

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Bible Student* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bible-student_01.php

The Bible Student

Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD

NEW SERIES

JULY 1957

VOL. XXVIII No. 3

‘THAT I MAY KNOW HIM’

The Passionate Pursuit of a Life Purpose

A. McD. REDWOOD

(Continued)

The Miracle of Its Revelation*

Whilst Paul was waiting at Athens (Acts 17) his spirit was profoundly moved within as he beheld the shameless idolatry of the Athenians. May we not say reverently it was an indication of the Sovereignty of God in action in moving the Athenians to challenge the Apostle concerning *his* beliefs and teaching concerning the GOD he was proclaiming? And the Apostle seized the opportunity not to be missed, for right in front of him stood an altar dedicated to ‘*The UNKNOWN God!*’

After an appropriate and yet friendly introduction he goes on to declare: ‘What therefore ye worship in *ignorance*, this set I forth unto you. . . .’ He had to adapt his exposition of course to meet these idolaters on their own level, and yet make clear to them concerning both the Divine nature and Sovereign authority of the God of Heaven and earth, the Creator of all things Who, nevertheless, is ‘near’ to all mankind, for ‘in Him we live and move, and have our being . . . for we are His offspring’ (vs. 23 ff.). Thus he began at their own level but went on to lift their thoughts towards the Creator of the heavens and the earth, Whose grace

* This first section of the article is a continuation of the theme with which the previous section *concluded*, viz., *The Nature of the Godhead*: which fact should be kept in mind.

and mercy are such as to strangely move men's hearts and minds —'if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us'. Then he leads on to the challenge: 'Now He commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent . . .' (vs. 29-31).

Now, of course, in the wonderful providence of God in this age we have been given an even fuller revelation—as described in some measure in our preceding article, where we dealt with the doctrine of the Trinity of the Godhead.

But now we may very reverently go further and ask: What is HIS nature of being? What IS God? The answer to that question is stated very simply by the apostle John in three references; the first in his Gospel, and then in his first Letter:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| I. 'GOD is SPIRIT' (or, LIFE) | (John's Gospel, 4: 24.) |
| II. 'GOD is LOVE' | (1st Epistle, 4: 8, 16.) |
| III. 'GOD is LIGHT' | (1st Epistle, 1: 5.) |

Examine these three statements in their contexts very briefly.

I. 'GOD is SPIRIT'. Not 'a spirit', but Spirit and spiritual in the absolute and ideal sense. That is, HE *is* the Source (the ONLY Source) of life, as demonstrated ever since the beginning of Creation and of human history (Gen. 2:7; Colossians 1:15-17).

II. 'GOD is LOVE'. The apostle adds: 'he that abideth in Love abideth in God, and God abideth in him. Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is even so are we in this world . . .' (read the whole of verses 16-19).

III. 'GOD is LIGHT'. The Lord's own word recorded by the same apostle is: 'I am the Light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the Light of Life.' (Jn. 8:12). If we turn again to the passage in Ephesians already quoted we can see the fuller implications of it: 'Now are we light in the Lord: Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth); and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.' (Eph. 5:8-11).

Such then are the 'constituents', the 'substance', of the Divine nature of HIM Whom we have been taught to call GOD; Who

IS GOD; and like unto Whom there is none other in heaven or on earth, but Who is the Creator of both. It is to Him the apostle refers in that inspired revelation: 'Who being rich in mercy, for His great Love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, did quicken us together with Christ, and raised us up to sit with Him in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus'. (Eph. 2:4-8).

But turn now to the more personal experience of

The Wealth of Its Realization

Because of the character of the days in which we live, we make no apology for examining in some measure the Way of Entrance into this 'Passionate Pursuit of a Life-Purpose' of knowing God in the reality of daily experience.

Men are still trying to invent ways and means by which to 'know' God; but alas! how futile they often prove. There is only *one* divinely-ordered 'Way': Christ states it categorically: '*I Am The Way*'! Hence the apostle John declares: 'To as many as received HIM (Christ) to them gave He the right to become *children* (Gk. *teknon*) of God, even to them that believe on His Name: which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of GOD' (Jn. 1:12, 13). It is important here to note the word 'children' and its significance, otherwise the whole point of the statement is lost. The idea of *teknon* 'includes the features of the presence of the divine principle, and the action of human growth. The child is made to *share in his* father's nature (2 Pet. 1:4), and he uses in progressive advance, the powers which he has received' (Westcott). This is how we begin to know God (Cf. Jn. 17:3; also vs. 25, 26).

Moreover, it should be noted that it is not merely a 'single crisis of spiritual adjustment' in our personality, but a life-long 'following on to know the Lord', as Hosea the prophet made clear to the men of his day even (ch. 6:3). The apostle Paul reminds the Colossian Christians that they should 'be filled with His (God's) will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to walk worthily of the Lord . . . and *increasing in the knowledge of God*' (ch. 1:9-12). The inherent vitality of the divine life is to develop

within, resulting in strength and spiritual knowledge which shall leave an unmistakable impression upon those with whom we live and work. Therefore, 'be no longer children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine . . . but grow up in all things into Him, who is the Head, even Christ'. (Eph. 4:14, 15). In ch. 5:1, 2, of the same Epistle this 'Ideal' is again stressed, in a phrase which is singularly impressive: '*Be ye imitators of God, as beloved children*, and walk in love, even as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us' (R.V.). The noun 'followers', or 'imitators' (Gk. *mimētēs*) is attached to the verb *ginomai* ('to become') in the present continuous tense, and implies a progressive growth of character.

