



This material has been provided by Asbury Theological Seminary in good faith of following ethical procedures in its production and end use.

The Copyright law of the United States (title 17, United States code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyright material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to finish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specific conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be *“used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research.”* If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of “fair use,” that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law.

By using this material, you are consenting to abide by this copyright policy. Any duplication, reproduction, or modification of this material without express written consent from Asbury Theological Seminary and/or the original publisher is prohibited.

Contact

B.L. Fisher Library
Asbury Theological Seminary
204 N. Lexington Ave.
Wilmore, KY 40390

B.L. Fisher Library’s Digital Content
place.asburyseminary.edu



Asbury Theological Seminary
205 North Lexington Avenue
Wilmore, Kentucky 40390

800.2ASBURY
asburyseminary.edu

PLACE OF GOD IN THE LIFE OF MAN

1932

J. Walden Tysinger

Asbury Seminary

CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
Introduction (The Important Place God Has In The Life Of Man)	2
I Man's Sense Or Awareness Of God	7
II God's Interest In Man	15
III If God Has A Deep Interest In Men Why Do Many Men Grope In Darkness?	23
IV If All Men Sense God Why Are There So Few Who Have The Christian Conception Of God?	35
V Fruits Of The Ethnic Conception Of God	38
VI The Value Of The Christian Conception Of God	46

INTRODUCTION

The Important Place God Has In The Life Of Man

There is nothing more needed in this era or any other era than for men to realize the important place God has in their lives. When man realizes God's love and interest for him he will want to come in close relation with him. Men must have a conviction that there is a God on whom they are dependent and to whom they are responsible if they have fellowship with him. God never manifests himself to anyone until someone thinks and relies upon him. "Until a man orients himself rightly with reference to God, it is impossible for him to give direction in his life which can alone insure his reaching that goal which is the only aim and end that can satisfy the soul of a rational and immortal being."¹

It is not the purpose of the author to set forth any philosophical or theological arguments as to the existence of God. It is the desire of the author to show that man is aware of God and the important place God holds in the life of every man. When men will rely upon and be true to what God impresses them to do they will not need any philosophical proof of God. The history of the idea of God proves this. "Men had the idea of God, and it had proved a creative factor in history, long before reflection upon it issued in its systematic expression as a doctrine. Moreover, men had enunciated the doctrine

1. Tillett: "The Paths That Lead To God." p. 25

before they attempted or even felt any need to define its relation to reality, and the logic of history is the purer philosophy."-- "In the New Testament as in the Old Testament, the existence of God was taken for granted as the universal basis of all life and thought." ¹ It is the disobedient and the skeptic that desires the philosophical proof. They are usually deprived or robbed of the goodness and blessings of God because they argue instead of believing.

Men need to realize the interest God has for them and the large place they can have with God. We want to see how God has been trying to have a large place in the life of man. After God had given his laws to men and after he had spoken to and through men in various ways and various times. He wanted a larger place in the life. He sent his only begotten Son into the world to give man an example by which to live, and to be a redeemer of man. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin condemned sin in the flesh."

We want to see why men grope in darkness even though God has a deep interest in them. We also want to see why there are so few who have the Christian conception even though all men sense God.

1. "The International Standard Encyclopedia," Vol. II
p. 1250-1260.

It is very important to study the fruits of the various conceptions of God. We will be able to see why the men who live in heathen lands do not get peace and satisfaction from their God and why they greatly need the Christian conception. We will also be able to see the value and have a greater appreciation of the Christian conception of God.

The study of the place of God in the life of man is important because God does have a large place in the life of men and men need to be concerned about God. "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."¹ We will find that all men have a religious nature and they try to satisfy that religious nature by seeking the help of some Supreme Being. "Religion is as universal as man and every religion involves some idea of God.* Since all men seek after God, it is very important that they should have a better conception of him."² "It is of great importance that men should know and feel that they are by their nature bound to believe in God; that they cannot emancipate themselves from that belief without derationalizing and demoralizing their whole being."³

1. Romans 7:14

2. "International Standard Bible Encyclopedia" p. 1250

3. Hodge: "Systematic Theology." Vol. I, p. 201

The study of the place of God in the life of man is important because men seek after God more than anything else. Man is concerned about God more than anything else. "The first and great fact of the universe is God. The Bible is eminently the story about God. It begins with his creation of the world and ends with a vision of His triumph. It is the story of what God did, of what God said, of how God loved, how he rewarded and chastened and strove and led and over-ruled and triumphed. Take God out of the Bible and it becomes as any other book. The Gospel is this --- God is for us; man is partaker of the glory of God."¹

People are crying out for God on every hand. They are saying like Phillip, "Show us the Father and it sufficeth us."²

1. Edward Keddy: "Moral Leadership and Ministry."
2. John 14:8

MAN'S SENSE OR AWARENESS OF GOD

There are some things of which only a few people are aware. It is only the wise and learned who are aware of some of the deeper things in life. The weak minded and the ignorant are not aware of Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason," or "The Mendelian Laws", or some of the other difficult problems of knowledge. But all men, no matter how ignorant or barbaric, sense God. Most all of the fundamental theologians agree to this statement. "All men have some knowledge of God. That is, they have the conviction that there is a Being on whom they are dependent, and to whom they are responsible."¹

The reason why all people are aware of some Higher Being is largely due to the fact that they want to satisfy their religious nature which God has given them. Man everywhere has a religious nature, and has some kind of religion. Someone has said that man was incurably religious. He is distinguished from other animals by his religious nature. "Religion is the chief differentiating characteristic of man. Other aspects of humans have indeed been important, yet the pre-eminently noble characteristic of man throughout his entire history has been his religion. In the history of mankind there never has been a tribe of men without some form of religion. Even the bushmen of Central Australia and the Indians of Patagonia who represent the lowest forms of existent human life cherish some belief in the spirit world and engage in some kind of worship."²

1. Hodge: "Systematic Theology," Vol. I
2. Hume: "World's Living Religions."

Men try many things and many ways to satisfy their religious nature. They travel over the plains, climb the steeps, and cross the streams; in the snow, the heat, and in the rain to some holy place hoping to become more holy. Men punish their bodies in order to become more religious. Parents throw their God given children into the mouths of wild animals in order to try to satisfy their religious nature. They erect beautiful stone temples to worship as they please. Men and women devote their whole lives trying to satisfy their religious nature. They give their time, ~~talents~~, talents, money and their all. Men and women deprive themselves of the privilege of marriage.

When Dr. James Freeman Clarke gave the general results of the survey of the ten great religions he said, "This survey must have impressed on every mind the fact that man is eminently a religious being. We have found religion to be his supreme and engrossing interest on every continent, in every millenium of historic time, and in every stage of human civilization. In some periods men are found as hunters as shepherds, as nomads; in others they are living associated in cities, but in all these conditions they have their religion¹ ~~that~~ St. Clair Tisdal says in his treatise on Comparative Religions, "Religion is as universal phenomenon found among all nations, in all conditions, though differing immensely in its teachings, ceremonies and effects in different places."² The great theologian, Dr. Miley, in his discussion on Theism says, "Religion is as widespread as the human family and pervades the history of the race."³

1. Clarke: "The Ten Great Religions" Vol. 1
2. "The International Std. Bible Encyclopaedia" Vol. 2 p. 692
3. Miley: "Systematic Theology." Vol. I p. 57

There are many other authorities who have made a study of the religious nature of man who say as the ones we have mentioned. Most all men think that religion is universal even though they have not made any intensive study of the religious nature of men.

