

## Atheists Have the Will to Believe

Like evangelicals, atheists string along a line from hard to soft. Soft evangelicals don't easily consign resisters to hell, and soft atheists don't easily assign God to non-existence.

So I am not surprised at the Pew survey indicating "21% of American atheists believe in God or a universal spirit, 12% believe in heaven and 10% pray at least once a week."

1.....In a sad bind, President Clinton came out with the legalism that "it all depends on what 'is' means." Well, atheism is the negation of theism (belief in God), and - in each case - it all depends on what "no" means to the particular atheist: *what, specifically, is being denied?*

2.....For decades my custom has been to ask professed atheists, "What deity are you denying?" Almost always it's a childhood god now *outgrown*: the person grew tall, but his/her god remained small. One may argue that a small god is appropriate to a small child, as are childhood playthings. But the modern West does not help children's small deity to grow up with them. So, when grown up, many leave their childhood's religion and playthings and forget about them.

3....."Your God Is Too Small" said J. B. Phillips in a 1952 book. As a London pastor during the blitz, he spent his air-raid-shelter time translating the Bible into language that those in his youth-group could understand (published, in 1958, as "The New Testament in Modern English"). He was concerned that the education they were getting was asymmetrical: the increase of appreciative awareness ("heart") was falling behind the increase of critical consciousness ("mind"). Since religion is more of the heart, and science is more of the mind, scientism was swamping theism. (A Harris poll 23 years later indicated that only 29% of Britons believed in God as personal [2.4.75 Christian Century].)

4.....Wordsworth died more than a century before "Your God Is Too Small," but his "Ode to Immortality" foresaw the West's educational mind/heart imbalance and its cure: "Let knowledge grow from more to more / but more of reverence in us grow; / that heart and mind, according well, / may make one music, as before - / but vaster." For that vaster "one music," I am increasingly hopeful for the world despite the present aggressive anti-religious secularism in the West.

5.....Human personal consciousness is a mystery inclusive of the powers and limits of heart and mind. As our upper and lower teeth work together on *visible* foods, faith and reason work together on *invisible* foods we need and hunger for. Both are gifts of God: by faith we can believe and love, by reason we can refuse to believe or to love. If God had not made our minds free to deny or hate him, we would not be free to affirm and love him.

6.....As the corpus callosum connects our brain-hemispheres, the will to make sense and have hope connects our hearts and minds. One of the sinews of that connection is the interplay between *faith and doubt*. After a sermon by the eminent Protestant public intellectual Reinhold Niebuhr, Felix Frankfurter - an equally eminent Jewish justice of the U.S. Supreme Court - said, "I agree with your sermon. I'm an unbelieving believer." Two generations ago, he was one of that 21-or-so-% of American-atheist believers in God.

7.....Quiet or angry atheists, atheists of solitude or solidarity, manage little more than to evidence the God-given denial-power of the human mind. History consistently dashes their hope for dominance. In 1928 (in "The Future of an Illusion"), Freud said that "soon" there would be no more believers in God than in a flat earth. At the height of the "death-of-God" movement, the 4.8.66 TIME cover blared "IS GOD DEAD?" The current CHRISTIANITY TODAY cover - also bright red letters on black - has "GOD IS NOT DEAD YET." The latter article's subtitle is "How current philosophers argue for his existence."

8.....The fact that we Americans have grown in *the will to live with difference* - and therefore are less dogmatic, more generous of spirit - should not be overread to mean that we are less religious. In America, the will to believe has never been stronger. But the habits of the heart have been changing faster than the habits of the mind, and the supporting data are less available to pollsters.

## Comments

Please report offensive comments below.

Rev. Jim Pool:

"It dawned on me as I viewed photos of deep outer space one day that indeed the God of the Holy Land is too small for what I saw."

Amen. The Hubble deep field photograph did more to undo the version of "God" held in my head than any tangible thing I've laid eyes on.

