

## **The Freethinker - Vol 98 No. 7 July 1978**

Francis Bennion chooses to rebuke Maureen Duffy (in the June "Freethinker") for describing herself and other NSS members as atheists. Since he asserts that atheism involves "dogmatism" and "faith", he is evidently under the impression that atheists necessarily claim ,that no god exists.

In fact the Oxford definition of "atheist" is "one who denies OR" (my emphasis) "disbelieves the existence of a God." To disbelieve in a god requires neither dogmatism nor faith. To profess oneself an atheist in this sense .is merely to make a psychological statement about oneself.

The "a" at the beginning of "atheist" Is the Greek privative, which has much the force of "without".

Etymologically an atheist need be saying no more than that he does without a god. In essence the word "atheist" is a translation into posh (that is, Greek derived) language of the slightly older English word "godless".

Before attacking on a point of pedantry It is wise to make sure one knows the facts oneself.

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