

Atheism Doesn't Make Sense

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The scene was the famous Marble Arch, Hyde Park, London. The time was Sunday night. The crowd was large and in holiday mood. The speakers were loud and fluent. And the old gentleman who particularly caught my attention was small, shrivelled, and an atheist.

“This morning,” he said, in a slightly cracked voice, “I was working in my garden. Maybe some of you were at church. I was doing something useful. Yes, I was a-working in my garden. Well, right there on a leaf in front of me I saw a large green bug. What did I do? I killed it. Now, ladies and gentlemen, what do you think of a god that creates large green bugs and then creates me to kill ‘em? Nice kind of god, ain’t he? Sensible, eh, wot? You can have a god like that if you want him. I’ll get along a free and independent atheist.”

There were some in the crowd who tittered. But near me stood a quiet little cockney. When the others laughed, he shrugged his shoulders contemptuously and said under his breath: “He’d a been a ‘eap sight better hoff if ‘e’d stayed in ‘is bloomin’ garden ‘stead of comin’ ‘ere to talk ‘is bloomin’ nonsense.”

I wanted to shake his hand.

All of One Stripe

For in that silly old man on the pitch in Hyde Park, abolishing God from this incredibly complicated and magnificently ordered universe, because he, with his almost illiterate brain, couldn’t quite figure out the possible uses of a green bug (which very likely had had a great deal to do with preparing the soil in which his flowers were growing), I seemed to see all the atheists who have ever lived, from the village atheist astride his cracker box in the corner grocery to the officials of the modern Legions of the Godless. And all their arguments seemed to be epitomised in that one old fellow who rejected God because he couldn’t understand a large, green bug.

Atheists are of that stripe. They get completely baffled, and all their theology goes haywire because of a seven-year locust.

Logic v. Laughter

Of all the theories ever held by the capacious and hospitable mind of man, atheism is certainly the one that makes least sense. It makes so little sense that there has never been a single positive argument advanced to prove that there is no God. Laughter and sneers and ridicule these are the arguments. “Look at that bug! Ha! Ha! Ha!” “Think about mosquitoes. Ho! Ho! Ho!” “Let’s see you draw me a picture of God! He! He! He!” “Isn’t it absurd that after millions of years of human advance people are still silly enough to believe in God? Pardon my unseemly mirth!”

Years ago, when Robert Ingersoll toured the country, vying with Barnum in showmanship and daring God to kill him (as God eventually did, and in rapid fashion), he once cried out: “We can no longer be content with a God for Whom it is impossible to advance a single proof.” Father Lambert, the brilliant apologist, flung back this simple challenge: “How dare Ingersoll be so utterly ignorant?

The proofs for the existence of God have never been touched by the ridicule of any atheist. They still stand today. Let Ingersoll knock one of them down if he can.” And Ingersoll couldn’t.

Straw Men

Anyone who knows anything of the tactics of atheists knows that what they do is build up straw men, call them our arguments, and then proceed to knock them down with resounding blows. “You prove the existence of God out of the Bible,” one group loudly taunts. “That’s the worst sort of vicious circle. You prove God out of the Bible, and then you prove the Bible by saying it is God’s word. Stupid argument! Vicious circle!”

We do nothing of the sort. We prove God’s existence from reason. We prove Him in exactly the same sort of scientific fashion that science is constantly using for its whole system. Only after we have proved by arguments from reason that He exists do we start discussing whether or not the Bible is His book.

The favourite straw men, who get a terrible drubbing, are the caricatures which are presented to us as if they were our idea of God. Bernard Shaw is not beyond doing that, though, of course, Bernard Shaw is not only not an atheist, but is actually a pantheist, one who believes that there is nothing else but God. This pet caricature presents God as a nice, doddering old gentleman, with white whiskers and a frock coat, who sits up somewhere back of a kind of heavenly altar and dozes over a world he is too old and too tired to do anything about. “Look at God!” cries the atheist. “Could you believe in Him?”

I certainly couldn’t possibly believe in a God like that. No man who has even a faint scientific or philosophic knowledge of God, no man who has studied God’s revelation even in passing, has any such ridiculous picture of God in his mind. And if artists, even the most orthodox, have sometimes painted God as old, venerable, whiskered, and paternal, it is because age and wisdom, years and fatherhood, white hair and achievement, have long been associated together in the human mind.

Many Substitutes

Then there is the chap who throws God out the window because he finds there have been so many false gods throughout man’s history. “There have been too many gods. They can’t all be right. So none of them is right.”

Which is almost as silly as saying, “There have been so many poor poets that I don’t believe Shakespeare wrote poetry. There have been so many men who drew abominable, silly marks on walls that I decline even to look at Michelangelo”

Of course, there have been false gods offered to human worship. No one is for a moment suggesting that it is always easy to go straight to the one true God. But that proves nothing against God.

All Agree

On the contrary, false gods prove the human need of God. In fact, the atheist has a squirming time of it when he tries to explain how it happens that the whole human race, all men and all nations, have felt that yearning desire for God. The atheist has an awful struggle to account for the fact that atheists have always been a handful as compared with the rest of humanity. And when he hastens to retort that the atheists have been the smart men of history, it is our turn to laugh. Until very recent times there has been scarcely a single notable man who claimed to be an atheist. (In our own time there have been hardly a half-dozen such notables.)

