

Why am I not an atheist ...

... and why I am.

I am *not* an atheist because:

- I hate God
- I prayed to God and my prayers weren't answered
- Militant/fundamentalist atheists converted me away from God
- I worship science and the works of man instead of God
- I'm rebelling against God like I rebelled against my parents & teachers in high school
- I think I'm better than God
- I had a bad experience with a priest or church or religious person
- I can't decide which religion to subscribe to
- atheism is my religion
- I think religious people are idiots
- I worship Batman
- I worship Satan
- I'm immoral/amoral and would rather do what I want
- I want to destroy religion

I *distrust* and *criticise* certain organised religions because:

- they are human inventions and many seem to be more preoccupied with obsessively controlling aspects of peoples' private lives than improving them
- many Christian churches are primarily concerned with attracting money and then keeping it rather than using it charitably
- many holy books get descriptions of the world & nature completely wrong, which you would not expect had they been dictated by the omnipotent creator of the universe
- many holy books contain descriptions of human events that cannot be historically verified and in all likelihood never happened (eg. Exodus)
- many holy books contain numerous laws, acts & stories of a morality that modern, free societies find repugnant; these societies have passed many of their own laws contradicting them
- there are so many separate & often violently opposed sects of each religion that it is more likely that none of them are correct than just one of them being so
- many religious groups demand special treatment such as the right not to be offended by statements, artworks, songs or anything else that may criticise or disagree with their dogma
- religious groups frequently try to have laws passed which unfairly impose their narrow standards of behaviour, based on interpretations of specific holy commands, onto the rest of society
- religious people often tend to pick & choose from, or "interpret" their holy texts, discarding what does not conform to modern standards of morality, law & political freedom; they then imply that modern morality, law and political freedom rests on the foundations of their particular religion
- there is such a wide spectrum of religious belief & adherence to dogma, ranging from light, barely-existent deism to the kind of rigid fundamentalism that oppresses and kills many, many people in its name, that it leads me to conclude that either God wasn't clear enough with his message, didn't spread it to enough people or that humans have basically made their religions and associated rules up as they went along and have been in conflict with each other about them ever since
- many religious people & groups wilfully mis-characterise atheists as immoral, empty beings with no appreciation for beauty or mystery simply because we prefer natural explanations for the

universe's phenomena rather than defaulting to "God did it"; they believe that any explanation, even a wrong one, is better than "we just don't know yet"

- many religious groups continue to deny long-accepted scientific facts such as the divergence of species through evolution and the verified age of the Earth; some wish their particular mythology taught as fact in science classes and go to extraordinary lengths to accomplish it; some even insist there's a huge, dark Scientist conspiracy quashing "academic freedom"
- some religious people & groups attempt to cherry-pick science (as they do their scriptures) for those parts which conform to their belief system while actively denying others, e.g. agreeing with "microevolution" while denying "macroevolution" or attempting to use the Second Law of Thermodynamics to debunk evolution
- some religious groups deny the efficacy of modern medicine in favour of treating an ill person with prayer, a practice which has led to many preventable deaths, often of children
- they all make extraordinary claims based on their scriptures, provide no evidence beyond referring to their self-confirming scriptures and then insist that the onus is on atheists to disprove their claims
- many religions have become inextricably intertwined with the laws of the patriarchal cultures which spawned or adopted them, leading to divine justifications for such horrors as female circumcision and "honour killings", which more often than not punish women, already under the thumbs of domineering males, for seemingly minute transgressions of law
- when it comes to the hot-button issue of sexual abuse by priests, many religions seem more concerned with good public relations, shielding themselves from culpability and keeping numbers in churches than with compensating victims and being active about preventing further abuse

I *am* an atheist because:

- any & all claims of and explanations for the existence of God or any other gods have thus far fallen far short of my standards of evidence
- my understanding of the natural universe is that it functions in such a way that doesn't require (or indicate) the presence of any supernatural entity intervening in either the laws of nature or selected peoples' lives

That's it. They are the only two things that I can say I absolutely have in common with any other atheist. In matters of sex, politics, architecture, gaming, interior design, pets, music, clothing, hobbies, language, philosophy, education, sports, typing speed, preferred drugs, affinity with beagles & frogs and any number of other categories I may be diametrically opposite to any other atheist in the world. To label one atheist with the same attributes you label another atheist is ignorant at best, flat-out dishonest at worst.

But what could steer me in the opposite direction? Probably the same things that could steer any atheist...

I could be converted to theism if:

- God, or *a* god, showed himself or performed an act that unambiguously proved his existence as an immortal, omnipotent being. As to what that proof would constitute: that god himself would be the perfect arbiter of what would conclusively prove to six billion people that he existed.

Such things as tortillas depicting blurred silhouettes of Mary do not count. If you're there, God, you're on notice! Any time is fine. No tricks - and come *alone* (if indeed there's only one of you, otherwise, bring the whole parthenon).