Man realizes his religious nature as well as his physical, social or asthetic natures. He seeks to satisfy his religious nature as well as he tries to satisfy his hunger for food and his thirst for water. Man feels that he "cannot live by bread alone."

Man in seeking to satisfy his religious nature seeks the assistance of some Higher Power. The religious nature calls ~~it~~ for God. Whenever and wherever man seeks to satisfy his religious nature he either seeks to find or to worship God. "Religion is as universal as man and every religion involves some idea of God."¹ "Religion carries with it some form of the idea of God or of some order of supernatural existence. There is no place for religion without this idea. This is so thoroughly true that the attempts to found a religion without the notion of some being above us have no claim to recognition in a history of religion."²

When men make pilgrimages to some holy place they make them with the idea of finding God. When men deny themselves of certain things they do it to please their God. When the Mother cast her dear child into the Ganges or the mouth of some wild animal she feels that she must do it in order to please her God or gods. Men give their own lives in order to please their God. When men erect large and costly buildings for re-

1. The Internation Std. Bible Encyclopaedia. Vol. II p. 1250

2. Miley: "Systematic Theology," Vol. I p. 57

religious worship they erect them for the purpose in which to worship their god. "Religion even in its lowest form means the idea of some supernatural being or beings. No fetish devotee can invest a divinity in a brook or tree or stone without the idea of its existence. The same is true up through all grades of idolatry. There are higher ideas of divinity than the idol would suggest."¹

There are three theories as to the idea of God. The three theories proposed are: The first is that we get our idea of God through intuition; the second, through deduction of reason, a conclusion arrived at by a process of generalization, supernatural revelation, preserved by tradition.

The first question is whether we become aware of God through intuition. When the question is asked, "Whether we become aware of God through intuition", the question is equivalent to asking, "Whether the belief in his existence is universal and necessary?" Is the awareness of God given in the very constitution of our nature? If it can be proved that all men believe in God, and no one has failed to believe in God, then his existence is an intuitive truth.

Such belief has been the common opinion in all ages. Cicero says, "Esse Deum, quoniam insitas eroum, vel potius innatas cognitiones habemus," Tertullian says of the heathen of his day, that common people had a more correct idea of God than the philosophers.

We have already given some proof for the first question. We had found that many of the theologians and the students of religion thoroughly believed that men everywhere were aware of God. Now let us see what the Bible has to say about the universality of man's awareness of some Super Being.

1. Miley: "Systematic Theology" Vol. I p.67 2. De Natura Decorum
"Systematic Theology" In. I

The Bible asserts that the awareness of God is universal. Most all of the writings of the Old Testament represents the spontaneous experience, and contains comparatively little reflection upon that experience. The only passages that shows the human mind turning back to ask the meaning of its practical feelings and beliefs are Isa. 40:66, in the Wisdom Literature, and a few of the Psalms.

The writers of the Old Testament never offered any proof of the existence of God. No one needed it. Their concern was to try to get people to come into a right relationship with God. The fool who "hath said in his heart there is no God" Psalms 14:1 and 53:1, and the wicked nations "that forget God" Psalms 9:17 are not atheists, but they are corrupt and neglect and reject the presence of God. The New Testament contains more reflection upon the inward content idea of God, but it does not contain any philosophical construction of the idea of God. "In the New Testament as well as the Old Testament the existence of God is taken for granted as the universal basis for all life and thought. Only in three passages of Paul's addresses to heathen audiences, do we find anything approaching a natural theology, and these are concerned rather with defining the nature of God than with proving his existence.

Paul says that the law of God is written upon the hearts of men. "The law written in the heart means an intuition of God and duty in the moral reason."¹ The great Apostle Paul would be capable of knowing this as anyone. He came in contact with men of all races. He had as much if not more spiritual insight into the relationship between man and God as anyone.

1. Miley: "Systematic Theology" Vol. I p. 69

As there is a necessary intuition of axiomatic aesthetic and moral truths, so is there a necessary intuition of a divine existence. "Thus they have both the holy aspiration and the sufficient response."¹ They are different ideas of God, but they all have some idea of the existence of God. The heathen ideas of God are very different from that of the philosophers. The rocks, brooks and such other things are gods to the heathen while the philosophers call their God, Force. "The deep thinking philosopher and the unthinking peasant travel along different roads in their search for God, but both alike are seeking him who alone can explain their problems and meet their respective needs. The tendency to worship some super human power is universal."²

There are some who are not willing to admit that the idea of God is intuitive. They generally hold that we get our idea of God by a natural deduction of reason. It is sometimes represented as the last and highest generalization of science. This generalization is possible only to cultivated minds.

Some regard the awareness of God as a result of reasoning. The awareness of God is something children and illiterates can hardly avoid and they need not be referred to constitution of nature. This does not give satisfactory reason for universality of the conviction of the existence of God. Our consciousness does not teach us that this is the ground of our faith in God. "We do not thus reason ourselves into the belief that there is a God, though the mass of the people are brought to this conclusion."³

1. Burrel: "Religions of the World" p. 309
2. Clarke: "The Ten Great Religions" Vol. I p.488
3. Hodge: "Systematic Theology" Vol. I p. 200

Reason does not account for the idea of God. It only gives the method by which it is confirmed and developed. The idea of God is given by intuition, but the idea grows by a process of reasoning. "While the existence of God may be an immediate datum of the moral and religious consciousness, it also be a legitimate subject for logical proofs. It is a truth in the affirmation of which the intuitive reason and the logical reason combine."¹

The idea of God which comes through intuition needs to be expanded. Men need to think upon this idea of God which they sense. We have a greater idea of God after years of study on the idea of God. "And so the evidence of God's existence grows upon us as the years escape. It intensifies as we study closely the mechanism of the universe. Then it is that the heavens become 'his open face' the trembling earth his footstool and mortal man his phenomenal masterpiece."²

There are some people who think that we do not get our idea of God through intuition or through a process of reasoning. They think that we get our idea of God through supernatural revelation preserved by tradition. They say the reason why the heathen believe in God is the fact that the idea has been handed down to them. When the knowledge of God began to die out God revealed himself to Abraham. They say that the more remote the people were from the Jews, the less they knew God.

1. Miley: "Systematic Theology" Vol. I p. 70
2. Fardoe: "Beyond The Ruts" p. 12

It is true that the people who lived farthest from the Jews knew God the least. They did not desire to worship God and follow his teachings like they should. They went away from God. However, they were aware of God. People can run away from God for a long time but will still be aware of God. The heathen who have been away from God a long time still sense God. "A revelation takes for granted that he to whom it is made has some knowledge of God, though it may enlarge and purify that knowledge."¹ "The voice of God must first be uttered in the soul."² "But this voice of the divine ego does not come to the consciousness of the individual ego, from without; rather does every external revelation presuppose already this inner one; there must echo out from within man something kindred to the outer revelation, in order to its being recognized and accepted as divine."³

It is true that God has revealed himself to man, and man's idea of God has developed as he has thought about God, but neither of them or both of them could account for the universality of the idea of God without a moral and religious nature in man to which the idea is native. "The idea of God does not wait for our reasoning processes. It springs into life before the logical faculty gets to work especially upon so high a theme. When we consider how early this idea rises in the mind, how persistently it holds its place through all conditions of the race, how it cleaves to humanity through all perversions and repugnances, we must think it an intuition of the moral reason."¹

It is very difficult to define God. Some of the titles given to God are definitions, but are not such in fact. When

1. H. B. Smith: "Faith and Philosophy" p. 18
2. Miley: "Systematic Theology" Vol. I p. 70
3. Wuttke: "Christian Ethics" Vol. II p. 103

Gos is called the Almighty, that only expresses his omnipotence, which is only one of his perfections. "A definition of God that shall be true to the truth of his being and character is a difficult attainment."¹

Even though it is difficult to define God we know that God is everywhere. The most ignorant can find him anywhere he goes. There was a black negro slave heard singing a good old hymn while he was working a thousand feet below the surface of the earth in the Mid-Lothian Mines in Virginia, by some men who came down from the North before the Civil War. This old blind negro slave enjoyed the blessings of God while he opened and closed the gate at intervals there a thousand feet beneath the surface of the earth seated upon a lump of coal. There was some sweet spirit within which helped him over the rough places of his life and made him contented and happy. The men heard the negro singing "And I, too, shall be dere in dat great getting up mornin' of the Lord."²

There were five young men who went far back in a cave in Kentucky and had a gracious time singing hymns and praying.

