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**LUSION
OF
BELIEF**

DAVID AIKMAN



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The Delusion of Disbelief: Why the New Atheism Is a Threat to Your Life, Liberty, and Pursuit of Happiness

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THE FOUR HORSEMEN

*“Ours is the first attempt in recorded history to build
a culture upon the premise that God is dead.”*

— Princeton theologian Paul Ramsey, in 1966

A great assault upon faith was launched in 2006 against unsuspecting Americans who attend church, go to synagogue, worship in mosques, pray in temples, or otherwise live lives in which religion plays an important role. In just over a half year, three books by atheists hit the bookstores. Each of these books in various ways attacks all religious belief in general and Christianity in particular. *Letter to a Christian Nation*, written by a doctoral candidate in neuroscience, Sam Harris, came out on September 19, just a day after the publication of *The God Delusion* by Richard Dawkins, a noted British ethologist, evolutionary biologist, and Oxford University professor. The third book, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*, by Daniel Dennett, a Tufts University philosophy professor, was released earlier, in February 2006.

All were best sellers and by mid-2007, the print run for *Breaking the Spell* had reached 64,000. *The God Delusion* was

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at 500,000, and *Letter to a Christian Nation* was at 185,000. Both the Harris and the Dawkins books were also on *Publishers Weekly's* 2006 best seller list.

Meanwhile, as Americans of faith were still digesting this burst of atheistic book production, one of the most talented writers and journalists in America, Englishman (and newly naturalized U.S. citizen) Christopher Hitchens, was about to uncoil his own sling. *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* was published on May 1, 2007. It was certainly a brisk seller; when I tried to buy a copy at the Borders bookstore on L Street in Washington D.C. less than two weeks later, I was told that it was sold out and that the store was scrambling to get more. In just a month's time, the book had debuted at the No. 1 slot on the *New York Times* best sellers list with sales of more than 58,000. By the third week of June, just seven weeks after *God Is Not Great's* release, 296,000 copies were in print, bringing the total copies in print of all four atheist titles to more than one million.

Harris, Dawkins, Dennett, and Hitchens—the names resonate like stately Anglo-Saxon partners of a Virginia law firm¹—descended upon the faithful like, well, the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. (For those who are unfamiliar with the Bible, or even with the biblically-derived imagery of Western art and literature, the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse appear in the sixth chapter of the New Testament book of Revelation and have traditionally been regarded as corresponding to Pestilence, Famine, War, and Death.) Indeed, these four atheist writers have already

been called the Four Horsemen in a review that appeared in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, a Washington D.C.-based weekly newspaper for American college and university faculty.²

Richard Dawkins uses the less glowering literary reference “The Four Musketeers” on his own Web site (<http://richard.dawkins.net>) in welcoming Christopher Hitchens to the gang of faithslayers. A far less flattering nickname would be “The Gang of Four,” a term that was disseminated with great effect by leaders in Communist China to denigrate four ultra-leftist politicians in a Beijing coup d’état after the death of Chairman Mao Tse-tung in 1976.³ But that might be unfair. It is enough to say that Dawkins and his allies have been referred to as “the new Godless,” “the New Atheists,” and “fundamentalist atheists,” among other sobriquets.

The publishing phenomenon that these authors triggered quickly spilled over into other forums all over the country, and even beyond American shores. National radio and television news talk shows pitted the authors in debates against evangelical Christians. The Internet quickly bristled with angry diatribes from both camps. Major secular and Christian magazines invited the authors and Christian leaders to defend their views. Book reviews cropped up in a surprising array of publications—print and online, American and European, religious and secular, scientific and atheistic, general news and scholarly. Journalists from Germany to Australia trumpeted the news that America was experiencing a new rise of atheism. Even China’s official national television network, CCTV, and a Chinese-

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language Christian magazine reported on the phenomenon, and some Christians on mainland China started circulating essays attacking the New Atheists.

