to believe in God so they can do certain things without feeling guilty."

Surely this is the "explanation" of atheism that is most appealing to believers. Even believers who accept the findings of science such as evolution and modern cosmology can accept this "explanation." This is what believers are taught by their leaders about atheists. This is what they are most sure of and repeat most often. This is what believers are willing to believe about atheists: that atheists deliberately want to do evil and, especially, to lead "sinful" lives of alcohol and drug abuse, sexual promiscuity, and perhaps worse. This undoubtedly accounts for the results of public opinion polling such as the 2002 Pew-funded Religion and Public Life Survey on Americans' opinions of people of different religious persuasions:

(continued next page)

	% Mostly or Very FAVORABLE Opinion	% Mostly or Very UNFAVORABLE Opinion
Protestants	76.6	6.9
Jews	75.4	8.1
Catholics	75.3	12.1
Evangelicals	57.0	17.5
Nonreligious	52.2	28.4
Muslims	48.7	27.4
Atheists	34.3	53.8

Keep in mind that the opinions of the non-religious and atheists are included. Of course, there is no evidence whatever that atheists are more likely to be alcoholics, drug abusers, sexually licentious, or generally evil. In fact, there is evidence that atheists are at least as law-abiding as others and less likely to be criminals or incarcerated. Do believers just hate atheists? Do believers feel threatened by atheists? Or ... might believers be relieving their anxieties about their own "sinful" inclinations by projecting them on to the most "other" group available?

After making this claim, apologeticspress.org throws in one more explanation for atheism:

"some people see evil, pain, and suffering in the world. They think that if God existed, He wouldn't permit such things to occur. In their minds, since bad things do happen, God must not exist."

This is the one fair-minded point in the online article "Why Do Some People Not Believe in God?" The subject of theodicy is addressed – inadequately – elsewhere on the site, but the damage has already been done. The "real reason" atheists don't believe – that they are "stubborn" and "want to live a sinful life" - has already been given. And this belief is more damaging than god-belief.

**PLANNED FOR NEXT MONTH:
"TRAILBLAZERS OF
FREETHOUGHT"
>>> Sunday, June 1st, 2014 <<<
SHERATON GRAND DFW AIRPORT
SE CORNER OF 114 AND ESTERS**

**YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS TO THE
NTCOF ARE NEEDED, APPRECIATED,
AND TAX-DEDUCTIBLE!!**

All NTCOF events can be found through our website calendar , or our meetup page, from which you can RSVP, at:

**- www.meetup.com/church-of-freethought -
JOIN THE NTCOF MEETUP GROUP !!!**

Social Luncheon: Today, immediately after our Service, join us for lunch and discussion. Today we meet at the Jason's Deli on MacArthur Blvd just south of 635, at 7707 N MacArthur Blvd, phone (972) 432-0555.

Freethought Salon: Get together to discuss today's service topic or other conundrums of interest for Freethinkers. Most Sundays, over breakfast, at the Hilton DFW Lakes Hotel restaurant in Grapevine beginning 10:30 AM; see the meetup site!

Game Night: The regular game night crew meets nearly every Friday night at the IHOP on 2310 Stemmons Trail (I-35), near Northwest Highway (Loop 12). Plan to arrive at about 7:30 PM, and stay late playing Risk, Rummikub, and other fun games!

Have Another Idea? Email or call us about it!

"People are pretty forgiving when it comes to other people's families. The only family that ever horrifies you is your own."

- Douglas Coupland

"A family is a risky venture, because the greater the love, the greater the loss. That's the trade-off. But I'll take it all." - Brad Pitt

"There is no such thing as fun for the whole family." - Jerry Seinfeld

"Happiness is having a large, loving, caring, close-knit family in another city."

- George Burns



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Dallas-Fort Worth Coalition of Reason

The North Texas Church of Freethought
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