



MOUNT MERRION FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
(BELFAST NORTHERN IRELAND).



Pulpit Ministry of Mount Merrion Free Presbyterian Church

Lord's Day Evening 8th February 2009.

'Atheism versus the Scriptures.'

"A Response to the British Humanist Association bus advert."

Scripture Reading Psalm 14:1; Psalm 53:1; 2Peter Ch3:3

By. Rev. Paul Thompson.

There is no doubt that in recent years there has been a bold assertion of atheistic thought upon our society. Young people in particular are expected to adopt atheism without any supporting evidence. However, most of us will be aware of the recent campaign by the British Humanist Association to have displayed in every major UK city's transport structure the message, *"There is probably no God, so stop worrying and enjoy your life."*

The campaign really began with Ariane Sherine a 28yr old independent journalist who works as a columnist for the Guardian newspaper. In a newspaper article appearing in the Guardian on June 20th 2008 Ariane Sherine reports how that as she walked to work the previous day she was greatly disturbed by a verse of scripture being advertised on a London bus by an evangelical group [Proclaiming Truth in London], the verse was Luke Ch18:8, *"When the son of man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"* The advertisement also displayed a website address, when she entered that website Ariane Sherine was horrified to find that the website carried the warning that anyone who doesn't *"accept the word of Jesus on the cross"*: would *"be condemned to everlasting separation from God and then you spend all eternity in torment in hell."* Believing the message on the bus and the website to be negative, her immediate response was to enquire as to the possibility of placing an opposing message on a London bus. This proposed message would be atheistic and humanistic in flavour. Her idea quickly gained the support of the British Humanist Association [a atheistic society]. After the funds were secured the message soon appeared buses, tube stations and else where in London and since then almost every major city in the UK. The message reading, *"There is probably no God, now stop worrying and enjoy your life."*

The mission statement of the BHA is as follows, *"The British Humanist Association exists to promote Humanism and support and represent people who seek to live good lives without religious or superstitious beliefs."* However, in principle their mission is to destroy bible Christianity, not any kind of religion. The BHA goes on to state that they are *"Committed to...an end to the privileged position of religion – the "established" religion of Christianity in particular – in law, education, broadcasting and wherever else it occurs."*

We are not to be surprised that atheism is becoming so bold in its message; in fact, we are to expect this to be so. Atheism amongst other things is a mark of the end times. Peter warns the Church in his day that prior to the return of Christ, Godlessness will be on the increase, *"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers...and saying where is the promise of his coming."*

Humanism defines itself as holding to a *'complete absence of belief.'* yet in its own admission there is a glaring contradiction. To have a complete absence of belief in anything, presupposes that you believe there is nothing to believe in, it is circular reasoning. The message of the British Humanist Association does not make any sense, they profess to believe nothing, yet their words proclaim that they believe something, I.e. that *'there probably is no God.'* As we will see later, atheism is nothing more than a false hope; that of a man or woman seeking to convince themselves and others that that God could not possibly exist.

*"It takes greater faith to be an atheist than to be a Christian."
"To be an atheist requires an infinitely greater measure of faith than to receive all he great truths which atheism would deny."*

It is not my purpose to enter into a discourse on proving the existence of God. My intention is to have the scriptures commentate upon man's professed rejection of God's existence! The word of God is prepared for such a philosophy, no matter how authoritative it may be, God's word is the final authority. The key passage to which I want you to consider is Psalm 14:1 The fool hath spoken in his heart, there is no God!

1) **The Description of the Atheist**, "*The fool...*"

An atheist is someone who denies the existence of God. The word '*atheist*' is derived from two Greek words, the little word '*a*' [without] and '*Theos*' [God] '*without God.*' However, we must define what God is, what exactly is it that men deny to exist? How are we to define God? Or what do we mean when we use the term God? This is an important question, it is vital from the standpoint that those who proclaim to be atheistic in their understanding, must clarify what they have no belief in. For the purpose of this message I want to adopt John Blanchard's definition, when we use the term God whether in evangelism, preaching or in relation to the creation and function of this universe, we are referring to God as a "*unique, personal, plural, spiritual, eternally self-existent, transcendent, immanent, omniscient, immutable holy, loving being, the creator and ruler of the entire universe and the judge of mankind.*" [John Blanchard '*Does God believe in Atheists?*']. For any man to say that he rejects any concept of God, we understand that rejection to be only that which we have just declared God to be [see above]. It is true that there are many who adopt the name '*atheist*', yet when pressed to reveal their understanding of God it is not God as a personal being, but something else. There are also others who we could say are '*practical atheists*', who live as if there were no God. For the purpose of simplicity, I am considering the '*branch*' of atheism that boldly asserts '*there is no God!*' For that essentially is what atheism is. Atheism is nothing more than a false hope exemplified by wicked men. The thought that there is no God is largely encapsulated in the hearts of all men, a distant hope that they will never have to stand before God!

We should not be surprised that we find these words in the bible [Psalm 14:1; Ps 53:1]. These words remind us that there are people in this world who will set their whole lives on a course to deny the existence of God. Very often those who are the key advocates of this denial present themselves to this world as educated authorities, who are intellectually superior to those who minister God's word; they deride Gospel ministers as unlearned and ignorant men, their writings and assumptions are not to be questioned. The defence of their false reasoning lies in education and ability, yet though that be so, God describes the man who sets himself on a course to reject any concept of God as a fool! The word 'fool' means 'base fellow' 1 Cor 3:19 "*For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.*" Rom 1:20-22 "*For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools."*

2) **The Delusion of the Atheist**, "*The fool hath said in his heart...no God...They are corrupt.*"

"A dog barks when his master is attacked. I would be a coward if I saw that God's truth is attacked and yet would remain silent."
...John Calvin ...