"God's footprints are in all the earth. His voice is in the spheres."³

"As the heart panteth for the water brooks so does the universal heart pant after God."⁴

1. Miley: "Systematic Theology" Vol. I p. 59
- 2.& 3. Pardoe: "Beyond the Ruts" pgs. 19 & 13
4. Burrel: "The Religions of the World" p. 309

GOD'S INTEREST IN MAN

God has always had an interest in man. He thought of man and had a marvelous place for him to live before he created man. At the time of man's creation, his place of existence and habitation was already prepared for him. All the natural resources of the earth were lying latent in the soil ready for him to apply his productive ability and obtain for himself everything to make life more abundant. Everything was at hand to sustain and build his physical, mental and spiritual energy. Air was here ready for his breathing, water to quench his thirst and cleanse his body, animals and plants to satisfy his hunger and give shelter to his body and beasts of burden to carry his loads. Minerals were bountiful to shape any kind of a machine and build any kind of tower. More than the necessities for mere existence were given. The blossoming of the flowers and the singing of the birds made life more enjoyable. Therefore, if man will look about him and see what God has given him he will have to say that God was interested in creating the world for man. "God saw¹ everything that he had made and behold it was very good."

After God had made a wonderful world in which man was to live he made a perfect structure called man. We do not realize what a marvelous creature man is until we make a study of the body of man. God made man in a way that man could use the things about him. His fingers and hands are able to turn the great stones in the high mountains into machinery. The mind of man has discovered a way to send messages in a moment to the ends of the earth. By the unique way man was created man has been able to do wonders. God created man in the best way possible. "So God creat-

1. Genesis 1:31

ed man in his own image, in the image of God created he him."¹

We can see that God was vitally interested in man when we think of the unique structure of man and look about in the world and see what a wonderful world in which we have to live. No wonder the Psalmist of old said, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.--- O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth."²

We have seen that God was interested in the creation of man and the world in which he was to live, but God has been far more interested in trying to get man to fellowship with him. God did no take but a week to create man and the world. God has been centuries trying to get man to fellowship with him. There are only a few chapters of the word of God that tell of the creation of man and the world, but a large portion of the Bible gives us a record of how God has been speaking to men and showing them his love.

From the very beginning, God spoke to man and when man did something he should not have, God asked him, "Where art thou?"³ When most all of the men on the earth became wicked he destroyed all of them but eight. God showed man that he was running the universe and that he wanted men to obey and fellowship with him. God showed man that he would be with him if he would trust in him by sending out Abraham and seeing him through. "Fear not Abram, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward."⁴

1. Genesis 1:27
2. Psalms 1:4, 5, 6 & 9
3. Genesis 3:9
4. Genesis 15:1

God saw man's need of law, so he called Moses, a man who was protected while a small child by being cradled in an ark of bulrushes in a river and who was brought up in Pharaoh's house and who was "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians",¹ up to Mt. Sinai and gave him laws for the people. These laws brought about a great advance in men's conceptions both of what is true and of what is right. "No doubt the sharp, ringing words in which these evils are forbidden in the Ten Commandments gave to Israel a clearer apprehension of the sins referred to than they had ever had before; and the manner in which they were grouped by the divine speaker brought into bold relief the chief elements of the moral law."² These laws have always been a guide for man. From the time they were given at Mt. Sinai to this present time have been in operation. Men have felt that they must obey the ten commandments, if they were to live rightly.

God has always cared for his people. He has always spoken to men to guide the people when the people were in need and would call upon him. He spoke to various ones between the time of Joshua and Samuel. The people to whom he spoke were called Judges. "God did not yield to this desire immediately but from time to time called forth special deliverers, whose work resembled that of a king. The judges however were not chosen from any one tribe, nor was there a regular succession of them."³

After God had appointed judges for several years the nations grew and the people stood in need of a king. When the people called upon God, he gave them a king. "Tomorrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that

1. Acts 7:21
2. "The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia" Vol. V p. 2945
3. Raven: "Old Testament Introduction" p. 160

he may save my people out of the hand of the philistines. For I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me." ¹
 When Saul disobeyed the Lord, God had another man to be anointed king. "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over israel? fill thy horn with oil and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons." ² God was with David in the battles, and in all his undertakings. David knew that the Lord was with him. When he faced the large Philistines he said, "And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's and he will give you into our hands." ³

The Lord graciously blessed the people of old. The Psalmist sang, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name." ⁴ "O sing unto the Lord a new song; for he hath done marvelous things." ⁵

When the people of Israel and Judah did not live as righteously as they should, and they began to take up with the things of the world more than they thought of righteous things God spoke to men who are known as prophets, and he told the prophets to warn the people of their wickedness. God told the prophets to tell the people to flee from their wickedness and return to God. "Therefore thus will do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." ⁶

Even though many of the people had forsaken God, he was very much interested in them. He always had some men to whom he would give a message. "Surely the Lord will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets." ⁷ When Judah forsook God and became a wicked nation God manifested himself to

1. I Sam. 9:16
2. I Sam. 16:1
3. I Sam. 17:47
4. Psalms 103:1
5. Psalms 98:1

Isaiah as a holy God. When Isiah saw that the Lord was holy and the whole earth was full of his glory he said, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts."¹ When Isiah heard the Lord asking who would go to prophesy he said, "Here am I; send me."²

When Israel became a idolatrous nation, and had turned from God, the Lord called Amos who was a prophet out of the prophetic order to tell the people to return to God and forsake their wickedness. Amos was only a shepherd of the sheep and a dresser of sycamore trees, but he had a divine call. "The lion hath roared who will not fear? the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy? And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go prophesy unto my people, Israel."³

After God had placed man in a wonderful world such as we have showed men that he would guide them aright and bless them if they put their trust in him; gave his laws to the people; appointed rulers; gave vital messages to the prophets, man would not obey God. But God still had an interest in mankind. He then showed his interest and love for men more than ever before. He sent his only Son into the world to show men how to live and to die for them.

We see God's deep interest in man when we think of him sparing not his own Son for man. Even though man would not let the Son of God be born in their houses or in hotels, God was interested enough to let his Son be born in a stable. The Son of God went about doing good. He administered to the poor, opened the eyes of the blind and the ears of the dumb, cleansed the lepers, and

1. Isaiah 6:5
2. Isaiah 6:8
3. Amos 3:8 & 7:15

helped all the unfortunate. He showed so much interest in men that he went about saying, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."¹ Even though men would not heed the word of the Son of God, and they sought to take his life, God spared not his Son from the death on the Cross. God was so interested in man that he gave his only begotten Son to shed his blood for the redemption of man.

