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Harold Willmington

Liberty University, hwillmington@liberty.edu

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HIM – PART FOUR

by Dr. H. L. Willmington

This is the **fourth** in a series in regard to basic facts about the God of the Bible!

Some 3,000 years ago a famous mid-Eastern king wrote these words: “Of the making of books there is no end.” Today, thirty centuries later, we could correctly rephrase that ancient statement to read: “Of the making of gods there is no end.”

Daniel Webster once said, “By far the most important thought that could possibly enter the human mind is the concept of God and one’s personal responsibility to that God.”

Well and good—but which God? Around 590 B.C. three young men stood on the plains of ancient Babylon about ready to forfeit their lives for refusing to give homage to a golden god. But the king desired to offer them a final choice. Bow down, he advised, or be burned up in a furnace of fire. He then reminded them, that if they continued to refuse, “*who is that God (the deity of the three men) that shall deliver you out of my hands?*” Well, who indeed!

Actually in the 21st century there is no lack of suggested answers. Here are but a few:

The years 2005-2007 may well be remembered as the *Age of the Angry Atheists*, for during this short span over one million copies of their books have been sold, indeed, some appearing on the *New York Times* Best Seller List. These books and their authors include:

- Richard Dawkins, *The Grand Delusion*
- Sam Harris, *The End of Faith*
- Christopher Hitchens, *God Is Not Great*
- Bart Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*

As noted above, these four are not just atheists—but angry atheists—hostile to any and all religions, especially the Christian religion!

Nor are they lacking in arrogance, for one of them, Richard Dawkins, has advocated that he, and others of like mind, be known as “The Brights,” as opposed to the rest of us. He defines “The Brights” as holding “*a world-view that is free of supernaturalism and mysticism.*” But, rejecting any divine being (or beings) whatsoever, how do “The Brights” explain the origin of all things, correctly believing the universe had a beginning?

Well, it all began some 14 billion years ago (perhaps more or less, but then—who’s counting) when all the untold trillions and trillions of stars, plus all other material in our universe, including the proposed existence of dark matter (which may consist of 97% of all matter) was once packed in a

radius smaller than an electron! Then came the Ultimate Big Bang, resulting in a colossal explosion, which today, 14 thousand million years is still going on!

Keep in mind, however, this all supposedly happened without any external influence, when there was no time for it to occur (it created its own time), no space for it to fill, and no material for it to work with! **Amazing indeed!** But even more incredible to contemplate: that all life today, from the lowly amoeba to human beings can be accounted for by evolving mud in past time.

This would include the paintings of a Raphael, the music of a Beethoven, the writings of a Shakespeare, and wonder of wonders—the teachings of a Christ! Everything from nothing! Mind boggling to say the least. By the way, what exactly **is** nothing? R. C. Sproul defines *nothing* as that which rocks dream about. But of course a rock **is** something. Perhaps a better definition would be *nothing is what nothing dreams about*. And all this from those who insist upon being known as “The Brights.” Go figure.

Of course, there is a radically different account of origins as written by an Author whose book has continually been on all Best Sellers Lists for hundreds of years!

GOD ORIGINALLY CREATED ALL THINGS AND IMMEDIATELY ABANDONED HIS CREATION

This is the view of deism:

This holds the existence of God but rejects his having any relation to the world or self-revelation. As pantheism accepts the immanence of God to the exclusion of his transcendence, so deism accepts the transcendence of God to the exclusion of his immanence. For deism, God is an absentee landlord who, having made the universe like a vast machine, allows it to operate on its own by inherent natural law without his personal supervision. It claims that all truths are discoverable by reason and that the Bible is merely a book on the principles of natural religion, which are discernible by the light of nature. (Floyd Barackman, *Practical Christian Theology*, p. 24)

Stated another way, upon creation, the creator abandoned his universe and is now on an eternal cosmic fishing trip of some sorts! Thus, no prayer offered up to this unconcerned God would ever be answered.

GOD IS A GOOD GOD, BUT LIMITED IN WHAT HE CAN DO

This is also known as finite godism. Author Harold Kushner takes this position in his well-known book, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*.

