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Subject: When did you become a Insert-Religion-Here?

Posted by [Spoony](#) on Thu, 13 Jan 2011 17:51:00 GMT

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Share your stories. When and how did you become a Christian/atheist/agnostic/whatever you consider yourself to be? What made you think so?

I'll start. My story is quite similar to the Hitch's; he says that for him it wasn't a case of becoming an atheist so much as realising he is an atheist. That's how it was for me. Neither of my parents are religious and they let me and my brother and sister make our own minds up (this is mainly because my father's parents were fundamentalist Christians who imposed a strict religious upbringing upon him and my aunt, and they found it absolutely miserable and resolved to do better with us). As for school, I live in a Christian country where Christianity is taught to the kids as though it were fact; i.e. the dumb bible myths are taught with the same certainty as what we're told in geography and maths. And there was no point at which the teacher said "there's no evidence for any of this" or "there are other religions out there too" or, most importantly, "you can just live your life without any of this crap". Also, daily prayer was compulsory.

But I never believed any of this. For some reason it just didn't click, and in the daily prayer at school we just bowed our heads and waited for the headmaster to get it over with. But I never considered myself an atheist; I'd never even heard the word before, and it didn't occur to me to ask "what's the word for someone who doesn't believe in this religious stuff?"

Later on, I was watching comedy on TV. My fellow Englishmen will know Jasper Carrott. Anyone remember that series where he was on trial? I only remember one thing about it - I must've been 14 or 15 at the time - but the prosecutor says about Jasper, in an accusing tone of voice, that he's an 'atheist'. I'd never heard the word before. I was a bright kid and was good with language, but this word was new to me. I went and asked my dad what the word meant, he told me, and I wondered why I'd never been told about this before. How strange that my school had tried to pump one particular religion into me without telling me about the option of atheism, it seemed.

Of course, at the time only one religion had been shown to me. I knew nothing at all about, say, Islam. Since then, my opinion of Christianity has gone very far downhill, and no other religion I've yet come across has struck me as either true or desirable. Still, the concept of freedom of religion (or as I prefer to phrase it, freedom of thought) is extremely important to me, and I'll insist upon it for people of any religion so long as it's there for me too. That's why I'm a harsh critic of the concept of hell, for example.

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