



IS THERE LIFE AFTER THIS LIFE?

DENNIS PRAGER

Is there an afterlife—life after this life ends? There probably isn't a human being who hasn't asked this question at one time or another.

And here's the answer: If there is a God, there is an afterlife. It's that simple.

And here's why:

First, this life is filled with an immeasurable amount of injustice and suffering. The only way there can be some ultimate justice for victims of evil is if there is an afterlife. And the only way comfort is available to those who suffer unjustly – from painful disease and premature death to the death of a child – is if there is an afterlife.

But such an afterlife exists only if there is a good and just God. A good and just God provides a way to compensate for all the unjust suffering in this world.

Second, since God is not physical, the physical world is not the only reality. There is also a non-physical reality. And we humans have a part of us which, being non-physical, survives the death of our body. We call it the "soul." But if there is no God, this physical life is all there is. So, no God, no soul; no soul, no afterlife.

Now, of course, those who doubt God's existence have every reason to doubt an afterlife. But if you believe in a good God, then you have to believe there's an afterlife. If you say you believe in God but not in an afterlife, the god you believe in is not only not good, that god is cruel. That god made a world filled with unjust suffering and just left it at that.

Now, some people who don't believe in an afterlife offer their own version of immortality. I once attended a funeral where the man officiating said, "While there is no afterlife, we do live on—through our good works and in the memories of loved ones."

That's what a lot of people who reject an afterlife want to believe.

But the idea that human beings "live on" through their good works or through the memories of loved ones—which generally means a person's children or grandchildren—is simply meaningless.

If people live on "through their good works," then children who die don't "live on." The number of "good works" most children are even capable of is minuscule. As for babies who die, well, babies can't engage in good works at all so, I guess, they just don't "live on."

Anyway, the truth is that bad works usually live on longer than nearly any good works. In fact, if works make us immortal, Hitler, with all the evil he did, is far more immortal than the kindest people on earth.

As for “living on in the memories of our children,” what do we say to those who have no children? “Sorry, you don’t live on”?

Moreover, living on in anyone’s memory—as beautiful as that is—is not the same as immortality or an afterlife. As Woody Allen put it, “I don’t want to achieve immortality through my work. I want to achieve it through not dying.”

If there’s no afterlife, we don’t live on. Period. Let’s be honest enough to acknowledge that. If there’s no afterlife, none of us will ever again be with those we most love and who love us. If there’s no afterlife, neither anyone murdered nor any murderer will ever receive ultimate justice. If there’s no afterlife, this life—for the vast majority of people who ever lived and for those alive now—is a meaningless crapshoot.

Finally, people always ask me, “So, what happens in the afterlife?” To which I can only respond: I don’t know.

But I do know this: My belief in God and the afterlife keeps me sane. The thought that this life is all there is means that torturers get away with the horrors they have engaged in; it means that this life is random and pointless; and it means that I will never again see anyone I love. This would drive me mad. In fact, I don’t see how it wouldn’t drive anyone mad who cares about suffering and who loves anyone.

So, is there an afterlife? If there is a God, of course there is.

I’m Dennis Prager.