To think that we are significant on a cosmic scale, that there is such a "holy land" and only a few "called" to be God's people from that speck of land, is to create the most mind-bogglingly small God one could imagine. Divine drama? I'd answer: only if we are a divine test-tube experiment for a curious creator who has a lot more to manage than our neck of the woods.

What peace might we come to if all of our kids were given a glance at a nearby galaxy through a telescope, with a picture of the Hubble deep field on a table with a magnifying glass for closer inspection! Maybe we'd realize we'd be better off cooperating with one another on this spaceship Earth!

POSTED BY: STEVEN | JULY 7, 2008 7:37 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Mr Elliott.

I think you supernaturalists who believe in gods and devils and things are bothered by atheists, because they stand outside the groupthink and therefore threaten it. That's why so many millions have been tortured and murdered over the centuries for not believing in what they were supposed to believe. Not for fun were they burnt and drowned during the Inquisition, but to preserve the sacred groupthink.

Today Religions no longer have that kind of power. If they did I am sure they would use it with all the savagery of ancient times. Out would come the thumb screws, and the knives to urge repentance on atheists, or death.

Instead they try now to redefine atheists, Believers are being told that there are no real atheists, because they pray too; and, by extension, praying is Good (because there really is a god).

What hooley! Only fools pray. Only the deluded and the indoctrinated pray.

The ones who believe there is no one to pray to, and therefore do not pray, are known as atheists. If they pray they are not atheists, but fools.

POSTED BY: ANDREW | JULY 6, 2008 6:49 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

The religious acquire their beliefs in the environment they grow up in. Once acquired, it's sustained by groupthink and the comfort it affords; especially regarding fear of death and dying. Believers of most faiths expect everlasting life.

That the fear of death is a reason why believers believe is clear from their claim that there are no atheists in foxholes. It says 'when you're scared enough you'll believe,' which says that religious folk cling to their faith out of fear of death, and that they see atheists as stupid fools

for pretending to be brave enough not to need God or religion.

To be 'god-fearing' is held to be virtuous, when it's just as irrational as being scared of ghosts.

I am not afraid of being dead one day. I was dead for billions of years before I was born, and it didn't bother me at all. So I say to believers, give up your fear. You have nothing to be afraid of. Give up your childish notions of gods and angels etcetra. Death is as natural as birth; and is our inevitable end, so you might as well get used to it. So stop panicking and praying to invisible skygods. There is nobody up there. Just enjoy life and be nice to people.

Gods are in the mind, not in the sky.

POSTED BY: PHIL HOURIHANE | JULY 6, 2008 6:44 PM

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>>TJ:

>>What? writes: "Let me get this one straight: If the panelist can show this person the undeniable existence of any single deity, he will deny it just the same?"

>>Think about it a little longer, will ya?

Uh, I did.

And I well know that you, my friend, and anyone similar to your way of thinking, are definitely not the last word on whether or not you, I, the other person, or Dr Elliot will or will not ever see even any close facsimilie of what we all might think a deity is. If you say that, you are saying 'you know' that to be a fact.

SURPRISE!....You dont.

You, my friend, those like you are the ones who limit the universe we abide in.

POSTED BY: WHAT? | JULY 6, 2008 6:37 PM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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"For decades my custom has been to ask professed atheists, "What deity are you denying?" Almost always it's a childhood god now outgrown: the person grew tall, but his/her god remained small. "

What I find hardest to believe about this is that "almost always" people respond directly to this question instead of saying things like, "What do you mean by that?" or "I'm not denying any Deity, I don't think deities exist."

Another question I have, Dr Elliott, is how do you determine that "it's a childhood god now outgrown..." Is this your analysis? Do people "almost always" say this outright?

Also, I wonder if you have kept any records of your conversations - any idea of the number of people you've talked with? their verbatim responses?

