

## Why the New Atheism is an Open Door for the Gospel in Europe

In the year 2000, *The Economist* magazine published an obituary for God. In 2007 they published a 16 page retraction entitled *God Returns to Europe*. For the whole of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Europe's secularists have largely assumed that they had won, or were certain to win the battle against 'irrational religion'. But the 20<sup>th</sup> century has turned out to be secularism's failed century, and religion has refused to die, and in some areas is even experiencing a resurgence. This in turn has resulted in the rise of what is termed *The New Atheism*. It is a more militant version of 'liberal' (as opposed to communist) atheism, which seeks to overthrow and prevent any public expression of religion in general and Christianity in particular. However rather than seeing this as a threat, this seminar looks at the 'open door' that the New Atheism provides in many areas of Europe.

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### I. Introduction

A. God returns to Europe

B. Is Europe the first post-Christian and post-secular culture?

### II. The Old Atheism

A. The four foundations – Copernician, Darwinian, Freudian and Technological.

B. God is Dead – Nietzsche and the philosophers.

C. Bertand Russell, the Bloomsbury set, Anthony Flew

### **III. The New Atheists**

A. The Four Horsemen – Dawkins, Harris, Hitchens and Dennett.

B. The French are still here! – Michael Onfray

C. Why so popular?

D. Should we be afraid?

### **IV. What do Europeans think?**

A. Cultural Attitudes

a. Apathy

b. Angst

c. Alienation

d. Anger

B. Coping Mechanism

a. The Pleasure Principle

b. The Power Principle

c. The Peace Principle

d. The Pain Principle

## V. Are Christians Atheists?

### A. The Greeks

### B. Religious Atheists

#### Suggested Reading

Diarmid MacCulloch: *Reformation – Europe’s House Divided*, Allen Lane, 2006

A C Grayling: *Against all gods*, Oberon, 2007

Antony Flew: *There is a God*, Harper, 2007

H.R. Rookmaaker: *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture*, Crossway, 1994.

Michael Onfray: *In Defence of Atheism*, 2007.

Richard Dawkins: *The God Delusion* – Bantam, 2006.

David Robertson: *The Dawkins Letters* – Christian Focus Publications, 2007.

John Lennox: *God’s Undertaker* – Lion, 2009.

John Gray: *Black Mass* – Allen Lane, 2007.

Pope Benedict XVI: *Jesus of Nazareth* – Bloomsbury, 2007.

John Stackhouse: *Humble Apologetics*, Oxford University Press, 2002

Paul Copan: *Is God a Moral Monster?*, Baker, 2011

John Lennox: *God and Stephen Hawking*, Lion, 2010