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« Rien que la Bible »

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**Cameroon Biblical Seminary
Class Transcripts**

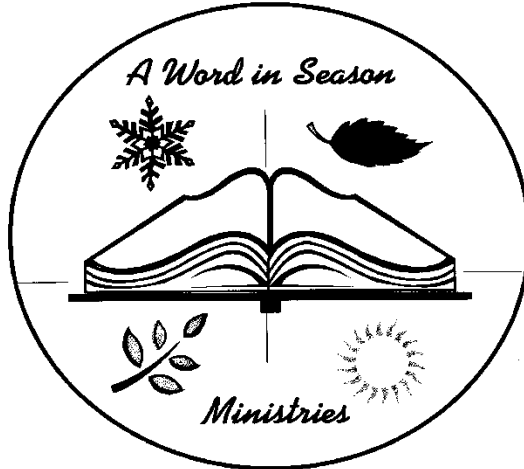
by

Earl Cooper, Ph. D.

THEOLOGY PROPER

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ὁ λόγος ἐν τῷ λαῷ ὁ λαὸς ἐν τῷ λόγῳ

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PREFACE

It has been my responsibility since 2003 to be involved in International Theological Education with the Canadian mission Across Borders for World Evangelism. In seeking to evaluate my teaching performance I audio recorded all of my first classes. For reasons I fail to remember, I continued recording every class that I taught over the following 15 years.

Due to health reasons I was unable to return to overseas teaching from July 2018 to the present (October 2019). Anxious to carry on some measure of ministry during this time of convalescence, Kathi and I determined to develop a book for each course I taught by combining the student manuals with transcripts of the classes. These we intend to supply for the school libraries where I taught.

Each class transcript is clearly marked. Within each class transcript the interactions between me and the students are identified in italics. The lecture content for each class is in regular text with the major student manual outline interspersed. Bible texts are from the NKJV. The Bible texts are italicized with regular text Bible references.

Please note: In the transposition of the recorded classes, the English portions of the recordings were used as the source. As a result, some of the French language recorded portions by the translator were omitted. These omissions included clarifications and excellent explanations of the class material along with the correction of verse numbering issues that occur between the English and French Bibles. For French language Bibles, a perusal of the verse context should enable finding the proper verse reference in question.

Theology Proper: This is a category of study within systematic theology; it denotes the study of the existence, nature and work of God. To distinguish the study of God specifically (in contrast to the study of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the church, etc.), the term *proper* is used to distinguish the study of God from theology in general.

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CLASS 1

I. INTRODUCTION TO THEOLOGY PROPER

A. Definitions

In the structure of the school here, you take courses when they are available. There is no rule of the order of teaching theology but normally we lay down the foundation of what the Bible is. From Bibliology, using the Bible as the foundation, the rest of the theology is taught. There is no right or wrong. But if someone asks you ‘who are the persons of the God-head?’ what is your answer? God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit because this is the order they are in the Scriptures, so to teach Theology Proper you would follow that order.

The word ‘theology’ comes from the Greek words ‘theos’ meaning ‘God’ and ‘logos’ meaning ‘word’ or ‘discourse.’ So technically the narrow meaning is the doctrine of God; theology means the doctrine of God. but the word is used also in the broad sense to refer to all doctrine that deals with the revelation of God. when I am in Canada and someone asks me what I do, I say I am a professor of theology. They will understand my job is to teach the theology, all the Scriptures because this is how it is usually used.

The approach these courses take is called ‘systematic theology.’ It come from the Greek word that means ‘put together as a whole.’ Systematic theology is the study of all the biblical doctrines in an organized way. In recent years there is another approach to theology that is popular in schools. It’s called ‘biblical theology.’ You have been exposed through Dr. David Brandon’s introduction to Biblical Theology. The difference is that systematic theology takes all the teaching through the entire Bible and puts it together in an organized way for each topic.

So for example, we looked at Christology. We looked at references in the Scriptures regarding Christ as He came on the earth and his ministry and therefore, included the OT and the NT gospels and teaching from the epistles. That’s systematic theology. So you notice when we went through ‘Christology. We had many references to indicate this is what the bible teaches. Biblical theology examines theology from each book of the Bible. It also can include the theology of individual writers of the bible. So we talk about the doctrine that is included in Genesis; it would include many topics and what it talks about-- what does Genesis say about doctrine? Or

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in all of Paul's epistles, what does he say about doctrine, so we have
Doctrine. These two different approaches to theology have advantages and disadvantages.

Because we looked at philosophy, it is good to make a comparison between philosophy and theology. It is interesting that they have similar objectives; both seek a comprehensive world and life view. There is a unique difference: theology is based on solid objective basis/truth from the Bible. The revelation of God given in human language has provided objective truth. We call the Bible absolute truth; the truth of God is absolute. This means what it declares it never changes and is always trustworthy. Philosophy rests on the speculations of the philosopher.

B. The Value of Theology (Thiessen)

1. The organizing instinct of the human intellect.

Ecc.1:13: *And I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven; this burdensome task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised.*

Humans are not content with simple facts but seek to understand things as a whole. Humans are created with an inquisitive mind, a searching mind.

2. The unbelief of our day.

Rom. 3:10-11: *There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.*

Eph. 2:19-20: *Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,*

Although none seek after God, those who, by God's grace, have come to know Him, should know what they believe in order to be anchored on solid ground. This is the great weakness of the American church today. As Nathan shared, many churches in America do not teach all the Bible. People who accepted Christ as Saviour are not getting the information to what the Bible teaches. There are born-again people who think when a person dies they become an angel. They are learning theology from TV rather than from the Bible.

3. The character of the Scriptures.

Heb. 4:12: *For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit,*

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and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

2 Tim. 2:15: *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

The Word of God opens up the human heart to reveal sin and falsehood, and leads God's people into God's will. The Lord desires His children to study the Scriptures, search His word, be transformed by His truth.

4. The development of an intelligent Christian person.

Lu. 6:45: *A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.*

Rom. 2:1-2: *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

People act in accord with what they believe. Only God, can transform His children. He does this by 'renewing of your mind' through His Word by His Spirit. God's people should not be ignorant people. We have become a part of the family of God, so we should do everything in our power to know all the truths that our Father has given us.

5. Within theology are the conditions to effective Christian service.

Christ and the apostles taught doctrine and, we should add to that sentence, lived doctrine. They taught and expected God's people to live by doctrine. You see doctrine or theology has very practical implications in our life. It is not boring as the elder in my church said. It has practical implications in how we live, so when we talk about teaching theology in our churches, we are not just talking about giving information, we are talking about giving God's information that transforms lives. When I was a student I went through the pastoral epistles to find out the emphasis of God's responsibilities for leadership in the church. As much as the leadership of the church is to visit the widows and the homeless, to comfort the grieving and to care for the body, more than anything else what was repeated was 'teach the Word.' But the effect in Ephesians, the purpose was to teach so people would be matured and do the work themselves. So the measure of successful teaching in a church is not just 'I have taught from cover to cover', it is the changed lives because you have taught from cover to cover. So don't boast of the good teaching programme in your church unless lives are changed. This is the value of theology.

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C. False and True Systems of Theology

We have to be exposed in our minds with the different systems in theology, the true systems, the false systems, so we have a list of 10 examples of systems of theology. This is only a sample. False religions are created every day it seems. Most of these false religions would fall in one of the 10 categories. Your notes include the definitions of true and false theologies. It is like an introduction of the whole process of studying theology. A brief summary follows:

1. Deism - The Deist believes in a transcendent but “absentee” God. His God made the universe and Man, but left His creation to sustain itself by natural laws. In the modern sense it refers to godlessness or a general denial of God.

2. Atheism - In antiquity, Gk. *atheos* described those who questioned the ruling religion and its gods. In the modern sense it refers to godlessness or a general denial of God. There are various kinds of atheism: Theoretical, Practical, Programmatic, Political etc.

3. Scepticism and Infidelity- The doctrine that true knowledge or knowledge in a particular area is uncertain. It is doubt concerning basic religious principles. God with question marks all around: “I would like to believe in God but if there is a god, why is there so much suffering in the world? Why are nations evil?” Infidelity is a lack of religious faith.

4. Agnosticism- As most commonly understood, the view that we cannot really know whether there is a God or not. “There may be a god, but I can never know Him.”

5. Pantheism - Pantheism means that everything is God and God is everything. “God is all and all is God.” God exists in nature in all things. God exists in trees, in your vegetables, in dogs, so be careful of what you eat!.

6. Polytheism - The belief in the existence of numerous gods. In the environment of the Bible most societies were polytheistic: there were ‘many gods and many lords’ (1 Cor. 8:5). The greatest example of this is Hinduism. Hinduism has over 3 million gods. When I teach in India, every night there are celebrations to different gods. Every night there are fire-works

Gk. Greek

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7. Tritheism - The heretical teaching about the Trinity which denies the unity of substance in the Three Divine Persons. Here there are 3 distinct gods, not a trinity, but a Tri-Theism

8. Dualism – Dualism assumes that two antagonistic principles underlie existence. Dualism, to religious testimonies, involves three aspects: (1) how the two opposing forces are conceived, (2) what experiences they represent, and (3) how they are institutionalized.¹ Dual-ism' meaning there are 2 distinct gods. Although Buddhism is actually atheism, denying a personal god, dual-ism believes in a good influence and an evil influence in the world. When is started teaching in Africa I saw students with shirts from America. On the shirts was 'Star Wars' in English. This is a series of famous movies. These movies promoted Buddhism, by focusing on the forces of darkness and the forces of light warring against each other. So to advertise Star Wars, is to advertise dual-ism.

