

ATEBE

Dinî Arařtırmalar Dergisi
Journal for Religious Studies
e-ISSN: 2757-5616

ATEBE Dergisi | Journal of ATEBE

Sayı: 10 (Aralık / December 2023), 179-185

Faith No More Why People Reject Religion by Phil Zuckerman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 224 pages, ISBN: 9780199740017

Faith No More Why People Reject Religion yazar Phil Zuckerman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 224 sayfa, ISBN: 9780199740017

Nafiye Aydın

Yüksek Lisans Öğrencisi, Ankara Sosyal Bilimler Üniversitesi, İslami Arařtırmalar Enstitüsü,
İslam Ekonomisi ve Finansı Anabilim Dalı
Master of Arts, Social Sciences University of Ankara, Institute of Islamic Sciences,
Department of Islamic Economics and Finance

Ankara, Türkiye

nafiye.aydin@gmail.com

[0009-0007-4586-7280](https://orcid.org/0009-0007-4586-7280)

ror.org/025y36b60

Makale Bilgisi / Article Information

Makale Türü / Article Types: Kitap Deęerlendirmesi / Book Review

Geliř Tarihi / Date Received: 11 Kasım / November 2023

Kabul Tarihi / Date Accepted: 13 Aralık / December 2023

Yayın Tarihi / Date Published: 31 Aralık / December 2023

Yayın Sezonu / Pub Date Season: Aralık / December

Atıf / Cite as: Aydın, Nafiye. "Faith No More Why People Reject Religion by Phil Zuckerman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 224 sayfa, ISBN: 9780199740017". *ATEBE* 10 (Aralık 2023), 179-185. <https://doi.org/10.51575/atebe.1389470>

İntihal / Plagiarism: Bu makale, iTenticate yazılımınca taranmıştır. İntihal tespit edilmemiştir/This article has been scanned by iTenticate. No plagiarism detected.

Etik Beyan/Ethical Statement: Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde bilimsel ve etik ilkelere uyulduęu ve yararlanılan tüm çalışmaların kaynakçada belirtildięi beyan olunur/It is declared that scientific and ethical principles have been followed while carrying out and writing this study and that all the sources used have been properly cited (**Nafiye AYDIN**)

Yayıncı / Published by: Ankara Sosyal Bilimler Üniversitesi / Social Sciences University of Ankara.

Bu makale Creative Commons Atıf-GayriTicari 4.0 Uluslararası Lisans (CC BY-NC) ile lisanslanmıştır. This work is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC).

Faith No More Why People Reject Religion by Phil Zuckerman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 224 pages, ISBN: 9780199740017

Abstract

This study evaluates the book “Faith No More Why People Reject Religion” written by Phil Zuckerman. Zuckerman, who conducts research in the fields of atheism, agnosticism, skepticism, humanism, and naturalism, examines the intellectual and social characteristics of people who abandon their beliefs in his book “Faith No More Why People Reject Religion” and questions whether people need a God to be truly moral. In our study, the apostasy stories in the book have been examined by comparing them with the author’s theses. Relationships between apostasy rates and given social variables have been evaluated in terms of scientific objectivity.

Keywords: Sociology of Religion, Secularism, Religiosity, Apostasy, Atheism.

Faith No More Why People Reject Religion yazar Phil Zuckerman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 224 sayfa, ISBN: 9780199740017

Öz

Çalışmamızın konusu, Phil Zuckerman tarafından kaleme alınan “Faith No More Why People Reject Religion” adlı kitabın değerlendirilmesidir. Ateizm, agnostisizm, şüphecilik, hümanizm ve natüralizm alanlarında araştırmalar yapan Zuckerman “Faith No More Why People Reject Religion” adlı kitabında inançlarını terk eden insanların entelektüel ve sosyal özelliklerini inceleyerek, insanların gerçekten ahlaklı olmak için bir Tanrıya ihtiyaç duyup duymadıklarını sorgulamaktadır. Çalışmamızda kitapta yer alan irtidat hikayeleri, yazarın tezleri ile mukayese edilerek incelenmiştir. İrtidat oranları ve verilen sosyal değişkenler arasındaki ilişkiler bilimsel nesnellik açısından değerlendirilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Din Sosyolojisi, Sekülerleşme, Dindarlık, Dinden Dönme, Ateizm.

