

dwelleth in us (Rom. 8:11). Redemption begins in the redemption of the spirit from the guilt of sin; it becomes complete in the ultimate redemption of the body from the consequences of sin (Rom. 8:20-23). When the redeemed saint shall appear in the Judgment purified in spirit and clothed in glory and honor and immortality, he will then be spiritually, metaphysically, *absolutely whole*. He will lack nothing of wholeness, nothing of perfection, in body, soul, and spirit. As the Apostle puts it: "And the God of peace himself sanctify you *wholly*; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23).

The Spirit-power of God makes men whole—physically, personally, morally and spiritually. Spirit in God means Holiness, Where the Spirit of God is, there is order, unity, wholeness, perfection. Where the Spirit of God is not, there is disorder, disunity, disintegration, and imperfection or lack.

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all."

6. Personality in God

On the subject of personality in God and in man, Dr. Edgar Sheffield Brightman summarizes as follows:

God and man both enjoy complex self-experience, *qualia* (including ideal norms) which low grade selves are not conscious of, a wide range of temporal and spatial consciousness, time-transcendence and space-transcendence, free purposive self-control, rational awareness of meaning, free response to environment, and privacy of consciousness. All these traits belong to the essence of personality.¹

The essentials of personality enumerated here may—it seems to me—be reduced to the four traditionally given, namely, (1) self-consciousness, (2) self-determination (purposiveness), (3) individuality (uniqueness, otherness, "privacy," *i.e.*, separate and distinct existence), and (4) transcendence (of time and space). Personality in God embraces all these characteristics.

1. *Personality in God, as in man, includes self-consciousness.* Self-consciousness is the ability to become subject and object, knower and known, at one and the same time. It is the ability to say, I am, with rational awareness of the meaning of the saying. Personality, therefore, is explicit in the very Name of our God, I AM. "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM; and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel,

1. *A Philosophy of Religion*, 363.

I AM hath sent me unto you" (Exo. 3:14). Only a person can say, meaningfully to himself, I am.

2. *Personality in God, as in man, includes self-determination, self-direction, purposiveness.* Our God is Pure Act. He acts, moreover, toward specific ends. And he accomplishes His purposes: *He gets things done.* As He Himself has said, through the prophet Isaiah:

I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done; saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure . . . Yea, I have spoken, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed, I will also do it. (Isa. 46:9-11).

Because our God is purposive, we have in Scripture what is designated "the eternal purpose" of God, the "mystery of his will," etc. That eternal purpose was, *proximately*, to send Jesus Christ, His Son, in the fulness of the time, to make atonement for sin and to conquer death, thereupon to publish the Gospel, establish the Church, and unite both Jews and Gentiles in the one Body of Christ. That eternal purpose is, *ultimately*, to create a holy redeemed race of saints, conformed to the image of His Son in both spirit and body; to present this race in the Judgment, clothed in glory and honor and immortality: and thus to vindicate Himself in the minds of all intelligent creatures of the false charges hurled against Him by Satan and his rebel host before the foundation of the world. (We suggest the following Scriptures, in this connection, to be read in the order given here.)

(1) Rom. 16:25-26: Now to him that is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal, but now is manifested, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known unto all the nations unto obedience of faith, etc.

(2) Eph. 1:3-12: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ; even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love; having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved: in whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence; making known unto us *the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in him unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth; in him, I say, in whom also we were made a heritage, having been foreordained according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will;* to the end that we should be unto the praise of his glory, we who had before hoped in Christ.

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(3) Eph. 3:1-12: For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus in behalf of you Gentiles,—if so be that ye have heard of the dispensation of that grace of God which was given me to you-ward; *how that by revelation was made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote before in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ; which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to wit, that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of that grace of God which was given me according to the working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which for ages hath been hid in God who created all things; to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord; in whom we have boldness and access in confidence through our faith in him.*

(4) 1 Pet. 1:10-12: Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them. To whom it was revealed that not unto themselves, but unto you, did they minister these things, which now have been announced unto you through them that preached the gospel unto you by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven; which things angels desire to look into.

