

Please understand that I don't hate God (any god); I just don't believe that he/it exists.

People have the wrong idea about atheists and atheism; they think that atheism involves some kind of bitterness or anger. In my mind and in my heart, I have **beliefs** – things that I believe - and there are things that I don't believe. In other words, I look inside my "Beliefs" box, and those particular beliefs aren't there. No hostility or anger. I don't hate unicorns or Bigfoot or Santa Claus. I just don't believe that they exist.

Imagine that I ask you if you believe in the Loch Ness monster. You reply that you don't; you've read the articles that show how the photographs are all fakes (in fact, the most famous photo of the "Loch Ness monster," taken in the early 1930's, was fake, and the man who took the photograph has admitted that he faked it). You don't **hate** the Loch Ness monster.

There was a time when I did believe in God, sometimes very strongly and sincerely, and I studied the Bible for years. There were other times in my life when I simply accepted the proposition, just to "get along." In other words, acting like a believer made my life simpler than doing a lot of serious thinking about the things that I had come to accept.

The word **atheism** simply means "without a belief in a god." Atheism is not, in fact, a **position** at all (and technically isn't a denial of any other position). Most people who identify as atheists will tell you that **they are not positively asserting that no god exists**; it just means that when it comes to the question of having **that particular belief**, they don't have it.

Like if you were to ask me if I have a British 5-pound note in my wallet. No, I don't. I don't have British 5-pound notes.

Most atheists (including me) would tell you, "Look, I'm open to the possibility that a god exists. When somebody can demonstrate that to me, I'll believe it. Until that time comes ... whenever I look inside my brain to see if there is a belief in there for a god, or leprechauns, or fairies, **the belief is not there.**"

It may be appropriate for us to distinguish carefully between **a belief** and **a desperate desire for a certain thing to be true.**

There are, of course, **anti-theists** who positively assert that no gods exist. Technically, those people have a burden of proof, and it's difficult to prove a negative.

Imagine that I ask you if you believe that there are space penguins living in caves on Mars. You would say, "No, I don't believe it." My next question

might be, "Can you prove that there are no space penguins living in caves on Mars?" Your response should be, "No, I can't prove a negative, and besides, the burden of proof isn't on me; it's on the person who asserts the existence of the space penguins."

If a person suggests to me that there is an invisible super-being (deity) who interacts with the real world and who knows everything, who can do anything, then my response is: Can you demonstrate this in any way?

Most theists believe in the God of the Bible. He won't talk to us, he won't answer questions, he won't answer prayers, and the last time he wrote anything was 2000 years ago.

And his book (the Bible): it endorses slavery (Ex. 21); it describes a worldwide flood that never happened; it features a talking snake (Gen. 3:1) and a talking donkey (Num. 22:31); it commands us to kill witches (ex. 22:18) and homosexuals (Lev. 20:13); it commands us to kill non-believers (Deut. 13); it treats women as property (Ex. 20:17); and it gives us no insight about how to improve our lives – no indication that it comes from a higher intelligence – no information about the germ theory of disease, or cosmology, or vaccines, or subatomic particles. **All of these important discoveries came to us from science, not religion.**

In fact, in Revelation, it states that there will be a time when 1/3 of the stars will "fall to the earth" (Rev. 6:13). Whoever wrote this has a fundamental misunderstanding about what a star actually is.

For most of the history of the church, it has been hostile to science; the Pope threatened to torture Galileo when Galileo discovered facts which contradicted the Bible. King James I banned Reginald Scot's skeptical book *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*.

Christians (theists) often talk about **faith**. Faith is when you believe something without sufficient evidence. **Faith is not a pathway to truth.** Faith can lead you to any position - faith can make you a Moslem or a Buddhist or a Wiccan. All you have to do is believe ... without evidence.

Imagine that a new airline is announced, and what's special about it is that it operates on faith. They land their airplanes by faith; the pilot says, "All I need is prayer to land my airplane. I just close my eyes and pray. Jesus, take the wheel." They navigate by faith. They check their fuel tanks by faith. The tickets are cheap. Would you fly on that airline?

Why, if God is real, do we have to dance through philosophical arguments and become experts in ancient languages - why isn't his existence clear and obvious? **Why doesn't God just show up here today, set the record straight,**

and be done with it? Then we wouldn't have to keep having the same debates for thousands of years.

I don't like the word "proof" because it seems to imply that the one who receives the "proof" is then required to believe the proposition. I don't ask for some kind of overwhelming proof that a god exists; I would just like a simple **demonstration**, the same way that I can demonstrate electricity, or I can demonstrate the fact that JB Kwik turns solid four minutes after you mix it up with a toothpick (it does it every time).

If I tell you that I believe in something I call "gravity," you don't have to believe me. You don't have to believe anything that I say. However, I can hold up a pencil and then drop it; I can **demonstrate** gravity (and I can do this demonstration over and over, hundreds of times, always with the same result). You still would not then be **required** to believe in gravity, but I would be able to claim that I had demonstrated it, and that for you to **deny** the existence of gravity is therefore unreasonable.

Dan Barker once said that the reason he doesn't believe in God is simple: there's no reason to believe. Simple. No basis, no belief.