

Christian Atheism

Pandeism is consistent with Christian atheism as outlined by Thomas J. J. Altizer in his book *The New Gospel of Christian Atheism*. It is atheism in the sense that the Divine Being who created the Universe became the Universe and no longer exists as a whole conscious Being. Altizer equates the event of creation with the "Death of God" made famous by Nietzsche. Pandeism is Christian in the sense that it is the underlying meaning of the myth-metaphor of the Incarnation, the Word becoming the Flesh of the Universe.

"The death of God is a truly paradoxical symbol, one which is at once a uniquely Christian and a uniquely modern symbol, a symbol evoking that Crucifixion which the Christian knows as the one source of redemption, and a symbol of that uniquely modern atheism which is a full dissolution or reversal of Christianity. Our deepest thinkers and visionaries of the death of God have effected this ultimate negation through a uniquely Christian language and symbolism, as witness Hegel and Nietzsche, and Blake and Joyce. Such an ultimate atheism is surely possible only within a Christian horizon, or only as a consequence of the ending of Christendom." (Thomas J. J. Altizer)

Altizer also refers to James Joyce's masterpiece *Finnegans Wake*:

"While images of the Christ of Glory ever more fully disintegrate in the West with the very advent of modernity, images of the Christ of Passion not only become ever more comprehensive, but ever more progressively undergo an ultimate transformation, finally disappearing, or virtually disappearing, as overt or open images of Christ, and doing so by embodying a truly new and anonymous totality, as luminously manifest in the deeper imaginative enactments of the twentieth

century. Surely *Finnegans Wake* is a primal expression of these enactments, but no other literary work since Rabelais has given us such a primal expression of body itself. Now body truly is a total body, and a total body enacting a universal sacrifice, or a *Missa Jubilaea*, a sacrifice that is cosmic and historical at once, and one embodied in this truly new vision of the body of Christ.”

“Joyce is perhaps the most deeply Biblical writer of the twentieth century, and is thereby in genuine continuity with the Christian epic tradition, a literary tradition that is more openly and more fully a Biblical tradition than is any other, yet a tradition that has transformed itself more profoundly than any other literary tradition. This can be understood as a consequence of the Bible itself. Although Dante had the deepest impact upon Joyce, Joyce himself could know Blake as his purest predecessor, for Joyce is truly Blakean in the very universality of his enactment of Satan, and in *Ulysses* Satan falls and yet knows no fall—*Lucifer, dico, qui nescit occasum* (50)—a fall that becomes a total fall in *Finnegans Wake*. That very fall is comprehensively enacted in the *Wake*, one beginning on its very first page and continuing throughout our first epic of the body itself. But Joyce goes far beyond Blake in his universal enactment of Satan. Now Satan is embodied in the depths of bodily actuality, and there embodied in a continual and a universal sacrifice or crucifixion of “*Haar Faagher*,” a sacrifice finally culminating in Book Four in the resurrection of Anna Livia Plurabelle.”

The “fall” in *Finnegans Wake* referred to by Altizer is humorously depicted by Joyce as the fall of Humpty Dumpty! This fall in which Humpty is scattered in many pieces is in turn a metaphor for the primal act of creation in *pandeism* in which the original Divine Being became the innumerable particles of the Universe.

“The great fall of the offwall entailed at such short notice

the pftjschute of Finnegan, erse solid man, that the humptyhillhead of humself promptly sends an unquiring one well to the west in quest of his tumptytumtoes: and their upturnpikepointandplace is at the knock out in the park where oranges have been laid to rust upon the green since devlinsfirst loved livvy." (from "Finnegans Wake (Unabridged)" by James Joyce)

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