

“THE THEIST CANNOT LOSE”

On October 6-9, 1947, a debate on *“The Existence of God”* took place on the campus of Harding College. This debate is in book form and well worth the reading. The disputants were the late James D. Bales, former professor of Harding College, and Woolsey Teller, one of the founders of *The American Association for the Advancement of Atheism*. The debate was held in the old auditorium on campus before the entire student body, faculty, area preachers, and numerous atheists. Forty-one years later I enrolled as a freshman at Harding University. Upon reading the book, I walked to Bales’ house between classes one day. I wanted to meet him and thank him for the devastating arguments he set forth that had Teller in a frenzy throughout the debate. I told him that I had just finished reading the debate, whereupon he said to me, “Brother Roberts, THE THEIST CANNOT LOSE.” The following irrefutable opening statement was made by Bales during the first night of the debate.

“Now, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to call to your attention that in this particular discussion I have nothing to lose, even if my friend is right. For if he is right and I am the accidental by-product of the workings of the laws of nature, I shall drop out of this life on even scores with him. I cannot lose. I have lived this life in hope of a life to come. I have had joys that he cannot know. I have had a hope that has sustained me in difficult times, that he cannot have; and finally I drop out of life on even scores with him, even if he is right. On the other hand, if he is wrong and I am right, he would admit that he is teaching a doctrine which is the most horrible doctrine that a man could teach: that would rob man of hope and purpose for life, and when we drop out of this life it will not be on even scores. I do not say this to prove that I am right. I simply point out that I cannot lose, that I have everything to gain and nothing to lose; that he has everything to lose and nothing to gain (14,15).”

Teller made no rebuttal to this statement, but conveniently overlooked it. As Thomas B. Warren has said, “No man turns against reason until reason first turns against him.” There are several encouraging points for the Christian and several discouraging points for the atheist that we learn from Bales’ illustrious statement.

First, Christianity is the most rewarding life there is to live. This cannot be said truly by any atheist. It is true that an atheist can live a strong, healthy, physical life, but so can the Christian. And if man possesses only a body then the Christian and atheist would share equal footing in this regard when they die. But if man is a dual-creature (which he is), possessing both body and soul, then the Christian and the atheist are not on equal terms. One is living a life that ONLY rewards the here and now. The other is living a life that rewards the here and now AND the there and then (Hebrews 11:6; Matthew 25:21,23)! The atheist has nothing meaningful for which to live in this life. He lives for self, he answers to self, he dies miserable. I have never known of one Christian who has ever regretted that he lived a faithful Christian life. I have never seen or heard of a Christian who was in abject misery as he lay upon his deathbed. In stark contrast, consider what the famous author and infidel Thomas Paine said as the

“...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel...” (Amos 7:8)

THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

LESSONS FROM THE ONE

Text: _____

I. Gratitude will Change _____

Notes:

II. Gratitude _____ No _____

Notes:

III. Gratitude is an _____ of _____

Notes:

AND JESUS INCREASED

Text: _____

I. The _____ Magnificence of Jesus

Notes:

II. The _____ Magnificence of Jesus

Notes:

III. The _____ Magnificence of Jesus

Notes:

NOTABLE QUOTES:

“Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing happened” - *Winston Churchill*

curtain of his tragic life was finally drawn to a close:

“I would give worlds, if I had them, that *Age of Reason* had not been published. O Lord help me! Christ, help me! O God what have it done to suffer so much? But there is no God! But if there should be, what will become of me hereafter? Stay with me, for God’s sake! Send even a child to stay with me, for it is hell to be alone. If ever the devil had an agent, I have been that one” (Lockyer, 132).

When an atheist dies he is often found cursing God with the very breath he gave him (Genesis 2:7). However, when the Christian dies he is found praising God. Paul said, “*For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain*” (Philippians 1:21). Truly, Christianity is indeed the most rewarding life one can live.

Second, Christianity is the most revolutionary life there is to live. Nothing has impacted our world for the better more than Christianity. And, nothing has been more detrimental to our world than the ungodly doctrine of atheism. It is a proven fact that our world has been revolutionized for the better because of Christianity (Proverbs 14:34a; Matthew 5:16). How many atheists can rise to their feet and truly say, “Our world is a better place in which to live because of people like me?” How many hospitals were founded by atheists? And, if there are any hospitals founded and operated by atheists, how many people would prefer atheistic care over Christian care? How many orphan homes do you know of that are operated by militant atheists? How many atheists are called to an open grave to provide words of comfort to families who are burying their loved ones (cf., I Thessalonians 4:13-18)? What hope can the hopeless atheist give to a grief stricken cancer patient?