9. Theism - As the word is currently used it can refer a philosophical system which accepts a transcendent and personal God, who not only created but also preserves and governs the world, the contingency of which does not exclude miracles and the exercise of human freedom. Theism, therefore, leaves room for the Christian revelation and is in various forms the view of the world common to all orthodox Christian philosophers; it is also required by *Judaism and *Islam.

10. Monotheism - Monotheism is a religious, theological, or philosophical position whose normative feature is recognition of only one God.

CLASS 2

We began looking at the notes on theology proper. I explained this is usually the first theology course and therefore, it has an introduction to whole of theology. We have to be exposed in our minds with the different systems in theology, the true systems, the false systems, so we have a list of 10 examples of systems of theology. This is only a sample. False reli-

¹ Fahlbusch, E., & Bromiley, G. W. (1999-2003). *Vol. 1: The encyclopedia of Christianity* (888). Grand Rapids, MI; Leiden, Netherlands: Wm. B. Eerdmans; Brill.

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gions are created every day it seems. Most of these false religions would fall in one of the 10 categories but not necessarily.

We have not talked about scientology or other popular religions that are around the world today. Some of the cults call themselves Christian but we know they are not. These cults and religions fall into some of these systems of theology we talked about here.

Prof. Question: *Where is true Christianity?*

Student Question: *Monotheism: one true God.*

Prof. Response: *Is that all?*

Student Response: *'theism' and 'monotheism.'*

Prof. Response: *Where is Judaism?*

Student Response: *Monotheism and theism. What about Islam?*

My problem is I have an issue with their understanding of the relationship. Their whole approach is 'we must please God.' In my understanding, their thinking of the relationship is only one way: they have to please God.

Prof. Response: *But God is not directly communicating with them in a relationship. I have met Muslims who say their prayer life is very meaningful, but when I see the Muslims express their prayer life, it is all ceremony. When we were travelling on the train, Muslims lay down their carpets. I do not know what activity they do but I think they repeat a prayer. To me it is the same as the Roman Catholics who hold their rosaries and repeat their prayers they memorize. So I'm sure there are some who say Muslims are theistic as well, but I see it as belief in one God or monotheism.*

What is common in Cameroon among the traditional religions? Student

Response: *Polytheism. Even Tri-Theism is practiced in Cameroon. There is a God for creation, a God protector, and the neutral God.*

Prof. Question: *I want to know what the neutral God does? Does he supervise the other two?*

Student Response: *This is a particular belief of the 'Beti' tribe, the foremost tribe among these students.*

Prof. Response: *I am sorry this topic is at the end; I would like to assign papers so I can know more about the gods of Africa. If you want a bonus for this class, tell me about one system among the Cameroon tribes that fits into one of these categories. This Canadian teacher is ignorant of traditional African religions.*

Student Question: *What can you tell us about 'animism'?*

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Prof. Response: I think animism would fall under pantheism. I know it is strong in Africa. My understanding is that rather than see everything as god, it sees spirits in everything. So they would not say spirits are synonymous with nature, but spirits is everything and everything is spirit. They would say spirits possess things, stay within things. In Ghana there was an evil spirit in water. So people did not drown because they could not swim, they drowned because the evil spirit pulled them under. People who were saved were terrified to be baptised in the stream. Many people in Ghana were frightened of water. They would even think before they took a shower! How dangerous will this be to me?

Student Question: Where can we put 'fetishism?'

Prof. Response: Is it a religion or is it how a religion is delivered? Isn't fetishism the way that polytheism or animism it is explained. The fetish aspects are the point of possession.

Student Response: No, it is the way of practising.

We could go on and talk about many, many systems within these, but we should press on.

D. Arguments for the existence of God based on reason.

The next section is the logical arguments for the existence of God. I want to remind you that the position that we have is called pre-suppositional apologists. An apologist is someone who argues what he believes, he defends it. We are called up one to do this. A pre-suppositional presupposes certain things: in other words when we defend the faith, there are certain things we believe regardless of our defence. One of these is that the Bible is the absolute truth. So in our arguments, it focusses on this belief and someone who does not believe this, the arguments will be meaningless.

For example "Christ rose from the dead." How do you know that? The Bible says so. It is truth. But someone who looks at this as just another book says, 'you cannot argue the book by the book.' It is not absolute. Another presupposition is 'we cannot by reason bring people to salvation.' Here salvation is a work of God in a person's life. So for me to prove the existence of God will not bring anyone to salvation. This is evident among atheist scientist today.

Within the last 20 years, one more element of the basic existence has been added to the list. Time, space, matter/energy, these are fundamental things in the universe. It is proven scientifically there had to also be one

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more thing: Intelligence. We know that intelligence is God, but the scientist who is the head of the atheistic society in the USA when he examined the proof that was established for intelligence, he accepted this. He is saying ‘creation or the universe could not exist without having initial intelligence.’ He admitted this. He sees the scientific evidence prove this, but at the same time he says he does not believe there is a God.

Why should we consider looking at arguments for the existence of God? The reason is to verify that Scripture is objective truth. It is good for us to be able to think through how the truths of the Scripture can be verified analytically. The following are the arguments for the existence of God in your notes:

1. The Intuitional or Ontological Argument.

We use the word ‘intuition’ which has the idea of having a sense of something, having within ourselves an understanding. Everywhere in the world, in all the ages, all people have believed there is a god. atheism has become popular through education. So the natural man who enters this world will have a sense there is a god. That has been proven historically. Every civilization believes there is a god. Explorers who discover remote civilizations have never found a people who say ‘there is not god.’

If you were to find an individual who has not had any education but grew up in the bush life many here in Africa and you were to take him and put him alongside anyone who is an atheist today, a man who is respected for his education and intelligence, and proved there is not god, the uneducated man would laugh at him. The uneducated man would say ‘you are a fool.’ So that is the ontological argument. History shows that people accepted the fact there was some kind of god because that truth is born within a man Ecclesiastes says God has put eternity in our hearts

2. The Cosmological or the cause and effect argument

If there is a creation, there must be a creator. It is only reasonable to believe that if I have a computer, someone made the computer. This is the effect, therefore there must be a cause.

Heb. 3:4: *For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God.* Here it says ‘every house is built by some man.’ That is the cosmological argument. If there is a house, someone built it. In essence the individual that first declared this “cause and effect principle” was quite possibly not a Christian. Nevertheless, the best evolutionary theories do not give the answers to the first cause of creation. Even if you believe man

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evolved from apes, the question has to be asked, where did the ape come from?

If a small amoeba evolved from the sea into an ape. Where did the amoeba come from and where did the sea come from? The big bang theory does not have the answer to first cause simply because the question remains. If a cosmic explosion began the evolutionary process, where did the elements of the explosion come from? If, as some scientists try to explain, the explosion was caused by a cosmic soup of chemicals and electricity that was there billions of years ago. Where did the soup come from?

You see, there is no answer from the scientists who say this is the process of creation. To try to find the answer, scientists came to the conclusion there must have been original intelligence. They proved that the first cause for all things was intelligence. Guess what my question is: Where did the intelligence come from? The only answer can be an eternal (before creation), all-knowing being, we call God almighty. Nevertheless, modern science denies this. .

3. The Teleological Argument.

This is the argument from design. The idea is that there is order in the universe. Someone would say ‘there is no order in the universe, look at the jungle. It is life exploding in random order. It is a mess, with weeds and vines, and one plant killing another! That is not order.

The answer is: Take a look at each one of those plants, each has a system of life. The roots draw up the nourishment from the soil, this is delivered through the branches to the leaves, the sun shines on the leaves and turns the nourishment into oxygen, the animals in the forest breathe the oxygen, they live off the plants and other animals. There is a complex system there.

This argument says if you have such a design, you must have a designer. I remember one way of proving this that a man used. He said ‘I am going to take all the letters of the alphabet and throw these letters into a room. Then I will take a monkey and put him in the room. How long will I have to wait until the monkey puts these together and makes a book? Anyone with intelligence would say this could never happen. Then I say: ‘You tell me through evolution that is exactly how we got our universe. You argue that all this just became to be because it had enough time.

The argument of time really concludes: the ape will make a book with enough time. A book is order, design, communication. No ape with a

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billion years will put that together. Time is an argument against the existence of God, the intelligent creator who gave order in His creation of the universe.

4. The Anthropological Argument.

This acknowledges that man is unique in all creation of the world. He has moral and intellectual qualities. If man came from apes, why don't apes have morality and a level of intelligence that man has? What was it in the evolutionary process that introduced intelligence and morality to man if apes don't have it? Man is just so different from all of creation. We see that in the creation story. God spoke and all the animals came into existence, but God personally formed man and God spoke and breathed into man the spirit.

When you are going through Genesis be sure to emphasize the unique creation of man. Man is made from the same chemical composition because God made the dirt to make man, that's the reason evolutionists believe what they do- the same chemical elements are in man as in nature. But the creation details clearly make man distinct, absolutely superior to anything else God had made. Man is made in the image of God. That sets him completely apart from the rest of nature.

5. The Argument from Congruity.

The belief in the existence of God best explains the facts of humanities mental, moral and religious nature, as well as the above facts of the universe, therefore, God exists. This is more than just the argument of each component part of creation (#3), this is the argument that these component parts work together in unique harmony, work perfectly together.

In America there is much attention to ecological systems. There are those trying to protect swamps and water areas because it is critical for these areas to continue to contribute to the whole natural welfare. Everywhere you go in the world you see things that fit together perfectly in that environment. So even with the effect of sin on the world, the world fits, it functions.

