

Chapter 1 – Concerning the Knowledge of God

Q4. How can we say that there is innate knowledge, seeing there are fools, who say in their hearts that there is no God (Ps. 14:1)?

A. That is more a desire than actual belief that there is no God.

The previous questions were about the existence of God. But a number of people in the world reject any existence of God. The question refers to them as fools. But what are “fools”? One dictionary says, it is “a person lacking in judgment or prudence.” Another commentary defines it as one who is a “senseless fellow, [or] dullard.” Is that what is meant here? No. According to the Bible a fool is “someone who disregards God’s Word.” His heart turns to foolishness. He has evil plans. He does not learn his lesson from mistakes he has made. This fool does not like spiritual knowledge and understanding. He even hates discipline. Do you know what he likes? Wickedness and evil.

It is good to think about the following question, *what is atheism?* If we look it up, it is defined as “The belief that there is no God...or greatest being.” How would you answer someone that would say to you, “I do not believe God exists”? That can be a challenge. Why? Because the Bible differs in what it says from the belief of an atheist. Because what does the Bible say? In Romans, we read, “Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them” (Rom. 1:19). What then is revealed to them? God’s wrath. Verse 20 adds that God’s invisibility is seen in creation by every human being. This means that no one has an excuse to believe God does not exist. But what does the atheist say? “God does not exist.” How can we reconcile these two statements? Let’s think about it a bit more. Because do you know what is interesting? Why do so many atheists fight against religion? Why do they want to force others to believe that God does not exist? Why do a number of atheists dread God’s existence at their deathbed? One example is Francis Newport. He was the head of the English Atheists. At his deathbed, he said, “You need not tell me there is no God, for I know there is one, and that I am in His presence! You need not tell me there is no hell. I feel myself already slipping.”¹ Let us give another example. A well known atheist is Richard Dawkins. He wrote *The God Delusion*. But what does he say about morality? Morality is rules to live outwardly according to God’s law. He says, “If religion will be abolished, people are right to do bad things. There is no God watching them.” Then he refers to a test with a security camera in a shop. When cameras are used, shoplifting will decline. And he says that the same is true about God. God as it were is a divine ‘spy camera’ that reads every thought. Thus, if people realize that God exists, they will do less evil. Very interesting. Let us look at another area. How would this man look to the design we see in the universe? He says in his book *The Blind Watchmaker*, “Biology is the study of complicated things that *give the appearance* of having been designed for a purpose.” Is that not interesting? There is at least the appearance that a Designer exists. One time, a person asked Dawkins about this. He said, “What do you think is the possibility that Intelligent Design might turn out to be the answer to some issues in genetics, or

¹ <https://christian-faith.com/quotes-of-dying-atheists-and-god-haters/>

evolution?” Do you know Dawkins’ answer? “It could be that at some earlier time, somewhere in the universe, a civilization evolved by probably some kind of Darwinian means to a very, very high level of technology— and designed a form of life that they seeded onto perhaps this planet...And I suppose it’s possible that *you might find evidence* for that if you look at the details of biochemistry, molecular biology, you *might find a signature of some sort of designer.*” Is that not interesting? He acknowledges that there is some proof of a Designer. Of course, he directly adds that this “designer” is not anything like the God of the Bible. In summary, we can say that Dawkins sees the possibility for the evidence of a Designer, a Creator of the universe. Stein asked him also what he would ask if he had to appear before God, if it would be the case that God would exist. Do you know what Dawkins would say? “Sir, why did you take such pains to hide yourself?” What can we learn from this? That strong atheists are not sure God does not exist. This is exactly what we find in the answer of our catechism booklet.

What does our answer say? It is more a “desire” or wish than an actual believe. Why would it be their wish? Atheists want to walk unlimited in sin. But each person has a conscience. What is that? It is an inner voice that warns when we do wrong. Let’s say that you have beaten a stranger. After that moment, you wish that the police does not exist. Or at least that they will not find out. Why? It would bring you in trouble. Lets finish our catechism question with another question, what arguments would you give to an atheist to prove that God exists? Think about some arguments.

