

# **List of books**

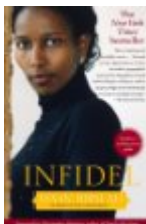
## **for atheists, agnostics and free-thinkers**

Dec 18, 2008 at 4:59 am - [13 Comments](#)

Here is a collection of nonfiction books I find interesting as an atheist and I suspect will also be appreciated by other non-believers. I have not yet read all of these, but I plan to read every last one - time permitting. I will update the list as I come across more books that I feel should be included.

Right now there are about 95 books with various topics including reason, morality, evolution, history of religion, pro-atheism, deconversion memoirs, biographies and more. They are alphabetized by the authors' last names. If you know of any other good books that I should add, please leave a comment!

**A**

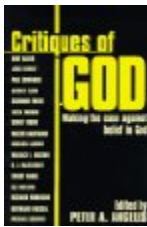


### **Infidel**

#### **1. By Ayaan Hirsi Ali**

Readers with an eye on European politics will recognize Ali as the Somali-born member of the Dutch parliament who faced death threats after collaborating on a film about domestic violence against Muslim women with controversial director Theo van Gogh (who was himself assassinated). Even before then, her attacks on Islamic culture as "brutal, bigoted, [and] fixated on controlling women" had generated much controversy. In this suspenseful account of her life and her internal struggle with her Muslim faith, she

discusses how these views were shaped by her experiences amid the political chaos of Somalia and other African nations, where she was subjected to genital mutilation and later forced into an unwanted marriage. While in transit to her husband in Canada, she decided to seek asylum in the Netherlands, where she marveled at the polite policemen and government bureaucrats. Ali is up-front about having lied about her background in order to obtain her citizenship, which led to further controversy in early 2006, when an immigration official sought to deport her and triggered the collapse of the Dutch coalition government. Apart from feelings of guilt over van Gogh's death, her voice is forceful and unbowed—like Irshad Manji, she delivers a powerful feminist critique of Islam informed by a genuine understanding of the religion.

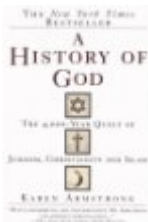


## Critiques of God: Making the Case Against Belief in God

## 2. By Peter Adam Angeles

Peter Angeles sets out to assemble an anthology--"of value to undergraduate philosophy classes as well as to the general public" --that presents the case against God. For both audiences, the decision to concentrate on authors "of known stature" was a wise one, because of the ease with which less well known writers could be dismissed by popular audiences (including audiences of undergraduates). The list of authors is a veritable who's who of twentieth-century philosophy, and the selections (as Angeles promises in the preface) are not snippets. Readers who work their way through the 17 selections in the anthology will get a substantial sampling of both the style and the substance of philosophical argument as practiced by a range of thinkers. One quirk of the collection is its concentration on material from 1950 to 1970 (13 of the 17 selections). This does not

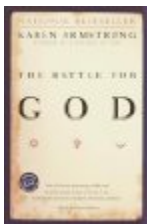
lessen its value as an anthology, but it may spur some readers to look closely at the context those decades provided for philosophical reflection on God's existence.



### [A History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam](#)

#### **3. By Karen Armstrong**

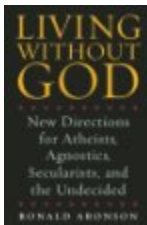
Armstrong, a British journalist and former nun, guides us along one of the most elusive and fascinating quests of all time--the search for God. Like all beloved historians, Armstrong entertains us with deft storytelling, astounding research, and makes us feel a greater appreciation for the present because we better understand our past. Be warned: A History of God is not a tidy linear history. Rather, we learn that the definition of God is constantly being repeated, altered, discarded, and resurrected through the ages, responding to its followers' practical concerns rather than to mystical mandates. Armstrong also shows us how Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have overlapped and influenced one another, gently challenging the secularist history of each of these religions.



### [The Battle for God](#)

#### **4. By Karen Armstrong**

About 40 years ago popular opinion assumed that religion would become a weaker force and people would certainly become less zealous as the world became more modern and morals more relaxed. But the opposite has proven true, according to theologian and author Karen Armstrong (A History of God), who documents how fundamentalism has taken root and grown in many of the world's major religions, such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. Even Buddhism, Sikhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism have developed fundamentalist factions. Reacting to a technologically driven world with liberal Western values, fundamentalists have not only increased in numbers, they have become more desperate, claims Armstrong, who points to the Oklahoma City bombing, violent anti-abortion crusades, and the assassination of President Yitzak Rabin as evidence of dangerous extremes.



### [Living Without God: New Directions for Atheists, Agnostics, Secularists, and the Undecided](#)

#### **5. By Ronald Aronson**

Ronald Aronson has a mission: to demonstrate that a life without religion can be coherent, moral, and committed. Optimistic and stirring, *Living Without God* is less interested in attacking religion than in developing a positive philosophy for atheists, agnostics, secular humanists, skeptics, and freethinkers. Aronson proposes contemporary answers to Immanuel Kant's three great questions: What can I know? What ought I to do? What can I hope? Grounded in the sense that we are deeply dependent and interconnected beings who are rooted in the universe, nature, history, society, and the global economy, *Living Without God* explores the experience and issues of 21st-century secularists, especially in America. Reflecting on such perplexing questions as why we are grateful for life's gifts, who or what is responsible for inequalities, and how to live in the

face of aging and dying, *Living Without God* is also refreshingly topical, touching on such subjects as contemporary terrorism, the war in Iraq, affirmative action, and the remarkable rise of Barack Obama.



### **In Gods We Trust: The Evolutionary Landscape of Religion**

#### **6. By Scott Atran**

With almost 1000 references and discussions of most of human history and culture, from Neanderthal burials to suicide-bombers in the Palestinian anti-colonialist struggle, this book is consciously and truly encyclopedic in scope, and shows both breadth and depth of scholarship...the reader finds himself constantly challenged and provoked into an intellectual ping-pong game as he follows the arguments and the huge body of findings marshaled to buttress them...Atran managed to combine the old and the new by relating the automatic cognitive operations to existential anxieties. This combination will be a benchmark and a challenge to students of religion in all disciplines.

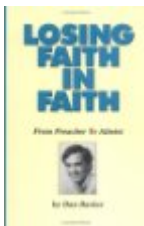


### **The End of Biblical Studies**

#### **7. By Hector Avalos**

In this radical critique of his own academic specialty, biblical scholar Hector Avalos calls for an end to biblical studies as we know them. He outlines two main arguments for this surprising conclusion. First, academic biblical scholarship has clearly succeeded in showing that the ancient civilization that produced the Bible held beliefs about the origin, nature, and purpose of the world and humanity that are fundamentally opposed to the views of modern society. The Bible is thus largely irrelevant to the needs and concerns of contemporary human beings. Second, Avalos criticizes his colleagues for applying a variety of flawed and specious techniques aimed at maintaining the illusion that the Bible is still relevant in today's world. In effect, he accuses his profession of being more concerned about its self-preservation than about giving an honest account of its own findings to the general public and faith communities.

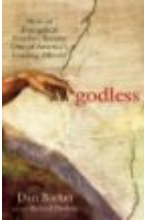
## B



### [Losing Faith in Faith: From Preacher to Atheist](#)

#### 8. By Dan Barker

Autobiographical story of journeying from fundamentalist/evangelical minister to atheist. Includes criticism of religion, fallacies and harm of Christianity, and invocation of freethought, reason and humanism. "An excellent, entertaining and highly readable book which can be used to easily demolish the 'strongest' arguments of unreasoning Christians . . . a remarkable debating aid." -- Norm Allen, Atheists of Florida, May 1993



## [Godless: How an Evangelical Preacher Became One of America's Leading Atheists](#)

**Dan Barker**

Conversions on the road to Damascus are for those who hear voices and fall prey to delusions and who would be better off seeking professional help. Much more valuable in the human story are the reflections of intelligent and ethical people who listen to the voice of reason and who allow it to vanquish bigotry and superstition. This book is a classic example of the latter.

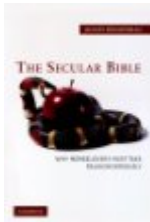


## [The Atheist: Madalyn Murray O'Hair](#)

9. **By Bryan Le Beau**

Forty years ago Madalyn Murray O'Hair was so notorious for her role in the Supreme Court decision banning prayers from public schools that she was, in the words of one Life profile, "the most hated woman in America." Although she assembled a nationwide movement of atheists and remained a thorn in the side of America's religious conservatives for nearly three decades, this biography more than ably reveals her limitations as a public intellectual and a social activist. In the opening chapters, Le Beau,

a historian of religion at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, provides a thorough account of O'Hair's struggle to eliminate morning prayer from her son's junior high school, deftly portraying the anti-atheist sentiment of the Cold War era and fleshing out the precedents set by earlier Supreme Court interpretations of the separation of church and state. The book then continues with a look at her "caustic, sarcastic, even outrageous" rhetoric. But the biographical account is interrupted halfway through with two chapters cataloging the philosophical and historical underpinnings of O'Hair's arguments, before Le Beau resumes the depiction of her downfall and the bizarre circumstances surrounding her disappearance in 1995 and the subsequent discovery of her body. The consequences of O'Hair's arrogance and combativeness will draw readers in initially, but in the end, there's only so much to say about her; even academics may find the account padded with quotations from political debates and O'Hair's fan mail. However, with the Pledge of Allegiance facing the same challenge O'Hair mounted against school prayer, her story couldn't be more timely.



### **[The Secular Bible: Why Nonbelievers Must Take Religion Seriously](#)**

#### **10. By Jacques Berlinerblau**

In well-wrought prose and with a frolicsome sense of humor, Berlinerblau poses questions that will disquiet thinking secularists as much as they will those committed to religion. By distinguishing between what traditions say about the origin of the Bible and how they interpret it, he opens the door to making the same distinction between what critical biblical scholarship has to say about biblical origins and biblical interpretation. Berlinerblau's book raises questions in a clever, intriguing way that will stimulate serious thought and discussion long after it is put down.

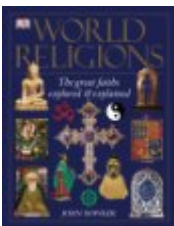




## **Religion Explained**

### **11. By Pascal Boyer**

Cognitive anthropologist Boyer does not shrink from the task of explaining "the full history of all religion (ever)" in this engaging but somewhat oversold synopsis of anthropological findings, purporting to show how "the intractable mystery that was religion is now just another set of difficult but manageable problems." Boyer eloquently critiques mainstream academic treatments of religion that, in his view, distort the facts by imposing a single explanatory theory on a complex assortment of religious phenomena. At the same time, he argues that the variety of human religious concepts is not infinite, suggesting an underlying pattern in the way certain kinds of religious concepts engage the mind by "successful activation of a whole variety of mental systems." These patterns increase the probability that such concepts will be remembered and transmitted



## **World Religions: The Great Faiths Explored & Explained**

### **12. By John Bowker**

An easy-to-follow, pictorial resource that is overflowing with information. Each chapter begins with a succinct introduction and is followed by one-or-two page sections that

explain the basic tenets of the faith, symbols, events, people, buildings, works of art, and the differences and similarities to other religions. Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are included as are Jainism, Sikhism, Chinese and Japanese religions, and Native religions.

