

THE PERSONALITY OF GOD

The Attributes of God

Banska Bystrica, 22nd April 2018

8 בינו בערים בעם וכסילים מתי תשכילו
 9 הנטע און הלא ישמע אס-יצר עין הלא וביט
 10 היסר גוים הלא יוכיח המלמד אדם דעת
 11 יהנה ידע מחשבות אדם כיהמה הבל

Ps 94:8-11 ⁸ Understand, O dullest of the people! Fools, when will you be wise? ⁹ He who planted the ear, does he not hear? He who formed the eye, does he not see? ¹⁰ He who disciplines the nations, does he not rebuke? He who teaches man knowledge- ¹¹ the LORD- knows the thoughts of man, that they are but a breath.

כירשתים רעות עשה עמי אתי עזבו מקור מים חיים
 לחצב להם בארות בארת נשברים אשר לא יוכלו המים

Jer 2:13 my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

OUTLINE

0. INTRODUCTION:

- 0.1. THE PROBLEM OF DEPERSONALIZATION
- 0.2. BEING A PERSON AND BEING HUMAN
- 0.3. THE TRAITS OF A PERSON
- 0.4. INWARD CORRESPONDENCE

1. WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD?

- 1.1. WORSHIP
- 1.2. INQUIRINGNESS
- 1.3. THINK "WITH GOD"

2. THY WILL BE DONE!

- 2.1. CREATION
- 2.2. OUR INHERITANCE – HIS CHOICE
- 2.3. THE GOD OF SURPRISES

3. YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD!

- 3.1. THE BEGINNING OF LOVE
- 3.2. REALIZATION OF THE LOVE TO GOD

4. TO REMEMBER

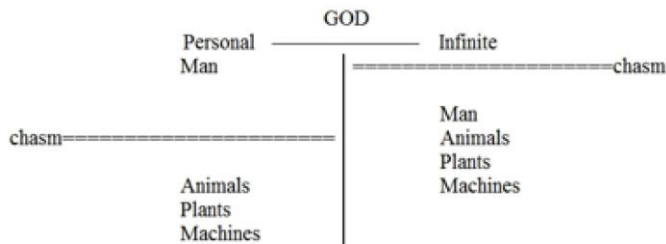
0. INTRODUCTION:

0.1. THE PROBLEM OF DEPERSONALIZATION

[C.S. LEWIS *Mere Christianity*] A good many people nowadays say, 'I believe in a God, but not in a personal God.' They feel that the mysterious something which is behind all other things must be more than a person. Now the Christians quite agree. But the Christians are the only people who offer any idea of what a being that is beyond personality could be like. All the other people, though they say that God is beyond personality, really think of Him as something impersonal: that is, as something less than personal. If you are looking for

something super-personal, something more than a person, then it is not a question of choosing between the Christian idea and the other ideas. The Christian idea is the only one on the market.

- → idolatry
- (1) primitive idols (2) sophisticated idols: FEUERBACH; evolution; science; literary imagination... (3) orthodox “Christian” idols → ritual; formulas; images; dogmas; emotions; laws; people...
- God – *Beyond Personality* [C. S. LEWIS]
- SCHAEFFER *The God Who Is There*: God infinite & personal



- Martin BUBER → "higher Mysticism" of real communion with God, [PRINGLE-PATISON]
- **John 14:6** No one comes to the Father except through me. [Beware of an IMAGINED god]

0.2. BEING A PERSON AND BEING HUMAN

- Communicable attribute → Schaeffer's diagram
- Psychology – O.C.E.A.N. theory of personality → Jesus “a universal personality” (not an either-or type)

O - C - E - A - N : Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism

Grew out of the Lexical Hypothesis which states that the fundamental elements of human personality should be encoded in our language. Factor analysis “extracted” these elements, or traits, from adjectives taken from the dictionary.

McC Costa and McCrae's NEO-PI-r is a popular commercial measure of the Big Five. Available from Sigma Assessments: <http://www.sigmaassessmentsystems.com/assessments/neopir.asp>
It measures the Big Five and six facets for each trait.

Extraversion	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness
Gregariousness	Straightforwardness	Self-discipline
Activity Level	Trust	Dutifulness
Assertiveness	Altruism	Competence
Excitement Seeking	Modesty	Order
Positive Emotions	Tendermindedness	Deliberation
Warmth	Compliance	Achievement Striving
Neuroticism	Openness to new Experiences	
Anxiety	Fantasy	
Self-consciousness	Aesthetics	
Depression	Feelings	
Vulnerability	Ideas	
Impulsiveness	Actions	
Angry hostility	Values	

0.3. THE TRAITS OF A PERSON

- traditional psychology: psyche → (1) the mind (2) the will (3) emotions
- biblical psychology: pneuma → (1) conscience (2) intuition (3) worship [→ regeneration]
- Inward correspondence with God in the Spirit

- **Gn 5:22-24** Enoch walked with God (וַיִּתְהַלֵּךְ עִתְרוֹתְאֵלִים) after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters. ²³ Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years. ²⁴ Enoch walked with God (וַיִּתְהַלֵּךְ עִתְרוֹתְאֵלִים), and he was not, for God took him.
- **John 4:23-24** the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

1. WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD?

- **Gal 4:9** ...you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God...