I remember reading, not so long ago, a list of “atheists” drawn up by a notorious American atheist. It was simply funny to anyone who knew anything about the men listed there. This atheist, who was none too scrupulous about his arguments for his cause, included in his list Aristotle and Plato, whereas they were philosophers who supplied some of the most powerful philosophical arguments used today by Christians and scientists to prove there is a God. He listed Shakespeare, who was no more an atheist than he was an aviator. He waved a hand at a composer or two who had written Masses to be sung in Catholic churches in honour of God. He gestured toward Spinoza, whose follower Einstein claimed to be when, in answer to the question whether he (Einstein) believed in God, replied: “Certainly, I am a disciple of Spinoza.”

What? Who?

The fact is that no man who thinks can look at the tremendous reality called the universe without asking how it came into existence and what keeps it in its orderly, law-controlled way? That eternal How and Why, asked by every generation of every people since dawn broke over the world, has forced man to cry out, in some sort of fashion, often in detail not too correctly or accurately, “All this must have had a planner, a creator, a preserver.” He might then go on to give that planner a name of his own making. He might visualise Him very badly or inadequately. But he could not get away from His existence.

No one has ever been able to bring forward an argument against the existence of God. However, it is a quite simple thing to act as if God did not exist. To a very large extent God turned the running of His earth over to His sons and daughters. And, like a considerate father, He is loath to intrude where He is clearly not wanted. So the policy of the present has been to push God out of all the affairs of life, as far as that was humanly possible. Like a considerate father, God permits a deal of this.

A cynic once remarked that a Christian country was one in which the name of God may, in polite society, be mentioned publicly only in an oath. Practically, in most “Christian” countries, God has been invited to mind His own business and to leave all the really important affairs of the world to men’s administration. Many a modern who would reject the still decidedly insulting epithet of atheist is willing to accept God’s existence only if God will remain a remote, impersonal being, far, far away from such places as Wall Street, Broadway, the First National Bank, the Board of Directors’ room, Downing Street, or the Quai D’Orsay. God has become slightly *de trop*. Eyes open in a slightly surprised stare when a prominent man publicly acknowledges that God has anything whatsoever to do with business or government or art or education.

It is because men have deliberately conspired to treat God as if He did not exist at all that the systematic atheism of the present day has become possible.

Besides, revolutionists of the present are completely at odds with kings. Disliking earthly kings, they have determined that the King of Kings does not belong, either. They have overturned the thrones of earth. Why shouldn’t they make a final effort to do what Lucifer failed to do — overturn the throne of heaven?

Hatred of God

So Communism, in Russia and Mexico and France and everywhere that it dares to show its true face, is God-hating to the core of its heart. [This is 1937 when this was written.] The Legions of the Godless are the applauded and petted battalions of Red Russia. Little children are taught to make

this act of faith: “I do not believe in God” — the hardest act of faith that anyone is ever called on to make. French atheism has the proud distinction of writing obscene books about God, reaching up filthy and polluted hands to soil, if that were possible, the All-Holy, the All-Pure.

We shall come back to them and their stupidity in a minute, to these professed atheists who make war on a God they say does not exist and whom they bitterly hate with a personal, venomous hatred, the Deity who they say never was and never will be. Just now we are concerned with the polite or the rough ushering of God out of His universe, which is the characteristic proceeding of our day.

Excluded

God just does not belong in public life. He has a scant and chilly welcome in our public school system. Buddha may be discussed and Mohammed’s Allah shown in his relationship to the development of the Orient. [Mohammed, of course believed that he had a special relationship with god – Allah is the Arabic word – and that the true God was the God who had revealed Himself to the peoples of the Book, Jews and Christians.] But God may be mentioned in the classrooms of practically none of the so-called Christian countries of the world, and this by public order and law. Once law courts began their sittings by appealing to the Giver of all laws. Today God would be astounded, if that were possible, to hear His Name mentioned in the law courts of Christian nations, save by a few faithful Christian lawyers. Modern business does not particularly favour God. Finance has not forgotten that man cannot serve God and Mammon, and deliberately it has made its choice. A minister or a priest may be permitted to say a brief prayer before the opening of national legislatures, but he leaves once the really important work begins, taking, no doubt, God along with him.

And modern despotic governments?

Well, we have seen Communism basing its entire concept of government on the exclusion of God from the whole of life. We have watched Nazism turning from the Christian God back to the beer-swilling gods of Teuton days, simply because Nazism knows that those fat-bellied, lustful, bloodthirsty old gods do not exist, and hence cannot do any unpleasant or annoying interfering with despotism and ruthlessness and persecution and violation of human rights, which Nazi leaders mean to continue as their policy. Fascism, though it is shrewd enough to make an offhand bow to God, really substitutes for Him an ancient pagan equivalent, the all-powerful, all-dominant State.

When the League of Nations petered out in a final fizzle of futility, many of us smiled to remember that from the start God was warned that at last the nations could competently and satisfactorily attend to their own affairs without any help from Him, thank you! Has God, I wonder, as He watched their fumbings, their bickerings, their pettiness and stupidity, smiled in tender and forgiving pity?

