



## **The Atheist's Fatal Flaw: Exposing Conflicting Beliefs**

*Norman L. Geisler, Daniel J. McCoy*

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Most critiques of atheism focus on refuting head-on the claims of atheists. Instead, this unique book faithfully represents what atheists say they believe and stands back to watch as the natural inconsistencies in that worldview inevitably rise to the surface.

Norman L. Geisler, the apologetic giant of our time, is joined by Daniel J. McCoy, highlighting two inconsistencies in particular. First they examine the atheist's assertion that God cannot exist because there is evil in the world and that if God truly existed, he would intervene. These same people then turn around and say any intervention on God's part would impose upon human autonomy, and thus would be unjust. Second, these very interventions that would be considered immoral if imposed upon the earth by God are lauded when they stem instead from some human institution or authority.

Geisler and McCoy highlight this kind of "doublethink" step by step, showing readers how to identify such inconsistencies in atheistic arguments and refute them--or rather show atheists how they refute themselves.

## **The Atheist's Fatal Flaw: Exposing Conflicting Beliefs Details**

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## From Reader Review The Atheist's Fatal Flaw: Exposing Conflicting Beliefs for online ebook

### Frank Peters says

While I have greatly appreciated much of what Geisler has written, and enjoyed listening to him speak, I did not like this book. Almost three quarters of the book included atheist arguments against God in rapid succession. It felt like a spiritual version of wading through a sewer, and I felt spiritually unclear throughout. Even the final section, where the author intended to show the fatal flaw of the atheist seemed to me to be based too often on a straw man argument. This isn't to say that he didn't have some good philosophical points – he did. Rather the main thesis of the book was worthy of an essay, not an entire volume. So, while the main thesis was solid, much of the extra material seemed weak or forced. Thus, I do not recommend this book to anyone.

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### Clark Goble says

The field of apologetics can be classified into two categories, negative and positive. Negative apologetics is concerned with making a defense of the Christian faith while positive apologetics is more concerned with attacking the beliefs of non-Christians. This book is, by and large, a work of positive apologetics as it furiously attacks the inconsistencies held by atheists.

Geisler and McCoy spend a great deal of time clarifying the arguments of popular atheists through extensive research and quotations. In fact, there are moments throughout the book I felt they were articulating atheistic thought too well. It is not an overstatement to suggest Geisler and McCoy understand atheistic claims far better than most atheists I've encountered. The two dive deep into the subject and articulate the opposing position clearly and fairly.

Using atheist's own words to frame their arguments, the authors expose some major inconsistencies in atheistic thought. Primarily, these inconsistencies lie in the area of moral evil, God's intervention, and the atheist's own concern with human autonomy. While atheist's condemn a God who doesn't directly intervene in the face of moral evil, they accuse Him of violating human autonomy when He does intervene.

Basically, this book destroys atheistic philosophy. One could argue that the authors could spend more time focusing on negative apologetics and defending Christian philosophy, however, this is all implied when not directly stated. As it stands, this book can be read in just a couple of hours and does a good job of articulating the authors' positions from beginning to end.

I highly recommend it.

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### Josh Olds says

QUICK HIT – Don't let the length of this book fool you. Geiser and McCoy's treatise on the fatal flaw of atheism is deep, complex, and enlightening. A challenging read, but a must-read for any lay level apologist or pastor.

When I was young and in middle school, I wanted to be just like Norm Geisler when I grew up. Now that I'm still relatively young, but with undergrad and seminary behind me (for now, anyway), I still want to be like Geisler. Perhaps no single person helped develop and mature my faith during my teen years than learning from a whole shelf full of Geisler's books that I collected over the course of those years. Between him, Ravi Zacharias, and William Lane Craig, I had a very full reading plate and a very intense apologetics training time during my mid-teens. I really respect Dr. Geisler's ministry, especially now as he is getting up there in years. I can only hope that my mind is as sharp and my will is as strong when I am where he is at now.

