

## Only Fools Deny There Is a God

### Psalm 14

Intro. 1) They are a small but vocal minority. Though few in number, they are mighty in influence. Their voice is heard particularly in the major universities and colleges, public education, the entertainment industry, and the media. And yet on a practical, everyday level, they may be your classmate, next door neighbor, or someone sitting beside you in a church service. What am I talking about? Atheism.

2) In its simplest form atheism is a worldview perspective that says there is no God and lives life from this perspective. And yet the issue is actually a bit more complex than that. Paul Feinberg in an article on “Atheism” in the *EDT* (pgs. 112-13) identifies 4 forms of atheism:

- 1) *Classical atheism* is not a general denial of God’s existence but the rejection of the god of a particular nation. Christians were repeatedly called atheists in this sense because they refused to acknowledge heathen gods. It was also in this sense that Cicero called Socrates an atheist.
- 2) *Philosophical atheism* may be contrasted with theism, which affirms a personal, self-conscious deity (not a principle, first cause, or force).
- 3) *Dogmatic atheism* is the absolute denial of God’s existence. This position is more rare than one might think, as people more often declare themselves agnostics or secularists. There have, however, been those who claimed to hold this view (for example, the eighteenth-century French atheists, and someone on a popular level like Madalyn Murray O’Hair [1919-1995]).
- 4) *Practical atheism* does not deny God, but life is lived as if there is no God.

There is complete indifference to his claims, and often there is outspoken and defiant wickedness (this is what we see in Ps. 14:1). This form of atheism is widely prevalent, as can be seen from the Scriptures.

3) It is these latter two forms of atheism that should particularly concern us. When it comes to Dogmatic Atheism there is a list of impressive advocates whose rhetoric is, if not persuasive, colorful and thought-provoking:

- “It is clear as the sun and evident as the day that there is no God; and still more, that there can be no God.” Ludwig Feuerbach, German atheist philosopher
- “My only wish is...to transform friends of God into friends of man, believers into thinkers, devotees of prayer into devotees of work, candidates for the hereafter into students of this world, Christians who, by their own procession and admission, are “half animal, half angel” into persons, into whole persons.”  
Ludwig Feuerbach, *Lectures on the Essence of Religion*, p. 285.
- “The cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be.” Carl Sagan, deceased  
Atheist scientist
- “The idea that God is an oversize white male with a flowing beard who sits in the sky and tallies the fall of every sparrow is ludicrous. But if by ‘God’ one means the set of physical laws that govern the universe, then clearly there is such a God. This God is emotionally unsatisfying...it does not make much sense to pray to the law of gravity.” Carl Sagan, deceased. Host of the television documentary *Cosmos*.
- “Modern science directly implies that the world is organized strictly in accordance with mechanistic principles. There are no purposive principles

- whatsoever in nature. There are no gods and no designing forces that are rationally detectable..." William Provine, Cornell University
- "Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist." Richard Dawkins
  - "Why should it be socially acceptable to make fun of psychics and not priests? What's the difference between crossing yourself or hanging a mezuzah outside your door and avoiding black cats? Believing that you've been abducted by aliens or that Elvis is still alive is, on its face, no sillier than believing that Christ rose from the dead or the God parted the Red Sea so that Moses and his followers might traverse it." Wendy Kaminer, *quoted in Free Inquiry, Fall 1999*.
  - "Emotionally, I am an atheist. I don't have the evidence to prove that God doesn't exist, but I so strongly suspect he doesn't that I don't want to waste my time." Isaac Asimov, "An Interview with Isaac Asimov on Science and the Bible," *Free Inquiry* (vol. 2, Spring 1982), 9.
  - "The only God I could believe in would be a bumbler. How could an omnipotent, omniscient being permit there to be so much suffering in the world?" Peter Singer, Professor of Bioethics, Princeton University *RNS* 3/9/00
  - "I don't want a God that would go around killing people's little girls. Neither do I want a God who would kill his own son." John Spong, Episcopal bishop, *Daily Record*, N.J., 1-27-00.
  - "If you have a faith, it is [probably] the same faith as your parents and grandparents had. No doubt soaring cathedrals, stirring music, moving stories and parables help a bit. But by far the most important variable determining your

religion is the accident of birth...Faith is the great cop-out, the great excuse to evade the need to think and evaluate evidence. Faith is belief in spite of, even perhaps because of, the lack of evidence.” Evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins quoted in *Servant*, Winter 2001.

3) Now to sure these men are passionate in their beliefs, dogmatic in their convictions, rock solid in their commitments. And yet one wonders, did they truly arrive where they are today by pure reason, clear and distinct rational processes. If one will press on just a little further, dig beneath the surface of the affirmations of these priests and prophets of the god-less world, you find honest admissions of the emotions and the heart fueling the engine of the atheistic agenda. Listen to Aldous Huxley in *Brave New World*:

“I had motives for not wanting the world to have a meaning; consequently I assumed that it had none, and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption....For myself, as, no doubt, for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation. The liberation we desired was simultaneously liberation from a certain political and economic system and liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom.”

