

THE FOOL'S CREED

By R. A. Torrey

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

OUR subject to-night is The Fool's Creed. Every intelligent man has a creed. You hear men in our days inveighing against creeds, but every man who thinks has a creed. A man's creed is what a man believes, and every man who thinks at all must believe something. The only man who believes nothing is the man whose mind is a perfect blank the utter idiot. If any man says, "I believe nothing," he is either mistaken or deliberately lying. If he believes what he says to be true, when he says "I believe nothing," then he must at least believe that he believes nothing, and in that case he is, of course, mistaken when he says that he believes nothing. But if he is not mistaken when he says "I believe nothing," then it cannot be that he believes that he believes nothing, and in saying "I believe nothing," he is saying what he does not believe; in plain English, he is lying. To think is to believe, and the only man of whom it can be truly said he does not believe any thing is the idiot. Our subject, however, to-night is not creeds in general, but a specific creed, The Fool's Creed. You will find a brief and plain statement of The Fool's Creed in Ps. 14: 1, "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." The fool's creed has at least the merit of brevity, you can put it in two words, "no God." There is a great cry in our day for short creeds. The fool's creed ought to satisfy this demand. He has reduced his creed to two short words, to five letters, "no God." Why is the one who says in his heart "no God" a fool, or rather, why is he not merely a fool but "the fool," the fool of fools, the one consummate fool?

I. THE MAN WHO SAYS THERE IS NO GOD IS A FOOL, BECAUSE THERE IS A GOD.

The first reason why the man who says there is no God is a fool is because there is a God. The proofs of the existence of a God, of an intelligent and beneficent Creator and Governor of the physical and moral universe are manifold and conclusive.

1. First of all, the observed facts of the physical universe point conclusively to the existence of an intelligent and beneficent creator and governor of that universe. There are four kingdoms in the universe as modern science investigates and knows it: (1) the inorganic kingdom, i.e., the non-living world with its mechanical and chemical forces; (2) the vegetable kingdom; (3) the animal kingdom; (4) man. The inorganic kingdom is the least wonderful of all, yet how wonderful even it is in its vastness, in its conformity to law, in its structure and its operations, in the mechanical and chemical forces, ever working out such beneficent results. But when we come to the vegetable kingdom we take a great step upward into a kingdom whose unveiled mysteries fill the soul with increasing admiration and astonishment the more we explore them. The laws of nutrition, of growth and reproduction, how marvellous they are. Even the smallest of the plants, the plants that can be seen only with the aid of the microscope present models of symmetry, proportion and beauty that man can only try to imitate but cannot succeed in imitating. When we come to the animal

kingdom we see superadded to the wonders of nutrition, growth and reproduction the still greater wonders of sensation and instinct. But take the last step upward to man, and we have superadded to these wonders the wonders of man's intellectual, moral and spiritual powers. Now all these things must be accounted for. We live in a wonderful world. The more we study it the more wonderful it appears, until it leads us on and out into the infinite, and until we see new meaning in the words of Ps. 19:1, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork," and in the words of Paul in Rom. 1:20, "For the invisible things of Him (i.e., God) since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived from the things that are made, even His everlasting power and Divinity; that they may be without excuse." More and more as our knowledge enlarges do we find that everything has its use, even down to the house fly, or the infusoria in the brook. Everything performs its functions according to law, from the sun one million two hundred and eightythree thousand times as large as the earth and moving through space with incredible rapidity, down to the microscopic cilia of some simple form of life that sway lazily to and fro. Even the seeming monstrosities of nature are in accordance with law. It takes no profound knowledge of nature to see manifold adaptations to intelligent purpose. Take for example, the eye, the most marvellous camera obscura that was ever constructed, with its wonderful chemical and mechanical and sensory arrangement for vision, protection, and voluntary and involuntary use. Take the bird, with its hollow bones, its light feathers rendered waterproof by oil secretions. A scientific acquaintance with nature enlarges our view. The telescope can find no spaces so vast that order and law cease, nor can the microscope discover particles so small that they lack in symmetry, beauty and adaptation to their end. We live in a universe of law, beauty and utility. Now comes the question, how did this universe come to be as it is to-day. There are four possible suppositions about it :

(1) First, that it was always as it is now.

