**Answering the New Atheists**

May 15, 2016 Facilitator: Rafael Halliburton

Week 1

The word *atheism* did not appear in the English language until the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. The Oxford English Dictionary documents the first use of the word to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, when it was coined (or borrowed from another language) by Miles Coverdale.

Even after the emergence of the word in the English language, there were very few people who actually denied belief in God. This changed after the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, which left a plethora of movements that also included skeptics and freethinkers, as well as Deists and pantheists. In the late \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ century, we finally arrive at the four horsemen of the modern apocalypse – Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Marx, Charles Darwin and Sigmund Freud.

Nietzsche, being one of the most abrasive of these thinkers, actually celebrated the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. In his work *The Anti-Christ*, he went on to write that the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of human enlightenment and progress is the Christian.

A new Pew Research Center study predicts that by 2050 \_\_\_\_\_\_ out of \_\_\_\_\_\_ Americans will be “religiously unaffiliated.”

**What makes the New Atheism new?**

Atheism, of course, is not new. David said in the psalms, “The fool says in his heart, there is no God,” (*Ps. 14:1* and *Ps. 53:1*). In the ancient world and throughout most of human history, the question was never whether or not there is a God, but \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is God? Thus, in the Old Testament, one of God’s most insistent purposes is to make clear that He is the Only God, and that He will tolerate no other.

The New Atheism is not just a reassertion of atheism. It is a current movement that represents a far greater public challenge to Christianity than that posed by the atheistic movements of previous times. They are, in their own way, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in intent and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in hope. They see atheism as the only plausible worldview for our time, and they see belief in God as downright \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ – an artifact of the past that we can no longer afford to tolerate, much less encourage.

The most well-known are Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris and Daniel Dennett. These four men have especially come to embody the New Atheist movement. So much that they are sometimes referred to as the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the Non-Apocalypse (or New Atheist Apocalypse).”

The New Atheists represent a major challenge to the Christian church and to Christian theology. They see science as on their side and argue that scientific knowledge is our only \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ knowledge. Christopher Hitchens has gone as far as to state that religion is a “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the mind.” They argue that belief in God is organized ignorance, that theistic beliefs lead to violence, and that atheism is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. They are shocked and appalled that Americans refuse to follow the predictions of the secularization theorists, who had assured the elites that belief in God would be “dissolved by the acids of modernity.”

**Is Science on the Side of Atheism? Is there evidence for the existence of God?**

Science is defined as: Knowledge or a system of knowledge covering general truths or the operation of general laws especially as obtained and tested through scientific method (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).

The scientific method seeks to explain the events of nature in a reproducible way.

By its very nature, Science is unable to answer the questions of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. As humans, we ask these deeper questions, which science cannot answer unless it goes beyond its own natural and right limits. Therefore, our faith gives us access to something that goes beyond the limits of science.

Faith and science do not have to be mutually exclusive. They do not have to contradict or be in conflict with one another. The difference between the Christian and Atheist is that we look at the same \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and simply draw a different conclusion. Just because we cannot comprehend attributes of God does not mean they do not exist. Our \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to understand something cannot determine whether it is true or not.

Scientifically speaking, the existence of God cannot be proved or disproved. That does not mean, however, that there is no \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of God’s existence. The Bible states, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world” (Psalm 19:1-4).

Design points to a Designer -

Science points to God -