

4

NATURAL THEISM, PART TWO

Natural Theism is the science that treats of the existence and character of God in the light of nature and reason. Chapter Three was a study of the evidence we can see outside ourselves, that is evidence we can see in the physical universe around us. Chapter Four will be a study of the evidence we can see within ourselves and of the evidence from human experience.

The Bible declares in Gen.1:27 that God created human beings in His own image. Jesus said, "God is spirit" (John 4:24). If God is spirit, and if humans are created in His image, then humans must also be spiritual beings. This truth is affirmed throughout the Bible. For example: "When Jacob had finished giving instructions to his sons, he drew his feet up into the

bed, breathed his last and was gathered to his people" (Gen. 49:33).

Note that Jacob's body died, but Jacob was gathered to his people. The real person, the spirit, went on living. Or consider these words of Jesus:

I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him (Luke 12:4-5).

Thus, according to Jesus, the death of the body does not end the existence of a human being, and our real concern should be what happens to us after our bodies are dead. This truth, that humans are spiritual beings, directly conflicts with the atheistic doctrine that nothing exists but physical matter and that the spiritual realm is non-existent. If we can find within ourselves evidence of something more than just physical matter, this becomes evidence for the reality of spiritual things, for the reality of the supernatural, and for the reality of God.

SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

If physical matter is all that exists, then each of us is nothing but a combination of chemicals come together by chance. But we don't feel like combinations of chemicals, we feel like persons. Each of us feels that the real "me" is something apart from the chemicals that make up the body. We feel that the real person is not physical but spiritual.

We not only live, we can see ourselves living. This

knowledge of ourselves, this self-awareness or self-consciousness, is universal among humans beings and is uniquely human. Other forms of earthly life do not have it because other forms of earthly life are not spiritual beings.

Is it possible that all of us are wrong; that we really are not persons, but are only chemicals? Perhaps so, but if we are wrong, then why do we feel the way we do? Why would calcium, carbon, hydrogen, and the other elements that make up our physical bodies have this self-consciousness, this feeling of being a person?

Clearly the humanistic view of man is contrary to the common sense of the whole human race. And just as clearly, a view of man that is contrary to the common sense and innate knowledge of the whole human race, is not apt to be a correct view. Thus, this universal and unique self-consciousness, this awareness of our spiritual nature, is strong evidence that the spirit is real. And if we are spiritual beings, then it follows that there is a spirit world or reality and that there is a supernatural God who also is Spirit.

OUR UNIQUE ABILITY TO REASON

If we are nothing more than the chemicals which compose our bodies, then our thought processes are explained as a "stream of consciousness," each thought feeding on the memories of previous thoughts and flowing on into the thoughts that follow making a continual stream that shifts about as it is affected by external stimuli. It is probable that the thought processes of animals do operate in some way similar to this, and some of our own thoughts when

we day dream, seem to operate similar to this.

But we know that isn't all there is to it. We know we can control our thoughts. We can direct our brains to ignore external stimuli and concentrate on some problem we want to solve. We can change a train of thought. We can reason about things that have no connection with our environment. Who is this controller, this director, this changer of direction, this reasoner? It is not the chemicals themselves. It is something apart from the chemicals, it is the real person – the spirit.

Again our common sense tells us that we are more than chemicals; that behind our thoughts there is a thinker; that we are spiritual beings.

OUR MORAL NATURE

If we are nothing but chemicals, then our behavior is nothing but chemical reactions. The way we act is determined entirely by the way the chemicals we are composed of react to the situation we are in. Since chemicals do not control the way they act, we do not think of some chemical reactions as moral and some as immoral. Thus, it makes no sense to condemn Hitler or Stalin for doing "evil", or to praise Lincoln or Churchill for doing "good", because there is no good or evil, only chemical reactions.

But again, our common sense and what we can see within ourselves tell us this is not true. We know that some human behavior is good and some is evil. We know that human behavior is more than chemical reactions. Thus, we know that human beings are more than just chemicals.