Objectionable Law

God has been pushed aside from Communism and ruthless capitalism, from Nazism and radical labour, simply because God has a most inconvenient way of acting: He does lay down laws and He does give commandments. He says to the despot, no matter how strong his army of shirts, black, brown, or red: “Of course, your power is only a trust held for the sake of the peace and happiness of your people. Some day I shall ask an account of your use of it.” That’s a most annoying sort of speech for anyone to make to a dictator; and, since God has the utterly bad taste to make it in the

secret depths of the dictator's conscience, the dictator issues some new law to push God farther from the frontiers of his land.

To the ruthless capitalist God says: "You are merely a steward of the wealth you hold, and you dare not use it otherwise than for the happiness of those who work for you. The oppression of labourers and the robbing of widows and workingmen cry out to Me for vengeance." "Does it?" demands the capitalist, cynically. "Listen, God. You may have Sunday mornings between the hours of eleven and twelve; but during the rest of the week will You oblige us by realising that the laws of economics and of supply and demand take precedence over any of Your commandments, even over Your voice speaking in my secret soul?"

"You may overthrow the kings of earth," God says to the radical. "You cannot overthrow the throne of heaven." "Perhaps," retorts the radical. "But if we can't overthrow that throne, we can pull a curtain between it and the eyes of children, so that they'll never know it is there. We have our programme. You have no place in it. These children shall never so much as guess there is a God."

Man Makes His Gods

Then, after this exclusion of God by a concerted policy of so many of His men and women, comes the great joke. Man plays the joke on himself. He throws aside the great and beautiful God of reason and Christian revelation, and goes down on his knees and scurries around in the most feverish and often debasing service before gods of his own making. "God," said the great revelation to Moses, "made man to His image and likeness." "Nonsense," cries the modern atheist. "I shall make a god to my image and likeness." And, heaven pity him, he does. He makes a new god that is just as contemptible and small and futile as that god's creator.

Voltaire is often quoted as saying that if there were no God, it would be necessary for man to create one. The fact is that man turned atheist has proved Voltaire's statement in a thousand different forms. Man must have some god to serve, and, rejecting the true God, he creates for himself false and futile gods.

With Capital Letters

So modern business, until its god failed it as truly as the first golden calf failed its creators served Money, and spelled that Money with a capital M. Your modern dictator serves Power with a zeal and labour and self-sacrifice that match the efforts of the most zealous missionary preaching the true God. Science is spelled with a capital S, and that large S is significant: Science will remake the world; Science will save humanity; Science must be served by the burned out lives of specialists and the tireless ritual of laboratory and classroom and dangerous expedition.

Even that despicable and ashen thing called Pleasure gets its ritual and its faith and cult. I wonder whether a more exacting creed has ever existed than the creed that deifies Pleasure and sends its devotees scuttling off in obedience to a faith that has no fulfilment and a love that burns itself out as it flames and flares and smokes.

Man is God

"My god," wrote an atheist to me, "is humanity."

Out of my heart I felt sorry for him. Atheist though he was, he admitted he had a god. But imagine any man serving and reverencing and adoring the human race, the best-known member of which is, as far as he personally is concerned, himself. Imagine worshipping a thing that can have colds in the

head, cancers, and pimples on the end of its nose. Imagine bowing down to the race which is represented by the man whose face rather revolted me this morning as I looked at it in the shaving mirror. Fancy having as one's god this mankind which, for all its genius and achievements, is capable of murder and lust and brutal cruelty and filthy speech and obscene thinking.

And imagine offering us a god who must, in order to advance or improve himself, act on the principle of lifting by the bootstraps. God can reach down and lift man up to higher things. God can endow man, as He actually has, with the powers by which man can vastly improve his condition and surroundings and even himself. But a man cannot lift himself by his own boot-straps; and, if there is no God above man, man cannot be lifted at all. He cannot give himself what he has not already got.

The most unsatisfactory god in all of the modern pantheon is undoubtedly the god called humanity. I might be able to adore the smooth, gleaming statue of the Greek Zeus. I might conceivably worship a golden calf. I am certain I cannot find anything innately divine about the person I know and live with and find as inadequate and as thoroughly, humanly unsatisfactory as I find myself.

Yet, scratch the most arrant atheist and you'll find a believer in some absurd god whom he worships tirelessly, hopelessly. The more vehemently a man denies he has a god, the surer I am that he is serving, with the sacrifices and labours of a lifetime, some god of his own crude fashioning.

"I Don't Understand"

"But," cries the atheist, always ready to fling difficulties which he mistakes for proofs, "I can't understand your God."

One disdains to reply, "Well, what do you understand with any degree of completeness?" One shouldn't want to dare him to explain what light really is, or what life is, or electricity, or even, completely and adequately, a drop of water. One shouldn't want to tax him by demanding that he understand completely how one seed grows to be a cactus and another grows to be a rose; how the germ of life develops in the darkness of a body until it comes forth a man-child; how it happens that the voice of a singer travels to the wires of a radio on unseen and really unexplained waves; what makes a grain of sand so different from a bit of diamond dust; why planets do not go crashing into one another, or why the ocean, in a sudden tremendous spout, does not go swirling off towards the ever-attracting moon. If God were the only thing the atheist did not understand, we might be a little excited and perturbed. But it is usually the ignorant, half-educated atheist who is loudest in his protests that he does not understand God, and quickest to show in his betraying speech how little he understands about anything.