Scientists have shown that when man introduces a problem into nature, nature will work toward correcting this. For example, we hear of the big oil containers that spill oil into the ocean. Man rightly seeks to clean up his mess. The oil does kill many living things in the sea, but scientist know that if you give sea time, it will fix this. The chemical composition, the sun, will eliminate the effect. This is a part of how things fit together

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and work together. It's an argument of congruity, earth works. So that even the acetum which is the element that holds all things together is a testimony of God as Paul states:

Col. 1:17: *For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.*

When man discovered the atom, he discovered the secret of what holds all the earth together. Now the further examination of the atom has discovered the atom itself is a universe that can be explored. In this text Paul, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit declared “*all things are held together by God’s Son.*”

These are some of the arguments for the existence of God. Human reason can look at these things and realize there must be a God. The Bible that gives us all this information contains objective truth. It can be reasoned through to see that these truths are reality. Does this mean that man will believe it? No!

E. Other Evidences for God's Existence

1. The Scriptures

There are other evidences for the existence of God, the greatest of which is the Scriptures themselves. The Bible assumes God. The Bible never tries to prove God.

Rom. 1:20: *For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,*

Scripture teaches that creation itself gives sufficient evidence of God’s existence that humans are without excuse in denying Him His due glory.

Prof. Question: *What are the first words of the Bible?*

Student Response: *“In the beginning God...”*

Prof. Response: *Exactly, no proof, no argument, just a statement of fact. The Scriptures reflect this fact throughout its pages.*

Student Question: *We have seen that the Bible introduces God, the Koran also introduces God, I am a bit confused.”*

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Prof. Response: All religious men will accept the fact of a god. The Bible is unique in that it is the Word of God. Is the Koran the word of God? you know it is not. Are the writings of Confucius the words of God? No!

If I were Satan, and I could not prevent man from coming to understand there is a god, wouldn't it be a good strategy to have other books designed to say the same thing, but lead to falsehood; to introduce God, but not the truth of God, to introduce some of the truth, but not all of the truth? This is one of Satan's means deceiving the world by imitating these as a holy books.

That's exactly what the taxi driver told me. He said we should take all the holy books, put them all together and have one religion. I can see Satan smile and say 'I have succeeded.'

I responded and say there is only one book from God, the Bible. This man had never heard that before. The problem is not man's interpretation of all the so called "holy books." The problem is the source of the holy books.

The book of Koran came from a man; the Hindu holy book came from man. Only the Bible came from God. The evidence that the Bible is the only Holy Book, it declares it contains no error which is provable, but in the other books there are many errors. That was the first time the taxi driver understood this. When I left him I asked if he had a Bible; He said he had it but he reads the Koran. I said go home and read the Bible. I pray he will open the Bible and read it.

2. History

We have the Scriptures; they are God's only written revelation to man. We also have history itself. Within the Scriptures we have the prophecies, many of which are now history unfolding God's plan. I think Nathan's sermon about God saying Jerusalem would be His city, proves the existence of God. From my perspective I would have talked about the people instead of the city. There is nothing in the city that says Jerusalem cannot be bombed and destroyed; if it is, God's people will build it again. The real evidence is the people of God. We do not know that perhaps God's people may be scattered from their land in the future. We do know this; there will always be a people of Israel.

History shows many people have tried to destroy the Israelites. Hitler is known in recent history, but it has been repeated many times before him

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to completely destroy Israel. I believe in peace in the world. Canada has made a strong statement that we need to protect Israel, so an atomic bomb will not be dropped on it. All nations should be protected. Even if Iran developed a bomb that fell on Israel, there would still be Israelite people. This is a testimony of the existence of God. As someone once said: History is His Story.

3. Believer Experience

Apart from the Scriptures, of all the additional evidences of the existence of God I believe this last one is the best. I speak of the unique transforming power of God evident in a believer's life.

2 Cor. 5:17: *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

1Pe. 2:2: as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,

All those who are truly born again are new creations, each sense a change within. It may not be sensed immediately, it may not be sensed in extreme measures, but the reality of God's Spirit residing within the heart will manifest itself in life. God cannot be present without affecting change. All believers will come to know this power within. The fact that we are prompted by the Holy Spirit to commune with God, to pray to Him and seek His Word as babies long for milk, it just the beginning of God's evident power. The desire and blessings of Christian fellowship in another evidence of God's transforming power.

One of our church members shared his experience of being immediately delivered from drug abuse dependency. For him, God's transforming power was an immediate reality. This man went back to school despite his past academic failings and became a pastor. God transforms lives!

CLASS 3

We continue on our notes looking at the definitions of God.

F. The Definition of God

1. Scriptural definitions

John 4:24: *God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*

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Here there is a definition of God that says ‘God is Spirit.’ This is not complete, it is relating to the actual context that is there. With His disciples in the city buying food, Jesus did a surprising thing: He spoke to a Samaritan woman, whom He had never met. The Samaritan religion was confused and in error. Jesus said: You Samaritans worship what you do not know. In leading this woman to true salvation Jesus stated: God is Spirit and must be worshipped in spirit and truth.

To worship **in truth** is to worship God through Jesus. To worship **in Spirit** is to worship in the new realm which God has revealed to people. **The Father** is seeking true **worshippers** because He wants people to live in reality, not in falsehood.²

In her conversation with Jesus, He walked her through the necessary truths about who He was. As a result the woman was convicted of sin, understood the need for salvation and put her faith in Jesus Christ.

1 John 1:5: *This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.*

God is Light. In Scripture light is contrasted to darkness. The Bible tells us the world is in darkness and light dispels darkness. The idea of light of course in Scripture is truth, righteousness, the character of God. God is the source of truth because God is truth:

John 14:6: *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

1 John 4:8: *He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*

God is ‘love’ and the context here emphasizes the sacrificial nature of God’s love. The demonstration of God’s love was Christ dying for us. Those who do not love do not know God. The absence of love in the life of an individual proves that he does not know God The one who does not

² Blum, E. A. (1985). John. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Jn 4:23). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

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love is a stranger to God. He never even began to have a relationship with God; that is, there was never a time when this person could have legitimately claimed that he knew God.³

Heb. 12:29: *For our God is a consuming fire.*

Often we preach God is Light and God is Love and God is Spirit, but rarely do we preach what Hebrews says, God is a consuming fire. The idea of the consuming fire is His nature of holiness that calls for justice that brings judgment as a consuming fire.

You see that these definitions are specific to the contexts in the Scriptures. But they are certainly not comprehensive.

2. Theological definition

Other attempt to give a definition of God that is more comprehensive are found in catechisms. Here are some examples:

Westminster catechism: God is a Spirit, Infinite, Eternal, and Unchangeable in His Being, Wisdom, Power, Holiness, Justice, Goodness and Truth.

My personal favourite:

God is: infinite, eternal, unchangeable,

: perfect...in His... being, will, power, love, holiness,
goodness, righteousness, wisdom, truth

resulting in: ... sovereignty, blessedness, glory, majesty
...in Himself

and in: ... grace, mercy, compassion, long-suffering,
faithfulness, justice, wrath

... toward creation

G. The Primary Names of God

We have the primary names of God that are given in the Scriptures. The names (in the broadest sense) fall into six categories:

1. Proper names: El, Yahweh, Adonai, Theos, Kurios (God).

³ Akin, D. L. (2001). *Vol. 38: 1, 2, 3 John*. The New American Commentary (178). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

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2. Personal names: Father, Abba, Son, Jesus, Holy Spirit.
3. Titles: Creator, Messiah/Christ, Paraclete/Comforter.
4. Essential names: Light, Love, Spirit.
5. Descriptive names: Rock, *Ba'al*, Master, Rabboni, Shepherd.
6. Attributes: names of virtues or characteristics of the triune God-head.⁴

1. Elohim (El)

The name אֱל (‘El) is found over 200 times in the Hebrew Bible. It is best translated as “God.” The term *El* has a number of possible meanings: “to be first” or “to be strong.”

The name אֱלֹהִים (‘Elohiym) is the plural of El (‘*ēl*), and is found more than 2300 times in the Bible. Like its English equivalent ‘God’, it is, grammatically considered, a common noun, and conveys the notion of all that belongs to the concept of deity. The Hebrew ‘Elohim’ is translated LORD, God, LORD GOD in the KJV Bible.

In our languages we have only singular and plural. That’s not the situation in Hebrew. In Hebrew singular is ‘one’, dual is another form referring to ‘two’, plural is three or more. So the word Elohim is plural, signifying three or more. In the Hebrew, “Elohim” has to be three or more. In the word itself there is the suggestion of at least trinity. In Gen. 1:1 “Elohim” created, therefore the idea is ‘three or more created. In Gen. 1:26,27 “*let us make man in our image*” is a plural of three or more. Although the Hebrew ‘plural’ does not restrict to three, we see there clearly that Elohim refers to at least three.

As well “*let us make man in our image*” suggests that man is also was created with three or more elements. From Scripture man consists of body, soul and spirit. Nevertheless, I personally think this plural regarding man in God’s image is more than just body, soul and spirit. I think it speaks also of man’s “*image and likeness*” of the nature of God being in man, in which God rules and therefore gave man the rule of the earth. Also that God being all-wise has given to man superior intelligence.

⁴ Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (881). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

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Student Question: I cannot understand the relationship between God and 'let us make man in our image.'

Prof. Response: : I am trying to explain that some see the idea of the image of God in man as body, soul, spirit. God is three, Father, Son, Holy Spirit but Genesis does not use that, it just uses 'Elohim.' The form of 'Elohim' is plural which means 'three or more.' So therefore, some believe that means man's body, soul, spirit.

I think as you study the image of God in man is more than just body, soul, spirit. I believe the word 'image' means 'reflection.' So that which is by nature God is reflected in man. God is sovereign ruler of the universe, this is reflected in Adam as he was made ruler of the earth. God is all-wise, all-knowing and this is reflected in superior intelligence (to all creation) and as he can continue to grow in knowledge. God is creator- when he created, He created out of nothing but it is reflected in man's creativity, his ability to design and build. Man did not stay in the garden with a grass roof, he has grown to build, to create things.

