

# The Doctrine of God

from *Great Doctrines of the Bible* by William Evans

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## **I. HIS EXISTENCE.**

### **1. TAKEN FOR GRANTED BY THE SCRIPTURE WRITERS:**

It does not seem to have occurred to any of the writers of either the Old or the New Testaments to attempt to prove or to argue for the existence of God. Everywhere and at all times it is a fact taken for granted. "A God capable of proof would be no God at all" (Jacobi). He is the self-existent One (Exod. 3:14) and the Source of all life (John 5:26).

The sublime opening of the Scriptures announces the fact of God and His existence: "In the beginning God" (Gen. 1:1). Nor is the rise or dawn of the idea of God in the mind of man depicted. Psa. 14:1: "The fool hath said in his heart. There is no God," indicates not a disbelief in the existence, but rather in the active interest of God in the affairs of men—He seemed to hide Himself from the affairs of men (See Job 22:12-14).

The Scriptures further recognize that men not only know of the existence of God, but have also a certain circle of ideas as to who and what He is (Rom. 1:18-19).

No one but a "fool" will deny the fact of God. "What! no God? A watch, and no key for it? A watch with a main-spring broken, and no jeweler to fix it? A watch, and no repair shop? A time-card and a train, and nobody to run it? A star lit, and nobody to pour oil in to keep the wick burning? A garden, and no gardener? Flowers, and no florist? Conditions, and no conditioner?" He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh at such absurd atheism.

### **2. THE ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.**

[Footnote: A fuller and complete presentation of these arguments for the Existence of God may be found in the works of Dr. Augustus H. Strong and Dr. Francis L. Patten, to whom the author is here indebted.]

These arguments may not prove conclusively that God is, but they do show that in order to the existence of any knowledge, thought, reason, conscience in man, we must assume that God is (Strong). It is said of the beautiful, "It may be shown, but not proved." So we say of the existence of God. These arguments are probable, not demonstrative.

For this reason they supplement each other, and constitute a series of evidences which is cumulative in its nature. Though taken singly, none of them can be considered absolutely decisive, they together furnish a corroboration of our primitive conviction of God's existence, which is of great practical value, and is in itself sufficient to bind the moral actions of men. A bundle of rods may not be broken even though each one separately may; the strength of the bundle is the strength of the whole. If in practical affairs we were to hesitate to act until we have absolute and demonstrable certainty, we should never begin to move at all.

Instead of doubting everything that can be doubted, let us rather doubt nothing until we are compelled to doubt.

The late Dr. Orr said: "What we mean by the proof of God's existence is simply that there are necessary acts of thought by which we rise from the finite to the infinite, from the caused to the uncaused, from the contingent to the necessary, from the reason involved in the structure of the universe to a universal and eternal reason, which is the ground of all, from morality in conscience to a moral Lawgiver and Judge. In this connection the theoretical proofs constitute an inseparable unity—'constitute together,' as Dr. Stirling declares, 'but the undulations of a single wave, which wave is but a natural rise and ascent to God, on the part of man's own thought, with man's own experience and consciousness as the object before him.'"

Religion was not produced by proofs of God's existence, and will not be destroyed by its insufficiency to some minds. Religion existed before argument; in fact, it is the preciousness of religion that leads to the seeking for all possible confirmations of the reality of God.

### **a) Universality of Belief in the Existence of God.**

#### **(1) The fact stated and proven:**

Man everywhere believes in the existence of a supreme Being or beings to whom he is morally responsible and to whom propitiation needs to be made.

Such belief may be crudely, even grotesquely stated and manifested, but the reality of the fact is no more invalidated by such crudeness than the existence of a father is invalidated by the crude attempts of a child to draw a picture of its father.

It has been claimed by some that there are or were tribes in inland Africa that possessed no idea or conception of God. Moffat,

Livingstone's father-in-law, made such a claim, but Livingstone, after a thorough study of the customs and languages of such tribes, conclusively showed that Moffat was wrong.

Nor should the existence of such few tribes, even if granted, violate the fact we are here considering, any more than the existence of some few men who are blind, lame, deaf, and dumb would make untrue the statement and fact that man is a seeing, hearing, speaking, and walking creature. The fact that some nations do not have the multiplication table does no violence to arithmetic.

Concerning so-called atheists in Christian lands: it may be questioned if there are really any such beings. Hume, known as a famous skeptic, is reported to have said to Ferguson, as together they looked up into the starry sky: "Adam, there is a God." Voltaire, the atheist, prayed to God in a thunderstorm. Ingersoll, when charged with being an atheist, indignantly refuted the charge, saying: "I am not an atheist; I do not say that there is no God; I am an agnostic; I do not know that there is a God." "I thank God that I am an atheist," were the opening words of an argument to disprove the existence of God. A new convert to atheism was once heard to say to a coterie of unbelievers: "I have gotten rid of the idea of a supreme Being, and I thank God for it."

## **(2) Whence comes this universal belief in the existence of God?**

aa) *Not from outside sources*, such as reason, tradition, or even the Scriptures.

*Not from reason or argument*, for many who believe in God have not given any time to reasoning and arguing the question; some, indeed, intellectually, could not. Others who have great powers of intellect, and who have reasoned and argued on the subject are professed disbelievers in God. Belief in God is not the result of logical arguments, else the Bible would have given us proofs.

*Nor did this universal belief come from tradition*, for "Tradition," says Dr. Patton, "can perpetuate only what has been originated."

*Nor can it be said that this belief came from the Scriptures even*, for, as has been well said, unless a man had a knowledge of the God from whom the Scriptures came, the Revelation itself could have no authority for him. The very idea of Scripture as a Revelation, presupposes belief in a God who can make it.—*Newman Smith*. Revelation must assume the existence of God.

bb) *This universal belief comes from within man*.

All the evidence points to the conclusive fact that this universal faith in the existence of God is innate in man, and comes from rational intuition.

### **(3) The weight and force of this argument.**

The fact that all men everywhere believe in the existence of a supreme Being or beings to whom they are morally responsible, is a strong argument in favor of its truth. So universal an effect must have a cause as universal, otherwise we have an effect without any assignable cause. Certain is it that this argument makes the burden of proof to rest upon those who deny the existence of God.

#### **b) The Argument from Cause: Cosmological.**

When we see a thing we naturally ask for the cause of that thing. We see this world in which we live, and ask how it came to be. Is it self-originating, or is the cause of its being outside of itself? Is its cause finite or infinite?

That it could not come into being of itself seems obvious; no more than nails, brick, mortar, wood, paints, colors, form into a house or building of themselves; no more than the type composing a book came into order of itself. When Liebig was asked if he believed that the grass and flowers which he saw around him grew by mere chemical forces, he replied: "No; no more than I could believe that the books on botany describing them could grow by mere chemical forces." No theory of an "eternal series" can account for this created universe. No matter how long a chain you may have, you must have a staple somewhere from which it depends. An endless perpendicular chain is an impossibility. "Every house is builded by some man," says the Bible; so this world in which we live was built by a designing mind of infinite power and wisdom.

So is it when we consider man. Man exists; but he owes his existence to some cause. Is this cause within or without himself, finite or infinite? Trace our origin back, if you will, to our first parent, Adam; then you must ask, How did he come into being? The doctrine of the eternity of man cannot be supported. Fossil remains extend back but 6,000 years. Man is an effect; he has not always existed. Geology proves this. That the first Cause must have been an intelligent Being is proven by the fact that we are intelligent beings ourselves.

#### **c) The Argument from Design: Teleological.**

A watch proves not only a maker, an artificer, but also a designer; a

watch is made for a purpose. This is evident in its structure. A thoughtful, designing mind was back of the watch. So is it with the world in which we live. These "ends" in nature are not to be attributed to "natural results," or "natural selection," results which are produced without intelligence, nor are they "the survival of the fittest," instances in which "accident and fortuity have done the work of mind." No, they are the results of a superintending and originating intelligence and will.

