

Atheism, Apatheism, or Adventism?

Anthony Bosman, PhD

1. Do we need to win arguments to win souls?

2. Can we be certain that God exists?

3. Has science replaced the need for faith?

4. Should we still take Genesis seriously?

5. Why does God hide while people suffer?

6. Space colonies and A.I.? The future of humanity.

**always
prepared**

“Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, **always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you**; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are silenced, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.” (1 Peter 3:14b-16)

attitude & approach

“Have **no fear** of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with **gentleness** and **respect**, having a **good conscience**, so that, when you are silenced, those who revile your **good behavior** in Christ may be put to shame.” (1 Peter 3:14b-16)

“The Saviour knew that no argument, however logical, would melt hard hearts or break through the crust of worldliness and selfishness.”^[1]

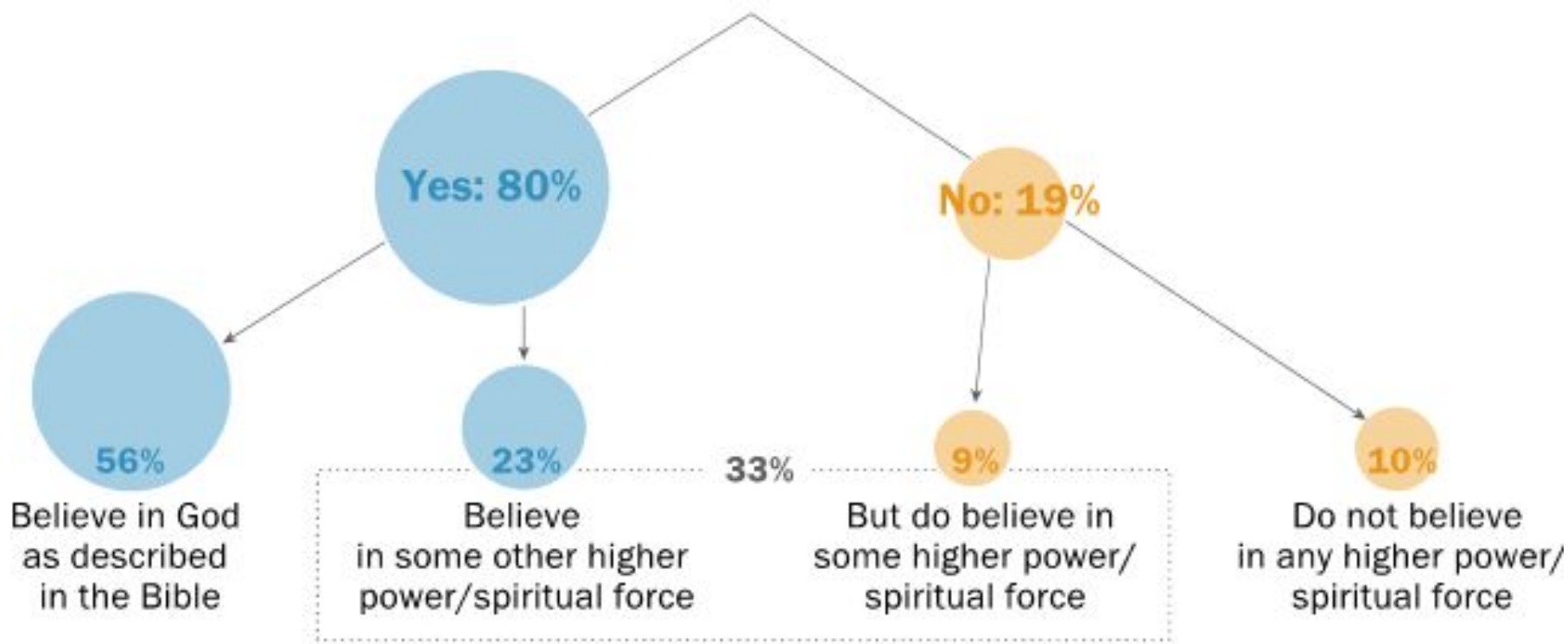
“Love will do that which argument will fail to accomplish.”^[2]



[1] Acts of the Apostles, p.31

[2] Gospel Workers, p. 121

Do you believe in God or not?



