

Who is a God Like unto Thee?

The Perfections of His Person

Because man's life upon the earth is so very transitory, it is probable that he is not as capable of considering the beginnings of things as he might be. The theory of evolution has given men to assume that almost anything can in time evolve from almost nothing, but the old axiom is as true today as ever it was, that every effect demands an adequate cause.

As man looks around upon the material universe, he is confronted with powers and with dimensions which make him, or should make him, feel very small. Yet with all this he has an intuitive sense that there is something about himself and his constitution which elevates him above all the wonders around. This something, immaterial and yet real, mysterious and yet definite, is PERSONALITY. Man is greater than the mightiest beast, the highest mountain, the brightest star, for within his comparatively feeble frame are faculties and powers unknown to anything else in all the material realm. He discerns his personal intelligence, will, emotion, his moral sense, and so on, and he recognises that his possession of them

lifts him immeasurably above the things which lack them, or which possess them only to an extremely limited extent. This is in no wise self-conceit on man's part; it is but a rational self-consciousness. The intellectual, moral and spiritual sensibilities which he discerns, fused into the constitution of each individual, form the personality.

Now even the atheist is bound to recognise a first cause. Matter, as we know it, cannot be eternal. Since the universe is in a state of change, in fact of deterioration, it is self-evident that it must have had a beginning. Every man, whatever his philosophy, has to face the fact, and to complete the phrase, **"In the beginning—?—?"** The atheist proposes that the origin is an unknown force or inevitable principle, and that, given such a starting point, the universe has "happened", and has "evolved" purely by chance. The Christian finds such a proposition pathetically irrational and inadequate. For him no better answer to the question can be given than that sublime statement which commences his Bible, **"In the beginning GOD..."**.

Recognising moreover the necessity of such a First Cause, he realizes that God must be not only of such an order as to create the mighty and wonderful universe around him; He must be capable of creating such a being as himself. **"Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto"** anything that would be incapable of the conception and creation of personal beings (Acts 17:29). (The argument of Psalm 94:9 is perfectly logical and can be extended.) The Christian knows intuitively that the God to whom he owes his being cannot be any less a PERSON than himself. Can the less create the greater? Man's instincts lead him to an eternal and absolute PERSON as the ultimate truth, immanent in, but infinitely above, creation, the Origin of all, including himself. Hence when he reads on the page of inspiration that **"God created man in His own image, in the image of God created**

He him" (Gen. 1:27), his heart leaps, for this is the very conclusion to which his inner consciousness has been leading him. The reason, indeed, for this creation after the image of God is that man might be capable of personal communion with his Personal Creator: for this reason man was designed and made.

We have already observed that the evidences of God's existence point to His Personality. Creation, Prophecy, Sovereignty and Saviourhood reveal not only the might of His arm, but the wisdom and intelligence of His mind, the authority of His will, and the justice and love of His heart. It is our present desire to consider a little of the moral attributes of this Transcendent Person, those attributes which belong to His inner nature, His Personal character as we might say.

We should find it difficult to discover a more fitting starting point for our consideration than the two statements of John's First Epistle, **"God is light"** (ch. 1:5), and **"God is love"** (ch. 4:8,16).

The first is a declaration of God's essential purity, and that this is absolute is indicated in the following clause, **"and in Him is NO darkness AT ALL"**. As God's natural attributes are absolute, so are His moral attributes. That God is **"only wise"** does not deny wisdom to others; it teaches rather that only God is absolutely wise, and that all true wisdom is derived from Him. In the same sense only **"God is holy"** (Rev. 15:4) or **"good"** (Matt. 19:17).

But the first great moral attribute of God, His consummate perfection, if not His total glory, is holiness. When His heavenly hosts prostrate themselves before Him in ceaseless adoration, their cry is, **"Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty"** (Rev. 4:8). He is **"the Holy One"** (Isa. 1:4 and frequently), whose **"name is Holy"** (Isa. 57:15) and whose Essence is **"Spirit of Holiness"** (Rom. 1:4). When we read of Him **"dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can**

see" (1Tim. 6:16), the reference is not to some outward circumstance of His habitation, but to the Essential Perfection of His Person. So dazzlingly pure is He, far beyond the conception of the purest of men, that the very sight of His perfection must be death to the fallen creature (Exod. 33:20). What overwhelming awe filled the men who caught but a glimpse of His glory (Exod. 34:8; Job 42:5,6; Isa. 6:5; Rev. 1:17). **"Holy and reverend is His name"** (Psa. 111:9). **"Who is like unto Thee, O LORD, among the Gods? WHO IS LIKE THEE, GLORIOUS IN HOLINESS, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"** (Exod. 15:11). **"There is none holy as the LORD"** (1Sam. 2:2). **"He is pure"** (1John 3:3). And not only is impurity totally absent from His Nature, it cannot even stand in His Presence: **"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity"** (Hab. 1:13): **"our God is a consuming fire"** (Heb. 12:29).