Christianity always has had and always will have a tremendous positive impact on the world in which to live! Even an imperfect human effort to imitate that Perfect One “who went about doing good” will ever be a blessing to mankind (Acts 10:38).

As for the theist and atheist, they represent two vastly different systems of belief, resulting in two vastly different eternities. For the atheist, life is a *hopeless end*. But for the theist, and more precisely, for the true Christians, life is an *endless hope*. Truly the theist (who is a Christian) cannot lose!

-Jason R. Roberts

THE BOOK OF THE GOSPEL—3

The third book in the New Testament is the third of the gospel accounts, simply known as “The Gospel According to Luke.” And though the author does not give his name, like so many books in the Bible, there is abundant historical evidence to prove that it was the one to whom it is ascribed, Luke. He is the only one listed by the earliest of writers as the author, and the earliest lists of New Testament books, like the Muratorian Canon (A.D. 170) refer to this as “the third book of the gospel, according to Luke, the well known physician.” Paul, too, in Colossians 4:14 refers to him as “*Luke, the beloved physician...*” confirming his identity. Paul’s familiarity with Luke, though, would be grounded in much more than just a casual acquaintance. In Paul’s final address from his Roman prison he referred to the fact that “*only Luke is with me*” (II Timothy 4:11), indirectly stating the fact that Luke was apparently a common fellow worker with Paul in his travels. This is confirmed even further by the inclusion of such words as “we” and “us” in reference to Paul’s travels recorded in Acts, also believed to have been written by Luke. And though he was a fervent servant of God and successful evangelist in the kingdom, Luke was not an apostle, and thus not an eyewitness of all things recorded in this book. The only conclusion, then, that can be reached as to why it is so perfectly united with the other of the accounts is that it too was inspired of God (II Timothy 3:16).

As Matthew wrote his account to the Jews to prove to them the Messiah-ship of Jesus, and as Mark wrote his account to the Romans to prove to them the Son-ship of Jesus, Luke’s account is believed to have been written primarily to the Greeks to prove to them the perfection of Jesus. Dunn recorded,

“While the Romans sought to conquer humanity, the mission of the Greeks was to perfect humanity. They looked for the ideal man, who would be representative of the whole human race. They idealized human reason, beauty, and truth. They made all of their gods after some form of their idea of perfect humanity. Luke appealed to them by representing Jesus as the ideal, universal man, the perfect expression of reason, beauty, and truth.”

In Luke 2:52, it is stated, “*And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.*” The rest of the book is set out to prove the degree of perfection with which He increased as He “is portrayed as the highest in social, physical, mental, and spiritual attainment” (Dunn).

Luke is set apart from the other of the accounts in several ways. First, Luke gives the most complete and detailed account of the events leading up to Christ’s birth, including full accounts of the foretelling of John the Baptist’s birth, the foretelling of Christ’s birth, John’s actual birth, and then Jesus’ actual birth. Second, Luke is the only writer to include details from the boyhood of Jesus as he records His time in the temple at the age of twelve conversing with the doctors. Third, much of the information recorded between chapters nine and nineteen (referred to as His Perea ministry) is peculiar to Luke, including various teachings and events in His life.

Another outstanding quality of this particular gospel account is its beauty and precision. Luke is known for using skillful medical terminology as well as the highest of literary styles. His record of Calvary is so vivid and filled with imagery that it is as though by reading it you yourself are transported to that scene and are seeing it with your own eyes. Of Luke’s account it is suggested that it is the most versatile in style and language and that he has a great command not only of the Greek but likewise of Hebrew phrases and constructions (Plummer).

Finally, the stated purpose of Luke’s account reveals the intentions as to why it was written at all and as to why it was written by Luke in particular. He recorded:

“*Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us. Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed*” (Luke 1:1-4).

Thus, Luke states that he wrote intending to with certainty give an orderly record of those things in which they already believed, but in order to strengthen their faith, particularly that of one named Theophilus (“lover of God” or “friend of God”). However, by his writing not only did Luke strengthen just the faith of Theophilus, and not only was an adequate record provided to the Greeks to prove the perfection of Jesus, but likewise has a book been inscribed by inspiration that has stirred faith in many and provided hope in us all.

-Andy Brewer