

In most Christian nations, people do Christmas to celebrate the birth of Jesus. For the Jews, there have Hanukkah which is a celebration that honors the rededication of the Temple of Jerusalem. Amongst Hindus, there's Diwali, the festival of lights related to the goddess of prosperity, Lakshmi. In Muslim nations, the people there observe Ramadan, the holy month of fasting.

Across the world, people believe in one god or numerous, and religious ceremonies like those are expressions of this belief. Religion, and the belief in God, obviously have a significant role to play in peoples' lives.

However, according to Richard Dawkins, a well-known evolutionary biologist and outspoken atheist, religion and the belief in God go in the garbage can of history. By using the principles of scientific investigation to religious beliefs and practices, Dawkins opposes a lot of the popular opinions religions make based on their faith.

Chapter 1 - Faith is a coincidence of birth, not a concrete motive to have faith in God.

God is really an amazing being. He sees all, knows all and all-powerful. God is the superhero of superheroes. Nothing and nobody competes with his incredible abilities.

This omnipotent, omniscient being is the God of the three key monotheistic religions of the modern-day– Judaism, Christianity and Islam. However, there's an issue. If this God is really amazing, really powerful, and really unique, how is it possible that he's only one among several? As a matter of fact, just one among thousands.

That's correct. There are a lot of gods except the God of the key monotheistic religions. All through history, Thousands of gods have been prayed to and into the current day. For example, the Vikings were polytheists – they believed in various gods. Wotan was their main god; however, they had other gods like Thor, the thunder god who held a hammer, and Snotra, the goddess of wisdom. The Greek gods and goddesses comprised Zeus, the king of the gods, Aphrodite, goddess of love, and Poseidon, the god of the sea.

All the same, if we combine all the Greek and Viking gods together with the Muslim, Jewish, and Christian God, they'd still add to only a small portion of the gods that humans and their entire religions have worshipped all through history. Even the number of gods only committed to the sun is vast: A lot of native African religions have sun gods like Anywanwu, Mawu, and Ngai. Australian aboriginal sun gods comprise of Bila, Wala, and Karruar.

However, regardless of the various gods that are available, the gods that people worship and the religions in which they follow is determined more on the time and place they were born than any other thing. Why is this important? This is because this entails that your own faith is probably a result of the time and place you were born. If you'd been given birth to during the time of the Viking, you would have believed in Wotan and Thor. If you'd been born in Australia to an aboriginal family, you would most likely have believed in sun gods like Bila or Wala.

If there are really a lot of religions and really a lot of gods, how can you be certain that your religion or god is the one real one? Definitely, you can't tell. If all the other religions are wrong, what makes you sure that your particular religion and scripture isn't wrong as well?

As a matter of fact, the holy books of the greatest dominant monotheistic religions nowadays are wrong. Certainly, the roots of these books raise a lot of uncertainty about the accuracy of their contents.

Chapter 2 - The Bible, as well as other holy books, isn't correct; therefore, there's no cause to trust anything written in them.

Have you ever played a game called "Telephone?" A lot of people stand in a row. The person at an end murmurs a story to the next person standing near her, then that person does the same to the one next to him. It continues like this until the story gets to the other end of the line and the last person says what she heard to the entire group. Regularly than not, the story has changed a lot along the way.

A lot of the holy books – as well as the Bible – happened through a “Telephone” effect. The stories they say were given through word-of-mouth storytelling over decades and occasionally even centuries before they were eventually written down, making them really untrustworthy.

Let’s consider the New Testament, which consists of the core of the Christian Bible. It has the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. There was a really long space between the death of Jesus and these gospels were written down. As a matter of fact, the oldest of the gospels, Mark, was written down 35-40 years after the death of Jesus. Consider how a lot of things could have altered after four decades of “Telephone”!

And this is only the New Testament. The Old Testament – the sections of the Bible that originated from the Tanakh, the holy book of Judaism – is alike untrustworthy. A lot the Old Testament was written down centuries – that’s correct, centuries – after the events detailed in the text.

Also, there’s no archeological or historical proof to approve a lot of the key incidences that the Old Testament tells as real. One of the main incidences in the Old Testament, definitely, is the imprisonment of the Jewish people in Egypt. You’d wonder that if a whole nation of people were held captive in ancient Egypt, there should be some kind of a trace of it. Still, not a single piece of proof has been discovered to prove or even suggest that such captivity ever happened.

