

Response to Susan Jacoby's Article by Marcy Thompson

In the article "The Blessings of Atheism", the author Susan Jacoby presents the premise that atheism offers more comfort and freedom than Christianity. Her three main points are that atheists do not need to worry about how a good God could have allowed bad things to happen; that atheists can do more good; and that atheists are encouraged, knowing that the dead do not suffer anymore.

First of all, Jacoby suggests that Christianity falls apart due to bad things that happen and the belief in an all powerful God, while atheism offers comfort from having to deal with that. However, while it is hard to understand why God allows evil in the world, Christians know that there will be evil in the world and that evil does not come from God, but from the enemy. In this world, since the fall when sin came into the world, there has been evil. God is not to blame, but rather sin.

The idea that it is easier for atheists in times of trouble also forgets the benefits of knowing there is a God and He is in control. Knowing that God is in control and cares about you helps Christians hold on in tough times. While God will not make things easy and all troubles disappear, it aids Christians when going through difficult times to remember that God is there, giving them strength and helping them through the hurdles they are facing. Christians also have the hope that, even if things never get better here on earth, this is not it and we have heaven and eternity with God to look forward to. Atheists do not have these benefits. For atheists, no one is in control, no higher power can give them strength to keep going, and certainly there is no paradise to be looking forward to. Life is just life--something to get through and have as positive of an experience as you can make for yourself before you die and cease to exist.

Secondly, Jacoby says that atheists do more good than Christians because they do not have to consult a higher power on what they should do. However, how do atheists decide what they should do? Without God, they have to simply decide what seems like a good idea without really knowing if it is right or not. In addition, without God, there can be no right and wrong, no good and evil. Without an absolute standard to show what is good and what is evil, there can be no good or evil, and that absolute standard cannot exist if life is no more than living and then ceasing to exist when we die without any sort of meaning or higher power.

Additionally, there is no evidence offered that Christians are in anyway hampered by having morals aligned with God. Christians do good because God wants them to. Atheists do good because it's the decent thing to do. Doing something because your God, creator, and savior wants you to is going to be a much stronger motivation and cause you to do much more good than just doing it because it is the decent thing to do.

Lastly, Jacoby says that atheism gives more comfort when loved ones die. She says that because atheists believe that the dead no longer suffer when they are gone, that gives comfort to those left behind. However, Christianity also believes that believers who die are no longer suffering--and are in paradise with God. While it is a comfort to know that loved ones are no longer suffering, that is all the comfort that atheists can give. Christians have the comfort that, not only are dead believers no longer suffering, they are in paradise with Jesus.

The article is about "The Blessings of Atheism", but atheism does not have the blessings set forth in the article. Instead of the promised freedom of no all powerful God, there is meaninglessness. Instead of the promised morals, there is only a muddled up sense of trying to do the decent thing.

Instead of the promised comfort, there is hopelessness. Atheism means denying that there is any meaning or anyone in control of life. Atheism means there is no right or wrong and you can only guess what the best thing to do is. Atheism means that there is nothing to look forward to after this life, which is filled with suffering. No matter what the article says, those do not sound like blessings to me.