(5) Gal. 4:4-5: But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

(6) Rom. 8:28-30: And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, *even to them that are called according to his purpose. For whom he foreknew [i.e., in His eternal purpose] he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brethren: and whom he foreordained, them he also called [i.e., in His eternal purpose]; and whom he called, them he also justified [i.e., in His eternal purpose] and whom he justified, them he also glorified [i.e., in His eternal purpose].* This eternal purpose will be fully realized in the immortalization of the saints, in which process they will be conformed to the image of the glorified Christ. [Also Phil. 3:20-21; Rom. 8:18-25; 1 Cor. 6:2-3, 15:24-28; 2 Pet. 3:10-13; Rev. 20:10-15, 21:1-8, 22:1-5; Rom. 2:7; 1 Tim. 1:17, 6:13-16; 2 Tim. 1:10.]

“That God may be all in all”—such will be the glorious Consummation. Thus it will be seen that the Bible teaches clearly that our world is, after all, neither geocentric nor anthropocentric, but *theocentric*. All things begin and end with God.

3. Personality in God, as in man, includes individuality, uniqueness, otherness. Dr. Berman writes:

The discontinuity of the personal self with all other selves is the essential fact of every human existence. The human individual continually perceives himself as a concentrated entity, a consciousness

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bounded by the limitations of his own personality, segregated from every other human being. Even in the most intimate fellowship there is a consciousness of those invisible and intangible barriers which permanently divide one individuality from another. Because he lives alone in his consciousness, every man lives alone in the cosmos. This ultimate solitude of every human being is the central fact of all his experience and all his knowledge.¹

To quote Dr. Rufus Jones:

First, last, and all the time, *i.e.*, in our sanity, we possess an integral, self-identical self, which knows what it knows and does what it does. It is, or at least can become, a highly complex spiritual reality, with a sphere and range of its own. We are in large measure the makers of ourselves; but fortunately we start with a precious impartation, or birth-gift, which is big with the potentiality of spirit—otherwise we might have ended as a hop-toad,

A creature predestined to move
In a well-defined groove,

with no power to build a self from within, such as we possess now. And that self of ours, whatever its ultimate destiny may be, is utterly unique.²

A person is a unique being, a being with thoughts, images, memories, experiences, all of which are, in the very nature of the case, exclusively his own. He is inevitably characterized by what Brightman calls "privacy of consciousness." Hence he is never duplicated. To quote Emerson again: "Nature never rhymes her children nor makes two men alike."

Personality, therefore, in relation to all other persons, is *otherness*: a person is an *other* to all other persons, and all other persons are *other* to one another and to him. To some extent every person is indeed, in Leibniz's phrase, a "windowless monad." Hence Karl Barth's emphasis on the *otherness* of God is in perfect harmony with the fact of the personality of God.

H. Wheeler Robinson writes:

In both man and God there is a principle of self-consciousness, unshared by any other, that exclusive principle of individual personality which gives the peculiar quality to "my" experience, as distinct from another's. The name "Spirit" is given to this principle in God, just as "spirit" denotes it in man. The gift of the Spirit of God means that this exclusive consciousness of his is exceptionally shared with man, or, as a Hebrew prophet would have put it, that man is admitted into the council of Yahweh, to think His thoughts (Jer. 23:18, 22). At present, however, we have no more than the "earnest" of the condition of full knowledge (1 Cor. 8:2; 13:12; Gal. 4:9), the condition itself being full transformation by the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18).³

1. Louis Berman, *Behind the Universe*, 13.

2. *Spirit in Man*, 21-22.

3. *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*, 227-228.

