

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD (1)

THAT God exists is an eternal truth which even some sceptics from evidences staring them in the face now admit! A good knowledge of this fact coupled with holy fear is a powerful incentive to virtue and the best guard against vice. The most demonstrable among the evidences of His existence are found in His works of creation. But whenever doubt about this has arisen, it has not come from those who are pure in heart.

There are many people, especially among the intellectuals, who do not believe in the existence of God. These are the atheists. They are often inflated with pride based on a warped notion that by disbelieving in the existence of God they are scholarly and even scientific.

When misfortunes befall some people or when they are faced with problems they are unable to cope with they either turn round to accuse God or deny His existence. There was a man who said he did not believe that God exists because he lost his beautiful wife. We have also learnt of a certain Nigerian who was formerly a Christian so-called but today makes so much noise about his atheism in his writings. He became an atheist as a result of frustration. When he went overseas for further studies he hung his hopes for financial aid upon certain people. But to his chagrin he was disappointed by those whom he regarded as fellow-Christians. Consequent upon this accident he pitched his battle not against his "offenders" but against God. The circumstances that drive people into atheism vary from one person to another.

Science

In the *DRUM* magazine issue of December 1966, a certain man was quoted to have said: "Science has proved that there is nothing like God. If anything, God is what you think he is." This is arrant nonsense. We know that this is the mentality of some who brag so much about science-a subject about which they themselves have no profundity of knowledge. J. S. Hoyland, in his book, *A Brief History of Civilization*, wrote that "science teaches us, more than was ever possible before, to marvel at God's wisdom and skill".

There are some people who want to see God before they can believe that He exists. We do not see any sense in this point-of-view. Prime Minister Kosygin of Russia and President Nixon of America, to our knowledge, have not visited Nigeria, yet many of us who have not seen them believe that they are existing.

When a question was asked whether a scientist could believe in God, the answer was given by an eminent scientist thus: "Some persons think that scientists simply can't believe in God. But I think scientists have unique advantages here-for scientists are precisely the persons who believe in the unseeable, the essentially undefinable. No scientist has ever seen an electron. No scientist soberly thinks that anyone ever could.. Yet nothing is more 'real' to a scientist than an electron." This was published in *A Guide to the Religions of America* by Leo Rosten.

To disbelieve, or doubt, or to be ignorant of God's existence is folly at its worst. The Psalmist David, declared: "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good." – Psalm 14: 1.

Bertrand Russell is a philosopher who in worldly circles, has gained eminence. But he is a die-hard agnostic. When he was asked as to what kind of evidence could convince him that God exists, he said: "I think that if I heard a voice from the sky predicting all that was going to happen to me during the next twenty-four hours, including events that would have seemed highly improbable, and if all these events then proceeded to happen, I might perhaps be convinced at least of the existence of some superhuman intelligence. I can imagine other evidences of the same sort which might convince me, but so far as I know no such evidence exists."

Not only does the view expressed by Russell lack faith, as is characteristic of agnostics, pyrrhonists and atheists, but it is also very puerile indeed. There are records in the Holy Bible of holy men whom God-for the overall benefit of mankind-revealed Himself to in the days of old and they carried out His instructions. Russell could not believe all those because he wanted a personal experience whereby God would talk to him before he could believe in His existence.

If we are to go by Russell's way of thinking, man would not need to exercise his reasoning faculty, and God would have to talk to everybody in order that everyone might know that He exists. Did the British Prime Ministers who lived before Russell talk to him and every Briton of today before they believe that they (the Premiers) lived and ruled in their times? There are many people who, out of spiritual ignorance, feel like Russell but God Almighty is not One who can be tempted or Whose will could be altered to satisfy sinful men. God says: "For my thought's are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways...." – Isaiah. 55: 8, 9.

Francis Bacon, the essayist and philosopher, stated in his Essay, *Of Superstition*, thus: "God never wrought miracle to convince atheism, because His ordinary works convince it."

