

Ethics of an Atheist

Christopher Hitchens, atheist author and journalist, appeared on CNN's "Anderson Cooper 360°" last night. On the same day of the Rev. Jerry Falwell's death, Hitchens offered these descriptions of Falwell: "ugly little charlatan," "horrible little person" and "evil." Hitchens added to these insults in his exchange with Cooper:

Cooper: Christopher, I'm not sure if you believe in heaven, but if you do, do you think Jerry Falwell is in it?

Hitchens: No. And I think it's a pity there isn't a hell for him to go to.

Cooper: Do you believe he believed what he spoke?

Hitchens: Of course not. He woke up every morning, as I say, pinching his chubby little flanks and thinking, I have got away with it again.

Cooper: You think he was a complete fraud, really?

Hitchens: Yes.

Cooper: You don't think he was sincere in what he spoke?

Hitchens: No. I think he was a conscious charlatan and bully and fraud.

Hitchens: Lots of people are going to die and are already leading miserable lives because of the nonsense preached by this old man, and because of the absurd way that we credit anyone who can say they're a person of faith... The whole life of Falwell shows this is an actual danger to democracy, to culture, to civilization.

Such comments—particularly when made on international television on the same day of a man's death—go far beyond

disagreement and into the realms of rank incivility. This sort of attack should not be surprising, however, coming from Hitchens. It was only this past Sunday, May 13, that Hitchens bared all of his feelings about God to Sean Hannity on the Fox News Channel's "Hannity's America." Hitchens offered viewers this glimpse into his mind:

I say I am an antitheist because I think it would be rather awful if it

[God's existence] was true, if there was a permanent, total, around-the-clock divine supervision and invigilation of everything you did. You would never have a waking or sleeping moment where you weren't being watched and controlled and supervised by some celestial entity, from the moment of conception, well, not even your death. Because it's only after death that the real fun begins, isn't it? It would be like living in North Korea.