



## When Atheism Becomes Religion: America's New Fundamentalists

By Chris Hedges



**When Atheism Becomes Religion: America's New Fundamentalists** By Chris Hedges

From the *New York Times* bestselling author of *American Fascists* and the NBCC finalist for *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning* comes this timely and compelling work about new atheists: those who attack religion to advance the worst of global capitalism, intolerance and imperial projects.

Chris Hedges, who graduated from seminary at Harvard Divinity School, has long been a courageous voice in a world where there are too few. He observes that there are two radical, polarized and dangerous sides to the debate on faith and religion in America: the fundamentalists who see religious faith as their prerogative, and the new atheists who brand all religious belief as irrational and dangerous. Both sides use faith to promote a radical agenda, while the religious majority, those with a commitment to tolerance and compassion as well as to their faith, are caught in the middle.

The new atheists, led by Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens and Sam Harris, do not make moral arguments about religion. Rather, they have created a new form of fundamentalism that attempts to permeate society with ideas about our own moral superiority and the omnipotence of human reason.

*I Don't Believe in Atheists* critiques the radical mindset that rages against religion and faith. Hedges identifies the pillars of the new atheist belief system, revealing that the stringent rules and rigid traditions in place are as strict as those of any religious practice.

Hedges claims that those who have placed blind faith in the morally neutral disciplines of reason and science create idols in their own image -- a sin for either side of the spectrum. He makes an impassioned, intelligent case against religious and secular fundamentalism, which seeks to divide the world into those worthy of moral and intellectual consideration and those who should be condemned, silenced and eradicated. Hedges shatters the new atheists' assault against religion in America, and in doing so, makes way for new, moderate voices to join the debate. This is a book that must be read to understand the state of the battle about faith.

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### Editorial Review

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**\*Starred Review\*** Hedges is clear from the outset: there is nothing inherently moral about being either a believer or a nonbeliever. He goes a step further by accusing atheists of being as intolerant, chauvinistic, bigoted, anti-intellectual, and self-righteous as their archrivals, religious fundamentalists; in other words, as being secular versions of the religious Right. Like best-selling atheists Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins, and Daniel Dennett, Hedges is disgusted with the Christian Right, going so far as to call it the most frightening mass movement in American history. Even more disturbing for Hedges, however, is the notion, which many atheists and liberal churchgoers share, that as a species humanity can progress morally. There is nothing in human nature or human history to support the idea, Hedges maintains, nor that the flaws of human nature will ever be overcome. He discusses the dark sides of the Enlightenment, Darwinism, consumer culture, the justifications for America's wars (including in Vietnam and now Iraq), and obsession with celebrity, among other equally hot topics. His purpose in this small, thought-provoking book is, he says, to help Americans, in particular, accept the limitations of being human and, ultimately, face reality. --June Sawyers

### Review

"Chris Hedges reminds us that the point of religion is not to make us disdain those who think differently but rather to help us become decent, responsive, and moral human beings." - O, The Oprah Magazine (*O, the Oprah magazine*)

### About the Author

**Chris Hedges** was a foreign correspondent for nearly two decades for *The New York Times*, *The Dallas Morning News*, *The Christian Science Monitor* and National Public Radio. He was a member of the team that won the 2002 Pulitzer Prize for Explanatory Reporting for *The New York Times* coverage of global terrorism, and he received the 2002 Amnesty International Global Award for Human Rights Journalism. Hedges is the author of the bestseller *American Fascists* and National Book Critics Circle finalist for *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*. He is a Senior Fellow at The Nation Institute and a Lannan Literary Fellow and has taught at Columbia University, New York University and Princeton University.

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