

Are Atheists Smarter Than Christians?

By Dave DeWitt

A friend recently asked me if atheists are smarter than Christians. Actually, I think he asked, “**Why** are atheists smarter than Christians?” Anyway, I found the question intriguing, so I wrote down some thoughts.

As we encounter the liberal progressive agenda, in say, novels, movies, TV programs or the public school system (K through college) we are indoctrinated with the idea that atheists are smarter than Christians. Atheists are usually depicted as scholars, thinkers, heroes, scientists, and other well-adjusted people. Christian leaders are often depicted by some wacko handling snakes, some legalist nutcase or some idiot walking around screaming nonsense holding a Bible to his chest. And the average Christians are usually portrayed as unintelligent uninformed people who naively follow the wackos. Today’s liberal progressive agenda ignores the scores of hard-working, moral, family-oriented, sound-minded, **smart** Christians involved in local churches, parachurch ministries, and missionary organizations all over the world. And these people, because they have a moral and theological foundations in the truth, are smarter than smart atheists. Having said that, it is indeed true that many atheists are smarter than many Christians. It is probably even true that the average atheist is smarter than the average Christian. Biblically that should not be true. So why is that?

First, We Should Define a Christian

I shall here use the word “Christian” to identify a person claiming to have salvation by having received Jesus Christ as their personal Savior (as described in John 1:12; 3:16; 5:24; 14:6). Their sincerity or lifestyle is not a consideration here. My definition would eliminate cults (like the Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses) because they add to biblical salvation. It would also not include people who are just part of a Christian country (like England is Anglican and Greece is Greek Orthodox) or those who just attend a Christian Church.

Second, We Should Define an Atheist

There are two kinds of people who call themselves atheists. Most common are those who say something like, “A good God would not allow all this suffering.” These are just God-haters, not true atheists. **The true atheists are anti-supernaturalists.** They believe there is nothing but the natural universe. Not believing in God is just a byproduct of their anti-supernaturalism. For example, their commitment to naturalism is why atheists do not believe in miracles. But they usually make the mistake of not differentiating between the mystical and the miraculous. Miracles are contrary-to-nature events. But like natural events, miracles are described as having public, objective, historical verification (like Moses crossing the Red Sea and the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth). Given the preponderance of evidence, these events are true beyond reasonable doubt. Mystical events are reports of experiences that are private, subjective, and without historical evidence (like Mohammad receiving the Qur’an from the angel Gabriel or Joseph Smith receiving the Book of Mormon from the angel Maroni). Atheists are smart to not believe in mystical claims, but they are not smart to equate unverifiable mysticism with verifiable miracles.

Third, We Should Define “Smart”

The Merriam Webster Dictionary says smart is “having or showing a high degree of mental ability. [Then they offer the synonyms] ‘Intelligent’ and ‘Bright.’”

The New Oxford American Dictionary defines smart as, “having or showing a quick-witted intelligence.” They define intelligence as “the ability to acquire and apply knowledge.”

We also know that “the ability to acquire and apply knowledge” comes from being rational. We are all born applying reason to observations to make sense of reality. When people stop applying reason to reality, we get them mental or psychological help. So, I would conclude,
“Smart” is the mental ability to gain intelligence by applying reason to life’s observations.

The Bible Does Not Say Atheists Are Smart

The Bible does not discuss atheism per se because there is no evidence of atheists in the ancient world. During the times the Bible was written (~1500 B.C. to A.D. 100), most people were polytheists, with some pantheists in the far east and the Jews, who were monotheists. But there were no identifiable atheists. The first identifiable atheists appeared in Europe in the 1600s, about 100 years after the Protestant Reformation. However, even though the Bible does not address atheism, the Bible has many statements that can be applied to atheism.

Psalm 53:1-3, (as in Psalm 14) *The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God (Elohim)”*

The one who says *There is no God*, in Psalm 53, is probably a polytheist not an atheist. David calls him a *fool* because he does not believe in one sovereign God (Elohim means sovereign). What the fool has in common with the atheist is they both deny the existence of a sovereign God.

Conclusion: It is foolish to deny the existence of one sovereign God.

Application: Atheists deny the existence of a sovereign God, so they should not be smarter than Christians.