Groups across the United States booked the authors to speak at venues ranging from a Unitarian church to the New York Public Library, as well as any number of college campuses. New videos showing one or another of the authors or some parody of them cropped up on YouTube just about every week. Dawkins wrote of one grueling day in Toronto when he was booked for “five television interviews and one radio, all in one day beginning before breakfast.”⁴ The phenomenon was so widespread that it even made it into the pages of the Sunday “funnies.” That’s not a place where discussions of this sort are normally found, but on June 17, the “Opus” strip commented on the “surprising trend” of atheist best-selling books.⁵ Indeed, this has been a surprising trend, but it clearly indicates that the coterie of Dawkins, Dennett, Harris, & Hitchens has touched a nerve. “This is atheism’s moment,” exulted one publishing house CEO.⁶

It is true that atheists are enjoying a rare prominence in American society, where their numbers have always been small. In March 2007, *Newsweek* magazine reported the results of a poll in which people were asked, “Are you an atheist?” A mere 3 percent of respondents said they were atheists, while 96 percent said they were not and 1 percent answered “don’t know.”⁷ (Hitchens has claimed there may be as many as 15 million atheists in the United States, which would be closer to

6 percent of the population.) Only 29 percent in the *Newsweek* poll said they would vote for an atheist for president, down from 37 percent in 2006 and 49 percent in 1996. In other polls, atheists have received the highest disapproval rating of all identifiable social groups as possible future spouses of one's children: 48 percent, as opposed to 34 percent for Muslims and 27 percent for African Americans.⁸

Atheists were also considered “least likely” to share the average American’s “vision” of America.⁹ In April 2006, *American Sociological Review* reported on a study that found it is still socially acceptable, in the United States at least, to say you are intolerant of atheists.¹⁰ In *The God Delusion*, Dawkins cites his own figures illustrating the isolation of atheists in America. He refers to a 1999 Gallup poll that asked Americans whether they would vote for an otherwise well-qualified person who was:

- A woman—95 percent said they would.
- A Roman Catholic—94 percent
- A Jew—92 percent
- An African American—92 percent
- A Mormon—79 percent
- A homosexual—79 percent
- An atheist—49 percent

The last statistic in this list seems especially to have riled Dawkins. In *The God Delusion*, he speaks often of a need for “consciousness-raising” among atheists in America, and the

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need for atheists to “come out,” much as homosexuals have been doing in ever-larger numbers in recent decades. He writes almost wistfully, “My dream is that this book may help people to come out.”¹¹ For those who may need some friendly encouragement to do so, Dawkins provides in his book a helpful five-page appendix entitled “A partial list of friendly addresses, for individuals needing support in escaping from religion.”¹² His Web site has a social-networking section that serves as a platform for putting atheists from around the world in touch with each other.

In 2003, Dawkins and Dennett wrote a series of editorials trying to popularize a new nomenclature for atheists: “the brights.” Ostensibly, this was to provide atheists with their own version of “gay pride” and a sort of umbrella of respectability to protect atheists from the real or imagined prejudice of many Americans. Today, there is a brights Web site, www.the-brights.net. Not surprisingly though, the term *brights* has provoked a backlash from those offended by the pretentiousness of the term, and not only among nonatheists. On National Public Radio, a commentator discussing the notion of “brights” drily observed, “The rest of us would be the ‘Dims,’ I suppose . . . [t]hey might as well have chosen the word ‘The Smugs’ or ‘The Smarty-Pants.’”¹³ Dawkins, moreover, has found robust disagreement with the notion of “brights” in one of his fellow Four Musketeers. Christopher Hitchens disdainfully refers to the term as both a “cringe-making proposal” and conceited, because it implies that atheists are inherently brighter people than benighted people of faith.¹⁴

