

Religious Bulletin
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To An Agnostic.

You lay down certain propositions to which you say you want an answer. If you are asking in good faith, here is your answer; if you are simply seeking an occasion to blaspheme or to harm the faith of others, God is your Judge.

Your first proposition is Herbert Spencer's accusation that God is the author of evil as well as good and that He revealed Himself to the Jews only as fearsome and terrifying; and Spencer's protest that his will is not free and that therefore he cannot help hating God.

Very well. Tell us how your Spencer, who attributed the world to an "infinite, eternal energy from which all things proceed -- the ultimate Reality transcending human thought," could give free will without giving at the same time the possibility of moral evil. In your quotation he complains that he has no free will; if he has none, then there is no moral evil. But the common sense of mankind recognizes remorse and satisfaction, merit and demerit, duty, responsibility, choice, and so forth; therefore the common sense of mankind demands free will and recognizes the possibility of moral evil. The common sense of mankind is a better guide than Herbert Spencer, who said, near the close of his life, "I have spent my life beating the air." As for the "Old Testament God," if you can read the Old Testament without finding a superabundance of God's loving kindness, you are blind. "If thy eye be evil, thy whole body shall be darksome."

Your second proposition contains the sophism of Epicurus that it is wicked of God not to remove evil from the world, and the blistering diatribe of Jeffries that "a man of intellect and humanity could cause everything to happen in an infinitely superior manner."

So be it. Let your man of "intellect and humanity" make a world and cause therein "everything to happen in an infinitely superior manner." He will take out of it the beauty of struggle, the joy of victory over handicaps, the sweet virtue of mercy to the unfortunate; he will take away the most glorious chapter in the history of the human race, the Redemption and the Life of the Redeemer. You will have a world of men who struggle not, who never rise from a fall, who know no victory, who are devoid of mercy. Take your choice.

Finally, you ask for an act of faith in the literal interpretation of the Bible, with certain specific interpretations which skeptics call in question, among which are: the creation of the world out of nothing, the special creation of man, the fall of man and its effects, the Incarnation of the Son of God, and so forth.

No Catholic can make an act of faith in the literal interpretation of the Bible, because the Catholic Church alone, which has preserved the Bible and practiced its teachings from the beginning, has received from God the right to interpret the Bible. If you want to know how the Catholic Church interprets the Bible, study the little catechism which we give to children in grammar school. It contains truths which the philosophers, unaided by Divine revelation, were unable to discover. Prayer helps you to understand it.

Waste neither pity nor hate on us poor Christians. Hate injures only the man who hates; save pity for the man who cannot be happy. The man who washes the ulcers of the leper, the missionary who brings ideals to the savage, the priest who restores confidence to the man who has lost faith in himself and in humanity, the father who works through heat and snow to raise a family, the mother who braves hardship and death to give souls to God -- they need no pity. They have the happiness the cynic can never know; they have given to the world all the human things it has that are worth while. Agnosticism has given us the present situation in Russia.