1.1. WORSHIP

- **Rom 11:33-34** Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! ³⁴ "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?"
- **["NATURAL THEOLOGY"]** → **Rom 1:20** For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

1.2. INQUIRINGNESS

- we must be cautious not to be curious in an improper way → CHAMBERS

[CHAMBERS *The Psychology of Redemption*] Curiosity in the natural world is right, not wrong, and if we are not intellectually curious we shall never know anything, God never encourages laziness. When we come to the universe of the Bible, the revelation facts about God, intellectual curiosity is not of the slightest use. Our senses are no good here, we cannot find out God by searching. We may have inferences from our common-sense thinking which we call God, but these are mere abstractions. We can only get at the facts that are revealed in the Bible by faith. Faith is not credulity; faith is my personal spirit obeying God. The Bible does not deal in common-sense facts; the natural universe deals in common-sense facts, and we get at these by our senses. The Bible deals with revelation facts, facts we cannot get at by our common sense, facts we may be pleased to make light of by our common sense. For instance, Jesus Christ is a revelation fact, sin is another, the devil is another, the Holy Spirit is another. Not one of these is a common-sense fact. **If a man were merely a common-sense individual, he could do very well without God.**

- "teach me your statutes" (לְמַדְנִי חֻקֶיךָ) – Ps 119:12, 26, 64, 68, 124, 135, 171

1.3. THINK "WITH GOD"

- **Pr 3:19** The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens
- **[SCIENCE]**: Johann Kepler got his daily edification in astronomy. His scientific inquiry was a matter of **thinking God's thoughts after him**.¹
- **[ETHICAL KNOWLEDGE]** → "conscience" – "knowing with God"
- the mind of Christ → 1Cor 2:9-16 **1Cor 2:16** "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ
 - the parables of Christ: **analogical thinking** → how God thinks about the world → a lost sheep; a lost coin; a lost son;
- **1Cor 13:9** For we know in part and we prophesy in part (ἐκ μέρους γὰρ γινώσκομεν καὶ ἐκ μέρους προφητεύομεν)
- **[warning:] 1Tim 1:5-7** The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. ⁶ Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, ⁷ desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.

¹ <http://www.dailyedify.com/science-is-thinking-gods-thoughts-after-him-johann-kepler> (21-Apr-18)

2. THY WILL BE DONE!

- (1) God's will → omnipotence → total resignation; (2) God's will → identification with humanity (Incarnation) → complete absorption/empathy

2.1. CREATION

- **Rev 4:11** "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."

2.2. OUR INHERITANCE – HIS CHOICE

- **Ps 47:4** He chose our heritage for us, the pride of Jacob whom he loves.

2.3. THE GOD OF SURPRISES

[CHAMBERS, *The Place of Help*] Some prayers are so big, and God has such a surprising answer for us, that He keeps us waiting for the manifestation.

[CHAMBERS *My Utmost*] Be ready for the sudden surprise visits of God.

[CHAMBERS *Biblical ethics*] No creed or school of thought or experience can monopolise the Spirit of God. The great snare of some aspects of presenting the Gospel is that everything is put in the head, everything must be rational and logical, no room is left for the great power of life which shows itself in surprising ways.

[CHAMBERS *Called of God*] At any moment there may break the sudden consciousness of this incalculable, supernatural, surprising call that has taken hold of your life—"I have chosen you." The call of God has nothing to do with salvation and sanctification. It is not because you are sanctified that you are therefore called to preach the Gospel; the call to preach the Gospel is infinitely different. Paul describes it as a necessity laid upon him

3. YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD!

- **Mt 22:36-39** "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" ³⁷ And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

3.1. THE BEGINNING OF LOVE

- sympathy ↔ person-to-person relationship
- **1John 4:19** We love because he first loved us ()

3.2. REALIZATION OF THE LOVE TO GOD

- ⇒ based on *reality* (sons)
- **Rom 8:15** you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"
- **Gal 4:6** And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"
- **Eph 2:18** ...through him [Christ Jesus v.13] we both have access in one Spirit to the Father

4. TO REMEMBER

- We have to be very careful about how we think about God → tendency of depersonalization (idolatry).
- Avoid the two extremes: (1) the God who is too BIG for our empathy and understanding, (2) the God who is LIKE MAN fully grasped (1Cor 13)
- Worship God through His Messiah and the Holy Spirit (John 4:23–24)