

How Do People View God --Today? Part II (continued from Part I)

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Other Views Of God Are:

Pantheism. This view of God is embraced by those who hold that the complex universe –began with that which is impersonal. Pantheism is often associated with Hinduism, and other Eastern Religions, but this belief is not uncommon in Western societies. Many people in the West hold to the view of Pantheism.

Francis Schaeffer, points out, that under Pantheism, “*Morals, . . .have no meaning as morals, for everything in pantheism is finally equal.*”¹ Pantheism holds that the universe, is in some sense, God.

Polytheism. This view of God(s) is the belief that there exists a plurality of personal gods. This view was common among the ancient Greeks, and the ancient Romans. This view of God is also very common among tribal peoples today.

Atheism. This view actually denies the existence of God. *Naturalism* is a world-view that entails atheism. The Naturalist does not believe in any supernatural realm behind nature. The naturalist believes that the universe, and the natural order of things, simply exist “on their own.”

Monotheism. This view of God is often abbreviated as **Theism**. Theism holds that only one God exists. God is seen as a personal Being, the Creator of the universe, and the One Who is supreme in power and knowledge. The ancient Jews, those who did not hold to the Christian-Faith, and Muslims, believe in the concept of Theism. Philips and Brown wrote of Islam:

*“The Islamic view of God is a mixture of Jewish, and Christian, and Arabic religious concepts derived from the sacred books: the Torah (delivered through Moses), some of the Psalms (through David), the Gospels (through Jesus) and, the Koran (through Mohammed).”*²

Even though Judaism and Islam share a common understanding of God as a single, personal Being, Christianity, holds the view that God is, “One, in three Persons. The Three Persons as the Godhead. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.” This is a view that is expressed in the teachings of The Bible. Islam, and the Quran reject the teaching of the Biblical Trinity!

¹ Francis Schaeffer, *He Is There And He Is Not Silent*, Published by, Tyndale House Publishers, [Wheaton: Illinois], 1972, p. 9.

² W. Gray Phillips, and William E. Brown, *Making Sense Of Your World, A Biblical Worldview*, Published by, Sheffield Publishing Company, (Salem; Wisconsin), 1991, p. 80.

The most important point of theism for Christians is that God does exist. He is final reality, and everything that exists is ultimately dependent upon Him—and His existence. This is the unchangeable, revealed Truth of The Bible, and it is foundational to the Christian belief in *Theism*. Baxter points out some great truth about God:

*“The Biblical view of God is an eternal Being who is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, holy, just, and merciful. He is not only the First Cause but the Being who maintains and supervises the universe. Unless we can be convinced that there is a God, it is pointless to talk about creation, or the inspiration of the Bible, or miracles, or the divinity of Christ.”*³

Christianity declares that God is absolute, and He is the infinite- Personal, Living God. He is the One who created all things in the universe.⁴ Therefore, He is the One Who sustains it all. Both the Old Testament, and the New Testament declare that God created **“all”** things in a very bold way. Notice the following verses:

*“Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in heaven, and all that is in the earth is Yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all. In Your hands are power and might, and in Your hand, it is to make great and to give strength to all.”*⁵

*“In the beginning was the Word, (Jesus) and the Word (Jesus) was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him (Jesus). . .”*⁶

*“And He (Jesus) is before all things, and in Him (Jesus) all things hold together.”*⁷

The writer of the book of Hebrews claims, in a similar way, that the Lord

*“. . .(He, Christ) Upholds all things by the word of His power.”*⁸

The repetition of the inclusive phrase **“all things”** shows that the Biblical writers were referring to *all of creation*—in this seen world, what our eyes behold, and the unseen world, that which we can only imagine.

³ Baxter, p. 31.

⁴Genesis 1:1; John 1:1-3.

⁵I Chronicles 29:11-12.

⁶John 1:1-3.

⁷Colossians 1:17. [Emphasis Added].

⁸Hebrews 1:3. [Emphasis Added].

The Living God, Revealed In Sacred Scripture:

In The Bible, God is revealed as the living God who has the power to sovereignly determine the outcome of events. He determines the destiny of all things in the world. The God of The Bible reveals the sins and wickedness in the heart of man, and He forgives the sins of Man through HIS grace and mercy—through Christ’s complete work on the Cross. He judges Man’s sins, when Man rebels against His holy standard. The awareness of God brings the awareness of sin in the life of the individual! (Exodus 20:1-3; Psalm 19:1-4; John 3:16; Acts 17:22-32; Romans 1:18-28; I John 4:8-9).

