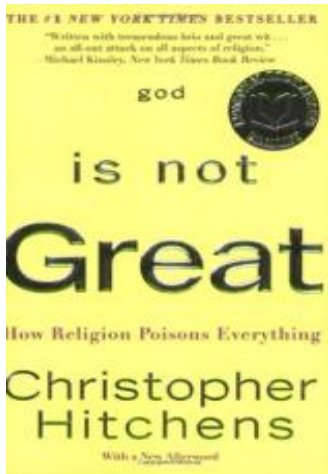


God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything

by Christopher Hitchens



About the Book

In the tradition of Bertrand Russell's **Why I Am Not a Christian** and Sam Harris's recent bestseller, **The End of Faith**, Christopher Hitchens makes the ultimate case against religion. With a close and erudite reading of the major religious texts, he documents the ways in which religion is a man-made wish, a cause of dangerous sexual repression, and a distortion of our origins in the cosmos. With eloquent clarity, Hitchens frames the argument for a more secular life based on science and reason, in which hell is replaced by the Hubble Telescope's awesome view of the universe, and Moses and the burning bush give way to the beauty and symmetry of the double helix.

Discussion Guide

1. Name an ethical statement or action, made or performed by a person of faith, that could not have been made or performed by a nonbeliever.
2. Do you agree with the author's assertion in chapter two, "Religion Kills"?
3. Do you think religion's cultural contributions have outweighed the tribal conflicts it has provoked?
4. Do you believe there is a biological or psychological basis for religious faith?
5. Does discussion of personal religious faith belong in the public square?
6. Do you believe an atheist could be elected President of the United States?
7. Should political speeches include the phrase, "God bless America"?

8. Do you agree with the author's analysis of the central paradox at the core of religion: That that "the three great monotheisms teach people to think abjectly of themselves, as miserable and guilty sinners prostrate before an angry and jealous god..." while also teaching people "to be extremely self-centered and conceited" by assuring them that "god cares for them individually" and that "the cosmos was created with them specifically in mind"?

9. Why does heaven hate ham?

10. Do you agree that religion causes sexual repression and ignorance that is harmful to children?

11. Do you think secularism can provide moral authority (as religion does for its adherents)?

12. If god exists, why was this book a #1 bestseller and National Book Award nominee?

13. One prominent anti-atheist argument (see p. 230) holds that atheists are responsible for some of history's worst atrocities (e.g., Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot). How do you respond to this idea? Do you agree with Hitchens' assessment?

14. A spurious but still popular story goes that on his deathbed, Darwin recanted the theory of evolution and embraced Christ. Why do you think this story became popular? Does this say anything about our society?

15. Do you think atheism is incompatible with all forms of spirituality --- e.g., with the idea of Karma?

16. What do you make of the idea that religion gives people "bad reasons to behave well"? Does atheism provide us with any "good" reasons to behave well?

17. If it were to be shown conclusively that Moses and Jesus and Mohammed were mythical figures, and their "books" man-made and not god-made, would all our moral dilemmas not be exactly what they are now? Or would you consider this news a personal tragedy?

Author Bio

Christopher Hitchens (1949-2011) was a prolific author, columnist, editor and book critic, writing on issues ranging from politics, to religion, to the nature of debate itself. Hitchens' 2007 manifesto, *GOD IS NOT GREAT*, was a #1 *New York Times* bestseller and National Book Award nominee. His other *New York Times* bestsellers include *HITCH 22*, *ARGUABLY* and *MORTALITY*.

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