It is very wrong to look to scientists, philosophers and other secular scholars for guidance in matters about God. The knowledge they acquire in institutions of higher learning, being worldly, does not lead them to God. Rather there is much in it that poisons their religious beliefs and dampens their enthusiasm for divine worship. Even among those who are called theologians we find more grain of secularism or profane wisdom than sacred truth in their works!

St. Paul had good reasons for saying that the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God. (1 Corinthians 3: 19) He also stated: "For it is written, I (God) will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent...For after that... the world by (its) wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." – 1 Corinthians 1: 19-21.

The Holy Bible abounds with veracious testimonies of the prophets about God and His doings among men in the days of old. That apart we are all surrounded by evidences of the existence of God. We ourselves as human beings are proofs that tell unmistakably of the existence of the Creator. We did not come into being by chance neither did we make ourselves. We are the creation of the Almighty God. As it is written: "Know ye that the LORD He is God: it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture," – Psalm 100: 3.

When the Psalmist further considered the wonders of God's creation and especially the wisdom displayed in the formation of the human body and its organism he declared: "I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are Thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from Thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them," – Psalm 139: 14-16.

Naturally, every child grows up with the instinctive knowledge of God's existence. Any attitude later developed against this knowledge is a clear sign of perverse inclination of the mind. St. Paul stated that God, through the visible things of His creation had shown the reality of those that cannot be seen so that no one can be excused for denying His existence. He wrote: "But God shows His anger from heaven against all sinful, evil men who push away the truth. For the truth about God is known to them by instinct; God has put this knowledge in their hearts. Since earliest times men have seen the earth and sky and all God made, and have known of His existence and great eternal power. So they have no excuse for saying they don't know whether or not there is God. Yes, they knew about Him all right, but they wouldn't admit it or worship Him or even thank Him for all His daily care. And after a while they began to think up silly ideas of what God was like and what He wanted them to do. The result was that their foolish minds became dark and confused. Claiming themselves to be wise without God, they became utter fools instead." – Romans 1: 18-22. *Living Letters*.

Let us look at the heavenly bodies-the sun, moon and the stars-and we cannot be left in doubt, if we have sober minds, as to the infinite greatness of the All- powerful Architect of the universe. And turning to this earth where there are more than enough that meet the eye we would not be better than beasts if we cannot know that there is in existence a Supernatural Intelligence in Whom, according to St. Paul, "we live, and move, and have our being". – Acts 17: 24-31.

Isaiah the prophet was under inspiration when he said: "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one faileth.... Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of His understanding...." – Isaiah. 40: 26-31.

What is more, David, in his psalms, stated: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech, nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone

out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun." – Psalm 19: 1-4.

Men of Learning

A number of men of higher learning who believed in God's existence can also be cited. George Berkeley (1685-1753) was a scholar who, in the history of philosophy, is said to be a figure of permanent importance and inexhaustible interest. He wrote: "We may even assert that the existence of God is far more evidently perceived than the existence of man; because the effects of Nature are infinitely more numerous and considerable than those ascribed to human agents." –*The Principle of Human Knowledge*.

Here is a quote of Albert Winchester, a biologist: "A deeper and firmer belief in God can be the only result of a better insight into truth." (*Reader's Digest*, May 1963, page 85)

Also, a distinguished mathematician and author stated: "To me, God is the mysterious mind that has created the detail and the dimensions of the universe, including the crowning mysteries of you and me and our minds. It is He who has put order and beauty into all this. It is He who has shown that truth and faith and love furnish for us the solution to all problems... With full credit to the science that has opened up the vastness of space and of the universe beyond, God is still highest." (*Reader's Digest*, November 1968, page 132).

C. H. Spurgeon was quite right when he wrote: "He who looks at the sunrise, and the sunset and does not see the footprints of God, must be inwardly blinder than a mole, and only fit to live underground. God seems to talk to me in every primrose and daisy, to smile upon me from every star, to whisper to me in every breath of morning air, and to call aloud to me in every storm. It is strange that so many educated gentlemen see God nowhere.... Thus it is very clear that a man may be a great hand at learning and yet be ignorant, very ignorant."