I realize when you're talking about your area of expertise, religion, you don't need to be precise to be believed - that's where faith comes in, as well as your established authority as a spokesman for religious belief. But when you're talking about real-live people's reactions, precision is more important and your background as a theologian is not compelling.

POSTED BY: E FAVORITE | JULY 6, 2008 9:25 AM

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It has been well said that one should not be so open minded that one's brains fall out. This is a good admonition to those who, for example, pusillanimously declare themselves agnostics when the only rational alternative to belief in the existence of supernatural beings can be atheism.

This is because the basis of belief in the existence and gods and goddesses is no different from that for belief in pixies, namely legend and credulity; and the grounds for entertaining the thought that something might exist (footprints, fur snagged on fences, grunting in the night, actually seeing the creature in question bounding up a hillside) require much better and more consistent supports than the pre-scientific fictions invented by our ancestors to explain what they did not understand.

People forget how strong the belief in the Little People was until quite recently - they were a feature of things well into Victorian times and even later. They were blamed for much, such as missing pins and curdled milk, the lights seen on the marshes, and various aches and twinges suffered by old ladies. As reason diffused its happy light over the Western hemisphere, courtesy of the growth of literacy in those same times, belief in pixies and their ilk faded.

But superstition has strong talons; a lady of Cork, literate and generally sensible, was once asked whether she believed in leprechauns, and replied, "I do not, but they are there anyway," thus beautifully capturing the spirit of agnosticism in all its faint-hearted fence-sitting tendentiousness; for it is premised on the fact that since no one has proved that X does not exist, X might exist, as if this in any way followed, and as if responsible and disciplined intellectual endeavor does not show the fallacy of thinking that, for example, the fact that no one has proved the non-existence of Tolkein's Hobbits means that they therefore might exist in some Middle Earth after all.

Still: it remains important to be open-minded, though with a readiness to subject what is offered for our intellectual assent to stringent evaluation by the light of probability and experience. These two latter are indispensable servants of thought. They explain the difference between the assiduity with which some seek the Loch Ness Monster, while no such expense of cameras and microphones, boats and planes, bearded researchers and photojournalists has ever clustered around the possibility that a woodland grove might be the scene of moonlit pixie parties. For the idea of large marine beasts has a plausibility endowed by whales and manatees, while the idea of antique such beasts has its plausibility from sharks and coelacanths, both of them survivors from hideous depths of zoological time.

Oddly, it is the credulous who are the least open-minded. They accept dogma, and dogma closes - even indeed punishes - enquiry thereafter.

Voltaire says that he honors the man who seeks truth, but despises the man who claims to have found it.

The saying touches the essence of the difference exceedingly well, and should be the motto of anyone who aspires to intellectual honesty.

POSTED BY: A.C.GRAYLING | JULY 5, 2008 11:48 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Religious fools trying to redefine the word for those of us who don't believe in their made up God.

An atheist, as defined by this old atheist, is one who doesn't believe in this current God anymore than he believes in Gods like Apollo or Horas.

They are all man made. Atheists know this. and this is why they don't pray.

Only the deluded pray.

POSTED BY: MARC CUNNINGHAM | JULY 5, 2008 11:00 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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An atheist who prays is not an atheist.

Atheists don't believe in gods, or anything supernatural, and think that praying is very silly because there's nobody up there to take your call.

I am an atheist and have atheist friends; we giggle at the idiocy of prayer and belief in superstitious mumbo jumbo.

An atheist who prays makes as much sense as a vegetarian who eats meat. The behavior cancels out the label.

POSTED BY: EVAN DONNER | JULY 5, 2008 10:51 PM

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BGone said:

"They really know how to hurt ya. Nothing's sacred anymore. Next thing we'll find out the pope isn't a Catholic.

Is the pope a Catholic?

Do bears go dodo in the woods?

Do atheists believe in God?

Only the bears still behave the way God intended."

LOL! That's great!

