

'New Atheism' is old hat

BY JAKE BLUMGART | STAFF WRITER

In a punch-up, who do you back — famed magicians Penn & Teller, or God? Welcome to what Gary Wolf of *Wired*, has sensationally dubbed "the New Atheism."

Who are the New Atheists? The men who Wolf pins the name to (Penn & Teller, have a separate section devoted to their godlessness) are Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris and Daniel Dennett, all of whom have recently released books questioning the sanctity of religious faith.

"They condemn not just belief in God but respect for belief in God," Wolf writes. "(For the New Atheists), religion is not only wrong; it's evil."

That's not all. The New Atheism wants all you agnostics, deists, skeptics, and other assorted fence-sitters to join their battle against what they see as the virulent supernatural crutch of religion.

Atheism is defined as a disbelief in the existence of God(s) and it's nothing new. Indeed, the non-believer roll call is a lengthy one. In addition to Penn & Teller (who sometimes write "There is No God" instead of their autograph), Barry Manilow, Dave Barry, John Lennon, Frida Kahlo, Gorbachev, Stephen Hawking, Freud, Bjork and Keanu Reeves are (or were) all atheists. And this list just scratches the surface of declared atheists whom you've heard of.

The New Atheism described by Wolf is something else entirely. While traditional atheism is content with denying belief in God, the new breed is almost evangelical. It is safe to assume that its teachings will alienate a fair number of the less vehement non-believers, who may not like or

believe in religion but can respect those who do.

The most prominent mouthpiece of the New Atheists is Dawkins, a renowned evolutionary biologist, recent author of the best-selling "The God Delusion," and a ferociously evangelical proponent of atheism.

In "The God Delusion," Dawkins writes, "As long as we accept the principle that religious faith must be respected simply because it is religious faith, it is hard to withhold respect from the faith of Osama bin Laden and the suicide bombers."

"Evangelism is a moral imperative (for Dawkins)," writes Wolf. "(He) does not merely disagree with religious myths. He disagrees with tolerating them, with cooperating in their colonization of the brains of innocent tykes."

This all sounds rather harsh. However, it is important to remember that the New Atheists are almost all Western scientists. Their principal interactions with the faithful have been with the puerile intelligent de-

sign and creationist movements and the vicious terrorist attacks on the London Underground and 9/11.

The extremism of the New Atheists is in part a reaction to these threats to life, limb and scientific empirical teaching represented by religious fundamentalists from George Bush to Osama Bin Laden.

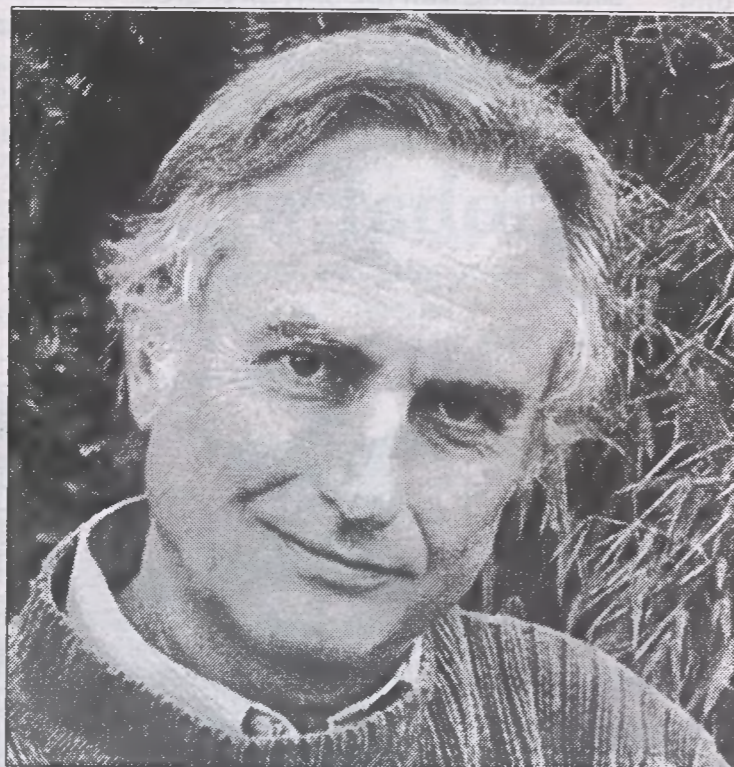
While the New Atheists can be rather nasty, even boorish, they also haven't killed anyone. Which is more than can be said for other fundamentalists.

