

A Lord's Day Snippet!

Biblical and Southern Studies

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SBSS

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1 God is a name my soul adores,
the almighty Three, the eternal One;
nature and grace with all their powers
confess the infinite unknown.

2 Thy voice produced the sea and spheres,
bade the waves roar, the planets shine;
but nothing like thyself appears
through all these spacious works of thine.

3 Still restless nature dies and grows;
from change to change the creatures run:
thy being no succession knows,
and all thy vast designs are one.

4 A glance of thine runs through the globe.
rules the bright worlds and moves their frame;
of light thou form'st thy dazzling robe.
thy ministers are living flame.

5 How shall polluted mortals dare
to sing thy glory or thy grace?
Beneath thy feet we lie afar,
and see but shadows of thy face.

6 Who can behold the blazing light?
Who can approach consuming flame?
None but thy wisdom knows thy might,
none but thy word can speak thy name.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

The Majesty of the Transcendent God

“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts,” said the LORD.

Isaiah 55:9

What is the sense of the word transcendent in relation to God? It certainly has nothing to do with “transcendentalism!” “Transcendentalism” was a humanist concept used to

describe all objective idealists which took an unusual form in New England among the eclectic circles of Emerson, Parker, Thoreau, Channing, Clarke, etc. This false concept was man-centered. God is transcendent; therefore, He is beyond our finiteness or limitations. When we talk about “transcendence” we are talking about the eternal God. “Transcendence” in relation to God means that God is beyond the range of human experience, reason, belief, etc., but even this word is too confining for God is infinitely above all else. Before time and creation, the majestic God was in the eternal as the uncaused cause. He is complete in Himself and therefore, infinite or self-contained. He alone as the eternal I AM was! In His transcendence God is separate from and independent of creation and humanity. He transcends time and space, and yet is present in every point of space with His whole being.

Simply put God is independent from everything and anything in the universe. As Isaiah put it, He is higher than the earth and human thought. There is no other being as He is whose existence is not caused but He eternally is apart from anyone or anything! Thus, God is not a fixture of the universe, He is not a part of the universe, He is not the sum of the parts of the universe, He is not the heart of the universe. He actually is eternal, without beginning or end. He was not created, but self-contained, self-extent, self-dependent. God is an order unto Himself. “God’s self-existence is what defines His transcendence” [Sproul]. God is outside our sensory experience.

“Yet we must not compare the being of God with any other.... We must not think of God as highest in an ascending order of beings, starting with the single cell and going on up from the fish to the bird to the animal to man to angel to cherub to God. This would be to grant God eminence, even pre-eminence, but that is not enough; we must grant Him *transcendence* in the fullest meaning of that word. Forever God stands apart, in light unapproachable. He is as high above and archangel as above a caterpillar, for the gulf that separates the archangel from the caterpillar is but finite, while the gulf between God and the archangel is infinite. The caterpillar and the archangel, though far removed from each other in the scale of created things, are nevertheless one in that they are alike created. They both belong in the category of that which is not God and are separated from God by infinitude itself” [Tozer].

Again, Isaiah by the guidance of God the Holy Spirit reveals the divine transcendence. “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isa.57:15). The God who is transcendent whose name is Holy dwells in His holy place. The word “holy” reveals God’s transcendence because of His supreme greatness when compared to creation. So, when He is declared holy it means He transcends all creation.

The Psalmist asked, “Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high, Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in earth” (Ps. 113:5-6). Our God whose station is outside our sphere and He dwells on high. He must humble Himself in order to look at heaven and earth. Yes, God is completely other than we are. “To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One” (Isa. 40:25). This points to the fact that God is higher than man. God is the first and best of beings or He is the highest good. God cannot be fully explained by human concepts. Human comprehension and genius at the highest level is limited, but God is unlimited. We will never be able to adequately describe or approach God. We can never raise ourselves to the level of God the infinite because we are finite. Salvation is in the condescension of God through Jesus Christ and the Spirit for the unlimited to save the limited. There will never be a time when this difference between the transcendent God and the earthly being man will change. Therefore, we should reverence and worship the true and living God. We must guard against acting in a degrading way toward our transcendent God, who is “higher than the earth” and “higher than our ways.”

Such a God as our transcendent God must be worshipped in the light of who He is! The minister of Christ, A. W. Tozer (1897-1963), wrote regarding how we must keep “the majesty of God in full focus in all our public services. Not only our private prayers should be filled with God, but our witnessing, our singing, our preaching, our writing should center around the Person of our holy, holy, holy Lord and extol continually the greatness of His dignity and power. There is a glorified Man on the right hand of the Majesty in heaven faithfully representing us there. We are left for a season among men; let us faithfully represent Him here.”