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ATHEISM, THE ENEMY OF CIVILIZATION

by Dr. W. B. Riley
1861-1947

(A part of W.B. Riley's statements about science could not foresee the further findings concerning matter, since this was written some time before 1947. However nothing that science has discovered since would prove him wrong about the basic issues. ELB)

The subject, "Atheism, the Enemy of Civilization," is an affront, but it states a fact. Infidelity is uniformly egotistical and readily imagines it is the friend of all that is good. It shall be our purpose to show that historically the exact opposite is true. It is as perfectly the enemy of man and the foe of civilization as it is the opponent of God. The sacred Scriptures are in this matter, as in all others, the last word (Ps. 14:1), "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." History has provided thousands of illustrations of this divinely inspired assertion.

Atheism is the Enemy of Science

This statement runs counter to the boasted claim of infidelity. Unbelievers have ever been enamored of the notion that they are scholarly and even scientific. Their boasts in this matter are to be found upon every page emanating from their pens and heard in every hall where one of their representatives secures an audience; but in spite of all that, we propose to state clearly and prove abundantly the exact opposite.

The discoveries of science clearly indicate the existence of God. If it be true as Professor Leuba, of Bryn Mawr, contends, that the majority of teachers of science in America are infidels, that is only proof of their superficiality and incompetence. It is not science that has made them so, but rather, "a pseudo-science"—evolution; and a false science always makes for unbelief, while a true one eventuates in faith. The outstanding experts in the established sciences of mathematics and astronomy have been outstanding believers, while the representatives of the Darwin speculation have just as unanimously been atheists, agnostics and skeptics of all sorts.

In the very nature of the case, a study of the works of God impresses one with His personality, power, wisdom, infinity, and from the least speck of material existence to the infinity of the universe, all unite in declaring both His greatness and His glory.

Man used to talk of monads and imagined that they were the smallest particle of matter; such language is now out of date. The monad, so it is claimed, is a world of molecules. The ancient philosopher Giordano Bruno conversed of these as eternal, and declared each of them a microcosm or mirror of the Deity. Leibnitz regarded the monads as non-spatial units, each one representing the same universe, but presenting that universe from a different point of view, and each attaining its activities through the will of God. There was a time when biology thought of a monad as a simple single-celled organism; that time is past. A molecule was discovered; it was so small that

men declared it the smallest part of a substance that could exist separately and still retain its composition and proportion, the smallest combination of atoms that would form a given chemical compound. But alas for the recent deliverances and the instability of so-called science! We are now told that each molecule contains 740 electrons, and no man knows what will be the next deliverance upon this subject. It is evident, however, that the complexity of the simplest things is past the imagination of man. When you rise in the scale of existences and consequently advance in the study of science, you come across the most mysterious secrets in the natural world—secrets so illusive that as yet the mind of the modern man has utterly failed to uncover them. But a few days since the Associated Press carried “For Science Service” an article proving the discovery of heatless light. This suggestion is based on the fact that low forms of life have been found to generate heatless light. The bacteria and fungi that cause rotten wood to glow in the dark, and the mysterious firefly that can, with a willful or automatic motion in his body, emit a heatless light out of all proportion to the best that man’s devices have ever approached; these bugs and bacteria becoming, as the proportion to the best that man’s devices have ever approached; these bugs and bacteria becoming, as the article stated, at once the admiration and despair of scientists, but clearly indicating the acceptance of a mind infinitely above that of man. Man’s invention of light involves a slow combustion and always generates heat; not so with the light of the bacteria and the bug; and to date that secret is with God.

God’s work, in its simplest form, exceeds the understanding of man, and our amazement grows as we acquire additional knowledge.

The Psalmist said of his body, “I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are Thy works. 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” (ps. 139: 14-16).

In order to impress this truth one needs only to study physiology a little.

I don’t know that I shall even attempt to talk to you about the intricacies and efficiencies of the human eye. I will leave to others the detailed description of its lenses, the intricacies of its muscles, the delicacy and efficiency of its nerves. The eye constantly baffles the imagination and justifies Darwin’s statement, “To suppose that the eye with all its illusive contrivances for adjusting the focuses to different distances and admitting different amounts of light, could be formed by natural means, fails in the highest degree. But when it is all analyzed and the mind comes as near comprehending it as the human mind can, one simply stands amazed at the minutest evidences of the Divine, in the eye, and the proposition of an infinity fixed greater credit to same.”