## C



### [Seven Clues to the Origin of Life: A Scientific Detective Story](#)

#### 13. By A. G. Cairns-Smith

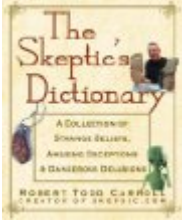
I know of no other book that succeeds as well as this one in maintaining the central question in focus throughout. It is a summary of the best evolutionary thinking as applied to the origins of life in which the important issues are addressed pertinently, economically and with a happy recourse to creative analogies. A splendid story - and a much more convincing one than the molecular biologists can offer as an alternative. Cairns-Smith has argued his case before in the technical scientific literature, here he sets it out in a way from which anyone - even those whose chemistry and biology stopped at 16 - can learn.



### [Within Reason: Rationality and Human Behavior](#)

#### 14. By Donald Calne

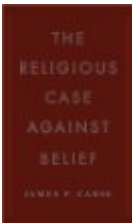
Does the ability to reason determine human behavior? If we thought more clearly and rationally, could we avoid such catastrophes as war? These are the questions Calne asks in this philosophical and scientific inquiry. "When I was young," says neurologist Calne (Univ. of British Columbia, Canada), director of the Neurodegenerative Disorders Centre at Vancouver Hospital, "I was taught that education was important because without it we would be doomed to stupid behavior and opinions based upon prejudice." But if education brought wisdom, he later queried, "how was it possible that Germany, the home of Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Goethe, Leibniz, and Kant could become a nation driven by hatred and complicit in the worst crimes against humanity?" His exploration for a definition of reason and an answer to his conundrum takes him here through neurology (brain structure and function) and evolution, considers the interweave between reason and social behavior and ethics, and then examines how reason has been invoked in the creation and maintenance of such cultural institutions as commerce, government, religion, art, and science. Calne agrees with the evolutionary evidence that intelligence and reasoning evolved as humans developed social organization, specifically, from the evolutionary need for individuals to cooperate in order to survive. Calne is clear in sorting through all this material: philosophy and psychology provide the principles by which reason operates, but reason itself is simply a tool. It is instinct rather than reason, he argues, which still sets our goals. How we then reach the goals is the part that involves reasoning. The strongest illustration of his argument is the existence of religion: "Reason can discredit religion so readily," says Calne, "yet religions flourish. We must conclude that the human needs for religion are very powerful." And therefore, in striving to solve societal problems, we first have to establish goals that appeal to our instincts and most basic motivations; only then will reason help us find the best way to reach them. Thought-provoking and clear, this is a useful and enjoyable exercise.



### **The Skeptic's Dictionary: A Collection of Strange Beliefs, Amusing Deceptions, and Dangerous Delusions**

#### **15. By Robert Todd Carroll**

Featuring close to 400 definitions, arguments, and essays on topics ranging from acupuncture to zombies, The Skeptic's Dictionary is a lively, commonsense trove of detailed information on all things supernatural, occult, paranormal, and pseudoscientific. It covers such categories as alternative medicine; cryptozoology; extraterrestrials and UFOs; frauds and hoaxes; junk science; logic and perception; New Age energy; and the psychic. For the open-minded seeker, the soft or hardened skeptic, and the believing doubter, this book offers a remarkable range of information that puts to the test the best arguments of true believers.



### **The Religious Case Against Belief**

#### **16. By James P. Carse**

While it seems paradoxical to oppose religion to belief—religions, after all, are systems of beliefs; and belief in deities, ritual practices and scriptures combine to form religions—Carse convincingly demonstrates that belief and religion are too often falsely

linked. Belief, he suggests, is a response to ignorance. Carse examines three kinds of ignorance: ordinary ignorance is simply lack of knowledge of some kind, such as the weather in Africa. Willful ignorance purposefully avoids clear and available knowledge, such as Creationists acting as if they know nothing of evolution. The tenacious beliefs that grow out of willful ignorance often result in bloody religious conflicts. Finally, what Carse calls higher ignorance accepts the fact that no matter how many truths we accumulate, our knowledge falls infinitely short of the truth. Individuals acting in higher ignorance can recognize the many truths that religious traditions can offer. Seen in Carse's provocative way, religion transcends the narrow boundaries established by beliefs, and transforms our ways of thinking about the world.

## D



### [The Origin of Species: By Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life](#)

#### 17. By Charles Darwin

It's hard to talk about The Origin of Species without making statements that seem overwrought and fulsome. But it's true: this is indeed one of the most important and influential books ever written, and it is one of the very few groundbreaking works of science that is truly readable. To a certain extent it suffers from the Hamlet problem--it's full of cliches! Or what are now cliches, but which Darwin was the first to pen. Natural selection, variation, the struggle for existence, survival of the fittest: it's all in here. Darwin's friend and "bulldog" T.H. Huxley said upon reading the Origin, "How extremely stupid of me not to have thought of that." Alfred Russel Wallace had thought

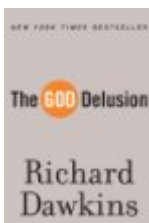
of the same theory of evolution Darwin did, but it was Darwin who gathered the mass of supporting evidence--on domestic animals and plants, on variability, on sexual selection, on dispersal--that swept most scientists before it. It's hardly necessary to mention that the book is still controversial: Darwin's remark in his conclusion that "Light will be thrown on the origin of man and his history" is surely the pinnacle of British understatement.



### [The Atheist's Introduction to the New Testament: How the Bible Undermines the Basic Teachings of Christianity](#)

#### **18. By Mike Davis**

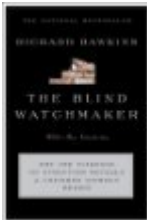
The Atheist's Introduction to the New Testament is your one-volume guide to the contradictions and inconsistencies found in Christianity's holy scriptures. It's the only resource you'll need to successfully debate Christian fundamentalists and expose the many weaknesses in the founding documents of the Christian religion. Unlike many contradiction lists available on the internet, The Atheist's Introduction to the New Testament organizes biblical contradictions around each of the major Christian theological doctrines--sin, forgiveness, salvation, the resurrection, the second coming, the divinity of Jesus--to show that they have NO consistent support in the Bible.



### [The God Delusion](#)

### **^ Richard Dawkins**

Richard Dawkins, in *The God Delusion*, tells of his exasperation with colleagues who try to play both sides of the street: looking to science for justification of their religious convictions while evading the most difficult implications—the existence of a prime mover sophisticated enough to create and run the universe, "to say nothing of mind reading millions of humans simultaneously." Such an entity, he argues, would have to be extremely complex, raising the question of how it came into existence, how it communicates—through spiritons!—and where it resides. Dawkins is frequently dismissed as a bully, but he is only putting theological doctrines to the same kind of scrutiny that any scientific theory must withstand. No one who has witnessed the merciless dissection of a new paper in physics would describe the atmosphere as overly polite.



### **[The Blind Watchmaker: Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe Without Design](#)**

### **^ Richard Dawkins**

Oxford zoologist Dawkins trumpets his thesis in his subtitlealmost guarantee enough that his book will stir controversy. Simply put, he has responded head-on to the argument-by-design most notably made by the 18th century theologian William Paley that the universe, like a watch in its complexity, needed, in effect, a watchmaker to design it. Hewing to Darwin's fundamental (his opponents might say fundamentalist) message, Dawkins sums up: "The theory of evolution by cumulative natural selection is the only theory we know of that is in principle capable of explaining the evolution of organized complexity." Avoiding an arrogant tone despite his up-front convictions, he takes pains to explain carefully, from various sides, why even such esteemed scientists as Niles Eldredge and Stephen Jay Gould, with their "punctuated equilibrium" thesis, are actually

gradualists like Darwin himself in their evolutionary views. Dawkins is difficult reading as he describes his computer models of evolutionary possibilities. But, as he draws on his zoological background, emphasizing recent genetic techniques, he can be as engrossing as he is cogent and convincing. His concept of "taming chance" by breaking down the "very improbable into less improbable small components" is daring neo-Darwinism.



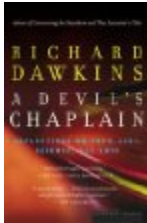
### [Unweaving the Rainbow: Science, Delusion and the Appetite for Wonder](#)

#### **^ Richard Dawkins**

Keats complained that Newton's experiments with prisms had destroyed all the poetry of the rainbow. Not so, says Oxford biologist Dawkins (*The Selfish Gene*) who, in an eloquent if prickly defense of the scientific enterprise, calls on the "two cultures" of science and poetry to learn from each other. Yet Dawkins cautions against "bad poetic science," i.e., seductive but misleading metaphors, and cites as an example " 'Gaia': the overrated romantic fancy of the whole world as an organism," a hypothesis proposed by atmospheric scientist James Lovelock and bacteriologist Lynn Margulis. Dawkins (continuing a celebrated battle that has been raging in the *New York Review of Books*) also lambastes paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould for "bad poetry," rejecting Gould's theory of punctuated equilibrium, which holds that new species emerge during relatively short bursts of evolutionary advance. In these conversational, discursive essays, Dawkins is, as always, an elegant, witty popularizer, whether he is offering a crash course in DNA fingerprinting, explaining the origins of "mad cow disease" in weird proteins that spread like self-replicating viruses or discussing male birdsong as an auditory aphrodisiac for female birds. However, in venturing into realms beyond the immediate purview of science, he reveals his own biases, launching into a predictable, rather superficial assault on paranormal research, UFO reports, astrology and psychic phenomena, all of which he dismisses as products of fraud, illusion, sloppy observation or an exploitation of our



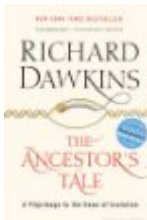
natural appetite for wonder. Dawkins is most interesting when he theorizes that our brains have partly taken over from DNA the role of recording the environment, resulting in "virtual worlds" that alter the terrain in which our genes undergo natural selection.



### [A Devil's Chaplain: Reflections on Hope, Lies, Science, and Love](#)

#### ^^ **Richard Dawkins**

Richard Dawkins has an opinion on everything biological, it seems, and in *A Devil's Chaplain*, everything is biological. Dawkins weighs in on topics as diverse as ape rights, jury trials, religion, and education, all examined through the lens of natural selection and evolution. Although many of these essays have been published elsewhere, this book is something of a greatest-hits compilation, reprinting many of Dawkins' most famous recent compositions. They are well worth re-reading.