Do you see what I mean by image, God is reflected in a smaller way in man. God has no beginning or end, so we say he is eternal but when we look at man, he has a beginning but he is everlasting. So in all of physical creation on earth, only man is everlasting. So I'm trying to qualify that I do not restrict the Hebrew 'plural' image of God in man as only body, soul, spirit.

2. Jehovah

Now we come to the name יהוה (Y^ehovah'). This is the personal name of God; the name that God identified Himself with:

The Heb. word *Yahweh* is usually translated 'the Lord' (note the capitals) and sometimes 'Jehovah.' The latter name originated as follows. The original Heb. text was not vocalized; in time the 'tetragrammaton' YHWH was considered too sacred to pronounce; so 'adōnāy ('my Lord') was substituted in reading, and the vowels of this word were combined with the consonants YHWH to give 'Jehovah', a form first attested at the start of the 12th century ad.⁵

⁵ Manley, G. T., & Bruce, F. F. (1996). God, Names of. In D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer & D. J. Wiseman (Eds.),

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Strictly speaking, Yahweh is the only ‘name’ of God:

In particular, Yahweh was the God of the Patriarchs, and we read of ‘Yahweh the God (Elohim) of Abraham’ and then of Isaac and finally ‘Yahweh, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’, concerning which Elohim says, ‘this is my name for ever’ (Ex. 3:15). Yahweh, therefore, in contrast with Elohim, is a proper noun, the name of a Person, though that Person is divine. As such, it has its own ideological setting; it presents God as a Person, and so brings him into relationship with other, human, personalities. It brings God near to man, and he speaks to the Patriarchs as one friend to another.⁶

Ex. 20:2: *I Am the Lord, thy God...*

There are 264 Bible references to the phrase “the LORD thy God” which uses these two names of God: Jehovah (OT: יהוה Y^ehovah, NT: κύριος kurios) and Elohim (OT: אלהים ‘elohiym, NT: θεός theos).

In Jonah the people called upon “Elohim” but Jonah calls on “Jehovah.” We have to understand there were many ‘Elohim’s” (gods) but only one Jehovah. You know the story of Jonah, the people call out to Elohim when the storm begins. Yet when Jonah realized the problem was himself, he called out to Jehovah.

Deut. 6:4: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD (יהוה, Y^ehovah) our God (אלהים, ‘elohiym), the LORD (יהוה, Y^ehovah) is one!”

Here we have the singular is the plural, our singular. So again we see the significance of the Words of Scripture showing by the names of God, that God is one God with three (Hebrew plural) aspects (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) as indicated in other texts such as:

Matt. 28:19: *...baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*

2 Cor. 13:14: *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.*

New Bible dictionary (3rd ed.) (420–421). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

⁶ Manley, G. T., & Bruce, F. F. (1996). God, Names of. In D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer & D. J. Wiseman (Eds.), *New Bible dictionary* (3rd ed.) (421). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

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Student Question: Is there any difference of the name Elohim and other names of God in the creation account. I notice that in Genesis 1 Elohim is mentioned. Is this the name of God that reflects the creative power of God?

Prof. Response: The name 'Elohim' implies many things, depending on the context. In the context of Genesis 1:1 many sources think implies a majesty or stateliness.⁷ You can see in Genesis 1, by virtue of God creating the world, this name is related to the omnipotence of God, nevertheless, 'Elohim' was the basic Hebrew name for all deities.

The name 'Elohim' is used 2249 times in the OT. In the English Bible the name "Jehovah" and the name "Adonai" are distinguished by the capital letters. Every time you see the capital letters LORD, it is Jehovah. Every time you see 'Lord', it is Adonai. The name Y^ehovah first appears in Genesis 2:4:

Gen. 2:4: *This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD (יהוה) Y^ehovah) God (אלהים) 'elohiym) made the earth and the heavens,*

The repeated emphasis on **the Lord God** is significant (2:4–5, 7–9, 15–16, 18–19, 21–22). The sovereign Creator ("God") of chapter 1 is also the covenant-making Yahweh (**Lord**). Thus Israel would know that her **Lord** had created everything, and that *He* had formed mankind by special design.⁸

This name is found 5521 times in the OT.

3. Adonai (Lord)

Now let's look at the word 'Adonai.'

⁷ Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

⁸ Ross, A. P. (1985). Genesis. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Ge 2:4b–7). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

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Gen. 15:2: *But Abram said, "Lord(אדני 'Adonay) GOD(יהוה Yehovih), what will You give me, seeing I go childless,*

Adonai was a common Hebrew word meaning 'lord', 'master', or 'ruler.' In this situation we have Abraham acknowledging Jehovah as the master who rules. So in this Scriptures 'Adonai' reflects 'master' or 'lord.' And this name is used two ways. For example in Genesis 24:9 אדוני ('adôn – shortened Adonai) is translated master, referring to Abraham, his servant's master. 1 Peter 3:6, the husband to his wife is 'lord' the NT equivalent of Adonai, the one who rules or has the human headship of the family.

Christ referred to this name regarding himself in John 13:13. It is in the context of Jesus coming with his disciples to celebrate the final Passover meal. He washes their feet and Peter responded 'you should not wash our feet.' The reason was because they called him 'Lord', vs. 13: 'you call me teacher and Lord, and you say well, as I am.' He was master, but in washing their feet he did two things: he taught that there is necessity for daily washing (of sins) and he taught them that the spiritual leaders of the people should follow His example of servanthood. So he said 'as I have washed your feet, you should wash other's feet.'

Some take this literally and when they break bread, they wash each other's feet. I spoke at a church in NC where this is done. But the pastor was wise. He explained that the washing of the feet was not the important thing. He said we will do this together as Jesus did this to show our desire to serve one another. So Jesus was saying 'yes, I am your Lord' and he defines his relationship with them. But in his willingness to wash their feet he was expressing the uniqueness of his ministry—'I did not come to be served, but to serve and give my life as a ransom for many. That is the whole concept of leader-servanthood.

Student Response: What did washing of feet by Jesus mean?

Prof. Response: Peter said: "Lord, are You washing my feet?" Jesus clarified: "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this." 'When Peter then said: "You shall never wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." Jesus was giving an example of continuing to keep relationship with God: "He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean."

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We looked at the names of God, just the major names, one of the great Bible studies. I encourage you to study at all the names of God: God our shepherd, banner, healer etc. There are many names of God combining Elohim with other aspects of his character. They are all very important and have to be studied in the context of the verses where they are used. I preached a series of messages on the names of God and the people were very appreciative. This is just a small aspect of the names of God that we have looked at.

II. THE NATURAL OF GOD

Now we come to the nature of God where we look at His attributes. Before we begin to look, we need to understand something about the way Systematic Theology teaches us about God. We look at texts of Scripture that indicate a certain aspect of God, for example, His omnipotence. We define this as an ‘attribute’ of God. There are other terms that we use. The problem is that God is not divided. In some ways we diminish God by trying to separate and define all these aspects.

It would help if we could, in our minds, put ourselves among the people of Israel standing at the bottom on the mount when He gives His law. Here there is lightning and thunder, the earth is shaking. Israel’s response was terror, and rightly so because God was before them in all of the attributes of His being and His person.

The full presence of Almighty God terrifies people. God is Spirit which we do not understand; God is Light which we cannot bear to look at in the fullness of His light. God is love and we can only begin to understand His love; God is a consuming fire. He is all of this all at the same time. And He has no beginning and no end. Do not allow studying the attributes of God to diminish God like a puzzle: this piece belongs to Him and this piece belongs to Him. God is so great and so beyond understanding in His nature that we always need to be in awe of Him. But for in study of the Scriptures, to describe Him we break it down in these terms to understand better.

I personally believe that when we enter eternity, we will always be learning more about God. Even as He is eternal, His very nature is unsearchable. We will never come to the end of understanding the uniqueness of God in all of what we call ‘attributes.’

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Therefore, for the present, we put what we know in Scripture into simple human terms. In our notes we break these down into, the spirituality of God first.

A. The Spirituality of God

1. God is immaterial and incorporeal.

He has no body. He is not made of the elements of the earth. John 4:24: *God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*

Luke 24:39: Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have."

The Bible teaches us that God is spirit, he does not have body, he is immaterial, there is nothing in him that can be compared to on earth or have any scientific formula defining Him.

When we read texts like Is. 65:2 which speaks of God's hands, Gen. 3:8 mentions God walking in the garden with Adam and Eve, 1 Kings 8 and 2 Chron. 16 speaking of the eyes of God, Neh. 1 and Psalm 31 referring to the ears of God, how do we harmonize this with God is spirit, having no body? Is the Bible inconsistent? One answer is that God can take any form. Another answer is God uses language for men to understand. I think both are correct.

God is all-powerful. He can do what man does with his hands. Certainly in creation when God created the world, he spoke, but when he created man, he formed. There is some difference there. For me the difference is, he created the world from nothing, but created man from what he already created. So how he did it, spiritual forces like the wind, he just thought it and he came? I don't know how he did it.

2. God is invisible.

Deut. 4: 15: *Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire,*

We are told nothing on the earth should be used to describe God. This is a reflection of Ex 20:4 where we should not make images of God. There are 2 different things that are sins in the moral code of God- don't worship anything other than the true and living God, there is only one true God. Israel was wrong to choose to be like other nations and have other gods. Humanity is wrong when we worship anything other than the one true creator.

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The other sin is to seek to worship the true Creator and make an image that represents him. When Israel waited for Moses to come down, they did not make another god; they made an image to understand who was on the mountain. They broke God's commandment he had just given them. Don't make images of God. Do you see the difference? God does not want us to try to represent him by material things, even precious gold. No image is sufficient. Do not try to help your children by saying close your eyes and imagine God is here beside you.

