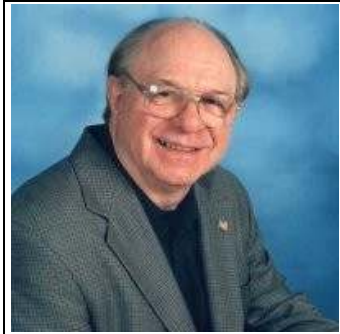


You Can't Win!

Der hier folgende Text stammt von der Site <http://barry-hampe-i-am-an-atheist-settings.quora.com/> - ihn zu übersetzen, war mir zu viel Arbeit, aber wir haben ja eh alle Englischunterricht gehabt!



Barry Hampe, Atheist

20 reasons an American Christian will (almost) always lose a discussion/argument/debate with an atheist about god, religion, or atheism.

1. It's unwinnable. If you are really good at this, you know the best you can get is a tie, and the atheist will probably agree to that before you start the discussion. You have only one irrefutable argument: "I believe." That results in a tie, not a win, when the atheist replies, "I have no such belief," and you are forced to agree to disagree.

2. Conversion is out. You are not going to convert an atheist, and the atheist, unless he or she is either a very young or very new atheist, is not trying to convert you.

Can you imagine having a conversation with an atheist without trying to convince him of something? If not, you're just wasting your time.

3. Two different worlds. If you are an American Christian, you live in a world where you are absolutely certain that the god of your religion exists. That is a major reason why atheism makes no more sense to you than a person who doesn't believe in the Statue of Liberty would make to a New Yorker. You know your god exists. And depending on what flavor Christian you are, you may also know that your god created the world you inhabit.

On the other hand, an atheist lives in a godless world. To an atheist, the lack of credible, objective, verifiable evidence for the existence of any god or gods is sufficient to support a lack of belief in god(s) until or unless such evidence can be produced. Apologists often make the mistake of asking the atheist, "If you don't have all of the knowledge in the universe, how can you be sure that God does not exist?" There are two flaws to this question. The first is the burden of proof. (See point #5.) Second, the apologist is tacitly admitting there is no compelling evidence, because, if such evidence existed, the apologist would surely point it out, rather than asking an illogical question.

4. Poor preparation. All too often, the Christians I've had Internet discussions with came unprepared and expecting an easy win. Unfortunately for them, their reasoning, which plays so well in the church basement, where everyone agrees with them, tends to fall apart when used on someone who not only disagrees, but has probably heard and answered it all before.¹

5. Burden of proof. Many American Christians are surprised to hear an atheist tell them that the atheist has nothing to prove; that the burden of proof is on the person asserting the existence of something. The Christians say, "You are asserting our god does not exist. Prove it!"

To which the atheist replies, "No, I am saying I have no belief in your god or any gods, because I have found no reason to hold such a belief. If you want me to believe in your god, the burden of proof is on you to show me that this god in which you believe actually exists."²

6. Wrong target audience. Christians tend to play to the faithful; while atheists make their case to the kids in the bleachers -- the doubters, the undecided, and the next generation. Therefore, the Christian may win the debate on the applause meter but lose where it's important. (If you think William Lane Craig won the debate with Christopher Hitchens³, take another look and try to determine what audience each had targeted. Then look at the 2012 PEW report which shows that one-third of young adults 18-29 now say they have no religious affiliation.⁴)

7. Undefined goals. When Christians challenge an atheist, it sometimes seems they are just trying to force the atheist into some admission that will let the Christian yell, "Gotcha!" It's not only a waste of time, but it also makes the Christian look petty if not outright foolish. Barring blatant ignorance, there really are no "gotchas" for either side.

8. Ignorance about atheists. You don't know how much you don't know. Chances are you neither know nor understand that person -- the atheist -- you are talking with. In several years of discussing belief vs. unbelief on Quora, I've been absolutely amazed at the amount of mistaken information American Christians think applies to atheists.

