

# [The atheist manifesto](https://assignbuster.com/the-atheist-manifesto/)

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In its most simplified sense, Atheism is the rejection of belief in the existence of deities (Nielsen). Specifically, however, it is that there are, without a doubt, no deities whatsoever (Craig 5). There are many criticisms of the philosophy of atheism.

Philosopher Blaise Pascal, while he did concede in his Pensees that “ Atheism shows a strength of mind,” he disclaimed this comment with the hastily inserted “ but only to a certain degree,” and went on to criticize Atheists for “ not seeing the signs of will of God” (Pascal 51). Other criticisms point to the immorality of Atheism, and even go as far as to question whether Atheism is a faith in and of itself. However, the most popular affront to Atheism is simply its primary principle of unbelief (Dawkins). Blaise Pascal was a frequent writer on various philosophic sciences, including religion. His criticisms of agnosticism and unbelief, as proposed in his 1669 defense of Christianity, Pensees, were considered almost textbook references until even the 1900s.

Christian apologetic Alister McGrath cited studies that suggested that religion and belief in God are correlated with improved individual health, happiness, and life expectancy, and even went as far as to imply that atheists might have a higher suicide rate than theists. (McGrath). It is worth mentioning that by the end of his life, Pascal had denounced Catholicism, and said he was no longer drawn to God. Also, in response to Mr. McGrath’s arguments, paleontologist Gregory Paul and philosopher Michael Martin have stated that in developed countries, health, life expectancy, and other factors of wealth are generally higher in countries with a greater percentage of atheists compared to countries with higher proportions of “ believers,” as it were.

Religion is unreasonable. Most religions posit facts that are denied by scientific evidence, such as so-called “ miracles,” and a “ Creation,” which has been disproven since the nineteenth century by Charles Darwin’s discovery of evolutionary theory (Ferngren 15). Religions and their holy books often contain conflicting facts and histories, a fact exemplified by the discrepancies in the Bible among the four Gospels of the New Testament. Religions’ illogic cannot adapt to modernity, either, and many teachings are left high and dry among rapidly evolving ideals and morals. For example: The Torah’s prohibition of eating shellfish or pork may have made much sense hundreds of years ago, when such animals would’ve been infested with parasites and disease.

However, increasing quality and safety of food production render this dietary rule an antiquity. All religions are non-divine, in origin, created instead to serve some social or political role (Dennett). They are invented as a human ideology, often to provide comfort or meaning in life; religious systems addressed larger emotional concerns, usually through dramatic narratives (i. e. The Bible), which outlined how communities and the world came to be.

Karl Marx saw religion as “ the Opium of the people,” a tool used by the ruling class to impress upon the masses the idea that their current suffering will lead to eventual happiness. Therefore as long as the public believes in religion, they will not attempt to make any genuine effort to understand and overcome the real source of “ their suffering” (Marx). Religion also has a history of brutal harm to individuals involved. Indoctrination and child abuse are one example. Children are terrorized with ideas of horrid punishment and damnation, made to feel guilt about perfectly normal sexual functions, trained to disrespect science and reason, and finally indoctrinated into a particular religious faith, thus depriving the child of the opportunity to make their own free inquiry later on in life (Dawkins).

The Islam faith even allows children to be married as young as ten years of age. Other harm to individuals inflicted by religious establishments include irrational and inadequate medical care, such as exorcism or faith healing; Jerusalem syndrome; an obsession with blood sacrifice; and a limitless number of other psychological effects. On a macrocosmic level, though, religion has major detrimental effects on society as a whole. Steven Weinberg, a Nobel laureate and leading theoretical physicist once remarked that “ with or without religion, good people can behave well and bad people can do evil; but for good people to do evil — that takes religion.” The number of cases of religious terrorism and religious wars is impressively long.

Religious wars like the Crusades, The Troubles in Northern Ireland, French Wars of Religion, the Taiping Rebellion, Islamic Jihad, the Second Sudanese Civil War, the Indo-Pakistani War of 1947, the Sri Lankan Civil War, and the Jewish-Roman wars tore the landscapes and social structures of each host country to unfortunately sectarian shreds. Religion supresses scientific progress, stifling leaps and bounds that would have put the human race light years ahead of its current technological state. The most famous instances of this is Galileo’s famous imprisonment for disagreeing with the Catholic Church on the issue of the center of the universe, or the execution of Giordano Bruno, who was branded a heretic for theorizing that there might be more life out there in space. Other examples of the ignorance of organized religion when it comes to science include the creation-evolution “ debate,” controversy over birth control, opposition to life-saving embryonic stem-cell research, and various theological objections to vaccination, anesthesia, and blood transfusion (White 10). As a parallel to theism’s hindrance of scientific progress, there is the many exemplifications of religion’s opposition to art or literature. Known as iconoclasm, many religious groups have a history of destroying important artistic works or cultural artifacts, such as the Taliban’s 2001 destruction of the Bamyan Buddhas in Afghanistan; Catholic priest Diego de Landa’s almost single-handed destruction all knowledge of Mayan heiroglyphs, with the intent of wiping out the Mayan religion; or the destruction of two Eleanor Crosses by Parliamentarian soldiers during the English civil war, because they were relics of Catholicism.

There are so many other various reasons why religion isn’t a viable ideology for today’s society. As societal structure advances, more pillars of ignorance are knocked out from under the dinosaur that is organized religion. Such an evolution is pushing religions to extremism and terrorism, to the point where theist groups are clinging absurdly to whatever social relics they can. Racism, by the hands of the KKK; repugnance towards homosexuality, most famously by the Westboro Baptist church; and even unfair treatment of women — a pillar of Islamic culture, no pun intended; are all desperate attempts to keep religion relevant, but failing attempts nevertheless. While there are debatably some intangible benefits to theism, those benefits far underweigh the negative aspects.

Religion, with its archaism, harm to individuals, harm to societies, its hindrance of the progress of science, and its encouragement of immoral acts, is an anachronism, and belongs back in the pages of pre-history, to help give an explanation to ancient farmers for seasons and droughts. Works Cited \* Nielsen, K.. “ Atheism.” Britannica.

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