

SERMON OUTLINE

Dr. David A. Renwick -- January 3, 2010

Probing Questions I: God – Are the Atheists Right?

Writings Impacting the series and this sermon

1. Left Behind, Tim Le Haye and Jerry Jenkins, 1995
2. The Reason for God, Timothy Keller, 2008
3. God is not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything, Christopher Hitchens, 2007
4. The God Delusion, Richard Dawkins, 2006

The 1st Question of All: Does God exist or not?

A. The Bible assumes God's existence: never tries to prove it!

see Gen. 1:1 –“In the Beginning God”; Ps.19:1, Rom.1:19-21

B. The Evidence

1. i. Against God: The terrible witness of Believers

- a. e.g., religious wars, strife, hypocrisy, scandal
- b. We have not followed Jesus' words
“By this all people will know you are my disciples, if you love one another”(John 13:35)
- c. We have been lukewarm, tepid, uncommitted (see Rev. 3:16)
Or fanatical (judgmental, harsh, little love or joy)

ii. For God: The Terrible Witness of Unbelievers/Atheists

- a. Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini, Mao, PolPot, racism, tribalism
- b. More destructive in 20th century than all religions ever.

2. i. Against God: The Problem of Evil, Suffering, Injustice

- a. Not a problem for ‘every kind of god,’ e.g., if your ‘god’ if god is weak, evil, or just grumpy!
- b. A problem for the Christian God because our ‘God’ is powerful but also loving and just.
- c. One Possible Solution: Evil exists because God chooses to create us as moral beings. For moral choice to be important, choices must be between good/God and something/someone else: that something else is, by definition, ‘evil.’

ii. For God: The Problem of Goodness, Art, and Beauty

a. The atheist must ask an equally difficult question:

How come there is so much goodness in the world if there is no God, or if ‘survival of the fittest’ (dog-eat-dog) is the primary law of the universe?

C. The Impossibility of Proving the Case – Either Way

- i. Belief always trumps Reason for both the believer and the atheist: I.e., an atheist is as much a ‘believer’ as a believer!
- ii. There are no proofs, only clues (Tim Keller).

D. Two Clues for God

i. Science

- a. Evolution says nothing either for or against God.
- b. The Bible does not tell us *how* the world was created, but *that* God was in it from beginning to end.
- c. THE big question: Why is there something rather than nothing?
- d. The statistical probability that human life would ever exist in tiny (see interview of Francis Collins www.salon.com, Aug.7, 2006; The Language of God, Francis Collins, 2006

ii. The Need for Meaning

- a. Somerset Maugham (in The Summing Up):
‘If one puts aside the existence of God . . . The answer is so unpalatable that most will not face it. . . life has no meaning.’
- b. John Paul Sartre (in Nausea): . .
‘here we are eating and drinking . . . and there’s nothing, nothing, absolutely no reason for existing.’
- iii. Meaning is almost always related to relationships

This is THE Clue:

Ultimate meaning comes from a relation with the ultimate personal being: . . . God . . .