God Is Too Big

However, we can go a step farther than that. We can simply answer: "If you could completely understand God, God would not be God."

Sounds a bit confusing? It's really not. God, to be God, must be vast enough to have formed this entire universe, given it its laws and order, composed the intricate formation of the atom, and traced with His almighty finger the transit of the planetary systems. God, to be God, must be infinite, without limit, far greater than the universe He made and the laws He established. Even the atheist, who is probably as cocky a little animal as struts the earth, has, in his saner moments, to admit that his mind is pretty limited and his comprehension pretty small. Yet he demands to take into his limited imagination the limitless God. He demands to understand, with his easily taxed, always

fumbling mind, the God Who is vaster than the universe, which no scientist claims even to have partially grasped. What nonsense!

We can, of course, know a great deal about God, and do. We can understand much of His power and beauty. We can read the signs of His intellect and will as He wrote them in stardust and traced them on the red tablet of the human heart. But if the moment came when any man really understood God, either that man would himself be God, or God would have become merely another man.

We are not in the least disturbed that we cannot fully understand God. The trouble with all the false gods of history, from the divine oxen of Egypt and Jove of Rome to Science and Money and Despotism, is that man could understand them. And, understanding them, man quickly came to know that they were not and could not be God.

“Prove Him to Me!”

But just a minute; the atheist has another bomb to throw.

“I believe only in what can be scientifically proved.”

“Fine,” I reply, gladly enough. “Nothing could suit me better.”

The atheist is sure he has me there. “But God cannot be scientifically proved.”

“No?” I query, with raised eyebrows.

“Certainly not. Let’s see you put God into a test-tube or under a microscope. Let’s see you treat God with a reagent. Turn the telescope on the heavens and show me God.” (Do you remember the absurdly amusing American in “Father Malachy’s Miracle,” who kept demanding that the dear old Benedictine show him a picture of the Holy Ghost?)

The atheist continues his bombardment. “Since when,” you and I ask him, “must men believe that only the things that are put under a microscope or in a test-tube are provable? Do you believe in mother love?”

He stutters angrily. “Of course.”

“Let’s see you put that into a retort. Do you believe that there is such a thing as justice? Have you ever held the law of gravity in a pair of forceps and watched it squirm? Friendship and hatred are powerful things. Go out and get me a sample of each, and we’ll put them between glass plates and see what they look like.”

Effects Prove

The atheist gives us the cold and disdainful looks he feels quite sure we deserve. “Quibbles!” he snorts. “Of course, I believe in such things. I have seen and felt and measured their effects. I’ve felt the effect of mother love. I’ve experienced the effects of hatred and friendship. Loyalty has left its impress on the world. I can see the power of the law of gravity.

“Thank you! Thank you!” say I, gaily interrupting. “That’s all I want to know. All really important scientific study is based on the law of cause and effect. We did not see the seas that once covered our mountains, but we have seen the shells left behind by those seas, and we know those seas existed. The staunchest believer in evolution has never seen one species change into another. He sees signs that that sort of thing happened, and he accepts evolution — which is another one of the things that you can’t put into a cage in your back yard and use as the source of a series of important

experiments. Even your detective stories — the delight, if I am not wrong, of all our superior minds — is based on the reasoning process which sees an effect and says, “That must have happened in this way. There is a footprint, that demands a man of such and such a build. Look; there’s the mark of a thumb on that gun. Now, if we can find the owner of that thumb... And note: the murderer smoked an Indian cigarette and carelessly spilled ashes on the floor...”

“So,” demands the atheist, “you argue from effect to cause? That’s like you Christians. You say this is an effect, there-by implying that something caused it. We say it just happened. And then it does not need a cause.”

“And the clearest thing in all this often quite clear world is that we are living in the midst of a constant series of effects. Things result from other things — roses from seeds, and from those roses more seeds, gravity pulling water and creating a waterfall. How did it all start? What got it all under way? We are surrounded by effects. What was the first cause?”

No Faith in Man

And then we are back to the proofs for the existence of God, which no one has ever done anything to counteract or destroy. They stand, those proofs, firm and irresistible, certain and convincing. In fact — and this is one of the strangest treasons, not to God, but to men — the only way in which those proofs have been touched and made to seem discredited has been by denying to man the power to prove anything. A German philosopher by the name of Kant — and a really great man he was, be it admitted — took all dignity from the human mind by making it impossible for that human mind really to prove anything. It could not even prove that two and two make four. It could not prove that when one chap hits another his blow is the cause of the other’s pain. It could not prove that last night’s rain was what dampened the ground, or that a man’s love for a girl is what made him bring her a box of candy. All those things were cause and effect, but they could not be proved.

I remember quite vividly meeting two young ladies after I had talked on atheism.