Since more and more Americans and many people around the world abandon their faith, research on atheism and agnosticism has recently increased. Zuckerman, born in 1969, is a Sociology and Secular Studies Professor at Pitzer College, California, USA. In “Faith No More,” he analyzes stories of 87 apostates in the U.S. and discusses the secular dimension.

Zuckerman provides different types of classification of apostasy followed by examining the psychological and sociological states of apostates. In light of the statements of apostates, he posits that apostasy is a process consisting of periods of rejection, realization, frustration, regret, and acceptance. He defines people rejecting their religion as freethinkers and brave. He further suggests that apostasy is strongly correlated with intellectualism and higher education.

The book refers to certain statistics and surveys on secularism in the United States, including the mindset of apostates with various backgrounds over life, God, and the afterlife. It also explores the reasons behind the rejection of religion by apostates.

The book delves into grounds provided by respondents in abandoning religion. Examples include dramatic family backgrounds, the misfortune of the loss of a loved one, dissatisfaction with the bindings of religion, the interaction with different thoughts, and so on. While people's expressions may not reflect real causes for rejecting their religion, they may be construed as breaking points. Drawing inferences from such expressions, Zuckerman supports the notion that the apostasy of these people is a natural phenomenon. They have been deeply secular indeed, and their apostasy is revealed in time. Zuckerman adds that apostates are not hundred percent aware of their motives.¹

Zuckerman analyzes apostates based on their social roles in the community. For instance, he reports that men are more inclined to apostatize than women. He claims that apostates are more likely to be better educated, more liberal, and respectful of human rights and defenders of world peace.²

The first chapter evaluates family background as a primary cause for apostasy. In the story of two brothers, Robert and Ed, the underlying cause appears to be parental pressure and childhood fears, particularly fear of supernatural beings such as demons.

The second chapter introduces examples of apostasy arising from some contradictions between reason and religious values, such as holy book stories, creeds, or teachings. Max's apostasy story is quite noticeable. He claimed himself as an atheist because he found the original sin doctrine incomprehensible. It should be noted that in Islam, every person is believed to be born innocent, and Max's case could be different if he met Islam. Another reason reported in this chapter is Theodicy, and many people apostatize because they refuse to believe in a God who lets the death of innocent people. It is important to note that the citations addressed to Qur'anic verses do not represent the image of God, which is mentioned on page 36 of the book.

The third chapter examines the stories of people who turned skeptical about God after going through challenging experiences in life, such as divorce, the death of a loved one, and poverty. The breaking point is the feeling that God mistreated them.

In the fourth chapter, Zuckerman mentions the apostasy experiences of two ex-Mormon interviews, Cecilia and Andrew. The thing that triggered Cecilia's apostasy was the rejection of the traditional Mormon undergarments. Andrew's story represents a complicated case. His homosexuality drove him away from religious practices and community while he continued his Mormon faith on a personal level. Accordingly, Andrew's case does not represent a typical apostasy.

¹ Phil Zuckerman, *Faith No More: Why People Reject Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 13.

² Zuckerman, *Faith No More*, 10.

In the fifth chapter, Zuckerman focuses on sex and sexuality as causes of apostasy and provides many examples. In many instances, people expressed their preference for sexual desires over being a pious or religious person, and this led them to apostatize. Zuckerman states that many of them felt intense guilt because of their premarital sex and after that, they questioned their faith. He makes comments based on statistical information and compares non-religious and religious people's sexual experiences.

In the sixth chapter, the reasons discussed for apostasy include people's encounters with hypocrisy and unethical behavior in religious environments. Some people distance themselves from their religion due to the misconduct or immorality of priests. Moreover, the interaction of religion is given as another reason for apostasy through the experience of other people. Zuckerman ends this chapter by adding some data from Sociologist Barry Kosmin's research and emphasizes that malfeasance on the part of religious figures has been one of the factors for the growing irreligious population in the United States.