**d) The Argument from Being: Ontological.**

Man has an idea of an infinite and perfect Being. From whence this idea? From finite and imperfect beings like ourselves? Certainly not. Therefore this idea argues for the existence of an infinite and perfect Being: such a Being must exist, as a person, and not a mere thought.

**e) The Moral Argument; Anthropological.**

Man has an intellectual and a moral nature, hence his Creator must be an intellectual and moral Being, a Judge, and Lawgiver. Man has an emotional nature; only a Being of goodness, power, love, wisdom and holiness could satisfy such a nature, and these things denote the existence of a personal God.

Conscience in man says: "Thou shalt," and "Thou shalt not," "I ought," and "I ought not." These mandates are not self-imposed. They imply the existence of a Moral Governor to whom we are responsible. Conscience,—there it is in the breast of man, an ideal Moses thundering from an invisible Sinai the Law of a holy Judge. Said Cardinal Newman: "Were it not for the voice speaking so clearly in my conscience and my heart, I should be an atheist, or a pantheist, when I looked into the world." Some things are wrong, others right: love is right, hatred is wrong. Nor is a thing right because it pleases, or wrong because it displeases. Where did we get this standard of right and wrong? Morality is obligatory, not optional. Who made it obligatory? Who has a right to command my life? We must believe that there is a God, or believe that the very root of our nature is a lie.

**f) The Argument from Congruity.**

If we have a key which fits all the wards of the lock, we know that it is the right key. If we have a theory which fits all the facts in the case, we know then that we have the right theory. "Belief in a self-existent, personal God is in harmony with all the facts of our mental and moral nature, as well as with all the phenomena of the natural world. If God exists, a universal belief in his existence is natural enough; the irresistible impulse to ask for a first cause is accounted for; *our*

religious nature has an object; the uniformity of natural law finds an adequate explanation, and human history is vindicated from the charge of being a vast imposture. Atheism leaves all these matters without an explanation, and makes, not history alone, but our moral and intellectual nature itself, an imposture and a lie."—*Patton*.

### **g) The Argument from Scripture.**

A great deal of our knowledge rests upon the testimony of others. Now the Bible is competent testimony. If the testimony of travelers is enough to satisfy us as to the habits, customs, and manners of the peoples of the countries they visit, and which we have never seen, why is not the Bible, if it is authentic history, be enough to satisfy us with its evidence as to the existence of God?

Some facts need more evidence than others, we know. This is true of the fact of the existence of God. But the Bible history is sufficient to satisfy every reasonable demand. The history of the Jews, prophecy, is not explainable minus God. If we cannot believe in the existence of God on the testimony of the Bible we might as well burn our books of history. A man cannot deny the truth of the testimony of the Bible unless he says plainly: "No amount of testimony will convince me of the supernatural."

Scripture does not attempt to prove the existence of God; it asserts, assumes, and declares that the knowledge of God is universal, Rom. 1:19-21, 28, 32; 2:15. It asserts that God has wrought this great truth in the very warp and woof of every man's being, so that nowhere is He without this witness. The preacher may, therefore, safely follow the example of the Scripture in assuming that there is a God. Indeed he must unhesitatingly and explicitly assert it as the Scripture does, believing that "His eternal power and divinity" are things that are clearly seen and perceived through the evidences of His handiwork which abound on every hand.

## **II. THE NATURE OF GOD: (Vs. Agnosticism).**

### **1. THE SPIRITUALITY OF GOD: (Vs. Materialism). "GOD IS SPIRIT."**

#### **a) Statement of the Fact, John 4:24: "God is Spirit."**

Meaning: The Samaritan woman's question, "Where is God to be found?" etc. On Mt. Zion or Gerizim? Christ's answer: God is not to be confined to any one place (cf. Acts 7:48; 17:25, 1 Kings 8:27). God must be worshipped *in spirit* as distinguished from place, form, or

other sensual limitations (4:21); and *in truth* as distinguished from false conceptions resulting from imperfect knowledge (4:22).

**b) Light on "God is Spirit," from other Scriptures.**

Luke 24:39: "A spirit hath not flesh and bones," i. e., has not body, or parts like human beings; incorporeal; not subject to human limitations.

Col. 1:15: "The image of the invisible God."

1 Tim. 1:17 (R.V.): "Now unto the King incorruptible, invisible."

These passages teach that God has nothing of a material or bodily nature. Sight sees only objects of the material world, but God is not of the nature of the material world, hence He cannot be seen with the material eye—at least not now.

**c) Light Derived from Cautions Against Representing God by Graven Images:**

Deut. 4:15-23; Isa. 40:25; Exod. 20:4. Study these passages carefully and note that the reason why images were forbidden was because no one had ever seen God, and consequently could not picture how He looked, and, further, there was nothing on the earth that could resemble Him.

**d) Definition of "God is Spirit" in the Light of All This:**

God is invisible, incorporeal, without parts, without body, without passions, and therefore free from all limitations; He is apprehended not by the senses, but by the soul; hence God is above sensuous perceptions. 1 Cor. 2:6-16 intimates that without the teaching of God's Spirit we cannot know God. He is not a material Being. "LaPlace swept the heavens with his telescope, but could not find anywhere a God. He might just as well have swept a kitchen with his broom." Since God is not a material Being, He cannot be apprehended by physical means.

**e) Questions and Problems with Reference to the Statement that "God is Spirit."**

**(1) 'What is meant by statement that man was made "in the image of God"?'**

Col 3:10; Eph. 4:24 declare that this "image" consists in "righteousness, knowledge, and holiness of truth." By that is meant that the image of God in man consisted in intellectual and moral likeness rather than physical resemblance. Some think that 1 Thess.

5:23 indicates that the "trinity of man"—body, soul, and spirit—constitutes that image and likeness.

**(2) What is meant by the anthropomorphic expressions used of God?**

For example: God is said to have hands, feet, arms, eyes, ears He sees, feels, hears, walks, etc. Such expressions are to be understood only in the sense of being human expressions used in order to bring the infinite within the comprehension of the finite. How otherwise could we understand God saving by means of human expressions, in figures that we all can understand!

**(3) How are such passages as Exod. 24:10 and 33:18-23 in which it is distinctly stated that men saw the God of Israel, to be reconciled with such passages as John 1:18; "No man hath seen God at any time," and Exod. 33:20: "There shall no man see me and live"?**

Answer:

*aa) Spirit can be manifested in visible form:*

John 1:32: "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove (or in the form of a dove)." So throughout the ages the invisible God has manifested Himself in visible form. (See Judges 6:34: The Spirit of the Lord clothed Himself with Gideon.)

*bb) On this truth is based the doctrine of "The Angel of the Lord"*

in the Old Testament: Gen 16:7, 10, 13. Note here how the Angel of the Lord is identified with Jehovah Himself, cf. v. 10, 13. Also Gen. 22:12—"The angel of the Lord...not withheld from *me*." In 18:1-16, one of the three angels clearly and definitely identifies himself with Jehovah. Compare chapter 19, where it is seen that only two of the angels have come to Sodom; the other has remained behind. "Who was this one, this remaining angel? Gen.18:17, 20 answers the question; v. 22 reads: "And Abraham stood yet before the Lord. In Exod. 13:21 it is *Jehovah*, while in 14:19 it is the Angel that went before Israel. Thus was the way prepared for the incarnation, for the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament is undoubtedly the second person of the Trinity. This seems evident from Judges 13:18 compared with Isa. 9:6, in both of which passages, clearly referring to Christ, the name "Wonderful" occurs. Also the omission of the definite article "the" from before the expression "the Angel of the Lord," and the substitution of "an" points to the same truth. This change is made in the Revised Version.

*cc) What was it then that the elders of Israel saw when it is said they*

*saw the "God of Israel"?*

Certainly it was not God in His real essence, God as He is in Himself, for no man can have that vision and live. John 1:18 is clear on that point: "No man hath seen God at any time." The emphasis in this verse is on the word "God," and may read, "GOD no one has seen at any time." In 5:37 Jesus says: "Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape." From This it seems clear that the "seeing" here, the which has been the privilege of no man, refers to the essence rather than to the person of God, if such a distinction can really be made. This is apparent also from the omission of the definite article before God, as well as from the position of God in the sentence. None but the Son has really seen God as God, as He really is. What, then, did these men see?