Consider the straight-forward confession of Thomas Nagel, prof. of philosophy at NYU:

“I want atheism to be true and am made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn't just that I don't believe in God and, naturally, hope that I'm right in my belief. It's that I hope that there is no God! I don't want there to be a God; I don't want the

universe to be like that.”

Hear the heart cry of 18 year old Tara Fritsch:

“I was taught that God was the Almighty and was good, but the past few months have set me straight. There is no God. At least, not the God everyone is talking about. If He/She was real, then there wouldn’t be so much disease, death, hurt and heartbreak in the world. In December, one of my friends lost her mother. In January, a friend was killed on his way to school. In April, a friend of the family lost his long battle with AIDS. And in May, one of my best friends also lost her mother. What god would want to do this to anyone? None that I know of or believe in.” Tara Fritsch, 18 Riverdale, N.J.

My point is this. Take a good hard look. Get beneath the surface. Pursue questions that expose life and what that means and you discover David was right, the problem is not with the mind, the problem is with the heart. We don’t want there to be a God, at least, not a God like the one revealed in the Bible. To this God we want to say No! Rejecting this God, we play the fool.

#### I. The Fool Opposes the Things of God

14:1-3

- Psalm 14 is almost identical to Psalm 53. It comes across as both a psalm of lament and a psalm of wisdom. The fool of Psalm 14 is the epitomy of the ungodly sinners of Psalm 1.
- To him the things of God matter not at all. They count for nothing. Intellectually perhaps, practically for sure, he lives an anti-god, a-theistic life where he is the center focal point of his own universe.

#### 1) He does not serve God

14:1

- The fool is *nabal*. The emphasis is not so much on his mind as it is his will. Here is the practical atheist. With wicked and evil motives he intentionally and boldly asserts his independence and autonomy from God. In his soul, on the inside where the real you is, he says God has no place. In my heart, in my life, in my affairs, there is no God for me or to me. If He is there I don't care. This man is a self-consumed humanist and self-absorbed secularist to the core.
- David quickly diagnoses his spiritual condition:
  - They are corrupt (morally perverse, wicked, depraved) in character
  - They have done abominable (*NIV*, “deeds are vile”) things in conduct
  - There is none who does good (a comprehensive judgment of all practical atheists). Serving God is of no concern at all.

## 2) He does not seek God

14:2-3

- David uses an anthropomorphism as he describes the Lord “looking down from heaven upon the children of men (lit. “sons of men”, *bene adam*) to see if any 1) understands and 2) seek God.
- Verse 3 provides the tragic answer.
  - They have all turned aside
  - They have together become corrupt
  - There is none who does good
  - No, not one

*Yahweh*, the Lord of heaven, conducts a survey of planet earth looking for those who understand the ways of God and seek the will of God. Through the fool is in view particularly, it is now all of humanity that is under scrutiny. It is utterly amazing.

What God saw in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3 & 4), at the time he brought the Flood (Gen. 6:5), at the tower of Babel (Gen. 11:5) and at Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18:21) has continued on. Mankind:

- Wants to be his own god (Gen 3) rather than confess Jesus as Lord and God.
- Would prefer to murder his brother rather than submit to God's Son (Gen 3).
- Desires to pursue every form of wickedness with an evil heart (Gen 6) rather than give his heart to Christ.
- Would build for himself a monument to the heavens (Gen 11), extolling man's greatness rather than look up to A savior on a cross and drop to his knees and bow his head at the feet of a crucified King.
- Would lust after strange flesh in sexual immorality (Gen 18) rather than live for the Lord Jesus in purity and holiness.

Trans. No, the wicked man, the evil man, the foolish man, the ego-centric/self-centered man will neither serve God or seek God. The fool opposes the things of God.

## II. The Fool Troubles the People of God

14:4-7

1) Committed to a world without God, the fool of Psalm 14 actively opposes not only the things of God, but the people of God. In some places of the world there is active persecution and oppression. Believers are threatened with death, imprisonment, torture and loss of home and job. In places like Korea, China, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and the Sudan the devoted disciple of Jesus follows his Master knowing he could meet death at any moment.

2) In other places opposition is of a different form. Most often it is verbal. Christians are ridiculed and lampooned. They are excluded from the public square, denied a

voice in our educational temples of secularism, and asked not so politely to keep their views to themselves. Foolish and blind to reality, the wicked fail to see the tragic end of such a worldview. What does David say of these who trouble God's people?

