

**“Given the Two Choices, I’ll Take the One That Gives Hope & Purpose”**

*The fool says in his heart, “There is no God” (Ps. 14:1<sup>a</sup>)*

A while back, I received an email from a young man from my youth group in the 1980s, who at the time was pursuing a Ph.D. in philosophy. He wrote: “Lately I’ve been doing a lot of reading in Nietzsche [and] there is a worldview in his work that I find extremely compelling. Of course, it is completely pagan, but that’s what makes it so compelling.” After reading this, I wondered as to what happened to his faith; how can any Christian find anything redeeming in a man who saw churches as no more than “tombs and sepulchers of a dead God?”

Nietzsche, whose father and maternal grandfather were Lutheran pastors, had nothing but disdain for Christianity. He once said: “The most important of more recent events—that ‘god is dead’, that the belief in the Christian God has become unworthy of belief—already begins to cast its first shadows over Europe.” But what sets him apart from other atheists is that he truly understood the ramifications of a Godless world. He knew that, as the Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky once declared, “If God did not exist, everything would be permitted.” “Everything,” to Nietzsche, meant rejecting the Enlightenment philosophers’ faith in reason and denying the universal truth. Then what’s left to validate our actions? Nothing but the “will to power,” which basically means, “I do what I will to do without allowing any guilt for having done so.” People who embrace this kind of thinking will not say that torturing babies is wrong, but they themselves wouldn’t do it. Certainly Hitler, taking his ideological cue from Nietzsche (Zacharias 1994:18), thought that torturing the Jews was a good thing!

Nietzsche’s atheism is quite different from the conventional atheism, which denies the Christian God but seeks to salvage Christian morality. The secular humanist Paul Kurtz once declared: “Is it possible to be moral without the benefit of the clergy? Of course it is [because] it is possible to ground ethical choice in rational intelligence” (1983:7). But Nietzsche would have scoffed at him, saying, “If there is no God, then why do you still want to be moral since that comes from the idea of the Christian God.” If there is anything compelling about him, it’s that he consistently lived out all the ramifications of atheism. How so? Nietzsche became insane and “spent his last 11 years in asylums and never wrote another page” (Kramer 2001:60). So what does atheism got to do with him becoming insane? According to Francis Schaeffer, “he understood that insanity was the only philosophic answer if the infinite-personal God does not exist” (1976:180).

Several years ago, I met a university professor, mildly-drunken at the time, at his home at the urge of his student who went to my church; she was concerned about his mental health. Surrounded by stacks of books on philosophy and religion, we spoke and I quickly learned that his father was a pastor of the same denomination that I belonged to and that he grew in the Christian faith. But some time ago, he decided that it wasn’t true anymore because science had shown Christianity for what it is—a congeries of myths. He said science and the Big Bang theory have proven the creation story to be a myth. In response, I asked him, “Where did the very ‘stuff’ (the so-called ‘singularity’ or ‘infinite density’) within which Big-Bang implored come from? How did inorganic matters suddenly become living organisms?” The professor responded, “That’s one problem that the science hasn’t solved.” I retorted, “That’s one problem

that the science will never resolve.” Feeling quite despondent, he muttered, saying, “But we all have to be honest with ourselves and to our intellect even though what we believe may lead to despair. I must believe it because it is the truth.” The Bible says the truth will set you free (Jn. 8:32) but the “truth” of Nietzsche and this professor led to insanity and despondency.

We humans are created in such a way that without hope and purpose, life loses its meaning. The Christian belief that the infinite-personal God individually made us imbues such hope and purpose in us! Everyone, whether Christians, atheists or scientific rationalists, start with faith in something. Christians readily recognize this since they believe that God exists by faith (Heb 11:6). What others do not want to admit is that statements such as, “God does not exist” or “the universe has no beginning,” are established by faith as well! Given those choices, I personally will choose the one that gives me hope and purpose instead of the other choice that guarantees misery and despondency. If you are not a believer, I invite you to study further on this issue. Search, for instance, William Lane Craig or J. P. Moreland in the web and you will find some valuable resources. If you are a believer but do not know how to defend your faith against the New Atheism of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it also will be valuable for you as well.

### **Further Reflection**

1. The Bible presents the existence of God as a self-evident truth. Consider Psalms 19:1-4 and Romans 1:18-2
2. To the extent that nonbelievers (excluding atheists like Nietzsche) and people of other faiths are capab

### **Bible Reading**

Monday: Proverbs 15 & Judges 15  
Tuesday: Proverbs 16 & Judges 16