POSTED BY: GAD | JULY 5, 2008 2:28 AM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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The being in the burning bush being Lucifer explains it all. Hell is pure confusion where lies are sacred. Atheists that lie about what they believe are all going to hell along with the Baptists and Church of Christ liars that say they believe IT was God in the burning bush.

POSTED BY: BGONE | JULY 4, 2008 3:08 PM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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They really know how to hurt ya. Nothing's sacred anymore. Next thing we'll find out the pope isn't a Catholic.

Is the pope a Catholic?

Do bears go dodo in the woods?

Do atheists believe in God?

Only the bears still behave the way God intended.

POSTED BY: BGONE | JULY 4, 2008 3:03 PM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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What? writes: "Let me get this one straight: If the panelist can show this person the undeniable existence of any single deity, he will deny it just the same?"

Think about it a little longer, will ya?

POSTED BY: TJ | JULY 4, 2008 7:49 AM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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If we Americans have grown more tolerant of differences, presumably religious differences, as Mr. Elliott proposes, thereby "less dogmatic" and "more generous of spirit," it may be we've grown less religious, contrary to his conclusions.

There are two ways to regard one's religiosity: one is institutional religious adherence, and the other is one's true religious consciousness. I dare say that if people can grow in the spirit of accepting other faiths without conditions (there are always the motives of those who seduce the other with generous tolerance of their religion, while working on capturing their souls), they would likely have loosened or broken the chains that bound them to their religious institution. Thereby becoming less religious in a traditional, institutional sense.

This appears to be happening around the country today. More and more people are searching exotic religions or philosophies for personal meaning to their lives. It doesn't mean they are more or less religious. It may mean they are seeking a purer religious experience, outside the "canned" religion they've been given for consumption all their lives. Or that experience may not necessarily include a deity. Searching for meaning in Buddhism, for example, is essentially a philosophical/spiritual quest. The Buddha is not a deity.

As to "atheists" who believe in God, or who practice deity-based religion, they are not atheists, pure and simple. This is a contradiction, explainable, perhaps, only by that person's misconception of their own atheism.

POSTED BY: PAUL TAYLOR | JULY 4, 2008 12:35 AM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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I suspect the "atheists" quoted here do not believe in a conventional god creature, but belief in some form of weak deist - -some weak "force" like form.

You find it surprising unbelief is a continuum?

The same is true of belief?

Show me where Baptists share the exact same views with each other??

Instead we see such huge differences on the human concept of a deity around the globe, it is just one of many proofs this is an invention by man.

If God has spoken, why don't people have the same understanding of the deity -- or at a minimum an understanding of the basic premises the deity really wants in a person.

Believers can't even agree on what the deity wants!

POSTED BY: UNIMPRESSED | JULY 3, 2008 9:56 PM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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I think what confuses the Reverend, here, is the fact that just because he teaches that non-Christianity means one is devoid of spirituality, doesn't make it true.

Plenty of people will take his lot's preachings of 'My way or the highway' and choose the highway, without becoming the nihilists he claims they must.

Maybe it's not 'God' they're rejecting, but the \*worldview\* he calls it 'atheism' to reject.

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | JULY 3, 2008 5:46 PM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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>>TJ:

>>Our panelist writes: "For decades my custom has been to ask professed atheists, "What deity are you denying?"

>>You demonstrate to me that any single deity actually exists and then I'll deny that one for you.

>>Deal?

Let me get this one straight: If the panelist can show this person the undeniable existence of any single deity, he will deny it just the same?

I guess, then, if you present this person with a cherry pie, they will say either 1) I see no pie or at the very least, 2)That's not a cherry pie, that's an apple pie.

Aye yi yi yi yi

oooooooooK

POSTED BY: WHAT? | JULY 3, 2008 5:41 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Which god am i denying?

All of them...

But dont get me wrong. I love fairy tales.

POSTED BY: ZERO | JULY 3, 2008 4:02 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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"Quiet or angry atheists, atheists of solitude or solidarity, manage little more than to evidence the God-given denial-power of the human mind."

