

**AN ATHEIST IS A PERSON
WHO HAS NO
INVISIBLE MEANS OF SUPPORT**



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AN ATHEIST IS A PERSON WHO HAS NO INVISIBLE MEANS OF SUPPORT (Part 1)

They say they are atheists, and the Lord says they are "without God in this world." And the Lord says that an atheist is "a fool," because "a fool has said in their heart there is no God." Therefore, atheists are declaring that they are omnipresent, and omniscient and eternal, knowing there is no God. In their negative assessment they declare that there is a God, because they attribute God's attributes to themselves and say there is no God.

But you cannot deny what doesn't exist. So again they are inconsistent, and say there is no God. But in order to know and have a relationship with God, they must be aided in their thinking, and that is where the Bible, the Word of God is, the revelation of the fact that there is a God, and that He is sovereignty, righteousness and justice, love, eternal life, omniscience, omnipresent, omnipotent, immutable, and veracity (truth). And they also have come short of the glory of God.

Were it not for the fact that God has made a suitable revelation of Himself to men, and that He expects them to give attention to

it, it would seem to be unwarranted presumption for the finite mind to seek to comprehend that which is infinite. The theologian should never lose sight of the fact that he, as no other scientist, is called upon to deal with things supernatural, with things that transcend the boundaries of time and space, **where no unaided human thought can penetrate,** and with unseen beings, including the three Persons of the God-head and the angels.

Confronted with such subjects as these, he should ever be in quietude of holy reverence, as was Moses before the burning bush, and ever impressed with the futility of dependence upon mere human opinion, as well as of the disastrous consequences which such dependence may induce. In the simplest of terms, God has spoken of Himself and of things infinite and eternal.

The Bible is that message, and while man cannot originate any similar truth, he, though finite, is privileged by the gracious illumination of the Spirit to receive, with some degree of understanding, the revelation concerning things which are infinite.

ATHEISM (Part 1)

The natural man who does not receive or know the things of God, has in all ages sought to answer the problem of a visible universe and by his efforts has unceasingly proved this Divine estimation of his limitations to be true. 1 Corinthians 2:14, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

It may be difficult for the spiritually enlightened mind to comprehend the fog of confusion in which the often sincere, but unregenerate men are plunged. It should be remembered that argument does not create Divine enlightenment. Only by the new birth can one "see the kingdom of God." The cure for spiritual darkness is "the Light of the world."

The groupings of natural men, and sometimes they are men of great mental powers, are varied and complex. However, they have formulated certain general lines of philosophy, and these, like the false religions of the Earth, bespeak the spiritual limitations of fallen man.

Theism means a belief in God, and in its naturalistic form is a rational philosophy regarding God, which is restricted to the one Divine essence. Biblical theism believes that essence, according to revelation, subsists in three Persons. As a rationalistic philosophy, naturalistic theism is sustained by the traditional arguments already considered, and may be distinguished from certain antitheistic theories.

The cognizance of nature on the part of man and his restless investigation into the facts of the universe and its origin are traced in the history of philosophy. Many schools of thought have appeared, some of which exist at the present time only in the records which constitute their history. These systems of thought reflect the groupings of the human

mind when unaided by revelation. It is recorded that some philosophers rejected revelation when it came to them. Romans 1:18-32. It is also true that others to whom revelation was denied would have responded to, and rejoiced in, the glorious light which it affords.

Plato has said, "The philosophers are able to grasp the eternal and immutable... Those who set their affections on that which in each case really exists." Sincerity, which welcomes added light, is reflected in these utterances.

The earlier philosophers were occupied with cosmology and not until Socrates and Plato was there any serious consideration of moral or intellectual phenomena. The fact that Socrates confused knowledge with virtue suggests the immaturity which his philosophy has evinced. The student of theology will do well to become familiar with the principle anti-theistic theories of this and past ages, for these, being more or less native to the unregenerate mind, are ever appearing in one form or another. One of these theories is "atheism."

ATHEISM (Part 2)

An open and positive denial of the existence of God is indicated by the term "atheism" (ATHEOS), no God! The designation is not properly applied to mere ignorance of God. A dogmatic atheist is one who assumes himself informed as to theistic claims yet emphatically denies the existence of God.

It is probably that a 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, a negative, premise.

