

Good Without God – Not Just a Bumper Sticker  
By Dan Bishop (© 2024)

Throughout history, dozens of gods and goddesses have appeared in Human folklore. Their presence and actions provided convenient explanations for nearly every mysterious event witnessed by Humans. The sun traversing across the heavens was a god in his chariot chasing the moon. Lightning and thunder were evidence of angry gods at war, either with Humans or with each other. Omens could be derived from the stars or from bird entrails by specially designated priests or shamans. Fire was a gift of the gods. Physical ailments were a curse cast upon individuals for some offense or oversight.

By the dawn of the twenty first century, only a few of these superhuman beings remain, but they few have followings of ardent believers numbering in the hundreds of millions, forming the core of the world's major religions. There is Islam's Allah and Mohammed, Christianity's God and Jesus, Judaism's Yahweh, Sikhism's Waheguru, and the pantheon of Hindu gods serving Brahma, Shiva, and Vishnu. And even these have experienced major divisions; Catholicism vs. Protestantism; Shiites vs. Sunnis; moderate vs. Orthodox Jews.

Interestingly, proponents of each major religion insist that their religion's god is the one true and only god in the universe and that everyone else has been deluded into following a false god. The penalty for not believing their one true and only god can be quite dire—an eternity in hellfire and brimstone.

Faced with the dilemma of making the correct choice or roasting in hell for eternity, a person shouldn't be held at fault for seeking another alternative. Fortunately, there is one. Simply reject all religious dogma relating to gods and supreme beings. Atheism, or its sibling, agnosticism, provide a rational approach to counter the prevailing winds of religiosity. Secular humanism provides an effective response to the claim "There is no morality without god." (Again, which god depends on who is speaking.)

"Good without god.", besides being an effective bumper sticker, summarizes the content in the previous four paragraphs in just three words. The American Humanist Association has adopted the following four attributes to describe humanists:

1. Informed by Science
2. Guided by Reason
3. Inspired by Art and Nature
4. Motivated by Compassion

The first two of these attributes address the issue of finding an alternative to belief in a supreme being. Science deals with observable, testable facts. Applying the scientific method expands the breadth of human knowledge. When Benjamin Franklin proved that lightning wasn't an act of an angry god, but merely a supercharged example of static electricity produced by natural forces, he demonstrated how scientific questioning and experimentation can reveal the true nature of nature's mysteries.

With the threat of AI distributing false information and the plethora of conspiracy theories inundating our world, our only course to sanity must be guided by reason. Is the story or image

we've just been exposed to makes sense? Is it reasonable? Does George Soros really control the world? Was the recent Kansas City football playoff win really the result of a vast Democrat Party conspiracy? C'mon. Get real. We must use our brain and common sense to reason through these constant assaults on our intelligence.

Humanists also don't need a god to give them inspiration. Instead of searching the pages of a sacred text, look to the heavens and behold the awesome, incomprehensible depths of the universe. More than 200-billion stars fill our Milky Way galaxy, and the Hubble Space Telescope has shown that there are over 200 billion galaxies. Light from some of those has taken over 13-billion years to reach Earth. And we are now finding that the majority of stars are surrounded by their own planets. Or climb a mountain and survey the vast wilderness that surrounds you. Art, music, and literature can be equally powerful inspirations.

And finally, empathy, compassion, sympathy, and humility are traits common to all Humans. Being a Nazarene, Baptist, Shiite, Jesuit, or whatever, doesn't grant you a monopoly on morality. Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan emphasized this truth 2000 years ago. If I find someone trapped in a burning car or drowning in a river, my Human instinct is to do everything I can to help that human being, whoever they may be. I don't need belief in a supreme being to do what is right. And judging by the scandals that frequently bring down high and mighty politicians, corporate leaders, and celebrities who loudly profess their religious credentials, I have no question but what my moral compass is far better than theirs. Good without god. Better words were never spoken.