Note: Don't know or unclear responses not shown. Figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Survey conducted Dec. 4-18, 2017, among U.S. adults.
"When Americans Say They Believe in God, What Do They Mean?"

"Faith is the great cop-out, the great excuse to evade the need to think and evaluate evidence. Faith is belief in spite of, even perhaps because of, the **lack of evidence.**"

Richard Dawkins

**Isn't faith
belief without
evidence?**

“God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are all established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant.”

Steps to Christ, p. 105

**Isn't faith
belief without
evidence?**

“Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. **Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration.** Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith.”

Steps to Christ, p. 105

**Isn't faith
belief without
evidence?**



The Role of Evidence

No eloquence of words, no force of argument, can convert the sinner. The power of God alone can apply the truth to the heart. (Acts of the Apostles, p.239)

Simply presenting the evidence and making the argument won't, in itself, convert someone, but it can:

- (1) help someone overcome intellectual barriers to faith,
- (2) fortify the faith of the believer, and
- (3) reveal the sense-making power of Christianity.



A historical resurrection makes sense of why...

- Of the many Jewish Sects and Messiahs, only Christianity flourished (Acts 5:33-39).
- A crucified Messiah was considered foolish by Greek and Jews (1 Corinthians 1:22-25).
- The culture mocked the idea of resurrection (Acts 17:32).
- The disciples went from being fearful to bold in the face of persecution, willing to face violent deaths (Mark 14).
- The first eye-witnesses were women, whose testimonies wouldn't be valued by the culture (John 20).
- Paul's conversion (Acts 8-9).
- Record of the resurrection being taught soon afterwards and eyewitnesses confirming it (1 Corinthians 15:3-8).

Faith in the Resurrected Christ makes sense of the historical evidence, yet it also goes beyond it, bringing one into a relationship with the living Christ.

*Common Objections
to the Existence of God*



Objection 1

There is a presumption of atheism; only the theist has a burden of proof.

- Atheism: “There is no God” (Knowledge Claim)
- Weak Agnosticism: “I don’t know if there is a God” (Confession of Ignorance)
- Strong Agnosticism: “Nobody can know if there is a God” (Knowledge Claim)

Objection
2

**Belief in God is just like
belief in Santa or fairies.**

- Adults come to belief in God--not in Santa.
- There are no compelling reasons to believe in Santa.
- We have compelling reasons not to believe in Santa.
(We know where the gifts come from!)



Objection 3

You just believe in God to make yourself feel good.

- Can make the same critique of atheism (afraid of divine judgement, etc.).
- But such psychologizing isn't an argument for/against God.

Objection 4

If you were born somewhere else, you would believe in a different god or no god at all.

- Fails to recognize Christianity's global presence.
- Genetic fallacy: Attempts to discredit belief by giving an account of where it came from.
- If you were born in a different time, you likely would believe the sun orbited the earth, that there is only one galaxy, etc.

Objection 5

You already reject thousands of gods--why not just go one step further?

- God is Scripture distinct from Thor, Zeus, etc.
- “Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.” (Isaiah 46:9-10)
- Biblical God: Eternal, Omnipotent, Omniscient.

Objection 6

Omnipotence is absurd. Can God make $2+2=5$? Or a square circle? Or a rock so big that He can't lift it?

- “The LORD does whatever pleases Him.” (Psalm 135:6)
- “[God] is called omnipotent on account of His doing what He wills, not on account of His suffering what He wills not; for if that should befall Him, He would by no means be omnipotent. Wherefore, He cannot do some things for the very reason that He is omnipotent.” [Augustine, *The City of God*]
- Things God cannot do: God cannot lie (Num 23:19; Heb 6:18)

Objection 6

Omnipotence is absurd. Can God make $2+2=5$? Or a square circle? Or a rock so big that He can't lift it?

- “If we are faithless, [God] remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.” (2 Timothy 2:13)
 - To act wickedly would deny God's holiness.
 - To act unjustly would deny God's justice.
 - To act irrationally would deny God's rationality.
- God doesn't act arbitrarily; He acts consistently with His character and nature.

