

The Voice, the Eternal, the Music



My earliest memories of God are from when I was around five years old. I remember playing outside, and often pausing to think about who or what created the water in our pond, the trees in our yard, or even the breezes that blew through the Oklahoma plains. I felt God's gentle but profound touch in those times. But who or what touched me remained a mystery.

I didn't much like church. I didn't like dressing up in uncomfortable clothes to worship God, but I loved the music and good preaching. Later, I came to know God personally as Jesus; I began to pray and study Catholic Christianity as well as the religions of the world to find more sophisticated experiences and explanations.

God is the Voice that calls us to the Word in and beyond all words.

God is the Being that gives meaning to every being yet is above our comprehension of being.

God is the Eternal that calls us to eternity from and in time.

He is the Infinite that calls us to infinity in and beyond space.

God is the Music that calls us to the sound that can be seen and the color that can be heard.

He is the Artist who calls us to an artwork that gives meaning to yet is beyond all earthly art.

Are we really hearing and listening to his voice today?

Paradox, Mystery, and Balance



God is Mystery. This Mystery is clearly revealed in paradox and balance.

A paradox is an apparent contradiction that speaks a deeper truth. Some paradoxes:

- We often find companionship, communion, and community in solitude.
- We often hear God's Word best in silence.
- We find spiritual wealth in simplicity and poverty.
- We discover freedom in obedience to God and to his experienced teachers on earth.
- We find pure companionship in celibacy and chastity.

We then go on to find such paradoxes as these:

- Glory in humility and even in humiliation
- Peace in the midst of conflict
- Joy in sorrow
- Consolation in desolation
- Life in death

These paradoxes all speak a deeper truth that can be understood on the deepest level by people searching for spiritual awakening in their lives. Paradoxes can open the doorway from the old, unhappy self to a new self, fulfilled in the Spirit of God.

These paradoxes are mysteries and cannot be comprehended by natural reason alone. They have a logic that defies mere human logic. To seek to understand such mysteries

implies that one is opening up to the mystical, that which cannot be understood by logic alone.

But once we glimpse these paradoxes and mysteries, even from a distance, we see that all things proclaim a logic more complete and balanced than anything the world has ever known.

This is the source and goal of all religion and spirituality.

Religion is a yoke we willingly embrace to ultimately set us free. As Jesus says, "For my yoke is easy, and my burden light" (Mt 11:30). As the wisdom literature teaches, wisdom is like a weighty yoke under which we willingly stoop our shoulders when we are young so that she may support us when we are feeble and old.

So there is a balance between doctrine and mysticism. And there is a beauty in that balance.

We begin with orthodox teaching regarding faith and morality. What or who is God, and how does he want us to live? How do we live as his united people? These things are basic.

We then move on to deeper and higher things. We move on to Mystery.

It's like playing a guitar. I was always inspired by good music. It sparked something mystical and beautiful in my heart and soul. But in order to make good music, I had to embrace the discipline of long hours of study and practice. I practiced until my fingers bled. The mystical spark of the beauty of music inspired me to keep at it and keep on. Only after much study and practice, and copying other people's styles and songs, did my own style, sound, and song emerge.

The same thing is true of paradoxes, mysteries, and balance. We must find the balance between doctrine and mysticism, the mind and the heart, the known and the unknown, to find the beauty of God.

Both Beyond and Personal



God is a name we give to the One above all names. The Hebrews called him *YHWH*, or “the One beyond all comprehension or naming”; and *Elohim*, or “the One we can know” as both plural and neuter. The Greeks called him *Theos*. We call him God.

God is the Force behind all that is. He is the Force in every and beyond all force. But God is not merely a force.

God is also personal. He is *hypostasis*. He is not merely a *prosopon* (Greek, meaning “face” or “mask”), nor is he mere *physis* (Greek for “nature”). God is the Person. All persons flow from him and find their true personhood only in him.

God is good. Goodness must flow out to another. Yet God is One, so to whom does he flow? Must God create in order to have another to receive his goodness? No. That would reduce him to being merely a god, not God. He must flow out to Another *within the One* in order to be God. God must be plural and one. This is a paradox, but it remains a deeper truth. It both completes and is beyond logic.

Do we cling to a mere human and earthbound logic, or do we allow God to reveal a more perfect logic found in paradox?

One ties us to earth. The other launches us into eternity in the here and now.