His holiness should be recognized and adored by His earthly creatures, as well as by His heavenly creatures (Psa. 145:21; Rev. 15:4); but especially by His saints (Psa. 30:4; 99:5,9). 1John 1:5 reveals that the primary impression made upon those who accompanied with the incarnate Son of God was just this – **"God is light..."**. Nowhere else does the holiness of God shine more brightly than at Calvary, where the sinless Son of God bore the wrath of a Thrice-Holy God against human sin (Psa. 22:1-3).

Because of His intrinsic holiness God must be just or righteous in all His ways. **"The righteous LORD loveth righteousness"** (Psa. 11:7). He is righteous in His character, His judgments, His ways and His works (Psa. 119:137; 145:17; Dan. 9:14; Rev. 15:3; 16:7). Even when **"clouds and darkness are round about Him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation (establishment) of His throne"** (Psa. 97:2). He is **"the habitation of justice"** (Jer. 50:7). The words of Moses still **"distil as the dew", "Ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, His work is**

perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He" (Deut. 32:3,4). Again, nowhere else is this more clearly seen than in the cross of Christ (Psa. 22:31; Rom. 3:25,26; 5:21). Although God's Beloved Son bore the stroke of offended justice, not one iota was withheld of all that was due (Psa. 42:7; 88:7; Isa. 53:6; John 1:29; Rom. 8:32). Without partiality God's inflexible justice demanded and received absolute satisfaction.

Equally right are all His words (Psa. 19:7-11; 33:4; 119:128; Rom. 3:4). He is **"the God of truth"** (Isa. 65:16) who cannot lie (Num. 23:19; Heb. 6:18). His word is not merely true it **"is truth"**, absolute and definitive (Psa. 119:142,151; John 17:17). His **"exceeding great and precious promises"** (2Pet. 1:4) are reliable (2Cor. 1:18-20) because **"God is faithful"** (1Cor. 1:9; Deut. 7:9; Psa. 89:1-8; Lam. 3:23); for which reason also His warnings are equally sure (Lam. 2:17; Dan. 9:11-13; Zech. 1:6). Note also Psa. 62:8,9; 118:8,9; Isa. 40:8; Jer. 17:5-8; Ezek. 12:25; 1Pet. 1:25).

"God is love" is also a declaration of the Divine Essence. The love that is the very nature of God is manifest in a number of forms, e.g. goodness, kindness, forbearance, compassion, grace, mercy (Exod. 34:5-7; Psa. 69:16; 86:15; 119:68; 145:7-9; Rom. 2:4; Eph. 2:4-9). It is also manifest to men in a number of different spheres. We read in Scripture of God's love for His CREATURES. This is a UNIVERSAL LOVE, bestowed upon all men alike, without prejudice or partiality. God's goodness to His creatures is displayed in a beneficent providence (Psa. 33:5; 65:9-13; Acts 14:15-17; Matt. 5:44-48), but the supreme manifestation of His love to a world of perishing and hostile sinners is the giving up of His Only-begotten Son to the sacrificial death of the cross (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; Titus 2:11; 3:4; 1John 4:9, 10). God hates man's sin, and is angry with the sinner by reason of it, yet loves his lost soul, and has gone

to infinite lengths to save him from his sins. Well might the prophet ask, **"WHO IS A GOD LIKE UNTO THEE, that pardoneth iniquity? ... He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in MERCY ... He will have COMPASSION upon us"** (Micah 7:18,19). Greater proof of His causeless, boundless love God could not give, than that given for all time at Calvary.

But we read also of God's love for His CHOSEN, a SOVEREIGN LOVE which elects them to salvation, and predestinates them to glory (Rom. 9:10-14; Eph. 1:4, 5; 5:25-27; cf. Deut. 7:6-8; Jer. 31:3; Mal. 1:2; Rom. 11:28).

Then we read of God's love for His CHILDREN. This is His FAMILY LOVE, the peculiar portion of those who have been born again by the Spirit of God, and who consequently know God not only as a bountiful Creator, but as a loving Father in heaven (John 16:27; 17:23,26; Heb. 12:5-9; 1John 3:1 [sons]). How sweet it is to know that if I am one of His, saved by grace alone, God loves me with a Father's love, as one of His spiritual children, for such love is the guarantee of every needful care and provision along life's chequered road (Matt. 6:8,25-34; 7:7-11).

Finally we read of God's love for the FAITHFUL. This is the LOVE OF COMPLACENCY, the result of His children living in a way which brings pleasure to His heart and glory to His name (John 14:21-23; 15:10; 2Cor. 9:7; Rev. 3:20. Compare Psa. 31:19,20; 146:8; Dan. 9:23; 10:11,19).

The eternal ages to come will provide the redeemed with ever-fresh manifestations of the infinite love of God, and in these will lie the secret of heaven's unfading bliss (Eph. 2:7; Rev. 21 and 22). What a day that will be when in heaven as well as in earth the words of the prophet shall be fulfilled, **"The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; HE WILL REST IN HIS LOVE, He will joy over thee with singing"** (Zeph. 3:17).