

Who are these Atheists anyway?

[Atheism](#) is a very modern philosophical concept which denies the existence of gods and the supernatural but, like the word “pagan” or “monotheistic” it encompasses a very wide range of philosophical and moral outlooks and understandings. Many of the distinctions between the various philosophical systems that we are referring to as “atheism” are extremely subtle and fine, and rely on historical and philosophical points which are sometimes very hard to understand.

As the purpose of these articles is to address Catholic apologetics, we will not be examining these distinctions in detail. Not because they are not interesting, but because they are not relevant. Basic apologetics is possible against atheistic principles without knowing or understanding precisely the nature of the belief system which the individual ascribes to.

The Meaning of the Word Atheist

The word atheist is formed from the prefix *a* (meaning not, or against) and the word *theist* (meaning one who believes in a god). Very often, people with an ax to grind will suggest that the word means “against God” - citing this as an example of the tendencies of atheists to argue not just against the *existence* of God, but also to say that everything to do with religion is evil or bad. Atheist does not mean this, and not all atheists are like this. A significant, vocal, minority are like this, however, and you must be prepared to deal with [anti-Catholic](#) attacks as well as arguments against the existence of God.

Practical Atheism

Technically speaking, the word atheist should only be used to refer to somebody who *denies* the supernatural. However, a number of times the word is used to refer to individuals who do not appear to have ever really seriously considered if there is a god or not, but who act – for all practical purposes – as if there is no god. These people are best described as “practical atheists”; they are not genuine atheists in that they do not deny or accept the existence of God or gods, but they simply act as if the matter is of no concern to them.

Agnosticism

Related to atheism, and most especially to practical atheism, is agnosticism – this is the belief that one cannot be certain if there is a god or not. Most agnostics are practical atheists – they may not be sure if there is a god or not, but they act as if there is not. They may *claim* to be unsure, but they act as if they are *very* sure.

Of particular relevance to [refuting agnosticism](#) is the so-called Pascal's Wager which states – in brief – that the benefits for believing in God (or, at least, acting as if one believes in God to the best of one's ability) are infinite and the costs of doing so are finite. The logical conclusion of Pascal's Wager is that it is better to act as if one believes rather than not. Pascal's Wager is discussed further elsewhere.

Note that an individual may fall into more than one of these categories, or claim to be something which he or she actually is not. It is necessary, before engaging in apologetics, to find out precisely what sort of atheist the person is.

Sources of Atheism

There are two ways to approach the subject of the sources of the modern [atheism](#) of the twenty-first century. The first is to look at the various social, political, scientific and philosophical movements which were the roots of modern atheism, and the second is to consider the individual reasons and arguments that cause modern atheists (as individuals) to reject the existence of God.

While the former is *very* interesting, it is not generally speaking directly relevant to apologetics directed at atheists – few modern atheists are aware of the origins of their beliefs and even those who are do not base their acceptance of them on the historical movements. Accordingly, this article will concentrate on the latter interpretation of the word *sources*.

This article will concentrate on simply listing and explaining these sources of atheism – refuting them is the focus of another article. Because of the nebulous complexity of atheism, it is necessary to understand it before effective apologetics can take place.

The belief that religion is a source of violence, intolerance and unpleasantness

Many atheists [believe that all religions cause violence and intolerance](#). Many examples are offered – some are obviously connected with religion (such as the Crusades, the Inquisition, the conquests of Islam in the eighth century) while others are not obvious (the Holocaust, for example). Less violent but equally distressing (to the atheist mindset) examples are also offered – one of the most popular is the so-called violations of the human rights of [homosexuals](#) (in denying gay marriage or adoption by gay couples).

The belief that religion hampers scientific progress

Many atheists believe that scientific progress is a desirable (or even the *most* desirable) thing for a society. They say that religions – with their perceived focus on the supernatural and “old fashioned ways” of doing things – hamper discovery of new ideas. This can occur through social pressures, or through more direct methods. A number of atheists will maintain that Christians (and - generally - specifically the Catholic Church) [have suppressed scientific discoveries and even imprisoned or killed scientists and other intellectuals](#). Also cited under this argument are the forced teaching of Creationism in schools and the attempts to suppress the teaching of the theory of evolution.

