

Dear Mom, Dad, Mark, Lise, Miriam, Bob,
Deb, Lee, Judy, Harold, Dave, & Grandma,

This is going to be a hard letter to write, because I'm not sure how any of you will react to it. But I hope that as you read it you will take account of the reason I write it. If there are two things we were all taught as children, it is that truth and honesty are very important, and that if you have the opportunity to help others you should do so. With those thoughts in mind I proceed.

During the past few years as a student I have done a lot of reading, studying, and thinking about the many problems of the world and about how to make sense of them, in order that perhaps I could even help to solve some of them. As I read many books and observed the functioning of the real world, it became increasingly difficult for me to continue to believe the things I had long been taught to believe, things taught to us about the way the world functions based on the Bible.

For a long while I was both very uncomfortable with my religion and very ignorant and afraid of the possibility of non-religion. So I found myself sitting on the fence between these two, and sitting there with a great deal of guilt about not being able to believe in the concepts of heaven, of hell, or of miracles, that we were all required to say we believed in each Sunday. This situation did not make for a happy life.

I have since come down from that fence, and I'll tell you what decision I made and why I made it. I think we can^{all} agree on the next point, though it may pain some of you to think about it at all. In reality, either God exists ~~in~~ some real way, or he doesn't exist at all. Furthermore, your beliefs about this important point ^{can} profoundly affect the way you think and organize your life.

In either case, whether there is or isn't God, you're left with explaining why the world looks and behaves the way it does. Again, the Biblical explanation became less convincing each day as I read more and

more of science and history. And the theory advanced by science that life could arise accidentally without any help from God and then, through millions of years of evolution eventually produce the species including humans that we see today, to me seemed far easier to believe and yielded a much better explanation of reality than that of the Bible.

So I had a world which was easier to explain if it did not contain God than if it did. Then I asked the following question. Would a loving God create a world which was far easier to explain without him than with him? And would he then punish frightfully those who chose the explanation that he does not exist even if they did so ~~only~~ to be better able to help themselves and their fellow man to be happy? These questions I had to resolve.

I am ~~absolutely~~ convinced that there is no God. Consequently, I no longer wish to be called or thought of as a Christian, but as an atheist. I hope I have caused no heart attacks by that statement. I am

also convinced, by the arguments of those who study the Bible skeptically, that the Bible was written by a long trail of mere humans, humans who longed for a God and had no objection to inventing him, and people who only wished that Christ had been perfect and able to save them. That is the statement of my beliefs.

Sincerely,

Paul