Q5. What is external or acquired knowledge?

A. It is the knowledge of God that can be derived from the visible creation. “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy work.” (Ps. 19:1).

Remember that we speak about external knowledge. That is knowledge that we get from the outside. It is acquired, which means to obtain it. Note that it speaks of getting knowledge of God. Also, it is a another type of knowledge, knowledge that we do not have by birth. It is what we get by an external source. This knowledge is “derived.” It is what we get. We do get this knowledge by our five senses. What five senses do we have?

1. Seeing (eyes), 2. Hearing (ears),
3. Touch (fingers),
4. Smell (nose), 5. Taste (mouth)

Let us focus on the first two. This is in line with our question, what we get “from the visible creation.” How do we see around us that God exists? We can mention two things, first creation is designed. It is clear that a designer has made all things in creation. Many things are functional. It is orderly. There are different colors. There is a circulation of oxygen to carbon-dioxide (CO₂). It is fascinating to see way how a baby is formed in the womb. Second, we see maintenance. Think about the growth of wheat and corn every year. That is what we can see. Le’s now turn to the second sense. How can we hear in creation that God exists? This is in a number of things, for example, thunderstorms, singing birds, and mowing cows. It is summarized in one of the psalms, “The heavens declare God’s glory” (Ps. 19:1).

This is all about our senses. But we also have a soul. This is more related to God than our bodies. What is a soul? It is a spiritual being. A being with a will, knowledge, and reason. The soul cannot die though the body can. Why is the soul then more related to God than the body? God is a Spirit. Our soul, as it were, is in the same realm. But the problem with our soul is that it is darkened. Yes, it is true that some sparks of light are left (Canons of Dort), but generally, it is much darkened.

6. Q. How can we conclude from creation that there must be a God?

A. Because creation cannot exist nor continue to be of themselves, but must necessarily have been created, and still sustained by God, “Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?” (Job 12:9).

The question begins with “how.” What is the way by which someone must conclude that God exists. It means, someone has the possibility to come to the conclusion that God exists. What kind of conclusion do we speak about? This begins with seeing and observing. Then the person thinks about it. The logical conclusion in his soul must be “there is a god.” Let’s give an example. You come to a certain location where you find an old house. It is in decay. There are holes in the roof. Stones are broken. The garden is full of weeds. The paint on the house is peeling off. Two weeks later, you come back to this house. Now, it looks completely new. The holes are closed. Stones are repaired. The garden does no longer have weeds. The paint is new and refreshing. What is your conclusion? People have worked on it. One thought about it and others worked it out. By the evidence of change, we can conclude that people have worked on it. What other examples would you give to describe the process of seeing, reasoning and come to conclusion?

What is the conclusion in of our catechism booklet? “Creation cannot exist nor continue [of itself].” This existence has to do with the doctrine of creation. Everything has a beginning. This must have happened by a Creator, God. Also, it is continued or sustained. That points to God’s providence. God maintains what He has created. This is also about restraining sinful things, like killings or riots. Let us think about the following question, why can human beings not exist without God? What do they depend on? You can point to food and drink, rain and sunshine, and sickness and health. There are many more things that we can mention. So, we need Someone else to sustain us. But there are people that have different thoughts about it. They believe in “deistic evolution.” This is a belief that God has created all things. But He no longer needs to maintain it. They have the idea of creation like winding up a clock. After that, the clock keeps working on its own. You no longer have to look after it. But is this be true? No. Even for that clock, it needs to be wind up every time again. This is also true in other areas. Farmers know of such things. Think about a wheat harvest. You need to plant the seeds. Compare that with creation. But after that moment, you need to maintain it continually. It needs water. You need to take out the weeds. Other times you need to spray pesticides. That is a picture of God’s sustaining power or providence. Let's end with this question, when do we see most that we depend on God? Yes, in times of trouble, sickness, and floods.