



By

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There Is No God – Atheists In America by David Williamson and George Yancey (Rowman & Littlefield, 2013) is one of the better presentations of what atheists think, believe and want.

I spent some time as an atheist in the 1960s and early 70s and have talked with scores of atheists in the years since. What Williamson and Yancey have presented from their research has a strong ring of truth about what atheists think, believe and want concerning religion and an expanding secular society, especially as it relates to government, politics and education.

One of the unique aspects of *There Is No God* is the inclusion of many quotes from atheists about important issues of our day: same-sex marriage, abortion, separation of church and state, and public school curricula, to name several. Reading what atheists think on these subjects in their own words should be helpful to anyone who wants to understand atheists and reach them for Christ.

Understanding Atheism

David Williamson and George Yancey are professors of sociology at the University of North Texas. They begin their book with a chapter on ‘Understanding Atheism in the United States’ and follow with ‘A Brief History of Atheism.’ These chapters are helpful in understanding atheism from ancient times to how atheists organized for action in the 20th and early 21st centuries.

Christians often tell me they’ve never met an atheist and don’t understand them. One of the most helpful aspects of *There Is No God – Atheists In America* is the authors introduce readers to atheists by sharing their first name, age, sex and education. That helps demonstrate that atheists are real people with real lives, hopes and dreams for their future and the future of society.

The authors first introduce the atheists in their survey by how they became atheists. Many were raised in religious home or were exposed to religion as children. Quite a few of them who admitted to having religious beliefs as children said they “lost their beliefs, at least in part, due to their experiences in colleges or universities” (p. 43). Another interesting research finding was that almost two-thirds of the atheists the professors interviewed stated that they “never had any doubts about their atheism” (p. 44).

It will come as no surprise that the vast majority of atheists surveyed viewed religious people as ‘irrational.’ The authors summarized atheist thinking this way: “atheists do not tend to rely upon positive arguments for atheism. Rather, they tend to point out what they perceive as the illogical thinking of people of faith.” I would agree with that based on my experience as an atheist.

Quoting Atheists

Here are a few quotes from some of the atheists Williamson and Yancey interviewed about how they view Christians and irrationality.

“The Christian probably just accepted his creed through tradition, fear and conformity, which I find weak and illogical.”

“Accepting things without evidence, in other words, faith or dogma, encourages people to accept things irrationally, which leads to harming others.”

“Religious people are susceptible because they are groomed not to question and to dedicate their lives to a ‘higher power,’ a power that is utterly silent (whether or not ‘God’ is deaf, he is without a doubt dumb).”

Quoting atheists is a strong point to *There Is No God – Atheists In America*. If you're not familiar with atheist thinking, you will find this book eye-opening. If you are familiar with atheist thinking, you will find the book insightful and helpful in talking with atheists about God and the Christian worldview.

Contents

The book is filled with great information and guidance into understanding atheists that you can read in just a few hours.

The chapter contents include:

1. Understanding Atheism in the United States
2. A Brief History of Atheism
3. Who Are the Atheists?
4. The Foolishness of Religion
5. Progressive Politics as a Tenet of Atheism
6. Toward an Atheist Morality
7. Atheism in the United States
8. Summary and Conclusion

Reviews

“Religious people assume that the growing atheist minority in America lacks a sense of morality. *There Is No God* gives a voice to committed atheists who have a strong moral compass, pointing not toward God but in the direction of rationality and humanism.” Ariela Keysar, Co-Principal Investigator, American Religious Identification Survey, Trinity College

“David A. Williamson and George Yancey have successfully walked the fine line between the two extremes of the religious-atheism divide. The authors’ messages are honest, thoughtful, and respectful of the people and points of view along the continuum of those with absolute god belief, absolute no-god belief, and variations in between.” Raymond F. Paloutzian, Professor Emeritus of Psychology at Westmont College: Editor of the *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*

“Williamson and Yancey ably integrate the sociology of religion with the political sociology in an insightful analysis of contemporary atheist Americans, a largely unknown and under researched minority.” Barry A. Kosmin, Director, Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society & Culture, Trinity College

Speaking as a former atheist who communicates with atheists every day about atheism, theism and the Christian worldview, this is a wonderful book to have in your library. It's even more wonderful to read, study and use information in the book to minister to atheists in your family and neighborhood, at work and school.

There Is No God – Atheists In America, Roman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013, Hardcover, 150 pages

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