

Fr. Perozich comments —

The English word “religion” originated from the Latin word “religio,” which meant “obligation,” “bond,” or “reverence.” However, the exact meaning of this term is still subject to debate among scholars. Some experts suggest that the word “religio” may have derived from the verb “**religare,**” meaning “**to bind**” or “**to connect,**” while others argue that it may have originated from “relegere,” which means “to read again” or “to carefully consider.” — *The Word Origin*

My religion is Catholic. I **believe** in the Holy Immortal Trinity. I am **bound** to the Trinity by my baptism for the Holy Spirit now dwells within me. I profess a **creed** of beliefs in God. My life is one of **reverence, obligation, being bound** to God for all that He does for me with the special **bond** as an adopted son with the promise as heir to eternal life when Jesus comes again.

Other people have their own religions. They have a set of **beliefs**, a **creed**, a strong **bond**, and express an **obligation** to promote their religion.

Some have a god. Some have **beliefs** and **principles** as their god. They are convinced of their **beliefs** and **creeds**, just as am I.

Often such people are more zealous than Christians in promoting, and indeed forcing, their religions on us Christians and on society.

The gods of some people can be recognized by what they promote.

Fr. James Martin and Sister Jeannine Grammick have the religion of homosexuality as their god.

Some prelates have politics as their god.

Al Gore and others have climate as their god.

Al Sharpton has race as his god.

Anthony Fauci had covid as his god.

Nancy Pelosi and others have abortion as their god.

Dylan Mulvany has transsexuality as god.

And on.

Dialoguing with them may be difficult.

**But be patient—the question will provide a starting point to bring people from the religion of the day to the religion of Christ.**

**We are all religious. Are you going to search for the right one? The question isn't whether to be religious, but which religion one should be.**

# How to Dialogue with Religious Atheists

By [Br. Ambrose Power, O.P.](#) | February 27, 2025

There was a moment in college when I found myself on the defensive. Sixteen people had signed up for a course debating the merits of religion in the public square. A couple of us found ourselves on the minority side of a debate, defending religion against nearly the entire class. My hope was merely to offer a suggestion: **Maybe religion is not the one intrinsically evil practice in all of civil society?** This may sound like a low bar, but if I had set my sights more ambitiously, I don't think I would've gotten anywhere!

**“Should religion be in the public square?” For my entire life, the answer to that question seemed like an immediate “yes,”** and I never considered that anyone would think otherwise. That is until the young lady who sat next to me started talking. Let's call her “Sally.” Sally was a fallen-away Catholic who, after attending Catholic school, decided to become an atheist. In one sense, Sally was not religious. After all, she denied the existence of God and abhorred any practice of institutionalized religion.

Still, I could not help but be amazed: **Sally was one of the most religious people I ever met. She zealously believed in her own set of strict dogmas: Religious people should never be allowed to vote, and socialism is the only rational way to approach economics, for example. Religion is intolerant, oppressive, she said, because it is dogmatic. Yet, it seemed that every week I heard the same “creed” of progressivism recited by my classmates.** They insisted they were faithless, but I couldn't help but wonder: Are they?

Maybe so. Recently, I read [The Religion of the Day](#), a new book from Bismarck, North Dakota's University of Mary, which argues that, despite appearances, we live in a highly religious age. How can this be, since our age has also been overwhelmingly described as "secular?" **The authors describe a general sense of the word "religious" which can be "understood as the particular set of beliefs and practices that a person or society holds in order to provide a meaningful vision and narrative for life"** (p. 14). Secular or not, societies can still be religious, **even if there is a widespread rejection of the existence of God.** After all, every human person has to cope with the question: Who am I and what am I made for? It is only natural that we would need to live with some answer to this question.

**If man is by his nature religious, and if, despite its attempts to deny it, our age is a highly religious age, then that has strong implications for how we preach the Gospel.** I'm sure that everyone reading this has met a "Sally" of their own. It is true that atheism and Catholicism are radically different from one another, making irreconcilable claims about the existence of God. **But it is also true that atheists and Catholics are both searching for meaning in this life. This fact can act as a bridge over the wide chasm.**

When dialoguing with atheists, the cultural instinct is to agree to disagree. Both parties are happy with their beliefs and they should let each other do their own thing. But instead, we should approach the conversation differently. **We are both religious. This means, whether implicitly or explicitly, we all live according to some creed. The way to dialogue with an atheist, therefore, is to acknowledge this reality and offer a challenge: We are all religious. Are you going to search for the right one? The question isn't whether to be religious, but which religion one should be.** Frame it as which set of beliefs is right. Such a question might sound startling

to those who believe they believe in nothing, maybe even aggressively so. **But be patient—the question will provide a starting point to bring people from the religion of the day to the religion of Christ.**