I'd like to think that I'm evidencing the evolved human capacity to apply reason to evidence.

"History consistently dashes their hope for dominance."

I really don't hope to dominate anyone else. I really just hope for my own Constitutional rights, and the Constitutional rights of others, to be respected. I also hope for a day when scientists can do science, and teachers can teach science, without religiously-motivated interference. I would not have thought that would be too much to hope for, but unfortunately it seems that "[i]gnorance and fanaticism is ever busy and needs feeding."

"The current CHRISTIANITY TODAY cover – also bright red letters on black – has “GOD IS NOT DEAD YET.” The latter article’s subtitle is “How current philosophers argue for his existence.””

Well, if it keeps them from worse mischief, I'm all for it.

"The fact that we Americans have grown in the will to live with difference – and therefore are less dogmatic, more generous of spirit . . . . "

What?! Has the good reverend not been paying any attention for the past eight years? Or has he completely taken leave of his senses?

I would gently suggest that he might ask Tammy Kitzmiller about this supposed willingness to live with difference. He might also ask Chris Comer about this supposed shrinking dogmatism, and this allegedly growing generosity of spirit. I think the good reverend might find that their experiences contradict the reverend's characterizations.

POSTED BY: JOHN THE SKEPTIC | JULY 3, 2008 2:41 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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"What deity do you deny?"

That's a good question. The trouble is this: No one has shown me a deity that I can't deny, and I can't conjure one up through creative thought or interpretation that I don't eventually come to deny. So, I am an unbeliever who continues to seek (openly, I might add) for a framework of belief that satisfies and respects my intellect while at the same time provides 'nourishment' for that line of inquiry generally referred to as 'belief' or 'spirituality.'

Which is to say that, to me, there is no god to believe in or not believe in; rather, the search for god is really just a search for essential, active principles operating in human life and/or the universe at large.

POSTED BY: CHRISDC | JULY 3, 2008 2:23 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Did the poll ask how many vegans eat meat? Or how many tea-totalers drink beer?

Chuck Palahniuk said it best in Fight Club, "shoving feathers up your butt does not make you a chicken".

POSTED BY: SCOTT D. | JULY 3, 2008 1:42 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Rev Eliot writes from the perspective of having absolute, authoritative knowledge - that knowledge being that god is real and Jesus is the savior of the world.

The atheist knows that this is but an opinion, and an opinion held onto \*in spite of\* the 1) lack of evidence to support such claims, and 2) evidence that contradicts such claims.

Which is why Rev Eliot's posts bounce off the atheists without making any impact whatsoever. For the atheist to even consider Eliot's position, one must not only set aside their considered atheism, but they must 1) set aside facts that science, rationality and logic have fully revealed, and 2) in so doing, accept Rev Eliot's fantastically contrary claims for said facts.

It's a lot of work for one to do for an unfounded presumption. We do it for our crazy uncles all the time, but in a public forum like On Faith, there is no onus on us to maintain the façades of the family situation, nor to roll our eyes and shake our heads behind the uncle's back.

POSTED BY: MR MARK | JULY 3, 2008 1:03 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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I think you are confusing atheists with agnostics or even with pantheists...

Atheists have the will to dismiss beliefs based on an absolute lack of evidence.

POSTED BY: THEGOMEZSYMBOL | JULY 3, 2008 1:02 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Triplebock: "It is your vanity to assume I am denying "your" god. Too often, believers say that atheists "don't believe in anything." I believe in a lot."

I would like to second this. Sometime I would like to have one of these "believers" ask me "What do you believe in?" and listen with the honest intent to change their beliefs if I can offer them something better. Unfortunately, based on my understanding of the definition of a "believer," this is never going to happen.

POSTED BY: L.KURT ENGELHART | JULY 3, 2008 12:41 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Sorry ... the poem is Tennyson's "In Memoriam", not Wordsworth. But a good one anyway.

