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A VIRTUOUS ATHEIST

The young man was an avowed atheist. He described himself as “capable of pristine thought and speech... moral, upstanding, conscientious, ethical, loving, and forgiving...and trying to do what is right.” He went on: “My strength of will and my concern with the principles and rules of right conduct are profound and unwavering.”

These seemed strange words coming from one who denied the existence of God (the moral center of the universe) and the Bible (the book that contains God’s moral standards). They were even stranger in view of his living in an immoral relationship with his girl friend, a situation all too common in an increasingly secular culture.

How should a Christian respond to such confusion so as to help? Consider the following response:

No mere mortal has any basis, other than personal opinion or scruple, by which to discriminate between vice and virtue. One may decide that certain things are “right,” but what of those who do not admire them? The defenders/practitioners of abortion, euthanasia, sodomy, lesbianism, incest, pedophilia, bestiality, group sex, rape, armed robbery, or whatever else you might name, have the same right to their opinions/choices as do all other subjective moralists. If such folk are wrong, by what standard? The fact is, they have none.

Logically, one must accept at least the possibility that those who **reject** all of the qualities one thinks are “right” may be just as “right.” In other words, the foundation of the “moral system” of every atheist is rooted “firmly” in thin air.

Upon what basis can anyone determine what is “right” (and know he is right about it)—apart from an objective (i.e., independent of human origin) standard of right and wrong? The answer is, “none,” which is exactly all that anyone has without God and His Word. It is good to appreciate noble traits and consider them as wholesome and right, but if they are right, it is not because we think so, but because God has so decreed. Without Him, no one has anything but an opinion about and personal preference for any behaviors—“good” or “evil.”

I need help to see how one reconciles “trying very hard to be moral” with fornication, unless “moral” and “pristine” conduct includes such. That “profound and unwavering concern with principles...of right conduct” apparently wavered a bit when you and your girl friend decided to cohabit. Let me see if I understand your moral code: Lying, stealing, greed, and hatred are verboten, but fornication is completely acceptable—simply because you so define these acts. Conveniently, subjective moralists have a way of excusing their own pet sins.

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