But the eye is not alone. Let some physicist tell you of the 600 muscles in the human body, the one thousand miles of blood-vessels in the human body, the 550 main arteries of the human body, or let him place before you the fact that 1,500,000 sweat glands spread out on the surface of the same, or that the lungs are composed of 7,700,000 cells, or that in the 70 years of human life the heart has struck 2,500,000,000 beats and has lifted by its throbs a load of 500,000 tons of blood; and if this does not bewilder you, then let him add that the “nervous system, controlled by the brain, has three trillion nerve cells, while the blood itself is made up of thirty million white corpuscles and one hundred trillion native red ones,” and you will be ready to throw up your hands in despair in comprehension of your physical self. And yet, with such an intricate machine, completed perfectly, set in operation, apart from accidents and incidents of danger, known to function from 70 years, the natural limit of a person’s life, to 969 years, the longest on record, and who will say that there was no intelligent designer for this competent machine?

But if the study of physiology does not suffice to impress one with all

the wisdom and power of an infinite God, then let him lift his face to the heavens above and the stars will speak; and when he has been told that the moon is 240,000 miles removed from the earth and that the sun is more than 90,000,000 miles distant, he will begin to think in terms of space, and then he learns that the sun is, in science, more than a million times as large as our earth.

It is only unused light that leads to spiritual darkness. The naturalist who does not find God in the universe has utterly failed to correctly interpret anything in it, from its greatest central sun to its most insignificant bacteria. To go back to the text, Paul tells us exactly how the process is accomplished. "The invisible things of Him (namely, His wisdom, power, beauty, and grace), from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." And then he tells us how it came about that they failed to so connect the two as to create in their own hearts faith, and he indicts them with moral deficiency, saying:

"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, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things" (Rom. 1:21-23).

It would be difficult, indeed, to see in all literature any more accurate description of the degenerating effects of Darwinism than the apostle here pens. For inanity, could anything surpass the combination of infidelity and the acquisition of learning?

Only men whose imaginations are wild and whose foolish hearts are darkened and whose egotism has puffed them up, could ever come to the conclusion of atheism. The portrait shown is impressed in the following words:

"There is no God, the fool in secret said;
There is no God that rules o'er earth or sky.
Tear off the band that binds the wretch's head,
That God may burst upon his faithless eye!

"Is there no God?-The stars in myriads spread,
If he looks up, the blasphemy deny.
While his own features, in the mirror read,
Reflect the image of Divinity.

"Is there no God?-The stream that silver flows,
The air he breathes, the ground he treads, the trees,
The flowers, the grass, the sands, each wind that blows,
All speak of God; throughout, one voice agrees,
And, eloquent, His dread existence shows.

Blind to thyself, ah! See Him, fool, in these! "It is only false science that leads to the bestial philosophy of infidelity, Darwinism has never done anything else. Its history of 3,000 years since the days of the Greek philosophers and down to its most modern revival, first by Erasmus Darwin, and later by his grandson, Charles, has accomplished no better ends. Never, in the history of man, has it made one colossal character or eventuated in a single outstanding discoverer of nature's secrets. The established sciences were found out and proved to the satisfaction of the public by believing men. The histories of these individuals are an open page. They were not only men of God, but many of them ministers; men in touch with God, and consequently capable of interpreting the work of God. In the universities the professed scientists of this present day are not scientists. What have they discovered? What contribution have they given to men by their knowledge? Certainly you do not count "The Hall of the Age of Man," by Henry Fairfield Osborne, a contribution, since it is evidently a hypocritical pretense.

Certainly you do not call Charles Darwin a contributor to modern science. His speculation has only succeeded in exciting an endless

controversy. Why should you name Conklin or Davenport scientists? All that they have ever done was to mouth over what other men have said; neither has made any discovery? Neither can you add Millikan, since his published discoveries are not yet proved, nor have they received anything like assured acceptance. These men are either open unbelievers or largely advocates of the mechanical theory.

