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By Dale Hurd - CBN News
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ATHEISM ASIDE: PETER HITCHENS' JOURNEY TO FAITH LONDON -

One of Britain's most famous journalists and outspoken atheists Peter Hitchens has become a Christian. His new-found faith has led to a very public literary debate with his older brother Christopher, who does not share his brother's belief in God.

Christopher, a very outspoken atheist and an American citizen, has written the book *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*.

In response, Peter, columnist for the *London Mail on Sunday* and a former atheist and Marxist revolutionary, has just written a book titled *The Rage Against God: How Atheism Led Me to Faith*.

The Battling Hitchens Brothers

The siblings, who've been dubbed "The Battling Hitchens brothers," came from a family with a Christian heritage. Their grandfather was a devout Baptist.

"He was a very strict Baptist," Peter told CBN News. "His wife, my paternal grandmother who I never knew, was an Anglican of a Protestant type. It was an extremely religiously conscious household."

Peter said relations between the two brothers are cool. This interview took place before it was announced that Christopher has developed cancer.

"I think it's typical of quite a lot of younger older brother relations. We don't get on particularly well," Peter said, adding that he and Christopher fought often as children.

Peter has suggested that Christopher spends so much time debating and attacking religion that he is actually a "repressed seeker." Christopher, however, has denied the claim.

For all their public dueling, Peter said the two haven't recently spoken privately about faith.

"I don't think I could be bothered to discuss it with him in private, to be honest," Peter said. "I don't think I'd get anything different in private than I get in public."

"I express the hope in the book that he'll stop assuming that religion poisons everything and that everyone who believes in God is stupid," Peter said. "I don't ask for any more."

"There's a difficulty: if you take a public position, a very public position, then you brick yourself up in a tower and it's got arrow slits instead of windows. You can chuck missiles out of it, but you can't get out yourself," Peter observed.

Life as an Atheist

Peter told CBN News that during his time as an atheist, he rarely had doubts about his unbelief.

"Not for a long time. No. We were armored against. We were full of our own righteousness," he explained. "We knew what was right. We knew we were right. We knew we were good. We defined our own goodness."

The former Marxist revolutionary wrote in his book that as an atheist, he didn't have any Christian friends - and didn't want any.

"I wouldn't have wanted any," he said. "I found the whole thing repellent."

"There is a lot of scorn in revolutionary socialism," he explained. "There's a lot of scorn for the people who aren't up for it. There is a lot of scorn for the people who are opposed to it. There's a feeling that you are the vanguard and you know best, and everyone else is ignorant and stupid."

"You see that scorn in the new atheists, in the way they treat their opponents - not with any kind of respect at all," he continued. "They still act as if Christianity is a kind of stupid aberration that only an idiot could follow."

Too Late for Britain?

Although Peter has returned to Christ, Great Britain largely has not. Church attendance is low and atheists have conducted public campaigns against faith. Peter said it may be too late for a revival of Christianity in Britain.

"I'm not allowed to despair, but if I were allowed to, I would," he said. "It's gone a long way. Christianity has been very badly damaged here."

"Huge numbers of people don't know anything about it at all, who don't know the Bible stories, who've never opened a Bible, who don't know the Bible, have never been inside a church, have no conception of what Christianity is or means," he said.

So how does this man of faith feel about having led others to become atheists?

"Obviously you look back on this and you think, 'Well, I've changed my mind, but the other people whom I have influenced have lives of their own and their thoughts have taken on a life of their own,'" he said. "But ultimately because I persuaded them, it's my fault. It's one of those things for which there is no real path back."

Peter's Journey Back to Faith

In his book, Peter said his return to Christianity was a process over many years. He writes about a moment in his journey back to faith when, as an atheist, he genuinely feared God.

It was when he gazed on Rogier van der Weyden's painting "The Last Judgment," which shows the terror on the faces of those condemned to Hell.

"They've obviously just heard the last trump," Peter said. "And one of them was actually vomiting with fright."

"And it just came through that I might be judged. And I was scared. I still am," he revealed. "One of my reasons for my change is that I am scared. But then again, 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.'"