

THEOLOGY PROPER (12)

consistent atheist has never existed. He is a sporadic individual who has forced intuition and reason out of poise in an attempt to maintain an assumed (and) negative premise." (Vol.1, p.163). Every theist should realize that the entire faith system of the atheist is built upon theory **NOT** fact. The wise apologist will be quick to point out that facts, even rational facts, point to the existence of a personal God.

When it comes to the atheist, there are, generally speaking, two types in existence:

(Type #1)- The Practical Atheist.

The practical atheist is one who lives his/her life as if there is no God. God is never given any consideration in the practical outworking of their lives. The practical atheist does not necessarily defend his atheistic position, he/she just practically lives life as if there is no God and no future accountability to God.

It is possible for a believer to actually live life and make decisions in life as a practical atheist. In fact, James warns that it is possible for a believer to practically forget about God (i.e. James 4: 13-17). Whenever a believer chooses to do what is contrary to God's word and will, he is, in a remote sense, trying to dismiss the concept of God from his mind and of his future accountability to Him.

(Type #2)- The Theoretical Atheist.

The theoretical atheist is one who adheres to a theoretical faith system that does not believe in the existence of God. The theoretical atheist is one who attempts to dogmatically defend his belief system. Although this type of individual will attempt to dogmatically defend his position, the truth is, he is not able to consistently defend his assertions and beliefs because they are always based on theory, not fact. When one attempts to defend a belief which is contrary to fact, one must have many inconsistencies which cannot be defended except through theory and speculation. (For example- Where did the world come from if there is no God? One answer, explosion. To believe an explosion causes beautiful, intricate design and order is a real stretch of faith as any explosion proves otherwise. Where does a person go when he dies? May come back as a tree or butterfly)

Among those who would classify themselves as theoretical atheists, two major distinctions may be observed:

Distinction #1- There are those who deny the existence of Any God.

The practical reality of this position is that this theoretical atheist usually makes something or someone his "god." Very few atheists don't devote themselves to something as their "god"- whether self, success, fortune, pleasure or education. Typically all atheists give themselves to something.

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Distinction #2- There are those who deny the existence of the God of the Bible.

This is, for the most part, the category which the majority of theoretical atheists find themselves in. Most atheists are really trying to deny and remove from their minds the God of the Bible and there are certain reasons why:

(Reason #1)- Atheists deny God of Arrogant Pride.

Atheists are anything but meek and humble people, they are proud and arrogant. They do not like to submit to any authority and their entire system is based on a proud rejection of God's word.

One good example of this very point is cited by Charles Baker in his discussion of atheism. He records the following: "The mathematician, Laplace, when explaining to Napoleon how the universe came into being was asked where God fitted into the picture. He purported to have replied: "I have no need of such an hypothesis." (Charles Baker, Dispensational Theology, p.127)

There is no doubt when we trace the history of atheism that proud arrogance is at its roots. Van A. Harvey writes: "The believability of atheism seems directly proportionate to the growth of the sciences and the emergence of humanism..." (Grolier International Encyclopedia, Vol.2, p.289)

As man began to make discoveries, which in fact God was permitting him to make, man became proud and arrogant and began to elevate himself and dismiss God. When such "educators" like Immanuel Kant, David Hume, Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud lent their support to atheism, a great number of people followed their proud arrogance. One such man was Charles Smith, an ex-divinity student who in 1925 founded the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism. This organization was based on proud arrogance, as one member said, those who believe in a personal God are uniformed people who live in a "cocoon of supernaturalism." (Henry Thiessen, Lectures in Systematic Theology, p.65)

Arrogant pride is the thing that was found in the heart of Satan. His desire was to be like the Most High God and it was this very thing that got him expelled from heaven(i.e. Is. 14:12,13,14). It is no mere coincidence that Atheism is built on an arrogant pride that elevates man and denies God. This arrogance is rooted in the being who is behind it, Satan.

(Reason #2)- Atheist deny God because of Theological Ignorance.

There are some who have given themselves to believing atheism because their theological knowledge of God is completely lacking. Some give themselves to atheism because of their ignorant concepts of God.

For example, the thing that prompted one individual to become atheistic was a challenge to God to strike her down with lightning. Her appeal was if God truly did exist, He should strike her down. When God did not respond to the request, this individual, out of pure ignorance,

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concerning the character of God, drew the conclusion there was no God in existence.

