



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on December 17, 2011

Christian Leaders React to Death of Outspoken Atheist Christopher Hitchens

English-born and Oxford-educated, Hitchens was, said the [New York Times](#) in its glowing obituary, “a British Trotskyite who had lost faith in the Socialist movement, spent much of his life wandering the globe and reporting on the world’s trouble spots for *The Nation* magazine, the British newsmagazine *The New Statesman* and other publications.”



In 1981 he moved to the United States, writing mostly for the liberal *Nation* magazine before settling into his position as a columnist with *Vanity Fair* in 1992. In addition to his voluminous, well-crafted attacks on such varied targets as Bill and Hillary Clinton, both George Bushes, Henry Kissinger, and Prince Charles, to name a few, he also defended the war in Iraq, Salmon Rushdie, and even the unborn, once angering “freedom of choice supporters by stating that the child’s life begins at conception,” reported the [Associated Press](#).

His antipathy for the Clintons was legendary and somewhat off-putting to the liberal crowd that loved him. “No Democrat angered him more than [Bill] Clinton,” noted the AP obituary, “whose presidency led to the bitter end of Hitchens’ friendship with White House aide Sidney Blumenthal and other Clinton backers. As Hitchens wrote in his memoir, he found Clinton ‘hateful in his behavior to women, pathological as a liar, and deeply suspect when it came to money in politics.’” Hitchens also “loathed Hillary Rodham Clinton,” the AP account continued, “and switched his affiliation from independent to Democrat in 2008 just so he could vote against her in the presidential primary.”

Among conservative Christians, however, Hitchens was known for his excoriating treatment of the Christian faith, and for his unbending atheism. One of his most well-known works is the 2007 book [God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything](#), in which he argued that organized faiths such as Christianity are “violent, irrational, intolerant, allied to racism, tribalism, and bigotry, invested in ignorance and hostile to free inquiry, contemptuous of women and coercive toward children” — and thus “ought to have a great deal on its conscience.” Nonetheless, he complained, such faith in God is “ineradicable. It will never die out, or at least not until we get over our fear of death, and of the dark, and of the unknown, and of each other.”

As he neared the end of his life, Hitchens offered an outward veneer to demonstrate that such were fears he had conquered. Even as his famous openness about the disease that was killing him prompted a stream of letters and e-mails from individuals who said they were praying for him, Hitchens



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“maintained that his illness had not changed his mind about religion,” reported the [Los Angeles Times](#), “and, borrowing from Shakespeare, asked believers not to bother ‘deaf heaven’ with their ‘bootless cries.’”

Nonetheless, some Christians, including the [Rev. Rick Warren](#), the high-profile pastor of California’s Saddleback Church, tweeted after Hitchens’ death: “My friend Christopher Hitchens has died. I loved & prayed for him constantly & grieve his loss. He knows the Truth now.”

Former atheist Lee Strobel, whose book [The Case for Christ](#) is considered a classic apologetic on the Christian faith, recalled on Twitter: “I was among many who shared Christ with him; so sad he rejected the Gospel.”

One of Hitchens’ targets in the Christian world was the Rev. Jerry Falwell, founder of the Moral Majority and Liberty University. Falwell’s son Jonathan, pastor of Lynchburg, Virginia’s [Thomas Road Baptist Church](#) (also founded by the elder Falwell), recalled that when his father died, “Christopher Hitchens had horrible things to say. All I can say is that I’m praying for Mr. Hitchens’ family in their loss.”

While major media mouthpieces and commentators were busily remembering Hitchens for his literary genius, the Christian community by and large thought, instead, on the tragedy of his lost soul traveling to eternal darkness and torment. Southern Baptist spokesman [Albert Mohler](#) said that Hitchens’ death served as “an excruciating reminder of the consequences of unbelief. We can only pray others will believe.” He added: “Few things are so valued in this life as brilliance and eloquence. Neither will matter in the world to come.” Mohler concluded that the tragic truth “about Christopher Hitchens is not that he died of unbelief, but that his unbelief is all that matters now. Unspeakably sad.”

The Rev. Douglas Wilson, an evangelical theologian who had debated Hitchens on the Christian faith, and who compiled a book with him on those debates entitled [Is Christianity Good for the World?](#), recalled on the [Christianity Today](#) website his friendship with Hitchens. “Christopher knew that faithful Christians believe that it is appointed to man once to die, and after that the Judgment,” wrote Wilson. “He knew that we believe what Jesus taught about the reality of damnation. He also knew that we believe — for I told him — that in this life, the door of repentance is always open.”

Wilson added that there was “no indication that Christopher ever called on the Lord before he died, and if he did not, then Scriptures plainly teach that he is lost forever.” But adding a note of hope for those still living, Wilson wrote that “we do have every indication that Christ died for sinners, men and women just like Christopher. We know that the Lord has more than once hired workers for his vineyard when the sun was almost down (Matt. 20:6).”

Photo of Christopher Hitchens: AP Images



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