The Atheist's Fatal Flaw, coauthored with Daniel McCoy just furthers my admiration even more. In ten cogent and coherent chapters, Geisler and McCoy go on the offensive, taking apologetics where it rarely goes. All too often, we treat apologetics as the art of answering questions, but let's be reminded that almost every time Jesus was asked a question, he responded in kind. In the same way, Geisler and McCoy go on the offensive to ask questions that point out some fundamental inconsistencies in the atheist's worldview.

Central to the book is, of course, the problem of moral evil. Geisler and McCoy brilliantly term this argument (along with those similar) a God in the Dock argument because it puts God on the defense stand (the dock). The interesting thing about these arguments is that it argues against God by assuming the existence of God...the very thing they're claiming to argue against.

Building on that, Geisler and McCoy then discuss the inherent contradiction in the atheist disliking the answer that God allows evil to allow human free will, yet then also arguing about the importance of human free will. Thus, while the introduction covers the inherent contradiction in the moral argument, the remainder of the book covers the inherent contradictions in the implications of the moral argument.

The Atheist's Fatal Flaw is not always an easy book to read. I recommend a chapter a day to fully allow you to mull over and digest the arguments, as well as take the time to think of your own examples. It's a revolutionary apologetic because it turns the tables on the atheist, asking them to provide their own coherent, cohesive worldview, which, ultimately, they cannot do.

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### **Grayson Gilbert says**

While this book brought great clarity to the logical arguments atheists may make against the concept and legitimacy of the existence of God, the treatment offered by Geisler and McCoy was by no means exhaustive. As I saw this book to be an introductory primer on the subject, this is not detrimental to the content and delivery.

I found the content of the book relatively engaging – especially in light of the vast amount of philosophical reasoning opposed to Christendom in the current age. Essentially, the authors seek to show that all the Christian must do is allow the atheist to expose their own arguments via direct contradiction.

The general premise of the atheist hangs upon the presupposition that God does not exist. However, even if God were to exist, His character and means by which He operates are inadequate at best. The atheist would argue that God is unjust for not intervening, yet also the methods by which the scriptures declare that God does intervene, are unjust, as they remove genuine autonomy.

For example: in the realm of Moral Evil, God is unjust for not intervening to stop high level immorality

(murder, rape, etc.) – yet also unjust if He does intervene because He infringes upon autonomy. In regard to guilt and rules, He is immoral by assigning guilt upon man for breaking rules, yet they would argue that it is entirely beneficial for guilt to be assigned on the premise of breaking certain societal, moral rules. The main problem, again, is that these things infringe upon true autonomy. They would argue that the man acting within the scripture's realm of morality is simply being coerced to do so, thus, it is not only disingenuous, but immoral and infantile.

Geisler and McCoy break down the book into ten chapters, seven of which deal with the framework by which atheists have made logical fallacies; the remaining three treat their content in light of the logical inconsistency. Here is where I would make an interjection, in feeling that the content could be better organized by including these inconsistencies at the end of each chapter for clarity and consistency.

The authors pull quite a few quotes from many leading atheistic thinkers, both from our current times and the Age of Enlightenment. However, I saw this as both a great strength for the book as much as a weakness. Nearly 60-70% of the first seven chapters consisted of direct quotations. Some of these were incredibly adept in representing the driving point of the chapter, yet to mine through them all was exhausting. Had they chosen roughly half – and selected the most powerful, such quotations could have served to greater influence the desired impact.

The content of the book had me puzzled a few times, not at the depth of the topic, but at the inclusion of some statements made from the authors. I will simply include a couple found and noted, one being a statement devoid of full research, the other being a dangerous theological proposal if carried to its logical end.

“What is most surprising to atheists, and even to Christians, about hell, is who came up with the idea. It was Jesus” (pg. 99).

While Jesus spoke extensively on the nature of Hell and of it being a literal place of torment, the Old Testament is not void of reference to eternal punishment for the wicked (Dan. 12:2; Isa. 66:24). It would seem simply to be an honest mistake of the authors in either being misinformed, or simply not giving due research behind the statement. Regardless, it is now published as a verified statement, though it is not.