Even those who claim to believe we are just chemi-

cals do not really live that way — except perhaps in fiction. The leading character in Jack London's famous novel, *The Sea Wolf*, was a brutal sea-captain named Wolf Larson. He was an intelligent, self-educated man who had read the philosophy of atheism and had actually put it to practice. He believed that human life is of no value because all life is nothing but chemicals, a yeasty ferment whose only purpose is to keep squirming a little longer by devouring other life.

At least one atheistic philosopher did carry his philosophy to its logical conclusion. As stated in Chapter Two, the Marquis de Sade did try to live as though he was nothing but chemicals. His brutality toward women kept him in prison or mental institutions for much of his life, and from his name we get our word "sadistic".

Atheistic philosophers can talk like Wolf Larson or the Marquis de Sade. Like the French philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre, they can say there is no moral difference between helping an old lady across the street, or beating her over the head and snatching her pocket-book. But, after saying this, Sartre signed a manifesto condemning the Algerian War as an "unjust" war. All of us, including atheistic philosophers, are constantly making moral judgments, constantly choosing between right and wrong, just and unjust. Even Wolf Larson found some right or purpose in life — the purpose to go on living. Why would chemicals have such a desire as that?

Human beings do have a moral sense or conscience. It is real and it is powerful. A guilty conscience is the most destructive of all human emotions. It is so powerful that it can ruin a person's life, destroy health, and drive to an early grave. Our conscience is not an

infallible guide to what is right, but it is a powerful force that tells us we ought to do what we believe to be right. It is possessed by no other form of earthly life. It certainly is not possessed by chemicals.

Our moral sense or conscience is not an instinct. It may tell us how we ought to choose between instincts – whether we should obey the herd instinct to rush into a burning house to save a child's life, or obey the survival instinct and stay away from the fire. Our moral sense is not something that evolved. More often than not it lacks survival value. When the Miranda case was decided, requiring that persons under arrest be advised that they do not have to answer any questions and if they do their answers can be used against them in court, it was generally believed this would almost end the use of confessions in criminal cases. But that has not been true, for many defendants still confess, driven by their sense of guilt, even though they know the confession will be used against them.

This moral sense, this powerful force within us that urges us to do what we believe to be right, tells us that we are more than just chemicals. We are spiritual beings with a moral nature given to us by a moral Creator. This, together with other attributes that we can see within ourselves, our self-consciousness and our unique ability to reason, cannot be explained by chemicals alone. They are convincing evidence of our spiritual nature, and thus evidence of the realness of the spirit world and of the supernatural God.

OUR POWER OF CHOICE

Harvard University's famous professor of psychology, B. F. Skinner, believed that both the human spirit

and God are superstitions that originated in man's inability to understand his world. He taught that freedom and free will are no more than illusions and that man is completely controlled by external influences. Because he could condition rats and pigeons to always react in a certain way, he was certain that human behavior can be predicted and shaped exactly as if it were a chemical reaction.

Of course, if the humanistic view of man is correct, then Dr. Skinner was correct. If we are just chemicals, nothing more, then our behavior must be just chemical reactions, nothing more. And if this is so, then once we learn enough about chemicals, we can predict exactly what any person will do under any given set of circumstances. Thus, we are not "persons" at all, but are nothing more than complicated machines.

Directly opposed to this is the Christian view of man. Basic to the whole Bible message is the truth that human beings do possess a free will. Humans do have the power to choose and they are responsible for the choices they make. Courageous old Joshua challenged the Israelites to take a stand, as follows:

Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD (Josh. 24:14-15).

Again it is obvious that the humanistic view of man as a chemical machine is contrary to what we see and experience every day. We are constantly making

choices and we see others doing the same. We know that we can think, and decide, and choose to do one thing or do just the opposite. Our common sense and daily experience tell us that this power to choose is real. It does not come from chemicals because chemicals do not make choices. It can come only from the person within – from the spirit. It is proof that we are more than chemicals, and thus proof that the spiritual world is real.

