

THEOLOGY PROPER (15)

(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.

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Agnosticism is actually a form of atheism, because a denial that God can be known is a logical, sequential step in denying God's existence. Most agnostics do not want to be branded as atheists, they want to be known as philosophers who stress the philosophy that you cannot know much of anything for sure.

Agnosticism is not a new belief system, in fact, the actual word "agnostic" and this belief system clearly existed in Athens, during the time of the Apostle Paul (Acts 17:23) The word "agnostic" comes from the Greek word used in Acts 17 :23 "unknown". This word literally is the Greek word ἀγνωστος, translated "agnostos." The word "agnostos" actually means unknown. Our English spelling of the word "agnostic" is almost exactly as it was spelled in the days of Paul.

The first person to coin the term "agnosticism" as one referring to an entire belief system was Thomas H. Huxley in 1869. Although others held to the same system, it was Huxley who is credited with tagging the Greek name to this particular faith system. Two men who really stimulated agnosticism before Huxley were David Hume of the 1700's and Immanuel Kant of the late 1700's and early 1800's.

A skeptic is one who doubts. An atheist is one who denies. An agnostic is one who says one cannot know. Agnosticism is a philosophical system that seemed to revive in the 18th and 19th centuries for three main reasons: 1) Several theories alleged "scientific discoveries" supposedly contradicted the Bible; 2) Theologians and Church authorities began disagreeing on a variety of interpretations; 3) There was a rise in higher textual and historical criticism.

The basic premise of agnosticism is that man can only know what he can prove and experience. As one writer observed, agnosticism "...considers valid only knowledge that comes from ordinary and immediate experience." (Ibid. p181) An agnostic believes that one can only know what one can fully grasp. If one cannot understand something or experience something in its entirety, then one cannot really know for certain.

The weakness and we might even say the absurdity of such a statement is refuted in the honest admission that we do not fully understand or grasp anything we experience, and much of what we do experience we accept by faith. For example, do any of us know everything about an automobile? Do we grasp and do we scientifically know everything about our car? Obviously the answer is "no." Yet, did we believe that our car would bring us to church? Obviously the answer is "yes." Even though we don't know everything about a car, we still believe in it because we are here. The agnostic may reason that he can prove and experience the reliability of the automobile by getting in the car and driving it. However, the agnostic must admit that since he does not know everything about the automobile, it takes faith to get in it. By the same token, when it comes to God, the believer may reason that he can prove and experience the reality of knowing God by inviting Jesus Christ into his life. This, too, takes faith. The agnostic

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may reason, "Yes, but we have a great deal of tangible evidence that one can get into a car and drive to a destination for there are witnesses of this all around." The believer may reason, "yes, but we have much tangible evidence that one who invites Jesus Christ into his life ends up knowing God, for there are tangible witnesses all around."

One who holds to an agnostic position must admit that although there are many things which cannot be known, there are also certain tangible things we can be known and in fact experienced: For example: 1) The Bible- what is it and why is it? 2) Jesus Christ- who was He and why was He? 3) Christians- how are they transformed and why do they claim to know God? 4) The world- who created it and how did it get here? 5) Life- how did it begin and why does it exist?

The agnostic makes at least three major false assumptions;

(False Assumption #1)- Man is incapable of knowing anything outside of the realm of natural phenomena.

The immediate response to such an assumption is- how does the agnostic know this? In other words, in order to say that one cannot possibly know anything beyond the realm of natural phenomena, he must be in a position to analyze all phenomena in order to make the statement Charles Baker observed: "This is in itself a very dogmatic statement about that which is supposed to be beyond man's ability to know. How can agnostics have such sure knowledge that man cannot know?" (Charles Baker, Dispensational Theology, p. 129)

One major issue that the agnostic must face with this argument is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ did things beyond the realm of natural phenomena. An agnostic must give an explanation for the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. Flavius Josephus was a Jewish author and historian and a Roman citizen who was born in AD. 37 and died somewhere near the year A.D.100. From the years A.D.77 to A.D.94, Josephus undertook a massive project to write the history of the Jews. His historical work was commissioned and supported by Rome and is esteemed and highly regarded for its historical information, even by secular universities and colleges. Josephus, himself, did not believe Jesus Christ was the Messiah. He was a Jew, who remained a non-Christian Jew. However, being an accurate, honest historian, here is what he wrote: "Now there was about this time, Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man for he was a **doer of wonderful works**, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, **for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him**; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day." (Flavius Josephus, The Complete Works of Josephus, Antiques of the Jews, Book 18, Chapter 3, Paragraph 3, Kregel Publications, p.379)

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Josephus clearly testifies that Christ did things far beyond natural phenomena, such as appear alive three days after his death, plus ten thousand other types of supernatural things. Josephus is a factual historical work, which is tangible and available and the agnostic must somehow explain how or why Josephus claimed Jesus did things beyond the realm of the natural, things which many people witnessed.

