

Godlessness: A Critique of the Idea of God

Johann Most

1870

Contents

1. From Faith	3
2. No almighty and all-good God	3
3. No almighty and all-wise God	3
4. No almighty and all-just God	4
5. No Almighty God	4
6. No Omnipresent God	4
7. On the God of the Pantheists	5
8. From the Bible	5
9. From the God of the Christians	5
10. Of the Immortal Soul	6
11. Who created the world?	6
12. From the punishers of the “blasphemers.”	6
13. Virtue and Sin	7
14. What Religion Serves	8
15. Ending	8

1. From Faith

Many things are believed about God, while in fact nothing is known about him. For belief is a negation of knowledge; one only believes what one does not know; what one does know one no longer needs to believe.

One can suspect something, one can consider something possible; but to believe something is absurd. Knowledge is positive, belief is illusory. Belief is madness; for the believer declares that he does not know an imaginary something, and yet he treats this imagination as a fact. When someone says: "I believe in God," this means that he does not know whether there is a God, but that he is nevertheless "convinced" of his existence, by what means he does not know. He claims that he "feels" the existence of God, but in fact this "feeling" is only an illusion; he simply believes in God, and that is enough for him.

There are indeed people who not only say that they believe in God, but who actually claim that they are in direct contact with God. In this case it is either a question of hallucination or hallucination.

Faith enables, indeed it causes, an innumerable number of ideas about God. What they have in common is that they understand God to be a being who is more powerful than humans and who controls them. These ideas of a higher power increase to the point of belief in omnipotence and vary to the point of horror. It is therefore not possible to give an exact definition of the concept of God, but it can be proven that belief in God is nothing other than madness.

To deal with all the different gods would be, if not impossible, at least a superfluous task; it may be sufficient to break down the main ideas about God, which will be done in the following.

2. No almighty and all-good God

If an all-powerful and all-good God existed, and if he wanted us to know him (this is what omni-goodness requires), why does he not let himself be perceived? If he is all-good, why does he leave us ignorant of his existence? It would be of great importance to know that an all-good Lord God exists! Since he were all-good, there would be no fear that his appearance would frighten us. (Or could the divine good be human evil?) And since he were all-powerful, he could easily protect himself and us against possible accidents.

But since no Lord God reveals himself, there can be no doubt that there is no all-good and all-powerful God.

This one argument proves sufficiently that there is no all-good and all-powerful God; further arguments are therefore superfluous.

3. No almighty and all-wise God

If an all-wise and all-powerful God exists and created the world, how could he create so many unwise beings? How can an all-wise man create something unwise? Is his wisdom perhaps so wise that he considers it wise not to spread it further? Or do the believers perhaps want to claim that everything is wise in this world?

From this it is clear that there is no all-wise and all-powerful God.

4. No almighty and all-just God

If God, the All-Just and Almighty, exists, and is consequently omniscient, and therefore knows all our misery and can put an end to it, why does he not do it? Why does the All-Just and Almighty God allow injustice to run free; why does he calmly allow the tyrant to murder the helpless child; why does he allow the weak to perish and the strong to triumph? How can one conclude from such facts that an All-Just and Almighty God exists?

If an Almighty God nevertheless existed, he would be the most complete monster; for atrocities are committed without any “stop!” from his side, millions. Creatures groan in slavery without his release, millions are strangled by raging barbarians, and the Almighty God — the monster — looks on calmly without saying a word.

Not only that! If an almighty God exists, he is the cause of all misery, because nothing can happen without him.

According to Christian concepts, such a God would not actually be a real God, because he would lack all-goodness and all-justice. But now the question arises as to whether omnipotence exists at all.

5. No Almighty God

If God Almighty existed, it would be necessary — as Bakunin says — to abolish him; for, as we have just seen, he could only be a tyrant. But since he were the Almighty, any attempt at liberation would be useless. Even if the Almighty wanted his own destruction, liberation would be impossible; for since the Almighty is everything, the cause, the will of life, the destruction of him would be the destruction of everything — including us.

If God were the Almighty, it would never be possible for man to be free. For since this God was almighty, man could only be a slave. No, if the Almighty existed, man could not even be a slave; he would be a thing without any power or quality, which is nothing according to common sense. But man is something, and consequently there is no almighty God.

But if God Almighty existed, man would not have free will. But countless cases prove that man has a highly developed free will, so there is no such thing as an almighty God.

6. No Omnipresent God

If God the Omnipresent exists, and is therefore everywhere, we must see, hear, smell, taste and feel him; if he is everywhere, he must also be before our eyes, on our tongue, etc., he must also be where we can perceive him. But since this is not the case, the omnipresent God is not everywhere, and consequently not at all. He is simply invisible, inaudible, insensible, insensible and insensible.