HUMAN EXPERIENCES OF A SPIRITUAL NATURE

Secular humanists claim that nothing exists but physical matter/energy, and thus that human beings are nothing but chance combinations of chemicals. If this is true, then every human experience can be explained according to the natural laws that apply to those chemicals. But if, as Christians claim, humans are spiritual beings, then it is possible for them to have experiences of a spiritual nature – experiences that cannot be explained by natural laws, but require supernatural explanations. Thus, the important question to be considered here is – do human beings ever have experiences which cannot be explained by the laws of nature?

Throughout history, thousands of people have reported experiencing miracles, providential happenings, and answered prayers. No doubt many of these were coincidence, many were mistakes, many were falsehoods. But it is not necessary that we prove all of them. In fact, if just one of these actually occurred, then we know that something exists other than physical matter. If any of these reports were made by per-

sons of high integrity and sound judgment, who actually witnessed the event, and were able to correctly evaluate what they saw, then such testimony is good, admissible, evidence of the spiritual nature of human beings, and of the reality of supernatural events. It becomes one more converging line of evidence, pointing to the reality of the spirit world, to the reality of supernatural events, and to the existence of God.

A MIRACULOUS ANSWER TO PRAYER

Boyce Mouton has written a book published by College Press, Joplin, Missouri, entitled *Beyond the Veil*, in which he has collected a number of reports of miracles and providential happenings. These reports have been carefully selected and come only from persons of unquestioned integrity. They amply demonstrate the reality of supernatural intervention in human affairs. The following example is from pages 106 and 107:

Dr. Garland Bare is quoted several times in this book. His name is synonymous with integrity to all who know him. He has lived a life of faith and can tell stories by the hour about answers to prayer.

Among the most remarkable experiences of his life was a miraculous healing which took place in Pua, Thailand in 1973.

A young man named Ban Chong wanted to become a Christian. His father was a witch-doctor and forbade him to do so. In order to keep him away from the influence of the missionaries Ban Chong was banished to the mountains for a year to care for the cattle. Here he was stricken with falciparum malaria and was brought to the hospital where Dr. Bare was practicing.

For some forty eight hours Dr. Bare used every new medical treatment and technique available, but to no

avail. Ban Chong only became worse.

Finally, as a last resort, they began dripping quinine into his veins. At this point the patient began to hemorrhage in his digestive tract and bladder. The condition was described as "black water fever" as it causes the urine to turn black.

Dr. Bare then gave Ban Chong a transfusion. In that remote area only one suitable donor could be found and he weighed but 90 pounds. One unit of blood was given but it did no good.

By now Ban Chong's blood pressure was 80/20. His family was summoned to his bedside and informed that he was dying. His witch-doctor father came with his brother, Jur Sha, who was a Christian elder.

Father — "Can God heal my son?"

Dr. Bare — "God can do all things!"

Father — "If he becomes a Christian will that guarantee his healing?"

Dr. Bare — "No!"

Father — "One year ago I forbade him to become a Christian, but now I am willing if he wants to."

Ban Chong — "It is too late — I am dying."

Dr. Bare — "You can give what is left of your life to God."

Ban Chong — "I can't pray — I have on the spirit strings."

(Spirit strings are articles associated with demon worship. By now Ban Chong's blood pressure was 50/0 — his extremities were cold and his eyes were glazed. Dr. Bare asked for scissors and removed the spirit strings.)

Ban Chong — "God, I am dying. If it is at all possible save me!"

At this point Dr. Bare said that immediately Ban Chong's color returned to his face and his bloated stomach became flat. Dr. Bare asked for a blood pressure reading and the nurse said it was 120/70. His pulse was 80 and regular and he had no more fever or other symptoms of malaria.

Since it was late Friday night Ban Chong remained

in the hospital until morning and then was released a well man. On Sunday he was baptized into Christ along with his father and other members of the family.