“Of course,” they said, “we believe in God. Any sensible person does. But we don’t accept your proofs.”

“What’s wrong with them?” I asked politely.

“Why, they just don’t prove, that’s all.”

And then it dawned on me. “Oh, you went to such and such a college, didn’t you?” I named a famous secular school. They nodded. “And studied Kant?” For a moment they were not sure, but suddenly they nodded again. “Ah, then, that’s why you’re not impressed by my arguments. You haven’t lost your faith in God. Your professors, when they taught you Kantianism, simply made you lose your faith in man.”

And it is important to remember that Kant, though he did not think man could prove God’s existence (or, for that matter, prove really anything in the world), believed firmly in God, and used, almost unconsciously, valid arguments for his belief. For he said that, when he read the law in the stars and the law in his own conscience, he knew there must be a God. His proofs for the existence of God were excellent. His justification for his disbelief in man’s reasoning processes was very poor.

Who?

We are not going to consider the proofs for God's existence in anything like detail. That would require a volume. Besides, even a little brushing up of memory, or facing of reality brings those proofs clearly to mind. For even the most casual and slipshod thinker cannot escape the fact that this is a plan-filled universe. All science is based on the fact that things move according to nature's laws, and that the more one studies, the clearer those laws become. Text-books are written, laboratories built, factories established, in the certainty that, when the law has once been discovered, it will be found to hold tomorrow, a year from now, a thousand years in the future.

To prove the need of a God, swiftly glance around the world and make a few vivid comparisons. Look at the stars and remember that they are moving at rates of speed that make our streamline trains seem to stand still. Compare that intricate pattern of heavenly movement - suns and planets of incredible size and weight moving through space with a speed unmatched by our fastest racing car — with the schedule of, let's say, the Santa Fe Railroad. Yet it takes thousands of men constantly planning, watching, supervising, to keep the schedule of that single railroad from going wrong and smashing limiteds against freights and locals against excursions. Yet the planets and stars and suns are, according to the atheist, just dashing around without anyone to plan their schedules or mark out their courses. Smart, isn't it?

Comparisons

There is that miracle of miracles, the human eye, delicate, accurate, capable of taking in the mountain range or peering into the heart of a molecule, so intricate that it took scientists uncounted centuries to discover how it operated. Compare that with the camera you carry with you on your vacation, which is, after man's clumsy fashioning, an imitation of the human eye. Yet it took the genius of inventors, the accuracy of mathematicians, the skilled craftsmanship of mechanics centuries to plan, develop and make the camera. The eye, says the atheist, who surely is, beyond all mortals who walk the earth, devoid of a sense of humour, just developed itself because the blind protoplasm of some ambitious jellyfish wanted to see. How did he know, this jellyfish, that he wanted to see, when he didn't even know what seeing was?

But to go on with the comparison: Compare the human throat with the telephone; the wax flower with the rose covered with fresh dew; the accurate solar system with your watch, which does persist in losing time no matter how often the watch-repairer works on it; the snow crystal on your window-pane with the jigsaw puzzle you laboriously put together; the jumping muscles of a frog with the clumsy mechanism of a steam-shovel; the accurate succession of the seasons with the way in which big department stores plan sales to meet the arrival of those seasons; the light from the distant sun with that of the electric bulb that burns on your desk.

These human things, the atheist readily admits, took years of planning, took genius to invent, required a most careful study of nature's operations. Yet these things are copies, if ever so imperfect, of nature's achievements. They demand an elaborate system of upkeep and servicing. But the incredibly vaster things in nature — Oh, they just happened by some inexplicable trick or accident. Nobody planned them; nobody set them going; nobody keeps them from smashing into bits.

Oh, is that so? Honestly, don't you think it's our turn to laugh?

If Things Move

There is the scientific law of inertia, which the atheist is going to crack his skull against unless he wants to throw that out along with God. You remember, of course, the law of inertia: A body at rest tends to stay at rest until moved by some external force; a body in motion tends to remain in motion until stopped by some external force. One thing is patently clear: The world is simply tingling with motion. From the vibration of the electrons within the atom to the sweep of solar systems through space, everything moves.

[The poet in me wants to shout out that all this motion points to the reality that the world is simply tingling with emotion – the emotion of Him who set it in motion. I digress. Let us return to the clear thinking scientist.]

Yet science is very clear about the fact that this was not always the state of the universe. Motion, with time, has clearly become more elaborate, more complicated; new types of motion have filled the history of the universe — as when from solidifying gases came the sun, or fish crawled out on banks and tried their fins as incipient wings.

Who started all this motion? It was always there? That's the atheist's dodge. ("But how does he know that?") On the contrary, the universe is running down. Scientists know that, at some far, far, far away date — oh, give it trillions or quadrillions of years — it will be as run-down as an ancient grandfather's clock. So, if it will end in time, however remote, it started in time, however remote.

What started it? Something inside itself? That's against the law of inertia. Something or somebody outside itself? Ah, that's what we call the First Mover, the Cause of all this universal motion. That's just another name for God.

It All Depends

There is one argument for God that has been expressed in a number of ways. Simply, it is this: Everything in this world depends upon something else. That sort of thing can't go on forever. Eventually one has to arrive at something that does not depend upon something else. Otherwise nothing at all could exist.