Galileo was an ardent Christian believer; Copernicus, while a Papist, had an unshaken confidence in God and His Word, and was brought up in the house of a priest. Kepler was a ministerial student of such scientific tendencies as to triumph over the priest, and the works of Sir Isaac Newton show that he combined in one man a search for nature's secrets and the discovery of the secrets of revelation; and lastly, Mendel, the devoted monk, who, while about his pastoral duties, checked up many facts and discovered more of the laws of nature than all his boasted scientific brethren combined. Now let it be forever understood that Atheism is the enemy of science, and Faith its father and friend.

Atheism is the Enemy of Society

God-deniers are not delightful souls! Go where you will throughout the world, when you find them you will not want to abide with them, and it would be difficult for God Himself to brook them.

The first murder that stained the earth with human blood was wrought by a man who refused to recognize the sacrificial atonement as a type of the saving Christ. And when the flood came and wiped the earth with the besom of destruction, it was that it might rid it also of skeptics and atheists men who had forgotten and denied God.

There has been a stir recently in the circles of education and religion over the wave of suicide sweeping our colleges, and outstanding men have been discussing methods of abating this blot upon civilization. The solution of the problem is not far to seek. When the schools stop teaching an atheistic philosophy, the fruits thereof will not be so

openly found, and those fruits are despair, degradation and death.

God-deniers are usually men of reprobate morals. You will seldom find a man who combines in one and the same person the philosophy of atheism and a course of upright moral conduct. "The American Association for the Advancement of Atheism" declares that they "will undertake to abrogate all laws for enforcing Christian morals." Later they add they wish to better civilization by "operating as a wrecking company."

That is what atheism has ever been—an enemy of Christian morals, "a wrecking company," indeed! Had others charged them with this, they would, undoubtedly, have repudiated the charge; but now that they have asserted their purpose, they can hardly complain. Intelligent and thoughtful men will remind them that they are running true to form. The history they make will of necessity be of a sort which atheism has known through all the centuries.

The love of sin is the individual's lowest estate. There are many unfortunate men and weak women who fall into sin, but who positively loathe the same. The adversary's trap takes them; his pitfalls catch them, but they uniformly grieve over their weakness, regret their folly, and plead with God for recovering favor. But Paul says in this text that they come to the point where they not only give themselves up to uncleanness through lust, where they not only change the truth of God into a lie, worshipping the creature rather than the Creator, where they not only offend against God, but even against nature itself, being filled with all unrighteousness, but where they actually have pleasure in them that do evil.

That is the character of infidels! "The American Association for the Advancement of Atheism" deliberately publish their pleasure in them that do evil, and express the hope that "one representative from their camp may undo the work of a score of missionaries," and that "a few thousand dollars spent in the circulation" of their infamous literature may "offset millions spent by the churches."

The drunkard is not the lowest man, the man who takes pleasure in making other drunkards, is lower still. The harlot is not the lowest of women, but the woman who takes pleasure in teaching her sister harlotry is taking the last plunge toward the pit. The grieved doubter is not necessarily damned, but the man who destroys the faith of his friends and the professor whose teaching wrecks the confidence of students—such are allies of Satan himself!

Atheism is the Enemy of the State

Civilization has not been the product of atheism. We challenge “The American Association for the Advancement of Atheism,” or any other advocate of this God-denying, soul-destroying doctrine, to show one instance in which their philosophy has built a State, or a single instance in which they have made anything but an evil contribution to the same. In view of this fact is it not amazing to find many school-men—men set in positions of opportunity and responsibility—stealthily poisoning the minds of the young? “The American Association for the Advancement of Atheism” is quoted in the following:

“Dr. Erwin Erdman, of Columbia University, teaches his students that ‘man is a mere accident,’ that ‘immortality is a sheer illusion,’ and that ‘there is practically no evidence for the existence of God.’

“Everett Dean Martin, Director of Cooper Union in New York City, has the largest class in philosophy in the world. He teaches his students that ‘religion is primarily a defense mechanism,’ subjective in its organism.

“Professor John B. Watson, of Johns Hopkins, teaches that ‘freedom of the will has been knocked into a cocked hat,’ and that ‘soul-consciousness, God, and immortality are merely mistakes of the older psychology’.”

All across this continent text-books are filled with their vicious work,

going under the name of Science, which is being compelled to carry the straining burden of such statements, and society already feeling the consequences of the same, is but reaping the first-fruits of a bitterer harvest that is sure to come.

