

Spaghetti Monster God



Some time ago a young woman, somewhere in this country, caused a controversy at her local Department of Motor Vehicles. She went to renew her drivers license, and she insisted on wearing a metal colander on her head, (the sort of thing you strain the water out from freshly cooked spaghetti).

If wearing a colander on one's head isn't absurd enough, the woman insisted on her right to do so for her license photo because it was a matter of religious belief. She claimed to be a member of the *Church of the Invisible Flying Spaghetti Monster*.

Believe it or not, there is a sort-of-church which goes by this name and which is actually recognized in a few European countries. It is, in truth, an organization formed in reaction to the teaching of "Creationism" and "Intelligent Design" in certain public schools instead of the Theory of Evolution or Natural Selection.

I won't take on the content of those competing theories in this column. Rather, I am more interested in the appeal to this rather silly image for a deity. Obviously, this is a satirical mockery of religion in reaction to the religious beliefs which motivate those people promoting Creationism and Intelligent Design curriculums in public schools. It is a way of saying to religious believers that "*Your belief is no less absurd or arbitrary than something like this Invisible Flying Spaghetti Monster!*"

Spaghetti and meatballs are a culinary dish derived from Italian cuisine: The dish is just one of millions of variations on the ways modern humans ingest animal and plant proteins, carbohydrates and other nutrients. This is the only experience any of us have with such a being and, as such, its way down

on the "scale of being" relative to other beings in the world. What does it have to do with anything other than cuisine or a certain narrow aspect of human culture.

Proposing this as an alternative "god" betrays a gross misunderstanding about true religion. True religion arises from the self-transcending spirit in the human person. Ancient pagan religion is vastly more intelligible than this silly mockery of religion. It's easy to make fun of the religiosity of ancient people because we can easily dispel their myths with scientific proofs. And modern atheists of a scientific/materialist bent truly believe that science will, one day, explain everything in some grand unified theory of existence.

The problem with this is that it won't succeed. If it were only a matter of "the god of the gaps", wherein a scientific explanation inevitably comes along to "fill in the gap" where God used to reside, it may be possible. But the God we propose is not the highest being within Creation or the Universe.

First of all, this crass dismissal of religion is a refusal to take human longing and the search for meaning seriously . . . as if everything can be boiled down to materialistic explanations including something like love. Secondly, it ignores the history of the philosophical search for the unifying principle of reality . . . what the Neo-Platonic Philosophers called "the One" and St. Thomas Aquinas and other Christians called "God." In other words, it is logically posited that there must be an un-caused cause, a being who doesn't depend on its existence from any other being, one who is a pure act of *being* itself with no unrealized potential, and one in whom there is all perfection. Indeed, this "one" whom we call "God" is outside of Creation and sustains it in existence as its *first* and *sustaining* cause. We believe this is the God of the Bible.

My point is not an exhaustive exposition of Christian Metaphysics, but a push back against the grossly ill-informed caricature of religion. The God in whom we believe is not some willy-nilly, arbitrary choice of deity, but one who has spoken to us at the depths of our being and in the very structure of creation. Scientific materialism will not exhaust the mystery . . . ever.