Man could not, and therefore does not, ever fully adjust himself to the logical conclusions of atheism. If he did so adjust himself, he would not only repudiate God, all moral value and spiritual reality, but would like-

wise repudiate the human constitution on its immaterial side. For the consistent atheist there could be no mind, no conscience, no mortality, no sensibility, and no will.

The theory of the atheist cannot support its own assertions because of the element of mind which such support requires. To the atheist the material universe is only an accident and all its marvels of coordination and development are fortuitous. He knows no cause for anything, even his own existence. He has not hope for himself in time or eternity. When he denies the existence of God, it is by an assumption of knowledge which transcends the limitations which the negative creed allows.

The wonder then turns on the great process by which a man could grow to the

immense intelligence that can know that there is no God. What ages and what lights are requisite for this attainment? This intelligence involves the very attributes of Divinity, while a God is denied. For unless this man is omnipresent, unless he is at the moment in every place in the universe, he cannot know but there may be in some place manifestations of a Deity, by which even "he" would be overpowered.

If he does not know absolutely ever agent in the universe, the one that he does not know may be God. If he is not himself the chief agent in the universe, and does not know what is so, that which is so may be God. If he is not in absolute possession of all the propositions that constitute universal truth, the one which he wants may be that there is a God. If he cannot with certainty assign the cause of all that he perceives to exist, that cause may be God.

If he does not know every thing that has been done in immeasurable ages that are past, some things may have been done by a God. Thus unless he knows all that is, he precludes another Deity by being one himself. He cannot know that the Being whose existence he rejects does not exist. But he must know that He does not exist else he deserves equal contempt and compassion for the temerity with which he firmly avows his rejection and act accordingly.

Atheism, according to its etymology, signifies a denial of the being of God. It was applied by the ancient Greeks to Socrates and other philosophers, to indicate that they failed to confirm the popular religion. In the same sense, it was applied to the early Christians. Since the usage of the term "theism" has been definitely fixed in modern languages, atheism necessarily stands for a denial of the belief in a **personal God**, which is the result of spontaneous recognition of God as manifesting Himself in consciousness and works of nature. Atheism is still possible as an abnormal state of consciousness induced

by sophistical speculation or by the indulgence of sinful passions, precisely as subjective idealism is possible.

It exists in the following forms:

1. Dogmatic - as when the conclusion is reached either
 - A. that God does not exist
 - B. that the human faculties are positively incapable of ascertaining or verifying His existence
2. Skeptical - As when the existence is simply doubted, and the conclusiveness of the evidence generally relied upon is denied
3. Virtual - as when
 - A. principles are maintained essentially inconsistent with the existence of God, or with the possibility of our knowledge of Him by materialists, positivists, absolute idealists
 - B. when some of the essential attributes of the Divine nature are denied, as by pantheists
 - C. when explanations of the universe are given which exclude the agency of an intelligent Creator and Governor, the moral government of God, and the moral freedom of man, i.e., the theories of Darwin and Spensor and Nestorians generally

Atheists:

- claim to be omnipresent
- claim to be eternal
- claim to be omniscient

otherwise they would be wrong saying there is no God. They would have to be everywhere at once to know. Omnipresence. They would have to know all things and they would have to have existed in eternity past, time, and eternity future to say there is no God. "A fool in his heart has said there is no God." An atheist.

AN ATHEIST IS A PERSON WHO HAS NO INVISIBLE MEANS OF SUPPORT! (Part 2)

“HOW AN ATHEIST WAS SAVED”

We all come into this world without God, without hope, without Christ, and without eternal life. The Scripture declares that we come into this world physically alive and spiritually dead. An atheist says “There is no God,” because he came into the world separated from God and then at the age of accountability he has rejected God.

So an atheist is a person who has rejected God. But that is not that God is not faithful, because He is, and “He is not willing that any one should perish.” But atheists are perishing without. God did die for atheists. “Though we deny Him, yet He abideth faithful.” “But even when we were dead in sins, He hath quickened us together with Christ, by GRACE ye are saved. BUT GOD, who is rich in mercy, by His great love wherewith He loved us.”

Here is a description of how an atheist became a child of God. “Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision, by that which is called the Circumcision, in the flesh made by hands; That at the time ye were WITHOUT CHRIST, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and STRANGERS FROM THE COVENANTS FOR PROMISE, HAVING NO HOPE, AND WITHOUT GOD IN THIS WORLD. But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off ARE MADE NIGH BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST.”

