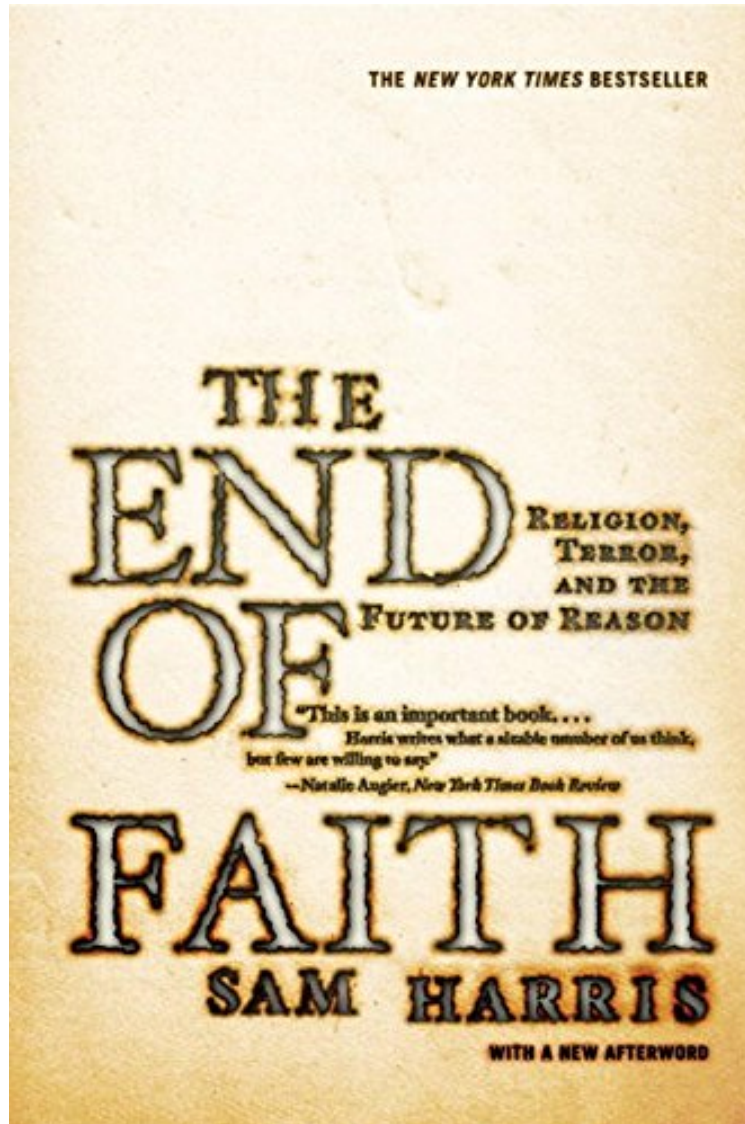


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The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason

Sam Harris

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Sam Harris : The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The most important book of our time. It is a MUST READ By MountainManCO The most important book of our time. It is a MUST READ for anyone, believer or not, who wants to honestly think seriously about why we believe the things we believe and if it is good to do so. Sam Harris is one of the

most clear thinkers, writers, speakers of our generation. If you appreciate thoughtful conversation or writing and are at all considering reading this, DO IT! 6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A Thought Provoking Outlook on World Events and Religious Attitudes By TWSam Harris presents his rationale that the world faces an equally dangerous yet wholly unexpected vulnerability from religious moderates as it does from extremists. Harris asserts that moderate beliefs cause the masses to refrain from attacking fundamentally flawed religious beliefs based on the notion that certain values are perceived as too sacred to question. If you are an atheist looking to bolster your views, an agnostic wishing to amplify your curiosity, or a member of any religion looking to strengthen your convictions, Sam Harris will deliver as his book is filled with provocative questions and thoughts worthy of our times. Harris has a resounding ideal that becomes apparent very quickly in his book. "There is no reason that our ability to sustain ourselves emotionally and spiritually cannot evolve with technology, politics, and the rest of culture. Indeed, it must evolve if we are to have any future." It is evident that Harris' mission is not to disrupt the beliefs of the religious sector, but to instill in the public an inquisitive nature about events that at the very least opens the issue of religion up for discussion among all other topics. The foundation of Harris' view stems from his belief that people generally assess situations in all realms of life based on logic and rationality, excluding religion. "Tell a devout Christian that his wife is cheating on him...and he is likely to require as much evidence as anyone else, and to be persuaded only to the extent that you give it. Tell him that the book he keeps by his bed was written by an invisible deity who will punish him with fire for eternity if he fails to accept its every incredible claim about the universe, and he seems to require no evidence whatsoever." The result of this stance ends up producing a defense and justification for an avoidance of a meticulous examination essential for truly understanding fundamental motivations. If we are unwilling to even ponder such a line of reasoning, how can we expect to successfully find fault among common terrorists actively hiding behind the same line of logical reasoning? Assertions like these will resonate with some, and will strengthen the religious views of others; but all intelligent people will agree that there is merit in considering such thoughts because if our beliefs cannot withstand simple logical questioning, than what does this reveal of our beliefs? Where Harris might emit some weakness is in his view that the entire impetus behind Islamic terrorism is the loose quality of Koran. This clearly overlooks the far greater population of Muslims that do not share terrorist ambitions despite devoutly following the same text. Thus Harris may have been better served looking at all influencing factors (such as poverty, social influence, group identity, etc) instead of assuming religion must represent the only incentive. The End of Faith is not to be taken lightly, as even detractors of Harris' work will require significant time to sincerely analyze the vast scope of reasoning offered. If you are seeking a thought provoking outlook on world events and religious attitudes and have the strength of conviction to handle an undeviating line of reasoning, you will find this book invigorating. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Good, but some faults By lawguy20I came into this book already believing in Harris' central thesis. In the first few chapters he brilliantly sets forth arguments that would be difficult to adequately refute. However, I have some serious qualms with his final two chapters. Early on in the book Harris argues the evils of religion by demonstrating just how barbaric religion can cause people to behave by giving examples of early christian torture devices that personally made me quite uneasy. Harris explains how these sessions of torture would always result in false confessions. Harris even gives an example of a judge who began to feel suspicious of the reliability of torture to elicit meaningful confessions. Upon the judge voicing his concern that torture may elicit false confessions about being a witch, he himself was tortured and then confessed to being a witch. Yet, Harris then proceeds, in the second to last chapter, to defend torture if it will help elicit any response. He claims that anything is better than nothing. It seemed to me that Harris contradicted himself and reserved the right to torture to the "enlightened" modern thinkers, while condemning the medieval torturers. I feel that Harris' attitude toward torture is that medieval torture was wrong because it was done in the name of religion, but modern forms of torture are acceptable because they may save a persons life. However, to me, torture is torture regardless of the intentions or reasons for torturing. The final chapter I found to be peculiar. Harris seems to embrace, although he claims otherwise, the teachings of Buddhism. Either way, I found the final chapter irrelevant to the book as a whole. The premise of the book was to debunk the validity faith, not advocate a replacement. I gave the book 4 stars instead of 5 because of the last two chapters. I know I focused on the negatives in this review, but the book is very enjoyable and I would highly recommend it.