Personality in God means, then, that the Mind of God is not the totality of human minds, as the pantheist would have it. Pantheism has always found the problem of evil difficult to handle, for the simple reason that in the pantheistic view, God, as the totality of intelligences in the Cosmos, would necessarily embrace the evil as well as the good in human thinking. The only alternative, of course, is to treat evil as non-existent, as an "illusion of mortal mind." This is precisely what most pantheists—and Absolutists—do. But personality in God, I repeat, does not mean that the Mind of God is identical with the totality of creaturely minds. It means, in fact, just the opposite—that the Mind of God is the Absolute Other to any or all human minds. I thank God that such is the case, for it means that we frail human beings can pray to God and enter into communion with God, as person in relation to Person.

4. *Personality in God, as in man, includes transcendence of time and space.* God is absolutely free from all temporal and spatial limitations. "But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Pet. 3:8). This is, of course, but a poetic way of saying that time means nothing to God. The same is true of space.

As the Psalmist cries out:

Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?
 Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there;
 If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there.
 If I take the wings of the morning,
 And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
 Even there shall thy hand lead me,
 And thy right hand shall hold me.

This great truth of God's transcendence of time and space relations, however, has been fully presented in a foregoing section and needs not to be elaborated here.

Finally, should we be speaking more correctly if we were to designate God a "Superperson"? Some philosophers have thought so, on the ground that to call God personal is to make Him finite, or speaking more precisely perhaps, anthropomorphic. On this point I quote again from Brightman:

If God be a person, it is self-evident that his experience is incomparably vaster than man's. It is certain that he has powers unknown to man, and goodness utterly transcending man's. It is highly probable that he has indefinitely many types of experience unknown to us, which are barely hinted at by such facts as the ultraviolet and infrared rays, invisible to man. But it is one thing to say that per-

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sonality which is in part known includes kinds of experience of which we do not yet know; and it is quite another thing to say that there is an entity of some sort which is lacking in all consciousness and experience and rational personal identity, and yet is higher than personality. In the former sense we may say that God is superpersonal, meaning superhumanly personal. In the latter sense, since we cannot define our hypothesis except wishfully, we cannot know whether an unconscious "superpersonality" would be better or worse than personality, and we cannot use the concept to explain any aspect of actual conscious entities such as ourselves. As far as we can know, the unconscious and impersonal, if such there be in the universe, is below and not above the level of conscious personality. At best the unconscious superpersonal is but a label for the unknown, and not a definable hypothesis.¹

Let us conclude, therefore, with Dr. Brightman, that it would be legitimate, undoubtedly, to speak of God as a superhuman Person, for *that* He is indeed, especially in the fact that, in the light of His own revelation of Himself, His personality embraces, in some inscrutable manner, a triplicity of Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—each of whom is a Personality in His own right, so to speak. But to describe God as a "Super-person" means nothing, in the light of our human experience. Moreover, in response to the hue and cry of "anthropomorphism," we are on solid ground in affirming that man can hardly think of God as less than a Person, because Person is the highest category of being of which man has knowledge. And since man is a person, and knows that he is a person, he cannot properly think of God as less than, or inferior to, himself. Therefore, we are content to accept the revealed Name of our God, with all its implications—I AM THAT I AM, HE WHO IS. *The Person of God thus authenticates our love for Him, the prayers we lift up to Him, and the fellowship we enjoy with Him. None of these privileges would be possible, if God is less than person!*

QUESTIONS ON REVIEW OF PART FOUR

1. In what sense is a human being "the image of God"?
2. What fallacies are involved in the writing of Xenophanes about anthropomorphism? Why is anthropomorphic representation apparently necessary to make God congenial to us?
3. Why do we say that much of the Old Testament is constructed on principles of "kindergarten pedagogy"?
4. Explain what is meant by the cold, intellectually-constructed concepts of God. Cite examples.
5. Explain what is implied in the word *person* as descriptive of God.
6. What does Dr. Jones mean by "mind when it reaches the stage of spirit in beings like us"?
7. How does a man ultimately attain the stature of a *real person*, according to New Testament teaching?

1. E. S. Brightman, *op. cit.*, 237.