The second, and more troublesome statement comes just three pages later, picturing God as a panting, frenzied, desperate wreck in regard to sending people to Hell. We know it to be true from scripture that He takes no pleasure in the death of anyone – but desires that they would repent and live (Ezekiel 18:32; 1 Tim. 2:4). However, it cannot be stated that He is in such emotional disarray as to be “panting, frenzied, and desperate” as He executes wrath.

We must ask the genuine question: does God take pleasure in executing justice? Though He desires that all would be saved, this desire is not effectual. If it were, all would be saved and the heresy of Universalism would be dogma. The logical, and perfectly biblical deduction, is though God takes no pleasure in those who do perish, He does take pleasure in executing His justice. To be sure, we ought to clarify the meaning of “pleasure” as something altogether different than sadomasochistic joy; it would seem more prudent to show the progression that in punishing the wicked, He is brought glory, thus, manifesting pleasure in Himself - as He is utterly worthy of all glory.

Directly after this statement, the authors write, “What we know is that the Christian God was so intensely against sending the atheist to hell that he went to hell himself, like a fireman to the rescue.” While the context speaks of the sacrifice made on the cross, this statement might allude to a popular, yet

unsubstantiated notion that Christ descended into Hell after His death upon the cross.

If they were not alluding to Christ literally going to hell, one might allegorically say that Christ endured hell upon the cross - yet even this is unsubstantiated. Christ bore the fullness of God's wrath against those whom would be saved— not hell. Hell is the place of torment in which the fullness of God's wrath is poured out upon the unregenerate.

The one massive problem I had with this book though is not in some of the poor theology that I came across. The authors never make a grand appeal to the gospel. I will argue, time and again, that it is the foolishness of the gospel that saves. Not Apologetics; not rhetoric; not exposing contradictions. The gospel. While we may win an argument, employing such means does little to cut to the heart to expose the idol that the atheist has built up in place of God: himself. I am convinced that nothing save the gospel of Jesus Christ and Him crucified will do this.

Disclosure: I received this book free from Baker Books through the Baker Books Bloggers [www.bakerbooks.com/bakerbooksbloggers](http://www.bakerbooks.com/bakerbooksbloggers) program. The opinions I have expressed are my own, and I was not required to write a positive review. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255 <http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/wa....>

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### **Jerry Blackerby says**

Very good book showing the conflicting beliefs/statements by atheists.

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### **Travis says**

I have heard it said, and I agree, that we should not present an argument against another person's position without first being able to express that person's position in such a way that the person would agree that what we have presented is indeed their belief. In *The Atheist's Fatal Flaw*, popular apologist Norman Geisler along with Daniel McCoy attempt to do just this regarding some popular atheistic arguments against belief in God.

Geisler and McCoy cite the writings of multiple popular atheistic authors and speakers in order to present a clear and fair understanding of one of the most common objections voiced by atheists against the concept of a deity. The authors then attempt to disclose that there is a natural self-contradiction in the rationale adopted by many atheists.

In this work, Geisler and McCoy address the atheist's objection to the existence of God based on the issue of moral evil. The authors point out multiple ways in which atheistic authors and speakers have argued that for there to really be a God as the Bible presents, that God clearly would have done something to put an end to the kinds of moral evil and atrocities that we have seen all throughout human history. The authors then also

point out that the same oppose on moral grounds of their own making the concept of divine intervention to put a stop to all evil, the worst cases of evil, or to work within the consciences of the willing to prevent evil. The atheists seem to be demanding that God act more strongly to prevent human on human evil, but to somehow do so without exercising divine authority or inhibiting human freedom in any way. The authors summarize, “In short, we will find that the atheist demands God fix the problem of moral evil while at the same time demanding freedom from the very methods God would use to fix it” (113).