(2) Second, that it came to be as it is by chance, that the atoms that constitute the universe, in their eternal dance, have at last assumed their present associations and relations.

(3) Third, that there existed from all eternity certain material atoms containing in themselves the power of uniting and acting upon one another and developing into the present condition of the universe.

(4) Fourth, that the universe is the work of God.

This covers all the possible suppositions. Which is the true one? The first we know to be false. We know that the universe was not always as it is. The second is easily seen to be false. There is a chance that the atoms that constitute the universe in their eternal dance might assume the present associations and relations displayed in such marvellous orderliness, obedience to law, perfection of construction, and adaptation to intelligent ends. I say there may be a chance that that is true, but while there is one chance that it might be so, there is an infinite number of chances against it. The bringing in of infinite ages in which it might happen does not help the theory, for while there might be one chance of our living in that particular age in which it did happen, there would be an infinite

number of chances against it. Now the man who chooses to believe that in favour of which there is one chance, and against which there are an infinite number of chances can be justly characterized as in our text, "a fool." What would you call a man who believed that Webster's dictionary was not the intelligent product of a reasonable being, or a number of reasonable beings, but that the letters that constitute it were thrown down by chance and happened to fall into the shape we find them in the dictionary? There is only one word in the English language by which you would dream of characterizing such a man, you would call him a fool. But the theory that Webster's dictionary came to be in that way would not be a fractional part so foolish as the theory that the atoms that constitute this universe in their eternal dance at last assumed their present associations and relations displayed in such marvellous orderliness, obedience to law, and perfection of construction, and adaptation to intelligent ends, as we now find in the physical universe. The third theory, viz., that there existed from all eternity certain material atoms containing in themselves the power of uniting and acting upon one another and developing into the present condition of the universe, is untenable :

First, because if the atoms had existed from all eternity with the inherent power of combining into the present universe, they would have combined into it ages ago.

Second, because, while we have abundant experience of the construction of works exhibiting design by intelligent agents, we have absolutely no experience of unintelligent atoms having power of combining themselves into works exhibiting the marks of intelligence. Suppose one should attempt to throw a thousand dice and have them all turn up sixes, and succeed, what would you say? Every intelligent man would say the dice were loaded. But who loaded the dice of the universe? It is evident the third theory will not hold.

We have only the fourth theory remaining, viz., that the universe is the work of an intelligent and beneficent Creator. There is a God. The theory of evolution does not in the least affect the argument. If the theory of evolution were true it would only show the wonderful method by which this intelligent and beneficent Creator worked out His plans.

2. Not only do the observed facts of the physical universe point conclusively to the existence of God, the facts of history point to the same thing. The hand of an intelligent, beneficent, just governor of the destinies of men is clearly seen in history, not only in Bible history but in all secular history as well. Anyone who carefully studies history will see that throughout the whole history of the race, as Coleridge puts it, "one increasing purpose runs." We see that above the human actors, kings, generals, statesmen, and commoners trying to carry out their own ambitions and purposes, there has been the guiding hand of One who has made even the wrath of men to praise Him, and who has worked out good from the lowest ambitions and vilest passions of men. Cities, kings, dynasties, and empires fall, but history marches right on to the goal that God has set for it the kingdom of God on earth.

3. The Bible as it lies before us proves that there is a God. Here is a book altogether unique to be accounted for. It must have an author. It is entirely

different from any book, or all books, men have written it differs from them in its fulfilled prophecies, it differs from them in its indestructibility and invulnerability against all assaults ; it differs from them in the purity and loftiness and comprehensiveness of its teachings; it differs from them in its power to save men and nations; it differs from them in its inexhaustible depths of wisdom and truth. This book, to anyone who will study it deeply and thoroughly and candidly, is manifestly not man's book. Whose book then is it? The more I study this book the more overwhelmingly convinced I am that there must be a God back of it.