Evidently an *appearance* of God in some form to their outward senses; perhaps the form of a man, seeing mention is made of his "feet." The vision may have been too bright for human eyes to gaze upon fully, but it was *a* vision of God. Yet it was only a manifestation of God, for, although Moses was conversing with God, he yet said: "If I have found grace in thy sight, show me thy face." Moses had been granted exceeding great and precious privileges in that he had been admitted into close communion with God, more so than any other member of the human race. But still unsatisfied he longed for more; so in v. 18 he asks to see the unveiled glory of God, that very thing which no man in the flesh can ever see and live; but, no, this cannot be. By referring to Exod. 33:18-23 we find God's answer: "Thou canst not see my face... thou shalt see my back parts, but my face shall not be seen." (Num. 12:8 throws light upon the subject, if compared with Exod. 33:11.)

"The secret remained unseen; the longing unsatisfied; and the nearest approach to the beatific vision reached by him with whom God spake face to face, as friend with friend, was to be hidden in the cleft of the rock, to be made aware of an awful shadow, and to hear the voice of the unseen."

## **2. THE PERSONALITY OF GOD: (Vs. Pantheism).**

Pantheism maintains that this universe in its ever changing conditions is but the manifestation of the one ever changing universal substance which is God; thus all, everything is God, and God is everything; God is all, all is God. Thus God is identified with nature and not held to be independent of and separate from it. God is, therefore, a necessary but an unconscious force working in the world.

## **The Bearing of the Personality of God on the Idea of Religion.**

True religion may be defined as the communion between two persons: God and man. Religion is a personal relationship between God in heaven, and man on the earth. If God were not a person there could be no communion; if both God and man were one there could be no communion, and, consequently, no religion. An independent personal relationship on both sides is absolutely necessary to communion. Man can have no communion with an influence, a force, an impersonal something; nor can an influence have any moving or affection towards man. It is absolutely necessary to the true definition of religion that both God and man be persons. God is person, not force or influence.

### **a) Definition of Personality.**

Personality exists where there is intelligence, mind, will, reason, individuality, self-consciousness, and self-determination. There must be not mere consciousness—for the beast has that—but *self*-consciousness. Nor is personality determination—for the beast has this, too, even though this determination be the result of influences from without—but *self*-determination, the power by which man from an act of his own free will determines his acts from within.

Neither corporeality nor substance, as we understand these words, are necessarily, if at all, involved in personality. There may be true personality without either or both of these.

### **b) Scripture Teaching on the Personality of God.**

(In this connection it will be well to refer to the Ontological Argument for the Existence of God above.)

#### **(1) Exod 3:14:—"I AM THAT I AM."**

This name is wonderfully significant. Its central idea is that of existence and personality. The words signify "I AM, I WAS, I SHALL BE," so suggestively corresponding with the New Testament statement concerning God: "Who wast, and art, and art to come."

All the names given to God in the Scripture denote personality. Here are some of them:

Jehovah-Jireh: The Lord will provide (Gen. 22:13, 14).

Jehovah-Rapha: The Lord that healeth (Exod. 15:26).

Jehovah-Nissi: The Lord our Banner (Exod. 17:8-15).

Jehovah-Shalom: The Lord our Peace (Judges 6:24).

Jehovah-Ra-ah: The Lord my Shepherd (Psa. 23:1).

Jehovah-Tsidkenu: The Lord our Righteousness (Jer. 23:6).

Jehovah-Shammah: The Lord is present (Ezek. 48:35).

Moreover, the personal pronouns ascribed to God prove personality: John 17:3, et al. "To know thee"—we cannot know an influence in the sense in which the word know is here used.

*Statement:* All through the Scriptures names and personal pronouns are ascribed to God which undeniably prove that God is a Person.

**(2) A sharp distinction is drawn in the Scriptures between the gods of heathen and the Lord God of Israel (See Jer. 10:10-16).**

Note the context: v. 3-9: Idols are things, not persons; they cannot walk, speak, do good or evil. God is wiser than the men who made these idols; if the idol-makers are persons, much more is God.

See the sharp contrast drawn between dead idols and the living, personal, true and only God: Acts 14:15; 1 Thess. 1:9; Psa. 94:9, 10.

*Statement:* God is to be clearly distinguished from things which have no life; he is a living Person.

**(3) Attributes of personality are ascribed to God in the Scriptures.**

God repents (Gen. 6:6); grieves (Gen 6:6); is angry (1 Kings 11:9); is jealous (Deut. 6:15); loves (Rev. 3:19); hates (Prov. 6:16).

*Statement:* God possesses the attributes of personality, and therefore is a Person.

**(4) The relation which God bears to the Universe and to Men, as set forth in the Scriptures, can be explained only on the basis that God is a Person.**

Deism maintains that God, while the Creator of the world, yet sustains no further relations to it. He made it just as the clock-maker makes a self-winding clock: makes it and then leaves it to run itself without any interference on His part. Such teaching as this finds no sanction in the Bible. What are God's relations to the universe and to men?

*aa) He is the Creator of the Universe and Man.*

Gen. 1:1, 26; John. 1:1-3. These verses contain vital truths. The

universe did not exist from eternity, nor was it made from existing matter. It did not proceed as an emanation from the infinite, but was summoned into being by the decree of God. Science, by disclosing to us the marvellous power and accuracy of natural law, compels us to believe in a superintending intelligence who is infinite. Tyndall said: "I have noticed that it is not during the hours of my clearness and vigor that the doctrine of material atheism commends itself to my mind."

(In this connection the Arguments from Cause and Design above, may be properly considered.)

*Statement:* The Creation of the Universe and Man proves the Personality of the Creator—God.

*bb) God sustains certain relations to the Universe and Man which He has made.*

Heb 1:3—"Uphold all things." Col. 1:15-17—"By him all things hold together." Psa. 104:27-30—"All creatures wait upon Him for "their meat in due season." Psa. 75:6, 7—"Promotion" among men, the putting down of one man and the setting up of another, is from the hand of God.

What do we learn from these scriptures regarding the relation of God to this universe, to man, and to all God's creatures?

*First.* That all things are held together by Him; if not, this old world would go to pieces quickly. The uniformity and accuracy of natural law compels us to believe in a personal God who intelligently guides and governs the universe. Disbelief in this fact would mean utter confusion. Not blind chance, but a personal God is at the helm.

*Second.* That the physical supplies for all God's creatures are in His hand: He feeds them all. What God gives we gather. If He withholds provision we die.

*Third.* That God has His hand in history, guiding and shaping the affairs of nations. Victor Hugo said: "Waterloo was God."

*Fourth.* Consider with what detail God's care is described: The sparrows, the lilies, the hairs of the head, the tears of His children, etc. See how these facts are clearly portrayed in the following scriptures: Matt. 6:28-30; 10:29, 30; Gen. 39:21, with 50:20; Dan. 1:9; Job 1:12.

*Statement:* The personality of God is shown by His active, interest and participation all things, even the smallest things, in the universe, the experience of man, and in the life of all His creatures.

## **THE UNITY OF GOD: (Vs. Polytheism).**

There are three monotheistic religions in the world: Judaism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism. The second is a development of the first; the third is an outgrowth of both.

The doctrine of the Unity of God is held in contradistinction to *Polytheism*, which is belief in a multiplicity of gods; *Tri-theism*, which teaches that there are three Gods—that is, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are, specifically, three distinct Gods; and to *Dualism*, which teaches that there are two independent divine beings or eternal principles, the one good, and the other evil, as set forth especially in Gnostic systems, such as Parseism.

