

God is not Great - The Case against Religion by Christopher Hitchens.
Atlantic Books 2007.

Christopher Hitchens is a superb writer whose verbal acumen is impressive and whose wit and passion highly enjoyable even when one disagrees with him. The fact that I find myself in agreement with a great deal of what he writes in *God is not Great* is unsurprising, for this brilliant diatribe is a demolition of orthodox religion in whatever manifestation it may be found, and his view of fundamentalism and mine are almost identical.

Some of the chapters in *God is not Great* are superb, not least *A Short Digression on the Pig; or, Why Heaven hates Ham, A Note on Health, to Which Religion Can Be Hazardous and Arguments from Design*, and their power and passion is intensely stimulating, although I felt the last chapter of all, *In Conclusion: The Need for a New Enlightenment* to be rather disappointing and less powerful than those that preceded it.

My only frustration with *God is not Great* is the fact that Christopher Hitchens makes no allowance for the progressive impulse in Judaism and Christianity, which has done so much to bring ancient faiths into harmony with modern living and provided many people with a meaningful way of engaging with their religious heritage. One is also left with the sneaking suspicion, as with Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion*, that the principal focus of the author's ire is Islam, but to avoid the charge of Islamophobia the focus is widened to include all religions. Nevertheless this is a fine text from one of the leading fundamentalist atheists of our time and should be as widely and seriously read as possible, especially by those who profess a religious faith.

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