An atheist by Scriptural description is:

“Dead in trespasses and sins.” “Without Christ.” “Strangers from the promise.” “Having no hope.” And “WITHOUT GOD IN THIS WORLD.”

No wonder the Psalmist said, “A fool hath said in his heart there is no God.” That

is an atheist, a Scriptural atheist, but... “God is who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.”

Scripture counts man “without God,” in darker tints, and yet man as he may become, in brighter ones, than are elsewhere found. The range of this portrait painter’s palette is from the pitchless black of being “without God,” to the most dazzling white, as of snow smitten by sunlight.

Nowhere else are there such sad, stern words about the actualities of human nature, “without God,” nowhere else such glowing and wonderful ones about man’s possibilities. This Physician knows that He can cure the worse cases, if they take His medicine. And is under no temptation to minimize the severity of the symptoms or the fatality of the disease. We have got both sides in this text, man’s actual condition, “dead in trespasses and sins,” and man’s possible condition, and the actual condition of thousands of men, made to live again in Jesus Christ, and with Him raised from the dead, and with Him gone up on high, and with Him sitting at God’s right hand.

Now that is what you and I may be if we will. If we will not, then we must be the other. The choice is ours with God or without God.

So we have three things here to look at for a few moments: the DEAD souls, the compassion LOVE that looks down upon them, and the RESURRECTION of the dead.

The look of love, the life of love, and the lift of love.

The first picture of an atheist is a dogmatic statement about the actual condition of human nature apart from Jesus Christ, "dead in trespasses." The apostle looks upon the world, many colored, full of activity, full of intellectual stir, full of human emotions, affections, joys, sorrows, fluctuations, **as if it were one great cemetery**, and on every gravestone there was written now the word "atheists," by the same inscription. They all died of the same disease, "dead through sins," literally as the original language of the New Testament properly means.

Now many who hear this immediately say "exaggeration." Here again we have, they say, the old gloomy view of human nature cropping up again. Well, I am not at all unwilling to acknowledge that truths like this have very often been preached both with a tone and in a manner that repels, and which is rightly chargeable with "exaggeration," and undue gloom and narrowness.

But let me remind you that it is not the pastor or the preacher, nor the apostle only, who have to bear the condemnation of exaggeration. If this passage of Scripture is not true, then you would have to condemn Jesus Christ also, because He said, "Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man, ye have no life in you." And I think whether you think He is Divine or not, His words about the spiritual condition of men go so surely to the mark that a man must be tolerably impregnable in his self-conceit who charges the Lord of glory with narrowness and exaggeration.

But we are content to say, along with Christ, and if you and I accept Him as our Teacher, may not only take His graciousness, but His stern words, assured that a deep graciousness lies in these, too, if we rightly understand them.

Let me remind you that this verse, by no means is confined to Christian teachers, but that, in common speech, we hear from all high thinkers about the lower type of humanity being dead to the loftier thoughts in which "they live and move and have their being." It has passed into a commonplace of lan-

guage to speak of men being DEAD to honor, DEAD to shame, DEAD to this, that and the other good and noble and gracious things.

The same metaphor, if you like, lies in this verse. They who call themselves atheists, and have given their wills and inmost natures over to the dominion of self, and that is the definition of sin, that such men are IPSO FACTO, by reason of that very surrender of themselves to their worst selves, dead on what I may call the top side of their nature and that all that is there is atrophied and dwindling away. **Unconsciousness is one characteristic of death.**

When you look around you, you know there are tens and hundreds and thousands of men and women who are all but utterly unconscious of a whole universe in which are the only realities, and to which it becomes them to have access. "You live, in the physical sense, and move and have your being in God," and yet your inmost life would not be altered one hair's breadth if there were no God at all. You pass the most resplendent instances and illustrious illustrations of His presence and His work, and you see nothing. You are blind on that side of your natures, or as our verse says, dead to the whole spiritual realm.

"That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us: For in Him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring."

We are just as if there were a brick wall run against some man's windows so that he could see nothing out of them. So you, by your persistent adherence to the paltry present, the material, the visible, the selfish, have reared up a wall against the windows of your souls that look Heavenwards, and of God, and all the lofty starry realities that cluster round Him. You are as unconscious as the corpse upon its bier is of the sunshine that plays upon its pallid features, or of the dew that falls on its stiffened limbs. **Dead because of sin.** Is that exaggeration? Is it exaggeration which charges all but absolute unconscious-

ness of spiritual realities upon worldly men like some of you?