Other minor anachronisms and errors in the Bible also propose that these holy books can’t be considered as truth. For example, in the Old Testament, it was written that the prophet Abraham owned camels. But, we understand from archeological proof that camels weren’t domesticated until a lot of centuries after Abraham was thought to have lived.

Obviously, the Bible and other holy books can’t be reckoned on when we talk of historical facts. Therefore, why should we believe them when we talk about the existence of God?

**Chapter 3 - The God of the Bible is a jealous, fierce God;
therefore you shouldn’t depend on him for moral guidance.**

Think of yourself as a kid, getting home from school. You see your dad waiting. He happily proposes that you both light a bonfire together. You love bonfires; therefore you agreed and eagerly follow him outside. However, once the firewood is set, something bad occurs. Your dad takes you and throws you on top of the firewood. Apparently, he wants to barbecue you – since God commanded him to do so.

That's basically the biblical story of Abraham's close-sacrifice of his son. If you were that kid that was close to being sacrificed, would you consider God was good? Maybe not. A God who can consider of no other method to test his subjects' faithfulness except to have them sacrifice their own children is really cruel.

Definitely, in Abraham's situation, God intervened at the really last minute and released him from sacrificing his son. However, don't see that as a proof of God's mercy, because God isn't really kind all the time

Let's look at the story of Jephthah, whose story was told in the Book of Judges in the Old Testament. Jephthah was an Israelite general who really wanted a win over his opponents. He promised that if God helped him conquer his opponents, he'd sacrifice anyone or whatever he first encountered when he got home.

Jephthah conquered his enemies. When he arrived home to celebrate, who should first meet him but his beautiful daughter? With fear, Jephthah understood that for him to keep his promise to God, he had to sacrifice her. God didn't intervene to prevent him, and poor Jephthah's daughter was destined to die.

Not only does the God of the Bible regularly try to test his followers' loyalty in unkind means and also puts extreme and violent punishment on innocents.

For example, the books of Joshua and Judges in the Old Testament talks about the Israelite campaigns to take charge of the Promised Land, the region we now know as Israel. This region was home to a lot of tribes, which God told the Israelites to destroy. For example, according to the Bible, God told the Israelites to terminate the Amalekites – one of the people that was staying there– not only by killing men and women, however, also killing children and infants, particularly boys. Virgin girls were to be held as concubines.

In present terms, God's commands for sexual assault and the killing of innocents would be considered war crimes. Therefore, perhaps we should look at another place for an ethical role model.

Chapter 4 - Holy books can't teach us how to be moral since morality evolves with time.

Not really long ago, people could possess other people. They could go to a market, pay money, and go back home with a slave, a person whose life they had total power on.

Thank goodness slavery has been eliminated since it's a morally wrong act. However, slaves aren't just the only people who have historically been deprived of their rights. For instance, Women, have also had really limited rights until lately. For example, in Britain, it was just in 1928 that women got voting rights the same as those of men. The women of Swiss were just given those rights in 1971. Some nations like Saudi Arabia, have only allowed women this basic democratic right in the last few years.

A lot of the harassment of women and other marginalized people have experienced has been justified by religion. The reason is that holy books regularly present really problematic opinions of specific groups of people. The Tenth Commandment of the Bible, "Thou shalt not covet," includes a man's wife and his servants as part of his properties, like his ox and house. The Quran also sees women as less than men – a huge cause of why women's rights are strictly curtailed in orthodox Muslim nations such as Saudi Arabia even till now.

The disgust against slavery that we experience presently, and our acceptance of women's rights, is a case of how social morals have evolved. Our morals aren't still – they change and develop. If we were to abide by the moral guidance and principles of holy books such as the Bible and the Quran, we would be murdering innocent children and considering women like property. Even though some of the awful things still happen, there's now general agreement that such type of acts is morally wrong.

Certainly, we can blame holy books partially for the violence that has happened in the world., The Nazi leader of Germany during World War II Adolf Hitler, was really successful in carrying out the Holocaust – the genocide of 6 million Jews in Europe – partially because he built on centuries of anti-Semitic prejudice embedded in the hearts of German Catholics and Protestants, prejudice gotten from the story of Judas' betrayal of Jesus in the Bible.

Texts with such awful prejudice in them have nothing to teach us on morality. If we need to have morals, just our human faculties which are our reason and empathy – can direct us.