In the Gospels, Christ reveals God, as a God of love, mercy, kindness, grace, holiness, forgiveness, and justice, etc. God is all knowing—Omniscient. God is all present—Omnipresent, and God is all powerful—Omnipotent. The living God cares about, and loves His creatures, and He knows their needs before they ask Him to meet them.⁹

Here are some Truths, God claims and Revealed for Himself in the Bible:

God is Revealed:

As the Living God, and man is Commanded to “love Him first:” (Matt. 22:37-40).
As a Spirit Being, and He is One who accepts worship in “Spirit and in Truth” (John 4).

As The Creator of the universe: (Gen. 1:1; Psalm 19 1-6; Rom. 1:18-20)

As the God of Love: (John 3:16; I John 4:8, 16; Jer. 31:3)

As the God who is Holy: (Isa. 6:1-6)

As the God who forgives (Jer. 31:34)

As the Merciful God (Heb. 8:12)

As the God of grace, who justifies sinners by His grace (Rom. 3:24-25)

As the God who is Righteous (Rom. 3:22)

As the Transcendent God, Whose presence “fills heaven and earth” (Jer. 23:23-24)

As the Redeemer (Isa. 49:26; 60:16)

As the God who is near and Immanent, (Psalm 23)

As the God who is or has perfect knowledge (Job 37:16)

As the God, who has “all” knowledge, “and nothing is left out” (Romans 11:36)

As the God Whose “understanding,” is Infinite (Psalm 147:5)

As the God who named all the stars (Psalm 147:4)

As the God who “sees the heart of man” (I Sam. 16:7)

As the God with a purpose, and no one can frustrate His purpose (Isa. 14:26-27)

As the God who is “unchanging --Immutable” (Mal. 3:6; Psalm 102:7)

As the God who cannot lie (Titus 1:2; Heb. 2:18)

As the God who knows “the number of hairs on every person’s head, and knows when a sparrow falls to the ground” (Matt. 6:25-32)

⁹John 3:16; Matthew 6:8, 32.

As the God Whose “thoughts and ways are not like the thoughts, and ways of man” (Isaiah 55:8-9)

As the God who put on Human Form—in the Incarnation, through His Son Jesus Christ. His name is “*Emmanuel*,” which means “*God with us*” (Matt. 1:23).

What defines God? What separates God from His creatures? It is this truth, “*God declares the end from the beginning.*”¹⁰ (Isa. 46:10). The doctrine of God is very unique and distinct in the Christian Faith. The doctrine of God separates Christianity from *all* world religions!

Can man know God? Can man know the thoughts of God? Yes! Man can know, and respond to the Living God, and therefore, have life—eternal life.¹¹

Louis Berkhof points out quite correctly the living God is revealed in the Bible; he tells of the Communicable, and Incommunicable Attributes of God:

God’s Communicable Attributes:

“The Knowledge of God, The Wisdom of God, The Truthfulness of God, The Goodness of God, The Grace of God, The Holiness of God (God’s holiness is the only attribute that is mentioned in the superlative degree in the Bible), The Love of God, The Mercy of God, The Long-Suffering of God, The Righteousness of God. The Forgiveness of God, The Sovereignty of God, The Will of God, The Justice of God, The Wrath of God, and the Veracity of God – which may be described as that perfection in virtue of which He is true in His inner Being, in His revelation and in His revelation to His people.”

The Communicable Attributes of God, refers to characteristics of God that He shares with man in some measure, since man is made in God’s image. Attributes like knowledge, love, wisdom, grace, mercy, and others listed above—are fact, some of these Attributes, the Apostle Paul actually mentions in the *Doxology* in Romans 11.

God’s Incommunicable Attributes:

“The Spirituality of God—God is a Spirit, as a Spirit Being, He is present everywhere, The Independence, or Self-Existence of God, The Foreknowledge of God, The Immutability of God is (His unchanging nature—God is: All powerful, All present and All knowing), The Infinity of God [His absolute Perfection, His Eternity, His Immensity, He is Transcendentally separate], and The Simplicity of God. By ascribing

¹⁰Isaiah 46:10.

