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# America's Four Gods: What We Say About God--And What That Says About Us

By Paul Froese, Christopher Bader



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## America's Four Gods: What We Say About God--And What That Says About Us By Paul Froese, Christopher Bader

Despite all the hype surrounding the "New Atheism," the United States remains one of the most religious nations on Earth. In fact, 95% of Americans believe in God--a level of agreement rarely seen in American life. The greatest divisions in America are not between atheists and believers, or even between people of different faiths. What divides us, this groundbreaking book shows, is how we conceive of God and the role He plays in our daily lives.

*America's Four Gods* draws on the most wide-ranging, comprehensive, and illuminating survey of American's religious beliefs ever conducted to offer a systematic exploration of how Americans view God. Paul Froese and Christopher Bader argue that many of America's most intractable social and political divisions emerge from religious convictions that are deeply held but rarely openly discussed. Drawing upon original survey data from thousands of Americans and a wealth of in-depth interviews from all parts of the country, Froese and Bader trace America's cultural and political diversity to its ultimate source--differing opinions about God. They show that regardless of our religious tradition (or lack thereof), Americans worship four distinct types of God: The Authoritative God--who is both engaged in the world and judgmental; The Benevolent God--who loves and helps us in spite of our failings; The Critical God--who catalogs our sins but does not punish them (at least not in this life); and The Distant God--who stands apart from the world He created. The authors show that these four conceptions of God form the basis of our worldviews and are among the most powerful predictors of how we feel about the most contentious issues in American life.

This updated edition includes a new preface and afterword in which the authors reflect on their goals in writing this book, and explore trends that have developed since the initial publication. *America's Four Gods* provides an invaluable portrait of how we view God and therefore how we view virtually everything else.



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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"*America's Four Gods* is an outstanding exposé on what exactly people mean when they talk about God. It is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand how people think and feel about God."--Andrew Newberg, M.D., author of *Why We Believe What We Believe*

"A tour de force showing what Americans believe about God and how it shapes their behavior. This path-breaking work forces us to move beyond the ill-defined labels of religious liberals and conservatives to understand how images of God move people to action." -- Roger Finke, Professor of Sociology & Religious Studies, Penn State University

#### About the Author

**Paul Froese** is an Associate Professor of Sociology at Baylor University and fellow of the Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion. His book *The Plot to Kill God: Findings from the Soviet Experiment in Secularization* won the 2009 Distinguished Book Award from the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion.

**Christopher Bader** is an Associate Professor of Sociology at Baylor University. He is co-director of the Association of Religion Data Archives.

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