A lack of historical knowledge

Many atheists bolster their beliefs by the use of historical examples which they do not realize are isolated incidents, taken out of context, or just plain wrong. A number of the most common historical errors refer to the period of the early Church – many atheists incorrectly believe that

Jesus was not considered [divine](#) until 325 when the Council of Nicaea formally [proclaimed](#) the doctrine of the [Trinity](#). In this, they fail to understand [doctrinal proclamation](#).

Such beliefs lead atheists to believe that the supernatural elements of religions are a later invention or addition, and were not present from the beginning, and – therefore – cannot be true.

Intellectual laziness

Many atheists are intellectually lazy – they do not think through their positions and compare the various elements to each other. Much of what many atheists believe is internally inconsistent, although individual elements of their belief system make sense and are appealing. Sometimes, if a particular element of atheist theory was taken to the logical conclusion the result would be extremely unpleasant, not at all appealing and completely illogical. As an example, the atheistic belief that we do not have souls and our intellects and personalities are merely the actions of very sophisticated organic “computers” would – if taken to the logical conclusion – completely deny the notion of free-will and consciousness. Our consciousness is clearly observable by ourselves, and therefore this argument cannot be true – there must be some additional source of our consciousness and free-will.

The liberal agenda in promoting scientific advances which deny God

Most atheists claim to be motivated by “science” - although very few of them completely understand what this means. Part of the liberal agenda is to promote scientific advances and discoveries which seem to deny God's existence (such as evolution) and to suggest that research into scientific fields contrary to [Christian morality](#) (such as [stem cell research](#)) is essential, necessary, effective and only held back by old-fashioned religious dogma. Many atheists are convinced by this agenda.

Liberal agenda in mocking religion in the media

Also part of the same agenda is the mocking (either open or covert) of religion in the media. In entertainment especially [priests](#) and other religious characters are figures of fun at best, and monsters at worst. Books and movies such as *The Da Vinci Code* are very popular and are seen by many as being accurate portrayals of religions.

Liberal agenda in promoting moral choices contrary to certain religions

The promotion of certain activities (such as [sexual promiscuity](#), [use of contraception](#) and so forth) by the liberal media is seen by many atheists as legitimizing them. This, in turn, leads atheists to believe that the Church is out of date and wrong for condemning them – and, therefore, God cannot exist if His Church is so out of touch.

Corrupt individuals within religions

Many atheists observe religious individuals who are also [corrupt or bad people](#) (for example, pedophile priests, violent terrorists, or even just very uncharitable, angry Christians they personally know) and come to the conclusion that the whole religion is false because of this.

Emotional and Moral Appeal

This is discussed in the [separate article](#). In brief, many atheists are atheists simply because to believe in a god would require them to change their lifestyle and give up actions and activities which they find enjoyable, or because of the social mockery and ostracism they would experience as a result of converting.

Lack of experience of God

All atheists lack an experience of God which is sufficient to overcome any of the preceding reasons and arguments. An atheist may have had some experience of God, but it has not been sufficiently clear – or on *his* terms – to overcome his disbelief in God. Many atheists have never sought an experience of God, instead choosing to simply assume that God does not exist from their own logic. Others have chosen to seek God, but have put conditions on what they will believe – they require a God who manifests on *their* terms, not His.

Refuting Atheism

It is not easy to give a simple guide to refuting [atheism](#), simply because the philosophical belief can vary so much between individuals who all identify as atheists. It will be necessary for the Catholic apologist to identify the [reasons why the person is an atheist](#), and then to address those specific issues. As pointed out [elsewhere](#), it is necessary to determine what the person's *real* reasons are, rather than that he or she *says* they are.

Who is this God fellow anyway?