¹ See, for example, <http://www.quora.com/Are-atheists-too-Vulcan-with-logic/answer/Barry-Hampe>

² See, for example, <http://www.quora.com/Are-atheists-too-Vulcan-with-logic/answer/Barry-Hampe>

³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=4KBx4vvlbZ8

⁴ "A third of adults under 30 have no religious affiliation (32%), compared with just one-in-ten who are 65 and older (9%). And young adults today are much more likely to be unaffiliated than previous generations were at a similar stage in their lives." - 'No Religion' on the Rise: 19.6% Have No Religious Affiliation. <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/10/09/nones-on-the-rise/>

That person in your congregation who claims to have been "an atheist," may have experienced a crisis of faith, but probably never reached the defining point of atheism --having no belief in any god or gods. Therefore, they are not a good source of information about atheists and atheism. Ask them about that.

Some Christian sects actively discourage their members from reading about non-theism. And if you can't study your opponent, how can you expect to best him in a discussion, argument, or debate?

9. Wrong focus. Early in any discussion with American Christians, it often becomes apparent to me that they are listening to me (or reading my words) solely to find something to refute, rather than trying to understand or learn about atheists and atheism. What I have noticed is that they ignore what I have written when it varies from the response they were expecting. They just go on to the next question on their Apologetics check list. They also ignore any questions I may ask of them, while insisting I should answer all questions of theirs. When I offer an explanation about something with five or six points, and the Christian comes back quibbling about something in just one of those points, while ignoring the rest, I'm pretty sure of what's going on. They don't care about my explanation. They are only interested in finding something to disagree with. It's a losing strategy.

10. Flawed expertise. I don't know how many times I've offered the standard definition of atheism shared by most 21st century atheists, "atheism is the lack of belief in any god or gods," and had the Christian tell me, "No, that's an agnostic. An atheist believes God does not exist."

Now, I have been a declared atheist for seven decades, and I'm pretty sure I know where I, and most of the atheists I know, stand on this question. An a-theist is a non-theist. Theists believe in a personal god. Atheists have no such belief. That's it.

The social rule is: Each side gets to define what it stands for. So don't try to tell me what I do and don't believe. That's insupportable arrogance, and you'll just end up looking bad.^{5 6}

11. Unsupported assertions. This is another tactic that plays well in the church basement, but not so well in a real discussion. The Christian will declare that atheism is just another religion. Or may say that since atheists can't prove God doesn't exist, atheism is a belief just like Christianity. That's when atheists start talking about unicorns, elves, fairies, and teapots, and the Christians get upset, because they think we are comparing fairy tale creatures to their god. We're not. We're comparing belief with lack of belief.⁷

I've also had Christians tell me that atheists worship science or worship evolution. We are not worshipers. Really. Christians worship; we don't.

12. Analogy is not evidence; neither is metaphor. American Christians love analogies. When I said I had never seen any compelling evidence for the existence of their god, one suggested:

Let's use storybooks . . . where we are the storybook characters - the constructed personality in a world constructed to be bound by physical laws. Characters in a storybook never know who their author is, and that is consistent with the experience of "never encountering any credible, objective, verifiable evidence of an author". But the fact that there's a story implies that there is an author. Anybody outside the book knows this, but the characters within the book can only infer this, but never have solid proof. Is that acceptable as a viewpoint?

That's an analogy. As explanation by example, it's fine. As evidence, it is meaningless. There is no more evidence that writing a book models the origin of the universe correctly than there is that the universe was created by a deity.

Another person had the notion that the metaphor "heart and soul" in some way bolstered the idea that humans have a soul. It doesn't. It's a saying, not evidence.

13. Bad science. If you learned what you know of science, specifically biology, physics, and cosmology, from an Apologetics web site, you are entering the ring blindfolded with both hands tied behind you. Here's the dirty little secret: Christian apologists are not trying to win a debate with actual scientists. They can't. They are simply trying to offer aid and comfort to the faithful. So what they say doesn't need to be real science, it just has to sound scientific to those who don't know any better. But it won't work in a discussion with an atheist who actually knows something about biology, the theory of evolution, or the Anthropic Principle.

14. Bad logic. American Christians are terrible at logic. They are unaware of what constitutes a logical argument. They are unaware of the logical fallacies they often commit. And they seem not to realize that a proposition can be logical without being true.

