

## The Rise of the Non-religious

To be sure, statistics reveal that religious believers are getting less and less these days. In the census of 2016, 30.1% of Australians stated "no religion" and a further 9.6% chose not to answer the question. This meant a rise of about ten per cent in the category of "no religion," compared with the previous census. This represents a very clear trend. Similar statistics are coming up in Europe. If we add the 9.6 per cent, the figure would be formidable indeed. European countries have experienced a decline in church membership and church attendance. A relevant example of ongoing trend is Sweden where the church of Sweden, previously the state-church until 2000, claimed to have 82.9% of the Swedish population as its flock in 2000. Surveys showed this had dropped to 72.9% by 2008[7] and 61.2% by 2016. Moreover, in the 2005 Eurobarometer survey 23%[9]

fought on religious differences. Violence has emerged even in Buddhist countries like Myanmar and Sri Lanka. Hinduism and Buddhism, being based on rebirth theory would also find it uncomfortable to sustain itself against the Darwin bombshell. There has been no evidence in modern biology for a substance that survives and transcends a dead body.

Yet, religion still holds in a most significant way despite the obvious red warning in Western statistics. The "why," answer is most complex. In the space we have we may put down a few of the possible reasons that cause religion

Not a Rational Assessment of Content Try answering the question: Before you cast your choice in your religion-what-ever that religion may be- did you ever make a study of the teachings? Did you ever compare the teachings of alternative religious choice? Did you ever study issues like the existence of a

had no opportunity to think the fundamentals independently. Our inherited religion becomes the normal thing. Other religions are false or funny or both. The great divide between "us," and "they," got crystallised to the detriment of the human family. "They," will go to hell and burn there. "We," are the chosen people. Professor Richard Dawkins in his classic, "The God Delusion," suggested that if a person who is now a staunch Christian had been born into a family in Afghanistan he would probably have ended up a Jihadi. It so happens depending on where one is born.

book, "Religion Explained (2001)" Pascal Boyer lists many of these non-relevant causes of religion. Says Boyd, "functional elements of religion can remain fully operational even if the underlying belief system contains serious flaws."

## Some Attractive Contents of Religion

We would, however, not be doing justice to the dogma of religion if we rule out completely the attraction in content. Some common contents of religion do attract the ordinary, unsophisticated mind. There is, the idea of after life referred to above. One finds it psychologically unsatisfactory to accept the position of one's terminally at death. One likes to feel that life will continue and that this isn't all there is. This feel is the antidote to the fear of dying. "It cannot be," we think. "I will do good here and ensure a berth in heaven or in a better samsaric existence." This feeling of our continuance into better states in an after life does naturally attract many faithfuls. Then, there is the sense of justice in us: We feel that we will get a more deserving deal in the next lifer that our sworn enemies will get their desserts in the next life. What goes around will come around.

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# WHAT CAUSES RELIGION?

of the Swedish population said that they don't believe there is any sort of spirit, God or life force and in the 2010 Eurobarometer survey 34%[1] said the same.

## Darwin's Prediction

When he launched his theory of evolution by natural selection over 200 years ago, Charles Darwin was reluctant to make a big hue and cry over this phenomenal discovery. This was because he would cause pain to those of his family and friends who were around him and also because of the likelihood of church oppression. He, however, predicted that this exposure of the lie of creation will gradually dawn in the minds of the populace as time unfolds and technol-

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ogy unfolds. This is, perhaps, what is happening today. The brutal fact is that evolution by natural selection totally undermines creation by a God and uproots Christianity, Islam, and other creation-based religions.

## Religion still holds

Despite the bombshell of Darwin why does creation- religions still hold? This question should occur to any thinking person. Islam is on the rise and its extreme manifestation of violence-prone, intolerance -prone fundamental Islamic cults threatens the lives and peace of others. Christian evangelists still preach creation theories in America. Wars continue to be

soul, a God, a heaven or hell, a 'something other than soul' that passes onto another womb? A samsaric cycle? I am sure you did not. At least not in the case of the vast majority of religion-bound individuals. Then what caused you and causes you to believe?

## Inheritance

The most dominant cause is inheritance. You and I inherited our religions from the family we were born into. In my case, I had the advantage of a mixed marriage-family that made me ponder at the time. Many others have not had that potential openness in mental windows. The vast majority of the religious simply inherited their religion from family and society. Their societies fostered the inherited legacy. Their schools firmed the ideas and continued the brain-washing procedure. Sunday schools and Daham Pasal solidified the inherited belief basket adding myth to the authentic doctrines. In this way, we

Shouldn't this make you realise that your religion isn't a big deal.

Your Religion Serves Other Functions Another very significant factor is that religion serves important non-religious functions. It gives one a strong sense of identity and support base. You are not alone but in a group. Human beings are social animals-after all. Affiliation to a particular religion and to the attendant emotional package can empower you and give you a sense of self-worth. The sectarian strifes between Sufis and Sunnis of the Islam religion, the strife in Northern Ireland, the phenomenon of Sinhala Buddhism in Sri Lanka are just a few of so many examples. The growth of cults is another example. In this way religion serves social functions and fosters ego needs. It helps people to get out of loneliness and to cope with depression etc. The latter are all factors irrelevant to actual doctrinal content. There is no appraisal of the pros or cons of the theological dogmas. In his

