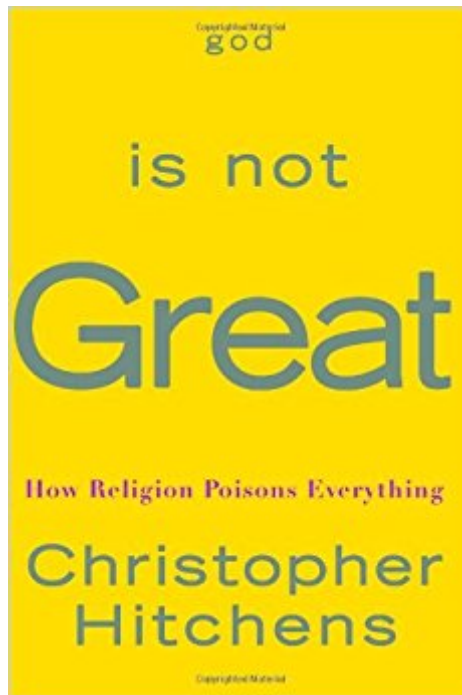




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God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything



Synopsis

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.

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Customer Reviews

Hitchens, one of our great political pugilists, delivers the best of the recent rash of atheist manifestos. The same contrarian spirit that makes him delightful reading as a political commentator, even (or especially) when he's completely wrong, makes him an entertaining huckster prosecutor once he has God placed in the dock. And can he turn a phrase!: "monotheistic religion is a plagiarism of a plagiarism of a hearsay of a hearsay, of an illusion of an illusion, extending all the way back to a fabrication of a few nonevents." Hitchens's one-liners bear the marks of considerable sparring practice with believers. Yet few believers will recognize themselves as Hitchens associates all of them for all time with the worst of history's theocratic and inquisitional moments. All the same, this is salutary reading as a means of culling believers' weaker arguments: that faith offers comfort (false comfort is none at all), or has provided a historical hedge against fascism (it mostly hasn't), or that "Eastern" religions are better (nope). The book's real strength is Hitchens's on-the-ground

glimpses of religion's worst face in various war zones and isolated despotic regimes. But its weakness is its almost fanatical insistence that religion poisons "everything," which tips over into barely disguised misanthropy. (May 30) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Starred Review God is getting bad press lately. Sam Harris' *The End of Faith* (2005) and Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion* (2006) have questioned the existence of any spiritual being and met with enormous success. Now, noted, often acerbic journalist Hitchens enters the fray. As his subtitle indicates, his premise is simple. Not only does religion poison everything, which he argues by explaining several ways in which religion is immoral, but the world would be better off without religion. Replace religious faith with inquiry, open-mindedness, and the pursuit of ideas, he exhorts. Closely reading major religious texts, Hitchens points to numerous examples of atrocities and mayhem in them. Religious faith, he asserts, is both result and cause of dangerous sexual repression. What's more, it is grounded in nothing more than wish fulfillment. Hence, he believes that religion is man-made, and an ethical life can be lived without its stamp of approval. With such chapter titles as "Religion Kills" and "Is Religion Child Abuse?" Hitchens intends to provoke, but he is not mean-spirited and humorless. Indeed, he is effortlessly witty and entertaining as well as utterly rational. Believers will be disturbed and may even charge him with blasphemy (he questions not only the virgin birth but the very existence of Jesus), and he may not change many minds, but he offers the open-minded plenty to think about. June Sawyers Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

Mr. Hitchens writes entertainingly and certainly sustains one's interest, but it's really not very hard to find ludicrous inconsistencies in religious beliefs, whatever their origin. What he should be doing is writing to explain why a cultural construct like religion has managed, despite its toxicity, to survive over thousands of years of human history. Though I'm sure he knows better, he is trying very hard to make "god" and "religion" the same thing. I gave up on religion years ago for many of the reasons he cites, but about god, I'm not so sure. I think there are a lot of people like me - yea, generations upon generations - who have gamely hung on to the baby even as the bath has gone over the fence. As a result, we have the B-minor Mass; the others have fish on Fridays.