And now, how can one assert the existence of a being which we cannot perceive at all? It will be said that the Omnipresent is something immaterial, something spiritual. Supposing, not admitting, that this is true, how can anyone have proof of his existence?

The absurdity of the idea of an omnipresent, imperceptible God is obvious if one thinks about it for a moment. This spirit, which takes up no space, is nevertheless supposed to be everywhere!

Since, in the existence of an omnipresent God, there can be no place where he is not, he is, as a result, everything. Yes, this omnipresent God is everything, including a colorful flower, a howler monkey, a fragrant manure trough, etc.; and yet we can neither see, hear, smell, taste nor feel him! This is certainly strange; and to understand this, you really don't need any intellect, but a good portion of faith.

Then, who can even imagine something immaterial? Immaterial! "Something" that consists of nothing! But you shouldn't think about this, you have to believe it.

7. On the God of the Pantheists

The God of the pantheists is totally useless. Their God is the world, nature, so man would also be a part of God, and as a result the God of the pantheists would not be personal — a very strange God. He is a being, similar to the state or "society." He would be all-powerful if he were only — a person. But, like the state, he is everywhere he is recognized; he himself is incapable of action, his business must be taken care of by representatives, because he is just a nebulous figment of the imagination, a ghost. He is (as Heine says) "a poor, dreamy being, woven and grown together with the world, imprisoned in it, as it were, and yawns at you, without will and powerless."

You pantheists, just call nature nature; just call the world world! Why should things that already have a name be given another name that expresses only too clearly what it actually means?!

8. From the Bible

The Bible actually has nothing to do with God. It is a book full of horrors, absurdities and contradictions. The story of creation, for example, is a blatant fraud and contradicts itself; the Bible tells us one time that man was created before animals and another time after animals.

Such contradictions are not uncommon in the "Holy Scripture". — How can the Bible reporter even know that and how God created the world? — Nevertheless, it will suffice to point out that the Bible is a product of human hands, cannot be anything else, and that there is nothing to prove its false divine origin. And nothing in it testifies to the unproven existence of God. What we find in it is that man is not a product of God, but that the idea of God is a product of humans.

9. From the God of the Christians

Describing the Christian God is completely impossible, because the opinions of Christians about their Lord God differ by miles. The best description of the Christian God is probably the one that declares him to be indefinable. But something indefinable cannot be criticized. And in fact the Christian Lord God is indefinable — or one would have to believe some sect.

10. Of the Immortal Soul

The religious swindlers also spread the colossal lie that man has an immortal soul. Experience has not yet established that such a thing as a soul exists, but that the so-called mental functions are nothing other than physical functions. But!

What does science prove to believers?! They believe, and therefore they cannot be convinced by evidence.

Christianity only recognizes that humans, not animals, have an immortal soul. The ancient Egyptians were more consistent in this madness; they believed, as we are told, that animals can also have a soul, that after a person's death his soul travels and often resides in cats, dogs or crocodiles. This is a highly comical madness if you have enough cool blood and do not suffer too much from the madness.

11. Who created the world?

The question has often been asked: Who created the world? Believers say it was God; other, unbelieving believers say that the world has neither beginning nor end. Now, I cannot imagine the world without a beginning and an end, but neither can I imagine a world with a beginning and an end. But this lack of knowledge is absolutely no proof of the existence of God for me; because to believe something because I cannot understand it is a manifestation of blatant nonsense. It is precisely when you do not understand something that it is even more important to examine the matter and examine it again, not to throw in the towel. It would still be better to put an end to the question and not think about it any more than to give in to stupid belief. Besides, what does it matter to me who created the world? Since it is here, I take it as it is and try to enjoy it as much and as well as I can. But to those who say that God created the world, I want to ask the question: Who created God? Here we have the same question as above: the question of the origin of the first cause. And so the whole God phrase falls apart again. –

According to Corvin there can only be one world cause, only one God. He then says: »The so-called atheists do not actually deny the existence of God, which would be absolute stupidity, but only declare themselves against the idea of a personal God.« This is simply Kohl.

Corvin uses the name God to describe »the power suspected by everyone, even if not understood, to which he attributes the origin and preservation of everything that exists, the world.«

But Corvin judges himself when he says: »Every person who is capable of thinking at all forms an idea of this being that is appropriate to the degree of development of the reason given to him at birth. This idea is his god, and thus every man is the creator of his god.« This last sentence is enough. This idea has therefore created the world! No comment necessary.