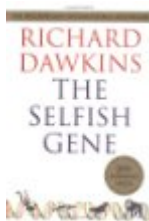


### [The Ancestor's Tale: A Pilgrimage to the Dawn of Evolution](#)

#### **Richard Dawkins**

The diversity of the earth's plant and animal life is amazing—especially when one considers the near certainty that all living things can trace their lineage back to a single ancestor—a bacterium—that lived more than three billion years ago. Taking his cue from Chaucer, noted Oxford biologist Dawkins (*The Selfish Gene*, etc.) works his way narratively backward through time. As the path reaches points where humanity's

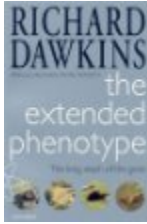
ancestors converge with those of other species—primates, mammals, amphibians and so on—various creatures have tales that carry an evolutionary lesson. The peacock, for example, offers a familiar opportunity to discuss sexual selection, which is soon freshly applied to the question of why humans started walking upright. These passages maintain an erudite yet conversational voice whether discussing the genetic similarities between hippos and whales (a fact "so shocking that I am still reluctant to believe it") or the existence of prehistoric rhino-sized rodents. The book's accessibility is crucial to its success, helping to convince readers that, given a time span of millions of years, unlikely events, like animals passing from one continent to another, become practically inevitable. This clever approach to our extended family tree should prove a natural hit with science readers.



### [The Selfish Gene](#)

#### **Richard Dawkins**

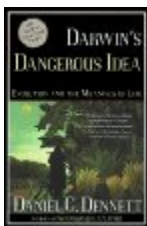
Inheriting the mantle of revolutionary biologist from Darwin, Watson, and Crick, Richard Dawkins forced an enormous change in the way we see ourselves and the world with the publication of *The Selfish Gene*. Suppose, instead of thinking about organisms using genes to reproduce themselves, as we had since Mendel's work was rediscovered, we turn it around and imagine that "our" genes build and maintain us in order to make more genes. That simple reversal seems to answer many puzzlers which had stumped scientists for years, and we haven't thought of evolution in the same way since.



### **The Extended Phenotype: The Long Reach of the Gene**

#### **Richard Dawkins**

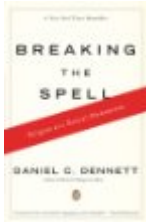
This is a revised edition with a new afterword by Daniel Dennett. The Extended Phenotype carries on from where The Selfish Gene takes off. It is a fascinating look at the evolution of life and natural selection. Dawkins's theory is that individual organisms are replicators that have extended phenotypic effects on society and the world at large, thus our genes have the ability to manipulate other individuals. A worldwide bestseller, this book has become a classic in popular science writing.



### **Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life**

#### **Daniel C. Dennett**

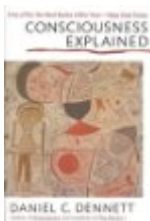
One of the best descriptions of the nature and implications of Darwinian evolution ever written, it is firmly based in biological information and appropriately extrapolated to possible applications to engineering and cultural evolution. Dennett's analyses of the objections to evolutionary theory are unsurpassed. Extremely lucid, wonderfully written, and scientifically and philosophically impeccable.



## **Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon**

### **Daniel C. Dennett**

In his characteristically provocative fashion, Dennett, author of *Darwin's Dangerous Idea* and director of the Center for Cognitive Studies at Tufts University, calls for a scientific, rational examination of religion that will lead us to understand what purpose religion serves in our culture. Much like E.O. Wilson (*In Search of Nature*), Robert Wright (*The Moral Animal*), and Richard Dawkins (*The Selfish Gene*), Dennett explores religion as a cultural phenomenon governed by the processes of evolution and natural selection. Religion survives because it has some kind of beneficial role in human life, yet Dennett argues that it has also played a maleficent role. He elegantly pleads for religions to engage in empirical self-examination to protect future generations from the ignorance so often fostered by religion hiding behind doctrinal smoke screens. Because Dennett offers a tentative proposal for exploring religion as a natural phenomenon, his book is sometimes plagued by generalizations that leave us wanting more. Although much of the ground he covers has already been well trod, he clearly throws down a gauntlet to religion.



## **Consciousness Explained**

## **Daniel C. Dennett**

Consciousness is notoriously difficult to explain. On one hand, there are facts about conscious experience--the way clarinets sound, the way lemonade tastes--that we know subjectively, from the inside. On the other hand, such facts are not readily accommodated in the objective world described by science. How, after all, could the reediness of clarinets or the tartness of lemonade be predicted in advance? Central to Daniel C. Dennett's attempt to resolve this dilemma is the "heterophenomenological" method, which treats reports of introspection nontraditionally--not as evidence to be used in explaining consciousness, but as data to be explained. Using this method, Dennett argues against the myth of the Cartesian theater--the idea that consciousness can be precisely located in space or in time. To replace the Cartesian theater, he introduces his own multiple drafts model of consciousness, in which the mind is a bubbling congeries of unsupervised parallel processing. Finally, Dennett tackles the conventional philosophical questions about consciousness, taking issue not only with the traditional answers but also with the traditional methodology by which they were reached.

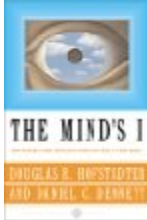


## **Freedom Evolves**

### **19. By Daniel C. Dennett**

"Trading in a supernatural soul for a natural soul-is this a fair bargain?" Dennett, seeking to fend off "caricatures of Darwinian thinking" that plague his philosophical camp, argues in this incendiary, brilliant, even dangerous book that it is. Picking up where he left off in Darwin's Dangerous Idea (a Pulitzer and National Book Award finalist), he zeroes in on free will, a sticking point to the opposing camp. Dennett calls his perspective

"naturalism," a synthesis of philosophy and the natural sciences; his critics have called it determinism, reductionism, bioprophecy, Lamarckianism. Drawing on evolutionary biology, neuroscience, economic game theory, philosophy and Richard Dawkins's meme, the author argues that there is indeed such a thing as free will, but it "is not a preexisting feature of our existence, like the law of gravity." Dennett seeks to counter scientific caricature with precision, empiricism and philosophical outcomes derived from rigorous logic. This book comprises a kind of toolbox of intellectual exercises favoring cultural evolution, the idea that culture, morality and freedom are as much a result of evolution by natural selection as our physical and genetic attributes. Yet genetic determinism, he argues, does not imply inevitability, as his critics may claim, nor does it cancel out the soul. Rather, he says, it bolsters the ideals of morality and choice, and illustrates why those ideals must be nurtured and guarded. Dennett clearly relishes pushing other scientists' buttons. Though natural selection itself is still a subject of controversy, the author, director of the Center for Cognitive Studies at Tufts, most certainly is in the vanguard of the philosophy of science.



### **The Mind's I: Fantasies and Reflections on Self & Soul**

#### **20. By Daniel C. Dennett**

From some of the 20th century's greatest thinkers, essays on topics as diverse as artificial intelligence, evolution, science fiction, philosophy, reductionism, and consciousness. With contributions from Jorge Luis Borges, Richard Dawkins, John Searle, and Robert Nozick, *The Mind's I* explores the meaning of self and consciousness through the perspectives of literature, artificial intelligence, psychology, and other disciplines. In selections that range from fiction to scientific speculations about thinking machines,

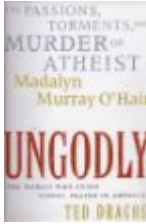
artificial intelligence, and the nature of the brain, Hofstadter and Dennett present a variety of conflicting visions of the self and the soul as explored through the writings of some of the twentieth century's most renowned thinkers.



### **The Jesus Puzzle: Did Christianity Begin with a Mythical Christ? Challenging the Existence of an Historical Jesus**

#### **21. By Earl Doherty**

Why are the events of the Gospel story, and its central character Jesus of Nazareth, not found in the New Testament epistles? Why does Paul's divine Christ seem to have no connection to the Gospel Jesus, but closely resembles the many pagan savior gods of the time who lived only in myth? Why, given the spread of Christianity across the Roman Empire in the first century, did only one Christian community compose a story of Jesus' life and death-the Gospel of Mark-while every other Gospel simply copied and reworked the first one? Why is every detail in the Gospel story of Jesus' trial and crucifixion drawn from passages in the Old Testament? The answer to these and other questions surrounding the New Testament will come as a shock to those who imagine that the origins of Christianity and the figure of Jesus are securely represented by Christian tradition and the Gospels. With the arrival of the third millennium, the time has come to face the stunning realization that for the last 1900 years, Christianity has revered a founder and icon of the faith who probably never existed.



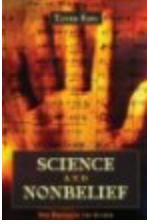
## **UnGodly: the Passions, Torments and Murder of Atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hair**

### **22. By Ted Dracos**

Madalyn Murray O'Hair, the notorious atheist who launched the Supreme Court case taking prayer out of America's public schools, was also the victim (along with her son and granddaughter) in a brutal Texas murder that went unsolved for years. Dracos, a print and TV journalist who has consulted for America's Most Wanted, reviews the case in full true-crime mode, the prose purpler with every page. But in a departure from genre conventions, the book heaps more abuse on the victims than the killer. It's one thing to deflate the "godless Joan of Arc" legend built up around O'Hair by discussing the shortcomings in her legal arguments or speaking candidly about her pervasive bigotry, but those revelations are just a warmup for gratuitously cruel swipes at her physical appearance and lurid intimations of lesbian incest. (There's even a brazen assertion that her husband was paid to marry her by the FBI so they could keep tabs on her.) For all its excesses, though, the narrative handles the family's disappearance and the subsequent investigations well, describing how an ex-convict finagled his way into O'Hair's inner circle and manipulated her and her finances, making it look as if O'Hair had fled the country. The ruse was good enough to fool the local police (portrayed here as bumbling incompetents) for years, until an investigative reporter and a private eye began to uncover the details. The book's pulp sensibility, complete with fevered imaginings of O'Hair's thoughts, may obscure the subtleties of her life, succeeding only in its main priority of unraveling the mystery behind her death.

**E**

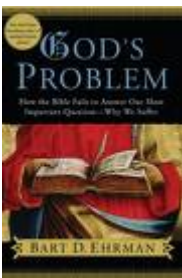




## Science and Nonbelief

### **23. By Taner Edis**

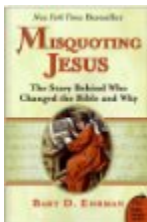
In this wide-ranging overview, physicist and acclaimed science writer Taner Edis examines the relationship between today's sciences and religious nonbelief. Beginning with a brief history of science and philosophical doubt, Edis goes on to describe those theories in contemporary science that challenge spiritual views by favoring a naturalistic conception of the world. He provides a very readable, nontechnical introduction to the leading scientific ideas that impinge upon religious belief in the areas of modern physics and cosmology, evolutionary biology, and cognitive and brain science. He also shows how science supplies naturalistic explanations for allegedly miraculous and paranormal phenomena and explains widespread belief in the supernatural. Finally, he addresses the political context of debates over science and nonbelief as well as questions about morality.