Atheists deny the existence of “gods” - but that necessarily includes a definition of what “god” means. Few atheists realize this logical necessity, and it is up to the apologist to point this out. The word “god” is just a label, and without a definition the atheist doesn't actually mean anything.

The apologist should ask the atheist, “Tell me about the god you don't believe in.” Although this might seem totally illogical and impossible, the atheist will usually be able to give some characteristics of the being he does not believe in. These characteristics are normally a simplistic version of the Christian God – so the atheist denied-god is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, all-loving and so forth.

However, very few atheists have a picture of their denied-god which is, in fact, completely in-line with the Catholic definition of God. Atheists may confuse omnipresence with pantheism, or

all-loving with being tolerant of evil (or, even, use the infamous “problem of evil” argument). In short, the atheist is rejecting a god which *the Catholic apologist doesn't believe in either!*

Technically speaking, Catholics are pagan-atheists, and Hindu-atheists, and New Age-atheists – we deny the existence of *these* gods! Arguably, we are also Moslem-, Jewish- and perhaps even Protestant-atheists too.

The self-identified “atheist” will deny a particular sort of god – it will be necessary to find out what that god is *like* and then demonstrate (most likely) that that god is not the real God whom Catholics worship. The atheist can retain his cherished beliefs that a particular being cannot exist because they are not actually incompatible with worshipping the *real* God.

Lack of direct experience of God

If the person is an atheist because he or she has never had a direct experience of God, then all the Catholic apologist can do is pray and *ask the person to pray*. It is very difficult (some would say practically impossible) to *argue* someone to a belief in God through pure logical means – it requires a great intellect (on the part of the apologist *and* the atheist) and a very solid grounding in philosophy. Saint Thomas Aquinas came up with a number of very good arguments for the existence of God (and also the [existence of the human soul](#)) in his *Summa Theologica*, but these arguments themselves are very complicated and rely on foundational philosophical understanding which is simply beyond or not possessed by most people. Although many atheists claim to be highly educated and clever, this is often simply not the case.

Fortunately, God does not just want those who are intelligent enough to know about Him – He wishes for everyone to come to know and love Him. Most people have an experience of God through prayer – this is the normal method of communicating with God. If the person is an atheist *just* because he or she has never had any direct experience of God (remember, atheists may not be entirely honest about why they are atheists) then the apologist should ask the person to pray – in their own words, as humbly and genuinely as they can manage.

At that stage, the next phase of apologetics is out of the apologist's hands – and is firmly in God's! All the apologist can do is encourage the person to pray and – if they refuse or do not treat the exercise seriously, or have excessive cynicism about it – tell the person that he or she is being intellectually dishonest, and that there are clearly other – [emotional reasons](#) – why he or she is an atheist.

Religion hampers science or leads to violence

Many atheists use these arguments, but these arguments are logically flawed, and the apologist should be able to demonstrate this via the use of logic. In order for the argument that God is not real because religion hampers scientific progress / causes violence to be true, the following two points must be true;

1. Religion actually *is* a source of violence or hampers scientific progress

2. The fact that religion causes violence or hampers scientific progress means that it is untrue.

The second point is a logical jump – just because something causes problems does not mean it does not exist, nor does it mean that its claims are not true. It may mean that a person does not *want* it to be true, but that is not the same thing at all. From a logical perspective, one point does not lead to the other – there are plenty of things which cause violence (human greed etc.) which clearly exist.

In addition, religion *when considered as a single phenomena* doesn't cause violence or hamper scientific progress – there are *certain* religions which do this. A Catholic apologist's duty is to prove the validity of Catholicism – not to defend the entire *notion* of religion or every single religion in the world. The fact that *certain* religions have hampered scientific progress and / or caused violence and suffering can actually work to the apologist's advantage; in that Catholicism hasn't (when the [historical evidence](#) is examined [dispassionately and accurately](#)) and therefore is seen as being “better” than other religions.

The Problem of Evil

This is a predominant theme from atheists – it is exceptionally common and virtually every self-proclaimed atheist uses it in one form or another. It is, however, easily refuted and is – without wishing to sound too dismissive – really Basic Philosophy & Theology 101.