Chapter 5 - Living creatures aren't made from the top down, by God; however, from the bottom up, by DNA.

If you want to construct a house, you sketch out blueprints. Then you employ construction workers who will build the house to your taste.

Building a house in this manner is an illustration of top-down design. Also, this is how a lot of people consider God: a top-down architect in the sky who created the world underneath.

However, another method to construct a house is from the bottom up. Consider a termite mound. It's a remarkably difficult structure – all those chimney-shape protrusions and dollops of mud are pretty something.

When termites make such a mound, there isn't another termite master architect checking her architectural plans and telling the other termite workers how to do things. Instead, each termite works on its own, following simple guidelines such as, "If encounter a pointy cone of mud, add another dollop on top of it."

Nevertheless, the final outcome is a very complex, stylish structure that rivals even the most difficult human architectural designs. When a structure appears like this, without a pre-defined plan, however with each one contributor and component following simple guidelines – it's known as bottom-up design.

Just like termite mounds, living creatures appeared through bottom-up design. Regardless of what the holy books tell us, no God sitting in the sky created you and the world that surrounds you. Instead, you and all other living organisms originated from the bottom-up work of DNA.

So what is DNA? It's a code that consists of molecules, one that offers guidelines for creating any living organism. DNA transfers information from parents to their offspring. Your genes – the molecular units you get from your parents – consists of DNA.

Embryonic development is a bottom-up process caused by DNA. How is that so? That is, you began as a fertilized egg –a single cell inside your mom's uterus. This single-cell divides in two. Each of these cells divides into two. Then these four cells divide into eight, and it continues. Meaning, those first cells at the start of your life were each following one simple DNA instruction: "Divide!"

It's this early cell- division which ultimately led to the baby form of you. Definitely, this is only the fundamentals of the process. However, what is saying is that there was no master plan for a baby you. Only a group of cells following simple instructions.

Chapter 6 - Living creatures adjust to their surroundings and grow through the process of evolution.

When you get cold, you wear a warm sweater, right? When you're hot, you'll remove some layers to cool down. You adjust depending on the environments that you encounter.

Similarly, in nature, living creatures adjust to their surroundings. The manner that these organisms adjust is essential. Why? Because it signifies evolutionary history.

Let's use fish as an example. Some species of flat-bodied fish live wholly on the seafloor, but there are two kinds of flat bodies. One stays parallel to the seafloor with the belly facing downwards. Skates and rays, two species of fish, have that type of flat bodies.

However, other species of fish, like plaice, sole, and flounder, look really different. Their flat bodies position the other direction, positioning them perpendicular to the seafloor. When these fish's ancestors started living on the seafloor, placing their bodies this manner showed a practical issue: one of their eyes ended up facing the ground.

Therefore, how did they endure? With time, their bodies adjusted to their new bottom-of-the-sea existence and surrounding, forming distorted, twisted skulls that enabled both eyes to look upwards. The differences between these species of fish show that these animals are the result of evolution. Evolution is a process that was first defined by the naturalist Charles Darwin in the mid-1800s, one in which one type of organism will grow and evolve into another over thousands and millions of years.

Flounder, plaice, and sole originated from fish ancestors that swam upright. We understand this because the structure of their bodies, as well as their distorted skulls, shows this process of evolution.

While Skates and rays developed from fish ancestors who swam flat, such as sharks. This is the reason why they're much more sophisticated-looking fish than plaice, sole, and flounder: they didn't have the issue of having to move one eye to the other side of their heads – their eyes were already positioned in the correct position.

The manner in which living creatures have adjusted to their surrounded shows that these creatures are the result of evolution, not the intelligent plan of a god.

Chapter 7 - Natural selection, which is the source of evolution, describes the improbability of living things.

We've all watched those wildlife documentaries that display cheetah hunting. It's hypnotizing to see the remarkable power and beauty of the big cat running after its prey.

When we look at an animal like a cheetah, we are likely to assume that an "intelligent designer" – a euphemism for God – must have created it. Why? Because a creature as difficult as a

cheetah couldn't have just occurred. All creatures – even simple ones such as bacteria – are really improbable.

Let's look at that cheetah. If we were to attempt to make or even just develop a cheetah by randomly scrambling different parts of the body, we'd really mess up. We might eventually end up with a cheetah that has four legs on one part of its body. Or a cheetah that has teeth in its backside instead of its mouth.