You may remember the way that situation puzzled the old East Indian philosopher. "What," he was asked by his pupils, "keeps the earth suspended in space?"

"Ah," said the Indian philosopher, looking very wise, "the earth rests upon the back of a tremendous elephant."

The pupil was momentarily satisfied; but back he came. "What," he demanded, in the exasperating fashion of smart pupils, "is the elephant standing on?"

The philosopher went into another little mental huddle with himself and returned with this convincing answer: "The elephant is standing on the back of a great turtle."

The pupil thought that very nice indeed, and went about his business once more. But his business soon ceased to engross him, for he had another difficulty. "And what," he demanded of the now quite frustrated philosopher, "is the turtle standing on?"

The Indian philosopher gave it up. "That," he answered sadly, "I have not been able to discover."

The fact remained that the turtle had to be standing on something, or the earth itself would crash off to oblivion.

The Chain

Let us, instead of looking downward for a turtle, look upward. Right before your nose, we'll suppose, hangs the links of a long chain. That lowest link depends upon the link above it. The link above it depends on the link above that. And, looking up, you notice that the links hang one from another up and up until the chain disappears in the sky. Now, although you remember hearing the traveller's tale of the Hindu magician who throws in the air the rope which hangs from nothing, though the magician's boy climbs up it and out of sight, you also remember that nobody has ever seen that trick done, and the whole thing seems to be the tale of the tropics-heated imagination of some European traveller, who forgot to wear his sun-helmet that particular afternoon. Ropes and chains do not hang in thin air. They must hang from a beam, a pole, a roof, or, possibly, from a rivet fixed in the mountains of the moon.

The Chain of Effects

Now, be good enough to look about you. The world is full of things, none of them necessary, since any of them might just as easily not have been at all; and these things all depend upon other things. There is yourself depending upon your father and mother. If your father and mother had not met, you would not, so to speak, have depended at all. Your father depended on your grandfather, and he, in turn, on all the ancestral links in the progression from the first man.

Let us, just to make the chain a little longer, pretend that that first man depended on an anthropoid ape, who ambitiously tried walking about on his hind legs and grunting in unintelligible syllables. Let us stretch the chain back to the ancestors of the anthropoid ape — to the first mammals, to the birds with the experimental wings, to the fish, to the protozoa, to the queer and amorphous beings wiggling in the primitive slime, to the elements of gas, to the first atoms — back, back, to the very first link in the chain.

None of them had to be; any one of them might not have been; a number of them ceased to be as time went on. Your father might have caught scarlet fever and died before you were born; that particular primordial anthropoid might have been unintelligent enough to tackle a sabre-toothed tiger; one of the remote fish might have tried to fly too soon.

As a matter of fact, the history of the universe, as read in the rocks, is a history of all sorts of links that cracked up before they could be parts of really long chains. Clearly, none of them was necessary.

What Holds It?

So, we have one of two pictures: We have either a chain that hangs from nothing, just remains suspended in the air, not fixed to something permanent like a great beam, a roof, a mountain top, the side of a crater on the moon; or, we have a chain, the far end of which is held firm and tight by some Power strong enough to keep the whole chain from slipping off into oblivion, firm and lasting enough to hold that chain in place throughout all time. The first picture is ridiculous. We are forced to accept the second. So that Power, that firm, lasting Something which always was, and was by the necessity of Its nature, actually does hold all these accidental, fragile links in place and keeps the chain from dropping off into nothingness. Which is all just another description of the Person we call God.

It would be fun if you worked that argument out for yourself. Try to make a chain hang without something fixed, firm, to hold it. Then give the argument a little serious thought. It gripped the

minds of the great Greek philosophers, forcing them to accept the Great God instead of their discredited little man-made gods. It is an argument that every true scientist, every mathematician, every great thinker sees and knows to be without answer or the possibility of refutation. Yet you can demonstrate it tonight while the rest of the party are doing parlour tricks.

The Crushing Word

Now, all this while my good little friend, the atheist, has been waiting for his chance. He flings at my head the crushing words; he flies at me with the light of victory in his eye.

“All this poppycock about God,” he almost shouts, “is made absolutely and completely unnecessary by the one, now proved, fact of —”

“Don’t tell me,” I plead. “Let me guess. By the one, now proved, fact of EVOLUTION!”

He would have much preferred it had I let him throw his bomb and then reeled back stunned by the detonation. Just the same, he knows he has me cornered now, and he sees through my bravado. He belongs, let’s say, to the school of “thinkers” who spawn from Girard, Kansas, and who pour forth the discredited scientific nonsense of fifty years ago at five cents per booklet, along with information, on how to be happy in love, how to be successful in business without brains or training, or how to read palms and draw horoscopes. So the fact that practically all first-line scientists even today admit some sort of God doesn’t bother him at all. Evolution solves all difficulties. Evolution has destroyed any need for God.

Evolution Demands God

Ah, but has it? Well, the plain fact is, my good little atheist, that if Evolution (even if it be spelled with a capital E as another substitute for God) be true, God is more necessary than He ever was.