The argument runs as follows; if God is all powerful then He could prevent evil from happening. If God were all-loving, He would want to prevent evil from happening. Evil exists. Therefore, God is either not all-powerful or not all-loving. In either case, He is not *worth* worshiping (alternatively, God as defined by the Catholic Church does not exist, so I do not worship Him specifically).

Refuting this argument depends on refuting the premises and also refuting the logical structure which forms the conclusion from the premises – both are flawed.

Firstly, God *is* all-powerful. God *could* eliminate evil from the world. This is true and accurate.

Secondly, God is “all-loving” or infinitely compassionate. This is true, but there is an implicit *third* premise in this argument – that infinitely compassionate means that He would wish to prevent “evil” acts *and is prepared to take the necessary steps to do so*.

Thirdly, the term “evil” is never defined in this argument – what is evil? Asking the atheist will not get a clear answer – given the fact that the only clear definition is “that which is against God” and the atheist denies the existence of God. The atheist will probably give *examples* of evil – the Holocaust, child rape, murder, war, starvation. All of these things are certainly unpleasant, and many of them are actively evil (some of these things are simply the natural results of evil, selfish actions, and others – like hurricanes and floods – are just natural disasters).

The unspoken premise in this argument is that an all-loving God will intervene to prevent *what the atheist defines as unpleasant*. This is a key issue – if God interfered prevented everything that was genuinely evil (i.e. what He saw as evil) then no-one would be able to deny His existence, no-one would be able to have [premarital sex](#), no-one would be able to advocate or have an [abortion](#) and so forth.

This would result in the *complete subjugation of free-will*. This is a necessarily logical step – God cannot prevent evil without removing free-will from people (and removing it not just to a degree of coercion – i.e. “Do as I say or you will suffer” - but rather *totally* removing it so that humanity has no free-will *whatsoever* and cannot *choose* to do anything.)

If there is no free-will and humanity cannot choose evil, then humanity cannot choose good either. A rock has no free-will; it is not a moral thing, but neither is it amoral. It simply *exists*.

So, what does it mean for God to be all-loving? It means that He wants us to choose Him and choose the good. He wants us to reject evil. God's highest good is the correct exercise of free-will to choose Him. He sees death and suffering as, while very unpleasant for humanity, not evil in and of themselves. Death and suffering are often the results of evil actions, but they are not evil themselves.

God is both infinitely loving and infinitely just; in His love He gives *everyone* the chance to know Him and respond to Him, the chance to choose good. A person who has chosen God and who is killed by an evil man is in a better position than the evil man; he is going to Heaven. God is interested in allowing humanity to choose Him, not in trampling over their wills and turning them into inert objects who have no ability to choose good *or* evil.

A similar argument to the problem of evil is the idea that an infinitely loving God would never send people to Hell – this is basically the [universalist heresy](#), but with the additional element that God Himself is denied, rather than just the [existence of Hell](#).

A number of atheists will simply ask “If there is a God, why is there so much evil in the world?” A short and snappy answer (which is also very accurate) is “If there is no God, why is there so much good? Why do we even have the *idea* of good if there is no source for it?”

Individual scientific / historical / social / moral beliefs “prove” that religion is false

There are wide variety of specific belief systems (such as evolution, the notion that [homosexuality](#) is okay, the belief that the Church has [been responsible for countless deaths](#)) that atheists bring up as “evidence” that there is no god. Addressing these issues – although different in the details – involves basically the same tactic.

Firstly, determine if the belief being advanced is, in fact, *true*. Is the theory of evolution being advanced accurate, or are there holes in it? Is [homosexuality](#) actually moral from a purely secular standpoint, or does it lead to problems and issues which – even when God is taken out of the frame – are disadvantageous to society? If the initial belief isn't accurate, then the whole argument falls apart.