What clarifies the improbable being of the cheetah then, unless God? Natural selection, that Charles Darwin suggested as the cause for evolution.

Scrambling a cheetah at random would end up with a terrible outcome. However, what if just a teeny-tiny aspect of the cheetah evolved at a time? Assume a separate cheetah cub is born with a little longer claws than its parents. It's a random change, and really small that we still have something we identify as a correct cheetah.

How did this cheetah cub get these little longer claws initially? A cheetah cub just like every other animal or person gets its genes from its parents. However, over time, one gene in a baby evolves at random. Meaning, a gene mutates. The process of mutation is random, and it doesn't really improve things. As a matter of fact, the majority of mutant genes only make things worse.

However, some mutant genes – for instance that gene that extended the cheetah cub's claws – make things better. That mutant gene offers that cheetah cub an advantage; since it has a better hold on the ground, it can run a bit faster after prey. Due to this edge, this cheetah is more probably to live and to have cubs of its own, in which it can transfer this mutant gene to that will also help its cub survive.

This is the process that Darwin named natural selection. Animals or organisms with mutant genes that have an advantage to their survival are more likely to survive and transfer these genes to their offspring.

Therefore, don't give God praise for those improbable cheetahs. Rather, thank mutant genes.

Chapter 8 - Our tendency towards superstition and religion is probably a result of evolution.

Let's assume that you're an early human out on the African grasslands. You're really making progress digging up a root for dinner when unexpectedly, you hear the grass ripple. It could possibly be the wind – however, it could also be a prowling predator.

What are you probably going to do in such a condition? Maybe mistake on the side of caution and run off in a dash! Even though there was no lion prowling in the grass, it was good for you to believe that there was; a common belief that strange movements or sounds possibly signify danger and that could save your life.

The tendency to identify patterns like “mysterious movement in the grass possibly signifies predator” assisted our ancestors to survive threats. Since it was beneficial to our survival, this tendency was passed down from generation to generation through the process of natural selection.

Superstition and religion perhaps occurred as an accidental result of this evolutionary tendency. Similar to how our ancestors changed to find signs that indicated danger, they also unintentionally ended up discovering patterns where there was nothing.

For example, during the early days of human society, parents with an ill baby might have observed that their child got better only after they killed a bull. These humans, naturally tending to find patterns, assumed that the bull's killing is related to their child's recovery. Therefore, they started sacrificing a bull anytime one of their children fell ill. That's the start of a superstitious practice. Superstitious practices like sacrifice and even prayer – practices intended to offer divine intervention somehow– are the foundation of religion.

It's not only humans who form superstitious practices, but pigeons also do as well. The psychologist B. F. Skinner conducted an experiment where he put eight pigeons in different boxes. An apparatus feeds the pigeons randomly and occasionally.

Six out of the eight birds grew superstitious practices. One bird constantly shoves its head up. Another bird constantly made pecking movements. A third kept walking around. Each bird had

maybe made that certain movement just before their feed came. Even though there was no connection, each bird linked that single movement with the food, and developed superstitious act as a way of stirring more food to come.

Pigeons are pigeon-brained –that is the reason they adopt superstitious practices. While humans are really complicated, intelligent creatures. This is the reason why it's time for us to leave God and superstition once and for all.

Outgrowing God: A Beginner's Guide by Richard Dawkins

Book Review

We shouldn't trust in God since evidence proposes he doesn't occur. Not just that, he's really far from an ethical role model whose pattern we should trail. Our trend to trust in God occurred because we developed to be superstitious. As a matter of fact, it's evolution that describes the entire living complexity of the world, and humans are a major specimen of evolution. Although superstition may have assisted our ancestors to challenge the threats of the wild, we've now developed minds difficult enough to identify the divine for what it really is– a false delusion.

Believe in science.

When you encounter a gap in your understanding, believe that science will offer the solution. For example, even if the scientific evidence for evolution is really unquestionable, you may think of how the process of evolution began initially. Rather than assuming that God began the process, think of it that it's really likely that the answer is somewhere else – in the laws of biology, physics, and chemistry. Nevertheless, these laws have already clarified a lot about the mysteries of our existence – as well as how we developed from single-celled organisms. Therefore, it's only a matter of time before science explains the remaining unanswered questions.

<https://goodbooksummary.com/outgrowing-god-by-richard-dawkins-book-summary/>

