

The Modern Atheism

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Time has overcome the scientific struggle over proving the existence or non-existence of God. In the past, until recently, many atheists and believers struggled to prove their point of view based on science and reason. After the intensity of this conflict subsided and the aggressiveness of each of the two parties shifted toward a state of calm acceptance of one another and objective thought proliferated among civilized men instead of antagonistic and eliminationist emotional thought, both atheism and faith began to approach their arguments and proofs objectively. Science has its recognized scope, and so does faith. Open dialogue with the statements of the other became prevalent, and the eliminationist approach to the other subsided, at least in the civilized world. As for the East, this matter is still an eliminationist struggle between faith and disbelief, and it has even increased greatly in recent times.

Atheism in recent centuries was based on a scientific and humanist mentality (one that proceeds exclusively from man) which says that God does not exist and that (to Him be glory) the oppressed man invented gods as a consolation for the injustice inflicted on him, while the rich and authoritarian man invented gods to atone for his sins with money and to maintain his sovereignty over others through religion. There is no doubt that scientific development has produced euphoria and a dream that humans might reach a time when science solves all human problems. And just as history shows that every age, including golden ages, has an end and then loses its luster, the same has happened with science, as man experienced his inability to solve all challenges. The approach, which began as idealistic, then became objective. Man began to realize that there are no proofs that confirm the non-existence of God or vice versa but, rather, paths and experiences that lead to Him. We say in Christianity that faith is a divine grace, in the sense that it is an openness and acceptance of the presence of God who is always present but is not seen by those whose insight is blind and whose pride is fatal.

As a result, atheism moved from the aim of denying the existence of God, to a practical aim of managing human affairs without God. Man became the starting point and the final point, the beginning and the end, the source of legislation and the executor of the laws, all at the same time. Perhaps the saying of the French poet Brevér, "Let us leave the sky to the birds and the angels," is the best

illustration of contemporary atheism. Some atheists coming from a Christian cultural environment said in describing him, "Our Father, who art in the heavens, stay there." The atheistic man no longer cares about the presence or absence of God. He is by himself and not with God. He is a person open to everything except God because God's presence makes demands of him.

Modern atheism does not want any relationship between itself and God. It seeks to organize a person's affairs in the light of what it sees as correct, useful, and necessary for him. The new motto of humanity has become, "What is appropriate is whatever I see fit." The exclusion of God from human life is not new, but it has imposed itself in Western and Eastern societies in recent years as a way of life that is binding on everyone, whether they are believers, atheists, or indifferent.

God disturbs humans because He demands from them what is contrary to their desires and lusts, which kill them. He wants life for them, and they want fun; He wants permanent joy for them, and they seek temporary happiness; He wants them to ascend to the heights, and they want to remain attached to the earth. A person is afraid of abandoning what is familiar to him. He enjoys what he knows, avoiding the adventure of entering into what he is called to discover.

If contemporary atheism prevents man from being open to the presence of God and His action in him, then it can, under the influence of the prevailing contemporary culture, afflict the believer as well. When a believer does not organize his life according to the values and virtues of the Gospel, when he does not fight his ego and his self-love, when he lives for the improvement and advancement of his standard of living alone, when he resorts to what contradicts his faith in order to achieve a personal interest, when he devotes most of his time to earthly matters, he leaves no time for himself to enjoy the presence of God. To the extent there is a practical denial of his faith, is he not an atheist in essence and reality and only a believer in appearance and pretense?

The role of false and distorted faith in the production of atheism is evident in history. How many people have been turned away from God and His commandments because of hypocritical believers?! And how many atheists would not have disbelieved in God if they had experienced an honest and pure atmosphere of faith?! The believer's sin is double, because (on one hand) his hypocrisy harms him and offends his God and Savior and (on the other hand) he causes others to doubt and stumble so that they turn away from the path of faith.

It says in the Bible regarding someone who makes others fall into sin, “It is better for him to have a large grindstone hung around his neck and to be thrown into the depths of the sea. Woe to the one who makes people fall into sin” (Matt. 18:6-7).

Believers are called to embody their faith in the purest form. They become “the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14) when God’s light shines in them as a result of their purity and tender love, imitating the love of their Master. Then the Lord’s saying will be true in them: “All people will know that you are My disciples” (John 13:35).

Originally published on May 11, 2015.