In a report on the new atheism, the *Chicago Sun-Times* agreed that it was accurate to call its proponents “Fundamentalist atheists” because they are basing their movement on “a piece of dogma that can’t be challenged without enraging them and [have] clung to the belief that contemporary American society doesn’t permit the criticism of religion.” The author points out the irony of this view, saying, “They hold this belief so strongly that they’ve written several best-selling books about it. The fact that this might be a contradiction doesn’t seem to have occurred to them.”¹⁵

If the polls cited above and Dawkins’s assertion of American intolerance of atheists are accurate, then we “dinks” do indeed need to behave better. It is surely the mark of any civilized society that philosophical and political adversaries conduct discourse with respect and courtesy. As Catholic theologian and former U.S. ambassador Michael Novak has observed, “*Civilization is constituted by reasoned conversation*. Civilized humans converse with one another, argue with one another, offer evidence to one another. Barbarians club one another” (emphasis in the original).¹⁶ Of course, everyone knows that this principle of civilized behavior is often ignored, in the realm of politics certainly, but increasingly also in what passes for humorous conversation on TV and radio talk shows.

Curiously, in some atheistic rants about religion, the verbal content of vulgarity and obscenity seems to be exceptionally high.¹⁷ For some reason, the discourse of atheists in Britain has been more decorous; Dawkins would almost certainly not utter an

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obscenity on-camera in England. Perhaps the propensity for foul language in America is because atheists here enjoy “shocking” religious people.¹⁸ Christians, however, even if they don’t use obscenities with any regularity, have been just as guilty of abusive discourse with their opponents, even when those opponents are fellow believers.¹⁹ There can be no excuse for this.

It was Sam Harris’s *Letter to a Christian Nation* that initially prompted me to write this book.²⁰ *Letter*, as it happens, was written in response to critical letters Harris received from readers responding to his first book, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason*. That book, Harris has explained, was inspired by his realization after September 11, 2001, that it was religious belief that had provoked nineteen Arab hijackers to commandeer U.S. airplanes and crash them into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and a field in Pennsylvania. Harris thought that it was time to challenge the validity of religious faith itself. *The End of Faith* was initially rejected by several publishers because of its disparaging views on religion—particularly on Islam. When it was finally published in 2004, though, it not only sold 275,000 copies and debuted at No. 4 on the *New York Times* Best Sellers list, where it had a thirty-three-week run, it was also awarded the 2005 PEN/Martha Albrand Award for First Nonfiction.

In *Letter to a Christian Nation*, Harris writes that he received thousands of e-mails and letters from people saying that he was wrong not to believe in God. “The most hostile came from Christians,” he said, adding, “The truth is that many who claim

to be transformed by Christ's love are deeply, even murderously, intolerant of criticism. While we may want to ascribe this to human nature," he continued, "it is clear that such hatred draws considerable support from the Bible. How do I know this? The most disturbed of my correspondents always cite chapter and verse."²¹

Well, I am certainly not disturbed by Harris's books. Outspoken atheists have been writing and publishing since at least the middle of the eighteenth century, and their ranks have been filled with some talented and powerful intellects: Enlightenment-era French philosopher and writer Denis Diderot; eighteenth-century French-German author Paul-Henri Thiry, baron d'Holbach; nineteenth-century German philosopher Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach; "father of Communism" Karl Marx and his collaborator, Friedrich Engels; German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche who famously declared, "God is dead"; American Freethought orator Robert G. Ingersoll; "father of psychoanalysis" Sigmund Freud; Bertrand Russell, one of the founders of analytic philosophy; and French existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, among others.