After God gave his only begotten Son for the redemption of man, and to give man an example by which to follow, many men have turned a deaf ear to God. There have been nations that have turned from God and become self-centered. Again God has been interested in man and has inspired men to go about telling the good news. God was with Martin Luther through all his trials and difficulties. When Old England became indifferent toward God he spoke to John Wesley and inspired him to bring the people back to the Father above.

If men would only see the interest God has for them they would want to fellowship with him. Men everywhere should try to see in some measure how God has been interested in man. Men everywhere should cry out like the Psalmist of old did when he said, "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works, to the children of men."²

God has spoken to Abraham, Moses, the judges, kings, the prophets and the disciples of his Son, and has given his Son for the purpose of trying to get men to fellowship with him. We find the Apostle Paul saying that as God gave his Son to men so will he

1. Matthew: 8:20
2. Psalms 107:8

give freely his love to them. "He that spared not his own Son
but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also
freely give us all things."¹

IF GOD HAS A DEEP INTEREST IN MEN WHY DO MANY MEN GROPE IN DARKNESS

From what was said in the preceding chapter it would seem that all men enjoy life abundant and no one would grope in darkness. For we found that God has been and is vitally concerned about man. He was interested in man before he placed him here, that he has been all down through history revealing his love to men. We also found that God has written his law upon the hearts of all men everywhere and men everywhere are aware of God.

There have been thousands who have had life abundant, and there are many at this present time who are living a happy life. The reason why people in the past have enjoyed, and the reason why there is a great number enjoying life now is the fact that they have accepted the way of life. They have accepted the Son of God who is the way of life. "I am the way."¹ They have had to give their lives over to Jesus Christ. "If any man would come after me let him deny himself and follow me."² We have to accept Jesus Christ if we get a happy life from God and if we fellowship with him. God's word teaches, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me."³

While there have been thousands and there are thousands enjoying life and fellowship with God there have been millions and are millions who are still groping in darkness. Even though Christ came in order that all men might be saved there are thousands who have never heard of him. They are walking in darkness. They cry out for God, and do all they know, but they do not find peace and satisfaction. They give all their energy seeking peace, but they

1. John 14:6
2. Mark 2:34
3. John 14:6

do not find peace. There have been and there are thousands crying out, "O, where may I find him?" They climb the steeps, journey over the plains, and cross the streams seeking peace in God, but they do not find it. (Proof will be given to these facts in a later chapter.)

The question arises why do not the heathen people get peace when they call upon their God? Why does their God or gods not answer before the mother throws her baby in the mouth of the wild animal? Why does he not answer her and give her peace when she throws the baby in the mouth of the wild animal? We remember that Abraham felt that he would offer up his son and he did not have to kill him. God intervened.¹ Let us remember also what kind of God the heathen mother was seeking and what kind Abraham was following. The heathen woman's god was dumb. She had a man made God. There was nothing infinite about her God. A finite creature made it. Abraham's God was infinite. He could answer the prayer of a finite creature. The woman who cries out to her heathen god is like the worshippers of Baal who cried out to him and did not get an answer.² When Elijah cried unto his God his God answered immediately. Therefore, if the heathen woman and the worshippers of Baal do not get answers from their god and Abraham and Elijah do get answers when they pray to their God the conception and idea of God must determine whether or not men get answers to their prayers. If men have for their conception a Holy, Merciful Eternal, Heavenly Father they can expect answers from their prayers. They have a knowledge of a prayer answering God. When men think of God as being holy they will feel like Isaiah did when he saw the Holy One. They will feel that they must be holy and will

1. Genesis 22
2. Kings 18

want to work for God. When men think of God as Almighty, and all Powerful they can put their trust in him and rely upon him and have faith that God will answer. Men have faith for answers to their prayers according to their knowledge of God. "Some degree of knowledge is necessary to the existence of faith, and increase of knowledge furnishes favorable ground for an increase of faith, since God is an ideal that will stand investigation, and increasing knowledge of him tends to intensify the spirit of trustful self-surrender."¹ Since knowledge determines man's faith in God we can see why the people who have not heard of the Christian conception of God do not get answers to their prayers, and peace in their souls. For the people who are living in the heathen lands do not pray to a god powerful enough to hear their prayers and give them peace and satisfaction.

Someone might ask why do not the heathen know how to approach God? Why do they not know how to approach God like the people who live in the Christian lands? We answer by saying that they have not heard the way Christian people approach God. They do not know that he is a Loving, Heavenly Father, because they have never heard that God is a Loving Heavenly Father.

The question might be asked why have they not heard of the Christian conception of God? We answer by saying that the people in the heathen lands did ~~not~~ know God at one time, but they did not honor him. They did not appreciate what God was doing for them. They made their own gods, and chose to live without the true God. When the people chose to live without the true God he gave them up. This is verified by Scripture. "Because that,

1. Sheldon: "System of Christian Doctrine" pg. 440.

When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like a corruptible man, and to birds, and four ~~fe~~ footed beasts and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them¹ up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts."

Now we can see why men grope in darkness even though God does love them. They chose to live without God. God was interested as much to keep all men believing, serving, and honoring him as much as he was to keep the people of Israel and Judah in close touch with him. He desired that man from the beginning of time would serve him. When Adam got out of step he asked him, "Where art thou." He destroyed all the people but eight when he sent the flood, because men forsook him. He wanted all people to know of him. They did know of him after the flood, but some of the people did not honor God. God said that his spirit would not always strive with man. Therefore those people who went into other countries and did not take God with them were without God and all their descendants have been groping in darkness unless missionaries have gone into those lands or they have come to Christian lands. There has been no record where God has manifested himself to people in heathen lands like he manifested himself in Christ. Men must take the Christian conception of God to them if they get it. They will continue to grope in darkness unless men take it to them. Jesus said that men were the salt of the earth or saviors of men and the light of the world.

1. Romans 1:21-24

Therefore there are millions who are groping in darkness even though God is vitally interested in all men because men chose darkness rather than light.

The question might be asked, "Why are there people living in darkness in South America and a few other countries who have once heard of Christ?" There are hundreds of people living in South America who are groping in darkness. Many of them are ignorant and many are longing to be made whole. There are various reasons why those people are groping in darkness, but the principle reason is the fact that they did not use the light they had. Jesus said that when men were no longer saviours of they would be cast out and be trodden under foot of men.¹ The priest have told the people what to believe and have kept the lay people ignorant. The priest have exalted themselves and as a result they have been humbled. They do not have any message from God to give the people. The people go through a form like Martin Luther did before he was saved by exercising faith. The self-seeking priests and the ignorant of the lay people have distorted the way of salvation given by Jesus. They chose their own selfish way of interpreting the way of salvation that Jesus gave. They try to reach God and obtain peace by their works and going through certain ceremonies. They are deprived of knowing how to get peace and satisfaction through faith. "An eminent representative of Roman Catholic theology must be regarded as greatly distorting the true notion of faith, when he says that its simple assent of mind to whatever God proposes to us as an ob-

1. Matthew 5:13

ject of belief, whether it is understood by us or not, and is better defined by ignorance than by knowledge. The truth is, faith denotes a fundamental bearing of the moral personality toward God, a trustful self-surrender of a human to a Divine Person, rather than an assent to enigmas, and is in intimate association with knowledge."¹

Then we can see why men are groping in darkness who have once known the way to God through Jesus Christ that live in South America and other places by the way the self-seeking priest and ignorant lay people have distorted the plan of salvation Jesus made. The people have lost the way and they are groping in darkness trying to find peace and happiness. Therefore we can say that God is interested in those people in South America and other countries even though they are groping in darkness. He provided a plan of salvation for them, but they distorted the conception of it.