There is much to be said in praise of the Wright brothers, who took off one sunny day, and Kitty Hawk became the synonym of man’s conquest of the air, a conquest which he had vainly sought since the days of Daedalus. To-day we stand before one of the big Douglas airliners, all set for a journey across the continent at 200 miles and more an hour, loaded with mail to be carried on precise schedule and slated to pick up passengers in New York and drop them off for dinner the same day in Los Angeles. We feel a sincere admiration for the geniuses who made all this possible, for the designers who worked on the machine year after year, for the engineers who planned the airports and perfected the safety equipment, for the efficiency experts who plotted the schedules and kept them working in good weather and bad. In fact, we are so impressed with the magnificent growth of aviation, that we are in a mood for passing out loving cups and medals, and placing wreaths on important tombs and impressive brows.

Do Planes Evolve?

But then it dawns on us. Why go about praising anyone for the efficiency of the modern airship? As a matter of fact, nobody is responsible for its development. What happened was this: When the Wright brothers designed their first heavier-than-air machine back there in the now remote days, they endowed their aeroplane with a wonderful power: It could not only fly, but it could, throughout the years that followed, evolve itself into an ever-increasing more perfect airplane. That plane developed into the early airships, that plunged themselves and their reckless aviators into the sea; it evolved into the rickety old craft in which the English Channel was first spanned.

That plane in turn developed into the death traps that were used during the Great War; but, fortunately, one of them was set aside, nature took its course, and, by the time the war was over, it had evolved, without any help from anyone, into something pretty smart and efficient in battle planes. Then this developed plane evolved into the plane with which the U.S. Navy sent Towers and Bellinger to cross the Atlantic. This plane did not achieve its goal, but hardly a half-dozen years later it had evolved into the “Spirit of St. Louis”, with which Lindbergh crossed the Atlantic. His plane evolved still further into bombing planes, luxury liners, fast mail planes, and, finally, into the modern cruisers which take off from San Francisco and end in Honolulu.

But note: All this time nobody but the Wright brothers deserves any credit. They endowed their first plane with the power to fly, but they did much more than that. They gave that first plane the power to evolve into all the planes which, from that day to this have transformed travel throughout the universe. Forget the other names in aviation. Just place wreaths to the memory of the Wrights of the U.S.A.

More Needs Still

“Will you,” demands our little atheist “stop this nonsense?”

“Ah,” we reply in our well-known, kindly tone, “we certainly will if you stop talking nonsense. Suppose your evolution is true. Suppose that from the first atom all this complicated, magnificent, as yet slightly explored world has evolved; what kind of being was it, let me ask, which endowed that first atom with the power to evolve into this universe? If we think the Wrights were remarkable for building their first plane, we’d think them miracle workers if they could have given to that first flying craft the power to evolve into all the other flying craft. And if, instead of merely making the world and planning and carrying out each detail, the Creator endowed the original atom with the power to evolve, the Creator of the world would be revealed as vastly greater than He ever seemed before.”

If Kitty Can’t

“There you go,” storms the atheist. “You’re dragging God in again. Evolution explains it all. We don’t need any God.”

“If you’ll concede that it is possible for the first plane to evolve unaided into all the planes down to the transcontinental liners of the present, then I’ll admit you are giving an explanation when you say: “God didn’t make the world.” Without any external aid the first atom slowly evolved into the violets and volcanoes, diamonds and dinosaurs, palm trees and planets, eyes and elephants, thunder clouds and the human thumb, caterpillars and the chemistry laboratory known as your stomach, rain clouds and reindeers. Is that a bargain?”

No. You won’t find even an atheist willing to make that bargain. He likes to hurl the word evolution at your head. But he does not like to be reminded that evolution without Someone behind it directing the most elaborate and complicated progression, from simple to infinitely complex and multiplied, is as meaningless as an aeroplane left on the floor of a museum in the expectation that year after year it will produce better and more perfect planes.

Why Call Him God?

“All right, all right,” cries the atheist, using the words but none of the soothing tone of the radio impressario. “You still haven’t proved that there is a God. All you’ve proved is that there is a being

of some sort who planned the universe, keeps it in order, gives it laws, is the Necessary Thing on which all the other things depend. How dare you call that Being God?"

Right there we could go into a disquisition on names, how relatively unimportant they are. How, for example, your father may have a variety of names: To the men downtown he is Mr. Smith; to his employees he is the Boss; to his friend he is Good Old Harry; to himself he is the Breadwinner; to your mother he is Darling; to you he is Dad. This creator and planner of the universe; this being whose mind conceived the laws of the world and whose will imposed them on all creatures, so that they move by force of those laws, blindly in the case of unintelligent creatures, freely in the case of man; this Necessary Being, on whom all else depends, has called Himself by a variety of names, and been called by a hundred different titles, from Javeh of the Jews to Our Father of the New Testament.

God is just the simple name by which we sum up our concept of all the qualities which we, after our scientific study of the world and its needs, discover Him to possess. The fact that he has the intellect to plan and the will to carry His plans into execution gives Him the two distinctive qualities which make Him, not an impersonal force, an abstraction floating vaguely like so much mist and fog through the universe, but a personal being who can be called Our Father, and who can be loved by His children of earth. But the names are unimportant. What is important is the easily proved fact of God's existence.