1) The fool acts wickedly

14:4-5

- These persons are called “workers of iniquity” (*ESV*, “evil doers”) who have no knowledge (*NIV*, “never learn”). They lack godly wisdom and insight, the ability to see things as God sees them.
- They eat up, with an unsatisfying appetite, the people of God as one eats bread, the daily food requirement for life. They feed on God's people. Others are a useful means to their evil ends and goals. They consume others like bread while avoiding the Bread of Life that truly satisfies (John 6).
- They do not call on the Lord. Why? They do not need Him nor do they want Him.
- And yet they tremble in fear, “overwhelmed with dread” (*NIV*), “are in great terror”(ESV) because they do see something divine in the redeemed community. Amazingly they are said to act against and oppose what they clearly see, that God is with them and that He is their refuge.
- Albert Einstein saw it. He said:  
 “Being a lover of freedom, when the [Nazi] revolution came, I looked to the universities to defend it, knowing that they had always boasted of their devotion to the cause of truth; but no, the universities were immediately silenced. Then I looked to the great editors of the newspapers, whose flaming editorials in days



gone by had proclaimed their love of freedom; but they, like the universities, were silenced in a few short weeks...

Only the Church stood squarely across the path of Hitler's Campaign for suppressing truth. I never had any special interest in the Church before, but now I feel a great affection and admiration for it because the Church alone has had the courage and persistence to stand for intellectual and moral freedom. I am forced to confess that what I once despised I now praise unreservedly."

(In A. Cochrane, *The Church's Confession Under Hitler*, 40).

- Yes, the fool fails to see where life without God lead, that as Dostoyevsky said in *The Brothers Karamazov*, "If God is dead, then all things are permissible."

- Victor Frankl saw it. He wrote:

The gas chambers of Auschwitz were the ultimate consequence of the theory that man is nothing but the product of heredity and environment-or, as the Nazis liked to say, 'of blood and soil.' I am absolutely convinced that the gas chambers of Auschwitz, Treblinda, and Maidanek were ultimately prepared not in some ministry or other in Berlin, but rather at the desks and in lecture halls of nihilistic scientists and philosophers. Victor Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul: Introduction to Logotherapy*, 1982, p.xxi.

Removing God from the earth, and earth becomes hell.

## 2) The Lord acts faithfully

14:5-7

- Blaise Pascal (1623-62) was a brilliant mathematician and Christian philosopher. His insight into the ways of God are still admired and

contemplated to this day. Considering how God reveals Himself and works in our midst he wrote some very perceptive and challenging words.

“If there were no obscurity, man would not feel his corruption: if there were no light, man could not hope for a cure. Thus it is not only right but useful for us that God should be partly concealed and partly revealed, since it is equally dangerous for man to know God without knowing his own wretchedness as it is for man to know his own wretchedness without knowing God.”

The fool does not feel his corruption but the man in Christ does.

The fool does not perceive the light of salvation but the man in Christ does.

The fool does not know his own wretchedness as he ought but the man in Christ does.

- This man in Christ, in spite of the attacks and opposition of the wicked can rest in the reality that the Lord will act faithfully on his behalf.

Vs. 5 The Lord is with the generation (*NIV*, “company”) of the righteous. To oppose God’s people is to oppose the God who is with His people.

Vs. 6 The wicked fool “shames the counsel of the poor.” The *NIV* says “evildoers frustrate the plans of the poor.” In positions of power and prominence they ridicule, harass and do their best to put and keep God’s people down. However, the Lord is their refuge, their fortress of protection, and their place of security in times of trouble.

Vs. 7 Here, in the final verse, is the prayer of Psalm 14. The psalmist pleads for deliverance and rescue from Zion, the place where Messiah-King is enthroned as God’s anointed (2:6)!

The phrase “bring back from the captivity of His people” is better rendered “when the Lord restores the fortunes of His people” (*ESV; NIV*). Such a day would bring rejoicing and gladness to the people of God. Such a day would come with the obedience and submission of the nation to God. Such a day was seen when out of Zion came Jesus the Messiah-King who joined His people, struck terror in the hearts of the wicked, delivered His own, and brought joy and gladness to all who flee to Him for refuge.

Con. 1) On June 11, 2001, 6 years, one month and 23 days after destroying the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people and wounding hundreds more, Timothy McVeigh was executed. He made no statement, but left a handwritten note quoting a section of the poem “Invictus,” written by William Ernest Henley. Listen to the words of a poem that sum up all too well the perspective on life of the fool of Psalm 14. (CNN, June 11, 2001).

“Out of the night that covers me  
 Black as the Pit from pole to pole,  
 I thank whatever gods may be  
 For my unconquerable soul.  
 In the fell clutch of circumstance  
 I have not winced nor cried aloud.  
 Under the bludgeonings of chance  
 My head is bloody, but unbowed.  
 Beyond this place of wrath and tears  
 Looms but the Horror of the shade,  
 And yet the menace of the years

Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how straight the gate,

How charged with punishments the scroll,

I am the master of my fate:

I am the captain of my soul.”

2) Each one of us must carefully examine our heart, our lives, to make certain we are not playing the fool of Psalm 14. “Who would,” you ask?

- When you persist in sins or a sin, closing your ears and heart to God, that is a fool.
- When you attempt to live your life without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that is a fool.
- When you attempt to live your life without prayer, that is a fool.
- When you attempt to satisfy yourself with anything other than Jesus Christ; that is a fool.
- When you claim to be the master of your own destiny, that is a fool.

3) The fool has said in his heart there is no God.

The wise has said in his heart there lives my God, and His name is Jesus.