

The Theological meaning of an anthropomorphism as well as an anthropopathism

Grace Bible Church
Pastor Teacher
Robert R. McLaughlin
Tree of Life
Weekly Review
010520

JOH 15:1-8, “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every {branch} that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither {can} you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you. By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and {so} prove to be My disciples.

As we begin this new year, we are ready to continue our study on the Doctrine of Dispensations as we are still noting the one dispensation that changed human history forever...and that is the Dispensation of the Hypostatic-union.

What a great way to usher in the new year 2020 with some of the principles that we noted during the last year concerning the place of numerology and some of the hidden mysteries that are found in the Word of GOD.

20/20 is a phrase that most of us have heard at some time or another which basically deals with our physical eyesight though it can also refer to our spiritual eyesight and doctrinal perception. Most of you need an understanding of what is called Theologically an anthropomorphism as well as an anthropopathism.

Therefore, we begin with two definitions as we continue. Those two words or doctrines and their definitions are very vital for us to understand.

Anthropopathism - A word used to ascribe a human thought or emotion to GOD a characteristic that HE does not actually possess, and one that is not actually a Divine attribute.

The purpose of an anthropopathism is to explain a divine policy to man in terms of man's frame of reference as far as the emotions, fear, anger, worry, and even more that apply a human emotion.

Anthropomorphism - A word used to ascribe to GOD certain parts of human anatomy that HE does not actually possess, but to use it as a form of typology to illustrate certain parts of the human body to express the love and unity of GOD with man. The word anthropomorphism comes from two Greek words, anthropos, meaning "man," and morphē, meaning "form."

Look at [JOH 10:27-28](#), **"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand."**

In Theological terms, anthropomorphisms use certain parts of the human body, such as the eyes, the ears, the hands, even the physical heart of man to describe the function of the Lord in the spiritual realm. In other words, anthropomorphisms are used for God acting on behalf of man and using the functions of those human parts to live the spiritual life that God has called us to live. It is the process of assigning human characteristics to God.

Human traits and actions such as talking, holding, reaching, feeling, hearing, and the like, all of which are chronicled throughout both the Old and New Testaments, are ascribed to the Creator. Under this principle we need to know and learn how our Lord uses anthropomorphisms and anthropopathism's.

[DEU 33:27](#), **"The eternal God is a dwelling place, And underneath are the everlasting arms; And He drove out the enemy from before you, And said, 'Destroy!'"**

You know, I really hope that all of you will develop a 20/20 attitude as you are seeing things clearly and perceiving things from the divine viewpoint. When you think of the coming New Year, 2020, I want you think of perceiving with your spiritual eyes 20/20.

[MAT 6:19-24](#), **"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."**

The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

Let me illustrate this principle by giving you one of the most misunderstood anthropomorphisms that we have throughout the Word of God. In fact, this anthropomorphism is used in the Bible more than any other anthropomorphism. The anthropomorphism that is used throughout the Word of God and it is used especially for salvation and spiritual growth.

Years ago that I did a study on how many times the word *heart* is used in the Word of God and I believe that I gave hundreds of times that the word heart is used as an anthropomorphism. Added to this, there is the individual who lives in their emotions and feelings as they pound on their chest and tell you that they love God and others with all their heart.

However, there were just two instances that I could find in the Word of God where the literal heart was used, and even then it could mean the spiritual heart. It's interesting that the word "heart" is used over one thousand times in the word of God both by the Hebrew and the Greek noun *kardia*, making it the most common anthropological term in the Scripture.

Anthropological refers to the study of the human body and the different functions of each part of the physical body. Throughout the word of God, the word heart has more references and applications than any other part of the human body.

The spiritual heart is used to reveal a person's true nature and it is the ultimate gift that man can give to God.

PRO 2:10, For wisdom will enter your heart, And knowledge will be pleasant to your soul;

PRO 4:23, Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life.

PRO 23:26, Give me your heart, my son, And let your eyes delight in my ways.

The "Heart" occurs over **one thousand times** in the Bible, making it the most common anthropological term in the Scripture. It denotes a person's center for both physical and emotional-intellectual-moral activities; sometimes it is used figuratively for any inaccessible thing. The point is that we should always look at the word heart in the Bible as a system of thinking having nothing to do with our feelings or emotions and everything to do with our thinking and our thoughts.

Let me illustrate how the Apostle Paul used anthropomorphism's and anthropomorphism to the believers in Ephesus when he said such things as in **EPH 1:18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened.**

Notice that this has nothing to do with the physical eyes or the physical heart but it has to do with the spiritual eyes and the spiritual heart or soul perception. One of the functions of the heart is to protect the souls of believers from being discouraged or worn out which is one of the many reasons given in **EPH 3:13, Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory.**

You see, we read of God's actions, emotions, and appearance in human terms, or at least in words we normally accept and associate with humans.

For example, in [LEV 20:6](#), God is said to have a face even though God doesn't have a face, only the humanity of Jesus Christ has a face and He was not even born at that time. We know that the entire Trinity does not have a face, only the humanity or the human body of our Lord Jesus Christ has a literal face as [JOH 4:24](#) states; **“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”**

[DEU 11:12](#), a land for which the Lord your God cares; the eyes of the Lord your God are always on it, from the beginning even to the end of the year.

Do these verses mean that God literally has eyes, a face, hands and feet?

No!

God is spirit, not flesh and blood, but because we are not spirit, these anthropomorphisms help us to understand God's nature and actions. With this I must add one more doctrinal principle to complete the new year with the new messages that are about to come. Like parts of the human anatomy, human emotions are also ascribed to God as anthropomorphism's.

God felt sorry; [GEN 6:6](#).

God gets jealous; [EXO 20:5](#).

God is moved by pity or compassion; [JDG 2:18](#).

God is grieved over making Saul Israel's first king; [ISA 15:35](#).

The Lord changed His mind [EXO 32:14](#).

And one of the misunderstood passages in the entire Bible is the anthropomorphism behind [ROM 9:13](#), where our Lord said **“Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”** Anthropomorphisms can be helpful in enabling us to at least partially comprehend the incomprehensible, know the unknowable, and fathom the unfathomable. But God is God, and we are not, and all of our human expressions are intrinsically inadequate in explaining fully and properly the divine. But human words, emotions, features, and knowledge are all that our Creator provided us, so these are all that we can understand in this earthly world at this time. My whole point of bringing you this introduction to the New Year 20-20 is so that I can remind you that the word Dispensation refers to both the “divine outline” and the “divine interpretation” of human history by which believers living at a specific time in history can orient to God's will, plan, and purpose for their lives.

How?

Once again, the answer to that is two-fold:

- After salvation, the most important decision that a believer makes in life is in the selection of their right-pastor-teacher.
- Divine Discipline.

Perhaps the most important decisions an individual makes after salvation is in the selection of their own pastor-teacher that God the Holy Spirit assigned them to; [1PE 5:5](#); [ACT 20:35](#).

I know that there will be many believers who disagree with that because they think that it is much more important for you to marry the right person than it is to choose the right pastor-teacher. If that is how you think, you have every right to make whatever choice you decide.