POSTED BY: DAVID A. | JULY 3, 2008 12:08 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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"An ordained United Church of Christ and American Baptist minister, "On Faith" panelist Dr. Willis E. Elliott has been a pastor, teacher, lecturer, administrator, consultant (to Newsweek for 38 years), church executive, and the author of six books."



And what does all that lead to, this pointless and superficial drool.

POSTED BY: GAD | JULY 3, 2008 11:44 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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It dawned on me as I viewed photos of deep outer space one day that indeed the God of the Holy Land is too small for what I saw. I know of no existing theology that accomodates the larger God necessary for the creation, something that appears to be a work in progress.

POSTED BY: REV. JIM POOL | JULY 3, 2008 11:29 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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I take exception to your notion of asking atheists which deity they are denying. For myself, the answer is all. Atheist means "without god". It is your vanity to assume I am denying "your" god. I simply frame my beliefs and actions without believing in any god. Too often, believers say that atheists "don't believe in anything." I believe in a lot. Just not the existence of any gods. Think of it this way: By marrying my wife, I haven't rejected millions of women. I just chose not to consider them because I was happy with the one I was with.

The very terminology of "believers" and "nonbelievers" shows the bias toward the majority religious opinion. Some day when there are more atheists than theists, the terminology may flip to assume the more common, labeling those who believe in gods "ascientists" or "arationalists".

POSTED BY: TRIPLEBOCK | JULY 3, 2008 11:26 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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I suppose we could answer the asinine "What deity are you denying?" question another way too.

I'm denying the only one that you forgot to deny Mr Elliot.

POSTED BY: TJ | JULY 3, 2008 11:19 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Attributing a "will to believe" to all and sundry represents little more than a failure to grasp that people can be constitutionally quite different. Many people just don't respond to the religious mode, many others respond negatively. Think of it as an "orientation."

Get out a little more, and you'll see that there are people who are, really by nature, rational and analytical; the other stuff goes right past them.

Another factor that obscures the view is the "will to believe that you believe." The vast majority of "believers" show few behavioral signs that they "believe" in anything like the sense that they believe -- no quotes -- in the facts of daily life. All the anxiety about "faith" can only come from an implicit recognition that there's something tenuous or inauthentic about it. This suggests that rationality may be more widespread than it appears, though well submerged in social observations and protestations.

POSTED BY: HQUAIN | JULY 3, 2008 11:04 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Mr. Eliot asserts that "Quiet or angry atheists, atheists of solitude or solidarity, manage little more than to evidence the God-given denial-power of the human mind."

I find this statement offensive because it carries the assumption that the assent of a majority is what determines truth (i.e. that if most people believe in God then he exists and the minority are wrong). One of the precious truths that we as a species have discovered in our history is that the loudest voice is not necessarily the right one. If humans are in possession of a denial power than the theists have the same ability to use it as atheists do.

In fact, given the worldwide lack of consensus as to who God actually is and how people should worship him, it seems that theists make greater use of their powers of denial, not less.

Furthermore, I resent the Christian tendency to view atheists as lost sheep to be brought into the fold. This view combines a certainty of having a direct access to the Divine Truth with a condescension on the poor souls not equally as gifted.

As an assertive atheist I have reached a considered decision about my views and respect others enough to not foist my views off on them unasked for. I would appreciate if the religious folk of the world would accord us atheists the same courtesy.

The statistical data quoted does no more than demonstrate individual confusion on the issue given the obvious contradiction it implies.

POSTED BY: PATRICK | JULY 3, 2008 11:03 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Perhaps, Mr. Elliott, in answer to your question "What deity are you denying?" it is ALL deities. After all, atheism is a rejection of the concept of deity, or supreme, supernatural beings.

And, yes, as a point of interest, we humans are a weak lot. And don't we tend to keep our "pet" rock, charm or other paraphernalia, as a token of protection or luck in our lives?