### **a) The Scriptures Assert the Unity of God.**

Deut. 6:4—"Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord"; or, "The Lord our God, the Lord is one." Isa. 44:6-8—"First...last...beside me there is no God." Isa. 45:5—"There is none else, there is no God beside me." 1 Tim. 2:5 "There is one God." 1 Cor. 8:4—"There is none other God but one."

That God is one, that there is no other, that He has no equal is the forceful testimony of above fifty passages in the Scriptures. The fundamental duty of life, namely, the devotion of the entire being to the Lord, is based upon the Unity of God: "The Lord...is one... therefore thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all* thy heart," etc.

No other truth of the Scripture, particularly of the Old Testament, receives more prominence than that of the Unity of God. This truth is clearly pronounced also in the material universe; it is the introduction and conclusion of all scientific researches. Any other representation contradicts both creation and revelation. Its denial is a proper object for the ridicule of every thinking man, and of the disbelief of every orthodox Christian. Let this, then, be our first and necessary conclusion—that Deity, whether creating, inspiring, or otherwise manifesting itself, is one God; one, and no more.—*Cerdo*.

A multiplication of Gods is a contradiction; there can be but one God. There can be but one absolutely perfect, supreme, and almighty Being. Such a Being cannot be multiplied, nor pluralized. There can be but one ultimate, but one all-inclusive, but one God.

Monotheism, then, not Tri-theism, is the doctrine set forth in the Scriptures. "If the thought that wishes to be orthodox had less tendency to become tri-theistic, the thought that claims to be free

would be less Unitarian."—*Moberly*.

## **b) The Nature of the Divine Unity.**

The doctrine of the Unity of God does not exclude the idea of a plurality of persons in the Godhead. Not that there are three persons in each person of the Godhead, if we use in both cases the term *person* in one and the same sense. We believe, therefore, that there are three persons in the Godhead, but one God. Anti-trinitarians represent the evangelical church as believing in three Gods, but this is not true; it believes in one God, but three persons in the Godhead.

### **(1) The Scriptural use of the word "One."**

Gen. 2:24—"And they two (husband and wife) shall be one flesh."  
Gen. 11:6—"The people is one." I Cor. 3:6-8—"He that planteth and he that watereth are one." 12:13—"All baptized into one body." John 17:22, 23—"That they may be one, even as we are one ... that they may be made perfect in one."

The word "one" in these scriptures is used in a collective sense; the unity here spoken of is a compound one, like unto that used in such expressions as "a cluster of grapes," or "all the people rose as one man." The unity of the Godhead is not simple but compound. The Hebrew word for "one" (*yacheed*) in the absolute sense, and which is used in such expressions as "the only one," is *never* used to express the unity of the Godhead. On the contrary, the Hebrew word "*echad*," meaning "one" in the sense of a compound unity, as seen in the above quoted scriptures, is the one used always to describe the divine unity.

### **(2) The Divine Name "God" is a plural word; plural pronouns are used of God.**

The Hebrew word for God (*Elohim*) is used most frequently in the plural form. God often uses plural pronouns in speaking of Himself, e. g., Gen. 1:26—"Let *us* make man." Isa. 6:8—"Who will go for *us*?" Gen. 3:22—"Behold, man is become as "one of *us*."

Some would say that the "us" in Gen. 1:26—"Let us make man," refers to God's consultation with the angels with whom He takes counsel before He does anything of importance; but Isa. 40:14—"But of whom took he counsel," shows that such is not the case; and Gen. 1:27 contradicts this idea, for it repeats the statement "in the image of God," not in the image of angels; also that "GOD created man in HIS OWN image, in the image of God (not angels) created he him." The "us" of Gen. 1:26, therefore, is properly understood of plural majesty, as

indicating the dignity and majesty of the speaker. The proper translation of this verse should be not "let us make," but "we will make," indicating the language of resolve rather than that of consultation.

#### **4. THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY: (Vs. Unitarianism).**

The doctrine of the Trinity is, in its last analysis, a deep mystery that cannot be fathomed by the finite mind. That it is taught in the Scripture, however, there can be no reasonable doubt. It is a doctrine to be believed even though it cannot be thoroughly understood.

##### **a) The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Old Testament.**

This doctrine is not so much declared as intimated in the Old Testament. The burden of the Old Testament message seems to be the unity of God. Yet the doctrine of the Trinity is clearly intimated in a four-fold way:

First: In the plural names of the Deity; e. g., Elohim.

Second: Personal pronouns used of the Deity. Gen. 1:26; 11:7; Isa.6:8.

Third: The Theophanies, especially the "Angel of the Lord." Gen.16 and 18.

Fourth: The work of the Holy Spirit. Gen. 1:2; Judges 6:34.

##### **b) The Doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament.**

The doctrine of the Trinity is clearly taught in the New Testament; it is not merely intimated, as in the Old Testament, but explicitly declared. This is evident from the following:

First: The baptism of Christ: Matt 3:16, 17. Here the Father speaks from heaven; the Son is being baptized in the Jordan; and the Spirit descends in the form of a dove.

Second: In the Baptismal Formula: Matt. 28:19—"Baptizing them in the name (sing.) of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Third: The Apostolic Benediction: 2 Cor. 13:14—"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ...love of God...communion of the Holy Ghost."

Fourth: Christ Himself teaches it in John 14:16—"I will pray the *Father*...He will give you another *Comforter*."

Fifth: The New Testament sets forth:

A Father who is God, Rom. 1:7.

A son who is God, Heb. 1:8.

A Holy Spirit who is God, Acts 5:3, 4.

The whole is summed up in the words of Boardman: The Father is all the fulness of the Godhead invisible, John 1:18; the Son is all the fulness of Godhead manifested, John 1:14-18; the Spirit is all the fulness of the Godhead acting immediately upon the creature, 1 Cor. 2:9, 10.

### **III. THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD:**

It is difficult to clearly distinguish between the attributes and the nature of God. It is maintained by some that such a division ought not to be made; that these qualities of God which we call attributes are in reality part of His nature and essence. Whether this be exactly so or not, our purpose in speaking of the attributes of God is for convenience in the study of the doctrine of God.

It has been customary to divide the attributes of God into two classes: the Natural, and the Moral. The Natural attributes are Omniscience, Omnipotence, Omnipresence, Eternity; the Moral attributes: Holiness, Righteousness, Faithfulness, Mercy and Loving-kindness, and Love.

#### **1. THE NATURAL ATTRIBUTES:**

##### **a) The Omniscience of God.**

God Is a Spirit, and as such has knowledge. He is a perfect Spirit, and as such has perfect knowledge. By Omniscience is meant that God knows all things and is absolutely perfect in knowledge.

##### **(1) Scriptures setting forth the fact of God's Omniscience.**

*In general:* Job 11:7, 8—"Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" Job's friends professed to have discovered the reason for his affliction, for, forsooth, had they not found out the secrets of the divine wisdom unto perfection. No, such is beyond their human, finite ken. Isa. 40:28—"There is no searching of his understanding." Jacob's captive condition might lead him to lose trust and faith in God. But Jacob has not seen all God's plans—no man has. Job, 37:16—"The wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge." Could Job explain the wonders of the natural phenomena around him? Much less the purposes and judgments of God. Psa. 147:5—"His understanding is infinite." Of His understanding there is no number, no computation. Israel is not lost sight of. He who can number and name and call the

stars is able also to call each of them by name even out of their captivity. His knowledge is not to be measured by ours. 1 John 3:20—"God knoweth all things." Our hearts may pass over certain things, and fail to see some things that should be confessed. God, however, sees all things. Rom. 11:33—"How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out." The mysterious purposes and decrees of God touching man and his salvation are beyond all human comprehension.

*In detail, and by way of illustration:*

*aa) His knowledge is absolutely comprehensive:*

Prov. 15:3—"The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch upon the evil and the good." How could He reward and punish otherwise? Not one single thing occurring in any place escapes His knowledge. 5:21—"For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings." We may have habits hidden from our fellow creatures, but not from God.

