

EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

“...FOR THE EQUIPPING OF THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF SERVICE...” ~ EPHESIANS 4:12

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THE SUBJECT ATHEISTS AVOID

By Ken Chumbley

In my two public debates with atheists (University of Illinois, 1985; Iowa State University, 1988), there was one thing in which I utterly failed. In discussions, my opponents spent all their time in the negative, attacking my belief in the existence of God. Not once was I able to prod them into telling the audience what they, as atheists, believed the *ultimate reality* to be. They were smart to avoid the subject. To call someone an unbeliever is not to say they have no beliefs, for unbelievers have many beliefs—including some unbelievable ones. And when these are clearly delineated, most folks see that the Emperor’s new clothes are no clothes at all! To illustrate, let’s look at this business of ultimate reality. My ultimate reality is the God who revealed Himself in Jesus Christ—but what is it for the atheist? Carl Sagan, American astronomer, astrophysicist, and host of the popular *Cosmos*, summarized it this way: “The cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be” (quoted by Ron Rhodes, *The 10 Things You Should Know About The Creation Vs. Evolution Debate*, 33). Put another way, the atheistic ultimate reality boils down to the “uniformity of causes in a closed system” (Francis Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason*, 36). I’m not giving you a Caricature or straw man here; this is what the atheists say they believe. Now this belief has many implications, but for this article, I’ll call attention to just three.

1) The physical order is the only order there is. The explanation for everything (the universe, man, etc.) is found in nature, not outside it (hence, per Schaeffer, nature is a *closed system*).

2) The physical order is governed by cause-and-effect. All actions are contingent, being determined by prior actions. The orbit of planets, for instance, isn't arbitrary, but governed by certain physical principles. So also the path of a billiard ball; a billiard ball isn't free to choose its own course; its course is a consequence, determined by antecedent considerations (mass, force, etc.).

3) Since man is a part of the physical order, he isn't qualitatively different from billiard balls or anything else in the physical order. As Elton Trueblood put it, "Whatever we do is the direct result of a combination of physical factors" (*The Logic of Belief*, 100). If atheists are right, and the world is only ruled by physical cause-and-effect, where does that leave us?

Supposing there was no intelligence behind the universe, no creative mind. In that case nobody designed my brain for the purpose of thinking. It is merely that when the atoms inside my skull happen for physical or chemical reasons to arrange themselves in a certain way, this gives me, as a by-product, the sensation I call thought. But if so, how can I trust my own thinking to be true? ...If I can't trust my own thinking, of course, I can't trust the arguments leading to atheism, and therefore have no reason to be an atheist or anything else (C. S. Lewis, quoted by James D. Bales, *Forty Two Years on the Firing Line*, 46).

I forgot who said it, but if naturalistic cause-and-effect is all there is, there isn't any real difference between saying, "I think" and "I itch"; both are but the results of natural

causes. Can you see why unbelievers shy away from talking about their ultimate reality? If they could prove their belief, they would destroy any reason for believing their belief. If atheism is true, atheistic beliefs are not intellectual concepts at which the atheist freely arrived; they are just sensations produced by physical forces beyond his control. Thus, men have no real freedom to deliberate and decide—everything about them is merely of physical causes.

If in this life only all we have is physical cause-and-effect, we are all men more miserable.

PROVERBS: WISDOM FOR LIFE

By Rick Lanning

“The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: *to know* wisdom and instruction, *to perceive* the words of understanding, *to receive* the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity; *to give* prudence to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion—a wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel. *To understand* a proverb and an enigma, the words of the wise and their riddles” (Proverbs 1:1-6).

The bookstores and libraries of America are stocked to overflowing with “How To” books that promise you the moon on how to find happiness and discover the “secrets” of life. Experts of all colors and stripes can be found who will, for a price, offer you the wisdom of the ages. Like Job replied to His “wise friends,” **“No doubt you are the people, and wisdom will die with you!”** (Job 12:2).

God gave the son of David eternal wisdom, good for 1000 B.C. and still good for 2017 A.D. It will still be perfect

millenniums from now, if the Lord delays His coming. Note in the text above, the reader can **“know... perceive... receive... understand a proverb and an enigma.”** That is, even the simple minded and the young can become wise (vs. 4), short-circuiting years of learning at the University of Hard Knocks. Like David told Solomon: **“I have more understanding than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation”** (Psalm 119:99).

The greatest education you can give yourself will not cost you tuition or room-and-board, but is free for the taking. For a solid month (31 days) focus one day at a time meditation on one chapter. In a month you will gain more wisdom than a Master degree at any college! Try this for one year (12 times through the book). In time the world will beat a path to your door for counsel. One day, perhaps sooner than you think, even you will be thought a wise man.

NOTES: _____

AM LESSON:
Facts of Faith

PM LESSON:
Life or Death?

“GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES...”
(MATTHEW 28:19-20)