## God's Problem: How the Bible Fails to Answer Our Most Important Question--Why We Suffer

#### 24. By Bart D. Ehrman

In this sometimes provocative, often pedantic memoir of his own attempts to answer the great theological question about the persistence of evil in the world, Ehrman, a UNC–Chapel Hill religion professor, refuses to accept the standard theological answers. Through close readings of every section of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, he discovers that the Bible offers numerous answers that are often contradictory. The prophets think God sends pain and suffering as a punishment for sin and also that human beings who oppress others create such misery; the writers who tell the Jesus story and the Joseph stories think God works through suffering to achieve redemptive purposes; the writers of Job view pain as God's test; and the writers of Job and Ecclesiastes conclude that we simply cannot know why we suffer. In the end, frustrated that the Bible offers such a range of opposing answers, Ehrman gives up on his Christian faith and fashions a peculiarly utilitarian solution to suffering and evil in the world: first, make this life as pleasing to ourselves as we can and then make it pleasing to others. Although Ehrman's readings of the biblical texts are instructive, he fails to convince readers that these are indeed God's problems, and he fails to advance the conversation any further than it's already come.



#### [Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why](#)

#### 25. By Bart D. Ehrman

The popular perception of the Bible as a divinely perfect book receives scant support from Ehrman, who sees in Holy Writ ample evidence of human fallibility and

ecclesiastical politics. Though himself schooled in evangelical literalism, Ehrman has come to regard his earlier faith in the inerrant inspiration of the Bible as misguided, given that the original texts have disappeared and that the extant texts available do not agree with one another. Most of the textual discrepancies, Ehrman acknowledges, matter little, but some do profoundly affect religious doctrine. To assess how ignorant or theologically manipulative scribes may have changed the biblical text, modern scholars have developed procedures for comparing diverging texts. And in language accessible to nonspecialists, Ehrman explains these procedures and their results. He further explains why textual criticism has frequently sparked intense controversy, especially among scripture-alone Protestants. In discounting not only the authenticity of existing manuscripts but also the inspiration of the original writers, Ehrman will deeply divide his readers. Although he addresses a popular audience, he undercuts the very religious attitudes that have made the Bible a popular book. Still, this is a useful overview for biblical history collections.

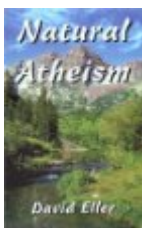


### **Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew**

#### **26. By Bart D. Ehrman**

What if Marcion's canon—which consisted only of Luke's Gospel and Paul's letters, entirely omitting the Old Testament—had become Christianity's canon? What if the Ebionites—who believed Jesus was completely human and not divine—had ruled the day as the Orthodox Christian party? What if various early Christian writings, such as the Gospel of Thomas or the Secret Gospel of Mark, had been allowed into the canonical New Testament? Ehrman (*The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*), a professor of religion at UNC Chapel Hill, offers answers to these and other questions in this book, which rehearses the now-familiar story of the tremendous diversity of early Christianity and its

eventual suppression by a powerful "proto-orthodox" faction. The proto-orthodox Christians won out over many other groups, and bequeathed to us the four Gospels, a church hierarchy, a set of practices and beliefs, and doctrines such as the Trinity. Ehrman eloquently characterizes some of the movements and Scriptures that were lost, such as the Ebionites and the Secret Gospel of Mark, as he outlines the many strands of Christianity that competed for attention in the second and third centuries. He issues an important reminder that there was no such thing as a monolithic Christian orthodoxy before the fourth century.



### [Natural Atheism](#)

#### **27. By David Eller**

"The most important new title from American Atheist Press since the death of Madalyn Murray O'Hair/" -- Frank R. Zindler, American Atheist, Summer, 2004 NATURAL ATHEISM contains an introduction explaining "What is Atheism?" plus 12 chapters and a bibliography.



### [Atheism Advanced: Further Thoughts of a Freethinker](#)

#### **28. By David Eller**

Only an anthropologist armed with personal experience of the full spectrum of religious behavior ranging from the complex and confusing adumbrations of religiosity seen among the Warlpiri of Australia to the familiar pomp of pontiffs in the Vatican could show so clearly what 'religion' is really all about and why it is so often anti-human and a threat to the survival of our species. Only an Atheist well schooled in the literature of philosophy in general and Atheism in particular could be in a position to see what needs to be done to advance Atheism not only in the theoretical sense but in the political sense as well. Dr. David Eller satisfies both requirements.

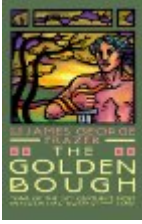
**F**



### **Unauthorized Version: Truth and Fiction in the Bible**

#### **29. By Robin Lane Fox**

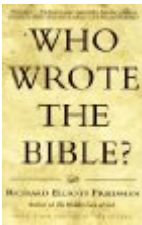
The author of *Pagans and Christians* ( LJ 1/87) gives a detailed exposition of the historical origins (or lack thereof) of the Bible. Fox claims that he believes "in the Bible, but not in God," and thus explores the Bible as a historian. His version is "unauthorized," not because it has been suppressed, but because the Bible does not proclaim its authority. He reaches for what the authors of the Bible intended, realizing that the Bible is not the word of God and that much of it is not historically accurate or factual. Fox does not approach his subject as an antagonist, but with the care and knowledge to make the text more meaningful. This book deserves a place in all libraries.



### **Golden Bough: The Roots of Religion and Folklore**

#### **30. By James George Frazer**

The thesis on the origins of magic and religion that it elaborates "will be long and laborious," Frazer warns readers, "but may possess something of the charm of a voyage of discovery, in which we shall visit many strange lands, with strange foreign peoples, and still stranger customs." Chief among those customs--at least as the book is remembered in the popular imagination--is the sacrificial killing of god-kings to ensure bountiful harvests, which Frazer traces through several cultures, including in his elaborations the myths of Adonis, Osiris, and Balder.



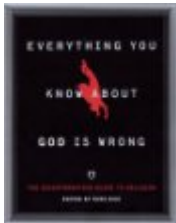
### **Who Wrote the Bible?**

#### **31. By Richard E. Friedman**

Friedman carefully sifts through clues available in the text of the Hebrew Bible and those provided by biblical archaeology searching for the writer(s) of, primarily, the Pentateuch. He does so with clarity and engaging style, turning a potentially dry scholarly inquiry into a lively detective story. The reader is guided through the historical circumstances that occasioned the writing of the sources underlying the Five Books of Moses and the

combining of these diverse sources into the final literary product. According to Friedman, the most controversial part of his case is the identification of the writer and date of the Priestly source. This book is neither comprehensive nor unduly complex, making it a good introductory text for beginners and nonspecialists.

## G



### [Everything You Know About God Is Wrong: The Disinformation Guide to Religion](#)

#### 32. By Neil Gaiman

In the new mega-anthology from best-selling editor Russ Kick, more than fifty writers, reporters, and researchers invade the inner sanctum for an unrestrained look at the wild and wooly world of organized belief. Richard Dawkins shows us the strange, scary properties of religion; Neil Gaiman turns a biblical atrocity story into a comic (that almost sent a publisher to prison); Erik Davis looks at what happens when religion and California collide; Mike Dash eyes stigmatics; Douglas Rushkoff exposes the trouble with Judaism; Paul Krassner reveals his "Confessions of an Atheist"; and best-selling lexicographer Jonathon Green interprets the language of religious prejudice.



### [The Atheists Are Revolting!](#)

### 33. By Nick Gisburne

From The Rational Response Squad to The Blasphemy Challenge. From The God Delusion to The End of Faith and The God Who Wasn't There, atheists are on the move and in the news. Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Brian Flemming, all have set the tone for modern atheism, openly challenging religion in society and to demand equal air time in an increasingly intolerant religious/political environment. Outspoken atheist Nick Gisburne has written a new book for atheists, at times openly parodying Christianity, but always keeping both eyes firmly on the central, serious theme: give no respect to a belief system based on ancient myths, for which there is no proof. This book hacks at the shiny veneer of 'God is love' and reveals the true message of the Christian religion: 'serve God or burn'. Part of the rising phenomenon known as the 'YouTube Atheists', popular video blogger Nick Gisburne returns with a feast of short, sharp arguments to rattle the foundations of Christianity. Look out, The Atheists Are Revolting!



### [The Structure of Evolutionary Theory](#)

### 34. By Stephen Jay Gould

Over the past few years, a series of big books on evolution have been published: Human Natures by Paul Ehrlich, Consilience by E.O. Wilson and What Evolution Is by Ernst Mayr, to name just three. Now comes the biggest of them all (physically, at least) a 1,400-plus-page cinderblock of a book from Harvard zoology professor Stephen Jay Gould (The Lying Stones of Marrakech; Ontogeny and Phylogeny). The culmination of about 25 years of research and study, this book traces the history of evolutionary thought



and charts a path for its future. After Darwin wrote *The Origin of Species* in 1859, scientists created a synthesis of genetics, ecology and paleontology to explain how natural selection could produce change and form new species. Gould thinks that this "modern synthesis" has hardened into a dogma stifling the science. Gould claims that an obsession with "selfish genes" and simplistic versions of natural selection blinds researchers to the significance of new discoveries about how evolution really works. The rules by which embryos develop, for example, create constraints that channel the flow of evolution. Asteroid impacts and other catastrophes can send evolution off on unpredictable trajectories. And selection, Gould contends, may act not just on individuals or their genes, but on entire species or groups of species, and in ways we've only begun to understand. This book presents Gould in all his incarnations: as a digressive historian, original thinker and cunning polemicist. It is certainly not a perfect work. Gould gives short shrift to the tremendous discoveries spurred by "Darwinian fundamentalism," while he sometimes overplays the importance of hazy theoretical arguments that support his own claims. But even Gould's opponents will recognize this as the magnum opus of one of the world's leading evolutionary thinkers.

## H



### [An Atheist Epic: The Complete Unexpurgated Story of How Bible and Prayers Were Removed from the Public Schools of the United States](#)

#### **35. By Madalyn Murray O'Hair**

*An Atheist Epic* tells the dramatic story of how fourteen-year-old William J. Murray III and his mother Madalyn Murray (later O'Hair) challenged the compulsory recitation of

the Lord's Prayer and forced reading of the Christian Bible in the public schools of Baltimore. It tells of the beatings young Bill received with the approval of school authorities, police, and courts, and of the attacks on the Murray home instigated and led by good Christians -- attacks that led quite directly to the fatal heart attack suffered by Mrs. Murray's father. It describes the Christian execution of little Garth's kitten and the sorry demise of the two 'Atheist dogs' that Bill and Garth had as companions after loss of the kitten. Virtually all the religious attacks upon the First Amendment-mandated separation of state and church that America has endured since 1963 have been in retaliation to 'Murray v. Curlett' -- the case that Madalyn successfully took all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court to obtain the ruling that forced prayer and Bible reading were unconstitutional. The improbable series of events that led to that decision are painted here in colorful detail.