Healing such as this can only be explained as the supernatural intervention of God. Actually such healings occur with great frequency. Nearly everyone knows of healings that defy medical explanation. Perhaps some are the result of some natural cause. But it is not reasonable to insist that all can be explained away on natural grounds.

A PROVIDENTIAL ANSWER TO PRAYER

At page 39 of *Beyond the Veil*, Boyce Mouton recorded an incident that was reported to him by Roy Weece. Mr. Weece served the church at Eldon, Missouri, for many years and, for about 20 years, has been a campus minister at the University of Missouri at Columbia. He is one of the best known preachers in America, and thousands could testify to his integrity and sound judgment. Therefore, the following quote from Mr. Weece's eyewitness account would be accepted by any jury as truthful evidence.

Several years ago I became convinced on the basis of John 7:17 that God does give subjective evidence to the believer. This evidence will not contradict objective or revealed truth, nor will it precede our obedience to God. There must be obedience and trust in my life for this subjective evidence to occur.

Acts 8 was also intriguing to me. Philip, the Christian, was directed to the Ethiopian nobleman to tell him about Jesus and baptize him along the road. I figured that if God could lead people together in that

day, I couldn't see any reason why He couldn't lead people together in this day. So I decided to pray that God would guide me to people.

One example of this guidance came out west of Eldon, Missouri, in the vicinity of Versailles. I had been given the name of a man who lived in that vicinity. I had been told that he worked during the daytime and that I would have to catch him in the evening, but still I felt a strong compulsion to go down that road, and go into his yard. I had never been there before. I came up to his porch and knocked on the door and just about turned to walk away, for I just knew that he wouldn't be there.

Then the door opened, and there he stood. I introduced myself and said that I was a Christian and that I wanted to talk with him. He said, "Come right in." He took me over to a chair. On the chair was a gun. He said, "I was just seated on this chair with this gun to my temple. I had decided that life was not worth going on. Then I decided that before I did it I would try to call on God. And so I laid the gun aside, knelt down at this chair, and said, God, send somebody to help me."

It was at that moment that Roy Weece knocked on the door. Could this have been a remarkable coincidence? Was it just chance that Roy Weece felt a compulsion to drive to a house, where he fully expected to find no one at home, and to arrive just as the man inside, on the verge of suicide, had knelt to ask God to send someone to help him? The odds against such a sequence of events are astronomical. Certainly this is relevant, reliable, evidence that the things of the spirit are real. Add to the two examples presented here, countless other reports of a similar nature, and this becomes a strong line of evidence pointing to the truth of the Christian view of reality.

OTHER SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES

So far, we have considered spiritual experiences that involve the action or intervention of God – miracles, providential happenings, and answered prayers. There is good evidence that human beings have other experiences of a non-material nature, usually referred to as “psychic phenomena”. Included in this category are:

Extra-sensory perception (ESP) – Perception that is outside the realm of the senses.

Telepathy – Communication between minds by some means other than normal sensory channels.

Clairvoyance – The ability to perceive things that cannot be seen.

Premonition – A forewarning received by some means other than the normal sensory channels.

Psycho-kinesis – Moving objects by some non-physical means.

Obviously these phenomena, if they really happen, disprove the basic belief of atheism – that nothing exists but physical matter and that everything operates according to natural laws. For this reason, most scientists, although supposedly engaged in an objective search for the truth, have ignored the evidence for psychic phenomena and comparatively little research has been done in this field.

Sir Alister Hardy, formerly head of the zoology department at Oxford University, and knighted for his outstanding work in biological research, in a book entitled, *The Living Stream* (Harper & Row, New York, 1965) made this statement, page 285;

If only 1 per cent of the money spent upon the physi-

cal and biological sciences could be spent upon investigations of religious experience and upon psychical research, it might not be long before a new age of faith dawned upon the world.

