



**Junia** heute

## **The attempt to understand "GOD the almighty" - the "image of God" of men**

To the discussions about "women in the office?" the church lets itself lead justifiably in the first place by the question, what the Holy Scripture says to it: It is the basis of our faith teachings, and here in the first place the gospel of Jesus Christ (the four gospels) and the New Testament. Then, however, in the consequence also the question arises: What is GOD (and his will), and what is to be assigned against it to the image of God of the people - an admittedly very difficult questioning. We would like to approach this topic in the following article somewhat.

As a child I have often asked myself: "Who has actually written down what the Bible reports to us in the history of creation - who was there then and could tell about it, how the dear God has created the earth, the animals and plants and finally us people?"

The creed summarizes, what we believe to it as Christians. The first article of faith says in one sentence: "I believe in God, the Father, the Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth."

In the old testament one knew only this one creating and all-powerful GOD, the GOD of Abraham, which is found in all three monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity and also in the Islam).

Sometimes one hears in services and in conversations among believers sentences like "The dear GOD is so and so ..." and then we describe people, how GOD is then, what he has for thoughts, how he decides, what he considers good or bad, which opinion he has to some questions; and many statements more, to some other topics.

But is God really in such a way - or is that in the actual sense only the picture which we humans have of God, our "image of God"?

Many statements about the almighty God in the Old Testament testify from it, how the respective people in their time have imagined this God, how they have interpreted his revelations (e.g., the prophets), how they have tried to understand his omnipotence and to put into words - they have made themselves a "God image" and have tried to explain Him: A "just" GOD, a "punishing" GOD, a "reconciling" GOD or a "protecting" GOD and still many other qualities more were and are attributed to HIM. It was and is still today the attempt of

the people in their respective time, in their respective culture and life reality to grasp and to describe this almighty GOD.

When the son of God came in Jesus Christ on this earth, he has shown us people a "new face of GOD" - HE has given GOD a human face, filled with love, grace and mercy.

Does then this almighty eternal GOD have with it also "human features"? Jesus led once with a woman a very interesting conversation about the faith in GOD - known as the conversation with the woman at the Jacob's well (to be read in John's gospel chapter 4). In this conversation we find a very interesting statement of Jesus, after the woman from Samaria had addressed him to the different faith conceptions of the Jews (GOD must be worshipped in the temple) and the people from Samaria (GOD should be worshipped on the mountains). Jesus answered to it that a time comes where all this would have no more meaning and validity:

"But the hour is coming, and is already now, that the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father also wants such worshipers. God is spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4, verses 4 to 6).

What does Jesus point out with it, and what can we learn today from these statements of Jesus about the nature of GOD?

- GOD is much higher than everything what we humans can imagine about HIM, and he is not at all comprehensible with the mind.
- God is spirit
- GOD is to be described with our human and culturally coined value conceptions only inadequately

In order to call in addition an example and to clarify it at it: Moses received for the people Israel on the Sinai the laws and with it God closed a covenant with his people. By Moses God announced to the people how the tabernacle was to be built, the altar, the ark of the covenant, how the garments of the priests were to be formed - and afterwards he introduced among other things rites to the many different sacrifices which should be offered to God. There we read of many sacrifice slaughterings, how the blood of the animals is to be distributed on the altars and even, how the garments of the priests should be sprinkled with blood.

I would like to say from today's faith view: Moses had a "God picture" and so as he understood God and his inspirations (as a child of his time as a prophet) he has announced to the people how this God should be worshipped: This GOD should be honored with the sacrifices of that time - according to his image of GOD, which he had of the almighty GOD at that time. Nobody would repeat the same today. God is the same and "does not change" - what changes however is our image of God.

## **Jesus Christ - God's son**

Evangelist John writes in his gospel: "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with GOD, and GOD was the word. The same was in the beginning with GOD. All things are made by the same, and without the same nothing is made that is made." (John 1, verses 1 - 3).

With it he establishes the reference to the creation.

But he also writes further in his prologue: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, a glory as of the only begotten Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1, verse 14).

With these words he shows us the Son of God in Jesus Christ, who reveals to us the glory of GOD, a glory characterized by grace (new image of God) instead of by right and law (image of God in the Old Testament).

### **Conclusion: What does this tell us for today?**

It is to be distinguished between our image of God (coined from the culture) and what GOD is: From the view of our faith he is the almighty GOD and creator of heaven and earth; a GOD who is only very limitedly and inadequately graspable with our small human mind.

And if we deal with questions, which are discussed in the today's time also particularly in the churches regarding their further development (for example the question: "Women in the office"), then we should not mix these questions with the will of GOD - because what do we know of the will of GOD? Is it really important to HIM, how a church rite looks like? Or whether we humans introduce some regulations from a cultural coinage or not? How did Jesus so aptly say:

""You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (cf. Deut. 6, verse 5). This is the highest and first commandment. But the other is the same: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (cf. Deut. 19, verse 18). In these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matthew 22, verses 37 to 40).

He thus clearly focuses on the only essential thing.

And here and today in the Advent time 2020 we remember again thankfully how this Jesus Christ came as a son of God on this earth and gave us humans a new picture of GOD.

A small remark to the end: All these are also again only thoughts from a God image - namely my God image today in the year 2020 ...

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