

THE DEITY OF GOD

PART ONE

THE ONLY TRUE GOD

THE great French composer, Charles Gounod, once paid a generous tribute to his Austrian counterpart, Mozart. Gounod remarked, "When I was twenty, I used to say, 'I.' When I was thirty, I said, 'I and Mozart.' When I was forty, I said, 'Mozart and I.' But now I am sixty, I say, simply and sincerely, 'Mozart.'"

Our spiritual growth into a realization of God may be expressed in a similar way. When we are young, we say, "I." God scarcely enters into our thoughts. After a time, we begin to take account of the Deity, and our contemplations are modified to the conception of "I and God," though we probably would not give public expression to this. Later on, God's Spirit begins to take a greater hold on us, and exercises our minds "to *will* as well as to work for the sake of His delight" (Phil.2:13). Then He is placed first, and we say, "God and I." But the highest pinnacle of spiritual perception is not reached until the "I" has completely faded out of the picture, and we say, simply and sincerely, "God."

This is the pinnacle to which the apostle Paul is directing our thoughts when he states, as he does on several occasions, that "*All is of God*" (1 Cor.11:12; 2 Cor.5:18; Rom.11:36); when he declares that the evangel is "*God's power for salvation*" (Rom.1: 16); and when he emphasizes that God is "operating all, in accord with the counsel of His will" (Eph.1:11).

It is particularly significant that it is in the prison letters, the most spiritually advanced of Paul's writings, that he prays most earnestly that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may be giving you a spirit of wisdom and revelation *in the realization of Him*" (Eph.1:17) and "that you may be filled full with the realization of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, you to walk worthily of the Lord for all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing *in the realization of God*" (Col.1:9,10).

The Greek word, here translated "realization," is *epignosis*, (lit. *on-knowledge*). In the King James (Authorized) Version, it is generally translated "knowledge," thus ignoring the prefix *epi*, though three times the word is rendered "acknowledging" and once "acknowledgment." But the prefix indicates that there is more in the word than mere knowledge, and the Concordant Version renders it either "recognition" or "realization," depending upon the context (cf Keyword Concordance, p. 242).

Humanity as a whole does not "test God to have Him in recognition" (Rom.1:28). Humanity is not ignorant of God (v. 21), but "knowing God, not *as God* do they glorify or thank Him." Because of this, their unintelligent heart is darkened, and God "gives them over to a disqualified mind."

In contrast to this general trend, the eyes of our hearts have been enlightened (Eph.1:17), and Paul prays that we may be growing "into a realization of Him," that we may become "competent for a part of the allotment of the saints, in light" (Col.1:10-12).

And let us note that it is "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory" Who gives us "a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the realization of Him" (Eph.1:17), and it is the same God and Father Who makes us "competent for a part of the allotment of the saints, in light" (Col.1:12). Thus is the deity of God manifested in the believers, and thus we see the importance of our subject.

THE DEITY

The word "deity" only occurs once in the Greek Scriptures, in Colossians 2:9, where they speak of the entire complement of the Deity dwelling bodily in Christ. The word is defined in the Keyword Concordance as "that which pertains to God," and when we speak of "the deity of God," it is a way of expressing "the godness of God." (There is no word "godness" in English, so we have to use the word "deity.") As we understand it, it is a means of ascribing to God all that is rightly His, whatever field of His operations we may be considering, and, in particular, in attributing to Him all the glory to which He alone is entitled.

The Scriptures are emphatic in placing God first and foremost. The initial commandment to Israel was, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me" (Ex.20:3). Through one of His major prophets, Isaiah, God challenged His people, Israel, with the question, "To whom will you liken Me, and make Me equal, and compare Me, and we shall be alike?" And again, "I am leue, and there is none else." And yet again, "I am leue, the Alueim! That is My name, and I will not give My glory to another, nor My praises to carvings" (Isa.46: 5; 45:18; 42:8 CV).

Let us beware lest we detract from God the glory that is His due! This is easier done than we may think.

GENESIS 1:1

The very first sentence of Scripture is of supreme importance in establishing the deity of God. "Created by the Elohim were the heavens and the earth." This is the Concordant rendering of Genesis 1:1, which places the words in their Hebrew order and gives the correct title of the Deity in this connection. The corresponding and more familiar phrase in the King James Version is "God created the heavens and the earth," and because this is the rendering that has been in use over the centuries, it is the one that has been specifically attacked, as we will endeavor to show.

"God created the heavens and the earth." This is a plain, simple, straightforward statement; no words could be more specific, nor less open to misunderstanding. And yet they have been challenged by no less than seven human philosophies, and, as all human philosophies are inspired by the Adversary, this means that Satan considers this Divine statement of fact so important that he has attacked it from seven different directions. Let us consider the statement in detail.

