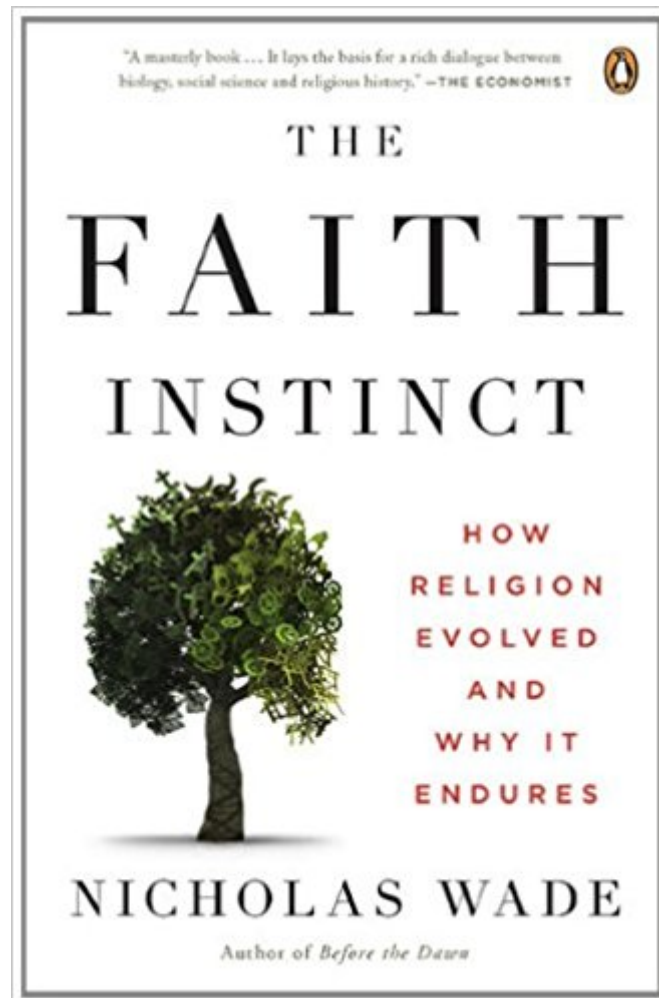




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The Faith Instinct: How Religion Evolved And Why It Endures



Synopsis

A New York Times science reporter makes a startling new case that religion has an evolutionary basis. For the last 50,000 years, and probably much longer, people have practiced religion. Yet little attention has been given to the question of whether this universal human behavior might have been implanted in human nature. In this original and thought-provoking work, Nicholas Wade traces how religion grew to be so essential to early societies in their struggle for survival, how an instinct for faith became hardwired into human nature, and how it provided an impetus for law and government. *The Faith Instinct* offers an objective and nonpolemical exploration of humanity's quest for spiritual transcendence.

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Customer Reviews

Taking up where he left off in *Before the Dawn* (2006), an engaging examination of human evolution in light of explorations in the human genome, longtime New York Times science reporter Wade deftly explores the evolutionary basis of religion. He draws on archeology, social science and natural science as he vigorously shows that the instinct for religious behavior is an evolved part of human nature because, like other human social traits that have evolved over many thousands of years, the practice of religion conferred a decided survival advantage to those who practiced it. Natural selection operates according to principles of survival and reproduction of offspring with heritable traits. Many of the social aspects of religious behavior offer advantages—such as internal cohesion—that lead to a society's members having more surviving children. More importantly, since religions have evolved as their societies have developed, is it possible, Wade asks, for religions to

be reworked so that as many people as possible can exercise their innate religious instincts to their own and society's benefits? Sure to be controversial for its reduction of religion to a product of natural selection, Wade's study compels us to reconsider the role of evolution in shaping even our most sacred human creations. (Nov. 16) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Evolutionary studies have accumulated enough convincing explanations based on enough factual discovery for it to be indisputable that religion is biologically rooted. Wade, a science journalist whose vita includes stints with the revered journals Nature and Science before he joined the New York Times science section, draws on the most famous and influential researchers to synthesize the story of religion through the ages. While religion has utility for the individual, it is overwhelmingly important for group cohesion and loyalty, as evidenced by the mass dancing, chanting, and trance-seeking of hunter-gatherer cultures, in which what much later Christian idealists called the priesthood of all believers genuinely obtained. When stationary communities arose, hierarchies followed in all enterprises, including religion, and if anything, religion's community-binding function became more crucial as populations and then technology burgeoned. By now, it should be obvious that religion not only won't but can't be expunged. There is so much more in this compact account, including cultural-evolutionary explanations of the three great monotheisms—enough, in fact, to make it a cornerstone of popular religion-and-science studies. --Ray Olson --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The book is a non bias account of how and why religion evolved and was successful. The only thing was it was a little repetitive at times. But interesting and good explanations. Also the author gave evidence and historical accounts of different peoples.

I love this book. I've given it to several people. Fresh. Thought-provoking.

I thought it was unique and profound

He has some useful ideas about the purpose of religion, but it is mostly a dismissal.

Wade writes this book in the light of science. He provides elaborations on why religion started and

why it continues to grow. This isn't a book to confirm or deny any faith, rather it holds faith from a scientific standpoint and offers possible explanations on why religion persists.

Explains why we have religion ver well.

Well written succinct account of the development of religion all over the world. Mr. Wade does not attempt to talk us out of religious behavior but does try to demonstrate the numerous ways religion has developed for mankind.

This book puts religiosity on a firmly scientific, evolutionary foundation. If religion overall is veridically false, why would natural selection allow it to survive? This book explains the conundrum.

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