There are men who are living in countries where there are many Christian churches and Christian ministers who really know God that are groping in darkness. At least they do not know the abundant life in Christ. There are thousands of men living in Christian countries who live like beasts of the field. Many of them live far worse. They have to be locked up and guarded by other men.

The man who hears the Christian minister preach a good sermon on the love of God might ask, "Why am I not enjoying life here in God's world if God loves me as the minister says?" The man who has committed some crime and has been sent to prison

1. Sheldon: "System of Christian Doctrine" p. 440.

and when he thinks of his ruined condition he asks, "If God is love like the Christian people say he is, why has he let me come into this place?"

The man who heard sermons by Christian ministers on love and wonders why he is not enjoying life here in God's good world has failed to accept the God of Love and Mercy. The fact that he has not committed himself to God is the reason why he is not enjoying the abundant life. Men cannot live the abundant life without God. The Son of God said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."¹ The Apostle Paul who was a great leader of his day knew there was no way to live a happy life than to have God in his life. He had tried living a life without Jesus Christ, but when he found Jesus he said, "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."² "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."³

If the man who hears the sermons on love and mercy of God and believes that God is a God of love and mercy ~~will~~ but does not commit himself to God he will never enjoy the fellowship with God and the abundant life. It is true that the Word of God says that God has great love and mercy for the people and it also says that men must come to him if they are to live the abundant life. When God sent the prophets to the people of the nations which were becoming indifferent toward him, he did not tell the prophets that all the people would be saved if they went

1. Matthew 4:4
2. I Cor. 3:11
3. Phil. 1:21

to them. The prophets did not tell the people that by their coming that they would all come back to God. God called Israel to return unto him, "If thou wilt return, O Israel, sayeth the Lord, return unto me."¹ Amos told the people to "Seek the Lord, and ye shall live."² When God sent his only begotten son into the world, he did not say that all men would be saved, but he said that all could be saved. Jesus went about doing good, and saying, "The foxes have holes, and the birds have nests, but the Son of man has no where to lay his head."³ He did not say that all people with whom he came in contact would hear him and be saved. He did say, "Come unto me", "Believe." There were a host of people who came in contact with Jesus ministry that never enjoyed the abundant life. The reason why they did not enjoy the abundant life was the fact that they failed to accept him. So it is with the man who goes to a Christian church and does not accept Christ. If he feels that God is knocking at his heart and knows that the best thing for him to do is to accept Christ, but does not accept him, he will remain in darkness. He must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. A feeling and an idea about Christ is not trusting in him. Sheldon in writing on faith says, "In its religious use the term denotes not merely intellectual assent, but also self-committal or trust,--- in its specifically Christian sense it is an attitude of trust and self surrender toward God as revealed in Jesus Christ."⁴

1. Jer. 4:1

2. Amos 4:1

3. Matt. 8:20

4. Sheldon: "System of Christian Doctrine" p. 440-441.

Therefore the man who hears sermons on the love and mercy of God and does not commit himself to Jesus Christ and wonders why he is not enjoying the abundant life will never have the joy of the Lord in his soul until he accepts and fully trusts in Jesus Christ. God had~~ada~~ a deep interest in man when he sent his son into this world to die for man, and it is his plan for man to accept him if they get the benefit out of the coming of Jesus. This is verified by the occasion of the rich man who came to Jesus desiring to have eternal life. The rich man did not get eternal life because he would not give up his riches and trust in Christ. He had to think more of Christ than his riches if he was to get eternal life from Jesus. All men must have utter faith and trust in Jesus or they will go through life groping in darkness like the rich man. "The specifically Christian faith is doubtless incumbent upon those who have the opportunity to exercise it and is universally a requisite for saved men, in the sense that sooner or later everyone of them must confess the mediatorial position and lordship of Jesus Christ."¹

The man who lives in a Christian country and finds himself in prison in a ruined condition has rejected the God offered to him and has given himself to the evil one. He has become a seeker after evil instead of righteousness. He has reaped evil. He could have reaped a happy life if he would have sought after the good things of life.

1. Sheldon: "System of Christian Doctrine" p. 238.

It is God's law that man will reap what he sows. We should not expect to live the abundant life and leave God out of our lives and give our lives to the evil one. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."¹ Therefore the man who finds himself in a ruined condition morally has chosen the wrong things in life. God was interested in giving him a good life. The man could have had it if he would have chosen it. The Psalmist said of the righteous man, "Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."²

From the discussion of the heathen the Catholics in South America and the man who goes to Christian churches and does not accept Christ and the man who lives in a Christian country and finds himself in a ruined condition morally, we have found the reason the heathen are without God and men grope in darkness even though God is interested in them. We found that God has manifested his interest to all men, but many men would not accept his interest. The reason the heathen are without God is the fact they choose to live without God. The reason many of the Roman Catholics in South America and other countries are groping in darkness is the fact that they had rather have their own conception of salvation than that given by Jesus. We found the men who grope in darkness in a Christian nation where many people rejoice in the Lord was the fact that they fail to

1. Gal. 6:7
2. Psalms 1:3

accept the Christian way of life.

The Psalmist knew that God was interested in all men and knew that none needed to grope in darkness when he said "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."¹

Jesus tells us that God is interested in man and that man still gropes in darkness. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"²

If men would stop to realize how God has shown his interest to them they would want to fellowship with God. They would not grope in darkness, but say with the Psalmist, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name."³

1. Psalms 107:8 & 9
2. Matthew 23:37
3. Psalms 103:1

IF ALL MEN SENSE GOD, WHY ARE THERE SO FEW WHO HAVE THE
CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF GOD?

We have found that men everywhere sensed God. We found that the most learned and the most ignorant were aware of God. We found the law of God to be written upon the hearts of men. When we read the statistics of the adherents of the religions of the world we find there are thousands who do not have the Christian conception of God. Now the question arises, "Why do not all men have the Christian conception of God since all men are aware of God?"

We can answer by saying that men who do not have the Christian conception of God have not heard of Christ. Then the questions arise, "Why have the people in the heathen lands not heard of Christ?" "Are not the souls of the people of the heathen lands as valuable as the souls of Judea?" We are told that there is no respect of persons with God. The fact that Jesus did not go to all the world verifies the fact that there is no respect of persons with God. If God had sent Jesus into all the countries he would have respected the people who live in the heathen lands more than he would have those in the lands where they were looking for a Messiah. The people in the heathen lands had forsaken God and had set up their own god, while the people in Judea were still holding on to the God of Israel and looking for Jesus. We get from the parable of the talents that God gives to those who appreciate what he gives them, and

takes away from those who do not appreciate what he has given them. Therefore, the people who left God and built nations without God have had descendants that have groped in darkness and have not had any light given them only through other men.

The people would not have received Jesus in the heathen lands. They were not ready for him. Many of the people who were living in the land where they were expecting Jesus did not receive him. The people with whom Jesus mixed and mingled could not receive all of Jesus' teachings at first. "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot receive them now." Jesus also said that he did not cast pearls before swine. The gospel of Jesus Christ is too precious to be treated lightly. Some missionaries have spent years in the heathen land and they have brought only a few out of darkness unto light. Therefore it was needful to go among the people who would receive him most.