### **What On Earth Is An Atheist!**

**36. By Madalyn Murray O'Hair**

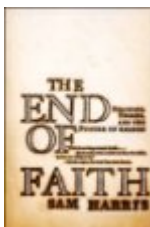
This is the first book Madalyn Murray O'Hair ever wrote. It is composed of transcripts of her landmark 1968 Atheist radio broadcasts made under the aegis of the Society of Separationists, the parent organization from which American Atheists Inc. later developed. This corrected new edition allows you to join Madalyn as she expounds upon an avalanche of theological and political topics: government giveaways of property to churches; the real 'religious foundations' of the United States; the philosophical and historical foundations of Atheism; Atheist thinkers and writers of various epochs; the dozens, not legions, of Christian martyrs put to death in antiquity; errors and absurdities of the Bible; and more.



### [Atheist Primer: Did You Know All the Gods Came from the Same Place?](#)

#### 37. By Madalyn Murray O'Hair

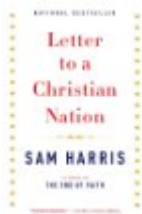
Open the book and you'll find an illustrated story explaining where gods originated. O'Hair takes you on the journey of the gods and how they originated in the minds of people to explain the universe, the world, even the weather. She places the onus of gods squarely on the shoulders of men. Crafted for the open mind of a child, depicting gods throughout history and across the globe, she is explicit in her position about the absurdity of Gods. O'Hair's simple language, coupled with Joe Kirby's wonderful cartoons of deities, keep the work grounded and light. I laughed out loud. I shared it with others standing near me. Then I read it again, and again. (The book is only 30 pages and takes five or ten minutes to read - yet it's so powerful.) The author gets it. She conveys it well and she is unabashed and forthright. She covers gods and war, the anthropomorphic nature of gods, the main gods, and the historic gods, and in the end, wages a strong case for the death of gods. My thoughts after reading the primer turned to my daughter. Should she share this with her Christian friends in her elementary school? The case, so cogently argued in an Atheist Primer, will take her Christian classmates aback. Her friends, unable to respond, will turn to their parents. Oh, I so look forward to our next elementary school ice cream social!



## The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason

### 38. By Sam Harris

Sam Harris cranks out blunt, hard-hitting chapters to make his case for why faith itself is the most dangerous element of modern life. And if the devil's in the details, then you'll find Satan waiting at the back of the book in the very substantial notes section where Harris saves his more esoteric discussions to avoid sidetracking the urgency of his message.



## Letter to a Christian Nation

### 39. By Sam Harris

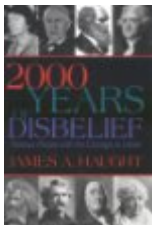
“Harris has consolidated his disdain for religion in a withering attack on Christianity, delivered in the form of an open letter. . . . Mr. Harris wants to grab your lapels and give you a good shake. . . . [he] makes a good case for a new and intellectually honest conversation about morality and human suffering.”—NY Observer



## 50 Reasons People Give for Believing in a God

#### 40. By Guy P. Harrison

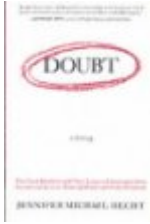
Religion is as universal as language, which hints at a biological basis. Why did our ancestors evolve an attraction to the supernatural? The fundamental question is not whether this attraction is rational or not - which is the subject of a dozen recent provocative books -- but what exactly faith delivers to those who possess it. The present book treats this question respectfully, listening to the answer of the believers themselves, which seems an excellent place to start.



#### [2000 Years of Disbelief: Famous People With the Courage to Doubt](#)

#### 41. By James A. Haught

The English speaking world rarely acknowledges the many and varied gifts that "disbelievers" have bestowed upon humanity. Churchmen generally contend that great figures in history, such as America's founders, were conventional believers. But author James A. Haught demonstrates that this just isn't true. In 2000 Years Of Disbelief: Famous People With The Courage To Doubt, he offers a spirited collection of biographical sketches and choice quotations to set the record straight -- intelligent, educated people tend to doubt the supernatural. It is hardly surprising to find a high ratio of religious skeptics among major thinkers, scientists, writers, reformers, scholars, champions of democracy, and other world changers -- people called "great" in history. The advance of Western civilization has been partly a story of gradual victory over oppressive religion, and these brilliant doubters were men and women who didn't pray, didn't kneel at altars, didn't make pilgrimages, and didn't recite creeds.



## **Doubt: A History: The Great Doubters and Their Legacy of Innovation**

### **42. By Jennifer Michael Hecht**

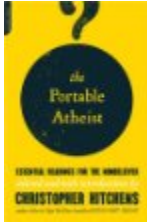
"Hecht does us freethinker apologists a great service here. She gives us an eloquent and exhaustive account of the process of doubt through history. For the most part, the people she depicts here are skeptics, rather than cynics. Their humanistic values come from their own evaluations and struggles with objective truth, rather than a wholesale rejection based on suspicion of motives of others" - [Gregory Mills](#)



## **God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything**

### **43. By Christopher Hitchens**

If God intended reasonable men and women to worship Him without embarrassment, why did He create Christopher Hitchens? It was a fatal miscalculation. In *God Is Not Great*, Hitchens not only demonstrates that religion is man-made — and made badly — he laughs the whole monstrosity to rubble. This is a profoundly clever book, addressing the most pressing social issue of our time, by one of the finest writers in the land.



### **The Portable Atheist: Essential Readings for the Nonbeliever**

#### **44. By Christopher Hitchens**

Hitchens, an avowed atheist and author of the bestseller *God Is Not Great*, is a formidable intellectual who finds the notion of belief in God to be utter nonsense. The author is clear in his introduction that religion has caused more than its fair share of world problems. "Religion invents a problem where none exists by describing the wicked as also made in the image of god and the sexually nonconformist as existing in a state of incurable mortal sin that can incidentally cause floods and earthquakes." The readings Hitchens chooses to bolster his atheist argument are indeed engaging and important. Hobbes, Spinoza, Mill and Marx are some of the heavyweights representing a philosophical viewpoint. From the world of literature the author assembles excerpts from Shelley, Twain, Conrad, Orwell and Updike. All are enjoyable to read and will make even religious believers envious of the talent gathered for this anthology



### **Is Christianity Good for the World? A Debate**

#### **45. By Christopher Hitchens & Douglas Wilson**

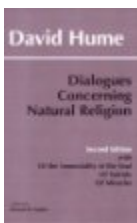
This is a joyful book. Both men clearly love the subject, love wrestling with it and each other, and do so with an evident—and expressed—sense of gratitude. Whatever side of the debate you align yourself with, my guess is that you find that as refreshing as I do, given how joyless so much of the discourse on both sides of this debate tends to be.



### **The Quotable Atheist: Ammunition for Non-Believers, Political Junkies, Gadflies, and Those Generally Hell-Bound**

**46. By Jack Huberman**

Surprisingly, no book of quotations on God and religion by atheists and agnostics exists. Luckily, for the millions of American nonbelievers who have quietly stewed for years as the religious right made gains in politics and culture, the wait is over. Bestselling author Jack Huberman's zeitgeist sense has honed into the backlash building against religious fundamentalism and collected a veritable treasure trove of quotes by philosophers, scientists, poets, writers, artists, entertainers, and political figures. His colorful cast of atheists includes Karen Armstrong, Lance Armstrong, Jules Feiffer, Federico Fellini, H. L. Mencken, Ian McKellen, Isaac Singer, Jonathan Swift, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Virginia Woolf and the Marquis de Sade.





## [Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion: The Posthumous Essays of the Immortality of the Soul and of Suicide](#)

47. By **David Hume & Richard H. Popkin**

In the posthumously published "Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion", the Enlightenment philosopher David Hume attacked many of the traditional arguments for the existence of God, expressing the belief that religion is founded on ignorance and irrational fears. Though calm and courteous in tone - at times even tactfully ambiguous - the conversations between Hume's vividly realized fictional figures form perhaps the most searching case ever mounted against orthodox Christian theological thinking and the 'deism' of the time, which pointed to the wonders of creation as conclusive evidence of God's Design. Hume's characters debate these issues with extraordinary passion, lucidity and humor, in one of the most compelling philosophical works ever written.

I

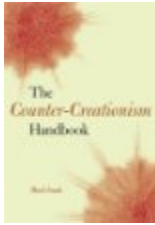


## [Challenging the Bible:: Selections from the Writings And Speeches of Robert G. Ingersoll](#)

48. By **Robert G. Ingersoll**

Challenging the Bible contains masterful insights about the Bible from one of the world's greatest freethinkers and orators of all time--Robert G. Ingersoll. Editor and religious expert Dean Tipton has selected some of the best material from thousands and thousands

of pages of Ingersoll's writings and recorded speeches that challenge the Bible and its followers.

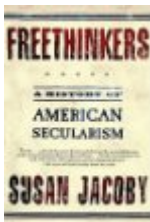


### **[The Counter-Creationism Handbook](#)**

#### **49. By Mark Isaak**

As any experienced debater can tell you, one essential ingredient to success in public debate is to know your opponents arguments. That idea is thoroughly reflected in this guide to the debate on creationism. School teachers, librarians and public officials are often caught unprepared by requests of creationists to remove books or modify curricula. This guide to many of the most common arguments of creationists will allow public officials the means of appreciating creationist concerns and perhaps countering their requests....Each entry summarizes the creationist argument and provides a rebuttal based on scientific evidence. Documenting both sides of these arguments is important for following up on particular issues; so Isaaks bibliographies provide both creationist and scientific sources. This consistency in coverage means the guide can serve adherents to either side in this debate. This unique guide should be of value in both public and academic library collections.

## **J**



## [Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism](#)

### 50. By Susan Jacoby

Is America really one nation under God? Not according to Pulitzer Prize–finalist Jacoby (*Wild Justice*, etc.), who argues that it is America's secularist "freethinkers" who formed the bedrock upon which our nation was built. Jacoby contends that it's one of "the great unresolved paradoxes" that religion occupies such an important place in a nation founded on separation of church and state. She traces the role of "freethinkers," a term first coined in the 17th century, in the formation of America from the writing of the Constitution to some of our greatest social revolutions, including abolition, feminism, labor, civil rights and the dawning of Darwin's theory of evolution.



