

May the Farce be with You

A lighthearted look at why
God does not exist



Written and Illustrated
by
Pamela Sutter

See Sharp Press

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For information contact:

See Sharp Press
P.O. Box 1731
Tucson, AZ 85702-1731

www.seesharppress.com

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WANTED



GOD

Aliases: Yahweh, Jehovah, Savior, Heavenly Father,
Allah, Lord, Holy Spirit, Creator, Maker, Christ,
Intelligent Designer

Crimes: existing under false pretenses; impersonating a deity; violating "Good Samaritan" laws by failing to come to the aid of those in need; causing assorted "Acts of God" resulting in loss of property & life

*Considered armed and dangerous. Best course of action should you encounter him:
Ignore him and he'll go away.*

Introduction

Atheist. The word has shock value, but it simply means “without belief in God.” Unlike agnostics, who suggest that God is unknowable, and that they cannot or do not know whether God exists, atheists discount any and all supernatural entities. Atheists are not waiting for evidence of God any more than they are waiting for evidence of purple unicorns.

It is no coincidence that humans are the only species that practices religion, for we are also the only species that is aware of death. Soon after evolving the ability to think (and to think about death), we began to believe in gods: sun gods, fertility gods, volcano gods, animal gods, and the god of special interest to atheists, the monotheistic Judeo-Christian, omnipotent, universe-creating God of the Bible. God belief seems to be an inevitable cultural byproduct of self-awareness.

We may be smart enough to believe in (more accurately, hope for) a higher power, but our unique human brain is also stubborn enough to continue believing/hoping despite the discoveries of science that pretty much put God out of a job. Recent polls indicate that roughly 10% of Americans consider themselves to be atheists, making nonbelievers a larger minority than Jews or Mormons. That still leaves 90% of citizens claiming to believe in God.

God’s existence, it is said, cannot be disproven. In fact, *anything* that the mind can imagine can never be disproven. Think up something fanciful, something you know can’t possibly exist, such as an invisible elf that resides in your refrigerator or a table with 10,000 legs. “*Poof!*” it automatically has an above-zero chance of existing, because it cannot be proven absolutely that this invention of your mind doesn’t, hasn’t, or won’t ex-

ist somewhere at some time in the universe. All of space and time would have to be searched to prove it 100% false.

The logic seems absurd, but it's a necessary disclaimer. A believer who says "prove God doesn't exist" could just as easily demand, "Prove there isn't a colony of Flatlanders living in Planet X's core." God's existence is more problematic than that of Flatlanders, for God is supernatural, not physical.

The whole cosmos could be searched atom by atom and He'd never be found. Because of this, atheists consider belief in the supernatural, and hence in God, to be irrational—as irrational as backwards time travel or claiming to know the final digit of pi.



Paradoxical Prayer

A comatose young boy hovers near death. Family and friends pray he'll survive. The boy dies. The family muses that God needed him; he's been called "home" and is being embraced by all his loved ones that preceded him. Perhaps his parents ask, "Why God, why?!" and then concede that the answer would be beyond their understanding. Suppose the child survives. It's a miracle, their prayers were answered! Now let's say the boy survives, but with a severe handicap. Were the prayers only partially answered? No, the boy becomes an inspiration to others as part of God's grand plan. What about a patient down the hall who dies. Not enough prayers? God needed her more? (And for that matter, how could God "need" anyone?)

Notice that no matter what the outcome, believers twist events to justify their sense of hope. No matter what happens, God comes out smelling like a rose.

A glance at the newspapers reveals God's odd prayer-answering priorities. Apparently He favors granting record-breaking home runs over saving a doomed commuter train. He allows a planeload of praying passengers to smash into the ocean while He puts someone's multiple sclerosis into remission. He looks the other way when a toddler is kidnapped and murdered, but gladly answers a farmer's prayers for rain.

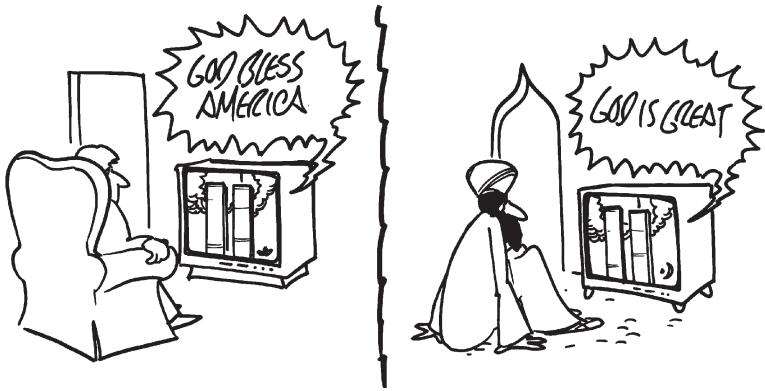
When planes don't crash or when a person doesn't get a disease, prayer again gets the credit, and God gets points for allowing life to proceed normally.

Praying before a sporting event is among the most ridiculous forms of "worship" imaginable. To think that the Creator of the universe would care about the outcome of a high school football game is ludicrous. Did God favor the winning team? Was He angry with the player who made the losing fumble? Many believe so: one in four Americans believe that God intervenes in sporting events.

He must have really had fun with the 49th Superbowl (Seahawks vs. Patriots), especially in the final minute. That God—what a prankster!

The motive behind prayer is especially revealing. Prayer begs God to intervene. Isn't that second-guessing God's intent? Isn't prayer a suggestion to God that this present course might not be the best way to handle things? "Do you really need to take little Timmy now?" Praying implies that God's divine plan is in error and that we have useful advice for him.