Secondly, and most importantly, does this belief mean that religion isn't true, or does it just mean that the person would find it easier and more appealing if it were not? If a person condemns the Church for forbidding the [use of condoms](#), is that actually proof that God does not exist? Or is it simply proof that the Church (and God) have a different [morality](#) to the atheist? Disagreeing with God does not necessarily mean that God does not exist – it means that either you or God are wrong. When this point is reached, it will be necessary to show that the Church's [moral positions](#) are – in fact - valid.

The Church contains corrupt individuals and therefore God can't exist

There are two ways of refuting this argument – the first is by pure logic. Merely because [corrupt people follow a religion](#) does not mean that the religion is a sham! That is a total logical disconnect. It may be that an individual atheist does not wish to belong to a group which contains such members, but that does not prove that God does not exist. This is the argument of [infallibility verses impeccability](#) applied to the Church as a whole.

The second method is by simple example; there are many atheists who have killed people (the Chinese government, for example) – does this mean atheism isn't real? Are Martin Luther King's ideals untrue because he was an adulterer? Are the values of the Founding Fathers wrong because some of them kept slaves? Or are these people just hypocrites?

The *truth* of a position is not determined by the *morality* of those who profess to believe it. If a doctor who says that people must lose weight for their health and then dies weighing 350lbs of a heart attack, that does not mean his science was wrong – it means that he just didn't practice what he preached!

The Apologist Strikes Back!

The above examples are all *reactive* not *proactive*. The apologist reacts to objections raised by the atheist. However, this should not be the only tactic the Catholic apologist has. Below are a number of active methods of refuting atheism – asking questions and raising objections to that belief!

Humanity's tendency towards depravity

This is an excellent argument to use against evolutionists – not against evolution itself, but rather against atheism.

Most atheists, if asked, will agree that humanity is not [morally](#) perfect – there is evil and depravity in human nature. Regardless of what source they ascribe this to (many will ascribe it to “religious men trying to control people!”) the fact remains that it has to have an ultimate source which is external to human consciousness. While people have invented religions to control people and take their money, where did the idea that this could be done *come* from? Human depravity is not an advantageous trait – it damages the group (because it causes one individual to

desire more resources and to hurt others) and is therefore not a beneficial survival trait. It in fact confers no survival advantage to be selfish in terms of resources for a co-operative creature like humanity (although for a lone hunter – like a cat – this would be advantageous.) Most evolutionists think that humanity is genetically predisposed towards a communal living and hunting pattern.

Most theories of evolution maintain that a non-desirable survival trait will rapidly be weeded out of the gene pool – how does this trait (which is not desirable given humanity's nature as a pack animal) survive?

The only logical answer is that either i) it is external to evolution and genetics (and is therefore attributable to what? The Church tells us that the Fall is responsible) or ii) evolution is flawed (and if evolution is flawed, what made life?)

This is an appealing argument to use, but be warned that a number of atheists will either deny humanity's depravity, or will state that it is – in fact – a valid survival mechanism (despite all evidence to the contrary!)

Pascal's Wager

Pascal's Wager is truly effective only against [agnostics](#), although it will work on a number of atheists who haven't thought their position through. In brief, Pascal's Wager states that it is better to believe in God than not because the benefit of believing is potentially infinite (Heaven) and the downside of not believing (Hell) is potentially infinite. The actual act of believing requires only a finite expenditure of energy (as we are finite creatures) therefore it is *always* worth believing and *never* worth not believing.

Pascal's Wager sounds exceptionally appealing, but clever people may notice that there is a flaw in it. The wager speaks of *belief* and it is impossible to *act* belief through an act of will. What it is possible to do is *behave* in a certain manner. The hope of Pascal's Wager rests on the notion that God will [judge deeds rather than just beliefs](#). Fortunately, this is the correct teaching and is supported by Catholic theology!

Pascal's Wager does not work very well on died-in-the-wool atheists – but it is very effective on genuine agnostics. Agnostics are not sure if there is a god, but generally speaking act as if they are very sure there is not! Pascal's Wager can be used to suggest to them that – if they are genuinely not sure (as opposed to tied to atheism because of its [emotional appeal](#)) – then it is always better to act in a Christian manner. Once someone is praying and conforming their [morality](#) to the Christian ideal they are far more likely to actually become a Christian.