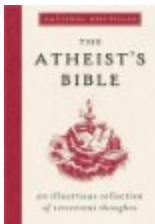
## [The Age of American Unreason](#)

### 51. By Susan Jacoby

Inspired by Richard Hofstadter's trenchant 1963 cultural analysis *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, Jacoby (*Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism*) has produced an engaging, updated and meticulously thought-out continuation of her academic idol's research. Dismayed by the average U.S. citizen's political and social apathy and the overall crisis of memory and knowledge involving everything about the way we learn and think, Jacoby passionately argues that the nation's current cult of unreason has deadly and destructive consequences (the war in Iraq, for one) and traces the seeds of current anti-intellectualism (and its partner in crime, antirationalism) back to post-WWII society. Unafraid of pointing fingers, she singles out mass media and the resurgence of

fundamentalist religion as the primary vectors of anti-intellectualism, while also having harsh words for pseudoscientists. Through historical research, Jacoby breaks down popular beliefs that the 1950s were a cultural wasteland and the 1960s were solely a breeding ground for liberals. Though sometimes partial to inflated prose (America's endemic anti-intellectual tendencies have been grievously exacerbated by a new species of semiconscious anti-rationalism), Jacoby has assembled an erudite mix of personal anecdotes, cultural history and social commentary to decry America's retreat into junk thought.

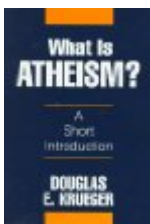
**K**



### **The Atheist's Bible: An Illustrious Collection of Irreverent Thoughts**

**52. By Joan Konner**

"If atheism's going mass you need not just a sacred text but an easily portable one..." -- Philadelphia Inquirer "This slim, attractive volume will amuse nonbelievers -- and, ironically, cause them to spend hours reading about God and religion." -- Boston Globe



### **What Is Atheism?: A Short Introduction**

### 53. By Douglas E. Krueger

Many questions and concerns arise when believers question the purpose and meaning they suspect is lacking in the lives of nonbelievers. Douglas Krueger contends that atheism is a powerful alternative to religion, yet it is also one of the most misunderstood because people harbor preconceived ideas about atheism. This concise introduction to subject has been designed with the general audience in mind.

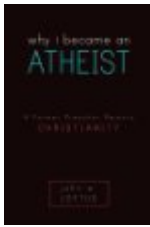
**L**



### [The Bible Unmasked](#)

### 54. By Joseph Lewis

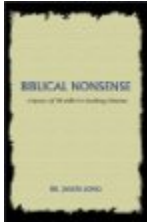
In taking as my subject for this book the question of the morality, or rather the immorality of the Bible, I realize at once the importance and delicacy of the subject. This is true, because what is immoral in one age and time, may at some other time, be considered moral, and what we to-day may consider moral and acceptable, may at some future date be condemned as being immoral. Therefore, the subject that I have chosen for my book is as delicate as it is serious, as there is always the possibility of saying something that may be entirely at variance with the conceptions of some of us regarding morality and its phases.



## [Why I Became an Atheist: A Former Preacher Rejects Christianity](#)

### **55. By John W. Loftus**

For about two decades, John W Loftus was a devout evangelical Christian, an ordained minister of the Church of Christ, and an ardent apologist for Christianity. With three degrees - in philosophy, theology, and philosophy of religion - he was adept at using rational argumentation to defend the faith. But over the years, as he ministered to various congregations and taught at Christian colleges, doubts about the credibility of key Christian tenets began to creep into his thinking. By the late 1990s, he experienced a full-blown crisis of faith, brought on by emotional upheavals in his personal life as well as the gathering weight of the doubts he had long entertained. In this honest appraisal of his journey from believer to atheist, Loftus carefully explains the experiences and the reasoning process that led him to reject religious belief. The bulk of the book is his 'cumulative case' against Christianity. Here, he lays out the philosophical, scientific, and historical reasons that can be raised against Christian belief. From the implications of religious diversity, the authority of faith vs reason, and the problem of evil, to the contradictions between the Bible and the scientific worldview, the conflicts between traditional dogma and historical evidence, and much more, Loftus covers a great deal of intellectual terrain. For every issue, he succinctly summarises the various points of view and provides references for further reading. In conclusion, he describes the implications of life without belief in God, some liberating, some sobering. This frank critique of Christian belief from a former insider will interest freethinkers as well as anyone with doubts about the claims of religion.

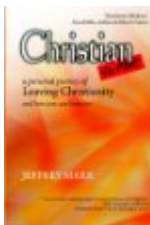


### **Biblical Nonsense: A Review of the Bible for Doubting Christians**

**56. By Jason Long**

Biblical Nonsense is a broad look at the tremendous problem of associating divinity with the world's most popular book. This part-philosophical, part-scientific overview explores the Bible's divine treachery, scientific mistakes, historical errors, false prophecies, and comical absurdities. Biblical Nonsense also expands beyond these standard reasons for skepticism by tackling the rationale behind the emergence and perpetuation of Christianity, psychological and sociocultural reasons that drive Christians to cling to their beliefs, and illogical methods of argumentation invoked in the defense of the Bible.

**M**

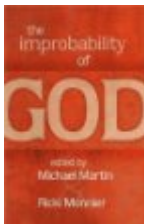


### **Christian No More: On Leaving Christianity, Debunking Christianity, and Embracing Atheism and Freethinking**

**57. By Jeffrey Mark**

This book is a great resource for doubting Christians needing support, agnostics looking for clarification, and atheists looking for new and unique arguments. Author Jeffrey Mark

dismantles Christianity, showing how it's founded on myths that have no basis in reality, and how it is built on a theology of threats and hell that aren't valid. Mark details his own journey, first as a devout Christian in a mainstream church, to finally finding happiness as he realized the Bible simply couldn't be real -- nor are the threats of eternal damnation. And Mark shows why it can't be real, taking the reader through a wonderful journey of science, history, myth, and even theology. Author Guy P Harrison calls this book, "an intellectual broadside to the world's most popular religion." He adds, "One wonders how any honest and thinking Christian can confront the material contained in this remarkable book and not come away with a very different view of their religion."



### **[The Improbability of God](#)**

#### **58. By Michael Martin**

A growing number of powerful arguments have been formulated by philosophers and logicians in recent years demonstrating that the existence of God is improbable. These arguments assume that God's existence is possible but argue that the weight of the empirical evidence is against God's actual existence. This unique anthology collects most of the important arguments for the improbability of God that have been published since the mid-1900s. The editors make each argument clear and accessible by providing a helpful summary. In addition, they arrange this diverse collection of arguments for the improbability of God into four thematic groups: Part 1 contains cosmological arguments based on the weight of the evidence relative to the origin of the universe; Part 2 presents teleological arguments based on the weight of the evidence relative to the order in the universe; Part 3 deals with inductive evil arguments based on the weight of the evidence relative to the widespread and horrendous evil in the world; and Part 4 contains nonbelief



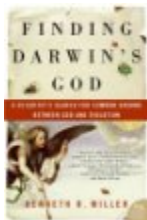
arguments based on the weight of the evidence relative to the widespread nonbelief or the reasonable nonbelief in the world.



### **The Cambridge Companion to Atheism**

#### **59. By Michael Martin**

This timely volume appears in the midst of what many see as a resurgence of interest in and enthusiasm for atheism, a resurgence that may result from a reaction to resurgent religious fundamentalism at home and abroad[...]the book does contain some resources that scholars will find valuable, and its introductory-level approach is appropriate given the book's aims.

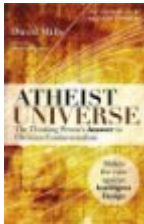


### **Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground Between God and Evolution**

#### **60. By Kenneth R. Miller**

Though he takes a different tack than Wyller (above), Miller tries to draw a straight line between two apparently opposing ideas: the theory of evolution and belief in a creator. In a more humanistic account than Wyller's, Miller, a professor of biology at Brown

University, explains the difference between evolution as validated scientific fact and as an evolving theory. He illustrates his contentions with examples from astronomy, geology, physics and molecular biology, confronting the illogic of creationists with persuasive reasons based on the known physical properties of the universe and the demonstrable effects of time on the radioactivity of various elements. Then standing firmly on Darwinian ground, he turns to take on, with equal vigor, his outspoken colleagues in science who espouse a materialistic, agnostic or atheistic vision of reality. Along the way, he addresses such important questions as free will in a planned universe. Miller is particularly incisive when he discusses the emotional reasons why many people oppose evolution and the scientific community's befuddled, often hostile, reaction to sincere religious belief. Throughout, he displays an impressive fairness, which he communicates in friendly, conversational prose. This is a book that will stir readers of both science and theology, perhaps satisfying neither, but challenging both to open their minds.



### **[Atheist Universe: The Thinking Person's Answer to Christian Fundamentalism](#)**

#### **61. By David Mills**

Clear, concise, and persuasive, *Atheist Universe* details exactly why God is unnecessary to explain the universe and life's diversity, organization, and beauty. The author thoroughly rebuts every argument that claims to "prove" God's existence — arguments based on logic, common sense, philosophy, ethics, history and science. *Atheist Universe* avoids the esoteric language used by philosophers and presents its scientific evidence in simple lay terms, making it a richly entertaining and easy-to-read introduction to atheism. A comprehensive primer, it addresses all the historical and scientific questions, including:

Is there proof that God does not exist? What evidence is there of Jesus' resurrection? Can creation science reconcile scripture with the latest scientific discoveries?

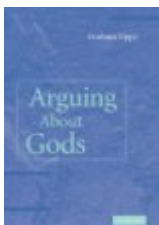
**O**



### [Atheist Manifesto: The Case Against Christianity, Judaism, and Islam](#)

**62. By Michel Onfray**

This tightly argued, hugely controversial work convincingly demonstrates how the world's three major monotheistic religions-Christianity, Judaism, and Islam-have attempted to suppress knowledge, science, pleasure, and desire, often condemning nonbelievers to death. If Nietzsche proclaimed the "Death of God," Onfray starts from the premise that not only is God still very much alive, but increasingly controlled by fundamentalists who pose a danger to the human race. Documenting the ravages from religious intolerance over the centuries, the author makes a strong case against the three religions for demanding faith, belief, obedience and submission, and for extolling the "next life" at the expense of the here and now. Not since Nietzsche has a work so groundbreaking and explosive appeared to question the role of the world's dominant religions.

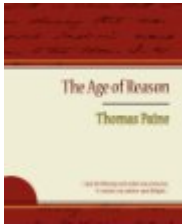


### [Arguing about Gods](#)

### 63. By Graham Oppy

Graham Oppy examines contemporary arguments for and against the existence of God. He shows that none of these arguments are persuasive enough to change the minds of those participants on the question of the existence of God. His conclusion is supported by detailed analyses of contemporary arguments, as well as by the development of a theory about the purpose of arguments, and the criteria that should be used in judging whether or not an argument is successful. Oppy discusses the work of a wide array of philosophers, including Anselm, Aquinas, Descartes, Locke, Leibniz, Kant and Hume, and more recently, Plantinga, Dembski, White, Dawkins, Bergman, Gale, and Pruss.