Obviously this individual was greatly lacking in any real knowledge of God. For one thing, God **never** executes people just to prove His existence. When God executes people it is for the purpose of pouring out His wrath. Second, the fact that He did not send lightning down to destroy this woman is not a proof of His non-existence, it is a proof of His grace. In spite of the fact that this ignorant woman was proudly challenging God, God was still very gracious to her. Third, God does not answer the requests of those who reject Him and His son. There would have been a much greater chance for the request to have been answered by God, had the request been made by a "righteous man", not a "godless woman." God has never jumped to quickly answer the prayer requests of one who doubts, denies and downplays Him. God has always delighted in answering the prayer requests of those who love Him. In this case, it was total ignorance of theology that prompted this woman to foolishly deny the existence of God.

(Reason #3)- Atheists deny God because of Future Judgment.

To admit the existence of a personal God is to admit that someday one must face God. This of course has serious ramifications if one does not want to admit his sinfulness and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior, for it means one will face God as a condemnatory judge. Most atheists are proud and do not want to submit to any authority, for in their minds, they are the authority. Most atheists see themselves as their own "god", therefore they do not ever want to admit they have sinned and have done things which are wrong. The moment an atheist admits this, he must come to terms with future accountability for his actions.

If an atheist allows his mind to acknowledge the existence of God, for one moment, he/she must immediately concede the possibility of a future judgment in which God will judge and condemn him. One of the more practical ways to dismiss this idea of future judgment from one's mind is to deny the existence of the God who will judge. Since an atheist is not willing to humble himself or herself to God's word, which clearly speaks of future judgment and demands repentance in light of it, he/she must invent some method of getting around this intimidating reality. Atheism is a mental means of coping with life as time ticks away. Deep in the heart and mind of the atheist is the realization that time is moving forward and future judgment is coming. The only options an atheist has are: 1) Get right with God; 2) Deny God. The atheist chooses to deny God. As with any false system of belief, atheism is filled with many weaknesses:

(Weakness #1)- Atheism contradicts the Bible.

Genesis to Revelation establishes the existence of a personal God. In fact, the Bible is God's book, which He inspired. An atheist cannot deny the factual existence of the Bible, so he must give an answer to at least six basic questions: 1) Why does the Bible exist? 2) Why does the Bible claim to be God's word? 3) Why do so many people defend the Bible as God's word? 4) Why does the Bible continually transform people and change lives? 5) Why does the Bible call one who denies God "a fool" (Ps. 14:1)? 6) Why should people believe theory over the Bible?

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(Weakness #2)- Atheism contradicts logical Reason.

The live rational proofs for the existence of God(Ontological, Cosmological, Teleological, Anthropological, Historical, are based on solid reason. In fact, "Plato not only viewed atheism as irrational but argued that certain atheists deserved the death penalty. " (Grolier International Encyclopedia, Vol.2, p.288) These rational proofs are very reasonable and very logical and they must be answered. The syllogisms must be refuted and since they are based on sound thinking, atheism becomes a total contradiction to logical reason.

(Weakness #3)- Atheism contradicts logical Limitation.

At best, the minds and capabilities of men are very limited. There is much we do not know and there is much we still need to learn. In order to make a claim that there is no God, one must be capable of getting beyond the normal human limitations. For example, the Bible teaches that God is a Spirit and in order for a human being to claim there is no God, he must be able to see the spirit world and determine God is not in the spirit world. Dr. Chafer gives a good example in quoting John Foster. He says that in order for one to say there is no God in the universe, he must know every agent in the universe or else the one that he does not know may be God (Vol. 1, p.168).

In order for a man to deny that there is a God that is everywhere present at the same time, he must be everywhere present at the same time to actually know the place(s) where God is not. In order for a man to claim that there is no God who created the world and life, he must be in a position to testify what actually did happen in eternity past, as Foster says: "If he does not know everything that has been done in immeasurable ages that are past, some things may have been done by God. " Dr. Henry Thiessen observed: "Limited knowledge can infer the existence of God, but exhaustive knowledge of all things, intelligences and times is needed to dogmatically state that there is none." (Lectures In Systematic Theology, p.66)

Any honest, logical person will admit that man is far too limited to be able to say there is no God. How could a man who is limited to 70-80 years of life(give or take a few) be in a position to say there is no Eternal God? In order to make such a claim, man would need to have existed through all eternity and would need to be able to observe everything.

As previously stated, atheism is not rational, it is theoretical. **It cannot be logically defended for it goes against the very logic that God has given to man.**

Faith System #3- Agnosticism.

This is the faith system that believes God cannot be known. One encyclopedia gives this definition- "Agnosticism is the philosophical position that it is impossible to know about the nature or existence of God."(Grolier International Encyclopedia, Vol. 1, p. 181) Simply stated, agnosticism is the belief that God cannot be known in practice or in principle.