

Why I Promote Freethought, Atheism, and Humanism

By Norm R. Allen Jr.

For some odd reason, many theists actually wonder why so many atheists believe that atheism is such a big deal. They say that atheists should simply disbelieve in God and remain silent about it. Boy, wouldn't religious leaders just love that? They could continue ruling- and *ruining*- societies, influencing public policy, starting and justifying wars, controlling people's lives and so on, without interference from open atheists.

First, I promote non-theism because I am deeply passionate about it, and because it matters. It matters that throughout the history of human civilization, most people have believed strongly in a Being for whom there appears to be no strong evidence whatsoever. Many theists are easy to lead astray, to manipulate, to oppress and to enslave. Many others do a great deal of harm in the name of God. Therefore, I am intellectually and *morally* obligated to stand uncompromisingly opposed to theism. I could not in good conscience run away from such a duty.

Skepticism, however, in the scheme of things, is just not nearly as important. While I am a skeptic and applaud those passionate skeptics that continue to critique paranormal beliefs, such beliefs generally do not pose great harm to humanity as a whole. No genocidal maniac has ever killed in the name of Big Foot or astrology. No one has been accused with the equivalent of blasphemy for critiquing a belief in UFOs. Paranormal believers do not determine the outcomes of major political elections. Fortune tellers do not try to force their outdated morality on the masses or try to force their beliefs to be taught and accepted in the public schools. For these reasons and others, skepticism will never be a priority in my life as is non-theism.

To be honest, I uncompromisingly promote non-theism because I have the courage to do it. Sadly, not many people have the intestinal fortitude to unflinchingly take on something as big, widespread and seemingly intractable as theism. Most non-theists *do* remain silent about their lack of belief. Their silence, however, only helps to perpetuate the age-old hoax of theism.

I promote humanism so that non-theists know that they have a secular alternative to theistic religion. They do not have to believe that they must send their children to houses of worship for moral instruction. There are secular ethical systems such as Kantian ethics, utilitarianism, consequentialist ethics, and so on. Moreover, while teaching children about secular ethics, we can teach them why it is important to have good reasons to support or reject ethical ideas. The Divine Command Theory (just do it because God commands it) is irrational and dangerous. It has led to widespread human misery throughout the millennia.

I promote non-theism so that non-theists understand that they can have a sense of community with like-minded people. They should not have to feel that they are all alone. There are millions of non-theists throughout the world, and they connect in real time or online.

I promote atheism to encourage atheists to have a sense of pride in who and what they are, and what they stand for. Why should one be ashamed to use her intellect fully where questions about God arise? Why should one be ashamed to hold a minority view? After all, truth is not determined by popular opinion. Atheists should be proud that they can go through life without superstitious baggage and without believing that they cannot get through life without the aid of a possibly existent Being.

I promote atheism to show atheists that there are secular alternatives to organizations such as Alcoholics Anonymous. People can recover from alcoholism and drug addiction without reliance upon a supposed Higher Power. Secular Organizations for Sobriety (SOS, or Save Ourselves) has been doing this for decades.

I promote non-theism to show that there is a naturalistic alternative to supernaturalism and religious explanations. Instead of the Adam and Eve “theory” there is evolution by natural selection. Rather than believe that God creates stars, we have high-powered telescopes, such as the Hubble telescope, with which we can see how stars form naturally. Rather than believe that an angry God sends hurricanes, tsunamis, and earthquakes to harm humans and innocent animals, we can use science to describe the naturalistic causes of these kinds of phenomena. Rather than believing that God created every animal after its kind, we can draw upon science to describe the magnificent diversity of life.

Finally, some people ask: why must miserable, negative atheists rain on theists' parade by denying them their comforting illusions? First, I have never felt obligated to go along with a so-called Noble Lie simply because it is comforting. However, my main objection to this question is that the lie is not so noble. For example, while there are many elderly women that get through life by believing in God, many of those women voted for Donald Trump and what he represents. There are also many seemingly harmless elderly women that are patriarchal, homophobic religious bigots. Such is the paradox of religion. When I am fighting against the negative aspects of religion, I never feel compelled to protect anyone's comforting illusions. I honestly consider some believers to be collateral damage in the war against negative religion – a war that I must wage.

I dream of a world in which no atheist feels that it is better to stay in the closet about her atheism. I dream of a world in which atheists – like their religious counterparts – feel free to acknowledge their worldview and to state plainly, proudly and without fear, hesitation or regret, that they simply do not believe in God.