Be honest with the atheist

This is perhaps the hardest of all the proactive tactics – be honest with the atheist. You should tell him or her why you think he or she is an atheist; address the [emotional appeal](#) of atheism right at the heart. Tell the atheist that he or she is afraid of having to change, of ridicule, of having to waste Sunday mornings. Very often, an atheist will say something like, “So, you think

I am going to Hell because I am in a [homosexual](#) relationship?” - the primary reason he does not believe is because he would have to change his lifestyle.

The apologist should always be ready to “call out” an atheist – to tell him or her the *real* reason why he or she rejects God. Very often, this will end the conversation – no-one likes to be called a liar or a coward (which is what this basically is). But the fact remains that unless the *real* reasons for atheism are addressed they will never be overcome.

Final coda

Very often, an atheist will be a “fundamentalist atheist” - which means someone who, when presented with *any* evidence which challenges the position “there is no God”, immediately says that the evidence is flawed, or who says there must be some *other* explanation. Or, people may be so attached to their lifestyles or so poisoned against religion, for whatever reason, that intellectual arguments will have no effect. With people such as this, apologetics is – sadly – a complete waste of time.

At this stage, the responsibility of a Catholic apologist is twofold;

1. To pray for the person – the apologist might not be able to get through to the person, but God certainly can!
2. **To ensure that – by using these apologetics techniques against the *people the atheist talks to* – he or she does not have free rein to spread his or her falsehoods. Apologetics may not be able to convince the atheist to become a Christian, but it might be able to stop Christians from becoming atheists!**

The appeal of Atheism

3. When [atheism](#) is analyzed dispassionately and rationally, it can be seen that there is no real “appeal” to it; that is to say, there is no substantial benefit to be gained from believing it even if it is true. If the atheist is right, then there is no afterlife, no God, and no reason to behave in a certain manner. Thus, whether or not one *does* believe in a god or gods is irrelevant – because no form of belief has any effect.
4. Similarly, atheism does not have much of an appeal this side of death either – it is a well-known fact that religious belief (of any sort) can provide strength. Atheism inevitably leads to the conclusion that there is no real “purpose” to life, or a purpose is found which – in itself – basically becomes a form of religion (for example, the atheist founders of the Enlightenment often spoke of “the state” as if it were divine and used the term “the Goddess Reason”). Atheists lack the divine purpose for life, although that is not to say that they cannot find a purpose in life which gives them direction (such as the pursuit of money, hedonistic pleasure or even noble motives such as family love and philanthropy). But, in and of itself, atheism does not really provide a purpose or goal in life – this must be sought elsewhere.
5. *Intellectual Honesty*
6. Of course, in order for a philosophical system to be believed it does not *need* to be “appealing”. It must appeal to *something*, but it does not have to appeal to the emotions.

Someone who is very intellectually honest may find a philosophical system to be abhorrent and without any value, but he may believe it to be true and, therefore, out of a sense of intellectual honesty and despite the horror and revulsion he feels at this system, will believe it. An example would be an atheist who is terrified by the idea of a godless universe and no life after death, but who does not see any evidence for God. He desperately *wants* there to be a god, but he cannot see it. Conversely, a person who – through experience and intellectual knowledge – believes the Christian God is real, and yet is [homosexual](#) may desperately want the Christian God to *not* be real (so that he can live an immoral life without it being immoral) but he cannot bring himself to believe that. Such intellectually honest people are, however, very rare. Most people are attracted to the belief system they ascribe to in an emotional manner – and comparatively few are intellectually attracted to the philosophies they believe.

