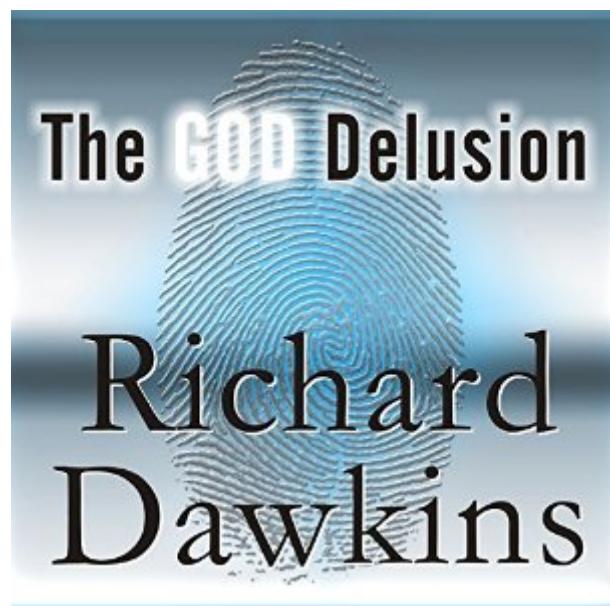


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The God Delusion



Synopsis

A preeminent scientist -- and the world's most prominent atheist -- asserts the irrationality of belief in God and the grievous harm religion has inflicted on society, from the Crusades to 9/11. With rigor and wit, Dawkins examines God in all his forms, from the sex-obsessed tyrant of the Old Testament to the more benign (but still illogical) Celestial Watchmaker favored by some Enlightenment thinkers. He eviscerates the major arguments for religion and demonstrates the supreme improbability of a supreme being. He shows how religion fuels war, foments bigotry, and abuses children, buttressing his points with historical and contemporary evidence. The God Delusion makes a compelling case that belief in God is not just wrong but potentially deadly. It also offers exhilarating insight into the advantages of atheism to the individual and society, not the least of which is a clearer, truer appreciation of the universe's wonders than any faith could ever muster.

--This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I read numerous reviews before I bought this book. Because of the controversial nature of the topic I was very interested in the perspective of the reviewer. Often this perspective was easy to guess but not always. So to make this review more valuable to the reader I would like to state my background first. I am a 50 year old active Catholic who has slowly become disillusioned by religion starting as a child when told my Protestant friend would not go to heaven. For years I existed on "faith" since I personally could find no evidence that God existed. As a Catholic there is also a good helping of "guilt" for good measure. I am also a very strong Constitutionalist and believe that the only way to get along is to have freedom of and freedom from religion. With the recent surge of religious

fundamentalism and its effects on politics I have become increasingly concerned about what Dawkins calls the American Taliban and the push for a Christian Theocracy. This actually scares me more than Al-Qaida. The words "Faith" and "Belief" have been morphed into the word "Truth". This new "Truth" has caused me to do a lot of searching for answers for what really is true. Richard Dawkins book was extremely helpful and was the first book I have read on the Atheist side of the fence. I found Chapters 1 through 4 and 7 through 9 easy to read. Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 10 were more scientific and a hard read for the average person. I actually needed a dictionary at my side to get through those chapters. I particularly liked the section in Chapter 3 on Pascal's Wager which I had mistakenly credited to Einstein in the past. What I had found so interesting is that he expressed ideas that I had been developing in my brain for years, but did not feel free to discuss with others. (although he can state them more eloquently than I can). The result is that I have been pushed from a 5 to a 6 on his scale of belief. The book is not only preaching to the Atheist choir, but to all those who are truly open minded enough to form their own opinions about God and religion. If you are in this category it is certainly worth purchasing. Previous reviews stated that Dawkins was mean spirited and blamed religion for social evils. I did not find this to be the case, and I found that he was as fair minded as someone who believes as he does can be.

I've just finished reading the 141 reviews above mine, and I think they're utterly fascinating--almost as interesting as the book. And the scores--the numbers who find each review helpful--are equally remarkable. Some reviewers, delighted to find their opinions supported by Dawkins, use the opportunity to bask in their superior intellects and display their generous contempt for those who disagree. Other reviewers feel personally attacked by this book, fending it off as best they can so they can retain their illusions, which are obviously valuable and meaningful to them. Actually, you don't even have to read the reviews to see which is which. Just look at the numbers. If you see very few finding the review useful, you'll know the review was written by someone opposing Dawkins' ideas. And if the majority find the review helpful, that means it agrees with Dawkins. This tells me that most of the people who are bothering to read the reviews are already pro-Dawkins--and it bodes ill for his hopes that his book will convert the believers. It won't convert many believers, not because it is wrong--it isn't--and not because it isn't well-written--it is--but because whatever else you can say about faith, it isn't easily extinguished. For those who have it, it is the only life raft on a limitless ocean. Those who don't have learned how to swim, or plan to. The most annoying reviewers, from my point of view, are those whose remarks demonstrate they haven't read the book (such as the fellow who insists Einstein was a believer), or those who feel Dawkins doesn't have the

Biblical knowledge to back up his conclusions. He doesn't need any Biblical knowledge. None of us do, when it comes to the question of belief. Memorizing the Bible neither adds nor subtracts from our ability to feel faith. And that's the bottom line for me. I am unable to accept an assertion of any kind supported by nothing more than faith. I need some kind of truth, some kind of evidence. There are or might be moments when I am jealous of those capable of faith. I would love to believe, when a loved one dies, that he or she is going to a better place and that we'll meet again some day. What a lovely, comforting thought. Would that it were true, or that I could believe it. But I don't--and it makes this life and every moment in it more valuable to me. I once asked myself how a person totally unfamiliar with religion, might choose among the world's offerings, might decide to adopt one of the world's thousands of religions. I could find no way. They all claim they're right and all the other religions are wrong. But are any of them right? Now I'm thinking similar thoughts about God. I saw a website recently that compiled the names of all of the gods, worldwide and throughout history. They found 3800 different gods or supernatural beings. If I were inclined to believe, which one would I choose and why? Dawkins points out that we're all atheists. We don't believe in Amon-re, Zeus, Thor, Apollo, Odin, etc., etc., etc. He just goes one god further.

Many have criticized this book for not speaking in a voice that could influence religious fundamentalists away from their delusion. There is no way the topic can be discussed that would have any hope of doing this. It would be akin to writing a book that through gentle persuasion would reason a paranoid out of his delusions. Ain't going to happen. I believe the intended audience is those who already have grave doubts, and are looking for a well reasoned examination of the issue. I was impressed by the simple and straightforward approach to resolving a basic question: "since we can't know for sure if God exists, shouldn't we all be agnostics?" I also enjoyed his definition of a pantheist (I'll leave that for the reader to discover). The opening sections on Einstein and his "religious" beliefs, and a general discussion of pantheism and deism are worth the price of the book just by themselves. As an aside -- those reviewers who cite Einstein's religious conversion away from atheism have clearly not read even this much of the book. Written with great humor and wonderful quotations -- I am sure there is something here to offend just about everyone -- but also with great courage and forthrightness.

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