Objection 7

Omniscience is not compatible with free will. If god already knows how we're going to choose, then we're not really free to choose.

- Options: (1) Reject foreknowledge, (2) Reject free will, (3) Respond to the objection.
- God foreknows that you will choose X because you choose X; the foreknowledge doesn't determine your choice, rather your choice determines what God foreknows.
- God "sees" your choice, but you choose it.

Objection 7

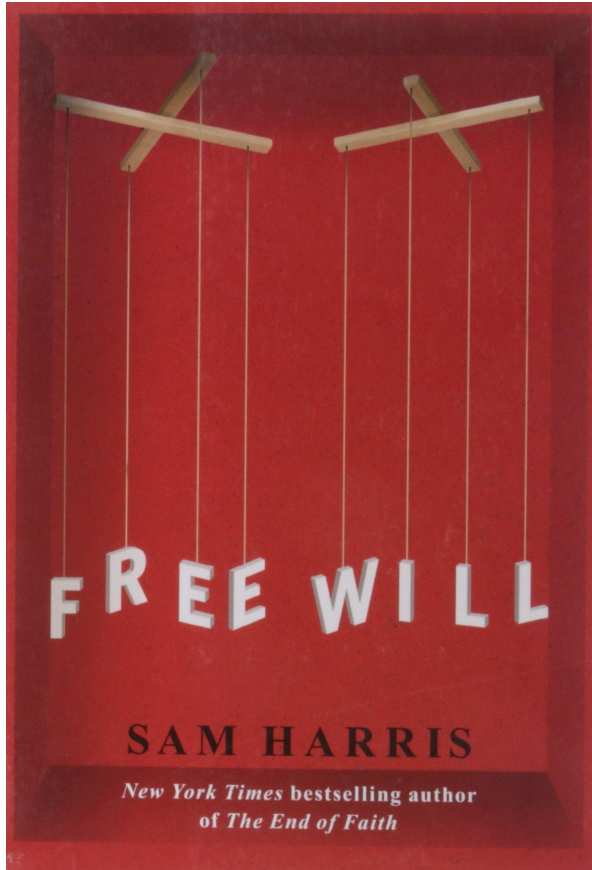
But given that God already knows that I am going to choose X instead of Y, is it still possible for me to choose Y?

- “...given that God already knows that I am going to choose X instead of Y”: God would only know this if you freely choose X instead of Y.
- The objection becomes: “Given that I freely choose X instead of Y, can I still choose Y?”
- No, not if you freely choose X. But you could have chosen Y--in which case God would have foreknown it.

Objection 7

But do I really have choice if God knows my choice?

- We can formulate the problem precisely in modal logic:
 - Premise 1: Necessarily, if God knows that you will choose X, then you will choose X.
 - Premise 2: God knows that you will choose X.
- From these premises it does not follow:
 - Conclusion: Necessarily, you will choose X.
- Rather, it only follows:
 - Conclusion: You will choose X.



“Free will is an illusion.”

[Sam Harris]

“I have a materialist view of the world; I think that things are determined in a rational way by antecedent events. That commits me to the view that **when I think I have free will, I am deluding myself.**”

[Richard Dawkins]

Belief in God affords a richer, nobler picture of what it means to be human that gives significance to our choices and makes sense of our deepest longings.



Objection 8

The humble position is to remain agnostic about God.

- In order to develop and experience moral progress, one must acknowledge some Standard greater than oneself.
- If God has revealed Himself, ignoring that revelation isn't humble, but foolish. We must examine the evidence as it is.

"Many wander in the mazes of philosophy, in search of reasons and evidence which they will never find, while they reject the evidence which God has been pleased to give. They refuse to walk in the light of the Sun of Righteousness, until the reason of its shining shall be explained." [Patriarchs and Prophets, p.432]

Atheism, Apatheism, or Adventism?

Anthony Bosman, PhD

1. Do we need to win arguments to win souls?

2. Can we be certain that God exists?

3. Has science replaced the need for faith?

4. Should we still take Genesis seriously?

5. Why does God hide while people suffer?

6. Space colonies and A.I.? The future of humanity.