Nor is this the first time in recent decades that God's existence and relevance have been questioned. A similar groundswell of atheistic activity culminated in a *Time* magazine cover story on April 8, 1966 (Easter Sunday, as it happens), that asked, "Is God Dead?" It turned out to be one of the newsmagazine's most controversial cover stories, and in it Princeton theologian Paul Ramsey was quoted as saying, "Ours is the first attempt in

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recorded history to build a culture upon the premise that God is dead.”²² With the benefit of hindsight, of course, we now know that that attempt failed. And it has to be said that this time around, none of the Four Horsemen succeeds in knocking religion out of the ring either, though cumulatively they do make some strong, and sometimes valid points against it. Their failure lies in at least one of the following: Their assertions are too wild to be taken seriously (does Hitchens *really* think that religion has done nothing good at all in the entire history of humanity?); when they stray into the terrain of biblical studies, they show an amazing unfamiliarity with it; and their view that the discoveries of science have invalidated religious truth is entirely rejected by an impressive group of reputable scientists.

Of course, in asserting the rudeness of his Christian correspondents, Harris underlines the point he first made in *The End of Faith*, which is that religion doesn't make people behave better toward each other. But Harris goes further. He also asserts that in writing *Letter*, he “set out to demolish the intellectual and moral pretensions of Christianity in its most committed forms.”²³ The question therefore arises: Why this sudden upsurge of atheistic propaganda now?

A number of factors come immediately to mind, political ones being the most prominent. George W. Bush's administration has probably included more evangelical Christians serving at senior levels than that of any recent U.S. president. Cabinet secretaries, speechwriters, and White House aides who are

Christians have been outspoken about their faith. The president himself has always been forthright about his religious convictions. In fact, when candidates were asked during a presidential debate to name the philosopher they most admired, Bush answered unequivocally, Jesus—a turning point in his 2000 primary campaign.²⁴ Since becoming president, Bush has been careful not to speak much in public about his faith, limiting his comments to expressions of gratitude to the many Americans who say they are praying for him. Privately, he has gone to church most Sundays that he is in Washington, and he has, at different times, invited clergy with whom he is close to the White House or Camp David.

This open display of Christian belief has not, it seems, troubled the majority of Americans. In the aforementioned March 2007 *Newsweek* poll, less than one-third (32 percent) of respondents agreed that “organized religion has too much influence on American politics.” Just as many (31 percent) said it had “too little,” and 29 percent that it had the “right amount.” This is hardly surprising considering that 82 percent of respondents in the same poll called themselves “Christian,” a figure in keeping with polling results that regularly show upwards of 70 percent of Americans identifying themselves as “Christian.”²⁵ Moreover, as The Barna Group found in its annual poll on the state of American faith in May 2007, 40 percent of Christians call themselves “born again” (which translates into 90 million Americans), and 43 percent said they attended church the previous week.²⁶ In the 2004 election,

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“born-again” voted overwhelmingly for Bush: 62 percent, as compared with 38 percent for Kerry.

This overt American religiosity is troubling, however, to some overseas observers of the United States, many of whom work in media or academia and tend to be secular in their outlook on life and therefore are uncomprehending of the piety of Americans. This piety is also just downright irritating to some, especially British observers, who like to caricature all popular American Protestant religious leaders as modern-day Elmer Gantrys, shysters in clerical garb. In their view, religious belief should be a private affair, and the way many Americans wear it on their sleeves is unseemly.

Another factor is uniting atheists on both sides of the Atlantic as well. It is the progress that lobbyists for “intelligent design” have made in the American educational system in their campaign to have Darwinism treated as an as-yet-unproven theory and not taught as scientific fact. Many scholars of Darwinian evolution have insisted that Darwinism inevitably confirms atheism. Richard Dawkins is one of them, and his dogmatism in this vein has aroused bitter criticism among other evolutionary scientists. Michael Ruse, a prominent Darwinian philosopher and agnostic, is one who has been deeply irritated by Dawkins’s view. “Dawkins and Dennett are really dangerous,” he complains, “both at a moral and a legal level.” Ruse argues that Darwinism is not inherently atheistic, and to claim that it is gives advocates of intelligent design a legal basis for their cause. After all, if they can show that Darwinism is a con-

cept synonymous with atheism, then to teach Darwinism in American public schools is to teach atheism, and that would violate the nonestablishment clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution prohibiting a state-run church.²⁷ “It gives the creationists a legal case. Dawkins and Dennett are handing these people a major tool,” Ruse argues.²⁸