Student Response: I was raised Roman Catholic, they have images. Why do they have them? They have them to represent God. I am confused.

What do you say about the Ark of the Covenant?

Prof. Response: The ark was not an image of God. It was a tool for their worship in which the reminders of the covenant were inside it, like the 10 commandments. The ark was a box. It was never an image of God. In the box were the tablet of the 10 commandments, the one that Moses brought down the second time, there was a rod, the rod that Moses had that budded in a miraculous way, there was a small jar with manna in it. These were testimonies of what God had proven to be for them. He's given the law, therefore has given them direction; given them human leadership to represent Him.

The Ark does not represent God in any way, it never did in the minds of His people.

There was a lid that went over top of this box. On the lid there were angels formed out of gold. These angels were formed in such a way that they were over top the lid of the covenant. This part was called the propitiation, where the blood was put for the covering of Israel.



Israel never saw this as an image of God. As a matter of fact, they knew when this ark was finally put into the temple, God evidenced himself right there. God in their minds was completely separate from the Ark of

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the Covenant which had this part and this part. If anything this was a testimony that they would not have an image, for they had a place for God to be. When the priests came in and bowed, they did not bow to the ark they bowed to the presence of God. When Roman Catholic people come into their church, they bow to the cross. In the RC church the cross still has the form of a man on the cross to represent Jesus Christ. This is an image.

How about Christians who wear crosses on their necklaces? Is that an image? Is it used in the same way as this? A catholic holding onto it and making the sign of the cross is certainly using it as a symbol of God. But for Christians who wear a cross without a man on it, it could just be a testimony of identification. To me it is no different than the early church using the symbol of the 'fish' as a symbol to represent Christianity.

The clergy who wear a collar to show they serve God do the same. Personally, I have no problem with any of this, it is a way to identify with our faith. In America there may be a few that have the symbol of the fish, but most people do not understand what that means, so it is insignificant. Many churches on the top of the building have a cross. Again, it's only to say 'we are of the Christian faith.' In America most evangelical churches have discontinued wearing the collar because we do not want to be identified with liberal Christianity. In America many clergy wear a collar only to get the benefits such as free taxi or best seats. If you are clergy, your restaurant meal is free. To me these kind of things are inappropriate to true Christian witness.

Having an image of God, anything that represents God, even for the right purpose, is the wrong thing to do. Evangelicals are sometimes guilty of doing this. If a family who is Christian wants their children to learn to pray might bring a nice white stone and tell their children just imagine this is God. I think this is against this command. Children have to learn that God is real even though you cannot see him.

Student Response: What is the meaning of making the sign of the cross
Prof. Response: My understanding it is the same as closing a prayer 'in the name of the father, the son, the holy ghost.' I do not think Catholics see this as some magic thing to say God will answer my prayer if I do this. My mother was RC. She would often pray she knew the Bible teaches you pray in the name of the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost. When she prayed and said those words she would make the sign of the cross. That does not bother me, provided they do not think it is a special formula for the only

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true church to use. Personally I met born again believers that are in the Catholic Church. When they take mass, they were thinking what we do when we take the Lords' table.

To them, the believers, they were remembering the Lords' death when they took mass. They did not understand the doctrine of their church. I had a man say to me he accepted Christ as his Saviour as a catholic, but stayed in the Catholic church. I ask how do you reconcile your true faith with taking mass. Mass is the same as your communion. I said that is not what your church teaches. He did not know and I explained to him. The priest says he is giving the body of Christ, your salvation. He was surprised! You do not participate in the cup, only he does because the cup is the blood of Christ that he takes, only the holy priest can take this blood, not the common people. There is ignorance everywhere.

CLASS 4

We were discussing the reality of not making any image of God. So in the context of God being invisible we should not make any attempt to explain God by visible things. We see in John 1:18 it is Jesus, the Son, who declares God. In our efforts to try to explain God, the best way is to go to the Scriptures and examine Jesus Christ.

Rom 1:20: *For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead,*

1 Tim. 6:16: *However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.*

Paul said the invisible things of God are understood by the things that He made. So God has determined it is sufficient by creation to see the character of God. In creation we see His power, His order, and His character of provision. That is sufficient. That calls individuals to seek Him.

1 Tim. 6:16: *who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power.*

Clearly no man has seen God, or can see God. This creates confusion for there are texts of Scripture that seem to indicate people have seen God. For example:

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Gen. 32:30: *And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."*

How can you account for Jacob claiming to see God face to face when the Bible says no man has seen God? This was at the time when Jacob wrestled with a man, so what Jacob saw was just a man, but as this man revealed himself, Jacob came to know he was wrestling with God in the form of a Christophany. Undoubtedly God the Son manifested Himself physically and fought with Jacob. There wasn't even the presence of the glory of God which on the mountain terrified the Israelites. In essence Jacob saw God, but God was in the form of a man. The issue was not what he saw, but the personal contact with the living God.

We have a situation in Exodus chapter 3, vs. 6 where Moses is before the burning bush. It says he was afraid and he hid his face, afraid to look on God. In 24:9 it says they saw the God of Israel and under His feet was a paved work of sapphire stone. These are descriptions of God. In Ex. 3 it was the burning bush. What is the explanation? Did Moses see God even though Scriptures say no man has seen God? The burning bush does not describe Jesus Christ here?

Prof. Question: *What was visible here in the bush?*

Student Response: *The glory, a brightness that was a fire burning but not consuming the bush.*

Prof. Question: *What was visible in chapter 24?*

Student Response: *The sapphire seems to indicate there was a brightness here as well.*

Prof. Response: *This here could be a Christophany because it speaks of 'under his feet', but the text seems to indicate with the brightness of the stone, a bright light like the glory of God. Again we see that God manifested himself in His glory. It was the visible presentation of himself, but not the reality of Himself.*

In the context of Aaron and Miriam challenging Moses' leadership (Numbers 12:6-8), we see in vs. 5 the Lord came down in a pillar of cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle, a presentation of the shekinah glory. It was the Lord in this manifestation who spoke to Aaron and Miriam, he describes how He had visited Moses and in the context he says he spoke to him in a dream, but not so with Moses who he stood face to face.

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Although the prophets had been spoken to in dreams, Moses stood face to face, he says in vs 8 he sees the form of the Lord. He refers to the time in which Moses looked on the Lord and in these passages, Moses on the mountain, before the burning bush, it was the 'shekinah' glory. Do you see that when the Scriptures say they saw the Lord, it was not the invisible, the true manifestation of God; it was God in His glory. I tried to explain this glory is his perfection; that He truly is. If anyone looked on this he/she would be destroyed because we are imperfect people.

God demonstrates his perfection on men in light; a brightness. In our sphere of understanding there is nothing more pure or glorious than bright light. That is how God chose to reveal an aspect of Himself in His glory, by bright light. Don't think that God who is invisible is bright light. Even bright light is part of creation. God is beyond this.

Student Response: How can we interpret the manifestation of God in John's vision on Patmos Island in the book of Revelation. We are told that Jesus Christ has the seven stars in his hand. He says for him John saw God.

Prof. Response: The text says the one who stood there is the head of the church, Christ, seen now in His royalty sitting at the right hand of the Father, not in his servanthood.

When the world sees him descend as He brings judgment, the world will also see him in the majesty of his royalty.

To me, the difference is in what Saul/Paul saw when he saw Jesus on the road, in His humility. What John saw in Revelation was Jesus in all His exaltation as King of Kings. Each are Christ.

Student Question: I want to know the situation of Adam, why he was walking in the garden.

Prof. Response: We don't know. All it says is that Adam walked in the garden with God. We cannot speculate. It was before the fall of man; Adam and Eve had full fellowship with God in unconfirmed holiness so that might indicate what they saw.

It is God who purposes to reveal Himself in particular ways for particular purposes. In Isaiah 6, he saw a vision of the Lord on the throne. In what manifestation did he see God: in his humility or his majesty? The answer is in Majesty; He was 'high and lifted up.' The whole picture is of God in majesty. That was the purpose of God in this vision to show Isaiah who He

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was among His people. But God had a different purpose when he wrestled with Jacob, when he called Saul, when He presented Himself before John to give the letters to the church.

Student Question: *From what Timothy says, how will we believers see God?*

Prof. Response: *In eternity when we are perfected, we will see God as He is. When we began we said we define theology proper by studying different aspects of God but don't let this reduce God in your mind. He has never changed, always the glorious God, the majesty King. It is for His purposes that he chooses to manifest Himself. All through Scripture sometimes God is not recognized, like when he was before Abraham saying he would destroy Sodom and Gomorrah.*

It was only as the conversation continued and the Lord said his wife would have a child that he became aware that this was the God who called him from the Ur of the Chaldees. I see the purpose for this was to call Abram to faith; if he had manifested himself, there would be no need for faith, he would be on his knees; the same with Jacob--he wrestled with a God until he realized that God had come before him and wrestled with him and changed his name. It was required for Jacob to have faith, so God showed Himself as an ordinary individual. Isn't that exactly what God did bringing Christ as the incarnate man? Those who saw Him, saw an ordinary Jewish man, but they were called to believe what He said about Himself.