Thomas Paine

Those who think that they can become influential characters by waging a fruitless verbal war against holy things should always remember that "it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks". In both sacred and profane history there is the lesson that those who gained popularity by denying God had miserable and inglorious ends.

The case of Thomas Paine is a ready instance. His atheistic writings in the eighteenth century provided literary amusements to his friends and misguided idolaters, many of whom are still found today in the academic world. Paine's books – *The Rights of Man* and *The Age of Reason* – were said to have taken the "Christian world by storm" and turned many from their religious beliefs to become agnostics or atheists.

But the end of Thomas Paine was miserable. Alfred Owen Aldridge, a Professor of English at the University of Maryland, in his *MAN OF REASON*—the biography of Paine—stated that “the life of Paine was a tragedy”. His manners were rough and ungracious, and that he “was at times short-sighted, at times vain.”

A review of the biography published in the *Morning Post* of August 20, 1963, spotlighted the sorrows of Paine. “He lived a life of ducks and drakes which cost him not only his dear wife Elizabeth but also the sale of his property to pay for a debt he owed. At the end of his 37th year, Paine’s life to the ordinary observer and perhaps to himself, was a dreary series of failure in his profession, in business and in marriage.

“But later in his life he became very unpopular with the people that built him up. First by defending the execution of Louis XVI found guilty of treason and by his ‘Rights of Man’. He was imprisoned and his book proscribed.

“He was practically deserted by his friends and on his death bed, it was left with a woman sympathiser to care for him and to lend her parcel of land for his burial. He died broken-hearted, unnoticed, unrewarded and unsung.”

Yes, Francis Bacon did say: “They that deny a God destroy man’s nobility; for certainly man is of kin to the beasts by his body; and, if he be not of kin to God by his spirit, he is a base and ignoble creature.” (Essay, *Of Superstition*)

Some people only confess God or believe in Him when they are struck by the force of His acts. When Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh of Egypt and delivered the Lord’s message that he should let the children of Israel go, he (Pharaoh) repulsively retorted: “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.” (Exodus 5: 1,2) But when the Most High showed His power and, because of the obstinacy of the king, punished the Egyptians with plagues, Pharaoh was compelled to confess to Moses and Aaron: “I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.” – Exodus 9: 27.

God sometimes allows certain things to happen in order to show that evil, which He abhors, is not destined to thrive forever, and that He rules even in the kingdom of men. (Psalm 7: 11-13; Ezekiel 21: 25; Daniel 4: 28-37.) The military coup of Saturday, January 15, 1966, in Nigeria affected the minds of many people in different ways. Someone who was described as a “well-known university lecturer” was quoted in the *DRUM* magazine of May 1966, as saying: “I have been an agnostic all my life, but now I believe there is God and that He has not abandoned the world to the devil to play with as he likes. I greet and embrace the new Nigeria that our brave military have ushered in. Whatever may happen in the future, I’m convinced that Nigeria will never be the same again. I’m convinced that the only people who won’t be happy today are those who have taken the country for a ride all these years.”

Well, if the incident of 1966 had not happened that intellectual might still, to his own hurt of course, have been blind in heart to the existence of God. This further points to the fact that agnostics and atheists are people who have fallen into the snare of the devil and who are spiritually captured by him at his will so that they may not know God. However, while some of them will be released by God like the university lecturer just cited, some will be permanently lost to the devil, And St. Paul said: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." – 2 Corinthians 4: 3, 4.

Faith

In order to be established in full appreciation and understanding of God's existence, FAITH is required, Hence St. Paul stated: "But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." – Hebrews 11: 6.

Those who deny God's existence and who are paying no heed to the saving gospel of Jesus Christ, will soon be compelled by the force of circumstances in this last day – the atomic age – to acknowledge not only the truth of His existence but also His supremacy. They shall find themselves in a spiritual storm when Jehovah the Almighty God will visit the iniquities of men upon them.

The Psalmist prayed: "Let them (confirmed unbelievers and evil-doers) be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish; that men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth." – Psalm 83: 17, 18.