Proverbs 9:10, *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*

Repeatedly, the Bible connects wisdom and knowledge to the fear of God (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10; Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). And that leaves out the atheists. But an atheist is not someone without religious fear. An atheist is someone who fears something other than God. Since the mid-1800s, that fear increasingly comes from evolution, which has become a religion. Evolution is not “smart” because there is no observation of it. Anywhere. But evolution causes atheists to fear. They are afraid of things like global warming, overpopulation, the extinction of animals, and the exhaustion of the planet’s assets. With evolution as their religion, they fear things like the traditional family, opposition to abortion, regulations of sexual expression, securing national borders, and getting energy from fossil fuel. They fear those things, and those who support those things, because they believe those things are destroying “progress” to a global utopia. It is not about preserving the planet, it is about preserving themselves.

Conclusion: Atheists do not fear facing a holy God, but they do fear humans and what they can do to destroy the planet, while keeping it from becoming a humanist global utopia.

Application: It is not smart to fear what man can do, while ignoring what God will do.

Romans 1:19-20, *...that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.*

Romans 2:14-15, *For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them.*

The atheist is conflicted because God has given us a general revelation of Himself in two places:

- One is the natural world (Romans 1). For example, the more we learn about the living cell the further away we are from scientifically explaining how it got there.
- Another is in our conscience (Romans 2). All humans have a conscience that points to what is right. Atheists retreat into things like technology to ignore their internal morality.

Conclusion: It is unwise for atheists to ignore the evidence for God in nature and their own conscience.

Application: To ignore the evidence of God in nature and our conscience is not smart.

Since the Bible Says Atheists Are Not Smart,
Why Does It Seem like Atheists Are Smarter than Christians?

First, we need to recognize that smart atheists are not smarter than smart Christians. Richard Dawkins, Carl Sagan, and Christopher Hitchens are not smarter than Athanasius, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, John Wyclif, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, Isaac Newton, Johnathan Edwards, Ludwig von Beethoven, C.S. Lewis, or Charles Ryrie. Smart Christians are smarter than smart atheists.

Also, if we define smart people as those with a high IQ, those people tend to get educated by a doctrine (in K through college) whose agenda is controlled by the liberal progressive mentality. If you put yourself under an indoctrination, you are likely to be converted to that doctrine. The progressive education doctrine generates most of our atheists. Atheists do not become smart people. Smart people are indoctrinated into atheism.

Why Is the Average Atheist Smarter than the Average Christian

We have seen that smart atheists are not smarter than smart Christians. Also, an application of the Bible says atheists are not actually smart at all. So why is the average atheist often smarter than the average Christian? I suggest the answer is clear and significant.

Many Christians are mystics and atheists are not.

Mysticism Makes Smart People into Dumb People

Mysticism is like a drug that drains away intelligence. Whereas Christians should always be smarter than atheists (1 Corinthians 2), the reality is, many are not. The main reason is, many Christians have exchanged the belief in the revelation record of the Bible, for a belief in mystical mental messaging. Instead of going to the Bible for a sufficient answer to what God has told them to do, many Christians say, "God called me," "God told me," "God led me." Mostly they are referring to mental telepathy, some imagined mental messaging which they claim is from God. That belief separates Christians from reason and reality. Mystical Christians need to understand three clear facts:

- **First**, there is absolutely no example of mental messaging in the Bible. All of God's revelation given in the Bible was in words. Audible or written words, quote-unquote, never mental messaging.
- **Second**, there is no rational path to supposed mental messages from God. If Christian mystics were born and raised in Saudi Arabia, would they be Muslims getting mental messages from Allah? The question is, "Would I have heard God's message to you if I were with you when you received it?"
- **Third**, when you believe that God is giving you mental revelation, you have abandoned the sufficiency of the Bible. You are adding to the revelation of the Word of God (I Corinthians 13:8; Revelation 22:18-20).

Conclusion: What Do We Know about Smart Atheists and Smart Christians?

- We know that Smart atheists are not smarter than smart Christians.
- We know that atheists do not become smart people. Smart people are indoctrinated into atheism by the liberal progressive education agenda.
- We know that, by applying the Bible, we can determine that no atheist should be smarter than any Christian.
- We also know that often the average atheist is smarter than the average Christian. Why? Because atheists are not mystics, and many Christians are. All over the world and for all recorded history, rational people have been smarter than mystical people. Atheists tend to be smarter than Christians in the same way rational people tend to be smarter than mystical people.