

Excerpts from “The God of Contemporary Atheism” by
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Introduction

One of the characteristics of Contemporary Atheism is that it does not confront the existence of God as much as it does the relation of God to Man. God’s existence in itself does not concern the present day Atheism that much. For instance, a German atheist says, “Let us leave heaven to the angels and the birds”. Another atheist says, “Our Father who are in heaven....stay there.”

What this Contemporary Atheism rejects is God’s control of Man’s existence; because it believes that Man’s existence would dissipate and disappear if domineered by another being. Thus Man would be lost in God.

Thus Contemporary Atheism is rejection of God more than it is denial of His existence. It is a willful stance more than a sheer mental operation. Through rejecting God as a point of reference and a regulator of Man’s existence, Contemporary Atheism sees liberation from the illusions that stood between him and the complete realization of his self.

Often ancient atheism was appealed to as a means to moral decadence. However, Contemporary Atheism appoints itself and is used as an advocate of moral values alleging that faith in God is an abuse to those values.

Marxism did not reject God except to add a tint of deity on the element and history making out of them two features that overcome man, degrading his dignity and crushing him. On the other hand, Sartre’s atheism, being more logical, asserted that man is a useless desire with no justification for his existence, a meaningless void and that his only treasure lies in his freedom. Sartre found emptiness as an idol for man to worship and to which he became a captive. Thus, these two types of atheism rejected God replacing Him with man - crushing idols.

Contemporary Atheism, a Self Divided Home

The implausibility that exists in each of the two types of atheism is met with the credulity inherent in the other. Thus, it could be said that Marxism, captivated with the utter fulfillment of man’s humanism, was right in rejecting the emptiness called for by Sartre asserting that history and existentialism are meaningful. For, meaninglessness itself is not delineated except relative to meaningfulness that captures us and with which we measure things. On the other hand, Sartre-ism was correct when it revealed to us that if we want to delve into the depth of things, human existentialism is meaningless without God. In reality, the victory of humanism with which Marxism boasts, making it the summit and aim of history, loses its meaning as long as history cannot liberate man from alienation, evil and death.

Accordingly, Man is a meaningful being heading towards the infinite.(Marxism). But, he is unable to realize this meaningfulness by himself (Sartre-ism). If we interpret these two premises into the language of Christianity, we can say that Man was created in God’s image, called for deity but he is not God and cannot come to the realization of his self except through God.

The question that rises here is: who is that God that has been rejected by both Marx and Sartre? If we examine the traits of this God that is shunned by contemporary atheism, we will find him a God that degrades, binds, blinds, crushes and sentences man with eternal negativism, ungratefulness, submissiveness and pettiness. He is a God who does not extend his grandeur except from man’s

weakness, ignorance and humiliation. Where is this God from the One Who revealed Himself to us in the face of Jesus Christ, manifesting a liberating, awakening, life-giving love.

How could Contemporary Atheism, which had appeared in a Christian environment, see God so much disfigured? The answer is that perhaps the atheists found this picture already existing in the minds of the Christians and copied it in order to refute it. In other words, to a large extent we, Christians, established that idol rejected by the atheists whom they and we alike called "God". In reality, the God that Christians worship is for most of the time, far away from the God Jesus Christ. But what originated this idol that deluded our worship to an untrue God?

Two reasons:

1. Man's imagination and desires. Man might deify his imaginations instead of constantly overpassing them as the Holy Bible and the entire Christian tradition call him to do.
2. Man is prone to form an image about God that gratifies and justifies his desires thus degrading God down to his level of selfishness, ambitions and covetousness instead of bringing his desires up to God's level.

What God detests has been committed in history under His holy name. In fact, murder, torture, manipulation, racism, and idol nationalism were committed in the name of God. As such, Judas Iscariot is not an individual but a crowd; for the treachery with a kiss is the perpetual portion "for the meek crucified truth". That explains to a large extent the repugnance that the name of God creates in the hearts of the best and most righteous atheists.

In that respect, it becomes clear that Contemporary Atheism has a positive side. For, unwittingly it testifies to God's oneness. This is because in its rejection of the idols, it implicationally seeks after Divine absolute; and in its protest against all treachery of truth and justice committed in the name of God, Contemporary Atheism inadvertently testifies to the One Who is the clear undefiled Truth and Justice.

It could be said that Contemporary Atheism plays a role in the purification of Faith; because fake faith is itself practical atheism which removes God in the name of God and so atheism approaches the Truth relative to its genuine nature. In this sense, Dostoyevsky, the believer, who uncovered the depth of atheism wrote, "...That is why our stance from atheism should be that of harkening in order to know what images of idolization we have abandoned and which still find its way to our faith. Our duty is to open up to its harsh criticism in the hope that it may draw us back to the genuineness of our faith."

Faith Rebukes Atheism because it confuses between the true God and the idols; and the most important idol is that of Man's contentment which stands between him and the submission to the infinite Who governs him. This contentment is the root of all idols. Faith calls atheism to quit, stop in the middle of the road, and overlook its negativism by confessing that true God Whose image is deeply inherent in his being. The sum of the accusations that atheism aims towards Faith is the degradation of creation in general and man in specific. It is true that Christians have forgotten the meaning of what they used to believe in and live by; presenting religion restrictively as worship to God with the exclusion of Man, history and the universe. So, atheism came to answer back by emphasizing Man, history and the universe without God.

The Two Idols, the ungodly idol that cancels Man and the Man idol that cancels God and which adds the infinity trait to his self contentment; these two terrific cancellations tear up the hope of humanity at its core. However, we adhere to the religion of God the Incarnate Who chose to ultimately tie His fate with Man. For God, out of love for man, became man, empowering man to become partaker with the Divine nature. (To be continued.)