Kushner writes:

If we have grown up . . . believing in an all-wise, all-powerful, all-knowing God, it will be hard for us . . . to change our way of thinking about him (as it was hard for us, when we were children, to realize that our parents were not all-powerful, that a broken toy had to be thrown out because they *count not* fix it, not because they did not want to). But if we can bring ourselves to acknowledge that there are some things God does not control, many good things become possible.

I believe in God. But I do not believe the same things about Him that I did years ago when I was growing up or when I was a theological student. I recognize His limitations. He is limited in what He can do by laws of nature and by the evolution of human nature and human moral freedom. I no longer hold God responsible for illnesses, accidents, and natural disasters, because I realize that I gain little and I lose so much when I blame God for those things. I can worship a God who hates suffering but cannot eliminate it, more easily than I can worship a God who chooses to make children suffer and die, for whatever exalted reason. (*Avon Publishers*, New York, NY, 1981, pp. 45, 134)

GOD IS A GOOD GOD, BUT LIMITED IN WHAT HE KNOWS

This is referred to as both the openness of God, and neotheism. The openness of God view is similar to that of finite godism.

- Finite godism seeks to limit the *power* of God.
- Neotheism does the same in regard to the *knowledge* of God.

We are thus left with a somewhat helpless and ignorant God.

Question: Do you know, at this very moment, what you will eat tomorrow, or all the words you will speak and each thought you will think? Probably not, but you're in good company, for neither does God! And the reason? Erwin Lutzer quotes from Dr. Greg Boyd, an advocate of neotheism from his book, *Letters From a Skeptic*, Victor Books, p. 30, where Boyd defends his position as follows:

In the Christian view, God knows all of reality—everything there is to know. But to assume He knows ahead of time how every person is going to freely act assumes that each person's free activity is already there to know – even before he freely does it! But it's not. If we have been given freedom, we create the reality of our own decisions by making them. And until we make them, they don't exist. Thus, in my view, at least, there simply isn't anything to know until we make it there to know. So God can't foreknow the good or bad decisions of people He creates until He creates these people and they, in turn, create their decisions. (Erwin Lutzer, *Ten Lies About God*, Word Publishing, 2000, p. 122)

Both these positions are of course totally refuted by ample scriptural verses!

- **The finite godism position:**

“Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity” (Isa. 40:12, 15-17).

Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases (Psa. 115:3).

Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me? (Jer. 32:27).

But Jesus looked at them and said, With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible (Matt. 19:26).

“For nothing will be impossible with God” (Luke 1:37).

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns (Rev. 19:6).

- **The neotheism position:**

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain unto it (Psa. 139:6).

He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names. Great is our Lord, and abundant is power; his understanding is beyond measure” (Psa. 147:4, 5).

Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world (Acts 15:18).

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! (Rom. 11:33)

A final thought is reference to the neotheism position:

God not only knows the past, present, and future, but also what might have been!

“Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. (Matt. 11:20-23).

THE GOD OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION

“Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders” (2 Thess. 2:3, 4, 9).

This self-proclaimed god will at first deceive the nation Israel, pretending to be their friend and also be looked upon by the Western Gentile nations as a benevolent dictator, but will eventually reveal his true identity – THE ANTICHRIST.

THE ULTIMATE GOD

“You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’” (Isa. 14:13, 14).

“You were an anointed guardian cherub. I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, till unrighteousness was found in you” (Ezek. 28:14, 15).

Rap Sheet:

- Previous convictions – none
- Original conviction – guilty of high treason, leading a rebellion against the King of the universe
- Location of crime – the heavenly garden of Eden? (Ezek. 28:13, 14)
- Accomplices: One third of heaven’s angels (Rev. 12:4)
- Aliases:
 - (1) Accuser of the Brethren (Rev. 12:10)
 - (2) Angel of Light (2 Cor. 11:14)
 - (3) Devil (John 8:44)
 - (4) Dragon (Rev. 12:3)
 - (5) God of this World (2 Cor. 4:4)
 - (6) Lucifer (Isa. 14:12)
 - (7) Roaring Lion (1 Peter 5:8)
 - (8) Satan (Acts 5:3)
 - (9) Serpent (Rev. 30:2)
- Two-fold sentence
 - (1) Has been cast out of the heavenlies (Ezek. 8:17)
 - (2) Will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10)

Prepared by:
Dr. H. L. Willmington
Dean, Willmington School of the Bible
Dean, Liberty Home Bible Institute
Liberty University

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