15. The Bible isn't proof. A book cannot be the evidence of its own veracity. That requires outside corroboration. Christians are so in the habit of quoting passages from the Bible to one another to make a point -- these are called

⁵ For an excellent explanation of the difference see <http://www.quora.com/Given-the-size-mystery-and-uncertainty-of-the-universe-why-are-atheists-doubtful/answer/Tiago-Guevara>

⁶ And see: Costya Perepelitsa's answer to Why do some self-identified atheists believe that a lack of belief in a god is sufficient to be called an atheist? <http://www.quora.com/Why-do-some-self-identified-atheists-believe-that-a-lack-of-belief-in-a-god-is-sufficient-to-be-called-an-atheist/answer/Costya-Perepelitsa>

⁷ See Barry Hampe's answer to <http://www.quora.com/Why-do-some-atheists-insist-on-calling-religious-peoples-beliefs-fairy-tales/answer/Barry-Hampe>

"proof texts" -- that they either forget, or are unaware, that the words of a sacred text are not acceptable evidence to an unbeliever.

16. Absence of a scientific answer is not proof of a god. For example, some American Christians claim that since science is (so far) unable to create life from inert materials then life must have been created by their god, as it says in the Bible.⁸ Atheists would answer that creation of life by a god is one hypothesis among many, and the least testable of all hypotheses.

Here's a college student trying to set up a winning situation for himself:

Science had always strived [sic] to find a non divine explanation for the world; without one you have to admit there must be a Creator, right?

Josh Miller's answer to What would Christians (or other theists) on Quora like to discuss about belief/ faith/ God/ Christianity with longtime atheists?⁹

Now, that proposition is ridiculous on the face of it. (If you don't know why, check out my response at: Barry Hampe's answer to How can one believe in science and religion at the same time?)¹⁰

Atheists would also point out the long list of things that used to be attributed to some god that are now explained by science. Science loves to say, "We don't know," how something happened and then work to find out how it did.

17. Atheists are not neutral parties. Occasionally some Christian will criticize the atheist they are talking with for not maintaining "rational neutrality," in the discussion. This is silly. Atheists are not neutral. They are a-theists, "not theists." Theists believe in some god. Atheists have no such belief. (See point #3.)

Christians sometimes seem to think that an atheist has an obligation to keep searching for some god until they either find it or die. Atheists are convinced that all gods are myths, not just the one the Christians don't believe in. Christians sometimes equate atheism with skepticism and try to insist that a skeptic must keep an open mind (until he either finds god or dies). Atheists reply that skepticism is a process and atheism is the result of that process.

Atheists can't be neutral. We do have a dog in this fight.

18. Lack of respect. I had a lengthy discussion recently with a Christian pastor who publicly prides himself on his ability to talk with those of different beliefs, including atheists. As this discussion continued (it would be wrong to say it progressed), I realized the pastor was only interested in one thing, and it wasn't an open exchange. He disdainfully dismissed every thought and explanation I offered. All that mattered to him was that he was right and I was wrong.

You don't have to agree with an atheist's thoughts, but you should respect the atheist's right to hold them -- especially if you are engaged in discussing religion and atheism.

19. Preemptive strikes. This is the response from a Christian when I asked if he had data supporting his broad generalization about atheists in academe:

"I feel like you never intended to answer my question and that you just wanted to make me look dumb." Why are so many people in academia atheists? ¹¹

So I asked a few more questions and got this:

"Also, I would appreciate it if you wouldn't give the usual atheist answer and tell me something along the lines of 'anyone who believes in a religion is a moron.' I understand that you're an atheist, but I won't force my views on you if you don't force yours on me." ¹²

20. Making it personal. When Christians feel the discussion (debate/argument) is not going their way, some are not above making things personal. Instead of discussing the issues rationally, they start making comments, such as, "You seem defensive about this," or "Why are you so angry?" or "You're being way too emotional." And when I offer to give them 50,000 Quora credits if they can show me examples of what they are talking about, they either stop replying or say they are unwilling to play those kinds of games. (But they never give examples.)

⁸ <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2012/04/120419-xna-synthetic-dna-evolution-genetics-life-science/>

⁹ <http://www.quora.com/What-would-Christians-or-other-theists-on-Quora-like-to-discuss-about-belief-faith-God-Christianity-with-longtime-atheists/answer/Josh-Miller-26>

¹⁰ <http://www.quora.com/How-can-one-believe-in-science-and-religion-at-the-same-time/answer/Barry-Hampe>

¹¹ <https://www.quora.com/Science-and-Religion/Why-are-so-many-people-in-academia-atheists/comment/286346>

¹² <https://www.quora.com/Science-and-Religion/Why-are-so-many-people-in-academia-atheists/comment/286346>