*bb) God has a perfect knowledge of all that is in nature:*

Psa. 147:4—"He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names." Man cannot (Gen. 15:5). How, then, can Israel say, "My way is hid from the Lord?" Cf. Isa. 40:26, 27. Matt. 10:29—"One... sparrow shall not fall to the ground without your Father." Much less would one of His children who perchance might be killed for His name's sake, fall without His knowledge.

*cc) God has a perfect knowledge of all that transpires in human experience:*

Prov. 5:21—"For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings." All a man's doings are weighed by God. How this should affect his conduct! Psa. 139:2, 3—"Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways." Before our thoughts are fully developed, our unspoken sentences, the rising feeling in our hearts, our activity, our resting, all that we do from day to day is known and sifted by God. v. 4—"There is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether." Not only thoughts and purposes, but words spoken, idle, good, or bad. Exod. 3:7—"I have seen the affliction...heard the cry: know the sorrows of my people which are in Egypt." The tears and grief which they dared not show to their taskmasters, God saw and noted. Did God know of their trouble in Egypt? It seemed to them as

though He did not. But He did. Matt. 10:29, 30—"But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." What minute knowledge is this! Exod 3:19—"And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand." Here is intimate knowledge as to what a single individual will do. Isa. 48:18—"O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace have been as a river," etc. God knows what our lives would have been if only we had acted and decided differently.

*dd) God has a perfect knowledge of all that transpires in human history.*

With what precision are national changes and destinies foretold and depicted in Dan. 2 and 8! Acts 15:18—"Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world (ages)." In the context surrounding this verse are clearly set forth the religious changes that were to characterize the generations to come, the which have been so far literally, though not fully, fulfilled.

*ee) God knows—from, all eternity to all eternity what will take place.*

The omniscience of God is abduced as the proof that He alone is God, especially as contrasted with the gods (idols) of the heathen: Isa. 48:5-8—"I have even from the beginning declared it unto thee; before it came to pass I showed it thee...I have showed thee new things from this time, even hidden things," etc. 46:9, 10—"I am God...declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." Here God is announcing to His prophets things that are to occur in the future which it is impossible for the human understanding to know or reach. There is no past, present, future with God. Everything is one great living present. We are like a man standing by a river in a low place, and who, consequently, can see that part of the river only that passes by him; but he who is aloof in the air may see the whole course of the river, how it rises, and how it runs. Thus is it with God.

## **(2) Certain problems in connection with the doctrine of the Omniscience of God.**

How the divine intelligence can comprehend so vast and multitudinous and exhaustless a number of things must forever surpass our comprehension. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:33). "There is no searching of his understanding; it is beyond human computation." We must expect,

therefore, to stand amazed in the presence of such matchless wisdom, and find problems in connection therewith which must for the time, at least, remain unsolved.

Again, we must not confound the foreknowledge of God with His foreordination. The two things are, in a sense, distinct. The fact that God foreknows a thing makes that thing certain but not necessary. His foreordination is based upon His foreknowledge. Pharaoh was responsible for the hardening of his heart even though that hardening process was foreknown and foretold by God. The actions of men are considered certain but not necessary by reason of the divine foreknowledge.

## **b) The Omnipotence of God.**

The Omnipotence of God is that attribute by which He can bring to pass everything which He wills. God's power admits of no bounds or limitations. God's declaration of His intention is the pledge of the thing intended being carried out. "Hath he said, and shall he not do it?"

### **(1) Scriptural declarations of the fact; In general:**

Job 42:2.(R.V.)—"I know that thou canst do everything (all things), and that no purpose of thine can be restrained." The mighty review of all God's works as it passes before Job (context) brings forth this confession: "There is no resisting thy might, and there is no purpose thou canst not carry out." Gen. 18:14—"Is anything too hard for the Lord?" What had ceased to be possible by natural means comes to pass by supernatural means.

### **(2) Scriptural declaration of the fact; In detail:**

#### *aa) In the world of nature:*

Gen. 1:1-3—"God created the heaven and the earth. And God said, Let there be light, and there was light." Thus "he spake and it was done. He commanded and it stood fast." He does not need even to give His hand to the work; His word is sufficient. Psa. 107:25-29—"He raiseth the stormy wind...he maketh the storm calm." "Even the winds and the sea obey him." God's slightest word, once uttered, is a standing law to which all nature must absolutely conform. Nahum 1:5, 6—"The mountains quake at him...the hills melt...the earth is burned at his presence...the rocks are thrown down by him." If such is His power how shall Assyria withstand it? This is God's comforting message to Israel. Everything in the sky, in sea, on earth is absolutely subject to His control.

*bb) In the experience of mankind:*

How wonderfully this is illustrated in the experience of Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. 4; and in the conversion of Saul, Acts 9; as well as in the case of Pharaoh, Exod. 4:11. James 4:12-15—"...For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that." All human actions, whether present or future, are dependent upon the will and power of God. These things are in God's, not in man's, power. See also the parable of the Rich Fool, Luke 12:16-21.

*cc) The heavenly inhabitants are subject to His will and word:*

Dan. 4:35 (R.V.)—"He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven." Heb. 1:14—"Are they (angels) not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" It has been said that angels are beings created by the power of God for some specific act of service, and that after that act of service is rendered they pass out of existence.

*dd) Even Satan is under the control of God*

Satan has no power over any of God's children saving as God permits him to have. This fact is clearly established in the case of Job (1:12 and 2:6). and Peter (Luke 22:31, 32), in which we are told that Satan had petitioned God that he might sift the self-righteous patriarch and the impulsive apostle. Finally Satan is to be forever bound with a great chain (Rev. 20:2). God can set a bar to the malignity of Satan just as he can set a bar to the waves of the sea.

**c) The Omnipresence of God.**

By the Omnipresence of God is meant that God is everywhere present. This attribute is closely connected with the omniscience and omnipotence of God, for if God is everywhere present He is everywhere active and possesses full knowledge of all that transpires in every place.

This does not mean that God is everywhere present in a bodily sense, nor even in the same sense; for there is a sense in which He may be in heaven, His dwelling place, in which He cannot be said to be elsewhere. We must guard against the pantheistic idea which claims that God *is* everything, while maintaining the Scriptural doctrine that He is everywhere present in all things. Pantheism emphasizes the omnipresent activity of God, but denies His personality. Those holding the doctrine of pantheism make loud claims to philosophic ability and high intellectual training, but is it not remarkable that it is in

connection with this very phase of the doctrine of God that the Apostle Paul says "they became fools"? (Rom. 1.) God is everywhere and in every place; His center is everywhere; His circumference nowhere. But this presence is a spiritual and not a material presence; yet it is a real presence.

**(1) Scriptural statement of the fact.**

Jer. 23:23, 24—"Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." Did the false prophets think that they could hide their secret crimes from God? Or that He could not pursue them into foreign countries? Or that He knew what was transpiring in heaven only and not upon the earth, and even in its most distant corners? It was false for them to thus delude themselves—their sins would be detected and punished (Psa. 10:1-14).

Psa. 139:7-12—"Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence," etc. How wondrously the attributes of God are grouped in this psalm. In v. 1-6 the psalmist speaks of the omniscience of God: God knows him through and through. In v. 13-19 it is the omnipotence of God which overwhelms the psalmist. The omnipresence of God is set forth in v. 7-12. The psalmist realizes that he is never out of the sight of God any more than he is outside of the range of His knowledge and power. God is in heaven; "Hell is naked before Him"; souls in the intermediate state are fully known to Him (cf. Job 26:2; Jonah 2:2); the darkness is as the light to Him. Job 22:12-14—"Is not God in the height of heaven?...Can he judge through the dark cloud? Thick clouds are a covering to him that he seeth not," etc. All agreed that God displayed His presence in the heaven, but Job had inferred from this that God could not know and did not take notice of such actions of men as were hidden behind the intervening clouds. Not that Job was atheistic; no, but probably denied to God the attribute of omnipresence and omniscience. Acts 17:24-28—"For in him we live, and move, and have our being." Without His upholding hand we must perish; God is our nearest environment. From these and many other scriptures we are clearly taught that God is everywhere present and acting; there is no place where God is not.