7. Those who are atheists because of intellectual reasons are best described as “genuine atheists” - such individuals are, ironically enough, often easy to convert to Catholicism. Someone who is intellectually open and genuinely honest and believes in the “scientific method” is interested in the truth of the world. Such a person does not (or *tries* not to) let his emotional attachments sway him. Because the Catholic faith is true, and can be demonstrated to be true, such people are often easier to convert than those who are emotionally invested in their beliefs. But, as mentioned above, genuine, intellectually honest and open atheists are *very* rare! However, when they *do* convert, they tend to make great apologists and very potent theologians!
8. *The Emotional Appeal of Atheism*
9. It is *very* important for a Catholic apologist to be able to determine why a particular atheist is an atheist – is it for reasons of intellectual honesty, or some emotional appeal? Or is it, perhaps, a combination of the two?
10. The vast majority of atheists are atheists because of emotional appeal. It is *very* important to determine the reason a person is an atheist – and then to direct apologetic efforts against that reason! It is no good *at all* to offer convincing arguments against something which is irrelevant! Bear in mind as well that atheists will often (often through no fault of their own) not tell the truth about their reasons for being an atheist – it may sometimes be necessary to discover why they are, and then tell them!
11. *Intellectual Pride*
12. Much of the appeal of atheism lies in intellectual pride and a sense of superiority. Atheism is a philosophical system held by relatively few, and thus its proponents are either seen as or think they are in some way special. Atheists (as a group) are also often perceived as being more intelligent than Christians – a number of prominent scientists and philosophers have been atheists, and the media and people's perceptions do much to foster this.
13. In addition, a number of events and phenomena which were once considered supernatural have now been shown to have natural causes which we now understand (for example, the weather and the movement of the stars and planets). The rationale is that *all* supernatural events must have a natural explanation (even if we have not discovered it), and only the very stupid or intellectually primitive would believe anything else.
14. Many atheists believe that the Bible (or other religious books) contain factual and scientific errors which immediately show that the entire book is not true. A number of atheists have been told historical and scientific “facts” which contradict what they believe

to be established “truths” of religion. Note that many of these facts are no such thing, and that the truths of the religion aren’t actually what the religion believes (as an example, many atheists believe that Darwinian evolution has been proved and that Christianity always teaches special “Six Day” creation. Neither of these points is actually completely true). For information on how to refute this kind of atheism, [see the relevant article](#).

15. *Attachment to Immorality*

16. But there are often other reasons why atheism is often attractive and appealing, and these have to do with the “cost” of believing. To believe in a god, any god, would require a change of lifestyle. Even the very best, most moral atheist who gives to charity, is kind, compassionate, faithful to his wife, never fornicates or commits adultery, and does not kill or steal would still have to give up at least an hour of his day every Sunday to go to Mass if he became a Christian, and probably more time for prayer and so forth.
17. (Surprisingly, this attitude is also found in those who do not believe in [“organized religion”](#) and instead choose to be “spiritual” or “worship in their own way”. Often, their motive for not believing in an organized religion is that to believe in one would require them to spend their Sundays in organized prayer, rather than doing whatever they want to do!)
18. But most practical atheists have far more “to loose” - they might have to change their moral outlook and actions in order to conform to a religious moral worldview necessitated by a belief in a god. For example, an individual may be living in a [sexual relationship with his girlfriend](#) and [using contraception](#). This is not seen as being a sin or problem as far as the current sexual morality of secular America is concerned, but the majority of Christian sects (and certainly the Catholic Church) view this as a sin. If this individual were to become a Christian, he would have to change this aspect of his lifestyle – something he probably does not want to do, as he enjoys the sexual relationship with his partner – or be branded a hypocrite.
19. An atheist becoming a theist also risks damaging his relationship with friends and family (in the above example, it is possible and even likely his girlfriend would break up with him if their relationship changed that dramatically). The ex-atheist may also be mocked by his friends who remain atheists, as they consider him to be intellectually and socially inferior to themselves. The social pressures keeping a practical atheist (and even a genuine atheist) within that philosophy are great.
20. As can clearly be seen, many of the reasons people do not believe have less to do with actually believing, and more to do with the difficulties and costs of living the belief. Most atheists do not realize that their rejection of God is not actually a well thought-out, rational decision, but is in fact just an excuse to not have to change their lifestyle for something which they think they would not enjoy as much.