

Issue 1:

Discussion of Omar Khayyam and Thomas Hobbes on atheism.

January 14, 2010

- What follows is a synopsis of the author's philosophy on the existence of God. My comments are in bold.

Omar Khayyam (1048 - 1131), a writer, astronomer, and mathematician.

From Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam

He clearly doubted that God had revealed himself to some men and not to others, especially in light of the very obvious fact that those who claimed to interpret the revelation were fond of using their claim in order to acquire and wield power over others in this world.

"To all of us the thought of heaven is dear - why not be sure of it and make it here...Men talk of heaven, there is no heaven but here...No agony of any mortal brain shall wrest the secret of the life of man; the search has taught me that the search is vain."

"If Allah be, He keeps His secret well...Shall I not piously believe that I am kept in darkness by the heavenly will?..."

The Koran: "And do you think that unto such as you, a maggot-minded, starved, fanatic crew, God save the Secret, and denied it to me?"

"Did God set grapes a-growing, do you think, And at the same time make it sin to drink?"

Thomas Hobbes (1588 - 1679), an English philosopher, particularly concerned with politics.

"Of Religion" From *Leviathan*

"Seeing there are no signs, for fruit of religion, but in man only...the seed of religion is also only in man...not to be found in any other living creatures."

"And first, it is peculiar to the nature of man, to be inquisitive into the causes of the events they see, some more, some less; but all men so much, as to be curious in the search of the causes of their own good and evil fortune."

"When he cannot assure himself of the true cause of things (for the causes of good and evil fortune for the most part are invisible), he supposes causes of them, either such as his own fancy suggesteth; or trusteth the authority of other men."

Some of the old poets said that the gods were at first created by human fear...the acknowledgement of one God, from the desire men have to know the causes of natural bodies..."

"...therefore from the like things past, they expect like things to come; and hope for good or evil luck, superstitiously, from things that have no part at all in the causing of it...In like manner they attribute their fortune to a stander by, to a lucky or unlucky place, to words spoken, especially if the name of God be amongst them..."

"And in these four things, opinion of ghosts, ignorance of second causes, devotion towards what men fear, and taking of things casual for prognositics, consisteth the natural seed of religion..."

"...with a purpose to make those men that relied on them, the more apt to obedience, laws, peace, charity, and civil society."

Hobbes mentions instances of other gods who have been worshipped who were "silly" (not his word, but his implication), so therefore God is equally implausible.

Mentions practices such as witches who claimed to confer with the dead, etc. and lumps them in with worshipping gods. Makes fun of them. That people believed such things "...because they thought them

to portend, or foreshow some great calamity to come...So easy are men to be drawn to believe anything...Gentiles, whose ends were only to keep the people in obedience, and peace..."

"...the Romans, that had conquered the greatest part of the then known world, made no scruple of tolerating any religion whatsoever in the city of Rome itself; unless it had something in it, that could not consist with their civil government.

"For seeing all formed religion, is founded at first, upon the faith which a multitude hath in some one person, whom they believe not only to be a wise man, and to labor to procure their happiness, but also to be a holy man, to whom God himself vouchsafeth to declare his will supernaturally...when they shall be unable to show any probable token of divine revelation; that the religion which they desire to uphold, must be suspected likewise..."

If you do not understand God, then how can you speak of Him?

"For as in natural things, men of judgment require natural signs, and arguments; so in supernatural things, they require signs supernatural, which are miracles, before they consent inwardly, and from their hearts."

Hobbes uses a couple of examples from the Bible where those who were led by God turned their backs on Him and once again either worshipped a false idol or wanted a new King. One example is about the children of Israel, who were led out of Egypt by Moses, and after he had been gone a little over a month they created a golden calf to worship. Second, he uses the example of the sons of Samuel who caused the people of Israel "to refuse any more to have God to be their king."

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