When these cultural and scientific views are coupled with the deep political unpopularity of the Bush administration because of the Iraq War, the combination is combustible. It has been easy to conflate the widespread dissatisfaction over the Iraq War with evangelical Christianity in general, especially since the Bush administration has openly appealed to conservative Christians for political support and because most observers have asserted that conservative Christians are the strongest supporters of Bush’s Iraq War policy.²⁹ Many overseas observers have seized upon Bush’s religious faith to explain his decision to launch the Iraq War—a view in line with the premise promoted by the atheists’ books that, contrary to conventional wisdom, religion is not a force for good.

Apart from these political reasons, though, there is the very real possibility of a cultural backlash against evangelical conservatives in general in the United States. As Bush’s two terms wind down, there are clearly segments of American society that have tired of the religious content of the public discourse of recent years. After six years of an administration that promoted “faith-based” initiatives for solving social problems—trying to undo the “progressive” legislation of the Clinton years

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(1993–2001) on gay rights and abortion issues—and after six years of sometimes triumphalistic rhetoric by Christian conservatives, some sort of reaction was all but inevitable.

Although Americans for the most part have all along favorably viewed the expression of religious belief in the public domain, it is also the case that Americans don't like exaggerated or extreme examples of that expression. As Hitchens's publisher Jonathan Karp put it: "It's a manifestation of the anger that people are feeling toward piety in the culture, fears about Islamic extremism and frustration with the way religion is continuously injected into our political life."³⁰ Fair play and equal opportunity are treasured American principles, and it may simply be that after two terms of conservatives and people of faith holding leadership positions in Washington, Americans think it is time for the other side to have a say about things.

If that is true of Americans, it is doubly true of British and other European observers. British observers in particular see broader historical analogies. In *God's Funeral*, British author A. N. Wilson recounts the way many leading nineteenth-century British intellectuals abandoned belief in God: historian Thomas Carlyle, philosopher John Stuart Mill, novelist George Eliot, literary critic Matthew Arnold, art critic John Ruskin, poet Algernon Swinburne. If there is one generalization that can be made about Victorian atheism, it is this: Intellectuals embraced atheism as much out of moral revulsion at what they considered Christianity's failure to address contemporary social ills such as child abuse, troubled marriages, and inadequate rights

for women as in response to Charles Darwin's discoveries about evolution or the Communist creeds of Karl Marx.

Wilson, himself a Christian-turned-atheist, makes an interesting point, however. The nineteenth century may have noted God's funeral (the book title is taken from a poem by English poet Thomas Hardy), but, Wilson says, "One of the most extraordinary things about the twentieth century has been the palpable and visible strength of the Christian thing, the Christian idea."³¹ Wilson cites such outstanding, and indeed heroic, figures as French philosopher Simone Weil, German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Russian philosopher Nikolay Berdyayev, and French priest and philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin—heroic because they each used faith to resist barbarous totalitarianism.

Wilson might have included on that list Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, the Russian Nobel Prize laureate in literature whose writings were instrumental in undermining the entire existence of the Soviet Union, because their truth-telling accounts of Stalin's gulag destroyed the Soviet experiment's last pretension to moral legitimacy.³² Wilson also notes the role of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in standing up to institutional racism in the United States, and of Anglican clergyman Trevor Huddleston in accomplishing the same against apartheid in South Africa.

As Wilson is forced to admit in the book's closing sentences, though he remains unpersuaded by Christianity or any other form of theism, "These world-changing men and women

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decided to ignore the death of God in the nineteenth century. They spoke in the name of a God who was First and Last. They put their trust in One who said, 'I was dead, and see, I am alive for evermore.'"³³ For an atheist, that's powerfully and truthfully spoken. To put a twist on one of the most famous sayings of Mark Twain, who incidentally was not a believer in God, "The reports of God's death are greatly exaggerated."³⁴

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Archer, Gleason. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1964.