Student Question: *When Jesus came the first time, he came as the Son; the next time He will come as a King, will He come as an incarnate King?*

Prof. Response: *The Son of God will always and forever God and man. That is one of the amazing expressions of the humility of God for the Son to be forever man. But we will be like him in our glorified state when we are perfected. We will not be God, but we will be privileged in the same way the Son is, to come before the Father in the Son's righteousness.*

Student Question: *When John saw Him, he fell down; but when He comes as king, will people look at Him and fall down?*

Prof. Response: *Where will the church be?*

Student Response: *Coming with Him.*

Prof. Response: *When He comes will the world see Him in His glory?*

Student Response: *Yes.*

Prof. Response: *The Bible says the world will see Him, but in the same glory as these people saw God, a reflection of His glory. He speaks and*

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the armies are destroyed. The only people who go into the kingdom are the saved people. During the 1000 year reign Christ is be on His earthly throne and people born in that time period will still be seeing Him although some are not saved. It seems to me that the expression of his glory is still the reflection of His glory as we have described elsewhere.

Let's look at the answer to the questions in your notes. The Bible says: 'no man has seen God.' What about those who claimed to see God? There are 3 answers that relate to this:

#1 they only saw the reflection of God's glory like when you look into a mirror.

All we see a reflection of ourselves. That's one way of understanding the glory of God. It is not looking at God, it is a reflection.

#2 some believe God manifests Himself as 'the Angel of the Lord.'

This phrase is used 58 times in Scripture. We see this first in Genesis 16 as God meets with Hagar: "*the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness*, and Genesis 22 where called Abraham: *And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham* (v. 11). In this context Hagar identified the angel as the Lord: *Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees;* (v. 13).

God presented Himself as 'The Angel of the Lord.' Schaeffer concluded that every time an angel was mentioned in the OT, it was a Christophany. I do not agree however, I do believe God did present Himself as the Angel of the Lord. Nevertheless, others suggest that in the OT the angel of the Lord, is God's personal emissary, who performed special functions at particular times in the history of Israel.⁹ This does not align with Hagar's statement.

#3 God has manifested Himself in material forms.

Ex. 3:4: *God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!"*

OT Old Testament

⁹ Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (90). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

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Ex. 13:21: *And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light.*

In these texts God was present in a bush of fire and a cloud and as a pillar of fire. When God descended between those who were going to attack the Israelites and the Egyptians, there was a difference, the ‘shekinah’ appeared differently to the Israelites from what it did to the Egyptians. The Israelites saw the cloud as a burning fire to give them light. But the Egyptians saw a cloud of darkness that blinded their way (Ex. 14:20). The choice is God’s how He wants to manifest himself to people.

#4 God manifested Himself as Jesus Christ, a man.

John 1:14: *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory,*

“We beheld his glory.” That does not mean that when Jesus walked on earth he had a halo so people could see His glory; the ‘glory’ they saw was a man with perfect character. Most did not recognize it as perfect; the Pharisees said Jesus was liar and a blasphemer. Even though He was perfect as a human, the world did not recognize perfections. We have seen the ‘spirituality of God’ he is incorporate immaterial, invisible. It’s confusing, but when you look, it becomes simple when you understand God chose to manifest himself at different time, differently. That does not take anything away from the fact He declares Himself Spirit, without body.

The second thing we look at is the personality of God. The Jehovah Witness deny the personality of the spirit and define it as a force. When we are talking about theology proper, we will focus on the personality of the Father, when we study Christology we show the spirit and the Son are given exactly the same personality traits. So what we look for is things that define person as opposed to force. The wind is a force, but it is not a person. That is the significant difference; some say God is a force, but not a person.

B. The Personality of God

1. God is Personal

When we say this we assert that God is rational, self-conscious and self-determining, an intelligent moral agent. As supreme mind he is the source of all rationality in the universe. Since God’s rational creatures possess independent characters, God must be in possession of a character that is divine in both its transcendence and immanence.

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The OT reveals a God who is personal, both in terms of his own self-disclosure and of his people's relations with him, and the NT clearly shows that Christ spoke to God in terms that were meaningful only in a person-to-person relationship. For that reason we can predicate specific mental and moral qualities of God, such as we do of human character. Attempts have been made to classify the divine attributes, *i.e.* character qualities, under such headings as 'Mental and Moral', 'Communicable and Incommunicable' or 'Related and Unrelated'. Scripture would seem to give no support to any of these classifications. *GOD's names are to us the designation of his attributes, and it is significant that, historically, God's names were given in the context of his people's needs.

It would seem, therefore, more true to the biblical revelation to treat each attribute as a manifestation of God in the human situation that called it forth, compassion in the presence of misery, long-suffering in the presence of ill-desert, grace in the presence of guilt, mercy in the presence of penitence, and so forth, suggesting that the attributes of God designate a relation which he establishes with those who feel their need of him.

That bears with it the undoubted truth that God, in the full plenitude of his nature, is in each of his attributes, so that there is never more of one attribute than of another, never more love than justice, or more mercy than righteousness, but that God is unchanging, undiminished and wholly involved in all that he does. If there is one attribute of God that can be recognized as all-comprehensive and all-pervading, it is his holiness, which must be predicated of all his attributes, holy love, holy compassion, holy wisdom, *etc.*

God is the original person. We are created after his person. People have some vague idea that god is a force, power or influence. But He is a person.

I give you a little definition of personality to distinguish person from power: Personality exists where there is intelligence, a mind, a will, a reason, where there is self-consciousness and self-determination.

So we see the personality of God in:

a. His names

Ex. 3:14: *'And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"*

In this declaration of who God is, there is the idea of self-determination, will, intelligence.

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b. In Contrasts

Jer. 10:10-11: *But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth will tremble, And the nations will not be able to endure His indignation. Thus you shall say to them: "The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens.*

Here we see Jehovah proved to be the true Elohim. And this is your homework for tonight. To study through Jeremiah and identify all the themes that relate to God is to discover the personality of Elohim.

1 Thess. 1:9: *For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,*

We know there are people who say they serve idols but they never got the instruction from the idols. This text speaks of serving the true and living God. It is God who is living, who gives the direction to serve. Which expresses His will and His determination. When you think of the millions of people who serve false gods, it is their own inclination and their own determination who they serve. In truth men that do this, do not serve the gods, they serve themselves.

Student Question: *What do you mean by 'Contrast' in the notes.*

Prof. Response: *When you go through the text you see the contrast between serving dead gods, those created by man which are nothing but sticks and stone and the living and eternal God which made all creation, including man. You must remember that Satan is behind serving idols.*

c. In Attributes

We see also that the personality of God is evidenced in his attributes of emotion and will.

Gen. 6:6: *And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.*

God was sorry when he looked on the wickedness of the world. In this passage it also says God was grieved in His heart. I suggest this confirms the Holiness of God's nature in the offense of sin and also the love of God's nature in the sorry of the necessary destruction of man.

1 Sam. 15:28-29: *So Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who*

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is better than you. And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent. For He is not a man, that He should relent.

In the context here, as the prophet “turned to leave” Saul grabbed the “hem” of Samuels robe and “tore” the corner tassel from it. In response Samuel declared that Saul’s rejection as king would stand. Though the Lord “was grieved” (v. 11; *nḥm*), he would not “change his mind” (*nḥm*). The surety of the Lord’s words was based in the stability of the divine nature.

John 3:16: *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

Does God ever do wrong? No! When the Bible says God is sorry, or God grieves, it is not an indication He has done wrong, it reflects that He is responsive in his dealings with man. In Gen. 6 He was sorry he created man, so he changed his dealings with man and took one man and his family and destroyed the rest. In Samuel, Samuel tells Saul that because of his sin, God will deal differently and bring another king. Because Saul disqualified himself, God did not say “well I will not have a king.” That would be God making the mistake. But no, God said I will achieve this by dealing in a different way. God’s nature is without change, he does not relent, but while being true to His nature, He succeeds in all His purposes without compromise.

John 3:16: *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

Prov. 6:16: *These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him*

Psm. 94:9,10: *He who planted the ear, shall He not hear? He who formed the eye, shall He not see? He who instructs the nations, shall He not correct, He who teaches man knowledge?*

What is there in John 3:16 that cries ‘personality’? Love. What in Prov. 6:6 that cries ‘personality’? ‘Hates.’ What is there in Psm. 94:9,10 that cries ‘personality’? ‘he hears’, ‘he sees’, ‘he knows’, ‘he corrects/chastises.’ These expressions of the personality of God are very basic and all through Scripture. In your theology books in the library you will see many more examples of these. These are just ways of seeing in Scripture the personality of God.

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We have been looking at the nature of God. We examined His spirituality, the fact He is spirit and everything that that means. We then looked at God's personality to define God as a person rather than a force as many cults profess. Now we look at the idea of trinity:

C. The Trinity of God

We saw the potential for this in the plural of 'elohim' meaning three or more. Now we look at further evidence in Scripture that Elohim is indeed three persons of one God.

We begin by saying 'God is three in one.' The idea is that if man were the author of the Bible, there would not be a concept of this. When we looked at the systems of theology we saw everything except a true definition that says 'one God of three persons.' This is truly what the Scriptures teach.

We must accept this truth by faith.

1. Several errors are proposed in an attempt to explain the Trinity.

When we started looking I suggested we do not allow the approach we take to diving God up in our minds. I would also suggest that we have the same problem when we talk about the trinity. We try, it is attempted by teachers to explain the trinity. 1:10

So we have to recognize that errors exist as we try to illustrate what God is. One of the errors is trying to say that God is three gods. This is not true, there are three individuals in the Godhead. One God, three persons. The trinity is just one person. There is also the idea that denies the trinity and makes the Son and the Holy Spirit creations of God.

The truth is: the trinity is the doctrine based on revelation from God. This was not the imagination of man, but the revelation of God. The way we say this: we worship one God, eternally existing in three persons. Can you think of some ways that do not work but the church has used to try to explain the trinity? The egg that has 3 parts, yet it is insufficient as an illustration of God because the egg although has 3 parts, each part is individual. That is insufficient example. Water can be solid/ice, liquid, and vapour. But the molecules cannot all be these three at the same time.

