

THE CREED OF A FOOL

"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Psalm 14:1.

From the beginning the minds of men have been concerned with such questions about God as the following: Who is God? Where is He? What is His nature? What is His attitude toward men? Can men approach Him? God has been acknowledged in every age and nation. Only in the hour of temptation have any ever doubted the existence of God except the fools who have denied the fact. Having closed their eyes, ears and minds to all the facts, fools have boldly declared, "There is no God." Instead of accepting such a statement, millions have continued to worship God as though these fools had never spoken.

There is abundant proof of the existence of God. This proof is so abundant that nobody can consider it thoroughly without acknowledging His existence. Nature itself proves the existence of God. Throughout nature there are marks of creative intelligence. Everywhere one finds the marks of intelligent and creative design. No man can disclaim the title of a fool and in the same breath declare that all the design, harmony and adaptability in nature are effects without an intelligent cause. On one occasion Napoleon pointed to the stars and expressed this idea in the words, "Gentlemen, if there is no God, who made all these?"

I. The Content of This Creed.

There are professing skeptics, agnostics, infidels and atheists abroad in the land. There are those who, with a supercilious pose, claim they have reached an intellectual altitude by thinking that they believe there is no God. However, it is a difficult task for those who deny His being to prove that there is not a God. To do so they must prove that there are effects without causes and that there are evident marks of design in the visible world without a designing mind. But these notions are at variance with common sense, and cannot be proved by the most artful reasoning.

1. It is negative.

This creed says, "There is no God." Anybody who accepts this creed simply shakes his head at what others believe and denies it. Why does he say, "There is no God"? His soul is unsaved. His life is sinful. Out of his wickedness corresponding wishes arise. He wishes to believe that Christianity is false, and consequently that there will not be any God to judge him at the last. He refuses to recognize the authority of God and resents the very prospect of meeting God. Being wilfully ignorant and having a corrupt heart, he tries to persuade himself that there is not a God. As he is, he wishes. The wish is the father of the thought. His wishing determines his thinking. In accordance with his desire, he thinks and acts as if there were no God. Whereas he begins by defying God, he ends by denying His existence.

A successful and happy life cannot be achieved by a negative program. Nothing worthwhile can be accomplished with a negative approach. A farmer cannot grow crops by just killing weeds. A carpenter cannot build houses by simply demolishing old worm-out shacks. A teacher cannot train children by just denying false theories. A merchant cannot build a great business by merely spending his time in keeping thieves from breaking in, or fire from destroying his goods. A game cannot be won merely by defensive playing.

A fool approaches you and declares to you that "there is no God," but, he does not give you anything to take its place. He simply comes to scorn your

beliefs but he does not have anything better to give. Until he can improve on what you have, continue to believe in and worship God Who is the Giver and Sustainer of life.

2. It is destructive.

The influence of this creed is positively damaging. There is nothing constructive about it, but it is entirely destructive. It takes confidence out of the hearts of people and fills them with doubt, and doubts are destructive. Doubts crush and blight and rob people of courage and the other foundation principles of life. Both the religious and the business world are built on confidence. When you shatter man's confidence in others, you have done him an irreparable damage. Such an injury will color all of his dealings with others. Broken confidences make cowards out of heroes. Such a negative creed will burn every Bible, hush every song and silence every prayer. Such a program would destroy every institution that has been produced by Christianity, such as the school, the hospital, the orphanage and the various other institutions for the afflicted and the aged.

3. It is worthless.

This creed is utterly without value. There is nothing in it to inspire, to encourage or to comfort others. There is nothing in it to enrich life. It does not solve any problems, lift any burdens, correct any wrongs, conquer any foes, win any victories or give any peace. If all were to accept it, the world would not be improved in the least. If all were to reject it, none would be hurt. It has never made a drunkard sober, a thief honest or a harlot pure.

II. The Contribution of This Creed.

1. It has not produced a civilization.

Where we find this creed, we discover a people without hope. Christianity has given liberty, taken shackles from the wrists of men, unbound the feet of Chinese women, stopped the sacrifice of babies to the beasts, lifted burdens from the hearts and the backs of the benighted people, and made life safer for all. Christianity is linked inseparably with kindness, education, sanitation, and humanitarianism. Neither skepticism, agnosticism nor atheism has ever produced any of these things.