¹¹John 17:3

simplicity to God, we assert that The Almighty is not composite, and He is not susceptible to division in any sense of the word.”¹²

The Incommunicable Attributes of God, are those characteristics of God that He cannot share with man. Because God is a Spirit Being, and man is a composite-flesh-being. These Attributes are uniquely a part of what it means for God to be God in His Self-Existence! The Apostle Paul mentioned three of them in Romans 11. These are: *God’s Self-Existence, God’s Self-Sufficiency, and God’s Eternality.*

Sometime in the first half of the nineteenth century the noted Bible commentator, Adam Clarke, give this description of God:

“A general definition of this great First Cause, as far as human words dare attempt on, may be thus given: The Eternal Independent, and Self-existent Being; the Being whose purpose and actions spring from Himself, without foreign motive or influence: He who is absolute in dominion; the most pure, the most simple, the most spiritual of all essences; infinitely benevolent, beneficent, true, and holy: the cause of all being, the upholder of all things; infinitely happy, because infinitely perfect; and eternally self-sufficient, needing nothing that He has made: Illimitable in His immensity, inconceivable in His mode of existence, and indescribable in His essence; known fully only to Himself, because an infinite mind can be fully apprehended only by itself. In a word, a Being who, from His infinite wisdom, cannot err or be deceived; and who, from His infinite goodness, can do nothing but what is eternally just, right, and kind. Such is the God of The Bible; but how widely different from the God of most human creeds and apprehensions.”¹³

The Bible calls upon its followers and all of mankind to be concerned with the God Who is revealed in Scripture –the God of divine revelation. When one’s concept of God in *not* Biblical, then, all too often one’s concern is with one’s Church’s doctrinal position first. But should we not be concerned with God, The Living God, Who has revealed Himself in sacred, Holy Scripture first?

There is in human thought—the thinking of relativism. (*Relativism is the philosophy, the theory that holds all truth is relative to the individual, and to the time or place in which he lives and acts*). Relativism leads nowhere but to meaninglessness, mindlessness, and to paralyzing despair. Relativism is always centered in the thinking of man; it makes man and his thinking the “*measure of all things.*” According to relativism, God, The Living God, is ruled out of man’s thinking, Man has no measure of himself, or of his world—and he cannot expect to find any value and meaning—without Almighty God!

¹²Louis Berkhof, *Manual Of Christian Doctrine*, Published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Company, [Grand Rapid; Michigan], 1933, p. 62-73.

¹³ Adam Clarke, as quoted by Batsell Baxter in his book, *I Believe Because*, pages 31-32.

In The Christian Faith, the Individual Inherits, and Imitates God--Himself

The Apostle Paul wrote, “And if children, heirs (people who inherit) also, heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ . . .”¹⁴ This passage speaks of followers of Christ being co-heirs (joint heirs) with Christ. This means that the individual Christian inherits what Christ inherits. *What does Christ inherit?* The Gospel of John tells us that Christ inherits God—The Father. Christ’s inheritance is The Person of The Living God! The Christian also “imitates” the Person of God.¹⁵

In **John 17:3-5**, before going to the Cross, Jesus Prayed:

“And this is eternal life; that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent. I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do. And now, glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I ever had with Thee before the foundation of the world.”¹⁶

In this prayer, Christ is asking God to give Him something He had before He came to earth. He is asking God to glorify Him! Therefore, Christ’s inheritance is the glory of God, the enjoyment of God Himself!

The Christian Faith is the only Faith which claims that the individual has the living God as his/her inheritance, as the everlasting, eternal Treasure. This is very unique and distinct from the rest of the religions of the world. The Christian possession is God—Himself. God Himself, the very life of God, the very glory of God, is the inheritance of the man, the woman who believes and obeys Christ.

God has communicated Himself to Man through Christ in the Incarnation (the act whereby God became Man); and by His grace, by His light, by His love, by His holiness, by His Truth, by His life, nothing is going to dispossess, or deprive the individual Christian from his/her heavenly inheritance, and eternal Treasure. This is a very definable Truth revealed in the Christian worldview!

¹⁴Romans 8:17.

¹⁵Ephesians 5:1-2.

¹⁶ All Bible quoted are taken from, The English Standard Translation.

Conclusion:

The Bible presents a rational, logical view of God, the infinite-personal, living, loving God—Who is revealed in Creation, and in The Bible. This view of God is called *Theism—the belief in One God*. This is the dominant view of God that is held by three of the world’s religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. But the Christian worldview of God is very unique—because God is personal, and Man can know Him!

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, and worldview, there has emerged a well-defined, and reasonable list of attributes, and characteristics of God, that are seen, and that are understood to be essential to ‘Who’ God is, and how He has revealed Himself. (These attributes about God, are not seen and revealed in other religions, and religious books). The attributes revealed in the Bible, play a key role in revealing the theistic concept of God.

The belief-system of The Bible, acknowledges the existence of God, and His existence is not contingent, or dependent upon any material thing for His existence. God exists by His own power and by His own sufficiency. The God of The Bible, has revealed Himself; plainly and clearly in this world for everyone to see, to understand, and to know. (He has revealed Himself in Creation, and in The Bible). He lives, and He is not silent!