Lawrence M. Krauss, a physicist, staunch opponent of creationism, and an atheist, has argued against the New Atheism and its invocations of black and white morality.

"I think we need to respect people's philosophical notions unless those notions are wrong," Krauss said. "The Earth isn't 6,000 years old. (But) Science doesn't make it impossible to believe in God. We should recognize that fact and live with it and stop being so pompous about it."

Evangelizing about anything is a bore. It won't get you invited to parties. As an atheist, I do not want a bunch of Christian missionaries breathing down my neck, trying to convert me every other minute (although that doesn't stop them from trying). It's safe to assume religious folks don't want us non-believers yelling at them about how idiotic their beliefs are. So don't do it. It's rude. If believers change their minds of their own volition, great. If not, that's fine too. The vast majority of them are good people anyway.

Atheism isn't going anywhere. Neither is religion. I guess we all just have to learn to live with each other.



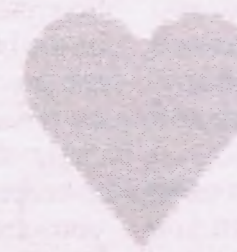
KDWEBSERVER.CO.UK
RICHARD DAWKINS, ONE OF THE "LEADING LIGHTS" OF THE NEW ATHEISTS.

The King's Campaign

500+ College Women Marching for the Empowerment of African American Men, wearing the shirt

reading:

I STILL



BLACK MEN

December 4th at noon on UNCG's campus

The King's Campaign initiative is striving to empower and uplift African American Men in colleges and universities.

There is a dire need for our support because 39 percent of

Black men are not graduating from institutions of higher learning across the nation. 500+ women showing their support will wear the t-shirt reading I STILL LOVE BLACK MEN at noon on December 4th. These women will march silently from College Avenue to the main fountain on UNCG's campus. The first targeted population is women from UNCG and Guilford College. Because both schools are predominately white, support for the small percentage of Black Men is in high demand. The proceeds from the King's Campaign will go toward future campaigning at universities along the East Coast and toward a scholarship for a young man in one or all of the hosting

Genital mutilation violates human rights

BY LANDRY HAARMANN | STAFF WRITER

Globalization has knocked down many barriers which previously kept cultures shielded and mysterious. People who represent different cultures meet, greet and co-mingle, which has helped in fostering a greater understanding and respect for the many different types of people on this planet.

There is an importance to respecting people of different cultures and the customs of such cultures.

However, when does a cultural custom become something to be abhorred?

In my opinion that point is when human rights are compromised, when a person is placed in a dangerous or unhealthy position. One such example is "female circumcision," better known as genital mutilation.

In genital mutilation, parts of a young girl's clitoris or labia are removed. In some

cases, the labia are actually sown together, in a procedure called "infibulation." This "surgery" is performed on girls who are between the ages of four and 12.

Female genital mutilation is done for several reasons: religion, honor, hygiene, fertility or to control a girl's sexuality.

The repercussions of genital mutilation are vast. The removal is usually done with an instrument that isn't sterilized, and as a result girls who have received female circumcision often contract infections and are twice as likely to die in giving birth.

I understand the importance of respecting other people and their cultures, but how can anyone respect a cultural practice which places young women in danger of infection, deformity and, in some instances, death.

Coming from Western culture, I approach the genital mutilation with my Western values, and I have a very hard time grasping the reasons behind this cus-

tom. Also, looking at genital mutilation, I feel it's a gross violation of human rights.

Some of the reasons, mainly the attempt to control a girl's sexuality, behind female genital mutilation, particularly to control a daughter's sexuality, angers me endlessly! The ritual is inherently sexist, no matter if it's a woman or a man performing the surgery.

More than that, it's dangerous and I cannot fathom how the women performing the ritual can lack sympathy for the young girls they are about to inflict severe pain upon.

Genital mutilation is not tolerated in either America or England. In England, if you are convicted of practicing genital mutilation, you receive a maximum of 14 years in jail. If you are caught in America, you can get up to 40 years in prison.

Not only is genital mutilation outlawed by both America and England, it goes against Article 5 in the Universal

Declaration of Human Rights, which says, "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."

In my book, and many others, genital mutilation is both degrading and torturous.

Despite its illegality and harsh repercussions for performing the act of genital mutilation, people still practice this custom.

In England, parents fly elders from African villages to perform the rituals on their daughters, and currently in America, an Atlanta man received a 40-year jail sentence after his 7-year-old daughter told the court that he had "cut me on my private part" with a pair of scissors.

America has long had a reputation as being a melting pot, but being at the forefront of the modern world there's just no room for archaic and inhumane customs like genital mutilation.