———. *New Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982.

Blomberg, Craig. *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987. See also works by William Lane Craig.

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Gaebelein, Frank E., ed. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Vol. 1. London: Pickering and Inglis, 1979.

Greenlee, J. Harold. *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, reprinted 1989.

Metzger, Bruce. *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Endnotes

CHAPTER ONE : THE FOUR HORSEMEN

1. I fess up to borrowing shamelessly a literary notion from Richard Dawkins, who, on page 99 of *The God Delusion*, refers to three eminent British scientists who are men of religious faith (Peacocke, Stannard, and Polkinghorne) “with the likeable familiarity of senior partners in a firm of Dickensian lawyers.”
2. David P. Barash, “The DNA of Religious Faith,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 20 April 2007, 6.
3. Mao Tse-tung died in September 1976. On the night of October 6, his wife, Jiang Qing, and three of her Shanghai-based political cohorts were arrested in Beijing in a political coup designed to bring an end to Mao’s radical leftist policies.
4. Richard Dawkins, “Observer Diary 27th May 2007.” Available online at <http://richarddawkins.net/article,1195,Observer-Diary-27th-May-2007,Richard-Dawkins> (cited June 2007).
5. The human character in the “Opus” strip comments, “Man, here’s a surprising trend: atheist books are suddenly best-sellers!” His friend, the penguin Opus of the comic strip’s name, suggests that it’s not surprising that people might prefer not to believe in God. After all, Opus says, “I’m not crazy about the idea of the maker of the universe knowing my most private, embarrassing secrets.”
6. This comment was made by David Steinberger, CEO of Perseus Books LLC, which has signed Christopher Hitchens on to edit *The Portable Atheist*, a compilation of essays by such writers as Mark Twain and Charles Darwin. As reported by Jeffrey A. Trachtenberg, “Hitchens Book Debunking the Deity Is Surprise Hit,” *Wall Street Journal*, 22 June 2007, B1.
7. “The Latest Numbers, Newsweek Poll, 31 March 2007: Conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International,” *Newsweek*. Available online at <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17875540/site/newsweek> (cited June 2007).
8. “Atheists identified as America’s most distrusted minority, according to new U of M study,” UMNnews press release, 28 March 2006. Available online at <http://www.ur.umn.edu/FMPro?-db=releases&-lay=web&-format=umnnewsreleases/releasesdetail.html&ID=2816&-Find> (cited June 2006).

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9. Stephen Phillips, "All Things Bright May Not Be So Beautiful," *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, 12 January 2007.
10. Penny Edgell, Joseph Gerteis, and Douglas Hartmann, "Atheists As 'Other': Moral Boundaries and Cultural Membership in American Society," *American Sociological Review*, vol. 71, no. 2 (April 2006), 211–234.
11. Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (London: Bantam Press, 2006), 4.
12. *Ibid.*, 375–379.
13. Steven Waldman, NPR commentary, 4 September 2003. Available online at http://www.the-brights.net/vision/essays/waldman_futrell_geisert_npr.html (cited September 2007).
14. Christopher Hitchens, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York: Twelve, 2007), 5.
15. R. J. Eskow, "I have a problem with all fundamentalists, even atheists: The world might be better off without organized religion, but who knows?" *Chicago Sun-Times*, 7 January 2007, B5.
16. Michael Novak, "Remembering the Secular Age," *First Things*, June/July 2007.
17. See in particular Christopher Hitchens's interview on Jon Stewart's *The Daily Show* on April 30, 2007. Available online at: <http://www.thedailyshow.com/video/index.jhtml?videoid=85999&title=christopher-hitchens> (cited November 2007).
18. A cover story by Gary Wolf in the November 2006 issue of *Wired* magazine, "The Church of the Non-Believers," has this amusing narrative:

At dinner parties or over drinks, I ask people to declare themselves. "Who here is an atheist?" I ask.