The authors then go on to point out that the atheists will turn back on their own rationale by arguing that the kinds of intervention that they deny God the right to do would be perfectly acceptable if done by humanity. Thus, their opposition to limited human freedom is only opposition to God limiting human freedom. Geisler and McCoy declare, “In a second inconsistency, the atheist seems to reverse stances on the immorality of the divine interventions. Whereas he argues scathingly against the morality of these interventions at the divine level, somehow these interventions turn out not to be problematic at the societal level” (124).

This work has several strengths that readers should appreciate. Geisler and McCoy offer a plethora of quotations from a variety of atheists to make clear the atheistic position. This indicates a level of honesty from these authors regarding their treatment of the atheistic argument. Geisler and McCoy are not trying to set up and destroy straw men.

The two contradictions that Geisler and McCoy find in the atheistic arguments are strong objections that must be addressed by those who would hold to an atheistic position based on the problem of moral evil. Geisler and McCoy raise a strong question about whether full human autonomy—an attribute highly valued by many atheists—is something that can somehow be held to while demanding that God somehow override that autonomy in cases of moral evil. Also, if an atheist argues that human beings can work to put an end to evil by use of moral judgment, reward, punishment, etc., why would such tactics be inappropriate for the Creator?

This book is not for everyone. It is certainly true that some atheists will have different arguments that they claim are their particular objections to faith in God. Such people will rightly claim that Geisler and McCoy have not landed on their “fatal flaw.” For some readers, the sheer volume of quotes will be hard to wade through—I found myself fatigued by the mountains of quotes, some of which were used multiple times. And, for Christians who are emotionally sensitive to aggressive atheistic statements, this book will be hard to stomach.

Truthfully, I believe the book’s greatest weakness may be the overreach of the title. The title of this work could lead a person to believe that this book contains a secret weapon in apologetics to settle the atheistic issue once and for all. However, truthfully, atheists have other arguments that they use to hold to their own faith in a lack of faith in God. Thus, to promise that this pointing out of a contradiction in the atheistic understanding of theodicy will be “fatal” to the atheist’s worldview over-promises and under-delivers.

Overall, I would recommend *The Atheist’s Fatal Flaw* to a Christian interested in apologetics or to an honest atheist who is willing to look at a Christian objection to an atheist’s claim that the problem of evil seals the theist’s fate. While not the easiest read or always the most engaging, this work has some challenging reasoning that many would do well to work through.

I received a free copy of this work from Baker Books as part of a book reviewer’s program. Baker Books has not influenced this review in any way, but has simply asked for an honest review of the book.

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## Jason Kanz says

The Atheist's Fatal Flaw: Exposing Conflicting Beliefs (2014, Baker Books) by the patriarchal Norman Geisler and newcomer Daniel McCoy is an important contribution to the existing apologetic literature. In classic Geisler style, this book moves forth in a relentlessly logical fashion. In essence, they spend the book examining two inconsistencies: "in the first case, though initially indicting God for not fixing the problem of moral evil, the atheist then indicts God for his attempts to fix it" (p. 131) and second, "although denouncing as evil the interventions that God proposes in order to fix moral evil, the atheist then reverses himself by absolving those same types of interventions at a societal level" (p. 132). In essence, certain actions are okay, so long as we do not attribute them to God.

What I found to be the primary strength of this book was the painstaking effort Geisler and McCoy went to accurately represent the atheist's viewpoints and inconsistencies. The first half of the book is full of numerous examples from atheists such as Hitchens, Dawkins, Dennett, Barker, and others. In fact, I suspect the naive reader may read the first half of the book and wonder if it is Christian. Keep reading.

The Atheist's Fatal Flaw is a useful, unique book, but it is not for the faint of heart. Gaining some basic grounding in apologetics, philosophy, and logic prior to tackling this book may be of benefit. Regardless, I think this book will benefit many in the years to come.