Creation and the Creator



God is beyond space and time. He is infinite and omnipresent, or present everywhere in space and time, in infinity and eternity, all at once.

Creation bears God's traces. The Creator also works in and through creation. Jesus is the incarnation of God in space and time—God-with-us. But we also believe in the resurrection of the body, and in a real heaven and hell. This is far beyond what we can now comprehend. But we've glimpsed it already in science.

Most believe that we live in three dimensions; four, if we count time. But quantum physics now theorizes that there are at least twelve to sixteen potential dimensions. There could be even more. What are the other eight to twelve? We can only guess, but the ideas are myriad and mind boggling. The universe is multidimensional, and this is only the physical universe.

The Eastern Christian Fathers tell us that the human spirit has the capacity to intuit infinity and eternity in the here and now of space and time even though they are beyond our full intellectual, emotional, or sensual ability to grasp. When we are reborn by the Spirit of God, the human spirit inside us is reborn and awakened. It then becomes the primary faculty that is processed through our minds, emotions, and senses. We gain the capacity to glimpse both created and uncreated multidimensional reality.

Jesus exemplifies this most perfectly as Son of God and Son of Man. After his resurrection, Jesus can appear as himself or as someone else. He has physicality but can walk into a room without coming through the door or even the window.

The heavenly Jerusalem has physical streets of gold that are something we can relate to. But those streets are also transparent and beyond what we can relate to in our physical universe.

Our new life in Christ means that we share in his resurrection beginning here on earth and reaching its fullness in heaven. This is what we are made for, and where we are ultimately headed. Heaven is creation in its fullness, for it is in full communion with God the Creator. Heaven is the fullness of Creator and creation, the spiritual and the phenomenal.

We are made for a physical universe that is beyond the limited one we currently inhabit. We are transformed and completed through the grace of the Spirit in our spirits. "What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart, what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor 2:9). Yet when we experience it fully, we will know what we were made for, and that for which we inherently long.

Are we ready?

God's Love and Our Freedom



God pours out his goodness and love in creation. He does not need to, but he wants to and does so freely. Creation only finds its fulfillment in the Creator. All creation bears his traces.

God freely created human beings in his image and likeness. We are spirit, soul, and body—tripartite as a reflection of his Trinity. Like the smooth surface of a still pond, our humanity reflects divinity in a completely unique way on earth. When we sinned, we lost God's likeness but still bear his image. We were turned upside down when we made the body primary and covered the spirit and soul as if in deep slumber. Our pond is agitated but still reflects his image, albeit a fractured and broken one. We still hunger for him in our desire for truth, beauty, and love.

God sends no one to hell; we must choose that for ourselves. To go to hell is an obstinate insistence to live independently of God. Why would anyone choose to live apart from perfect goodness and love? That is called the "mystery of iniquity."

When creation departed through sin from full communion with God, it got off the path. "Off the path" is the meaning of *hamartia*, the primary Greek word for *sin*. We got lost in the desert and wilderness, all tangled up in the weeds of life, and could not find the Promised Land. Yet we continue to long for God because we are created in his image. We long for truth, beauty, goodness, and love, but cannot find it by our own power alone. We need God's help to get back on the path.

This is a natural revelation in the philosophies and religions of the world. The truth contained in them comes from

God and leads us back to God. But they are not perfect revelation. When used wrongly, they can lead us away from God.

God sent us the Law and the prophets through the Chosen People as extraordinary or supernatural revelation. From the burning bush on Sinai, to the Temple, to prophetic schools of the Judean and Galilean hills, God prepared a way for his full revelation. When all this was written in the Jewish scriptures, it was as though God sent us a “letter” to prepare us for his full personal visit among us.

God sent us his Son as that full revelation. In him he paid us a personal visit. All revelation before him, both natural and supernatural, pointed to him and finds its completion only in him. God’s Son, incarnated on earth, has a name. That name is Jesus. It is his name for all eternity.

Jesus dies out of love so all might live in his love.

God is our Father, who heals all fathers, mothers, and children from the fear and anger of abuse and from misunderstanding in broken families and homes. God the Father sends his Son, who heals broken relationships with brothers and sisters. God is the Spirit, who empowers us with an enthusiasm that brings the Father and the Son to us as a life-changing personal experience. Individuals and communities can then know God beyond a mere idea or theology. Each is in all, and all is in each, yet without confusion.

Jesus reveals all of this—and more—beyond our limited understanding or words.