We are told by the Apostle Paul that God is not mocked and what a man sows he is going to reap. When people go away from God he does not bring them back unless they manifest an interest in getting back. We found that God is vitally interested in man and wants a fellowship with man. We also found that all people once knew God and when they chose to live without God he gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts. Therefore when God sent his Son to the world he sent him to the people who had not gone after other gods, and not to the people who set up their own god of gods.

However, God has an interest in the heathen. He wants men to take Jesus to the people who live in heathen lands. His son said that all of his disciples were the salt of the earth, and if they were not the salt of the earth they would be cast out. We get from that lesson what Jesus meant by taking the gospel to heathen lands as well as spreading it throughout the land where the gospel is already known. The last words that Jesus said were a command that people would scatter the "good news" to all the people.

Now the reason there are so few people who have the Christian conception of God even though all people do sense God is the fact that the ancestors of the heathens left God and God expects man to take a knowledge to them, and men have failed to take the gospel to them.

There are various reasons why men have not carried the Christian conception to all the people. The first reason is that there have not been men enough who have had the faith to go into the lands where there is danger and where people are superstitious. A second reason is that it is difficult to establish a mission in a field where christian people have not gone. A third reason is that men have not given of their means to support the mission cause. A fourth reason is that have not been enough earnest prayers to have more people sent more money given and to get the heathen to be more responsive.

FRUITS OF THE ETHNIC CONCEPTION OF GOD

"BY their fruits ye shall know them." There is no better way to know the satisfaction the people get from their god or gods who only have ethnic conceptions of God than to examine the fruits of their religions. "A tree is known by its fruits."

In pointing out the fruits of the ethnic conceptions of God we will obtain two important values. First, we will be able to see why the people who only have ethnic conceptions of God do not get peace and satisfaction from God. Secondly, we will see the importance of having the Christian conception of God.

In finding the fruits of the ethnic conception of God we must first find out what good they get from God and secondly we must find out the reason for their failing to get what they desire from God.

The people who only have the ethnic conceptions of God do get some good from their worship and religion. They have some truth in their religion. "We find, therefore, a modicum of truth in every one of the religions of the globe. It is by no means necessary that in our effort to exalt Christianity as the one true religion we should characterize all other systems as false" in toto. "We found in the first chapter that the people who had ethnic conceptions of God were aware of God. They searched for God, and hope to find satisfaction sometime by diligently searching after God. "If I mistake not we have discovered in each of the sacred books a silhouette, if nothing more of the face of God.

The people who have the ethnic conceptions of God have some code of morals. Burel says that a moral code is the resultant of a belief in God. Everyone who believes in God has some kind of morals. "The good side in the teaching of Confucius is his admirable morality."¹ "The fundamental principals of virtue are the common heritage of all races." Man instinctively feels that it is wrong to do wrong, and it is the best to do right.

The adherants of the ethnic religions have a longing to be made whole. They feel that there is something that could make them whole. They have a feeling that some one will deliver them from the world. "We thankfully recognize that souls of men in the pagan world, surrounded as they were by perplexities and dangers, were yet enabled to reflect as from the dim surface of silver, some image of what was divine and true we hail with great and eloquent Bousset, 'The Christianity of nature.'²"

While the people who only have the ethnic conception of God have some truth in their religion they are lacking in the thing that will bring permanent satisfaction. That awareness of God and that longing for the delivery and all their diligent seeking will not bring peace to their hearts. James Freeman Clarke is summing up what he has to say about the ethnic religions says that in every instance we can touch with our finger the weak and empty side.³

1. Clarke: "Ten Great Religions"
2. Burrel: "The Religions of the World"
3. Farrer: "Seekers after God"

The conception of God held by the adherents of the ethnic religions have the wrong conception of God. They do not look on God as a Merciful, Loving, Heavenly Father. Instead they look on God as one who is far off blessing in some visible place or one who is near dwelling in some object. Everyone of the ethnic religions have a different conception of God. Some religions have one and some have many. But none of them have "God with us."

When the heathens pray to their gods they feel no assurance that he or they are going to answer. If they cry all day and tear themselves to pieces they do not feel God answering them. The worshippers of Baal did this, but they prayed in vain.

When the people who only have ethnic conceptions of God worship they fail to sense the divine presence of God. There was a woman came to one of the fine heathen temples in India to worship. She was anxious to sense the presence of God. Her soul was groping out after God. She needed peace in her heart. She began to cry out to the god that was placed in the temple. She struggled with all her might to have the blessings of God upon her soul. She beat her hand on the altar until her hand was stained with blood, but failed to get satisfaction. She thought she would have to give up in despair, but she did not see how she could go away without having the blessings of her god upon her. At last a Christian missionary walked into the temple where she was and asked her what she was doing there,

She said that she wanted to have peace in her heart and wanted her god to bless her. He asked her if she wanted his god to give her peace and bless her. She wanted to know who his God was, and asked him to tell her. The missionary immediately told her about his God. When he told her the simple story of the God-man, Jesus, she jumped to her feet praising the Lord for the blessings and peace Jesus had given her.

When the people of the ethnic religions serve they do not feel they are rewarded with the blessings of God. They walk for miles through the hot dusty deserts, cross the streams, and climb the rugged mountains to their holy places hoping to find a deeper knowledge of their god or gods, but they go away disappointed. They throw their babies in the mouths of some wild animal but they fail to get a blessing. Some try to get satisfaction by punishing their bodies. They drive nails through planks and lay on the sharp nails hoping to get peace from their god or gods, but they do not get peace.

We have found that the people of the ethnic religions need a different god; fail to reach God in their prayers; fail to sense his presence when they worship; and fail to enjoy the blessings of God by serving him.

There are other reasons why the people of the ethnic religions need a different god. They need a god who will redeem them. It is true that they commit themselves to certain principles, and get temporary satisfaction, but they do not get their lives transformed. "In the heathen religion there is no such changes in men who, from having led lives of profligacy

and irreligious, have turned at once into paths of righteousness, have turned their propensities and submitted themselves to the feeble law of love. "When the heathens seek their god or gods to try to get rid of their sins they are left in increased agony. Many times they commit suicide. There is a place in India where there is a very deep gorge, a double railroad track and a deep pond of water. There have been thousands who have gone to this spot and ended their lives at one of the places mentioned, because they failed to find satisfaction in seeking God. There was a Christian missionary heard about this place where people ended their lives. He put up a sign above the dangerous places, "Come to see me before you take your life." Within one years time he had over three hundred people to visit him. After he told them the simple story of Jesus Christ they found peace and went back to their homes.

No ethnic religion presents to us a man or savior who is complete and rounded character, judged from a human standpoint. "Mohammed utterly failed on the ethical life. His life was so marred by coarse sensuality, weak effeminacy, heartless cruelty, unblushing hypocrisy and heaven dying blasphemy that for his stupendous achievements and his sublime and persistent self-assertion, he would long since have been beneath the contempt of mankind. Confucius appears to have been above reproach in morals and that amid profligacy; but he was cold in temperament, unsympathetic, and slavishly utilitarian in his teachings. He seems to have troubled himself but slightly if

at all, about the wants of the poor and the suffering; he taught no doctrine of self sacrifice for the ignorant and the unworthy. Gautama an almost sinless man had no glad tidings for the sorrowing; no encouragement for the weary and th¹ heavy laden."