12. From the punishers of the “blasphemers.”

God's liars who punish the ”blasphemers” form a miserable class of tyrants. If an almighty God lives, he can punish the “blasphemers” himself. What do believers have to do with interfering in the affairs of the “blasphemer”? Why don't they let the matter take its course, why don't they let God himself carry out the punishment, which would have a much better effect on the unbeliever and at the same time prove to him the existence of God?!? These representatives of God may say

that they have been commissioned by him, but — unless they are madmen — they know only too well that no God exists, which is why they assume a false authority to fight the atheists. — But if the almighty really existed, this authority would really also be his work, and the blasphemy committed against him would also be his work. Why does he want some to blaspheme him and then be punished by others? What is the point of this farce? An almighty being cannot go mad, otherwise his omnipotence would be at an end.

But in reality the matter is simply this: there is no such thing as God, and those who punish the so-called blasphemers are mad or conscious tyrants.

13. Virtue and Sin

All tyrants say — even if they don't believe anything — that faith is necessary to maintain the so-called order. Nothing is more correct than this! As soon as this fixed idea falls, the distinction between virtue and sin and their substitutes also falls, because the latter is their basis: virtue and sin come from divine fraud. When the origin falls away and the foggy product hangs in the air, man will ask himself: Why should an action be virtuous or sinful? Finally, when the fantasy of God proves to be nothing, man will realize that an action in itself is neither virtue nor sin. The phrase about a moral purpose of the world is like a soap bubble that gently flies up and bursts in the face of a conflict of interests.

The religious fraudsters say that the all-good and all-powerful God rewards and punishes people. But how can one assume that the All-Good One rewards or punishes people whom He has made virtuous or sinful? After all, everything is supposed to happen only through Him, everything is His work. But we have seen that there is no All-Just One or All-Powerful One, so the fraud of hell and heaven is obvious. We have seen neither God nor the devil, neither heaven nor hell. But the greatest fraud is probably that of the continuation of individual life after death. Such a ghost must be believed, only a fool creates such a rafter.

“We are all perfect” says Stirner and there is not a single person on the whole earth who is a sinner! There are madmen who imagine themselves to be God the Father, God the Son or the Man in the Moon, and so it is teeming with fools who think they are sinners; but just as the former are not the Man in the Moon, so these are not sinners. Their sin is imaginary.

But, one might object, their madness or their obsession is at least their sin. Their obsession is nothing but what they were able to achieve, the result of their development, just as Luther's belief in the Bible was all he was able to achieve. One person brings himself into the madhouse with his development, the other brings himself into the Pantheon and around Valhalla with it.

You brought the sinner with you in your head, that is why you found him, that is why you shoved him in everywhere. Don't name people Sinners, then they are not: You alone are the creator of sins: You, who think you love people, you are the one who throws them into the mire of sin, you are the one who separates them into the vicious and the virtuous, into humans and monsters, you are the one who defiles them with the spittle of your obsession; for you do not love people, but rather the human being. But I tell you, you have never seen a sinner, you have only dreamed of him. One can only sin against something holy. As soon as the desecration is complete, one can no longer sin, just as one can no longer steal as soon as there is no more property. Desecrate the holy, and virtue and sin no longer have any meaning. Virtue is no better than sin, it too is imaginary, it too is a rafter. Virtue is pleasing to God; But since there is no God,

nothing can be pleasing to God, and consequently there is no virtue. Just as there are no sinners, there are also no virtuous people.

14. What Religion Serves

It is clear what the whole God swindle is for, namely the exploitation of the masses of the people. As long as the poor devil hopes for a better fate in heaven, he will be more likely to be persuaded to live in misery here on earth. The priests, who are and were known hypocrites, are known as people who have always taken good care of their bodies. But not only the priests, but also all other God-pleasers, such as emperors, kings, rulers, landowners, capitalists, rentiers, etc., use the religious swindle as a splendid means of lulling the masses to sleep and then cheating and stealing from them. Doesn't every tyrant have to say that there must be a God? Yes, religion is the safety valve through which human intelligence, superfluous for slavery, goes to the devil; and there must be a religion – if a minority is to rule over a majority.

Religion seeks to destroy me, it seeks to make me its slave; it wants to give me a purpose. Religion demands that I serve a “higher” being and therefore tries to prevent me from serving myself. It demands that I be enthusiastic, devoted, and sacrificed for a so-called “higher being.” This “higher being” should be everything to me, and consequently I should be nothing to myself. But I am everything to myself and am destined for nothing. Those who are stupid enough to believe that they are destined for something “higher” are then guided by the clergy in such a way that service to the “higher being” is a waste of time.