In the seventh chapter, Zuckerman analyzes the daily lives of two women in detail. He states that considering the social average for apostasy, Rita and Nancy are exceptional examples for several reasons. Therefore, he placed a chapter just for two. Zuckerman's thesis is that there is a clear correlation between educational attainment and religiosity. He emphasizes that after they apostatize, they become more moral. However, a close reading of the stories reveals that Rita and Nancy faced some difficulties, such as jail time, hunger, and divorce, after which they decisively moved to change their lives. During and after such experiences, they have come across non-religious individuals with strong personalities who discouraged their affiliation with faith. Therefore, the details of the stories of Rita and Nancy call the author's claim about the positive effect of secularism on morality into question.

In chapter eight, Zuckerman rejects the thesis that "morality comes from belief in God" and supports the idea that apostates become more moral after they apostatize. He builds this argument on the example that crime rates in secular/non-religious countries are lower than in religious ones. It is questionable, however, to draw inferences about crime rates in religious countries. Since the causes of the crimes differ from society to society, making a general analysis based solely on crime rates and religion may be misleading.

In the ninth chapter, the family effect on apostasy is analyzed differently. From a sociological perspective, it is known that mothers have more significant influence over children than fathers. In the study, Zuckerman states that at least one parent of almost half of the apostate interviewers is irreligious. It is argued that non-religious parents affect their children and instinctively induce apostasy.

In the tenth chapter, the author summarizes the factors behind apostasy discussed in previous chapters and categorizes them under nine headings: 1) Parents, 2) Education, 3) Misfortune, 4) Other Cultures, Other Religions, 5) Friends, Colleagues, Lovers, 6) Politics, 7) Sex, 8) Satan and Hell, 9) Malfeasance of Religious Associates.³

Zuckerman provides a different perspective through analyzing secularization on a micro-level psychological basis. Based on surveys and observations, he discovers the reasons of secularism why people adopt secularism. In addition, he defines secularism in a common way in the doctrines of the faith: "Religion is compatible with human nature." He states that apostasy is a part of human nature, and people discover it over time. He puts forward a positive and moral understanding of apostasy by doing so.

Zuckerman argues that all reasons could be important individually, but none is valid for apostasy. He questions if people apostatize simply by their nature. According to him, some people force themselves to have faith because they think they are supposed to believe; however, they cannot maintain their faith over time. Zuckerman likens apostasy to homosexuality. He posits that both exist in the nature of a person; over time, the person realizes his nature and tries to resist, but eventually accepts the situation.

Zuckerman opposes the thesis that "religious needs are constant and essential for humanity". He positively conceptualizes apostasy and characterizes apostates as brave and bright people and freethinkers. He also argues that apostates were once religious but no longer they are. However, he fails to provide concrete data or research on selected apostates' religiosity. It is not easy to measure individual religiosity, and religiosity and religious identity are different patterns. Ultimately, Zuckerman predicts that apostasy would continue to grow in the United States. He also shares the statistical data of secularism for 2018 in another book, "Beyond Doubt," published in 2023. As he cites, the Scientific America report shows that the number of Americans who did not declare affiliation to any religion went up to 55.8 million in 2018 from 36.6 million in 2007. So, the new data confirms Zuckerman's prediction about the rise of secularization in the United States.⁴

Overall, the study attempts to explain apostasy through the personal experiences of individuals of diverse ages, statuses, genders, and family backgrounds. The stories of apostates directly narrated by themselves give insight into their struggles and experiences. The methodology of research and sampling is provided at the end of the book.

³ Zuckerman, *Faith No More*, 151-169.

⁴ Isabella Kasselstrand et al., *Beyond Doubt: The Secularization of Society* (New York: New York University Press, 2023).

Although interesting apostasy stories are placed in the book, it is hard to observe an unbiased approach. The author conceptualizes the stories with his perspective without a fair balance between secularism and religion.

Faith No More Why People Reject Religion by Phil Zuckerman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012),
224 pages, ISBN: 9780199740017

References

Kasselstrand, Isabella et al. *Beyond Doubt: The Secularization of Society*. New York: New York University Press, 2023.

Zuckerman, Phil. *Faith No More: Why People Reject Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.