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Merry Christmas, Dear Atheist

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Richard Dawkins appears quite comfortable with his status as the world's most influential apostle of atheism. He can rest his atheist laurels on the reputation of his best-selling book, *The God Delusion*, and his incessant advocacy of atheism in the media worldwide. To date, Professor Dawkins has demonstrated a take-no-prisoners approach to pressing his case, arguing that parents who inculcate religious beliefs within their own children are guilty of a form of child abuse.

And yet, it seems that Dawkins now wants to call himself a "cultural Christian." The [BBC](#) [British Broadcasting Corporation] [reports](#) that Dawkins now wants the traditions of cultural Christianity and plans to sing Christmas carols this season "along with everybody else." Now, why would an atheist want to sing Christmas carols?

The BBC reports that Professor Dawkins' comments came in response to accusations by a Member of Parliament that the nation was avoiding references to Christmas due to political correctness.

From the [BBC report](#):

Prof Dawkins, who has frequently spoken out against creationism and religious fundamentalism, replied: "I'm not one of those who wants to stop Christian traditions.

"This is historically a Christian country. I'm a cultural Christian in the same way many of my friends call themselves cultural Jews or cultural Muslims.

"So, yes, I like singing carols along with everybody else. I'm not one of those who wants to purge our society of our Christian history.

"If there's any threat these sorts of things, I think you will find it comes from rival religions and not from atheists."

The thought of Richard Dawkins singing any carols with explicit Christian content is difficult to hold — unless the Oxford professor intends to sing of a faith he does not profess.

Dawkins expanded on those comments in an article published December 13, 2007 by [The New Statesman](#). In this article Dawkins explains that Christmas is a part of his nation's history and culture, and thus to be acknowledged, if not celebrated, by all.

He even threw some barbs toward the United States, suggesting that political correctness and a fear of offending anyone's sensitivities was leading to a denial of the cultural significance of Christmas. All this is unnecessary, he insists:

For better or worse, ours is historically a Christian culture, and children who grow up ignorant of biblical literature are diminished, unable to take literary allusions, actually impoverished. I am no lover of Christianity, and I loathe the annual orgy of waste and reckless reciprocal spending, but I must say I'd rather wish you "Happy Christmas" than "Happy Holiday Season".

Now, don't believe for a moment that Dawkins has gone soft on Christian claims about Christmas. He devotes the

greater part of his article to an effort to debunk the biblical claims about Christ and Christmas. He argues:

Most but not all scholars think, on balance, that a charismatic wandering preacher called Jesus (or Joshua) probably was executed during the Roman occupation, though all objective historians agree that the evidence is weak. Certainly, nobody takes seriously the legend that he was born in December. Late Christian tradition simply attached Jesus's birth to a long-established and convenient winter solstice festival.

Well, the claim that Jesus was born in December is indeed a legend — a claim not found in the Bible. The claims that actually *are* found in the Bible, starting with the virgin conception of Christ and His birth in Bethlehem, are central and essential to the Gospel storyline and to the Christian faith.

We can only wonder which Christmas carols are Richard Dawkins' favorites. The sight of an avowed atheist joining in the Christmas chorus is a bit hard to imagine. At the same time, there is something comforting about the idea that even the world's most famous atheist will move his lips to the songs that celebrate Christ's birth. Perhaps those words will move from his lips to his head and his heart. We should pray that it might be so.



Merry Christmas, Professor Dawkins.

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