"The End of Faith articulates the dangers and absurdities of organized religion so fiercely and so fearlessly that I felt relieved as I read it, vindicated....Harris writes what a sizable number of us think, but few are willing to say." Natalie Angier, New York Times In The End of Faith, Sam Harris delivers a startling analysis of the clash between reason and religion in the modern world. He offers a vivid, historical tour of our willingness to suspend reason in favor of religious belief even when these beliefs inspire the worst human atrocities. While warning against the encroachment of organized religion into world politics, Harris draws on insights from neuroscience, philosophy, and Eastern mysticism to deliver a call for a truly modern foundation for ethics and spirituality that is both secular and humanistic. Winner of the 2005 PEN/Martha Albrand Award for Nonfiction.

.com Sam Harris cranks out blunt, hard-hitting chapters to make his case for why faith itself is the most dangerous element of modern life. And if the devil's in the details, then you'll find Satan waiting at the back of the book in the very substantial notes section where Harris saves his more esoteric discussions to avoid sidetracking the urgency of his message. Interestingly, Harris is not just focused on debunking religious faith, though he makes his compelling arguments with verve and intellectual clarity. The End of Faith is also a bit of a philosophical Swiss Army knife. Once he has presented his arguments on why, in an age of Weapons of Mass Destruction, belief is now a hazard of great proportions, he focuses on proposing alternate approaches to the mysteries of life. Harris recognizes the truth of the human condition, that we fear death, and we often crave "something more" we cannot easily define, and which is not met by accumulating more material possessions. But by attempting to provide the cure for the ills it defines, the book bites off a bit more than it can comfortably chew in its modest page count (however the rich Bibliography provides more than enough background for an intrigued reader to follow up for months on any particular strand of the author's musings.) Harris' heart is not as much in the latter chapters, though, but in presenting his main premise. Simply stated, any belief system that speaks with assurance about the hereafter has the potential to place far less value on the here and now. And thus the corollary -- when death is simply a door translating us from one existence to another, it loses its sting and finality. Harris pointedly asks us to consider that those who do not fear death for themselves, and who also revere ancient scriptures instructing them to mete it out generously to others, may soon have these weapons in their own hands. If thoughts along the same line haunt you, this is your book.--Ed DobeasFrom Publishers Weekly

In this sometimes simplistic and misguided book, Harris calls for the end of religious faith in the modern world. Not only does such faith lack a rational base, he argues, but even the urge for religious toleration allows a too-easy acceptance of the motives of religious fundamentalists. Religious faith, according to Harris, requires its adherents to cling irrationally to mythic stories of ideal paradisiacal worlds (heaven and hell) that provide alternatives to their own everyday worlds. Moreover, innumerable acts of violence, he argues, can be attributed to a religious faith that clings uncritically to one set of dogmas or another. Very simply, religion is a form of terrorism for Harris. Predictably, he argues that a rational and scientific worldview that relies on the power of empirical evidence to support knowledge and understanding should replace religious faith. We no longer need gods to make laws for us when we can sensibly make them for ourselves. But Harris overstates his case by misunderstanding religious faith, as when he makes the audaciously nave statement that "mysticism is a rational enterprise; religion is not." As William James ably demonstrated, mysticism is far from a rational enterprise, while religion might often require rationality in order to function properly. On balance, Harris's book generalizes so much about both religion and reason that it is ineffectual. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. A genuinely frightening book.... Read Sam Harris and wake up. - Richard Dawkins, The Guardian

Sam Harris launches a sustained nuclear assault.... A brave, pugilistic attempt to demolish the walls that currently insulate religious people from criticism.... Badly needed. - Johann Hari, The Independent

A radical attack on the most sacred of liberal preceptsthe notion of tolerance.... An eminently sensible rallying cry for a more ruthless secularisation of society. - Stephanie Merritt, The Observer

Shows how the perfect tyranny of religious and secular totalitarianism demonizes imperfect democracies such as the United States and Israel. A must read for all rational people. - Alan Dershowitz, professor of law at Harvard University and author of America on Trial