

Assemblies of God Head Calls Out 'Atheists Anonymous'

Several years before his death, Nicolae Ceausescu, dictator of Romania, addressed the hand-picked audience filling the five thousand-seat palace hall of Bucharest, the capital. The speech was beamed to the nation through the government-controlled television and radio networks.

Ceausescu reviewed the efforts of his administration to stamp out the church and, satisfied with his progress, boldly declared: "Communism is like a young flower that will continue to unfurl its flowers for centuries to come. Within ten years we will outlive Christianity in Romania."

Evidently he had not read, "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God'" (Psalm 14:1).

Not all atheists publicly declare themselves as did Ceausescu. Psalm 14 singles out the person whose conduct, not speech, evidences refusal to believe in God. The atheism is anonymous for the fool speaks not to an audience, but "in his heart."

Human Folly

Whenever I act in a manner inconsistent with the character of God or His will for my life, at that moment I too become an anonymous atheist. My behavior only illustrates what I really believe: "God, in this area of my life, I do not want You to exist. I will do my own thing."

Are there pockets of resistance to God's presence in your life—places you go, things you do, thoughts you ponder—where you hang out a "Not Welcome" sign to the presence of Jesus?

Romans 1 magnifies Psalm 14: "What may be known about God is plain. . . . Claiming to be wise, they became fools . . . and

. . . they did not see fit to acknowledge God.” (See vv. 19,22,28.) The assertion, “There is no God,” whether made by verbal proclamation or silent behavioral choices, is treated in Scripture as an irresponsible gesture of defiance.

Divine Examination

God does see and know. He “looks down from heaven on the sons of men” (v. 2). *Nothing escapes His notice.* He sees that “all have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one” (v. 3).

Contemporary society labels the biblical teaching of human depravity as quaint and out-of-date. But God’s Word declares us sinners and our human condition hopelessly undone. Outside of Jesus Christ, God has given up on the human race and abandoned it because of its mortal folly and evil. (See Romans 1:18–32.) *But through the good news of Jesus we may experience, through faith in Christ, the power of God to save us from both sin and death.* (See Romans 1:16,17.)

Atheism cannot create a noble society or nation. As someone has said: “Without God, man rots; without God, society rots.” When people act as though God does not exist, family and society disintegrate.

Divine Indictment

God’s examination brings two accusations against atheists: mistreatment of God’s people (v. 4) and oppression of the poor (vv. 5,6). God has taken notice of all totalitarian despots. He has prepared charges against them for trial in the day of judgment.

Yet, if I push God’s presence out of any decision or aspect of my life, I too will hurt God’s people. When self rather than God is on the throne, I am capable of treating others as bread to devour, satisfying my own needs rather than acting to nourish them. In the mirror of God’s Word my selfishness

should “overwhelm [me] with dread.” (See v. 4.)

I am accountable to God for how I behave, and so are you.

Divine Remedy

What is the answer to the folly of denying God His proper place? David cries out: “Oh, that salvation for Israel [add your name here as well] would come out of Zion! When the Lord restores the fortunes of his people, let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad!” (v. 7). *Thus Psalm 14 ends, not with judgment but grace.* Centuries later Jesus comes as the answer to David’s prayer for salvation. (See Matthew 1:21.)

A year and a half after the execution of Ceausescu by his own people, two young U.S. Assemblies of God ministers greeted thousands who had gathered in the same palace hall where the late tyrant had promised the church’s obituary. They declared: “We are happy to say tonight that the man who predicted the death of Christianity within ten years is himself now dead and in the grave. But we are thankful that, although the grass withers and the flower fades, Jesus is alive in Romania.” The place exploded in a roar of approval. At the end of the service hundreds came forward to accept Christ as Savior.

Psalm 14 illustrates that in the end God prevails. And joy eternal waits for those who, unlike the fool, look unto the face of Jesus and affirm: “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28).