This book is a comprehensive history of religion, it is logically laid out and is full of information making the author's point. While I enjoyed it, the references are at times a bit esoteric, and unless

you are as well read as the author this doesn't always help in understanding the point he is trying to make. All in all it is a devastating condemnation of religion and hard to refute. It should read "man is not great " as Hitchens doesn't believe in god. I did enjoy it and would recommend it to anyone interested in the subject.

Christopher Hitchens, a contributing editor to Vanity Fair and author of numerous books, speaks his mind against all organized religion in the world. In chapter after chapter he points out the great harm it has caused throughout the ages. He mainly paints a black picture of Christianity, Judaism, and the Muslim faiths but does not spare Buddhism and other faiths of the Eastern world. At times the tome appears to be more of a rant against specific persons like the Ayatollah Khomeini. Other times his venom is directed against specific sects. He blasts practices like the avoidance of pork by Jews and Muslims and circumcision as either being too barbaric or related to distant times when cannibalism was practiced in predeveloped societies. Humans, he says, taste like pork. Like Dawkins, Hitchens reviles against religion, however, Dawkins draws more upon evolution and science to disclaim supernatural and paranormal events. While Hitchens believes we should just use our common sense and clearly visualize (with his help) all the damage it has caused. I thought the book had many good points and succeeded in its title premise. I think also that he could have organized the material a bit better allowing the reader to rationalize along with him rather than have the sometimes ranting tone it possesses, which at some point turned me off. Otherwise, much of what he points out about religion is absolutely true. In the past, as Christians, we dared not object to church dogma and scripture, otherwise we would face punishment/death by the brutal authorities of the Inquisition. Today we are more freely allowed (except in Muslim countries) to express our voice in opposition to what some would call the "true faith in God". Everyone has, of course, their own beliefs or nonbeliefs. Today we are free to express them.

The content is ok I guess, but I found myself struggling to listen to this... the reader/writer has a deep voice that doesn't translate well to CD. It's a challenge to easily understand him and he tends to mumble. Definitely recommend buying the book over the CD.

Albeit preaching to the choir somewhat, I quite enjoyed Hitchens' treatise on the postulate that not only are all religions transparently manmade rather than divinely inspired, but that religion itself is a cancer of belief that aids and abets in many of the greatest atrocities in human history. Thankfully, in America we are mostly spared from the fundamentalist and autocratic dictates of a true theocracy,

and modern-day believers can be excused for some ignorance in the role of religion in conquest and suffering, but to the extent that free inquiry and honest skepticism is still threatened by religion in the States, we still suffer from the disease. The main criticism I could level against this book is that it is rather long and that on occasion following the threads of history and philosophy woven throughout the book can be a bit difficult. However, it's still very much worth the effort.

I always enjoy listening to Christopher Hitchens even when I disagree with him. His well articulated opinions leap out of the page to grab you and force you to listen. Yet, as much as I enjoy reading his high-caliber opinions, I always wonder why our renowned atheists rarely touch on the important questions of contradictions in religion. Sometimes, I feel as though the book is written for an audience of atheists rather than those who wear their religion day and night without giving heed to a sound argument. This is not a losing battle as some may believe. To the contrary. There is ample historical and linguistic evidence to make the case for atheism, to explain why Satan is virtually just another deity. Even his name, Satan, is fashioned in the typical Semitic manner used to describe deities. Much more is discussed in the book *God's Untold Story*, which covers not just how monotheism remains largely polytheistic, but also sheds light on the many great gaps in the Biblical and Qur'anic narrative. It is a must-read for every Atheist and Theist alike. Cheers.

I don't write reviews very often but....This was a great read. To me it seemed to read like a treatise on ethics and critical thinking but through the lens of showing how horrible religion is for people. The way in which it was written allows one to read any chapter by itself and still come away informed. However reading the full book through gives one a much better view of the material, arguments, and facts. The end result is more or less spectacular.

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