Serving a “higher being” is the essence of religion. Whatever this “higher being” calls itself, whoever it may be, that does not change the matter; worshiping it or serving it is and remains idolatry. An atheist has nothing above himself. Anyone who recognizes a “higher” is religious.

Every religion is based on the idea of sacrifice. It is therefore cruel, unjust, domineering, it robs me of my freedom and sense of self-belonging.

Religion wants to give me an authority, be it a secular or a ghostly one; the atheist strives to become authority-free. Religion wants me to be subordinate; the atheist strives to rebel. Religion wants to give me a master; becoming masterless is the atheist's goal. Universal enslavement is the ultimate goal of religion; the deification of every ghost, the breaking of all chains is the ultimate goal of the atheist. So choose whether you want to be a slave or a master. It depends on that whether you want to recognize a higher one or whether you want to be the highest for yourself.

15. Ending

It is not surprising that the God-swindle has spread so widely. After religion had arisen from the weakness and fear of mankind, it was propagated by all possible means by those who had an interest in it, the priests and other swindlers. The God-swindlers did not tolerate criticism; they shunned logic; they fought by intrigue, they tortured the unbelievers in secret, they stole in the name of God – in short, their whole method of fighting was based on hypocrisy. The stake and the torture by means of the wheel, the thumbscrew, the Spanish boot, the torture chair, etc. are silent and yet eloquent witnesses to the cruel tyranny of the priests' brood. After the people, ruled and idiotized by a relatively few hypocrites, languished in barbarism, it was incomprehensible that the plague of God had to triumph as long as only isolated atheists appeared, who were

immediately ruined by all means? As long as a considerable number of people did not become aware of this, every public atheist appearance was made impossible by the priests with poison, pyres and other means.

It is clear that the history of religious men provides no proof of the existence of God; on the contrary, it speaks for his non-existence. Tyranny in all forms is the fruit of religion. The actions of religious people have — generally speaking — slapped the religion they preached in the face.

How long did the priests remain real servants of God? Until the time came to become masters of the believers.

And by elevating themselves from servants of God to exploiters, they themselves trampled on religion. They did and do exactly the opposite of what they preach; instead of submitting, they rebel; instead of being servants, they become masters. As sad as the history of priesthood is, it nevertheless provides irrefutable proof of the existence of the rebellious tendency of people. No believer could be converted if there were not already seeds of unbelief in him. But this tendency to unbelief is still present in most people, despite all the priests, so that there is still a chance of success in the fight against the religious plague. Every person has an aspiration to research since birth, he seeks to understand things, to explain them to himself. And this is precisely what religion prohibits; it demands faith, and where this begins, all criticism goes to hell. Anyone who surrenders to faith sacrifices his intellect and his individuality, becomes an idealist, an obsessive despiser of materialism.

If one asks about the basis of the religious plague, the question is now easy to answer: it is the disease of the thinking apparatus; Just as there are people who suffer from persecution mania, there are also people who suffer from religious mania. And if you ask about the cause of this madness, there is only one explanation: the priests in league with need. "Need teaches prayer," says the proverb; and in fact need is the best founder of religion, just as religion is the best founder of need. It follows from this that better material conditions would be a good remedy against religious madness. One can easily convince oneself of this by taking a look at the wealthy classes of Christendom. The majority of them evidently do not believe in their religion, for their actions are mostly in contradiction with it. This can only be explained by the fact that the wealthy classes have become rid of religion as a result of their wealth and a better and healthier life. Clinging to the idea of God is caused on the one hand by hypnotic motives, and on the other hand by fear, weakness, lack of self-confidence, and spiritual bankruptcy. If someone has lost himself or never found himself, he surrenders to his ghost. Religion is therefore the rule of thought; the religious person is possessed by his idea.

Although the person suffering from religious madness declares himself healthy, he is still suffering, burdened with pain, melancholic, conceited, etc. By living for his absolute, pure, fixed idea, he loses himself, despises and renounces worldly pleasures (i.e. as far as this is possible), he is elevated above the worldly, above the sensual, and is only concerned with the pure, absolute spiritual, the ghost; therefore he does not perceive his enslaved nature properly; because his body system is sick, he believes the world is sick, vain, etc.

The Anarchist Library (Mirror)
Anti-Copyright



Johann Most
Godlessness: A Critique of the Idea of God
1870

Retrieved on January 28, 2025 from <https://www.anarchismus.at/religionskritik/christliche-religionen/6734-johann-most-die-gottlosigkeit-eine-kritik-der-gottes-idee>

usa.anarchistlibraries.net