

Christian University Student President: 'I'm an Atheist'

The student body president at Northwest Christian University made a shocking announcement last month when he wrote in the university's student publication that he is an atheist.

"My name is Eric Fromm. I am [a] Senior at NCU majoring in communications, and I am an atheist," he wrote in a column titled "Eric Fromm: Lifting the Curtain" for the Beacon Bolt, a student-operated online newspaper for the faith-based Northwest Christian University in Eugene, Ore.

"Yes, you read that correctly, I am an atheist," he continued. "For those of you who didn't already know about my nonbelief, this news may be a bit shocking, but I was an atheist long before I came to NCU."

Fromm then explained that he was baptized Lutheran and raised in the Methodist church, but he eventually decided "that God wasn't real."

"For me, church was an empty ritual that I participated in so I could see friends, scripture was largely mythological, and Jesus was a great moral teacher, but he wasn't God," he said.

The 21-year-old said he enrolled at Northwest Christian University because of its communications program.

"I knew that the school catered to Christian thinking, so before I enrolled, I visited the campus to make sure that the chapel services were comfortable enough that I could fulfill the requirement," he wrote. "No one was speaking in tongues or handling snakes, so I decided to stay."

Despite Fromm's controversial confession, Michael Fuller, the university's vice president for enrollment and student

development, says he already knew of Fromm's disbelief and didn't question his election as student body president.

"He's a man of very high character and respect," Fuller told the *Eugene Register Guard*, *The Washington Post* reports.

"If we all had our wishes, we wish Eric would be a strong Christian man," Fuller said. But, he added, "We're an open and welcome community, and we meet students exactly where they're at."

In Fromm's column, co-written by the Beacon Bolt student editor Brandon McGinnis, Fromm shares that he kept his nonbelief a secret until he was a sophomore. He says that once people started to find out, he was treated differently.

"Sometimes they would verbally attack me, sometimes they would give me the cold shoulder, and sometimes they just gave me dirty looks," he wrote. "I find it ironic that some NCU students will talk about how they were ridiculed in high school ... for their faith, but now, when the roles are reversed, they are doing the very things that hurt them. Matthew 7:5, right?"

He added, "Every day I'm burdened by the fact that my peers might reject me because I'm different from them. I won't be rejected because of my race or social class, but simply because of the fact that I don't believe in God—because I am an atheist.

"I'm writing this primarily because I don't want to keep my atheism a secret any longer, but I'm also writing this because I want to take my peers to task on their inability to accept those who don't fit their Christian pattern. Growing up in church I heard a lot of lessons about how Christians shouldn't judge others, but it seems like some people slept through that lesson."

Fromm ended his column by inviting questions or comments and

included his student email address.