I use the triangle to represent God in my notes, but I don't use it to teach what God is like, I use it as a short representation of the word God.

Prof. Question: Does anyone else use a different illustration?

Student Question: 'The light of the sun

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Prof. Response: How does that express trinity?

Student Response: The sun gives light, energy, also life.

There are many in every culture, they are insufficient. The best illustration is man himself. According to Scripture, humans have body, soul, and spirit? Yet yet this is ineffective.

2. The Trinity in the Old Testament

a. The plural name of Deity Elohim

We have in the OT the trinity, but basically this proves that God is more than two. For example we have the plural name of deity 'Elohim' which refers to three or more.

b. Personal pronoun Us used of the Deity

Then we have the many OT pronouns used of deity:

Gen. 1:26: *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness;*

Gen. 11:7: *Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language,*

Is. 6:8: *Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?"*

In each of these text God refers to Himself with the plural pronoun 'Us' which clearly addresses a plural God.

c. OT Theophanies

Gen. 16:7: *Now the Angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness,*

This passage is the first reference to "the angel of the Lord" (*mal'ak Yahweh*) in the Old Testament, where it occurs forty-eight times.

The precise relationship between the "angel of the Lord" and God is puzzling... The angel is equated with the Lord in some texts and yet appears distinctive in others... Chapter 16 illustrates the ambiguity of the angel's identity. He speaks in first person as God himself (v. 10), and both the narrator and Hagar's speech identify the angel as the Lord God (v. 13). He also is identified as the Lord when he calls from heaven to rescue young Isaac (22:11, 15).¹⁰

¹⁰ Mathews, K. A. (2005). *Vol. 1B: Genesis 11:27–50:26*. The New American Commentary (188). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

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Regardless of the ambiguity, ‘The Angel of the Lord’ indicates the plurality of a personal deity. The term Lord indicates the God who sent the messenger (, the term angel indicates the messenger sent by God. The verb ‘found’ (מצא matsa’) is singular, indicating one person speaking.

Student Question: Regarding the term theophany how it relates to the angel of the Lord.

Prof. Response: Because we are talking about the ‘Angel of the Lord’ God Himself is the one manifested, or revealed. A revealing of God in scripture is called a Theophany. There is an indication of more than two, in the sense of the Hebrew plural. However, when we talk about the manifestations of God appearing as a man, that is called a Christophany. So when you see the manifestation of God in the OT other than a man, it is a theophany, whether in the burning bush, or the ‘shekinah glory’ But when God manifests Himself in the appearance of a man, it is the role of the Son, a Christophany. We find in the context that Hagar “called the name of the LORD that spoke unto her, Thou God see me.” Recognizing the manifestation as God suggests a Theophany rather than a Christophany.

d. The Work of the Holy Spirit

In the OT the work of the Holy Spirit is distinguished from God:

Gen. 1:1, 2: *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth... And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*

Judges 6:34: *But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon;*

In Gen. 1 we see it was the Spirit of God who moved in creation. The idea if it is the Spirit of God, it is distinguished from God the creator. This expresses more than one aspect or persons of God. The same in Judges 6 with ‘the Spirit of the Lord’ coming upon Gideon.

CLASS 5

We looked at the suggestion of the trinity in the OT being words and situations that show God is more than one. We see in Genesis that God created the world and the spirit moved over creation. That suggests that God is more than one. But there is no text in the OT where God the Father, God the Spirit, and God the Son are referred to at one time.

3. The Trinity in the New Testament

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We do see in the NT, the working of the trinity in the OT. For 4000 years to Israel God was One God. Of all the societies of the OT referred to in Scripture, and all the archeological evidence discovered regarding societies in history, this truth made Israel unique. Israel was the only ancient civilization that had believed in One God. They came to know and understand this by the revelation of God. So when we in the NT are thinking of God, we should think 'God is one God.' Only by progressive revelation do we see the function of the three persons of God more clearly in the NT.

a. The Baptism of Christ

Matt 3:16-4:1: *When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."*

Here we have the baptism of Christ where we see the Spirit descending like a dove. Remember the text says the Spirit descended 'like a dove,' not 'as a dove.' In describing the spirit coming, God explains it is being like a dove settling on a shoulder. We also hear the voice of God saying 'this is my beloved Son.' Of course, Jesus is in the water when all this transpires. This is the first indication in one setting in the NT of the trinity. In this text where Jesus is being baptized, we see clearly the evidence of the Father, the Son, the Spirit.

b. The baptismal formula

Matt. 28:19: *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*

Here we have the baptism formula, we baptize in the name of the Father, in the name of the Son and the Holy Spirit. You can see how, as the Disciples of Christ and later in the church, that this idea of being baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit was an unique. We know that baptism was not new. It was the practice of the Jewish people to baptize those who were proselytized into the Jewish faith. It seems by archeological and historical evidence in ancient manuscripts that many of the pagan religions baptized people. Paul wrote of people being baptized for the dead, long before Roman Catholicism.

Baptizing was not a new thing to the church; they saw it as a point of association. However, to be baptised in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost was an absolutely new situation. It made the baptism

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involved in the church different from the baptism of John which was a baptism of repentance. Biblical baptism makes the church unique and separated from other religions to this day.

c. The apostolic benediction

We also see in the epistles the apostolic benediction where the trinity is mentioned:

2 Cor. 13:14: *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.*

Here again we see in one context, the trinity.

Student Question: *I want to know why the baptism of John is different from that of the church.'*

Prof. Response: *John's message was different from that of the church. John preached repentance in preparation for the Messiah. In reality John's message was not the gospel. It was specifically for the people of Israel; a call for them to repent and return to God in preparation for receiving the Messiah.*

We see from Isaiah chapters 7-9, when the Messiah would come, Israel would be in darkness. When we study the NT gospels, the Israelites were under the influence of the Pharisees' teaching who perverted the law and taught a works salvation. So Israel at the time of Christ's coming were no different than a pagan people, morally and ethically they were like the other nations, although they were taught there is only one God, they did not practice this.

Business was too important so they embraced other religions so the people could have the business.

John is seen as an OT prophet who called Israel to repentance. He called for a public testimony of that, which was baptism. Christ challenged the people with the gospel which embraced Jews and Gentiles alike and He commanded the apostles who established the church to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, to bring individuals into the fellowship of a church.

The condition for their baptism was more than just repentance, it was a change of mind involving faith in Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world. It's very possible that there were people who repented and were baptized with John but did not later believe that Jesus was the Messiah. In hearing John they knew they were wrong and had to repent and return to their tra-

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ditional expressions of worship according to the law. All that came by John's baptism of repentance, but Jesus the Messiah (the Christ) who brings salvation, no, that is too much to swallow!" Even Pharisees came to be baptized by John, they wanted the recognition of accepting John's message even though John himself rebuked them. Nevertheless, the ascension of Christ there were only 500 souls present. Not even enough believers to make a large sized local church.

Jesus had to demonstrate His humility, and Jesus had to identify with the people of Israel, so His baptism was not one of repentance, but a baptism of identification of people with their condition of sin.

d. Statement of Christ

John 14:16: *And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever*

In John 14:16 we have a statement from Christ. This is the time in which Jesus is teaching about the comforter who will come. So we see Jesus talking and praying to the Father and promising another Comforter. Again we see the trinity; Jesus praying, the Father hearing, the promise of the Comforter to come. Now there are other texts that demonstrate the trinity but in a different way. these texts don't have the names or evidence of the trinity in one text but what they do is have a couple of texts that are proven by mathematical formula.

e. NT Teaching

Rom. 1:7: *To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Heb. 1:8: *But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom.*

Acts 5:3, 4: *But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."*

If Jesus is given the same attributes as the Father, then we see that Jesus and the Father are the same. If the Spirit is given the same job identification as the Father, then the Spirit and the Father are one. Therefore, if $a=b$ and $b=c$, then a, b, c are all equal.

Rom. 1:7: *grace and peace from God our Father, the God of Christ',*

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Heb. 1:8: *‘to the son he said, thy throne, O God.’*

In these references we see God the Father and Christ as equal and both having the throne. In Acts 5:3, 4 the challenge was not to lie to the Holy Ghost which was lying to God. We see in Romans and Hebrews the Son is attributed the same things as the Father. In Acts 5 the Spirit is attributed the same to the Father therefore, Christ is equal to the Father, the Spirit is equal to the Father, so they are all equal.

D. The Infinity of God

We looked at God from the perspective of personality and trinity. Again I remind you this is just one way that we try to understand God by looking at different aspects of God. you’ll come across theologians who use different terms and different approaches. We come now to The Infinity of God

‘Infinity’ has the idea of no beginning and no end it refers to no limitations. When we receive new life in Christ we do not receive eternal life, although we use the term that way. We are all beings having a beginning, even though we will have no end. So when we talk about the infinity of God, it has this idea of no beginning, no end, no limitations. Only God is infinite. We see part of His infinity in Psalm 147:

Psm. 147:5: *Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite.*

Here God’s omnipotence and omniscience are evident. We see clearly that his understanding is infinite. It does say His power is mighty, but the word ‘infinite’ is not used here. There are other passages that indicate God is all-powerful, here it says he is all-knowing, omniscient.

Job 11:7-9: *Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than heaven — what can you do? Deeper than Sheol — what can you know? Their measure is longer than the earth And broader than the sea.*

The best way to summarize this text is to say God’s perfections are infinite. His perfections are the summary of all that He is. Everything about God is beyond measure.

It is Zophar speaking in this text, one of the ‘friends’ of Job. In his exhortation to Job, he is declaring that God cannot be known because his perfections are beyond human understanding.