God

This word repudiates

- 1. *Atheism*, the philosophy of "No God." Atheism *denies* God.
- 2. *Polytheism*, the philosophy of "Many Gods." Polytheism *divides* God into many smaller deities. The Egyptians, Greeks and Romans all had many gods, and the cultures of these earlier civilizations still find their way into the thinking of today, and especially into the fields of literature and the arts.
- 3. *Agnosticism*, which says that it cannot be known whether there is a God or not. Agnosticism *doubts* God.

These three philosophies (Atheism, Polytheism and Agnosticism, or the theories of "No God," "Many Gods" and "The Unknown God") all seek to rob God of His glory as a unique Being. God answers their challenge in Isaiah 45:5, "I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside Me" ("I am Yahweh Alueim, and there is none else. There is no Elohim except Me" CV).

These words repudiate philosophies four and five, namely,

- 4. Fatalism, which says that everything came into being by chance. Fatalism disputes creation.
- 5. Evolution, which says that one thing just grew out of another. Evolution debars creation.

These two philosophies would rob God of His glory as a Creator. God answers their challenge in Isaiah 40:26,28. "Lift up your eyes to the height and see; Who created all these? Who is bringing forth their host by number? . . . Do you not know? Should you not hear? The Elohim eonian is Ieue, Creator of the ends of the earth. He is not fainting, nor is He wearying. And there is no investigating of His understanding."

God Created the Heavens and the Earth

This whole phrase repudiates philosophies six and seven, namely, □

- 6. Pantheism, which makes God and nature one and the same, and
- 7. Materialism, which claims that matter is eternal

These philosophies, by reducing God to the level of His creation, deny Him the glory of His supremacy. He answers their challenge in Isaiah 40:25 and Isaiah 45:5, "Then to whom will ye liken Me, and whose equal will I be? Saying is the Holy One . . . I am Yahweh Alueim, and there is none else."

The fact that this opening verse of Scripture is attacked by so many human philosophies shows how determined are the efforts that have been made to undermine the validity of God's Word. But even more to the point is that it shows how determined and ruthless have been the attempts of the Adversary to destroy the absoluteness of the deity of God. And those who proclaim these philosophies are only following the lead, consciously or unconsciously, of their father, the Adversary. And those who believe them are only too clearly showing themselves to be his dupes.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

When God gave His law to the nation that had just entered into covenant relationship with Him, He made the first commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me!" And He followed this up by forbidding them to make, worship or serve any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven or earth or in the water. That is to say, they were not to give to any creature the glory and adoration that was due to Him as the Creator. He must be Supreme, and the glory of His supremacy He will not give to another, for all others are creatures, while He alone is the Creator.

Yet, while Moses was actually receiving this commandment at the top of the mountain, the people below were flagrantly flouting its principle by constructing and worshiping a golden calf, and they even persuaded Aaron to connive with them. No wonder Moses was wroth, and broke the tables of stone on which the commandment was written. The people had already broken it before ever they had received it in writing (they had already received verbal instruction from God, and had agreed to obey it—see Ex.19:7,8—so they were without excuse). And God was wroth with the people, too, and there was a great judgment in which about three thousand died (Ex.32:1-28).

But this state of affairs is not a symptom peculiar to Israel; it is to be found in all humanity. Paul tells us in

Romans 1 that God's great dispute with mankind, which brings down His indignation upon them, lies in the fact that "knowing God, not as God do they glorify or thank Him," but rather, "they change the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of an image of a corruptible human being and flying creatures and quadrupeds and reptiles" (Rom.1:21-23). Two verses later they are spoken of as those "who alter the truth of God into the lie, and are venerated, and offer divine service to the creature rather than the Creator."

This is the great lie referred to in Romans 1:25—altering the truth of God to make it seem proper for worship to be given to a creature rather than to the Creator. It is the same great lie which is spoken of in 2 Thessalonians 2:11, where, upon those who are perishing because they do not receive the love of the truth for their salvation, God is sending "an operation of deception for them to believe the lie." The love of the truth would direct them to the knowledge that "all is of God"—that the evangel is His power for salvation, based on the preaching of the cross; but the lie, backed up by all kinds of false signs and miracles, inspired by the Adversary, leads them into all sorts of false philosophies, which have as their basis the thought that man is capable of higher things, that he can achieve his own salvation independently of God, that he can work out his own destiny. This is worship of the creature rather than the Creator, and is an affront to the deity of God.

John H Essex

Copyright © Concordant Publishing Concern
15570 Knochaven Road, Santa Clarita, CA 91387, U.S.A. 661-252-2112

*This publication may be reproduced for personal use
(all other rights reserved by copyright holder).*