Witness France and her plunge into atheism and the reign of terror that followed; or, take Russia and her present debauch of infidelity, and the natural disgrace coming in consequence.

Civilization has ever been the product of religion, and false religion will produce poor civilization. Heathen countries have illustrated this; yet even their religion is helpful, and the wildest superstition has proven more beneficial than the most balanced atheism that ever voiced itself. If you want to know what the condition of any state or nation is, find out what its religion is, and you can readily determine; it is as unerring as the electric needle!

The world has suffered much from religion; Paul charged the people of Athens with being “too religious.” Yet perhaps it can be said with absolute candor that none of these are so detrimental to society, so harmful to the state and so destructive to national life, as atheism or “no religion.” Christianity has produced the highest known civilization.

There is not an ennobling influence known to humanity that is not the emphasized product of Christianity. There is not a desirable institution existing with any peoples that has not been fostered and favored by the Christian faith. There is not a philosophy that tends to the social, political and spiritual uplift of mankind that may not be found better phrased in the Bible than unbelieving men have ever expressed the same. The Christian faith, with its one and true God and its wondrous and true Book, has brought to the world more light and has given to living men more happiness than all the philosophies of unbelieving men combined; and the crime of the ages is not the murder of individuals, now characterizing and cursing modern society, but it is the sinister, devilish, damnable doctrine, now lurking

in the halls of every university in the land and of all civilized lands,
and seeking by smooth speech and in the name of “Science,” falsely
so-called, to destroy the faith of men in God and in His Son, Jesus
Christ, and in His revealed Will, the Scriptures!

--PBC

* * * *

MUSICAL BACKGROUND

BE STILL, MY SOUL

1752

Be still, my soul: the Lord is on thy side;
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;
Leave to thy God to order and provide;
In every change He faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul; thy best, thy heavenly Friend
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

Be still, my soul: thy God doth undertake
To guide the future as He has the past,
Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake;
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.
Be still, my soul: the waves and winds still know
His voice Who ruled them while He dwelt below.

Be still, my soul: the hour is hastening on
When we shall be forever with the Lord,
When disappointment, grief, and fear are gone,
Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.
Be still, my soul: when change and tears are past,
All safe and blessed we shall meet at last.

Omitted stanzas:

Be still, my soul: when dearest friends depart,
And all is darkened in the vale of tears,
Then shalt thou better know His love, His heart,
Who comes to soothe thy sorrow and thy fears.
Be still, my soul: thy Jesus can repay
From His own fondness all He takes away.

Be still, my soul: begin the song of praise
On earth, be leaving, to thy Lord on high;
Acknowledge Him in all thy works and ways,
So shall He view thee with a well-pleased eye.
Be still, my soul: the Sun of life divine
Through passing clouds shall but more brightly shine.
--Katharina von Schlegel

High on the list of outstanding hymn writers of eighteenth-century Germany was Fräulein Katharina von Schlegel. Very little is known about this godly woman except that she was born on October 22, 1697, and that she served the Lutheran church in the capacity of canoness in a women's seminary in Germany. From certain lines of stanza 1 – “In every change He faithful will remain” and “Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end”—one might infer Fräulein von Schlegel or someone close to her had suffered heartaches during which time friends had failed them. Whatever prompted the hymn, Fräulein von Schlegel seemed to have a longing to turn people to the “Friends that sticketh closer than a brother” and never leaves nor forsakes us.

The German title of “Be Still, My Soul” is “Stille, mein Wille, dein Jesus hilft siegen.” It was first published in *Neue Sammlung geistlicher Lieder* (1752). Fräulein von Schlegel received inspiration for the hymn from Psalm 46:10—“Be still, and know that I am God”—and 1 Thessalonians 4:17—“...and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

Katharina von Schlegel wrote many lyrics, but “Be Still, My Soul”

was the only hymn to be translated. Written in six stanzas, only five were translated into English and only three are in current use.

The translator of “Be Still, My Soul,” Jane Laurie Borthwick (1813-1897), was as noted among translators of German hymns as was Miss von Schlegel among authors. Miss Borthwick was born in Edinburgh on April 9, 1813. Her father, James Borthwick, was manager of the British Insurance Company in Edinburgh. Jane Borthwick was a member of the Free Church of Scotland and was a strong supporter of missions.