At page 235, Sir Alister Hardy included this quote taken from his Presidential Address to the Zoology Section of the British Association in 1949;

There is another matter which I feel it only right to mention if one is not to be intellectually dishonest. There has appeared over the horizon something which many of us do not like to look at. If it is pointed out to us we say: "No, it can't be there, our doctrines say it is impossible." I refer to telepathy – the communication of one mind with another by means other than by the ordinary senses. I believe that no one, who examines the evidence with an unbiased mind, can reject it.

What is this "something which many of us do not like to look at"; this dreaded knowledge that causes scientists to abandon their claim to be open-minded searchers for truth? It is evidence that the spirit world is real, that the God they have ignored is there, and that the judgment they hoped to escape lies ahead. But despite this bias, this unscientific refusal even to consider the possibility of such things, some scientific research into psychic phenomena has been done, most notably at Duke University by Professor Rhine and others. This research has provided unassailable statistical proof of the reality of telepathy, clairvoyance, and psycho-kinesis. Quoting Dr. Matthews, the Dean of St. Paul's, in his Maurice Lectures, published by the Oxford University Press in 1950, "The case for telepathy is so strong that one is tempted to say that

the only way to retain disbelief in it is by steadily ignoring the evidence."

What does all this mean? What does the reality of these so-called "psychic phenomena" do to the basic beliefs of atheism? At page 238 of his book, Sir Alister Hardy quoted Professor H.H. Price, then Wykeham Professor of Logic at Oxford, as follows:

Telepathy is something which ought not to happen at all, if the Materialistic theory were true. But it does happen. So there must be something seriously wrong with the Materialistic theory, however numerous and imposing the normal facts which support it may be.

Many people doubt the reality of these so-called "psychic phenomena". However, as seen above, they have been confirmed by some scientific studies, and they are accepted by some highly reputable scientists and scholars. Thus, while the case for Christianity certainly does not depend on psychic phenomena, this is one more line of evidence indicating that human beings are more than just chemicals, and that the universe contains more than just physical matter.

THE UNIVERSAL DESIRE FOR GOD

All over the world, even in the most remote places and among the most primitive peoples, there is belief in the spirit world, belief in supernatural events, and belief in some sort of deity. Atheists claim this universal belief is the result of man's need to explain death, and they have made charts purporting to show how religion evolved from animism through polytheism, on up to monotheism and, finally, to humanism (God is dead).

Such charts are based on little but wishful thinking. The actual evidence from archaeology and anthropology indicates that all around the world the original concept was of one God who was the Creator, and that this original knowledge was gradually lost and degenerated into the paganism of later times. Sir Alister Hardy in his book cited above, page 272, quotes from E. Evans-Pritchard, then Professor of Social Anthropology at Oxford, as follows:

The theories of writers about primitive religion have not been sustained by research. During the last century what was presented as theory was generally the supposition that some particular form of religion was the most primitive and that from it developed other forms, the development being sometimes presented as a succession of inevitable and well-defined stages. . . . All this was for the most part pure conjecture."

If human beings are nothing but accidental combinations of chemicals, where did this idea of God and this desire for God come from? Why would carbon, hydrogen, iron, and the other chemical elements that compose the human body, long for a creator? Certainly this is more evidence that we are spiritual beings, created by a supernatural God who is also Spirit, and who placed in us a desire for Him.

Study Questions

1. Explain why the Christian belief that humans are spiritual beings is in direct conflict with the doctrines of atheism.
2. What is self-consciousness? What does this tell you about yourself?

3. Explain why your thought processes are more than just chemical reactions.

4. What does our moral nature tell us about the reality of the spirit world?

5. Explain why your moral sense or conscience is not an instinct.

6. Why are our self-consciousness, our ability to reason, and our moral sense all evidence for the existence of God?

7. Why is it unreasonable to reject all reports of miracles and providential happenings as being untrue because they are impossible?

8. Why have many scientists been reluctant to investigate such things as telepathy and clairvoyance?

9. Why are even such evil practices as witchcraft evidence against atheism?

10. Why is the universal desire for God evidence that God does exist?

