

Friday Night Theology, 24th October, 2008
The Atheists on the Bus

"*There's probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy life.*" You may not have heard, but this [slogan](#) is to become a regular advert on London's infamous bendy buses, courtesy of the British Humanist Association (BHA) and supported by Britain's most famous atheist, Professor Richard Dawkins.

Of course, if as Christians we want to see the [Alpha Course](#) advertised on buses, we can hardly have any objections to the BHA advertising their views on the buses. Free speech, after all, has to work all ways. But what struck me is that the BHA may actually have done the Christian community a favour with this advert. In fact, [Theos](#), a Public Theology think-tank, thought it was such a good PR opportunity for Christianity, that they donated £50 to the campaign.

"Probably no God" starts off as a rather unconvincing statement of the BHA's belief. Of course no one can prove for certain whether there's a God or not, but I'm not sure I would be particularly inspired if a doctor told me that they were 'probably' qualified. Neither would I go to a restaurant that advertised its food and service as 'probably' good. Given this, it seems to me that we have a prime opportunity to ask anyone that questions us about this advert to consider the possibility that there *is* a God, a possibility the BHA itself allows for.

"Now stop worrying and enjoy life," also appears an odd choice of phrase, as if atheists have the prerogative on a fun life. I think God does want us to enjoy life, which is perhaps a message as Christians that we haven't always made clear - hence many people still view Christianity as a list of restrictive do's and don't. This advert could allow us to challenge that, and to affirm that enjoyment of life is a good thing, indeed a God-given thing. This doesn't sanction unrestricted hedonism, but rather it is to say that "life to the full" comes from knowing God - consider the words Jesus speaks in John 10:10, "*I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*" Life to the full surely isn't meant to be a life void of all enjoyment.

The fact that the BHA think there's a need for this advert at all, and the fact that the advert they have come up with is arguably very weak, leaves me wondering if their case for atheism may not be quite as strong as they would like to have us all think. I certainly hope you wouldn't ever see a Church encouraging people to join on the basis that they believe there 'probably' is a God. So, I for one will not be worrying about this latest foray from the BHA. Not only is it great that such adverts keep the debate about God firmly on the public agenda, but it seems to me that we can challenge the notion that only the atheists have all the fun. Not least, I expect we could enjoy ourselves talking about the dire nature of this ad with our atheist friends.

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