2. It has not built a good institution.

Christianity has fostered educational institutions, hospitals, orphanages, humane societies, rescue homes, and eleemosynary institutions. Atheism has never provided a shelter for the homeless, any bread for the hungry, any raiment for the destitute, or any healing for the crippled. The churches stand for these and put their best men and gifts into them. The fool, who denies that there is a God, would accept them, but would scorn the source from which they sprang. A London clergyman met an atheist who wished all churches, including Spurgeon's were destroyed. The clergyman said, "Then, which of your infidels would be first to take upon himself the responsibility of Mr. Spurgeon's orphanage?" The silence was very expressive.

3. It has not provided any inspiration.

This creed has never moved a soul to write a great poem, a great son or a great book. Whereas Christianity has produced hundreds of thousands of songs, atheism has never produced one. It does not have anything about which to sing.

4. It has not helped a life.

If Christianity does not benefit man while he lives here, it cannot help him after he leaves this earth. We are not interested in a religion which is offered merely as a fire escape from hell. We want something to turn our attention to nobler living in the present. The creed of the fool does not make anyone more honest or honorable, more considerate or sympathetic in the struggles of life.

Who has atheism ever helped? Where is there a single drunkard who has been led to abandon his dissipation and mend his ways because of the influence of skepticism? What wrong has it righted? The records are blank. But if you ask the same questions about the influence of Christianity, there are many volumes which contain the records of those who have been influenced by Christ and His gospel to leave the low and the base and live nobler lives.

III. The Challenge of This Creed.

1. It does not offer any hope.

This creed does not offer any forgiveness for past sins, escape from the habits that bind us or reward for the toils of the faithful. There is no reckoning day for the wrongs of life and no resting place for the spirit of the parted. There is nothing except to eke out a miserable existence, and to die as a beast. There is nothing to look forward to for satisfaction. Such a creed has no appeal for me.

2. It does not offer any comfort.

Unbelief and infidelity leave us helpless with our problems. It fails us when the shadows gather and the darkness falls. It does not have any staff on which we can lean when our strength fails. God pity those who will not trust in Him.

If one's heart is set upon righteousness, he will not have any difficulty in believing in a personal God, Who is a rewarder of both the good and evil deeds of his life. If any man says, with an air of laughter and self-satisfied triumph, "There is no God," there is something wrong with him on the inside. In his heart there is moral rotteness. In the words of our text, he is a fool. While I recognize that it is permissible for a person to prove himself to be a fool by saying, "There is no God," I feel toward him like the little girl did toward her baby brother. Somebody asked her how she liked him. She replied, "I like him all right, except his head is loose." Even though one is foolish enough to live without God, it is terrible for him to tamper with the faith of others.

The Philadelphia INQUIRER records the following story about the late Washington McLean:

"One terribly snowy, sleety day in Washington, he was sitting in the Riggs House reading room, looking out upon the dreary scene on Pennsylvania Avenue.

Presently in came Colonel Bob Ingersoll, the great agnostic. As he entered the apartment he held out his hand, saying, 'Hello, Wash, how do you do?' Mr. McLean took his hand, and, as he did so, said, 'Bob, I wish you could have been here a little while ago. I saw a scene out there that made me wish I were twenty years younger. A poor, crippled soldier was limping across the avenue, when a young, lusty fellow ran by him, and, as he did so, kicked the crutch from him and tumbled him down into the slush.' 'The villain!' said Ingersoll. 'He should have been sent to the penitentiary.' 'Do you really think so?' said McLean. 'Why, certainly,' replied the Colonel. 'What else could I think?' 'And yet, Bob,' said McLean, 'that is what you are doing every week in the year. Here are poor, old, infirm Christians, with nothing to aid or support them but their belief in religion, nothing to keep them out of the mire of despair but faith, and yet you go about kicking the crutch from under them worse than even this fictitious fellow did to this fictitious soldier.'"

Skepticism, agnosticism, infidelity and atheism will not do to live by or to die by. They offer wax swords for the conflicts of life. They offer painted fire for the wintry season of life. They offer painted water for the thirsts of life. They offer paper boats for the whirling rapids and dread abysses we have to dare in life.

There is a God. I know there is because I have personal dealings with Him every day. You and I must meet this great and holy God some day. That is why we are commanded to "prepare to meet thy God." Are you ready to meet Him? If not, won't you get ready now by accepting Christ as your Saviour and deliverer from the power of sin?