And take another illustration, another of the signature of dead is inactivity. Most of the faculties of people who listen to the Word of God are all shriveled, and about but extinct. They are "dormant," at any rate, to use another word for the death explained in this verse. For the death of this verse is not so absolute a death but that a resurrection is possible, and so "dormant" comes to express pretty nearly the same thing. Faculties of service, of enthusiasm, of life from God, of noble obedience to Him, what have you done with them? Left them there until they have stiffened like an unused rock, or rusted like the hinges of an unopened door, and you are as little active in all the noblest of Spirit, which are activities in submission to and dependence upon Him, as if you were laid in your coffin with your idle hands crossed for evermore upon an unheaving breast.

There is another illustration I can suggest for a moment. **Decay is another characteristic and signature of death.** And your best self, in some of you, is rotting to corruption by sin. When we think of these tragedies of suicide that are going on in the thousands of men round about us today, it seems to me as if the metaphor and the reality were reversed, and instead of saying that our text is a violent metaphor, transferring the facts of material death and corruption to the spiritual realm, I am almost disposed to say it is the other way around and the real death is the death of the Spirit. And the outer dissolution and unconsciousness and inactivity of the material body is only a kind of parable to preach to men what are the awful invisible facts ever associate with the fact of transgression.

There are three lives possible for each of us. Two of them involuntary, the third requiring our consent and effort, but all of them sustained by the same cause. The first of them is that which we call life. The activity and the consciousness of the bodily frame, and that continues as long as the power of God keeps the body in life. When He withdraws His hand there comes what the sense calls death. Then there is the natural life of

thinking, loving, willing, enjoying, sorrowing, and the like, and that continues as long as He who is the Life and the Light of men breathes into them the breath of that life. And these two are lived or died largely without the man's own consent or choice.

But there is a third life, when all the lower is lifted to the Lord, and thinking and willing and loving and enjoying and aspiring and trusting and obeying, and all these natural faculties find their home and their consecration and their immortality in the Lord. **That life is only lived by your own free will, and it is the true life.** The others are, as I said, but parables, and envelopes, and vehicles, as it were, in which this life is carried. The life lived by your free will is more precious than they.

In the physical realm, separate the body from God and it dies. In the natural conscious life separate the soul, and we call it from God, and it dies. And in the higher region, separate the spirit, which is the man grasping God, from God, and he dies, and that is the real death. But **the others are nothing in comparison with it.** It may coexist with a large amount of intellectual and other forms of activity, as we see all round about us, and that makes it only the more ghastly and the sadder.

You are full of energy in regard to all other subjects, but smitten into torpor about the Highest. Ready to live, to work, to enjoy, to think, to will, in all other directions, and utterly unconscious and unconcerned or all but utterly unconscious and unconcerned in regard to God. Atheist. A death which is so co-existent with such feverish intensity of life as the most of you are expending all the week at your work and your daily pursuits is among the saddest of all the tragedies that angels are called upon to weep over, and that men are fools enough to enact.

If the representation is a gloomy one, do not you think that it is better to ask the question? Is it a true one? Then, is it a cheerful one? I lay this on your hearts, that he that lives to God and with God is alive to the center as well as out to the finger tips and

circumference of His visible being. He that is dead to God is **dead indeed while he lives.**

Now, secondly notice the compassion and the GRACE and love that looks down on the cemetery. Death through sins. “God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love, wherewith He loved us.” So the great truth that is taught us here, first of all, is that that Divine love of the Divine Father bends down over His dead creatures and cherishes them **still.**

Now you can go much in separating yourselves from God through selfishness, self-will, sensuality, or other forms of sin. But there is one thing you cannot do, **you cannot prevent the Lord from loving you,** even a so-called atheist. I point you to the pathetic page in the Old Testament history where the king hears of the death, red-handed in treason, of his darling son, and careless of victory and forgetful of everything else, and oblivious that Absalom was a rebel, and only remembering that he was his son, burst into that monotonous wail that has come down over all the centuries as the deepest expression of undying fatherly love. “Oh my son Absalom. My son Absalom. Oh Absalom, my son, my son.”

