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“God’s Dupes?” — Atheist Public Relations at Work

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Just in time for the Easter season, [Sam Harris](#) is out with another attack upon Christian belief. This time, his new article reveals something of genuine interest — atheists must be content to talk only to each other.

Harris wrote an op-ed commentary for *The Los Angeles Times* in which he referred to believers as “God’s dupes.” He celebrated the fact that Rep. Pete Stark had declared himself to be a non-theist and, as some now claim, the nation’s highest ranking public official who is an atheist.

Author of inflammatory books like *The End of Faith* and *Letter to a Christian Nation*, Harris once again reveals that he is really writing feel-good literature for his fellow atheists — not a message really directed to a Christian audience at all.

Consider this rather pointed argument from his article:

The truth is, there is not a person on Earth who has a good reason to believe that Jesus rose from the dead or that Muhammad spoke to the angel Gabriel in a cave. And yet billions of people claim to be certain about such things. As a result, Iron Age ideas about everything high and low — sex, cosmology, gender equality, immortal souls, the end of the world, the validity of prophecy, etc. — continue to divide our world and subvert our national discourse. Many of these ideas, by their very nature, hobble science, inflame human conflict and squander scarce resources.

This is not exactly a conversation-starter with Christian believers. But it is hard to believe that this was Harris’s purpose anyway. In an earlier section of his article, he acknowledges that 83% of Americans believe “that the Bible is the literal or ‘inspired’ word of the creator of the universe.”

In other words, Harris concedes that the vast majority of Americans believe, at the very least, in the existence of God — and then proceeds to call them stupid. Going up against the overwhelming majority of the population is not usually a winning public relations strategy. The truth is not always on the side of the largest numbers, of course, but the very fact that Harris wrote this column this way indicates that he is not really trying to change minds, but merely to beat his drum for atheism.

So far as he is concerned, belief in God is a form of “self-deception” and a commitment to “Iron Age ideas.” Interestingly, he continues his assault upon theological liberals and moderates who, he argues, provide shelter for true believers. He calls for a massive breaking of “this spell” that he believes so inflicts humanity.

Atheism may or may not be a growth industry in America. The appearance of so many popular books advocating atheism points, at the very least, to a growth industry in atheist books. And yet, the aggressive and abrasive approach taken by authors like Sam Harris and Richard Dawkins seems intended more to impress fellow unbelievers than to convince believers to abandon belief in what he calls an “Imaginary Friend.”

This is a good point to keep in mind as these books and articles continue to appear. Given the publicity they attract, there is no reason to believe they will stop coming.

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