*I received this book free from the publisher through the Bethany Baker House book review bloggers program. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255: "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising."*

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## John says

Geisler and McCoy do a great job in letting the atheist explain some of their views on God, morality, intervention and free will by citing them in great parts of every chapter. Maybe a bit too much, but they make a point of showing that the views originate from these well known atheists and are not something they just make up or feel like something atheist's believe.

Fair enough, but they unfortunately do the mistake of quoting out of context sometimes although it do not make the arguments invalid - I think they did it because when you search for quotes it's easy not to check their context too well in their eagerness to find inconsistencies from the same person, because it would make the totality of the argument stronger. Not that it is defendable.

I have heard those inconsistencies made by many atheists many times, and I loved that I found this book that put this into words and showed how the flaws were made. Or rather, the origin of the flaws that atheists make in this way. Because many atheists rely on the totality of the atheist authors they've read (and do not think too much themselves) and do not bother much to check if they agree with each other. They do not check if Dawkins agree with Harris or Russell - but I'm sure most of them are more consistent if evaluated by themselves.

One other issue I have with this book is that they do repeat their points too many times, in the little room they do give for their own voice, so much that it feels a bit badly edited and not too well crafted.

It's more a 3.5 than a full 4.

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### **Sommer Page says**

#### **Must read!**

An excellent logical synopsis of the conflicting beliefs when denying God.  
This book opened my eyes to the wonderful rationality of my faith in God.

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### **Greg Ellis says**

Good book overall. A nice addition to the serious apologists bookshelf.

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### **Eric says**

This isn't really an typical apologetics book. It's a book about atheism and the contradictions necessary in their worldview. Full disclosure: I am an atheist, and I don't like having contradictions in my worldview, so I decided to read it.

Here's what I didn't like about the book: The book operates from the assumption that God exists, but then pulls quotes from atheists that (from their context) are under the assumption that God does not exist. The book starts with the dilemma that atheists want God to do a lot more in regards to moral evil but that atheists demand personal autonomy. But the quotes regarding personal autonomy are from the assumption that God does not exist. They argue how constraining belief in God is, how ridiculous submission to God appears from an atheistic perspective, and they're quite correct, it does seem very silly from an atheistic perspective. The authors don't do a lot of misquoting of the atheists, which is good, but they do a lot of misunderstanding and misapplying of the quotes.

The authors like to argue that what "the atheist" really wants is liberation from God, but most of the time, what they really want is just liberation from religion and Christianity. The authors do a lot of conflating of those ideas in this book. Contrary to a lot of Christian belief, we don't hate God. We just don't believe in him. :)

Dawkins has a quote in the book: "But the apparently irresistible temptation to whore with foreign gods is something we moderns find harder to empathize with. To my naïve eyes, 'Thou shalt have no other gods but me' would seem an easy enough commandment to keep. . . . Yet throughout the Old Testament, with the same predictable regularity as in bedroom farce, God had only to turn his back for a moment and the Children of Israel would be off and at it with Baal, or some trollop of a graven image." Which, of course, proves in a world where God is real, obeying and submitting to God makes complete logical sense. It would be clearly nonsensical to not obey, follow his rules, and submit to God. But from an atheistic perspective, it seems ridiculous.

The book isn't very well-written, unfortunately, (literally) half the book is quotes from various atheists, which as another reviewer said, is fairly lazy writing, and it has its share of logical fallacies, but the book as

a whole isn't too bad. The authors present some good cases of bad atheist logic (which, like all bad logic, I'm not a fan of), and there are some good arguments at the end responding to atheist objections. Not sure if I'd recommend the book to anyone, though. I think there are better books that serve the purposes that this book wants to.

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### **Ron Smith says**

Geisler and McCoy have produced a detailed work which clearly exposes the 'doublethink' of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four* that pervades atheism. Doublethink or what I call doublespeak is exemplified by C. S. Lewis himself when he was a young atheist. Lewis, as you may know, abandoned atheism and became a theist in 1929 and then a Christian in 1931.

