

The Incredible Journey

Throughout the ages poets and philosophers, as well as common folk, have often seen life as a journey. Even those who do not see their lives in such a metaphor conduct it in such a way that anyone observing them in their day to day actions could come to the conclusion that they are traveling somewhere. The starting point may not be obvious and the destination may be unknown, but the movement belies a race of travelers, always moving, but never getting to their goal. Scurrying about like ants in a disturbed sand pile, we appear to be on a troubled journey filled with wrong turns, backtracking, and confusion. It may be a journey without a well defined destination, but it is a journey nonetheless, and the metaphor is apropos. It is the nature of this journey we call life that we want to explore.

Before considering what this journey is, it may be useful first to explore what it is not. It is not, as the atheist may think, or be forced to conclude, a pointless interlude in the continuum of time; a single blip on the cosmic radar screen, appearing for an instant, never reappearing, and having no purpose. For the atheist the journey starts nowhere, goes no place, accomplishes nothing, and ends as it started. For him life's journey is a meaningless struggle; a pointless path to oblivion.

Neither is the journey of life the joy ride of the egotist, the man filled with grand illusions about himself. This person may have a vague sense of purpose outside of himself, but chooses not to explore it. He disregards the certainty of cosmic consequences and loses himself in self-indulgence. To him, life is composed of winners and losers, not right and wrong. He who accumulates the most goods along the way, wields the most power, expends himself in the most sensual pleasures, and maneuvers himself for the greatest amount of attention is the winner. All lesser achievers are losers. The irony is that all who live by this code are losers because, in the end, all is lost. There is little comfort in maximizing pleasure for a micro-moment, either in the dubious period called geologic time or in the much more probable eternity. A lifetime of sensual pleasure will ultimately evaporate like the metaphorical blip on the atheist's cosmic radar screen.

Unfortunately, even the typical theist often has a skewed view of life's journey. While a great many people believe in God, their perception of God is so poorly developed that they do not heed His call. Thus the average theist often has little more direction and purpose in his life's journey than the atheist or the egotist. There may be a somewhat more highly developed moral sense, but, where right action intersects with strong personal desire, all too often self wins the right of way. The complacent and unreflective theist travels a road without a well-defined destination or a clearly delineated purpose. As a result he is often hard to differentiate from his atheistic or egocentric counterparts.

The journey of which we speak is the task of getting from where we are, or maybe more properly who we are, to God. It is a peculiar trek, one open to all, but traveled by few. Like the tourist who cannot visit the place of which he does not know, most of us, not knowing the destination of the

journey, never embark. Having not heard of the destination and its wonders or, having heard too little to be enticed, there is little motivation to embark on such a long trip. Most people, atheists and theists alike, believers and egotists, travel a road without destination, purpose, or, consequently, hope. Even some who initially undertake the trip, having started out with an insufficient perception of the goal, upon experiencing the rigors of the journey, fall by the wayside, giving up long before the destination is achieved.

The objective of man is not to pile up temporal pleasures and honors to himself, but it is to seek after God and by His grace be transformed into his image. The depth and breadth of this work is beyond the scope of these few paragraphs to address. No man-made book can give adequate exposition to it. All the poets, preachers, and philosophers combined cannot adequately explain it in a lifetime. It takes the commitment of one's life merely to begin the journey.

Before we can talk about the destination, we must first consider the beginning. It begins with the realization that we did not self-create, that we are not immortal, and that there is a great Presence in the universe about which we, without help, know little more than that "It" is there and that "It" must be magnificent. We are on a journey from who we are to that Presence. We ask you to join with us in this challenging, yet profoundly exhilarating journey. Let us travel together for the balance of our mortal days in our incredible journey to God.