The adherents of the ethnic religions like motive power. They do not have the Spirit of the Lord upon them. They do not have the inner urge to do right. Many of them have a desire to live holy, but they do not have anything to prompt them to be holy. Paul recognized the religious nature of the heathen. He also knew that they did not get very much power from God, because they ignorantly worshipped God. "As I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD," whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you."² The lack of the motive power is one of the greatest weak points of the ethnic religions. They have a deep desire to be religious, but they fail to get out of their religion what they want. They fail in their standards of ethics, because they do not have anything to prompt them to do right. They are without the power of the presence of God, living in their souls.

The lack of urge and motive power in the ethnic religions keeps the adherents of the ethnic religions from spreading their beliefs and religions to the uttermost parts of the earth. The people are continually seeking to be made whole, and conse-

quently they do not have any urge to spread their beliefs. They do not have the compassionate love dwelling in their hearts and lives to suffer for others. They do not have anything tangible and evident to give to others.

The ethnic religions have but little success in converting Christians or any other religion to their religion. They do not try in a great way. "Mohammedism is spreading in Africa and India, but it makes no effort of any significance to convert America, Europe or Japan. The bounds of Confucianism are contracting. Shintoism has withdrawn from the lists as a religion and claims now only the place of a court ceremonial and a burial rite. Hinduism is geographically limited save as a philosophy by its principle of caste and Buddhism is rejected in Japan. Zoroastrianism, one of the worthiest of the ancient religions has almost vanished in the land of its origin, and numbers comparatively few adherents in India."¹

None of the ethnic religions are able to believe on their founder or anything and be saved from their sins. None of them have any solution to give to the inquiring soul that will give him satisfaction. The solution some of the ethnic religions give are the following: Zoroastrianism-Repeat the paet; Brahamanism-Be asorbed in Brahamanism; Buddhism-Be sublimely indifferent to everything; the religion of Greece-No assurance; Confucianism-Be a good citizen of the kingdom of China; Norse-Mythology- Fight the good fight right or wrong.

1. Ellinwood: "Oriental Religions & Christianity"

Therefore, if the people who only have the ethnic conceptions of God fail to reach God in the prayers; fail to sense his presence when they worship; fail to enjoy the blessings of God by serving him; have no redeemer; have no motive power; lack a universal outlook on the world; and do not have a solution to give to the enquiring soul they are standing in need of a conception of God that will give them peace in their souls, sense of the Divine presence, and fellowship with a prayer answering God. "The failures of the ethnic faiths no less than their aspirations show how great is man's need of Christ, and how utterly ~~u~~ unable imagination has proved itself to be even to conceive of such an ideal character as he revealed to us in the full light of history and in the wonder-working effects of his character upon the lives and hearts of those who then and in all ages since have in him received life an¹ light."

There are millions of people who only have an ethnic conception of God that are crying, "O, that I knew where to find him." They want to be made whole.

1. "International Standard Bible Encyclopedia" Vol. II p. 694

THE VALUE OF THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF GOD

The Christian conception of God is of great value if those who have the Christian conception get peace and satisfaction in their search for God. For we found that the reason why the men of the ethnic religions did not find peace ~~was~~ and get satisfaction out of their religions was the fact that they had the wrong conception of God. They did not know how to approach Him. We found that they were desirous to find peace in God and have his blessings upon them, but their god or gods did not answer them. They prayed and sought a god or gods that men considered as god or gods.

We found in the first chapter that every religion had a god or gods. It is very important what kind of conception of God we have. If we have a god that man only considered as a god we will not get anymore results from the man made god than asking a man to do what you cannot. If we have the conception of God who is the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ we will get help from him. We will know how to approach a God who answers. The people of the ethnic religions do not know how to approach a prayer answering God, because they have not heard about him.

When we have the Christian conception of God we will be able to do things that man cannot do for us or any man made god or gods. We will have a different conception of God. Instead of praying to an animal, brook, a stone, wood or some other dumb creature or object we will be praying to a Loving Heavenly Father.

We get the Christian conception of God from Jesus. We get it from what he said about God and from His own life. Jesus called God, Father. That gives us a very different conception of God from that of the ethnic conception. We know that God is a God of love by what Jesus said, "He that has seen me hath seen the Father."¹ If Jesus is like God God must be a God of love, because Jesus manifested love to those to whom he came in contact. Since God is like Jesus God must be a God of mercy. We know that God is a Holy God because Jesus lived a holy life. The governor who tried Jesus could not find a fault in him. We get from the teachings of Jesus that God is a God of Justice.

By having such a conception of God as Christ gave we are made to believe that the soul that gropes after God is able to find satisfaction.

Let us look at some of the ways the adherents of the Christian religion have of finding satisfaction, and how everyone in every nation may have perfect peace, joy and happiness.

When the adherents of the Christian religion pray to their God they get the assurance that he is a prayer answering God. He has invited everyone to ask him for their needs. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."² "If ye shall ask anything in my name I will do it."³ When Peter was put into jail prayer was offered by Christians to God and he was released.

1. John 14:9
2. Matt. 11:28
3. John 14:14

When the adherents of the Christian religion serve their God their lives are enriched. The greatest exponent of the Christian religion said that whatsoever we sow we will reap. He knew there was satisfaction and great joy in serving the Christian God, and the more he served God the greater blessings he received. He was cast into prison, mocked, became weary in body, but he said, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." The Christian missionary counts it all a great joy to forsake friends and country and go into the most difficult places to spread the "good news" of the gospel of their religion.

When people who are burdened with sin look to God the Father of Jesus Christ they are able to believe that God will take away their sins. They remember that Jesus came to "seek and to save." They seek the God that gave His Son to die on the Cross of Calvary and shed his blood to take away their sins. It is only the blood that can take away the sins of men.

The sense of a man who has the Christian conception of God is very much different from that of the man who has the ethnic conception of God. We saw in the preceding chapter where a woman was crying out to her God in a heathen temple and had to give up in despair. We can see a very much different picture of a Samaritan woman who came to Jesus at Jacob's well. Instead of her crying out to God for a long

1. Phil. 1:21

time in vain, she was surprised to know that she could be made whole within a short time, and have fellowship with Jesus.

The faith that men who have the Christian conception of God have in seeking and asking their God for forgiveness of their sins is one of the greatest virtues of the Christian religion. The redemption that men are able to get when they trust in the Christ of Calvary is a virtue of the Christian religion that none of the ethnic religions have. We found in the preceding chapter that none of the ethnic religions give a plan whereby men are able to get their sins forgiven.

Men of the lowest estate have been forgiven of their sins and made whole by having believed and trusted in the God that Jesus exemplified. Thousands have said, "I was once blind but now I see." "Under Christian influence we have seen African savages transformed to t trustable, humane and loving disciple. Whole races like Northmen, have been turned from savagery and made peaceable and earnest followers of the Christian religion."¹

"In vain had guilty men, groping under the burden of their guilt, looked elsewhere for deliverance; in vain had their labors before their idols and sought council at their oracles; the gods were dumb, the oracles were silent, there

1. Speer: "The light of the World."

nor answer."¹ The men of ethnic religions do not have their burdens of sin rolled away because they do not know of the blessed scenes of Calvary.

The value of the conception of God that was manifested on the Cross of Calvary is very much different from the conception of God manifest on the wall in a heathen temple or in some dumb stone, or in some animal. When men looked on the scene of the Cross of Calvary and believe that scene was made for them they will be made whole. They will have their sins forgiven, peace in their hearts, love in their souls, and know that the blessing of God are good enough for everyone.