(False Assumption #2)- Man may only know by Analogy.

The agnostic assumes that man can only know something by analogy and since man is finite and God would be Infinite, there is no way that the finite can know the infinite because there is no logical way to make the analogy.

The agnostic, however, overlooks one key point- man was made "in the image of God" (Gen 1 :27) This immediately informs us that some form of analogy can be made between an infinite God and a finite man because there is a sense in which man is made in God's image. Furthermore, as Baker says, ".it is not true that man can know only by analogy. He comes to know things largely by differences and contrasts." (Baker, p.30). Mr. Baker observes for example: "We do not learn what the color red is by analogy, but by the contrast with the remainder of the spectrum." (Ibid., p. 130)

(False Assumption #3)- Man may only know what he can grasp in its Entirety.

As we have already demonstrated, "Man does not have complete knowledge of anything. " A partial knowledge can be a real knowledge. For example, we all know that if we throw a ball into the air, it will come down because of gravity. We may not know anything at all about gravity, but our knowledge is certainly true and real to think the ball will come back down.

Agnosticism is best seen as a system that promotes: I will not know God rather than I cannot know God! Agnosticism, like atheism, is not factual nor logical. It is not objectively honest. It is a faith system that is false.

Faith System #4- Deism.

This is the faith system that believes God created the world and then abandoned it and left it to run by itself. As Dr. Chafer states: "As a philosophy, the contention is that God is personal, infinite, holy, and the Creator of all things; but that He purposely abandoned His creation when completed with the intent that it should be self-sustaining and self-promoting by the forces resident in it. " (Vol. 1, p. 176).

Deism does in fact admit God is the Creator, but it also makes God a Creator who abandons His Creation. Deism accepts the fact that God is transcendent, far beyond and superior to His everything, but it denies the fact that He is immanent, closely and intimately connected to all creation. Deism makes God an "absentee God." There are many weakness with Deism:

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(Weakness #1)- Deism denies the Bible.

The Bible clearly teaches that God is very closely associated with **all** of His creation, in a very intimate way (i.e. Matthew 10:29-3).

(Weakness #2)- Deism attacks God's Character.

God reveals that He is a Sovereign God who providentially governs everything (i.e. Is.46: 10-11). Deism attacks the character of God in that it denies that He is providentially governing all things and theorizes that the world is operating by some natural scientific "iron clad system of laws." (Berkhof, Systematic Theology, p.166)

(Weakness #3)- Deism promotes an unpleasant Faith.

One's faith system as it pertains to God determines one's ability to please God. In Hebrews 11:6, clearly the assumption is God can and will reward one who comes to Him with a proper faith system. Since Deism denies God's personal involvement with this world, it must also deny God's personal involvement with man. Therefore, it promotes a faith that does not please God, nor a faith that God will reward.

(Weakness #4)- Deism promotes an ungodly Lifestyle.

Obviously, if God is nowhere to be seen or found, man can just call his own shots and live life his own way. Such a mindset becomes impetus for a godless lifestyle. Accountability to God is dismissed in a faith system that says God has abandoned all things Man is left to do whatever He desires.

Deism is a false and dangerous faith system. Charles Baker observes: "While few today go under the name of Deist, the basic tenants of Deism are doubtless held by many people. If they are not outspoken Deists, they are virtual Deists. One who behaves as though God had never spoken, who disregards the Bible, who never prays, who finds the material world sufficient for all his needs, who thinks that God is billions of light years away and is completely disinterested in how may behaves- such an one does not need to pin the label of Deism upon himself." But, we might add, that is precisely what he is. (Baker, p. 108)

Faith System #5- Polytheism.

This is the faith system that believes there is more than one God. This belief allows for the existence of many "gods". The roots of polytheism can be found in the dark, foolish, empty imaginations and speculations of men (i.e. Rom. 1:21-23). Polytheism is clearly a corrupt faith system that denies the existence of the one and only true God, plus it destroys the potential accountability that man has to the one and only true God.