The name and the relationship will well up out of the father’s heart, whatever the child’s crime. We are all His Absaloms, and though we are dead in trespasses and in sins, “God who is rich in mercy,” bends over us and loves us with His great love. The apostle might well expiate in these two varying forms of speech, both of them intended to express the same thing, “Rich in mercy,” and “Great in love.”

For surely a love which takes account of the sin that cannot repel it, and so shapes itself into mercy, sparing and departing from the strict line of retribution and justice, is great. And sure a GRACE, a mercy, which refuses to be provoked by 70 times 7 transgressions in an hour, not to say a day, is rich. **That mercy is wider than all humanity, deeper than all sin, was before all rebellion, and will last forever.**

And it is open for every soul of man to receive it if he will.

But there is another point to be noticed in reference to this wonderful manifestation of Divine love looking down upon the myriads of men dead in sin, and that is that **this love shapes the Divine action.** Mark the language of our text in which the apostle attributes a certain line of conduct in the Divine dealings with us to the fact of His great love.

“Because He loved us,” therefore He did so and so. Now, there are two principles about that, and that is that one of them is here, is a demonstration, for some people who do not believe in the teaching of atonement by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, that the true scriptural representation of that doctrine is not which caricaturists have represented it, that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ changed in any manner the Divine heart and disposition.

It is not, as some critics say, that God loves because Christ died, but the fact that **God loved and that is why Christ died.** Christ died because God loves. Jesus Christ said the same thing Himself. “God so loved the word that He sent His Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should be saved.”

That brings us to the second principle here, that this Divine love, GRACE, patient, wonderful, unrepelled by man’s sin, as it is, has to adopt a process to reach its end. God by His love does not, because He can not, raise these dead souls into a life of righteousness without Jesus Christ. **Jesus Christ comes to be the channel and the medium through which the love of God may attain its end.**

God’s compassionate love, because He is rich in mercy, is not turned away by man’s sin. And God’s compassionate love, because He is rich in mercy, quickens men not by a bare will, but by the mission and work of His dear Son.

The final thing is the resurrection of the dead souls.

They died of sin. That was the disease that killed them. They cannot be quickened unless the disease be conquered. So we teach and press upon each soul the individual be-

lief in the death of Jesus Christ as being for each of us, if we will trust Him, the death of our death, and the death of our sin. By His great sacrifice and sufficient oblation He has borne the sins of the world and has taken away their guilt. And in Him the innermost reality of the spiritual death, and its outermost parable of corporeal dissolution, are equally and simultaneously overcome. If you will take Him for your personal Saviour, you will rise from the death of guilt, condemnation and selfishness, and sin into a new life of liberty, sonship, righteousness, and **will never see death.**

And on the other hand, the life of Jesus Christ is available for all of us. If we will put our trust in Him, His life will pass into our deadness. He Himself will vitalize our being. Dormant capacities will be quickened, and brought into blessed activity. A new direction will be given to the old faculties, desires, aspirations, and emotions of our nature.

The will will tower into new power because it obeys. The heart will throb with a better life, because it has grasped a love that cannot change and will never die. And the thinking power will be brought into living personal contact with the personal Truth, so that whatsoever contact with the darknesses and problems may still be left, but at the center there will be light and satisfaction and peace. You will live if you trust Christ as your personal Saviour and let Him be your life.

And if thus by simple faith in Him, knowing that the power of His atoning death has destroyed the burden of our guilt and condemnation, and knowing the quickening influences of His constraining love as draw-

ing us to love new things and make us new creatures, we receive into our inmost spirits the law of the Spirit of Life which was in Christ Jesus, and are thereby made free from the law of sin and death. Then it is only a question of time, when the vitalizing force shall flow into all the cracks and crannies of our being and deliver us wholly from the bondage of corruption in the outer as well as in the inner life.

For they who have learned that Christ is the life of their lives upon Earth can never cease their appropriation of the fullness of His quickening power until "He has changed the body of their humiliation into the likeness of the body of His glory, according to the working whereby He is able so subdue even all things unto Himself."

He Himself said, and His words remember, though you may forget all mine, "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And he that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?"

An atheist is a person who has no invisible means of support. Men call themselves atheists. God calls them "fools," "without Christ," "without hope," "without promises," and "dead, without God in this world."

Who wants to go through this life, this world, without hope, without Christ, without God? Do you? An Atheist? I don't.

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