The men who had the blood of Jesus Christ applied to their hearts are constrained to picture the scene to all the people with whom they come in contact. They gladly respond to what their savior commanded, "Go ye therefore, and teach of nations."² "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."³ Their joy is to try to get someone else to know Christ. They are convinced that they help everyone they must help him or her to become a follower of the Nazarene or become a better follower.

Another great value of the Christian conception of God is that it is adapted for all people. All people can believe in a God that Jesus exemplified. For all men want to see the God that will forgive their sins, give peace and their hearts and love in their souls. We found that no one of the ethnic religions would do for all people in all the country. The ~~same~~ ethics and moral ideas of anyone of the ethnic religions

1. Burrel: "The Religions of the World" p. 126
 2. Matt. 28:19
 3. Mark 16:15

would not do for the people all over the world. God gave his Son for the whole world, and everyone will believe in him can have peace and happiness.

When men who have the Christian conception of God and who have experienced him know the conditions which exist in the heathen lands they will either go to tell the people the good news or give a better means to help someone else to go. The men who have the love of God dwelling in their hearts go to the countries where men are groping in darkness will have something to give the men in darkness that will turn their darkness into light. They will have a light to present to the people in darkness instead of some code of morals and methods. We found that the adherents of some religions resent a code of ethics given by some other religion. Most of the ethnic religions have a fair degree of ethics and morals, but neither one of the ethnic religions have ethics or morals suitable for the people of the whole world. No code of ethic alone will get man in vital relationship with God. It is Christ and only him that can lead men to God. He is the only one who will satisfy their needs. He will give them a motive to do the right thing. Ethics and morals are good standards but they will not give man the power to do right. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."¹

1. Romans: 1:16

When men find something that will satisfy every need of every individual they will tell men about it. Men who have the Christian conception of God are telling about his love all over the world. They find the abundant life in spreading the gospel of the Christian religion to the places where men are in darkness. When men do not have the Christian conception of God they do not have any incentive to tell others about God, because they are always trying to find peace in their own souls.

Christianity does satisfy the needs of the people the world over, because it has been accepted and has been a great blessing to thousands of people in heathen lands. It has gone into lands where there are other religions. "Christianity is moving out over all the earth with steadily increasing power, with every multiplied agencies with every enlarged devotion, and with open and undiscourageable purpose to conquer the world. Whenever it has come into contact with natural religion it has assimilated and elevated it."¹

If the Christian religion is adequate for a universal religion it must be adequate for all the needs of man. It must give satisfaction to all the needs of man. We found in the study of the ethnic religions that there was something good in all of them. Christianity does not discredit any of the virtues of the ethnic religions, but accepts them. Christianity has all the good points of all the ethnic religions. It has the virtues of which the ethnic religions are lacking.

1. Clarke: "Ten Great Religions of the World" p. 505

Christianity gives fullness to the life of man; it is a pleroma. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."¹ "Christianity differs from all religions in this that is a pleroma, or fullness of knowledge."²

The adherents of Christian religion have a love for the poor, the downtrodden, the blind, the lame, and all the unfortunates. Their saviour went about healing the sick, opening the eyes of the blind and the ears of the dumb, and administering to the poor. The people who have the Christian conception of God follow their example. "Not in the past, but in the present glorious, not in the future, that I cannot span, living and breathing, over death victorious, my God --- my Brother man."³

When men look up on their God as one who loves the poor and all unfortunates they feel that they must be a friend to everyone. Whenever, men who have the Christian conception of God have gone they have taken love, had sympathy, and showed kindness to all those to whom they have come in contact. "The path of the gospel on history is marked on either side with monuments with of love and kindness, it has relieved the poor and suffering, enlightened the ignorant and helped the downtrodden to their feet."⁴

Men who have the Christian conception of God are able to live among other men in peace and harmony. They treat their fellow men as they ~~they~~ would want their fellow men to treat

1. John 10:10
2. Clarke: "Ten Great Religions of the World"
3. Ivan Adair: "Real Presence"
4. Hill: "The World's Great Religions, Poetry" p. 283
4. Burrell: "The Religions of the World"

them. When men who have the Christian conception of God live like their God prompts them to live love, peace and happiness will avail in their community instead of pride, jealousy, strife and anger. When men have God in their lives and they live like God prompts them to live, then they can expect to build nations that will stand. "For he has said, I will not leave thee, nor forsake thee."¹

We have seen that the people who have the Christian conception of God get assurance that God is going to hear their prayers when they approach him in prayer; they feel the blessings of God upon them when they serve him; they are able to get rid of their sins when they repent; they get satisfaction from their God; they are constrained to take what they have gotten from God to others; they have a love for all the unfortunate; they are able to live among their fellow men in harmony; and they get life abundant and life eternal from God.

We must be convinced that the Christian conception is of great value when men get such results as above mentioned from their God. They must have the true conception of Christ and the true religion. "The true religion sprung from God above, It must be like her fountain."² Other religions are defective and erroneous, ours is perfect and true, their system was esoteric, ours is universal; theirs temporary and for the few, ours eternal and for the race; they in their

1. Hebrews 13:5
2. Burrell: "The World's Great Religion"

popularity could barely found a school, Christ from his
cross rules the world."¹

"If Jesus Christ is a god, - and the only god, - I
swear I will follow him through heaven and hell, the earth,
the sea, and the air!", says the man who was a heathen but
is now a Christian.

"For him shall endless prayer be made,
And princess throng to crown his head;
His name, like sweet perfume, shall rise
With every morning sacrifice.

"Let every creature rise and bring
Peculiar honors to our King,
Angels descend with songs again,³
And earth repeat the loud amen."

1. Burrel: "The Religions of the World" p. 316
2. Richard Watson:Gilder: "The Song of the Heathen",
found in "The World's Great Religious Poetry" by
Caroline Hill. p. 323
3. Burrel: "The Religions of the World"

- Ten Great Religions, James Freeman Clarke - Houghton Mifflin Company, New York 1913
- The Religions of the World, Burrell, David James- Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 1918
- The Philosophy of Religion, George Galloway- Charles Scribner's Sons 1923
- Systematic Theology, Charles Hodge- Charles Scribner's Sons 1871-1923
- The Grounds of Theistic And Christian Belief, George Park Fisher- Charles Scribner's Sons 1883
- Christus Auctor, Warren A. Chandler- Publishing House of M.E. Church 1930
- The Paths that Lead To God, Wilbur Fisk Tillett- Cokesbury Press 1926
- Systematic Theology, I, Miley, New York, Eaton & Mains - 1892
- Philosophy of Theism, Borden P. Bowne- Harper & Bros. - 1887 I&II
- Systematic Theology, Miner Raymond- New York; Philip & Hunt 1877
- Beyond The Ruts, Hiler C. Pardue - New York; Hunt & Mains 1891
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, The Howard Service Co. 1932
- The Story of Religion, C. F. Potter; Garden City Pub. Co. 1929
- Old Testament Introduction, John H. Raden, Fleming H. Ravell Co. 1910
- The World's Greatest Religious Poetry, Caroline Hill, The MacMillan Company 1928
- Moral Leadership in Ministry, Eadward Keddey
- The Religion of Mankind, Soper Abindon Press 1921
- The History of Religion II Vols. Scribners 1919
- The Christ of the Indian Road, E. Stanley Jones Abingdon Press 1927
- Menzies: "History of Religion" Scribners 1918
- Hume: "The Living Religions" Scribners 1924
- Hopkins: "History of Religions" MacMillan 1909
- Breasted: "History of Egypt" Scribners