Usually, the first response is silence, accompanied by glances all around in the hope that somebody else will speak first. Then, after a moment, somebody does, almost always a man, almost always with a defiant smile and a tone of enthusiasm. He says happily, "I am!"

But it is the next comment that is telling. Somebody turns to him and says: "You would be."

"Why?"

"Because you enjoy p—ing people off."

"Well, that's true."

Available online at http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/14.11/atheism.html?pg=2&topic=atheism&topic_set= (cited June 2007).

19. See my Global Prognosis column in *Christianity Today's* August 2007 issue, entitled "Attack Dogs of Christianity."
20. As of June 2007, at least three books had been published in response to the atheist onslaught: Michael Patrick Leahy, *Letter to an Atheist* (Nashville: Harpeth River Press, 2007); Andrew Wilson, *Deluded by Dawkins: A Christian Response to The God Delusion* (Eastbourne: Kingsway Communications Ltd., 2007); and R. C. Metcalf, *Letter to a Christian Nation: Counter Point* (New York: iUniverse, 2007).
21. Sam Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), vii.
22. "Toward a Hidden God," *Time* magazine, 8 April 1966. Available online at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,835309,00.html> (cited July 2007).
23. Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation*, ix.
24. David Aikman, *A Man of Faith: The Spiritual Journey of George W. Bush* (Nashville: W Publishing, 2004), 3.
25. *Newsweek* Poll, "Religious identification in the U.S.: How American adults view themselves," Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance. Available online at http://www.religioustolerance.org/chr_prac2.htm (cited June 2007).
26. "Barna's Annual Tracking Study Shows Americans Stay Spiritually Active, But Biblical Views Wane," *The Barna Update*, The Barna Group, 21 May 2007. Available online at <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=271> (cited June 2007).
27. The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution reads: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging freedom of speech, or of the press; or of the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."
28. Details of the Ruse-Dawkins spat come from Madeleine Bunting, "Why the Intelligent Design Lobby thanks God for Richard Dawkins: Anti-religious Darwinists are promulgating a false dichotomy between faith and science that gives succor to creationists," *The Guardian*, 27 March 2006, 27. Available online at http://www.templeton-cambridge.org/fellows/bunting/publications/2006.03.27/why_the_intelligent_design_lobby_thanks_god_for_richard_dawkins/ (cited September 2007).

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29. Polls in the second half of June 2007 found President Bush's approval rating ranging from 26 percent to 32 percent. From "President Bush—Overall Job Rating in recent national polls," PollingReport.com. Available online at <http://www.pollingreport.com/BushJob.htm> (cited June 2007).
30. Lynn Andriani, "Believe It or Not," *Publishers Weekly*, 4 June 2007. Available online at http://www.samharris.org/site/full_text/believe-it-or-not/ (cited July 2007).
31. A. N. Wilson, *God's Funeral* (London: Abacus, 2000), 465.
32. See my profile of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn in *Great Souls: Six Who Changed the Century* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1998), 125–189.
33. Wilson, *God's Funeral*, 466.
34. What Mark Twain actually said was, "The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated."

CHAPTER TWO: THE ATTACK OF THE FOUR HORSEMEN

1. Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 153.
2. *Ibid.*, 117.
3. *Ibid.*, 252.
4. *Ibid.*, 278.
5. *Ibid.*, 292.
6. Daniel Dennett, *Breaking the Spell* (New York: Penguin Group, 2006), 181.
7. *Ibid.*, 323.
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9. Terry Eagleton, "Lunging, Flailing, Mispunching," *London Review of Books*, vol. 28, no. 20 (19 October 2006). Available online at http://www.lrb.co.uk/v28/n20/eagl01_.html (cited October 2007).
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