

ATHEISM

I. Defining "atheism"

- A. Bible begins with assertion of God. Gen. 1:1 - "In the beginning God..."
Does not attempt to prove God's existence.
- B. Atheism derived from two Greek words: *a* = no; *theos* = God.
- C. Atheism is usually defined as the dogmatic denial of God, the epistemological assertion that "there is no God." Antitheism. Francis Bacon (1625) - "Atheism is rather in the lip than in the heart of man."
- D. The atheism must have a concept of God which he rejects. Is it valid?
- E. Ps. 14:1; 53:1 - "The fool has said in his heart, 'there is no god.'"
- F. Atheism is to be distinguished from the various forms of theism.
 - 1. Polytheism - many gods
 - 2. Pantheism - all is god
 - 3. Henotheism - god in each category or community
 - 4. Monotheism - one God.
- G. The early Christians were charged with "atheism." Why? Because they did not believe in or worship the Roman and Greek gods.

II. Atheism is usually a form of idolatry.

- A. Man is a spiritual creature. Seeks something on which to focus in order to have meaning, purpose and identity. Samuel Butler (1912) - "the fight between the theist and the atheist is as to whether God shall be called God or shall have some other name."
- B. If man denies God, he inevitably constructs physical or mental "gods."
 - 1. Jere. 2:28 - "gods which you made for yourself"
 - 2. Gal. 4:8 - "those which by nature are not gods"
- C. The false gods of atheism.
 - 1. Humanism - Man is the measure of things, the highest being; his own god. Gen. 3:5 - "you shall be like God." Man is god.
 - 2. Secularism - from Latin *saeculum* = world. This world is all there is. Self-limiting. The world is god.
 - 3. Naturalism - The natural order is the only order. Nature is god.
 - 4. Scientism - Physical science will discover and give us all the answers we need. Science is god.
 - 5. Positivism - "seeing is believing;" empiricism. Sensory perception is god.
 - 6. Materialism - acquisition of material goods is the ultimate goal. William James: "Truth is the cash value of an idea." Money or things is god.
 - 7. Intellectualism - By logic and rational thought, man can figure everything out. Epistemological belief-system. Reason is god.
 - 8. Existentialism - Everything is tested by human feelings. All is subjective. Emotions are god.
 - 9. Relativism - There is no absolute. Everything is relative to your perspective. Personal viewpoint is god.
 - 10. Pragmatism - Have to go with what "works." Must be practical. Expedience is god.
 - 11. Socialism - The good of the whole is the highest good. Society is god.

12. Statism - Government will solve all the problems, and take care of man. Government is god.
 13. Pluralism - It doesn't matter what you believe or do. Tolerate everything. Diversity is god.
 14. Hedonism - Sensual pleasure is the highest good. If it feels good, it is good. "Eat, drink and be merry." Pleasure is god.
- D. Arguments used by atheists against belief in God.
1. Talking about God is meaningless because it is unverifiable.
 2. God cannot be known by empirical sensory observation.
 3. "You can't be sure about anything?" Are you sure?
 4. God is a result of man's superstition or wishful thinking?
 5. God's alleged attributes are contradictory.
 6. God would not allow evil.

III. Atheism and agnosticism.

- A. Atheists do not usually claim to be atheists. They might be called upon to prove their point.
- B. Agnostic is derived from two Greek words: *a* = no; *gnosis* = knowledge.
- C. The agnostic cops out and throws the monkey on the back of those who assert there is a God, saying "You prove it."
- D. Variations of agnosticism.
 1. "I do not know if there is a God."
 2. "Man cannot know if there is a God."
 3. "I do not want to know if there is a God."
- E. Agnosticism is equivalent to ignorance. Acts 17:23 - "unknown god" - *agnoeto theo*. (cf. Rom. 10:13)

IV. Differentiating between theism, deism and Christianity.

- A. Theist - "I believe there is a god" (maybe even singular, personal, infinite)
- B. Deist - "God is out there, removed from man." Wholly other.
- C. Christian - "I have received Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord (God)."

V. Practical atheism.

- A. Many assent to theism ("I believe in God.") or even Christian truth ("I believe in Jesus Christ."). They believe it, assent to it, affirm it, confess it. It is a tenet of their belief-system. Religious epistemology.
- B. These same people live as if God does not exist. They ignore God. God is irrelevant to their lives. They do not communicate with God, seek the direction of God, allow Jesus Christ to be Lord of their lives, recognize Jesus as their life, or seek to allow the expression of His character in all situations (i.e. love, joy, peace, patience...). They are "practical atheists."
- C. If God could and would die tonight, they would go right on in their theistic belief (or so-called Christian belief), unaware of His demise.
- D. It has been said, "You only really believe, what you act upon."
- E. Edward and Jules de Goncourt (1868) - "If there is a God, atheism must strike Him as less of an insult than religion."
- F. Charles Colton (1825) - "The three great apostles of practical atheism are health, wealth and power."