

Almighty Abba

Autor tekstu: **A.J. Mattill, Jr.**

According to Mark 14:35-36, Jesus knelt down in the Garden of Gethsemane and prayed like this: „Abba! Father! All things are possible for you. You can do anything. Remove this cup of suffering from me; yet not what I will, but what you will.”

„Abba” is an Aramaic word meaning „father.” More precisely, „abba” is a toddler’s expression of warm intimacy with its father, somewhat like „dada,” „daddy,” or „papa.” Thus „abba” is an affirmation of the child’s affection and love for, and trust in, its father. Hence when Jesus called God „Abba,” he was expressing his own intimate, loving, and trusting relationship with God Almighty. For Jesus, then, and for traditional believers ever since, God is a personal, supernatural, supreme, conscious thinking being, all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good, an “Abba” who hears and answers prayers.

1. Abandoning Almighty Abba. On the other hand, many modern thinkers have found „Abba” to be an inappropriate name for God, the supreme or ultimate reality. They prefer to think of God as „all there is,” or “creative power,” or “the force,” or “the evolving universe,” or “the ground of being,” or “life,” or “life force,” or “the eternal one life underneath all the forms of life,” or “the physical laws which govern the universe.” Hence when these persons use the word „God” they do not mean Jesus’ personal God. On the contrary, they mean „ground of being” or one of the other definitions just given.

However, some nontheists not only reject the traditional definition of God but they consider it confusing, even dishonest, to use the word „God” for anything other than a personal God. Thus they don’t call the supreme reality „God” but „creative power,” “force,” or whatever. Otherwise people will wrongly assume that the speaker conceives of God as they do, that is, as Jesus’ “Almighty Abba.”

2. Arguments Against Almighty Abba. Now we ask, Why have so many people abandoned Almighty Abba? There are many reasons, but here we limit ourselves to three of the most important reasons:

a. Pointlessness

Astronomers tell us that we are living in a violent universe with crashing asteroids and meteorites, with exploding stars, killer stars, cannibal stars, cannibalistic black holes, and with colliding and erupting galaxies — all without reverence for life on this or any planet in a hostile universe which builds and destroys without purpose. Nothing in this ghastly waste of bat-blind energy suggests an Almighty Abba. Rather, this violence is strong evidence that the universe is governed by unfeeling physical forces and is therefore pointless. As theoretical physicist Steven Weinberg wrote in his book, *The First Three Minutes*, “The more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it also seems pointless.”

b. Parasites

Would an Almighty Abba create half of all known species as parasites feeding on the other half? Think of more than twenty types of parasites afflicting sheep. There are even parasites which parasitize parasites which are in turn parasitizing a host. And how about ticks sucking the blood of their hosts and causing serious diseases, such as Rocky Mountain spotted fever and Lyme disease in man and Texas fever in cattle? Having recently suffered from more than my fair share of tick bites, I find it impossible to love and trust a tick-making deity.

c. Pain

The pain of animals and humans may well be the most serious of all objections to Almighty Abba. Let us hear a few words of wisdom from philosopher John Stuart Mill’s nineteenth century essay „Nature”: *„Killing, the most criminal act recognized by human laws, Nature does once to every being that lives, and in a large proportion of cases after protracted tortures such as only the greatest monsters ever purposely inflicted on their fellow creatures. Nature impales men, breaks them as if on the wheel, casts them to be devoured by wild beasts, burns them to death, crushes them with stones, starves them with hunger, freezes them with cold, and has hundreds of other hideous deaths in reserve, such as the ingenious cruelty of Emperor Domitian never surpassed. All of this Nature does with the most haughty disregard both of mercy and of justice, emptying her shafts upon the best and noblest*

indifferently with the meanest and worst. Nature not only takes life, but it also takes the means by which we live, on the largest scale and with the most callous indifference. A single hurricane destroys the hopes of a season; a flight of locusts or a flood desolates a district. Everything which the worst men commit against life or property, Nature perpetrates on a larger scale." Was Nature, then, created by a god we could call affectionately „Dada," "Daddy," or "Papa"? I think not.

Conclusion. Pointlessness. Parasites. Pain. „Honest to God!" There is no Almighty Abba.

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Keep on Reading: Mattill, *The Seven Mighty Blows to Traditional Beliefs*. Second Edition, 1995; and Mattill, *Freethought Focus*, 1998, both published by The Flatwoods Free Press, Gordo, Alabama.

Published in the Jan/Feb issue of the *American Rationalist* ©.

A.J. Mattill, Jr.

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(Publikacja: 15-01-2004)

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