"I maintained that God did not exist. I was also very angry with God for not existing. I was equally angry with Him for creating a world." -C. S. Lewis in *Surprised By Joy*

On the one hand atheists deny God, but on the other blame him for everything that is wrong in the world, mankind, and themselves. God must be condemned both for not-existing as well as existing. As Lewis says, atheists really are 'hard to please.'

I think Geisler and McCoy have a commendable work and *The Atheist's Fatal Flaw* is replete with examples, quotes, and understanding.

I did find myself doing a lot of skimming, but having written *A Mere Christian* that may simply be a reflection of my level of agreement and appreciation for this subject. I am probably not the typical reader interested in understanding atheism. My book has the goal of establishing or reestablishing one's personal apologetic. Why do Christians believe what we believe?

Geisler and McCoy are simply bringing atheism in focus for what it is. Still, I think *The Atheist's Fatal Flaw* is worthy of a place in my library.

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### **Ho Christopher says**

If you have ever tried to share gospel with an atheist, one of the most frequent argument you will hear raised against the Christian faith is that of the moral argument between God's benevolence and omnipotence. Often it is argued that if suffering exist, God is either powerless to stop it or God is not as good as who He claims He is, and therefore he is not fit to be worshipped. In light of debunking this argument, Norman Geisler and Daniel McCoy sets out to point out what they think is the fatal flaw within this string of argument.

Fatal Flaw takes this one argument and elaborates on it, quite extensively. The authors showed the depth of their research by the numerous and sometimes lengthy quotes from the atheist, often quoting from the Four Horseman of atheism (Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, Daniel Dennett) but also Bertrand Russell, Friedrich Nietzsche, Dan Barker, just to name a few.

In the first chapter, Geisler and McCoy sets the context of the book and examines briefly the flow and the gist of the book. Thereafter, it's followed with a 6 chapters analysis of the moral argument, with each chapter

flowing from the previous point made. Finally, a 'summary' of the points that actually shows how among these actually contradicts what they are arguing against. Geisler and McCoy then raised some of the objections against the atheists they were answering against and ends with a call for them to examine what they have written about and how this argument is not a good enough reason for the atheists to reject the Christian faith.

Frankly, I feel the book is a bit too long, with too many quotations and too repetitive, many a time what was quoted in the beginning of the chapter is quoted again for the end when a summary for the chapter is made. In their defence, I'm sure they are trying to show that they have done their research thoroughly, and have sought to read and understand the argument from the primary text. In reading the quotations they have referred to, I have felt the sting and wrath of the attacks made against the Christian faith. But one does wonder if there is a more concise way of summarising them could have been more helpful. It was at times a drag to read through all the quotations with seemingly 'no light coming out of a very (very) long tunnel.'

I felt also that the argument was dragged a little too long, and did not answer the question raised very effectively. In fact, I see that the main argument was raised very early in the book and should have been the main thrust of argument rather than using it at times within the book.

More alarmingly, I counted that there was only around 5 books within the bibliography that was remotely close to the topic of apologetics, which is striking for a book that sets out to attempt this task. No doubt, they are trying to put forth a new argument against the atheists, but I'm not quite if this argument is good enough. Would it be better to show why this new method is necessary? Or perhaps a combination of showing the flaws of the argument along with Christianity's answer against it?

In sum, I think this book would help those who have read the New Atheism deeply or would like to attempt to talk with those who have, but be warned, only those who persevere to the end would be rewarded.

Rating: 3.5/5

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### **Cathy Falk says**

I am not a theologian so perhaps that is the reason I had such difficulty reading this book. Over several months time I really tried to understand what was being presented but it was hard to plow through all the quotes and tangents without losing the point the author was trying to make. The book may be better received by a more learned person, but for the average person it was tough reading.

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### **April (The Steadfast Reader) says**

I need to take a deep breath before I start this. Okay. I think I'm ready. Dear Readers, I hope you know, that I read things outside my comfort zone. I read them with an open mind and I try to read them from the perspective of the people they were written for. (See: Pastrix, Never Pray Again, Jesus Hates Religion, The Answer to Bad Religion is Not No Religion - my entire religion tag. Even The Myth of the Spoiled Child - which actually changed my opinion after reading it.)