This does not mean that God is everywhere present in the same sense. For we are told that He is in heaven, His dwelling-place (1 Kings 8:30); that Christ is at His right hand in heaven (Eph. 1:20); that God's throne is in heaven (Rev. 21:2; Isa. 66:1).

We may summarize the doctrine of the Trinity thus: God the Father is

specially manifested in heaven; God the Son has been specially manifested on the earth; God the Spirit is manifested everywhere.

Just as the soul is present in every part of the body so God is present in every part of the world.

## **(2) Some practical inferences from this doctrine.**

First, *of Comfort*: The nearness of God to the believer. "Speak to Him then for He listens. And spirit with spirit can meet; Closer is He than breathing, And nearer than hands or feet."

"God is never so far off, As even to be near; He is within. Our spirit is the home He holds most dear. To think of Him as by our side is almost as untrue, As to remove His shrine beyond those skies of starry blue."—*Faber*. The omnipresence is not only a detective truth—it is protective also. After dwelling on this great and awful attribute in Psalm 139, the psalmist, in v. 17, 18, exclaims: "How precious are thy thoughts to me...When I awake I am still with thee." By this is meant that God stands by our side to help, and as One who loves and understands us (Matt. 28:20).

Second, *of Warning*: "As in the Roman empire the whole world was one great prison to a malefactor, and in his flight to the most distant lands the emperor could track him, so under the government of God no sinner can escape the eye of the judge." Thus the omnipresence of God is detective as well as protective. "Thou God seest me," should serve as warning to keep us from sin.

## **d) The Eternity and Immutability of God.**

The word *eternal* is used in two senses in the Bible: figuratively, as denoting existence which may have a beginning, but will have no end, e. g., angels, the human soul; literally, denoting an existence which has neither beginning nor ending, like that of God. Time has past, present, future; eternity has not. Eternity is infinite duration without any beginning, end, or limit—an ever abiding present. We can conceive of it only as duration indefinitely extended from the present moment in two directions—as to the past and as to the future. "One of the deaf and dumb pupils in the institution of Paris, being desired to express his idea of the eternity of the Deity, replied: 'It is duration, without beginning or end; existence, without bounds or dimension; present, without past or future. His eternity is youth, without infancy or old age; life, without birth or death; today, without yesterday or tomorrow.'"

By the Immutability of God is meant that God's nature is absolute|y

unchangeable. It is not possible that He should possess one attribute at one time that He does not possess at another. Nor can there be any change in the Deity for better or for worse. God remains forever the same. He is without beginning and without end; the self-existent "I am"; He remains forever the same, and unchangeable.

### **(1) Scriptural statement of the fact: The Eternity of God**

Hab. 1:12—"Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One?" Chaldea had threatened to annihilate Israel. The prophet cannot believe it possible, for has not God *eternal* purposes for Israel? Is He not holy? How, then, can evil triumph? Psa. 90:2—"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." Short and transitory is the life of man; with God it is otherwise. The perishable nature of man is here compared with the imperishable nature of God. Psa. 102:24-27—"I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years are throughout all generations. Of old thou hast laid the foundations of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end." With the perishable nature of the whole material creation the psalmist contrasts the imperishable nature of God. Exod. 3:14—"And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM." The past, present and future lies in these words for the name of Jehovah. Rev. 1:8—"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

### **(2) Scriptural statement of the Immutability of God:**

Mal 3:6—"I am the Lord, I change not." Man's hope lies in that fact, as the context here shows Man had changed in his life and purpose toward God, and if God, like man, had changed, man would have been destroyed. James 1:17—"The Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." There is no change—in the sense of the degree or intensity of light such as is manifested in the heavenly bodies. Such lights are constantly varying and changing; not so with God. There is no inherent, indwelling, possible change in God. 1 Sam. 15:29.—"And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent." From these scriptures we assert that God, in His nature and character, is absolutely without change.

### **Does God Repent?**

What, then, shall we say with regard to such scriptures as Jonah 3:10 and Gen. 6:6—"And God repented of the evil, that he said he would do unto them." "And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." In reply we may say that God does not change, but threatens that men may change. "The repentant attitude in God does not involve any real change in the character and purposes of God. He ever hates the sin and ever pities and loves the sinner; that is so both before and after the sinner's repentance. Divine repentance is therefore the same principle acting differently in altered circumstances. If the prospect of punishment answers the same purpose as that intended by the punishment itself, then there is no inconsistency in its remission, for punishment is not an end, it is only a means to goodness, to the reign of the law of righteousness." When God appears to be displeased with anything, or orders it differently from what we expected, we say, after the manner of men, that He repents. God's attitude towards the Ninevites had not changed, but they had changed; and because they had changed from sin unto righteousness, God's attitude towards them and His intended dealings with them as sinners must of necessity change, while, of course, God's character had in no wise changed with respect to these people, although His dealings with them had. So that we may say that God's *character* never changes, but His *dealings* with men change as they change from ungodliness to godliness and from disobedience unto obedience. "God's immutability is not that of the stone, that has no internal experience, but rather that of the column of mercury that rises and falls with every change in the temperature of the surrounding atmosphere. When a man bicycling against the wind turns about and goes with the wind instead of going against it, the wind seems to change, although it is blowing just as it was before."—*Strong*.

## **2. THE MORAL ATTRIBUTES.**

### **a) The Holiness of God.**

If there is any difference in importance in the attributes of God, that of His Holiness seems to occupy the first place. It is, to say the least, the one attribute which God would have His people remember Him by more than any other. In the visions of Himself which God granted men in the Scriptures the thing that stood out most prominent was the divine holiness. This is clearly seen by referring to the visions of Moses, Job, and Isaiah. Some thirty times does the Prophet Isaiah speak of Jehovah as "the Holy One," thus indicating what feature of those beatific visions had most impressed him.

The holiness of God is the message of the entire Old Testament. To the

prophets God was the absolutely Holy One; the One with eyes too pure to behold evil; the One swift to punish iniquity. In taking a photograph, the part of the body which we desire most to see is not the hands or feet, but the face. So is it with our vision of God. He desires us to see not His hand and finger, denoting His power and skill, nor even His throne as indicating His majesty. It is His holiness by which He desires to be remembered as that is the attribute which most glorifies Him. Let us bear this fact in mind as we study this attribute of the divine nature. It is just this vision of God that we need today when the tendency to deny the reality or the awfulness of sin is so prevalent. Our view of the necessity of the atonement will depend very largely upon our view of the holiness of God. Light views of God and His holiness will produce light views of sin and the atonement.

### **(1) Scriptural statements setting forth the fact of God's Holiness.**

Isa. 57:15—"Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place." Psa. 99:9—"Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at his holy hill: for the Lord our God is holy." Hab. 1:13—"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." 1 Pet. 1:15, 16—"But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation. Because it is written, Be ye holy: for I am holy." God's personal name is holy. John 17:11—"Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me." Christ here contemplates the Father as the Holy One, as the source and agent of that which He desires for His disciples, namely, holiness of heart and life, being kept from the evil of this world.

Is it not remarkable that this attribute of holiness is ascribed to each of the three persons of the Trinity: God the Father, is the Holy One of Israel (Isa. 41:14); God the Son is the Holy One (Acts 3:14); God the Spirit is called the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30).

### **(2) The Scriptural meaning of Holiness as applied to God.**

Job 34:10—"Be it far from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty that he should commit iniquity." An evil God, one that could commit evil would be a contradiction in terms, an impossible, inconceivable idea. Job seemed to doubt that the principle on which the universe was conducted was one of absolute equity. He must know that God is free from all evil-doing. However hidden the meaning of His dealings, He is always just. God never did, never will do wrong to any of His creatures; He will never punish wrongly. Men may, yea, often do; God never does. Lev. 11:43-45—"Ye shall not

make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creepeth, neither shall ye make yourselves unclean with them, that ye should be defiled thereby. For I am the Lord your God; ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth... Ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy." This means that God is absolutely clean and pure and free from all defilement.

