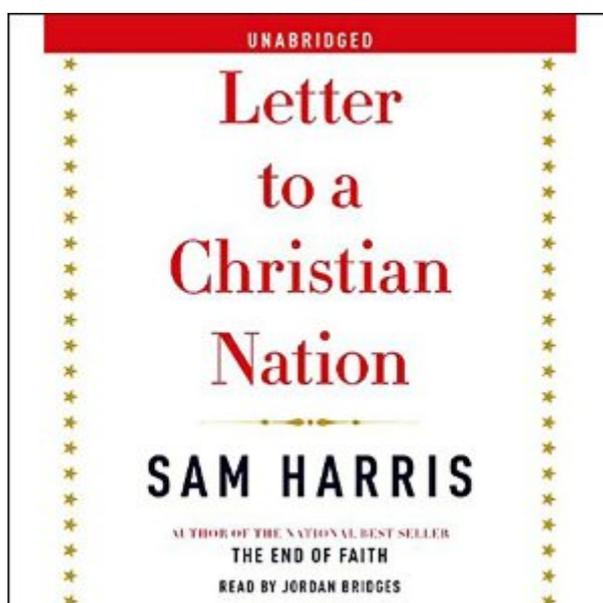


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# Letter To A Christian Nation



## Synopsis

“Thousands of people have written to tell me that I am wrong not to believe in God. The most hostile of these communications have come from Christians. This is ironic, as Christians generally imagine that no faith imparts the virtues of love and forgiveness more effectively than their own. 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, 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.” So begins Letter to a Christian Nation | www.samharris.org --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I just read that the "Harvard University Humanist Chaplain" (?) Greg Epstein is calling Sam Harris and Richard Dawkins the "atheist fundamentalists." "He sees them as rigid in their dogma, and as intolerant as some of the faith leaders with whom atheists share the most obvious differences" (Chicago Sun-Times, March 31, 2007). It is not supposed to be a compliment. Harris replied that "atheist fundamentalist" was "a silly play upon words," noting that "when it comes to the ancient Greek gods, everyone is an atheist and no one is asked to justify that to pagans who want to believe in Zeus." Epstein sees Harris as too rigid and too confrontational. Harris says "In our next presidential election, an actor who reads his Bible would almost certainly defeat a rocket scientist who does not. Could there be any clearer indication that we are allowing unreason and otherworldliness to govern our affairs" (p. 39, The End of Faith)? I guess Epstein is right. Harris IS

confrontational. BUT... does the world need more Epsteins, or Harrises? I vote for Harris. Letter to a Christian Nation is Sam Harris' rebuttal to the arguments from Christians to his viewpoints in The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason. It's a slim book, barely over 100 pages. What does he say? "People have been cherry-picking the Bible for millennia to justify their every impulse, moral and otherwise" (p. 18).

Ever since the truculently effective Madalyn Murray O'Hair disappeared, atheists have been pretty quiet on the national scene. It seems most non-theists are content to be left alone. Then too, unlike the godly who appear to need constant reinforcement, there are no ceremonies where the godless come to celebrate non-belief. By the same token, atheists are notoriously difficult to organize, to the extent that no collective voice on a national scale has arisen. Thus popular myths concerning both belief and non-belief continue to abound, while the most regressive arm of Christianity seeks to undo two centuries of church-state separation with its own version of Taliban rule. All in all, what's shaping up is not a pretty picture, particularly for the future of non-belief in America. I'm glad Harris has taken a public stand beyond those worthy yet weightier books likely to be read by only a few. "Letter..." is an inexpensive booklet, scarcely 100 pages with an introduction and wide spacing. It's not a work of depth or intricate argument, but then neither depth nor complexity is necessary for dispelling many popular myths surrounding a "godless world". Rather the book is written for the occasional thoughtful Christian in accessible prose with a revealing perspective on aspects that the ordinary believer may not have considered. And though the author assails Christian moderates for providing cover to the literalists, the material appears directed almost exclusively toward debunking the latter. The text revolves mainly around the question of morality, a traditional foundation of religious belief. Specifically, the concern is with such key aspects as -- Can there be morality without religion? -- Is the Bible a source of moral wisdom?

"Letter to a Christian Nation" is a rallying cry to rationalists everywhere and should serve as a wakeup call to retrograde Christians eagerly toiling away to displace science with magical thinking, overturn a woman's right to choose, relegate gays and lesbians to second class citizenship, or ensure the apocalypse. Harris presents concise arguments with lucidity, brevity and impact. If you haven't read his prior book "The End of Faith" the thesis of "Letter to a Christian Nation" will be startling and new. If you have, this worthy distillate of his prior work specifically focuses on the fundamentalist follies and foibles of America's cleverly marketed McJesus movement. With deft strokes Harris pens a number of reasons not to be a Christian - or religious at all. He exposes the

unreasonableness of faith, explaining with clarity and philosophical rigor why there is no real justification for believing in God, and how the notion of "faith" does little to justify any unfounded belief, or merit respect for same. Moral arguments come next as Harris, using examples ranging from Mother Teresa to the hatred of homosexuals, demonstrates that the Christian value system easily leads to ethically repugnant behavior - despicable in principal and practice because of the widespread and very real human suffering it creates. Christianity's maniacal obsession with people having sex is revealed as morally destitute - religious right political mandates that keep condoms out of Africa only increase the staggering AIDS death toll. Earlier this year Christian luddites unsuccessfully attempted to block the life saving Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccine, which will prevent many cases of cervical cancer because - in their twisted moral calculus - it might lead to teenagers having a little more sex.

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