In case you're new, I feel the need to tell you that while I am an atheist (a humanist) I am not an anti-theist. I believe in live and let live -- but that's all been covered. Check out my other posts for that.

So. This. Book. Let's start with the easiest critique. This book quotes so extensively from atheists, scripture, and apologetics, I have to wonder how many pages the author's own thoughts and writing would actually fill. (Ballpark guess, I'd say no more than 50, if that.) The reason given is to "faithfully represent what atheists say they believe..." Okay. Fair enough. But honestly, it's just way too much. Even if I had agreed with the premise of this book it would have been too much - frankly, it's lazy writing.

Structure. Ten chapters all aimed at highlighting atheist's 'inconsistent beliefs' - both of which make the assumption that there actually is a Christian God. Further, very cleverly, the authors create a strict framework in which they will present their arguments - God in the Dock - (GITD) incidentally also coined by another apologist, C.S. Lewis, who I actually like. Well, his apologetics, anyway.

"This book will not venture outside of the GITD arguments against the coherence of Christianity, with the agreement that the atheist will not hop the fence mid-argument to snatch, bring back, and sneak in caricatures."

Sigh. We'll get to tone in a moment, but first, what a very clever device Mr. Geisler and Mr. McCoy. Make the 'enemy' (read: atheist) suspicious to your intended audience and frame the argument exactly and only as is best for you.

Tone. The authors claim several times throughout the book that they are attempting to have respectful dissent with atheists - after such a claim, the next sentence is usually one that either takes a tone of superiority and general self-righteousness. In my experience that is not how you win hearts and minds, that's not how you show respect - though it's useful I suppose, if you're speaking to people inside of your own echo chamber. I think that the tone itself is evident by reading the synopsis alone. It only becomes more smug, the more you read.

Context. So, we've already talked about the extensive quotations in the book. As is to be expected with people not seeking to learn or to write honestly - the quotations are cherry-picked (both from the atheists and from scripture) to serve the purpose of the authors. How convenient. For the first few chapters I looked up the context of the quotations (most of which were wildly misrepresented) then I became weary. Predictably, the (in)famous Sam Harris quote is also taken out of context:

"Some propositions are so dangerous that it may even be ethical to kill people for believing them..."

You know what's coming... the rest of the story. A Load of Bright wrote a post called Misquoting Harris. While this was the most easily identifiable quote taken out of context - I promise you that most of the other quotes that I looked up were taken equally out of context. As I said, there were so. many. it was impossible for me to look them all up.

So when your argument is based on quotes taken out of context -- what argument do you have left? More troublesome, how honest is it? I have issues with dishonesty - especially - in books like this.

I actually laughed at the quote from 'former atheist' Paul Vintz who describes "what it was like to finally be counted among the initiates" He actually speaks about being drawn into society after becoming an atheist, whereas while he was a Christian, he had been shunned. I'm sorry. But no. Just. No. Not in America. (If you'd like a anthology of stories from atheists living in America, I'd highly encourage you to check out Atheists in America.)

Last thoughts. So, this book makes all the usual assumptions about atheists (we actually believe in God but

just want to rebel, there's no way to have 'real' morality without the guidance of a Christian God, a mild vilification of science, etc. etc. etc.) the book takes atheist's words (and scripture) and twists them to its own purposes. Blech. It feels like the authors are almost willfully misunderstanding what atheists think. It leaves a vile taste in my mouth.

I don't even know who to recommend this book to. I suppose conservative Christians locked in their echo chambers might enjoy it - but I've read reviews that say they're actually 'disturbed and depressed' by the number of quotes from atheists. (Which raises the question, Why is that? But that's another discussion for another day and another place.)

Do I have anything nice to say? Admittedly, not a whole lot. But the citations did give me a fabulous reading list of some of the greatest thinkers in our time and before - you can bet some of those will be on my TBR list soon.

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