4. Individual experience proves that there is a God.

(1) Individual experience regarding answered prayer proves this. If I should go to a hole in the wall and order beefsteak rare, and beefsteak rare should be passed out, and then order mutton chops and mutton chops should be passed out, and some other time should order turkey and cranberry sauce, and turkey and cranberry sauce should be passed out, and if this should go on day after day, and what I ordered was passed out, I should certainly soon conclude that there was some intelligent person there attending to my orders, even though I saw no one. This is my exact experience with God. There have been many things that I have needed, that I have gone to God alone about and have told him of the need, and no human being knew of the need, and He has supplied the need, supplied it oftentimes in such a way that the connection between the prayer and the thing obtained was of such a character that it was clear that the prayer brought the gift. There have been times in my life when I have risked everything that men hold dear upon there being a God who answered prayer on the conditions laid down in the Bible. I have staked my health and that of my family, my temporal needs, my reputation, everything that men hold dear for time and eternity, on God's answering prayer on the conditions laid down in the Bible, and I have won. For sixty years George Mueller housed and fed orphans by the thousand and secured the supplies for the work entirely by prayer. No one was ever told of the need, no one but God, and not one penny of debt was ever incurred; and money and supplies came, oftentimes came only at the last moment, sometimes came when it would seem impossible that they should come on time, but there was never a day nor a meal in which God failed to answer prayer.

(2) Individual experience in regard to salvation proves that there is a God. Lost men, men utterly lost, men with, whom every human effort to save has failed, have at last cast themselves upon God, the God of the Bible, the God who could only be approached through Jesus Christ, God in Christ, and have found salvation, such a salvation as God alone could work. They have been recreated, made new creatures, they have been raised from the dead.

The man who in anything proceeds upon the supposition that there is a God, just such a God as the Bible pictures, will always find this supposition works well in practice. To sum up thus far, the observed facts of the physical universe, the facts of history, the absolutely unique and undeniable character of the Bible, and individual experience all prove to a demonstration that there is a God. Therefore, he that says "no God" is a fool.

II. THE MAN WHO SAYS THERE IS NO GOD IS A FOOL BECAUSE NOT ONLY IS

THERE A GOD, BUT IT IS WELL THAT THERE IS.

In the second place, the man who says in his heart that there is no God is a fool, not only because there is a God but also because it is well that there is a God.

Please notice that it is "in his heart" that the fool says, "no God" ; i.e., he denies the existence of God because he does not wish to believe that there is a God.

For a man to wish that there were no God shows him to be a fool because there not only is a God, but it is well that there is, and to wish that there were not is a mark of consummate folly. If there is a God, a God such as the Bible describes,

the present life and the future life is full of brightness and hope to anyone who will take the right attitude toward that God; but if there is no God, then the sun has gone out of the heavens and a darkness that can be felt broods over the universe. If there is no God we know nothing of what is in store for us, the

present apparent harmony and orderliness of the universe may cease any moment, and all plunge into chaos. If there is no God history has no guiding

hand and no certain destiny. If there is no God, reason and thought, conscience and right, purity and love have no certain and eternal basis. If there is no God

we have no security for a moment that blind fate that rules all may not seize, and rend and crush us and plunge us into dark, unutterable, eternal misery. This

is a true picture of our position in the universe if there is no God. What intelligent man would wish to live in a universe without a God? Surely it is the fool, the fool

of fools, the consummate fool of the ages, who says in his heart, "no God."

There are many who do not say with their lips, "no God," but who say it in their "heart." They are not theoretical atheists, but they are practical atheists. Anyone who does not surrender his will to God is a practical atheist. Anyone in this building to-night who has not surrendered to God is practically saying in his heart, "there is no God," and is, therefore, a fool.

To sum up there is a God. Thank God that there is. There is just such a God as the Bible reveals. There is then but one right thing, but one wise thing for any man here to-night to do, that is surrender to His will. The only path of wisdom in the face of the proven facts, is to give ourselves in utter obedience to Him, and to accept as our mediator Him whom God has set forth to be the mediator between us and Him self, accept Him whom He has provided to be a sin-bearer, as our sin-bearer, accept Him whom He has exalted to be both Lord and King, as our Lord and King to-night. Who will do it? Who will do it now?