

Are religious people ever less than intelligent in their beliefs? Sure. Everyone is.

Perhaps the most obvious examples would be religious people who have beliefs that blatantly contradict each other, whose beliefs don't withstand even basic scrutiny, or who use one kind of reasoning when discussing religion, and another kind of reasoning when discussing other topics.

Consider a religious person who believes that, because Eve was formed from Adam's rib, men have one less rib than women. If this person maintains that this is absolutely true because it's in the Bible, even though skeletons and x-ray pictures contradict the fact and the Bible actually says nothing on the subject, then you might be justified in using a term like "wilfully ignorant."

But even so, you should save the "big gun" insults until you have run out of anything useful to say. They may be fun to throw around, but they don't convince anyone of anything and may make you look foolish yourself.

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that you do not agree with. For example, someone who, for detailed, rational philosophical reasons, believes that God is benevolent, might conclude that God would indeed consider granting a prayer for protection during an airline flight. Such a person is, at worst, wrong — not stupid. A belief might also sound foolish in large part because you don't understand it entirely. For example, you might think a Catholic is nuts for believing that a priest can turn bread into meat when any number of scientific test will show that the bread is still bread. But the fact is a Catholic would not be surprised by those scientific results. The transubstantiation of bread into the body of Christ is supposedly a change in the bread's nature, not its substance. It's something like Fran Smith marrying Fred Jones and becoming Fran Jones — nothing physically about Fran has changed, but everyone now recognizes that she's "a Jones." Once you understand a belief and its origins, it might still sound foolish to you, but at least you will have a more sound base on which to stand for your mud slinging.



## ARE RELIGIOUS PEOPLE STUPID?

A Question of Moral Atheism

*from blog.iamanatheist.com*



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ATHEISTS SOMETIMES FALL into the trap of assuming that religious people are all stupid or ignorant. Why do some atheists do this? Because they're human and humans tend to assume that anyone who does not agree with them is not thinking straight. Plenty of theists think atheists are "dumb" for disbelieving in "something so obvious as God." But don't religious people believe in dumb things? They think prayers can save them from airplane disasters, imagine winged beings watch over them, and think that magic words can turn bread into meat, right? Sure, some theists have beliefs along those lines, but just being able to say that something sounds ridiculous on its face isn't enough to say it's stupid to believe. You have to know the justification for belief. Before you can decide that someone's beliefs are dumb, stupid, foolish, or whatever pejorative term you want to assign to them, you need to know where those beliefs come from and what, in detail, they are. A conclusion that sounds foolish to you might be the result of perfectly good reasoning based on premises

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# QUESTIONS OF MORAL ATHEISM:

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1. Print pages one and two of this document, one on each side of the same piece of paper (if you don't have access to a duplex printer, print page one, put the page back in the paper tray upside down, and print page two — depending on the type of printer, you may have to experiment a bit).
2. Cut the printout in two, using the thin rules across the middle of the page as a guide.
3. Fold the two pieces of paper in half, making a pair of small pamphlets.
4. Keep one of the pamphlets to read, and give the other away to an interested friend or stranger.

That's it! If you have any questions, suggestions, or comments, we invite you to share them by leaving a comment on [blog.iamanatheist.org](http://blog.iamanatheist.org). Thanks!

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