POSTED BY: PAUL TAYLOR | JULY 3, 2008 10:26 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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"...present aggressive anti-religious secularism in the West."  
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Of all the childish things that fall out of the mouths of xtians, this is perhaps the silliest. 80% of Americans claim to be xtians, all political candidates have to prove their religious affiliation, the president says "Jesus Christ" is the greatest philosopher, and we annually pump half a billion taxpayer dollars into sectarian charities to patch the holes created by failed public services- and despite all this, the xtian still claims persecution.

POSTED BY: STUART | JULY 3, 2008 9:56 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Am I a "strong" non-believer of the orbital teapot because I am sure there is not? Would it be better and more politically correct to become a "weak" teapot non-believer?

There is no God because there is no proof of its existence (no: the fact that Nature is wonderful is not a proof) and all religions are obviously forgeries, except for people who only read their so-called holy book and don't want to consider other points of view.

"Do not trust people who read one only book."

POSTED BY: DANIEL R | JULY 3, 2008 8:25 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Our panelist writes: "For decades my custom has been to ask professed atheists, "What deity are you denying?"

You demonstrate to me that any single deity actually exists and then I'll deny that one for you.

Deal?

POSTED BY: TJ | JULY 3, 2008 7:41 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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what deity do you follow?

the personal savior is the deity that juchristianity is based uppon ,jesus came to tell mankind to worship the one god the one deity who is worthy of all praise and obedience ,yet christians took jesus as diety ,and divided god to 3 division ,instead of following the message they took the messenger as diety !!!.

the signs and evidences of the creator god exist every where ,what is the sign of your creator god do you deny?

there is no diety worthy of worship save the creator god .

POSTED BY: MO | JULY 3, 2008 4:59 AM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Most atheists are "weak atheists", that is they just express an lack of belief in a deity.

A "strong" atheist asserts that there is no deity.

The weak position is much stronger than the strong since it puts the theist in the position of providing evidence of his assertion, that there is a god.

Since, over the many centuries of religious practice, there has never been a shred of evidence supporting this assertion that holds up under examination, the theist is forced to fall back on "faith", belief in the absence of evidence.

""For decades my custom has been to ask professed atheists, "What deity are you denying?""

This is a totally meaningless question sense an atheist is not in a state of denial, he is a state of disbelief.

It's analogus to asking what brand of tooth fairy or Santa Claus is the atoothfairyist or asantaclauseist denying.

POSTED BY: INFIDEL57 | JULY 2, 2008 11:24 PM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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"So I am not surprised at the Pew survey indicating "21% of American atheists believe in God or a universal spirit, 12% believe in heaven and 10% pray at least once a week.""

Those aren't atheists, they are wannabe believers who think there is something more, a purpose to life, but can't get past the absurdities and contradictions of the established religions so they roll their own version of god's will.

POSTED BY: GAD | JULY 2, 2008 7:54 PM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Regarding this claim,

"The fact that we Americans have grown in the will to live with difference – and therefore are less dogmatic, more generous of spirit – should not be overread to mean that we are less religious. In America, the will to believe has never been stronger."

I think there's some serious denial in this belief. Most obviously, the ranks of those identifying as atheists, agnostics, "non-religious", and apatheists continues to grow rapidly both in America and the larger Western world. More importantly, though, the influence of religion on daily life continues to diminish. We are already at a point, even in America, where religion has no significant influence on most people's behavior or the way they conduct their daily lives. Only a tiny minority of hard-core Christians, orthodox Jews, zealous Muslims, and intense new-agers make even the slightest concession to their beliefs when choosing how to live.

Religion in the "first" world is much, much sicker than we generally allow ourselves to believe. The old trappings and frameworks are there, but they're an empty shell. Skeletons take a lot longer to rot than flesh.

POSTED BY: ASH | JULY 2, 2008 12:54 PM  
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