

The Concept of God

I. The Logic of a Concept of God

The fact of the existence of God is a “first truth.”

A “first truth” is knowledge that is intuitive. It is not derived from observation, reading, or reflection. “Intuition” may be defined as knowing something without having to be told.

Our belief in God is intuitive. It exists in all men (whether admitted or not), and would exist even if it were possible from birth to allow the mind to develop apart from the senses — sight, hearing, touch taste, and smell.

The knowledge of God is the unique feature of man, who is a spiritual being, possessing God consciousness. Such a knowledge is:

1. Universal — because all men manifest a belief in some “God.” Man has a religious nature.
2. Necessary — because the mind of man is compelled by its very nature to a recognition of God.
3. Prime — because such knowledge cannot be broken down into other basic forms, or needs to be proven by other facts.

This intuitive concept of God can be developed and established by observation, reflection, reason, and of course - revelation. However, it is independent of all these.

This “first truth” says that “God is,” and to some extent what God is.

II. False Concepts of God

Belief in the existence of God as a “higher power” is natural and normal. However, it is from this point that man’s understanding of God diverges greatly, and there are many resultant false concepts.

A. Atheism

Atheism is unnatural and abnormal because it is “a denial of the existence of God.” In most cases this is really a fake assertion on the part of people.

Atheism manifests itself in 3 ways:

1. Practical Atheism

For various reasons many people have chosen to discard God from their thinking and life.

2. Virtual Atheism

People have adopted various philosophies (e.g. materialism or communism) which require no belief in God.

3. Dogmatic Atheism

Some people openly boast their denial of God’s existence. Romans 1:22; Psalm 14:1

B. Agnosticism

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The word comes from the Greek, “a”—“not,” and “gnosko” — “I know,” and literally means “not knowing.” (It may also be expressed by the Latin word “ignoramus.”)

Agnosticism affirms the impossibility of ever knowing the certainty of God. It is a form of skepticism. Like atheism, this too is unnatural and abnormal.

Someone pointed out that the agnostic cannot find God for the same reason a thief cannot find a policeman - he's running away!

C. Deism

Born out of the 18th Century “Enlightenment” or “Age of Reason”, deism believes that God exists, but not as a personal God. It holds that God is present in His creation only in His power - not in His being and nature. Deism denies the need for (or the possibility of) special revelation, holding that man's reason is sufficient to know there is a ‘Higher Being’.

It is the “absentee God” theory; it sees God as some invisible Clockmaker Who wound up the universe, then left it for man to run. It is akin to the more recent “God is dead” fad.

Many of the early humanists were in fact deists. Twentieth-century humanism places man at the center of the universe. Freemasonry (with its “Divine Architect” god) is a product of deism.

D. Dualism

This idea holds that there are two distinct and irreducible principles — Good (God,) and Evil (Satan.) It teaches that both God and Satan are co-eternal, but that God is finite.

Persian Zoroastrianism is a form of dualism — as was the ancient Eastern religion of Manichæanism. The Gnostic sects of early Christendom were also dualistic.

E. Pantheism

Pantheism is the belief that all finite things are divine. Its motto is “God, otherwise Nature”. In other words, God is a tree, a rock, an animal. All “nature” is God.

New Age environmentalism is a present day example of pantheism. Its “mother earth” concept is nothing more than the worship of things created. Hinduism is also pantheistic because it holds that all life is sacred.

See: Romans 1:25

F. Polytheism

This is the belief in many (poly) gods. Many of the world's religions are polytheistic. The best example is Hinduism.

III. True Concepts of God

A development of the “first truth” intuition of God by reason and revelation leads us into a true concept of God. We may understand this by considering a series of 3 steps:

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A. Step 1 — Theism

Theism is the belief in a personal, infinite God. Theism opposes atheism and agnosticism, but does not necessarily exclude polytheism.

B. Step 2 — Monotheism

This is an extension of theism into the belief of the existence of only one personal, infinite God. Whilst this is a Christian concept of God, it is also a Jewish, Islamic, and Unitarian concept.

C. Step 3 — Triune Monotheism

This form of monotheism is the full, Biblical revelation of God. Our future studies will develop along these lines.

IV. “Definitions” of God

In fact, God cannot be defined. Our God is above definition. He is incomprehensible, eternally and infinitely above the trite intellect of man.

Any attempted definition of God is anthropomorphic (i.e. it can only be put in human terms, for a true definition of God is inexpressible in any language.)

A. Scriptural Designation of what God is.

1. God is a Spirit — John 4:24 — This is a statement concerning His essence.
2. God is Light — I John 1:5 — Since light is the opposite to darkness, this is a statement of His holiness.
3. God is Love — I John 4:8
4. God is a Consuming Fire — Hebrews 12:29 — Fire is symbolic of judgment. This is a statement of the righteousness and justice of God.

B. Theological Designations of God

1. Westminster Shorter Catechism
“God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.”
2. A. H. Strong. (Baptist)
“God is the infinite and perfect Spirit in Whom all things have their source, support, and end.”