

## "Tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?"-1King 22:16

### All Religion Is Bad Because Some Is?

In logical discussions, a straw man is a weak, illogical position that is easily refuted. The more powerful, logical position is then coupled with the straw man, and both are said to fall together, yet the stronger position never actually is refuted by the opposition. For example, suppose a person stated that he owned a congenial, safe dog. The man's neighbor argued that such was impossible. The opposing neighbor then recounted a story about a family's pet pitbull that went berserk and killed someone. Then he stated that this incident proves that all pets are dangerous. Does his argument follow from the evidence? Of course not. He might have proven that one family's pitbull was dangerous, but he did not prove that all pets are dangerous. In fact, it would be easy to multiply numerous examples of dangerous pets, but proving those specific pets to be dangerous could not logically be applied to all pets.

This idea must be understood when reading modern atheistic writings that purport to prove that the ideas of God and formulated religion are detrimental to society. Their argument, in a nutshell, goes like this: Since we can list examples of religions and religious fanatics that were (or are) harmful or detrimental to society, then all religions or ideas about God are harmful or detrimental to society.

So that the reader does not think that this author is, himself, constructing a straw man, let us consult the writings of a very popular, militant atheist by the name

of Christopher Hitchens. Hitchens has been critically acclaimed as "one of the most prolific, as well as brilliant, journalists of our time" according to the *London Observer*. The *Los Angeles Times* stated that he is a "political and literary journalist extraordinaire."

One of Hitchens' most popular recent books is titled *god Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*. Notice that his subtitle is broad enough to lump all religions into it: Islam, New Testament Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc. Hitchens then proceeded, in the pages of his book, to list many horrible things that people have done in the name of "religion." He said: "Religion has caused innumerable people not just to conduct themselves no better than others, but to award themselves permission to behave in ways that would make a brothel-keeper or an ethnic cleanser raise an eyebrow" (2007, p. 6). Hitchens even titled chapter two, "Religion Kills." In it he wrote: "Here, then, is a very brief summary of the religiously inspired cruelty I witnessed..." (p. 18). He then recounted horror stories of several moral atrocities perpetrated in the name of "religion." Furthermore, Hitchens stated: "If one comprehends the fallacies of any 'revealed' religion, one comprehends them all" (p. 126).

Can Hitchens and others document atrocities performed in the name of religion? Of course they can. Does this prove that all religion is false, and that if a person can spot a flaw or comprehend a fallacy in one religion, then he has effectively disproved the validity of all religions? Absolutely not. Can you imagine what would happen if this type of argument were used in other areas of life? Apply such thinking to food. Many foods are poisonous and kill people, thus all foods should be

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avoided. Apply it to electricity. It is the case that many people have died while using electricity, thus all electrical use is detrimental to society. Or apply it to activities like swimming. Many have drowned while swimming, thus all swimming leads to drowning and should be avoided. What if it were applied to surgery? Since it is true that thousands of people have died during surgery, or as a result of surgery, then all surgery should be avoided because it all leads to death or is in some way physically detrimental to society. Obviously, the ridiculous idea that **all** religion is detrimental to society because it can be proven that **some** religions are, should be quickly discarded by any honest, thoughtful observer.

New Testament Christianity does not stand or fall based on the validity of other competing religions. In fact, Hitchens and others are right to assert that many religions are detrimental to society. But they are wrong to lump true Christianity in with the rest of the useless lot. New Testament Christianity is unique, logically valid, historically documented, and philosophically flawless. It does not crumble with various other religions that are filled with “vain babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge” (1 Timothy 6:20). Instead, New Testament Christianity as personified in the life of Jesus Christ shines as **the truth** that makes men free (John 8:32).

[NOTE: It should not be understood that Hitchens and others attack Christianity solely using the straw man argument. They do present other, more specific arguments that are answered in other Apologetics Press materials. It should be observed, however, that the straw man is a frequently used, favorite tactic that needs to be understood and specifically refuted.] - Kyle Butt, M.A.

## Is it wrong to carry a grudge?

**Answer:** "Grudge" is commonly defined as, "A feeling of ill will or resentment" (**RHCD**). A held grudge often involves hate and the desire to do harm to the one against whom the grudge is held.

**Jesus taught love of enemies.** "Love your enemies," said Jesus (**Matt. 5: 44**). Jesus continued, "bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." Jesus himself practiced what he taught. Hear him on the cross as he prayed for his murderers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (**Lk. 23: 34**). Moreover, Jesus taught: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (**Matt. 6: 14, 15**).

**Actual forgiveness is conditional.** A biblical truth unknown to many is that actual forgiveness is conditional. Regarding a brother who has sinned against another, Jesus instructs the sinned against thus, "Take heed to yourselves: if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him" (**Lk. 17: 3**). The conditional particle "if" indicates forgiveness cannot be offered unless there is repentance. "Jesus unconditionally forgave," we hear. These same murderers for whom Jesus prayed his Father to forgive, were later charged with the sin of Jesus' murder and told to repent (**Acts 2: 22, 23, 37, 38**). It was not until they complied with the terms of forgiveness that they were, in fact, forgiven (**Acts 2: 38-47**). This does not mean, however, that one is to carry a grudge or harbor hate toward another. There must at all times be a forgiving spirit (**cp. Eph. 4: 32**).

Grudges are self-destructive. Hate eats away at the very fiber of the grudge carrier until he is miserable and obsessed. The inspired apostle Paul wrote, "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath" (**Eph. 4: 26**). – Don Martin

*"How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws?"  
(Exodus 16:28)*

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