**P**



### [The Age of Reason](#)

### 64. By Thomas Paine

I put the following work under your protection. It contains my opinion upon Religion. You will do me the justice to remember, that I have always strenuously supported the Right of every man to his opinion, however different that opinion might be to mine. He who denies to another this right, makes a slave of himself to his present opinion, because he precludes himself the right of changing it. The most formidable weapon against errors of every kind is Reason. I have never used any other, and I trust I never shall. Your affectionate friend and fellow citizen, Thomas Paine.



## [Superstition: Belief in the Age of Science](#)

65. By **Robert L. Park**

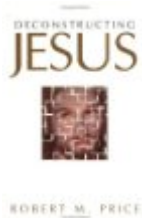
Science is the only way of knowing—everything else is just superstition, says physicist Park (Voodoo Science) in this thinly argued rehash of the debate between science and religion. Among other questions, Park revisits experiments regarding the healing power of intercessory prayer (prayer for the healing of others), citing several studies that he claims are meaningless because it is impossible to measure prayer. Further, he says, only science, not prayer, can protect us from so-called acts of God, like a tsunami. Park argues against the existence of the soul by debunking a tale of reincarnation and even interprets the Bible to his own purposes. But this chapter also shows how disjointed his arguments can be, as he jumps from the Plan B contraceptive to genes and memes to stem cells and ghosts. Such issues have been covered more eloquently and in greater depth by thinkers like Daniel Dennett in *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*.



## [Irreligion: A Mathematician Explains Why the Arguments for God Just Don't Add Up](#)

66. By **John Allen Paulos**

Few of the recent books on atheism have been worth reading just for wit and style, but this is one of them: Paulos is truly funny. Despite the title, the Temple University math professor doesn't actually discuss mathematics much, which will be a relief to any numerically challenged readers who felt intimidated by his previous book *Innumeracy: Mathematical Illiteracy and Its Consequences*. In this short primer (just the gist with an occasional jest), Paulos tackles 12 of the most common arguments for God, including the argument from design, the idea that a moral universality points to a creator God, the notion of first causes and the argument from coincidence, among others. Along the way, he intersperses irreverent and entertaining little chapterlets that contain his musings on various subjects, including a rather hilarious imagined IM exchange with God that slyly parodies Neale Donald Walsch's *Conversations with God*. Why does solemnity tend to infect almost all discussions of religion? Paulos asks, clearly bemoaning the dearth of humor. This little book goes a long way toward correcting the problem, and provides both atheists and religious apologists some digestible food for thought along the way.

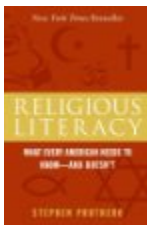


### **Deconstructing Jesus**

#### **67. By Robert M. Price**

In *DECONSTRUCTING JESUS*, author Robert M. Price argues that liberal Protestant scholars who produce reconstructions of the "historical Jesus" are, as Albert Schweitzer pointed out long ago, creating their own Jesus icons to authorize a liberal religious agenda. Christian faith, whether fundamentalist or theologically liberal, invariably tends to produce a Jesus capable of playing the role of a religious figurehead. In this way, "Jesus Christ" functions as a symbolic cloak for several hidden agendas. This is no surprise, Price demonstrates, since the Jesus Christ of the gospels is very likely a fictional

amalgam of several first-century prophets and messiahs, as well as of purely mythic Mystery Cult redeemers and Gnostic Aions. To show this, Price follows the noted scholar Burton Mack's outline of a range of "Jesus movements" and "Christ cults," showing the origins of each one's Jesus figures and how they may have finally merged into the patchwork savior of Christian dogma. Finally, Price argues that there is good reason to believe that Jesus never existed as a historical figure, and that responsible historians must remain agnostic about a "historical Jesus" and what he stood for.



### **Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know--And Doesn't**

#### **68. By Stephen Prothero**

Prothero (American Jesus), chair of the religion department at Boston University, begins this valuable primer by noting that religious illiteracy is rampant in the United States, where most Americans, even Christians, cannot name even one of the four Gospels. Such ignorance is perilous because religion "is the most volatile constituent of culture" and, unfortunately, often "one of the greatest forces for evil" in the world, he writes. Prothero does more than diagnose the problem; he traces its surprising historic roots ("in one of the great ironies of...history, it was the nation's most fervent people of faith who steered Americans down the road to religious illiteracy") and prescribes concrete solutions that address religious education while preserving First Amendment boundaries about religion in the public square. Prothero also offers a dictionary of religious literacy and a quiz for readers to test their knowledge. This book is a must-read not only for educators, clergy and government officials, but for all adults in a culture where, as Prothero puts it, "faith without understanding is the standard" and "religious ignorance is bliss."



## **Evolution: What the Fossils Say and Why It Matters**

### **69. By Donald R. Prothero**

Prothero, a geologist at Occidental College (After the Dinosaurs), explains how rich the fossil record has become. His goal is two-fold. First, he wants to demonstrate the wide variety of transitional forms that have been found, many within the past 20 years. Second, he aims to discredit the creationist movement. I have tried to document how they routinely distort or deny the evidence, quote out of context, and do many other dishonest and unethical things—all in the name of pushing their crusade. He accomplishes both of his goals (though he can be repetitious regarding the creationists), and his descriptions of recent research, much of it his own, are compelling. Prothero explains that the Cambrian explosion of life forms was anything but an explosion, and presents the impressive transitional fossils between reptiles and birds, along with striking evidence for mammalian evolution, including the relationship among hominid groups. With good science and some specific rebuttals to creationist arguments, this book demonstrates the importance of paleontology to the study of evolution.

## **R**



## **When God Is Gone, Everything Is Holy: The Making of a Religious Naturalist**



## 70. By Chet Raymo

In what he describes as a "late-life credo," renowned science writer Chet Raymo narrates his half-century journey from the traditional Catholicism of his youth to his present perspective as a "Catholic agnostic." As a scientist, Raymo holds to the skepticism that accepts only verifiable answers, but as a "religious naturalist," he never ceases his pursuit of "the beautiful and terrible mystery that soaks creation." Raymo assembles a stunning array of scientists, philosophers, mystics, and poets who help him discover "glimmers of the Absolute in every particular." Whether exploring the connection of the human body to the stars or the meaning of prayer of the heart, these challenging reflections will cause believers and agnostics alike to pause and pay attention.



## [The Cooperative Gene: How Mendel's Demon Explains the Evolution of Complex Beings](#)

## 71. By Mark Ridley

The field of genetics rarely makes for easy reading, but Ridley's anecdotal approach lightens the load. At times his writing conveys a sense of awe at the vast complexity of the universe, elevating his topic to appropriately sublime heights. His interest lies in the role that error has played in our four-trillion-year journey toward ever more complex forms, from single-celled eukaryotes to humans, and possibly beyond. Two kinds of genetic mistakes occur in reproduction, the author tells us, one accidental, the other intentional. The former results in copying errors similar to the way a simple message in a game of "telephone" can be drastically altered as it relays from player to player. The

latter results from genes that harm the body by uncooperative and selfish acts. As Ridley, a biologist at Oxford University and a regular contributor to Scientific American, Nature and the New York Times, shows, both kinds of error threaten the existence of complex life, and sex provides the solution, by concentrating errors in particular offspring and leaving others virtually error-free. Perhaps not unexpectedly, though, sex poses problems of its own, because natural selection, if unchecked, would seem to favor the selfish gene, making the evolution of complex life impossible. The evolutionary balancing act is achieved through a manner of genetic inheritance first described by Gregor Mendel. The so-called Mendel's demon, a mechanism of inheritance with a random component, directs the laws of biology toward creativity rather than destruction. As the author puts it, "Somewhere between the bacteria and us perhaps at about the stage of simple worms God did have to start to play dice."

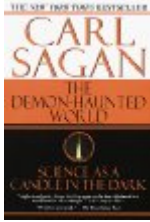


### [Why I Am Not a Christian](#)

#### **72. By Bertrand Russell**

Russell's title here comes from the first selection, a lecture delivered in London in 1927, and is followed by a collection of essays on religious and moral questions written between the years 1903 and 1954. Authority on mathematics and logic, Lord Russell's arguments embody his trained approach, pursue abstractions in orderly fashion and offer provocative material for his opponents.

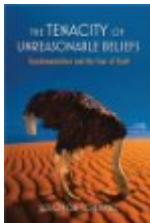
**S**



### **The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark**

#### **73. By Carl Sagan**

Carl Sagan muses on the current state of scientific thought, which offers him marvelous opportunities to entertain us with his own childhood experiences, the newspaper morgues, UFO stories, and the assorted flotsam and jetsam of pseudoscience. Along the way he debunks alien abduction, faith-healing, and channeling; refutes the arguments that science destroys spirituality, and provides a "baloney detection kit" for thinking through political, social, religious, and other issues.



### **The Tenacity of Unreasonable Beliefs: Fundamentalism and the Fear of Truth**

#### **74. By Solomon Schimmel**

This is a long-overdue book about a pressing subject by a brilliant writer qualified not only by his professional expertise but by his own life experiences. The question of why otherwise thoughtful people accept irrational religious fundamentalism is a difficult one to address in our age of oversensitivity about challenging deeply held religious beliefs. But Schimmel confronts the challenge head- on -- respectfully, intelligently, and with the

insights that have long characterized his work. This is a must-read for all thinking people who respect religious diversity.



### **Evolution vs. Creationism: An Introduction**

#### **75. By Eugenie C. Scott**

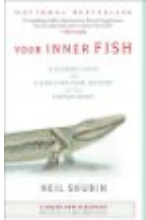
Scott, a physical anthropologist, runs the National Center for Science Education, which defends the teaching of evolution in high schools. (She advised the parents fighting the Dover school board.) Scott be said to be the one doing God's work as she patiently rebuts people who make most other scientists spit gaskets like short-circuiting robots. Her book is both a straightforward history of the debate and an anthology of essays written by partisans on each side. Its main virtue is to explain the scientific method, which many invoke but few describe vividly. Scott also manages to lay out the astronomical, chemical, geological and biological bases of evolutionary theory in unusually plain English.



### **America's Most Hated Woman: The Life And Gruesome Death of Madalyn Murray O'hair**

#### **76. By Ann Rowe Seaman**

Why did "Life Magazine" dub her "the most hated woman in America"? Did she unravel the moral fibre of America or defend the Constitution? They found her heaped in a shallow grave, sawed up, and burned. Thus ended Madalyn Murray O'Hair, the articulate "atheist bitch" whose 1963 U.S. Supreme Court case ended school prayer. Her Christian-baiting lawsuits spanned three more decades; she was on TV all over the country, foul-mouthed, witty, and passionate, launching today's culture wars over same-sex marriage and faith-based initiatives. She was a man-hater who loved sex, a bully whose heart broke for the downtrodden. She was accused of schizophrenia, alcoholism, and embezzlement, but never cowardice or sloth. She was an ideologue who spewed toxic rage even at the followers who made her a millionaire. She was a doting mother who accosted people to ask them to be sexual partners for her lonely children, and whose cannibalistic love led her children to their grave. She thrived on her fame, but just as the curtain of obscurity began to lower, the family vanished in one of the strangest of America's true crimes. This is the real story of "the most hated woman in America," by the only author to interview the killer and those close to him and to witness the family's secret burial in Austin, Texas.

