

ATHEISM (PART 1 OF 2): DENYING THE UNDENIABLE

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Description: Although a person may deny the existence of God, in the depths of their hearts, it is a fact they cannot deny.

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“Life’s greatest tragedy is to lose God and not to miss him.”

--F.W. Norwood

Atheists might assert that they don’t acknowledge the existence of God, but the view of some Christians and all Muslims is that at some level even the confirmed Atheist affirms God’s presence. The innate but neglected awareness of God typically surfaces in Atheist consciousness only in times of severe stress, as exemplified by the World War II quote “There are no Atheists in a fox-hole.”^[1]



Undeniably there are times -- whether during the agonizing days of a lingering illness, the seemingly eternal moments of a violent and humiliating mugging, or the split second of anticipating the impact of an imminent car crash -- when all mankind recognize the reality of human fragility and the lack of human control over destiny. Who does a person beseech for help in such circumstances other than The Creator? Such moments of desperation should remind every person, from the religious scholar to the professed Atheist, of the dependence of mankind upon a reality far greater than our own meager human selves. A reality far greater in knowledge, power, will, majesty and glory.

In such moments of distress, when all human efforts have failed and no element of material existence can be foreseen to provide comfort or rescue, Whom else will a person instinctively call upon? In such moments of trial, how many stress-induced appeals are made to God, complete with promises of lifelong fidelity? Yet, how few are kept?

No doubt, the day of greatest affliction will be the Day of Judgement, and a person would be unfortunate to be in the position of acknowledging the existence of God for the first time on *that* day. The English poet, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, spoke of the irony

of the distressed human appeal in *The Cry of the Human*:

“And lips say “God be pitiful,”

Who ne'er said, “God be praised.”

The thoughtful Atheist, full of skepticism but fearful of the possibility of the existence of God and a Day of Judgement, may wish to consider the ‘prayer of the skeptic,’ as follows:

“O Lord--if there is a Lord,

Save my soul--if I have a soul.”^[2]

In the face of skepticism blocking belief, how can a person go wrong with the above prayer? Should Atheists remain upon disbelief, they will be no worse off than before; should belief follow a sincere appeal, Thomas Jefferson had the following to say:

“If you find reason to believe there is a God, a consciousness that you are acting under His eye, and that He approves you, will be a vast additional incitement; if that there be a future state, the hope of a happy existence in that increases the appetite to deserve it...”^[3]

The suggestion can be made that if an individual doesn't see the evidence of God in the magnificence of His creation, they would be well advised to take another look. As Francis Bacon is noted to have commented, “I had rather believe all the fables in the legend, and the Talmud, and the alcoran (i.e. the Quran), than that this universal frame is without a mind.”^[4] He went on to comment, “God never wrought miracle to convince atheism, because his ordinary works convince it.”^[5] Worthy of contemplation is the fact that even the lowest elements of God's creation, though perhaps ordinary works in His terms, are miracles in ours. Take the example of as tiny an animal as a spider. Does anybody really believe that such an extraordinarily intricate creature evolved from primordial soup? Just one of these little miracles can produce up to seven different kinds of silk, some as thin as the wavelength of visible light, but stronger than steel. Silks range from the elastic, sticky strands for entrapment to the non-adhesive drag-lines and frame threads, to the silk for wrapping prey, making the egg sac, etc. The spider can, on demand, not only manufacture its personal choice of the seven silks, but reabsorb, breakdown and remanufacture--self-recycling from the component elements. And this is only one small facet of the miracle of the spider.

And yet, mankind elevates itself to the heights of arrogance. A moment's reflection should incline human hearts to humility. Look at a building and a person thinks of the architect, at a sculpture and a person instantly comprehends an artist. But examine the elegant intricacies of creation, from the complexity and balance of nuclear particle physics to the uncharted vastness of space, and a person conceives of...nothing? Surrounded by a world of synchronous complexities, we as mankind cannot even assemble the wing of a gnat. And yet the entire World and all the Universe exists in a

state of perfect orchestration as a product of random accidents which molded cosmic chaos into balanced perfection? Some vote chance, others, creation.

Footnotes:

[1] *N.Y. Times*. 13 Apr 1944. Cummings: Sermon on Bataan, The Philippines.

[2] Renan, Joseph E. *Prayer of a Skeptic*.

[3] Parke, David B. p. 67.

[4] Bacon, Francis. *Atheism*. p. 16.

[5] Bacon, Francis. *Atheism*. p. 16.

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