



# Believe

Peter Fitch  
St. Croix Church  
Sunday  
August 14, 2022

# Today's text from Scripture

Fools say in their hearts, "There is no God."

Psalm 14:1

# Atheism

“The essence of the argument is that religious belief is used to control others, therefore leads to wars and violent oppression, is unfounded and disproven by scientific naturalism. The origin of violence can therefore be overcome if people would be willing to abandon superstition and fideistic belief in favor of scientific naturalism.”

Owen Anderson, “The New Atheists and the Problems of Fideism”  
(commenting on Christopher Hitchens’ book, *God is Not Great*)

# Fideism

The theory that Faith  
is independent of,  
perhaps hostile to,  
perhaps superior to,  
Reason

# Not easy to avoid

Owen Anderson's critique of Hitchens and Dawkins and Harris (New Atheists) points the finger back at them as fideists in their own way

Perhaps Fideism is at the root of a lot of contemporary  
“Culture Wars”

But Atheism is a  
rich concept for  
exploration

Karl Barth (1886-1968)

Atheism: Wild, Mild, and the  
Really Dangerous Sort



“Atheism, For and Against”

Karl Barth



The argument is made that naming God is never really naming God but only naming our understanding of God. To take our ideas of the divine and hold them as if they correspond to the reality of God is thus to construct a conceptual idol built from the materials of our mind.

— *Peter Rollins* —

AZ QUOTES

# *How (Not) to Speak of God*

Ch. 4, Inhabiting the God-shaped Hole

Subsection: “Religion and the Absence of God”

Peter Rollins

Meister Eckhart  
(c.1260-c.1328)

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“God, rid me of God!”

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What are conceptions of God . . .

That are not worthy of God?

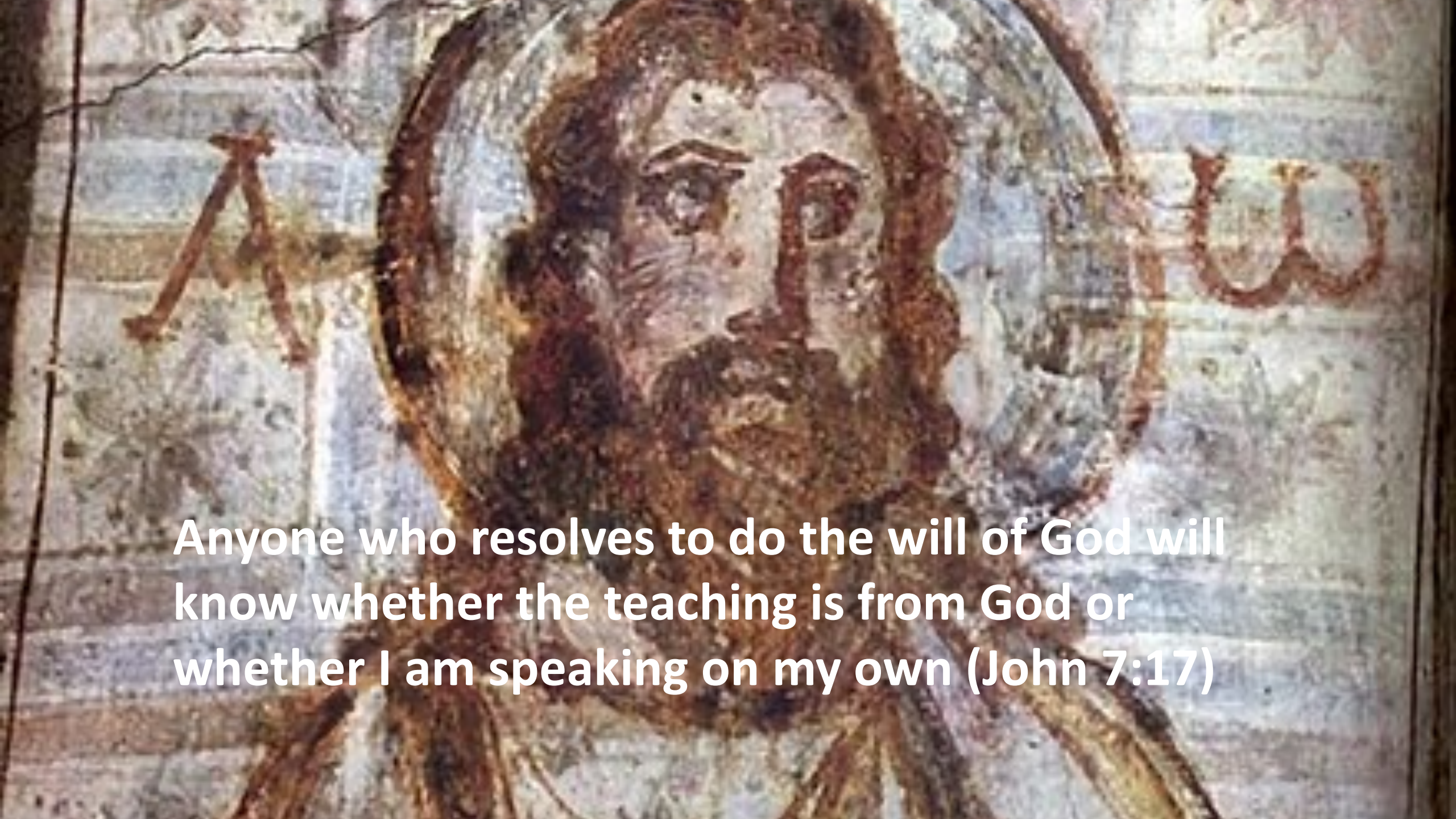
Here are some . . .

- God of Love who will torture people forever
- God who misuses power to manipulate
- God who brings evil into your life in order to make you grow
- God who loves some nations more than others
- God who only loves Christians
- God who treats men better than women
- God who rejects people based on things they cannot change
- God who hates people of different sexualities

Is there a way past all this?

Atheism may have some important things to teach us, but can we receive its gift and still walk forward in faith?

I think so.



**Anyone who resolves to do the will of God will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own (John 7:17)**

A late night talk . . .

“I agree that Something is there, but I don’t believe it is personal”

Mary Ellen’s answer: “God is personal”  
(based on a life-saving intervention)



Bernard of Clairvaux  
(1090-1153)

## Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Loving God*

Lord, You are good to the soul which seeks You. What are You then to the soul which finds? But this is the most wonderful thing, that no one can seek You who has not already found You. You, therefore, seek to be found so that You may be sought for, sought so that You may be found.

St. Augustine (354-430)

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“We begin in faith,  
and are made perfect  
by sight”

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# Paraphrase

Faith is to believe  
what we do not see,  
and the reward of this faith  
is to see what we believe.

St. Augustine, *The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love*

Moreover, when the mind has been imbued with the first elements of that faith which worketh by love, it endeavors by purity of life to attain unto sight, where the pure and perfect in heart know that unspeakable beauty, the full vision of which is supreme happiness. Here surely is an answer to your question as to what is the starting point, and what the goal: we begin in faith, and are made perfect by sight.

Further, to Laurentius . . .

And the true way to obtain  
this instruction is not to have  
a short treatise put into one's hands,  
but to have a great zeal  
kindled in one's heart.

Excerpt

*I Really Like Baseball . . . Thoughts on Sex, Faith,  
Mysticism, and Social Change*