

Responding to the New Atheists' attacks on the God of the Old Testament-1: Introduction: Dawkins on God

I have much to say about the new atheists (I will explain what the “new atheist” phenomenon is in subsequent essays) and their attacks on the God of the Old Testament. I will be examining their specific attacks, which will require philosophical analysis of the arguments, exegetical analysis of the Old Testament, and metaphysical analysis of the nature of God. Ergo, this will likely be an extended series. In the last series, the focus was on the Four Gospels to show that the resurrection accounts can be perfectly reconciled so that the believer can see how beautifully they fit together, and at the same time shut the mouths of the sophomoric obstreperous skeptics who blather on with their allegations of contradictions. I have shown in painstaking detail that there are no discrepancies. In this series, I will not only expose the pathological thinking of the new atheists, I will demonstrate just how supremely good the God is who they attack so vociferously. At times, I will be tempted to be heavy-handed and tend to vent through my keyboard due to the vitriolic atmosphere as demonstrated in Dawkins's charges below. I tend to return fire when these guys attempt to vomit all over Supreme Being. I covet your prayers as I embark upon this study.

Let's begin this series with the new atheists' attacks on the God of the Old Testament. How would you respond when sharing your faith with an unbeliever if he said he could not believe in the goodness of the God of the Old Testament after learning of the characterization of God in contemporary atheistic material—which often makes it to becoming bestsellers in America? Let's start with Richard Dawkins:

1. Dawkins deems God's commanding Abraham to sacrifice Isaac (see Gen. 22) to be “disgraceful” and tantamount to “child abuse and bullying.”
2. Moreover, says Dawkins, this God breaks into a “monumental rage whenever his chosen people flirted with a rival god, resembling so much as sexual jealousy of the worst kind.”
3. Dawkins says just look at the killing of the Canaanites—an “ethnic cleansing” in which “bloodthirsty massacres” were carried out with “xenophobic relish.”
4. In regard to Joshua's destruction of Jericho, Dawkins says that it is “morally indistinguishable from Hitler's invasion of Poland, or Saddam Hussein's Massacres of the Kurds and the Marsh Arabs.”
5. Dawkins says that such a God is a “moral monster.”
6. Consider one of Dawkins's most notable descriptions of Yahweh: “The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.

These charges are just the tip of the iceberg. There is much more from his ilk as per the other members of the “Four Horsemen, ” id est, Daniel Dennett, Christopher Hitchens, and Sam Harris. As a Christian how would you field such criticisms of the God you know to be Supreme Goodness? Would you become frustrated at the lack of ability to explain just how good God really is? Would you have to resort to platitudes? How in the world could any believer address these charges apart from understanding the Old Testament and the true nature of God? Apart from personally grasping Esse on a metaphysical level, it simply cannot be done. It is going to take more than a superficial attitude and understanding of a God who you only know as one who merely takes care of you. As wonderful and needful as that is, there is so much more: a real understanding of God as the object of our faith that goes far beyond the blessed fellowship with Him. No believer can thrive in life apart from constant fellowship with God. However, every believer must seek to understand God as such apart from the grace benes that He showers upon us. To understand God as He is irrespective of our personal blessings is to enter into true awe and adoration on a second-personal love level, which alone provides the highest and greatest motivation known to man.

Acts 17:28, for in Him we live and move and exist,

Existing in, with, and by Esse

Pastor Don