

# Everyone's Real Religion

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I once talked with a young man at an airport. He was pleasant and amiable but was one of those *I embrace the best of all religions* types. He explained, as I began to talk with him, that he didn't strongly believe any one religion and that they all had some value. He said he wasn't dogmatic - basically he was cool.

I told him that I knew he really did believe in one religion more than any other. That this was the reason he did not believe strongly in any of the religions he had mentioned earlier in our conversation, i.e., Christianity, Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism. He looked really surprised but assured me that he had no secret religion governing his life. He was a tolerant man. I told him pleasantly but plainly that I could prove to him that he did indeed have a religion that governed all of his thinking!

At this point what had been a "*hey whatever*" conversation changed. He became quite intrigued and really wanted to know what I meant. To give him credit he really was as open minded as he said and very pleasant. I continued that of course we knew the aforementioned religions could not be literally true because science had proven them wrong. He agreed. I pointed out that really evolution had proven all religions wrong in one way or another. He calmly agreed again as though I was telling him the earth was a globe.

He thought that all of this was some build up to the revealing of his secret religion - not realising that we were already on to it. I then pointed out that evolution was at best wild conjecture. I explained how natural selection happened all around us but that this was not evolution but rather extinction in action. I said several more things about evolution generally being scientifically unsound.

I explained to him that his real religion was his belief in evolution and that this governed all his other views. He stared at me speechless and looked visibly shaken. He openly

admitted that I was right about his *real religion* and that he had never realised how he had been a believer all that time. He promised to reconsider his beliefs. Right then he had to leave for his plane. I left him in the company of his Christian Mum, who hadn't been able to get through to him for years...

Everyone has presuppositions that govern what they believe. Many people present themselves as having a particular view or belief but when you question them you find a very different story. Take the famous Richard Dawkins for example...

Richard Dawkins is a Biological Theorist, a famous atheist and recently retired from a role as a Professor at Cambridge in which he was tasked with promoting the public understanding of science. His books have sold millions and he is a popular public speaker. Many people don't like Dawkins and find him too brash in his relentless criticism of religion. Dawkins preaches evolution and naturally Bible believing Creationists are his favourite enemies. He has said "*In order not to believe in evolution you must either be ignorant, stupid or insane.*"

In the light of such overwhelming evidence you might think it is safe to say that Dawkins is an evolution believing atheist. Actually he isn't. If Dawkins isn't really an atheist what is he!? Dawkins is what most more knowledgeable atheists are...

In the documentary film *Expelled*, Richard Dawkins is interviewed towards the end of the film by its star and producer Ben Stein. Stein asks Dawkins if he believes in God or indeed in any kind of god. Dawkins is irritated and asks Ben why he is even asking him this and affirms no. The questions roll on and (you really have to watch it to believe it) Dawkins admits that the evidence for intelligent design in living things is so overwhelming that they may not have evolved from scratch as previously thought. When pressed as to how they therefore may have come about he plainly says that an alien spaceship may have flown by and dropped a few bits off somehow seeding the mechanisms for intelligent life on Earth; The premise being that living cells are so intricately complicated that they look less and less likely to have simply popped into existence on their own. In other words, Dawkins does not

firmly believe in the spontaneous generation of life on Earth – the foundation of all evolution.

Dawkins also talks in the film about the Bible. He agrees with Stein when he quotes from his recent book *The God Delusion* that he has said God is: "*the most unpleasant character... a misogynist, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic and capriciously malevolent bully.*" Why would he say these things? Mr Dawkins is morally outraged at what he perceives as a great injustice, namely the absurdity of an all powerful loving God, actively allowing rampant suffering. So what then is Dawkins?

Dawkins is an outraged moralist. Watching him talk in the film *Expelled* it is clear that he will believe in anything but God, not because of scientific fact but because of moral outrage. This is actually a huge contradiction. After all, who said God was supposed to be nice anyway? Muslims don't have a big problem with the existence of God after an earthquake – only Christians do, since our presuppositions are that God is both loving and all powerful.

In a nutshell Dawkins doesn't believe in God because he doesn't like Him. Dawkin's real religion is: *God can't exist because he isn't nice enough.*

Dawkins has only ever heard the traditional *God is sovereign* evangelical theology that explains all suffering as God justly allowing it to continue even though He could stop it - because it wasn't His fault in the first place OR God is good and wants you to prosper so send me your best offering now because God spoke to me and told me the first 47 people to send me \$500 will have an amazing breakthrough... (yes of course God wants you to meaningfully prosper but that's not the way to do so).

Unsurprisingly these are the kind of reasons that most atheists don't believe in God.

So while you are sat there explaining patiently how Natural Selection is not Evolution and asking your friend "so where are the missing links?" or recounting how your Auntie Betty was

miraculously healed of cancer. Your atheist friend may not be listening at all, instead he is thinking about how can he embrace a God who still made everything when He knew it would all go wrong and how is he going to look associated with “send your best offering now” lottery breakthrough preachers.

Until you deal with the core presuppositions that people have about what church or God is like you will struggle to reach them with the gospel. The result is that many people only respond to the gospel when they are desperate or young and open minded. Churches may have great images and branding, hence they get a lot of younger adults attending. Unfortunately statistics show that as these people move up the career ladder their branding loyalty drifts. Branding loyalty, i.e. me and my church, my family, my home type of thing (which is really important and I absolutely agree with it) does not deal with the core of someone's beliefs. In the final analysis it's what people believe that governs the major choices they make in life not what attracts them for a little while.

People's presuppositions have to be dealt with first. Whether it is to bring them to a first time decision to make Jesus their Lord or to keep them serving God meaningfully for more than a couple of years. Otherwise almost half of all church attendees stop going to a church and remain at home, still wholeheartedly believing in God but with too many unanswered questions to get them off the sofa. In short, nothing that dealt with their real religion, or their presuppositions. They were not ready to move forward into something because they had already prejudged it as invalid in one way or another.

How do you deal with that? Deal with their presuppositions first. Answer their questions biblically and they will be morally, intellectually and emotionally satisfied. Answer them with standard pat answers about submission and how suffering is a mystery of God and guess what? – they're already gone.