The construction of the Tabernacle, with its holy and most holy place into which the high priest alone entered once a year; the Ten Commandments, with their moral categories; the laws of clean and unclean animals and things—all these speak to us in unmistakable terms as to what is meant by holiness as applied to God.

Two things, by way of definition, may be inferred from these Scriptures: first, negatively, that God is entirely apart from all that is evil and from all that defiles both in Himself and in relation to all His creatures; second and positively, by the holiness of God is meant the consummate holiness, perfection, purity, and absolute sanctity of His nature. There is absolutely nothing unholy in Him. So the Apostle John declares: "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

### **(3) The manifestation of God's Holiness.**

Prov. 15:9, 26—"The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord. The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination unto the Lord." God hates sin, and is its uncompromising foe. Sin is a vile and detestable thing to God. Isa. 59:1, 2—"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." Israel's sin had raised a partition wall. The infinite distance between the sinner and God is because of sin. The sinner and God are at opposite poles of the moral universe. This in answer to Israel's charge of God's inability. From these two scriptures it is clear that God's holiness manifests itself in the hatred of sin and the separation of the sinner from himself.

Herein lies the need of the atonement, whereby this awful distance is bridged over. This is the lesson taught by the construction of the Tabernacle as to the division into the holy place and the most holy place.

Prov. 15:9—"But he loveth him that followeth after righteousness."  
John 3:16—"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," etc. Here God's holiness is seen in that He loves

righteousness in the life of His children to such a degree that He gave His only begotten Son to secure it. The Cross shows how much God loves holiness. The Cross stands for God's holiness before even His love. For Christ died not merely for our sins, but in order that He might provide us with that righteousness of life which God loves. "He died that we might be forgiven; he died to make us good." Do we love holiness to the extent of sacrificing for it?

For other manifestations see under Righteousness and Justice of God.

#### **(4) Practical deductions from the doctrine of God's Holiness.**

First, we should approach God with "reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12:28). In the story of Moses' approach to the burning bush, the smiting of the men at Bethshemesh, the boundary set about Mt. Sinai, we are taught to feel our own unworthiness. There is too much hilarity in our approach unto God. Eccl. 5:1-3 inculcates great care in our address to God.

Second, we shall have right views of sin when we get right views of God's holiness. Isaiah, the holiest man in all Israel, was cast down at the sight of his own sin after he had seen the vision of God's holiness. The same thing is true of Job (40:3-4; 42:4-5). We confess sin in such easy and familiar terms that it has almost lost its terror for us.

Third, that approach to a holy God must be through the merits of Christ, and on the ground of a righteousness which is Christ's and which naturally we do not possess. Herein lies the need of the atonement.

#### **b) The Righteousness and Justice of God.**

In a certain sense these attributes are but the manifestation of God's holiness. It is holiness as manifested in dealing with the sons of men. Holiness has to do more particularly with the character of God in itself, while in Righteousness and Justice that character is expressed in the dealings of God with men. Three things may be said in the consideration of the Righteousness and Justice of God: first, there is the imposing of righteousness laws and demands, which may be called legislative holiness, and may be known as the Righteousness of God; second, there is the executing of the penalties attached to those laws, which may be called judicial holiness; third, there is the sense in which the attributes of the Righteousness and Justice of God may be regarded as the actual carrying out of the holy nature of God in the government of the world. So that in the Righteousness of God we have His love of holiness, and in the Justice of God, His hatred of sin.

Again Righteousness, as here used, has reference to the very nature of God as He is in Himself—that attribute which leads God always to do right. Justice, as an attribute of God, is devoid of all passion or caprice; it is vindicative not vindictive. And so the Righteousness and Justice of the God of Israel was made to stand out prominently as contrasted with the caprice of the heathen gods.

### **(1) Scriptural statement of the fact.**

Psalms 116:5—"Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful." The context here shows that it is because of this fact that God listens to men, and because having promised to hear He is bound to keep His promises. Ezra 9:15—"O Lord God of Israel, thou art righteous." Here the Righteousness of Jehovah is acknowledged in the punishment of Israel's sins. Thou art just, and thou hast brought us into the state in which we are today. Psalms 145:17—"The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works." This is evident in the rewards He gives to the upright, in lifting up the lowly, and in abundantly blessing the good, pure, and true. Jeremiah 12:1—"Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee." That is to say, "If I were to bring a charge against Thee I should not be able to convict Thee of injustice, even though I be painfully exercised over the mysteries of Thy providence."

These scriptures clearly set forth not only the fact that God is righteous and just, but also define these attributes. Here we are told that God, in His government of the world, does always that which is suitable, straight, and right.

### **(2) How the Righteousness and Justice of God is revealed.**

In two ways: first, in punishing the wicked: retributive justice, second, in rewarding the righteous: remunerative justice.

#### *aa) In the punishment of the wicked.*

Psalms 11:4-7—"The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men. The Lord trieth the righteous; but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone and an horrible tempest. This shall be the portion of their cup." This is David's reply to his timid advisers. Saul may reign upon the earth and do wickedly, but God reigns from heaven and will do right. He sees who does right and who does wrong. And there is that in His nature which recoils from the evil that He sees, and will lead Him ultimately to punish it. There is such a thing as the wrath of God. It is here

described. Whatever awful thing the description in this verse may mean for the wicked, God grant that we may never know. In Exod. 9:23-27 we have the account of the plague of hail, following which are these words: "And Pharaoh sent...for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked." Pharaoh here acknowledges the perfect justice of God in punishing him for his sin and rebellion. He knew that he had deserved it all, even though cavilers today say there was injustice with God in His treatment of Pharaoh. Pharaoh himself certainly did not think so. Dan. 9:12-14 and Rev. 16:5, 6 bring out the same thought. How careful sinners ought to be not to fall into the hands of the righteous Judge! No sinner at last will be able to say, "I did not deserve this punishment."

*bb) In forgiving the sins of the penitent.*

1 John 1:9 (R.V.)—"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Ordinarily, the forgiveness of sin is associated with the mercy, love, and compassion of God, and not with His righteousness and justice. This verse assures us that if we confess our sins, the righteousness and justice of God is our guarantee for forgiveness—God cannot but forgive and cleanse us from all sin.

*cc) In keeping His word and promise to His children.*

Neh. 9:7, 8—"Thou art the Lord the God, who didst choose Abram... and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites...to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous." We need to recall the tremendous obstacles which stood in the way of the fulfillment of this promise, and yet we should remember the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. When God gives His word, and makes a promise, naught in heaven, on earth, or in hell can make that promise void. His righteousness is the guarantee of its fulfillment.

*dd) In showing Himself to be the vindicator of His people from all their enemies.*

Psa. 129:1-4—"Many a time have they afflicted me...yet they have not prevailed against me. The Lord is righteous: he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked." Sooner or later, God's people will triumph gloriously as David triumphed over Saul. Even in this life God will give us rest from our enemies; and there shall assuredly come a day when we shall be "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

*ee) In the rewarding of the righteous.*

Heb. 6:10—"For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed towards his name, in that ye have ministered unto the saints, and do minister." Those who had shown their faith by their works would not now be allowed to lose that faith. The very idea of divine justice implies that the use of this grace, thus evidenced, will be rewarded, not only by continuance in grace, but their final perseverance and reward. 2 Tim. 4:8—"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing." The righteous Judge will not allow the faithful believer to go unrewarded. He is not like the unrighteous judges of Rome and the Athenian games. Here we are not always rewarded, but some time we shall receive full reward for all the good that we have done. The righteousness of God is the guarantee of all this.

### **c) The Mercy and Loving-kindness of God.**

By these attributes is meant, in general, the kindness, goodness, and compassion of God, the love of God in its relation to both the obedient and the disobedient sons of men. The dew drops on the thistle as well as on the rose.