The Borthwick sisters, Jane and Sarah (Mrs. Eric John Finlater), collaborated on translating from the German *Hymns from the Land of Luther* (four series: 1854, 1855, 1858, 1862). Under the initials H.L.L. (from *Hymns from the Land of Luther*), Miss Borthwick wrote and published numerous prose works, original poem, and translations of hymns. Hardly any hymnbook in England or America failed to include her original works and translations. Two of her best-known original hymns are “Come, Labour On” and “Rest, Weary Soul.” Jane Borthwick died in Edinburgh on September 7, 1897.

FINLANDIA, the tune to which the hymn is sung, is an arrangement of the most popular and lyrical melody from the tone poem of that title composed by Finland’s best-known and greatest composer, Jean Sibelius (1865-1957). The tune has been in American hymnals since 1933. Sibelius wrote FINLANDIA in 1897 as a patriotic tribute to his beautiful homeland. Sibelius was born in Tavastehus, Finland, in 1865. He visited America in 1914 and received a doctor of music degree from Yale University. Having ceased to compose after 1929, Sibelius died in Järvenpää, Finland, in 1957.

Treasury of Great Hymns
--Guye Johnson

* * * *

Authentic Prayer

I knelt to pray when day was done,
And prayed, “O Lord, bless everyone;
Lift from each saddened heart the pain
And let the sick be well again.”
And then I awoke another day
And carelessly went on my way.

The whole day long I did not try
To wipe a tear from any eye;
I did not try to share the load
Of any brother on the road;
I did not even go to see
The sick man just next door to me.

Yet once again when day was done,
I prayed, “O Lord, bless everyone.”
But as I prayed, into my ear
There came a voice that whispered clear,
“Pause, hypocrite, before you pray;
Whom have you tried to bless today?”

“God’s sweetest blessings always go
By hands that serve Him here below.”
And then I hid my face and cried,
“Forgive me, Lord, for I have lied;
Let me live another day,
And I will live the way I pray.”

--Author Unknown

* * * *

The Cedar Chest

MEMORIES OF MOTHER

She carried me under her heart, loved me before I was born, took God's hand and walked through the "valley of shadows" that I might live.

She bathed me when I was helpless, clothed me when I was naked, fed me when I was hungry, rocked me to sleep when I was weary, sang to me with the voice of an angel.

She held my hand when I learned to walk, suffered with my sorrow, laughed with my joy, glowed with my triumph, and while I knelt at her side, she taught me to pray.

She was a loyal friend when others failed. Through all the days of my youth, she gave me strength for my weakness, courage for my despair, and hope for my hopeless heart.

She prayed for me whether the day was flooded with sunshine or saddened by shadows. I can never repay the debt I owe to my mother.
--Copied

* * * *

A man got fired from his construction job. His friend asked him what happened.
"You know what a foreman is?" the man asked.

"The guy who stands around and watches the other men work? What's that got to do with it?"

"Well, he was just jealous of me. Everyone thought I was the foreman."

* * * *

If at first you don't succeed, you'll get plenty of free advice from people who didn't succeed either.

* * * *

A FATHER'S DAY PRAYER

Lord, thank you for fathers and their special place in the life of the family. Grant that the fathers of our church and our nation shall learn and accept the unique role you have given to them. Give them the spiritual discernment to lead their children to know God as Father through faith in Thee. We pray that fathers will have the wisdom to express your truth in such a way that their home will be a heaven on earth because you are in it. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

--Copied

* * * *

A little girl was diligently pounding away at her grandfather's old typewriter. She told him she was writing a story.

What's the story about?" he asked.

"I don't know. I can't read."

* * * *

The District Attorney stared at the jury, unable to believe the "not guilty" verdict he'd just heard. Bitterly, he asked, "What possible excuse could you have for acquitting this man?"

The foreman answered, "Insanity."

The attorney responded, still incredulous, "I could understand that. But all 12 of you!"

* * * *

Maybe they call it middle age because that's where it shows first.

* * * *

Editor's Note: (In this magazine we quote from many different sources. Please understand that this does not necessarily mean that we approve of nor endorse the publication from which we quote.)

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