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Letter From a Christian Citizen: Pastor, theologian writes first evangelical response to bestselling Letter to a Christian Nation

Moscow, Idaho—Douglas Wilson, Senior Fellow of theology at New Saint Andrews College and pastor of Moscow's Christ Church, has authored the first evangelical response to Sam Harris' *Letter to a Christian Nation*. Harris initially gained notoriety by making the case against God and formal religion in his first book, *The End of Faith*, and has since been described by many as part of a new "militant atheism." Combined his two books have spent nearly thirty weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list, demonstrating that the public is more interested in a national conversation on religion than it is typically given credit for. Wilson's response, entitled *Letter from a Christian Citizen*, was published by American Vision this week.

Reactions to Wilson's book have already come from readers on both sides of the issue. Atheist Dan Barker and Co-President of the Freedom from Religion Foundation is honest in his opinion of Wilson: "(He is) dangerously irresponsible with the truth. But I do think he is articulate and easy to understand, which makes it easy to have a debate with him. For all of his faults, which are many, he is consistent and he is clear." Dr. Craig Hazen, director of the graduate program in Christian Apologetics at Biola University, said Wilson's book actually made him glad that Sam Harris had attacked the Christian faith, "because it provided an occasion for Doug to write such a literate, compelling, and engaging response." Hazen continued: "I hope Bible study groups and Sunday school classes across the country set aside their normal lessons for a few weeks and gather together to study and discuss Wilson's *Letter from a Christian Citizen*."

Whatever their point of view, commentators have agreed that *Letter from a Christian Citizen* is direct, accessible, and engaging, apparently just the sort of counter Harris wanted. When anticipating Christian responses, Harris stated: "It seems to me that they will either have to demonstrate where my arguments fail, or they will have to relinquish many of their religious beliefs. As I say in the book, one of us really must be wrong." Wilson attempts that demonstration, and agrees on the stakes: "I appreciate the fact that Sam is so honest about the implications of our respective positions. If what he believes is true, then I've wasted a lot of time. Most of my life, in fact. If he's wrong, he's wasting all of his."

Wilson, known to many as the founder of modern classical, Christian education, also brings his trademark sense of humor and wit to a dialog that can be known for its shrillness and anger. Reflecting the spirit of Wilson's writing style, one description of *Letter from a Christian Citizen* begins, "In this little volume, Douglas Wilson opens up a can (of beer) on atheism," referring to the book's unusual evangelistic conclusion in which Wilson writes to Harris, "May the Lord call you to Himself, on the basis of this kind gospel. But whether He does this or not, if we ever meet, I would love to buy you a beer." Aaron Rench, Wilson's agent, would like to see that happen. "Who knows," he says, "Maybe we'll find someone who can bring the two of them together to split a pitcher of Guinness. I think the discussion would be lively and genuine, and the beer could make it even more interesting."

The ultimate goal is for *Letter from a Christian Citizen* to deliver the other half of the dialog on the same national scale as Harris' book. "Right now only half of the correspondence is in public view; it's an incomplete conversation," says Gary DeMar, President of American Vision. DeMar believes that Wilson's response provides a model apologetic for Christians. "Doug takes Harris' arguments head on and doesn't back down. The reality is that when you're preaching the truth, there is nothing so threatening as being unthreatened. That's the essence of a successful apologist."

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Douglas Wilson Bio:

Douglas J. Wilson is a Senior Fellow of Theology at New Saint Andrews College, a permanent member of the College's Board of Trustees, and a member of the College's Executive Council. At other colleges, he has taught both ethics and logic. He received a B.A. in Classical Studies, and a B.A. and an M.A. in Philosophy, all at the University of Idaho. He was also a founder of Logos School, a K-12 institution that pioneered the current classical Christian school movement. Today more than three hundred schools around the country (and countless home-schools), model their curriculums on the classical instruction used at Logos.

Wilson is also the editor of *Credenda/Agenda* magazine, a small Trinitarian cultural journal known for its humorous and satirical flavor, and has authored numerous books. These include several titles related to education and worldview: *The Case for Classical Christian Education*, *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning*, *The Paideia of God*, and *Excused Absence: Should Christian Kids Leave Public School?* His works on theology and culture include *Mother Kirk, Reformed is Not Enough*, *Angels in the Architecture* and *To a Thousand Generations*. He has also written *A Serrated Edge: A Brief Defense of Biblical Satire and Trinitarian Skylarking* as well as several children's books and biographies.

Wilson has been the pastor of Christ Church, Moscow, for more than 30 years. He and his wife, Nancy, have three grown children and a bunch of grandchildren, some of whom live in Moscow, and some who currently dally in Oxford, England.