One of the most famous books by Richard Dawkins who is perhaps the most widely acclaimed atheist at this time and vice president of the British Humanist Association is *'The God Delusion.'* In his book, Dawkins intended to nullify any argument for belief in God stating that Christians who believe in God are deluded! However, when we examine what the word of God says in regards to belief in God, we discover that the man, who by faith rests on Christ is regarded as a wise man, and those who reject the Gospel are said to be deceived and deluded themselves. The truth of the matter is, all men by nature are in a state of delusion, man's heart deceives him, his understanding is corrupt. Jer Ch17:9, *"The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked."* Only a fool would put his trust in his heart, the heart is set to deceive! Mar 7:21-23 *"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man."* The atheist like all men has a mind problem as well as a heart problem, this is a condition that is universal in scope. All men by nature are corrupt in understanding and are deceived by their hearts. Psalm 36:1, *"The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes."* Man sets himself not to fear God. The atheist is not some kind of special person, who is exempt from classification, *'all have sinned, there is none that doeth good, [psalm 14:1], no not one.'* One area in which this delusion is seen is in regards to:

a) Accountability.

One of the greatest motivations for adopting the tenets of atheism is the professed avoidance of judgement. Man's quest to build a God-free society is motivated purely by a desire to avoid meeting God one day in a judgement setting! Man knows that day is coming, he knows he will be brought into judgement, for his own conscience tells him that see [Rom Ch2:14], *"For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves."* The law of God is written upon man's conscience. It's impossible to live in this world without a concept of God, that concept may be confused, yet the conscience leaves a man without any excuse.

In Ch1:28-32 Paul mentions the sin of Atheism and hatred for God, in Ch2:1-2 he says that men will be inexcusable, *"Be sure that the judgement of God is according to truth, against them which commit such things."* We quoted earlier from 1 Cor 3:19 *"For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness."* The idea is of God by his hand laying hold upon rebellious man and dealing with him in wrath, sinful man is nothing more than a bird in a trap! The Atheist with all his cunning and professed wisdom, will not be able to get out of the hand of God, and escape his awful vengeance. You can not only hear but you can almost feel the Satanic undertones in the BHA's campaign message, *"Now stop worrying and enjoy your life."* That's what Satan told Adam and Eve in essence, *'Adam and Eve, God did not create you to be miserable, he placed you here in this beautiful world to enjoy everything, now stop worrying Adam about this threatened penalty, it wasn't real!'* Instead of a seeking to avoid judgment there ought to be a fearful looking and preparation for judgement. It is true that God created us to enjoy life, we are not to be miserable, however, true life and lasting happiness is found only in Christ, the desire for happiness is not to be found in a removal of God, untold misery will be the

portion, as our first parents instantly discovered! There is no enjoyment at the end of a life of sin!

The BHA statement, *“There is probably no God.”* is not a statement, rather it is an asserted hope, Spurgeon states of the message of Atheism, it is not *“A positive dogmatical declaration.”* When a man adopts atheism as his *‘lifestyle’* he is not removing God from having any influence upon him, rather he is setting up another god in the place of his creator condemning himself all the more. The first commandment is *“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”*

3) The Direction of the Atheist.

It is a most dangerous thing for a man to say *‘there is no God!’* It is something that will have eternal consequences for that man’s soul. Romans Ch1:28-30, *“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Unrighteousness...maliciousness...debauchery...deceit ...haters of God...”* When the apostle Paul refers to men ‘not liking to retain God in their knowledge’ he is speaking of men doing everything possible to erase this knowledge out of their minds and to prevent others from coming to know the one true and living God.

I am not saying that every man who sets himself on a course to convince himself that there is no God is beyond redemption; that would be to go beyond what the scriptures declares, there is hope for the atheist or the humanist, however, I can say this, that no matter who the person is, when that mindset is adopted, they are meddling with that which God turns men over to and leaves them there! They are heading in the direction of being left reprobate, with no possible hope. When God gives a man over to his base desires, there is no hope for that man, that man will be damned and his destination is a lost eternity!

I make this next statement in an attitude of grace and love; the atheist desires to be without God in this life, though that is impossible, yet to die without him is to ensure an eternity separate from him, complete absence from his grace and absolute separation from joy of any kind [Matt Ch8:11-12]! Ariane Sherine is quoted as saying that *“religious organisations are still trying to scare people into thinking irrational and harmful nonsense by threatening them with eternal damnation if they think for themselves. Hopefully the campaign will go some way to countering these ideas, which belong in a big trench back in the Middle Ages.”* Sherine goes on to speak of *“The truly Medieval idea of hell.”* Anyone who takes issue with these doctrines, is not taking an issue with a preacher or a school of Theology, but with Christ, these are Christ’s words [Matt Ch8:11-12; Matt 25:41].

For the man who understands God and understands that he stands before God as a sinner, a vile foolish man, to that man hell will be the most rational and logical thing; for he has offended God who is eternal in his being and holy in his character. Hell is not brutality, it is the just reward of wicked men. Hence we ought always to have a high view of Sin, it strikes at the heart of God therefore it carries with it a severe penalty.