

# DOCTRINE OF HEATHENISM AND GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS

December 30, 1986

- I. The nature of God-consciousness (GC).
  - A. GC is the state of awareness of the existence of a Supreme Being.
  - B. It develops early in life and occurs in all persons who possess normal mental faculties.
  - C. GC can be developed via information about God (correct or false) from others; otherwise, it will develop as the product of observation and reason.
  - D. Rationales which lead to GC.
    1. Cosmological: based on human intuition and the law of cause and effect (e.g., Aristotle's "unmoved mover").
    2. Teleological: the observed order of the universe demands a planner; the plant and animal kingdoms bear the mark of one designer. (Belief in chance or happenstance is the result of negative volition at GC devising an alternate system.)
    3. Anthropological: the principles of right and wrong which men are taught (and to which the conscience bears witness) demand an ultimate source (Rom.2:14,15).
    4. Ontological: the soul develops the concept of the ideal being.
  - E. The knowledge the unbeliever possesses about God extends to the specific attributes of His essence (cp. Rom.1:18-20; Act.14:17; Ps.19:1-6.).
- II. The issue at GC (Act.17:27a; Rom.2:7).
  - A. At GC, man either does desire, or does not desire, relationship with God (Rom.2:6-11).
  - B. Positive volition at GC and negative volition at GC divide mankind into two camps.
  - C. GC is also called accountability.
  - D. Man is obligated to satisfy God's righteousness (+R), honor Him (Rom.1:21, illustrated in Act.14:13), and give thanks (Rom.1:21; cp. Act.14:17).
- III. GC and gospel hearing.
  - A. GC does not save (Jam.2:19).
  - B. Those who are positive at GC will believe (eventually) at gospel hearing (Rom.2:7,10).
  - C. Those negative at GC will not believe (even if they hear), but will perish (Rom.2:8,9; 1Cor.1:18; 2Cor.4:3,4).
  - D. So volition is tested at two points, and it will always be positive-positive or negative-negative (Jn.3:18,36), never positive-negative or negative-positive.
  - E. The overwhelming majority are negative-negative (Mt.7:13,14 "broad is the way").
  - F. God never violates human volition (Act.14:16).
- IV. Heathenism is the result of negative volition at GC (Rom.1:18-32).
  - A. When negative unbelievers reject the truth and righteousness of God, they are left with error and unrighteousness (Rom.1:21; cp. vs.18).
  - B. When they pursue unrighteousness, they end up suppressing the truth.
  - C. Their understanding ("heart") becomes darkened (i.e., unable to see the truth; Rom.1:21; cp. 2Cor.4:3,4).
  - D. They pursue error and profess themselves to be wise, but they actually become fools (Rom.1:22; cp. 1Cor.1:18a).
  - E. They distort the nature of God, succumb to idolatry (Rom.1:23,25), and remove God from their thinking (Rom.1:25,28; cp. 1Cor.1:21a).
  - F. God removes His restraints as a demonstration of His judgment against them, and permits them to pursue lusts from their STA (sinful trend of Adam; Rom.1:24).
  - G. They degenerate to the pursuit of unnatural sexual activity (lesbianism and homosexuality, Rom.1:24,26,27), thus incurring the disapproval of their own society.
  - H. God judges them for their violation of Divine Institution #2 (marriage) and His natural order with sexually transmitted diseases, like AIDS (Rom.1:27).

- I. God further judges them for their rejection of Him by permitting them to become further depraved via all sorts of sinful activity, thus receiving the further condemnation of their own society (Rom.1:28-31).
  - J. They become totally depraved in that they approve of activity they know has been condemned (Rom.1:32).
  - K. When a whole society degenerates into Heathenism because of negative volition and either the absence or the removal of any righteous persons, God destroys it (Gen.6:5-7,13; 18:20-19:25); the conquest of Canaan (cp. Gen.15:16b; Rev.18).
- V. GC and the problem of the heathen (Jer.23:23; Act.17:27).
- A. What about the people who have never heard or apparently never heard?
  - B. To those who are negative at GC, God is under no obligation to give them a gospel hearing (they never heard of Christ and went to hell!).
  - C. For those positive at GC, God preserves them alive to hear the gospel (cp. Jonah.1:1,2; 3:4-10; 4:2).
  - D. So regardless of geographical isolation, race, language, or any other factor, God will provide the gospel.
  - E. Conclusion: the heathen are heathen because they are negative (Rom.1:18,19).
- VI. Not even one person who is positive at GC will fail to believe (Jn.17:2 "Even as You have given Him authority over all mankind, that to all You have given Him, He may give eternal life"; cp. 1Tim.2:4; 2Pet.3:9).
- VII. The problem of the rich (Mk.10:23-27), and the stumbling blocks.
- A. Among both rich and poor there are those who are positive at GC (Ps.49:1,2).
  - B. Jesus is referring to the positive rich only in Mk.10:23.
  - C. But wealth is a stumbling block to his faith in Christ.
  - D. So he must become a pauper before he will believe.
  - E. God will intervene and remove it.
  - F. God has this right (Ps.50:12 "the world is Mine, and all it contains").
  - G. For the man to remain wealthy would cause him to stumble over it and go to hell.
  - H. So God does what is impossible for the man himself, and the rich man enters the kingdom poor (go sell and give to the poor).
  - I. Case histories.
    1. Nebuchadnezzar (Dan.4).
    2. The rich young ruler (Mk.10).
  - J. The Pharaoh of the Exodus illustrates the antithesis.
  - K. Principle: whatever the stumbling block between the individual and faith in Christ, God will remove it (see Mk.9:43-48).
    1. No one would voluntarily cut off his hand or foot, or gouge out his eye.
    2. But the Lord will remove any stumbling block.
    3. No one will stumble over anything and go to hell.
    4. Only negative volition leads to hell.
- VIII. Evangelism and GC.
- A. Nationalism provides the environment for evangelism (Act.17:26,27).
  - B. Evangelism has occurred in every generation and dispensation (Act.17:6; Col.1:6; 1Tim.3:16).
    1. Evangelism in Noah's day.
    2. In the day of Moses (Rahab).
  - C. The church is the institution of evangelism today (Mt.28:16; make disciples of all nations).
  - D. The figure of speech is fishers of men (nations are the lakes and ponds and streams).
  - E. Not one fish positive at GC will go uncaught (Jn.17:2,20-22).
- IX. The verb of positive volition at GC is ζητέω (zeteo, seek; (Act.17:26,27; Rom.2:7)).
- X. Application of certain doctrines.

- A. Doctrine of the Integrity of God. God is impartial (Rom.2:11).
- B. Doctrine of unlimited atonement (Christ died for all; 2Cor.5:14,15,19; 1Tim.2:6; 4:10; Ti.2:11; Heb.2:9; 1Jn.2:2).
- C. Doctrine of divine sovereignty applied (2Pet.3:9).
- D. Doctrine of Election and Calling.

Reviewed: October 15, 1994

Reviewed July 15, 1995

© Copyright 1998, Maranatha Church, Inc.