

Professing That God Is

Genesis 1:1; BC, art. 1

Prepared to Profess #3

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים : THAT'S how the Bible begins. "In the beginning God created" (Gen. 1:1). That's how the ancient Creed begins: "I believe in God." That's how our Belgic Confession begins: **"We all believe in our hearts and confess with our mouths that there is a single and simple spiritual being, whom we call God"** (p. 855). We continue our series "Prepared to Profess" with the purpose of equipping you to know the Christian Faith so you can share and defend it with clarity and conviction. We take up PROFESSING THAT GOD IS.

CONSCIENCE

We PROFESS THAT GOD IS because OUR CONSCIENCES TESTIFY THAT HE EXISTS.¹

Part of being human is that God implanted into our consciences his existence. Justin Martyr (100–65) described this as a "seed of religion" (*semen religionis*); John Calvin said it was a "sense of divinity" (*sensus divinitatis*).

This is *illustrated in Scripture*. We saw last Sunday Paul passing through Athens up Mars Hill to the philosophers' gathering place. A line of idols dotted the road to every imaginable god the Greeks and Romans had conquered. Just in case they missed one, there was an idol "to the unknown god" (Acts 17:23). Why would the greatest minds of the ancient Graeco-Roman world create idols? Because their

consciences testified that God was real. Ecclesiastes says, “God has set eternity in the hearts of men” (Ecc. 3:11). This is why Paul said everyone knows *that* God is. Sadly, everyone also “suppress[es] the truth” (Rom. 1:18) of his existence and does everything to live as if he didn’t. Suppression evidences insurrection. Why does Richard Dawkins daily seek to disprove what he says doesn’t exist? Because he knows. Like bubbles rising to the surface in a hot spring we frantically try keep these bubbles down so they don’t accuse us. We suppress because we want to sin. We know that to acknowledge God is to acknowledge right versus wrong, that he’s Lord over us and that our actions have consequences. The Bible calls this kind of person *nabal*—a “fool” (Ps. 14:1). This isn’t a person with half a brain, who isn’t smart, but is a person who doesn’t respond appropriately to the sense God’s given.

For example, why do people say Adolf Hitler was “evil?” Evil is measured against the ultimate standard of God. Why does $2+2=4$? God has ordered the universe with certain laws. Why am I to love my wife? God has eternally existed in love between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Why must you tell the truth in an interview for a job? God is truth. We cannot think rationally or live morally without presupposing the existence of God. Living in a multicultural global village this means that reasoning and living ethically in community with one another was not invented as a cultural convention simply to get along with each other. Logic, laws,

and ethics are not determined in a relative way by differing cultures with no absolute truth. In fact, saying there's no absolute truth is itself a statement of absolute truth.

C. S. Lewis (1898-1963) said it like this: "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."²

When we as Christians struggle knowing God exists yet living practically, we need to be honest with God. Confidently acknowledge to him that it's not always easy to believe or live accordingly true when a loved one dies, when tragedy strikes a community, or when it seems impossible to make ends meet. Say as a man said two thousand years ago: "I believe; help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

CREATION

Because of conscience we profess that God is. We also PROFESS THAT GOD IS BECAUSE HIS CREATION TESTIFIES THAT HE EXISTS. In Psalm 19 David reflects on this saying creation is like a preacher: "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky proclaims his handiwork, day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge" (Ps. 19:1-2). This preaching is universal to all peoples in all places: "There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. Their measuring line goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world" (Ps. 19:3-4). In Romans 1 Paul reflects on this saying God is knowable in creation: "For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them"

(Rom. 1:19). In beholding the things God has made, all humanity from the creation onward has testified that he is the Creator and that everything that exists is his creation. Again, Paul asserts God's existence by stating it negatively: the fact that we create idols according to our own image testifies that the God who created the things represented exists. Where did we get the idea to make gods?

Scientists have published research extending farther and farther into the known universe and all we have to do is to go online to view the amazing pictures from the Hubble telescope in its Ultra Deep Field view photo. One photograph shows the deepest picture of space ever taken.³ In it there are ten *thousand* galaxies. Then you learn its perspective is like looking at a coin in front of you from seventy-four feet away, which means what exists is 12.7 million times more than can be seen by this photo. "O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?" (Ps. 8:1-2, 3-4)

CANON

Conscience intimately from within and creation powerfully from outside testify of God. By these all know God in a general way as the glorious, wise, eternal,

and powerful Creator. But this isn't able to lead to salvation; it only leaves "without excuse" (Rom. 1:20). But THE CANON TESTIFIES THAT HE EXISTS in a saving way.

The canon of Scripture testifies of God *sufficiently*. God isn't only a glorious, wise, eternal, and powerful Creator but a gracious, loving, and merciful Redeemer; not only is he Lord but he's Father. The canon of Scripture testifies of God *effectually*. Psalm 19 compares and contrasts these two knowledges of God. Creation proclaims the glory and handiwork of God in a universal way to all peoples in all places (vv. 1-6); the law, that is, the teaching of the LORD, revives souls, makes wise, rejoices the heart, and enlightens the eyes (Ps. 19:7-11). Why do we say the canon of Scripture is able to bring us to a saving knowledge of God? Isn't it just another book of religious feelings of some people in a far off time and place? There are many competing holy books: Judaism has the *Tanach*—the Old Testament; Islam has the *Qur'an*; Hinduism has the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Upanishads*, and the *Vedas*; Taoism has the *Tao-te-ching*; and Confucianism has *The Analects*. The Bible claims it's *inspired*, that it's the voice of God. The Bible claims it's *infallible*, that it's true in all it teaches and can't lead us into error. The Bible claims it's *authoritative*, that it's the only and ultimate source and foundation of theology and practice, doctrine and life. The Old Testament says, "Thus says the Lord" (Isa. 7:7); the New Testament says, "You have heard that it was said to those of old...but I say to you" (Matt. 5:21).

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

Conscience, creation, and canon; these all testify that God is. Philosophers and theologians have debated God's existence and the proofs of it for centuries; the debate still rages. Yet there's an ultimate reason we as Christians PROFESS THAT GOD IS: THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST. Because we as humanity have been suppressing the knowledge of God ever since Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3), God had to act dramatically to save us from foolishness. He did this by sending his very own eternal Son: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). After the eternal Son of God became a man he walked the earth for approximately thirty-three years. Then he was "crucified, dead, and buried." In his great chapter on the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul says the resurrection was the culmination of salvation. In reasoning with the philosophers on Mars Hill, Paul didn't point them to Christ's death, to life's purpose, to God's love for the sinner, nor to God's "wonderful plan for their lives"—as is so often done today by evangelists. He pointed them to the *resurrection* (vv. 30–31). Paul's greatest "defense" of the faith to the learned was actually to proclaim foolishness.

Knowing the God who made you is your highest purpose. Because the tomb is still empty you can enter God's fullness of life now and forever.

Notes

¹ See De Moor IV:10.

² C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1976), 140

³ <http://hubblesite.org>.