Why interfere with the Lord's plan for us? Don't pray for a loved one's cancer to be cured, for it's God's will that this disease will claim her, after which she'll be on her way to heaven. Might unanswered prayers be a test of faith? "God won't give me more than I can handle." My, what a nice God, always testing us, always toying with our emotions.



The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon spawned a surge of prayers, though all too late to have changed God’s mind about allowing the tragedy. Inevitably, the “where was God?” question surfaced. Clergy answered, “It’s not a question of where was God or why did He let it happen, but rather, why wasn’t it worse?” So, if we can imagine something worse, we then praise God for not letting it happen? Religious believers used every excuse in the book. The alternative was notably absent: “Maybe there is no God.”

The fact is, no prayers are answered. No prayers go unanswered. People are simply seeking meaning in otherwise inexplicable events, in much the same way that they see shapes in clouds. Prayer can be used as a form of calming meditation, which in turn can aid the body to heal, but there’s nothing divine behind this placebo effect. Scientific studies show similar results from petting cats and watching fish swim in an aquarium.

Prayer is simply a human reaction to apparently meaningless physical and emotional pain.

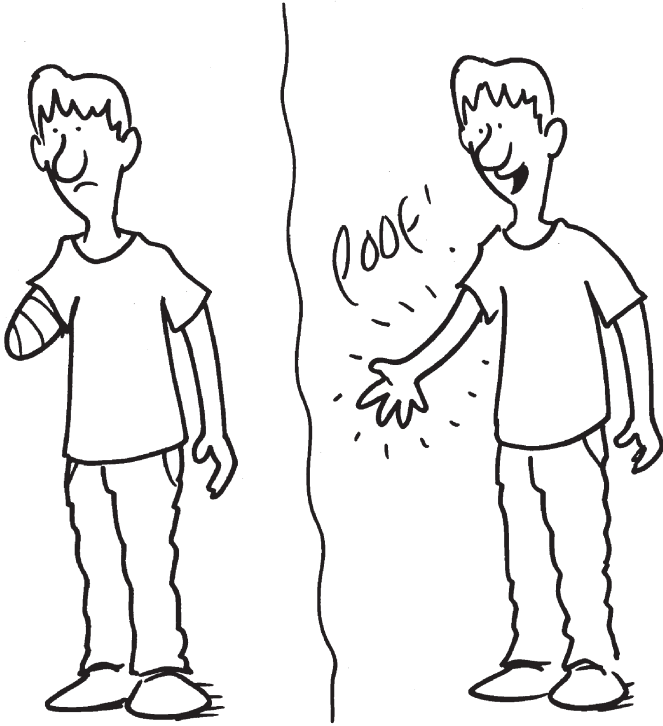


HOW GOD ANSWERS PRAYERS

Murky Miracles

A horrible accident took place in December 2000 in which an eight-months-pregnant woman was hurled through the windshield of a truck onto the pavement; the jack-knifing vehicle then sliced her body in half. This caused the expulsion of the baby, still attached by the umbilical cord and very much alive. The child's survival was hailed as a miracle by the woman's husband, the driver of the truck. "Something else must be at work here besides luck," he commented.

A miracle? It was a miracle that the mother died an ugly death by being cut in half by a truck? A miracle that the baby will grow up without his mother and, when old enough, will be saddened by the horrible way she died? A miracle that the baby was jettisoned onto cold asphalt as his father became a widower?



HOW COME GOD NEVER DOES THIS ?

Sorry, there was no miracle here. The human trait of seeking comfort is a strong one. Notice that the father focused only on the good: the baby survived the freak accident. People look for reasons to maintain their faith in God, and they will convince themselves they've found it, no matter what.

Time and again folks overlook the negative and latch on to whatever is left. An infertile couple praises the Lord for the miracle He bestowed when the fertility drugs kicked in to give them septuplets. Why was the couple plagued by infertility to begin with? Why weren't they content with the destiny He chose for them? Maybe they were meant to adopt a special needs child instead? No. Truth be told, all "miracles" are miracles only in hindsight.



“LOOK! OUR WEDDING PHOTO MADE IT THROUGH WITHOUT A SCRATCH! WHAT A MIRACLE!”

A tornado skips along a residential neighborhood, wiping out some houses, sparing others. Those with intact houses will praise the Lord, while the neighbor next door standing amidst rubble demands, “Why me?!” Random happenstance is assigned meaning by pattern-seeking humans. The result is a “miracle.” No god need apply, for the human mind has filled the position.

A man has a near-fatal encounter with (insert your own mayhem). In an interview he humbly explains, “It wasn’t my time.” Has he forgotten about all the people who were

snuffed out in the prime of life, and infants who never got to know life at all?

Watch what happens when trouble befalls a church. An earthquake in El Salvador destroyed the church in a small town, and also killed hundreds under a landslide of dirt and rubble. Survivors quickly declared, “God loves us, He left some of us alive to rebuild the church!” Huh?! God let people die horrible, claustrophobic deaths in order for the others to see themselves as “survivors”? This is a good thing? Why wasn’t the church spared? Come to think of it, why did the quake occur at all? Was God busy curing someone’s cancer sore?

“God only knows why this happened” is another common utterance, often spoken in dismay. Indeed, He must be one sinister God to allow or to create a natural disaster. Or maybe He’s a nice God, taking whole families up to Heaven at once so they can discuss his “acts of God.”

“It’s a miracle that more people weren’t killed.” Uh, it was a miracle that the earthquake killed a lot of people, but not everyone?

Miracles are in the eye of the beholder.