The Hardest Faith

I have said and written this on many occasions before. I say it and write it with much more emphasis this time: the most difficult act of faith in the world is the act in which the atheist cries out, "I do not believe in God." It is the most difficult and quite the silliest. One cannot make such an act of faith without binding oneself to all the intellectual consequences. It is a kind of blind, black boring into the ground. It is a giving up of the most fundamental laws of the human reason, the fruits of the most widespread experience of the human race.

When a man cries out, "I do not believe in God," he has to add: "And I reject the law of cause and effect. I have no explanation for the way in which anything happened, unless it just happened by chance. Grand pianos and radios, of course, do not happen by chance; but the stars and the cornfields, the mountains and the molehills do. I say that the world is filled with natural laws; but I also say that it is law which has no lawgiver. It just happened by some unexplained chance. I believe, in addition, that the whole human race, when it accepted a God and felt that the existence of a God was necessary to explain the plan and order of the universe and the law they knew to be present in their own hearts, was wrong and stupid and credulously foolish. I believe there is no God, although I can't advance a single argument to prove it. I prefer to accept the wonders of evolution, and say they all happened by accident or without an explanation than admit that there was a planner and director back of them who endowed beings with the power to evolve."

Isn't it simply dumbfounding that anyone can be found to make an act of faith as vast and baseless as that? Compared with any act of faith made by the most credulous believer in gods or God, this is a blind, implicit, reason-stultifying act which leaves those who hear it a little dazed and a little disappointed in human beings.

Even Bugs Prove

So, returning to my man on the Hyde Park pitch, who gave up God because he couldn't understand a green bug, I just feel sorry for him. It is true that for the minute he could not see any use for that bug. But if he had examined that bug, its power to see, its nervous system, the chemistry of its digestive apparatus, its fidelity to law, its incredible nature, absolutely inimitable by the greatest scientist, he might have gone down on his knees to any being who could produce such a marvel. And had he watched that bug's ancestors fertilise that garden, work the soil like miniature ploughs, and leave their bodies behind to enrich that soil, he might have found that the Being Who made the bug had given it not unimportant functions even in relation to the man who, because the bug had no place on a prize rose-bush, felt he must destroy it.

Down With Law!

Without meaning to hurt the feelings of any man or woman who has made the difficult act of faith, "I do not believe in God," I repeat, with all the conviction I possess: "People do not give up God because there are arguments against His existence; they give up God because they object to his law." I'd go further than that. In the vast majority of cases, they give Him up because He stands between them and the gratification of their personal greed, either their greed for money or their greed for power or their greed for pleasures which God was indiscreet enough to ban by His sixth and ninth commandments.

A logical atheist cannot be a moral man. Note: I do not say atheists cannot be moral people. They can be, and frequently are. After all, it is not reasonable to suppose that civilisation existed throughout long centuries in possession of the knowledge of God's beautiful law without there having been a great many people who accepted that law from force of habit, or because of convention. God banned murder, lust, cruelty, theft, greed, slander, the ugly things of which human misery is compounded. He banned them by the law He wrote in every human heart. He banned them again in the formal law of His written commandments. And men and women who give Him up are still illogical enough in many cases to continue to act by His laws, though they have rejected the Lawgiver.

No God, No Law

But why should they? If there is no God, there is no Lawgiver. The voice of conscience has no one to enforce its commands. One may listen to its clear commands; but if one declines to follow them, who can demand an accounting? If there is no God, there is no rewarder or punisher that the smart and clever person cannot outwit and escape. If there is no God, then man is the world's supreme lawgiver, and should feel quite free to scrap all the law with which he disagrees. If the law is not to his liking, and if, by force of brilliantly planned escape or the eloquence of shrewd lawyers, he can outwit it in human courts of law, what is to hinder him?

Hard Laws of Man

Despite all this, the world cannot get along without God. To replace God's law, smashed by this atheistic attack, we have seen the building up of cruel human laws and the modern taboos; the power of the majority crushing the right of the few, the will of the dictator riding bloodily over the backs of his oppressed people, the might of "those who have" crushing those who are luckless enough not to have, the rule of passion holding men and women in the most appalling of slaveries.

Difficulties

Note, please, that we do not for a moment deny that there are difficulties where the existence of God is concerned. We must remind you that God has to be beyond the complete understanding of any man or else He cannot be God. If God were small enough to fit into your limited mind and mine, He would not be the mover, planner, director of this slightly known universe. But only a fool lets a difficulty stand between him and a fact that is as clear, logical, and inevitable as the fact of God.

We Know

Atheism doesn't make sense.

Communism that starts off with the fundamental principle of atheism is essentially stupid.

Dictatorships which set up silly gods or the all-powerful State for the true God are always brutal, unjust, tyrannous.

The man who says, "I believe in God," and who knows how to prove his belief, faces life and sees that it is a beautiful thing, a God-given gift, an opportunity to march through a magnificently-ordered world into the presence of the Rewarder of noble lives, into the presence of our Father Who is in heaven, but who is yet the Creator, Preserver, Guide, and generous Benefactor of this earth and of us who are His children.