More specifically: Mercy is usually exercised in connection with guilt; it is that attribute of God which leads Him to seek the welfare, both temporal and spiritual, of sinners, even though at the cost of great sacrifice on His part. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us...God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Eph. 2:4; Rom. 5:8.)

Loving-kindness is that attribute of God which leads Him to bestow upon His obedient children His constant and choice blessing. "He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32.)

#### **(1) Scriptural statement of the fact.**

Psa. 103:8—"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy." For, instead of inflicting pain, poverty, death—which are the wages of sin—God has spared our lives, given us health, increased our blessings and comforts, and given us the life of the ages. Deut. 4:31—"For the Lord thy God is a merciful God; he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers." God is ready to accept the penitence of Israel, even now, if

only it be sincere. Israel will return and find God only because He is merciful and does not let go of her. It is His mercy that forbids his permanently forsaking His people. Psa. 86:15—"But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth." It was because God had so declared Himself to be of this nature that David felt justified in feeling that God would not utterly forsake him in his time of great stress and need. The most striking illustration of the Mercy and Loving-kindness of God is set forth in the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). Here we have not only the welcome awaiting the wanderer, but also the longing for his return on the part of the anxious and loving father.

## **(2) How the Mercy and Loving-kindness of God are manifested.**

In general: We must not forget that God is absolutely sovereign in the bestowal of His blessings—"Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy" (Rom. 9:18). We should also remember that God wills to have mercy on all His creatures—"For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy to all them that call upon thee" (Psa. 86:5).

*aa) Mercy—towards sinners in particular.*

Luke 6:36—"Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." Matt. 5:45—"That ye may be the children, of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." Here even the impenitent and hard-hearted are the recipients of God's mercy; all sinners, even the impenitent are included in the sweep of His mercy.

Isa. 55:7—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord: and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." God's mercy is a holy mercy; it will by no means protect sin, but anxiously awaits to pardon it. God's mercy is a city of refuge for the penitent, but by no means a sanctuary for the presumptuous. See Prov. 28:13, and Psa. 51:1. God's mercy is here seen in pardoning the sin of those who do truly repent. We speak about "trusting in the mercy of the Lord." Let us forsake sin and then trust in the mercy of the Lord and we shall find pardon.

2 Pet. 3:9—"The Lord...is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Neh. 9:31—"Nevertheless for thy great mercies' sake thou didst not utterly consume them; for thou art a gracious and merciful God." Here is mercy manifested in forbearance with sinners. If God should have

dealt with them in justice they would have been cut off long before. Think of the evil, the impurity, the sin that God must see. How it must disgust Him. Then remember that He could crush it all in a moment. Yet He does not. He pleads; He sacrifices to show His love for sinners. Surely it is because of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, and because His compassions fail not. Yet, beware lest we abuse this goodness, for our God is also a consuming fire. "Behold, the goodness and the severity of God." The Mercy of God is here shown in His loving forbearance with sinners.

*bb) Loving-kindness towards the saints, in particular.*

Psa. 32:10—"But he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about." The very act of trust on the part of the believer moves the heart of God to protect him just as in the case of a parent and his child. The moment I throw myself on God I am enveloped in His mercy—mercy is my environment, like a fiery wall it surrounds me, without a break through which an evil can creep. Resistance surrounds us with "sorrow"; but trust surrounds us with "mercy." In the center of that circle of mercy sits and rests the trusting soul.

Phil. 2:27—"For indeed he was sick nigh unto death; but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow." Here God's loving-kindness is seen in healing up His sick children. Yet remember that "He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy." Not every sick child of God is raised. Psa. 6:4—"Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak: O Lord, heal me... Deliver my soul for thy mercies' sake (v. 4)." The psalmist asks God to illustrate His mercy in restoring to him his spiritual health. From these scriptures we see that the mercy of God is revealed in healing His children of bodily and spiritual sickness.

Psa. 21:7—"For the king trusteth in the Lord, and through the mercy of the most High he shall not be moved." David feels that, because he trusts in the mercy of the Lord, his throne, whatever may dash against it, is perfectly secure. Is not this true also of the believer's eternal security? More to the mercy of God than to the perseverance of the saints is to be attributed the eternal security of the believer. "He will hold me fast."

#### **d) The Love of God.**

Christianity is really the only religion that sets forth the Supreme Being as Love. The gods of the heathen are angry, hateful beings, and are in constant need of appeasing.

## **(1) Scriptural statements of the fact.**

1 John 4:8-16—"God is love." "God is light"; "God is Spirit"; "God is love." Spirit and Light are expressions of God's essential nature. Love is the expression of his personality corresponding to His nature. It is the nature of God to love. He dwells always in the atmosphere of love. Just how to define or describe the love of God may be difficult if not impossible. It appears from certain scriptures (1 John 3:16; John 3:16) that the love of God is of such a nature that it betokens a constant interest in the physical and spiritual welfare of His creatures as to lead Him to make sacrifices beyond human conception to reveal that love.

## **(2) The objects of God's Love.**

*aa) Jesus Christ, God's only-begotten Son, is the special object of His Love.*

Matt. 3:17—"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Also Matt. 17:5; Luke 20:13. Jesus Christ shares the love of the Father in a unique sense, just as He is His Son in a unique sense. He is especially "My chosen." "The One in whom my soul delighteth," "My beloved Son,"—literally: the Son of mine, the beloved. And we can readily understand how that He who did the will of God perfectly should thus become the special object of the Father's love. Of course, if the love of God is eternal, as is the nature of God, which must be the case, then, that love must have had an eternal object to love. So Christ, in addressing the Father, says: "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

*bb) Believers in His Son, Jesus Christ, are special objects of God's Love.*

John 16:27—"For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God." 14:21-23—"He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father...If a man love me...my Father will love him." 17:23—"And hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." Do we really believe these words? We are not on the outskirts of God's love, but in its very midst. There stands Christ right in the very midst of that circle of the Father's love; then He draws us to that spot, and, as it were, disappears, leaving us standing there bathed in the same loving-kindness of the Father in which He Himself had basked.

*cc) God loves the world of sinners and ungodly men.*

John 3:16—"For God so loved the world" was a startling truth to

Nicodemus in his narrow exclusivism. God loved not the Jew only, but also the Gentile; not a part of the world of men, but every man in it, irrespective of his moral character. For "God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). This is wonderful when we begin to realize what a world in sin is. The love of God is broader than the measure of man's mind. God desires the salvation of all men (1 Tim. 2:4).

### **(3) How the Love of God reveals Itself.**

*aa) In making infinite sacrifice for the salvation of men.*

1 John 4:9, 10—"In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Love is more than compassion; it hides not itself as compassion may do, but displays itself actively in behalf of its object. The Cross of Calvary is the highest expression of the love of God for sinful man. He gave not only a Son, but His only Son, His well-beloved.

*bb) In bestowing full and complete pardon on the penitent.*

Isa. 38:17—"Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back." Literally, "Thou hast loved my soul back from the pit of destruction." God had taken the bitterness out of his life and given him the gracious forgiveness of his sins, by putting them far away from Him. Eph. 2:4, 5—"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ," etc. Verses 1-3 of this chapter show the race rushing headlong to inevitable ruin. "But" reverses the picture; when all help for man fails, then God steps in, and by His mercy, which springs from "His great love," redeems fallen man, and gives him not only pardon, but a position in His heavenly kingdom by the side of Jesus Christ. All this was "for," or, perhaps better, "in order to satisfy His great love." Love led Him to do it.

*cc) In remembering His children in all the varying circumstances of life.*

Isa. 63:9—"In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old." Here is retrospection on the part of the prophet. He thinks of all the oppressions of Israel, and recalls how God's interests have been bound

up with theirs. He was not their adversary; He was their sympathetic, loving friend. He suffered with them. Isa. 49:15, 16—"Can a woman forget her sucking child? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee on the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me." It was the custom those days to trace upon the palms of the hands the outlines of any object of affection; hence a man engraved the name of his god. So God could not act without being reminded of Israel. God is always mindful of His own. Saul of Tarsus learned this truth on the way to Damascus.

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