But there still remains the very important feature which we must make some careful study of, namely:

The Reality of Its Manifestation

That is to say, this 'Passionate Pursuit of a Life Purpose' of learning to know God, must primarily be a *personal* matter. That needs to be said in these days because so many professing the name of Christ are so obviously 'spiritual dependents'; they are ever in need of being 'propped up' as it were, or they would lose out entirely.

The Psalmist, on the other hand, sets before us, even in this day of 'enlightenment', a splendid example: 'One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, *to behold the beauty* of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple' (Ps. 27:4). Compare also Psalm 65:4.

It is not enough to know by the exercise of a mere 'Christian mentality,' as it might be termed. Rather, there needs to be a '*following on*', as already quoted. This 'spirit of a Godly enterprise' is reflected in the apostle's life, as stated in Phil. 3:13, 14; 'One thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are ahead, *I press on toward the goal . . .*'

Such is the purpose of God, therefore, in giving us the wonderful revelation of Himself, of His divine nature and being; and even

of the glorious truth that '*we are partakers of the divine nature*' (1 Peter 1:4). In that very fact is seen the foundation of the *spiritual intimacy* we have with God, reflected even in the Old Testament age, for did He not call Abraham 'My Friend'? (Isa. 41:8; James 2:23).

The Intimacy of Sonship

Corresponding with the great truth that '*God is Spirit*', or Life; and that He is the Giver of Life—not merely natural physical life, but of Eternal Life—we read that: 'God sent forth His Son . . . that we might receive the *Adoption of sons*. And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying Abba Father. So that thou art no longer a bond-servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God' (Gal. 4:4-7). Be careful to note that this is not merely an intimacy of possession (as Master and servant), true as that also may be, but of sharing in a common nature as already stated above. In fact, states Paul, 'God has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world . . . having foreordained us unto the *adoption of sons* through Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will' (Eph. 1:4, 5). And, as if that were insufficient, he adds later: 'Those whom He foreknew, He also foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the First Born among many brethren' (Rom. 8:29). But do not omit the *next* verse, which turns our eyes onwards to the ultimate: ' . . . them He also glorified' (v. 30). Well might the writer proceed to throw down the challenge (in v. 35): 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ . . .?'

The Intimacy of Friendship

The Lord's own words are very wonderful: 'As the Father hath loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love . . . *ye are My friends* . . . No longer do I call you bond-servants; for a bond-servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends; for all things that I heard from my Father I have made known unto you' (Jn. 15:9-17). The whole passage should be read and prayerfully studied, so full of intense meaning is it.

But do not fail to grasp the reality of what is implied in this Friendship of Love: It implies, for example, the cultivation of this love with all who are similarly 'friends of God'—for has He not given us an example of how we can often help each other? (Read John 13:12-15).

Not only so but it calls for *obedience* to the directing will of God. 'I have called you friends; for all the secrets which My Father has given Me, I have passed on to you; and therefore you are privileged beyond a mere "slavish" obligation . . .' (Jn. 15:14 ff.). The whole passage is so full of this theme of the intimacy of the Divine Friendship; and all is based upon that great and glorious revelation that GOD IS LOVE!

Before passing on to the next section, however, be sure to read carefully what the apostle James has to tell us (chapter 2:22, 23) regarding Abraham, the Friend of God. And again what he has to say in chapter 4:4, about the 'friendship of the world', in complete contrast.

The Intimacy of Discipleship

Corresponding to the glorious revelation that GOD is Light; and 'if we walk in the Light as He (Christ) is in the light, we have fellowship one with another' (1 Jn. 1:7), we learn the intimacy of discipleship.

The Lord unfolds the essential features for the full realization and enjoyment of this Intimacy in three statements found in the Gospel of John. 'If ye abide in My word, then are ye truly My disciples; and ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free'. (Jn. 8:31, 32). This is the first essential: to abide, to continue abiding, in the word which is THE Truth. This is not just a system or code of ethics, but a dynamic power to be ruled by and lived out in the common tasks of everyday life. Being 'MY Word', it is the expression of His will and of His love for our daily guidance.

The second statement is in John 13:35; 'By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have *love* one to another'. This is not a mere repetition of what we have noted under 'Friendship'. It helps to prove the divine truth: 'Now abideth faith,

hope, love, these three; and the *greatest of these* is LOVE' (1 Cor. 13:13). The Apostle's catalogue of 'spiritual experiences' in Romans 5:1-5 ends with the great 'climax'—'the Love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Ghost which was given unto us'.

Note: The above Editorial is incomplete, posted separately the closing paragraphs have been lost in the post. The Editor is now in England and it would seem best to release the magazine for printing as it is rather than delay publication.—W.J.R.

THE PLACE OF THOUGHT IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

By E. G. ASHBY, M.A., B.D.

In view of the importance now increasingly attached to the influence of the mind in promoting or retarding physical health, it is well for us to consider its bearing upon the spiritual life. It is clear that on various occasions the Lord challenged His hearers, whether friend or foe, with the need of clear thinking. 'What thinkest thou?' He asked, and He expected a reasonable answer to which real thought had been given. In fact it is perhaps just here that we find the real failure of the Pharisee: he failed to think anything through to its logical conclusion. His hypocrisy was not so much deliberate make-belief, for he probably thought he was right, as a rationalisation (often unconscious) in defence of his prejudices.

Though the Decalogue for the most part paid attention to the external act, the 10th commandment was concerned with the attitude of mind, and in the Sermon on the Mount the Lord showed most definitely that the Law has relevance not merely for the outward act but also for the inner motive. Not merely murder and adultery are condemned, but the inner yielding to unrighteous anger or the lustful look. In the light of this it is easy to appreciate the truth of the Proverb (23:7) that 'as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he'. As one saintly preacher used