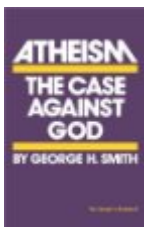


### **[Your Inner Fish: A Journey into the 3.5-Billion-Year History of the Human Body](#)**

#### **77. By Neil Shubin**

Fish paleontologist Shubin illuminates the subject of evolution with humor and clarity in this compelling look at how the human body evolved into its present state. Parsing the millennia-old genetic history of the human form is a natural project for Shubin, who chairs the department of organismal biology and anatomy at the University of Chicago and was co-discoverer of Tiktaalik, a 375-million-year-old fossil fish whose flat skull and limbs, and finger, toe, ankle and wrist bones, provide a link between fish and the earliest

land-dwelling creatures. Shubin moves smoothly through the anatomical spectrum, finding ancient precursors to human teeth in a 200-million-year-old fossil of the mouse-size part animal, part reptile tritheledont; he also notes cellular similarities between humans and sponges. Other fossils reveal the origins of our senses, from the eye to that wonderful Rube Goldberg contraption the ear. Shubin excels at explaining the science, making each discovery an adventure, whether it's a Pennsylvania roadcut or a stony outcrop beset by polar bears and howling Arctic winds. I can imagine few things more beautiful or intellectually profound than finding the basis for our humanity... nestled inside some of the most humble creatures that ever lived, he writes, and curious readers are likely to agree.



### [Atheism: The Case Against God](#)

#### **78. By George H. Smith**

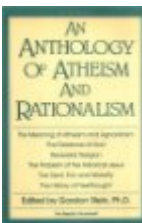
With this intriguing introduction, George H Smith sets out to demolish what he considers the most widespread and destructive of all the myths devised by man - the concept of a supreme being. With painstaking scholarship and rigorous arguments, Mr. Smith examines, dissects, and refutes the myriad "proofs" offered by theists - the defenses of sophisticated, professional theologians, as well as the average religious layman. He explores the historical and psychological havoc wrought by religion in general - and concludes that religious belief cannot have any place in the life of modern, rational man.



## Logic and Theism: Arguments For and Against Beliefs in God

### **79. By Jordan Howard Sobel**

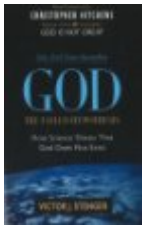
'... filled with new, interesting, and insightful observations and analyses ... a book everyone interested in philosophy of religion will want - and need - to read.' Graham Oppy, Monash University 'I'm often asked to recommend books on philosophy of religion from a skeptical point of view, and Mackie's *The Miracle of Theism* has been the only thing I could wholeheartedly endorse. Sobel's book would give me a second option. It's the best thing of its kind since Mackie's book, and in many respects, it's better than *The Miracle of Theism*.' Robert C. Koons, University of Texas, Austin 'This book is a rich resource for those interested in the traditional arguments for and against belief in God's existence ... the book is valuable not so much for the author's own conclusions in each chapter, as it is for the rich resource it constitutes ... the author has done a great service by assembling different versions of arguments for and against God's existence, by discussing the arguments intelligently and critically ... I suspect that many philosophers of religion, both theists and skeptics, will be responding to the particular arguments of this book for some time to come.'



## Anthology of Atheism and Rationalism

## 80. By Gordon Stein

This anthology fills a conspicuous gap in the discussion of religion and theism. The issues that theology addresses, the meaning of life, the existence of God, the truth of the Bible, the possibility of life after death, are so important to people that they ought to examine both sides of these fundamental questions. The atheist and rationalist writings collected here are virtually impossible to obtain anywhere else, even in large university library collections. This material chronicles the contributions of many distinguished thinkers who have carefully investigated key issues in religion and philosophy, but have arrived at remarkably different conclusions from those of the clergy or media.



## [God: The Failed Hypothesis. How Science Shows That God Does Not Exist](#)

## 81. By Victor J. Stenger

Throughout history, arguments for and against the existence of God have been largely confined to philosophy and theology. In the meantime, science has sat on the sidelines and quietly watched this game of words march up and down the field. Despite the fact that science has revolutionized every aspect of human life and greatly clarified our understanding of the world, somehow the notion has arisen that it has nothing to say about the possibility of a supreme being, which much of humanity worships as the source of all reality. Physicist Victor J. Stenger contends that, if God exists, some evidence for this existence should be detectable by scientific means, especially considering the central role that God is alleged to play in the operation of the universe and the lives of humans. Treating the traditional God concept, as conventionally presented in the Judeo-



Christian and Islamic traditions, like any other scientific hypothesis, Stenger examines all of the claims made for God's existence. He considers the latest Intelligent Design arguments as evidence of God's influence in biology. He looks at human behavior for evidence of immaterial souls and the possible effects of prayer. He discusses the findings of physics and astronomy in weighing the suggestions that the universe is the work of a creator and that humans are God's special creation. After evaluating all the scientific evidence, Stenger concludes that beyond a reasonable doubt the universe and life appear exactly as we might expect if there were no God.

**T**



### **Minds and Gods: The Cognitive Foundations of Religion**

**82. By Todd Tremlin**

With economical breadth and depth, Todd Tremlin has accomplished what no author has done previously. He has penned an introduction to the cognitive science of religion that coherently displays the major achievements of the field while providing enough material from cognate disciplines to render the themes and insights accessible to students from the natural sciences, social sciences, or humanities. Minds and Gods will likely become a touchstone text for the cognitive science of religion.

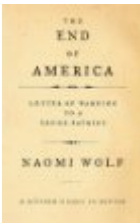
**W**



### **Darwin's Cathedral: Evolution, Religion, and the Nature of Society**

#### **83. By David Sloan Wilson**

God or evolution? Though the debate about our origins has swirled in epic controversy since Darwin's time, David Sloan Wilson bravely blends these two contentious theories. This has been tried before, of course, mainly by religious intellectuals. What makes Darwin's Cathedral stand out is that Wilson does not pursue the classic "intelligent design" argument (evolution is God's hand at work), but instead argues that religion is evolution at work.

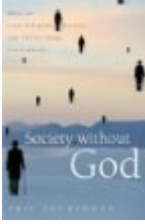


### **The End of America: Letter of Warning to a Young Patriot**

#### **84. By Naomi Wolf**

Naomi Wolf's End of America is a vivid, urgent, mandatory wake-up call that addresses momentous issues of tyranny, democracy, and survival.

**Z**



## **Society without God: What the Least Religious Nations Can Tell Us About Contentment**



**85. By Phil Zuckerman**

Sociologist Zuckerman spent a year in Scandinavia seeking to understand how Denmark and Sweden became probably the least religious countries in the world, and possibly in the history of the world. While many people, especially Christian conservatives, argue that godless societies devolve into lawlessness and immorality, Denmark and Sweden enjoy strong economies, low crime rates, high standards of living and social equality. Zuckerman interviewed 150 Danes and Swedes, and extended transcripts from some of those interviews provide the book's most interesting and revealing moments. What emerges is a portrait of a people unconcerned and even incurious about questions of faith, God and life's meaning. Zuckerman ventures to answer why Scandinavians remain irreligious—e.g., the religious monopoly of state-subsidized churches, the preponderance of working women and the security of a stable society—but academics may find this discussion a tad thin. Zuckerman also fails to answer the question of contentment his subtitle speaks to. Still, for those interested in the burgeoning field of secular studies—or for those curious about a world much different from the devout U.S.—this book will offer some compelling reading.

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**[The Noose](#) Dec 22, 2008**

Thanks for this awesome list. I didn't realize there were that many! Looks like I've got some reading to do :P.



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**Mark P Dec 22, 2008**

I didn't see any novels on the list. Atheists like fiction too. Here's a great book about an atheist philosophy professor at a catholic, feminist college - A "Land of created realities, where critical thoughts go to die." Both hilarious and thought-provoking.

Calling Bernadette's Bluff

<http://www2.xlibris.com/bookstore/bookdisplay.asp?bookid=12552>



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**[Scott Klarr](#) Dec 22, 2008**

I think I will make a part two of this thread that deals with fiction. Do you have any more suggestions?



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**Mark P Dec 22, 2008**

"Waiting For the Galactic Bus" and its sequel, "The Snake Oil Wars" both by Parke Godwin.

Both are pure fantasy (as they take place in an afterlife of sorts) but deal with a lot of concepts that atheists have a particular take on. Religious fundamentalism, mob mentality, that sort of thing.

Imagine energy-based aliens arriving on primitive earth on their version of an after-graduation party. Two of them get stranded, decide to experiment with a proto-ape by giving it an IQ boost, then spend the next four million years dealing with its decedents.

Again, hilarious and thought-provoking.



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**[Joe Zamecki](#) Jan 31, 2009**

That's a good long list! We have some great thinking minds on our side, and none to be ashamed of. Churches wish they could say that about themselves.

I especially recommend the Atheist Epic. It's intense.

>



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**[John W. Loftus](#) Dec 22, 2008**

This is a good list but you missed one. My book! ;-)



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**[Scott Klarr](#) Dec 22, 2008**

I actually just updated the list (which includes your book) then scrolled down to the comments and there you are!



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**[John W. Loftus](#) Dec 22, 2008**

Just do a search on my blog for the post (in quotes) "Why I Became an Atheist" and you'll see many high recommendations of it. I just didn't want you to miss it. Cheers.



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**Dave2 Dec 22, 2008**

David Hume's Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion



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**[Scott Klarr](#) Dec 22, 2008**

Added



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**[Ranjit Chatterjee](#) Dec 22, 2008**

Somewhere in this blog I saw Wittgenstein included as an atheist. He was not. He was a deeply religious thinker, as detailed in many books of the 'Swansea' school, and also in my "Wittgenstein and Judaism: A Triumph of Concealment" (2005)



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**[Scott Klarr](#) Dec 22, 2008**



Thanks for that insight. Perhaps the person who wrote that particular overview of the book (The Quotable Atheist) didn't realize that not every quote from within the book was from actual atheists.



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**[Manuel](#) Jan 22, 2009**

Hi Scott,

nice collection. I still don't recommend you reading all of these books. Read one or two. Have your arguments ready when the time is right, but don't waste your life with obsessing about this topic. It's not worth it. At least here in Europe the god-question is becoming more and more meaningless anyways. Better go out and enjoy the one life. THAT'S the most important message atheism and skepticism have for me.

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