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1 Kg. 8:27: *But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built!*

We see as Solomon is giving dedication to the temple he built, it was his father who wanted to establish a temple for God to dwell among His people. Solomon was the one chosen to build this. At the dedication he clarifies that the temple is representative that God would abide among them. Yet here we see that God cannot be contained in heaven or in earth. So in this we see that He is omnipresent, present everywhere.

Rom. 11:33: *Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!*

God's wisdom and knowledge are infinite and His judgments are infinite.

Prof. Question: *Can you give me another text that demonstrates that God is limitless in His power and being?*

Student Response: *- 'He is the same yesterday today and forever.' That text has some limitations, though. -Gen. 1- the creation story? Prof. Response: Yes, before creation, God was. Before time God was. When creation is given in detail, it came about as He spoke. If we follow the formula of scientists, that energy is not created or destroyed, then all that exists in the universe is energy that came from God. That means he is all-powerful.*

Psm. 139:1ff: *O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off...*

This passage reflects examples to demonstrate the infinity of God in knowing all, being everywhere, having all power, and being beyond human comprehension.

II. THE NATURAL ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

A. The omnipotence of God

1. This means that God is able to do whatsoever He wills

We look at Scriptures we see infinity and attributes of God within His limitless sphere. Because these attributes in comparison to creation itself, we call them 'natural attributes.' God created space and time and He is not limited by either. When we compare any part of creation to God we see these natural attributes. For example, He is omnipotent, the all-powerful God relates to more than just the fact he is all-powerful, it also

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speaks of the limitlessness of His will because he is all-powerful.

2. There are some things that God cannot do-- things that are contrary to His nature.

God's will is self-limited by His nature. God can do anything He wills, but He will never will to do anything against his nature. For example, God can never choose to sin.

These 2 points are different in a slightly unique way. #1 speaks of His will, #2 speaks of His power. He will never 'will' anything outside His nature. He will never 'do' anything outside His nature.

Student Question: Why did you call it natural attribute?

Prof. Response: His power is demonstrated in creation. We know power because we see it in creation. In creation we have space and time. God is not limited by space and time, neither is he limited by any power we could imagine. In creation God made man with knowledge and intelligence, but God is not limited by any understating of knowledge or intelligence, so we are saying natural attributes because they are compared with the reality we have in nature itself. Nature is limited. God is not.

There are some very clear passages in Scripture what God cannot do. He cannot look on sin.

2 Tim. 2:13: *If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.*

Here we see God cannot be unfaithful. God cannot deny us because we are part of Him.

Heb. 6:18: *that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.*

God cannot lie.

James 1:13: *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.*

God cannot tempt people to sin and He cannot sin Himself. And God cannot do self-contradictory things such as make spirit material, or make a square circle. Although God can do anything, this statement reflects the reality of God's consistence in creation in which he sustains the perfection of creation. When I was in school, one of the students came from a home

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that did not believe in God. This guy used to mock me as a Christian. One of the things he said is ‘if God is so great can He make a rock too big for Him to lift?’ That’s one of the self-contradictory things, and an absurd thing to even say. He did this to make me feel small by saying God cannot do all things. So that’s what we’re talking about here. God cannot make a physical spirit because He created spirit not physical. God will not pervert His creation although He has overridden it. For example, God made a donkey talk and transported a disciple over distance.

There are many different contradictions that people can imagine and try to demonstrate their own wisdom. My fellow student was proud to think of something that God could not do. God calls that wisdom of man ‘foolishness.’ So you see that although God is infinite and limitless in every aspect there are limitations on what he wills and what He does.

3. God can do what He wills to do.

This statement itself has greater implications. It addresses His sovereignty in which there is no limit on the rule of God.

Prof. Question: What was the term where the sovereignty of God is limited.

Student Response: ‘Open theism.’

Prof. Response: In some Bible colleges in America, Open Theism is being taught. To simplify it, Open Theism means that God’s purposes will be achieved but getting there will not always be His perfect way because of the power of evil. It is almost combining Christian truth with Buddhism: good force verse evil force. Is there a spiritual battle going on in the world? Yes! Does God ever lose? No!

Sometimes He allows the appearance of defeat for His own purposes.

Did Israel win every battle? No. Some would say that demonstrates that God sometimes does not get His own way. But every defeat was purposed by God’s will. Do God’s people ever die for the faith? Yes. Is that defeat? No. It is actually two victories: it completes the will of God, and the child of God is brought into the presence of God forever. That is the greatest thing any person can experience.

4. God has limited Himself in some extent by the free will of rational humanity.

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In the context of Adam and Eve being created with rational and self-will, God did not keep sin out of the universe. So you can see that there's a comparison between God's limitations because of His own nature, and the limitations of Adam and Eve because of the way He created them. God gave them intellect and free will, which necessitated free choice and a potential for choosing sin.

God did not bring sin in to the world. But, God in His purpose and will made man with a free will and therefore, sin-able. God also limited man in creation in not making him as God. If man was not God, and man is sin-able, then man is going to sin. Also when it comes to the penalty of sin for all humanity 'in Adam,' we also see, according to Scripture that God does not save anyone by force. Salvation is always a choice, yet, at the same time we know the faith to make the choice is given by God. When we wrestle with these things, it comes down to God creating things with to a specific nature. According to His purposes and that nature dictates certain things will happen. In our limited understanding some of this is very hard to grasp hold of.

Student Question: If God's will is set, what is the point of prayer?

Prof. Response: I was just going to point this out: If God is all powerful and all perfect, what is the role of prayer for God's people. Some people, when they realize that salvation will only come to the elect, say there is no point in evangelism because whoever is going to be saved will be saved anyway. With the same idea others say if God is perfect in His will, what is the point of prayer? So you tell me. Why do we evangelize? Why do we pray?

Student Response: -We pray because we need to have fellowship with our God.- 'we evangelize because we are commanded by God' - 'we do all of this because God tells us to.

Prof. Response: All of these are good answers. I appreciate the simplicity that we evangelize and pray because we are told to. These are a matter of obedience but we also see in the sovereignty of God a privilege of participation in the work He is doing.

In this church age God has clearly said that 'faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. "Blessed are the feet of those who bring the message." God has said 'fervent and effectual prayer will avail much.' We should do more than 'obey,' we participate and He promises us bless-

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ings because of it. Participation is the means to abundant life now as well as eternal reward to come.

Participation also demonstrates we are dependent on God in our evangelism efforts; it is the Spirit of God that blesses and brings understanding for salvation. And in prayer, we know it is God who answers the prayers according to faith and His will. So that exercise is a dependence on God, it is the greatest expression of our fellowship with Him. Remember we are not tools to be used and tossed aside. We are His children, formed in clay to be exactly what He wants us to be. There are many other aspects that are beyond our understanding.

When Moses prayed for Israel, God repented or changed His mind in how He would deal with Israel. So that instead of destroying Israel and making Moses the leader, God changed the direction He said He was going. The fact that although God knew He would change His mind, it does not lessen the responsibility Moses had in effecting that change.

5. God has power over:

a. Heaven and earth

We see in Scripture that God has power over heaven and earth **Psm. 33:6**: *By his word the heavens were made and all the host of heaven.*

Everything that exists in the universe/heavens is made by God, heaven and earth. In Genesis 1:1-3 all nature was created by God.

b. All men

James 4:12: There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?

James writes that God's people should always be aware that we are under the control of the One Law-giver. He is able to save and to destroy. So god has power over all men. The application to the believer is that we should not boast about what we will do, but we will do this if it is the Lord's will. So the idea is we should plan but be sure that we are seeking the Lord's will as the primary actions of our lives.

Ex. 4:11: *"Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the LORD?"*

We see that God enables/disables man according to His purposes. In this context God calls Moses to lead His people and Moses doesn't want to this; he doesn't think he is capable. God's statement to Moses is "I'm

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the One who makes men able. If I call you to do this, you are able to do this.' So the statement demonstrates the power of God over all men.

c. Angels

Dan. 4:35: *All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand Or say to Him, "What have You done?"*

Here is a testimony of power over the angelic realm. Heaven is no different than earth, God's will is completed in heaven.

Heb. 1:14: *Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?*

Another aspect of God's power over angels—it says in Daniel that God His will is complete in the army of heaven. In Hebrews we see that God has power over the angels, sending them forth to minister among the earth. We see in Job Satan's limitations on dealing with Job. So God has all-power over angels in heaven and in earth.

d. Satan

Job 1:12: *And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand.*

Satan's rebellion was not a surprise to God? In the same way God made man limited by his nature, he made angels limited by their nature. God made man to procreate so we have humanity from one man; in our sin nature comes from one man but angels were created individually, they do not procreate. They were still sin-able by the nature of their creation. Therefore, a choice was made individually for every angel. Satan called Lucifer chose to rebel against God and he is confirmed in his own sin forever. The host of angels who followed Satan are also confirmed in their own nature forever.

Rev. 20:2, 10: *He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; ... The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*

The angels who pursued God and did not follow are confirmed in their holiness forever in the Lake of Fire. God created them to have a particular nature and knew the consequences of that particular nature, and for His will and purpose, but He did not make Lucifer sin.

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So there's a parallel between angels and man, both being created as a rational beings with an original free will. Now the free will of each species/man and angels is limited by their nature. So we can say for angels, the one who became demons, their free will is operated only within their sin nature, they cannot do right because now that is not their nature. The angels that followed the Lord are confirmed in their nature of holiness, so they can only do right.

Man is different. We are all born with a sin nature and therefore, man can only choose according to that nature which is only choosing wrong. Therefore, the Bible says 'no man can please God.' in the second Adam, Jesus Christ, we are restored so the spirit of God enters our life and the original nature of man resides in man. The old man is dead/ the new man is alive. Our minds remember the old man's ways and the spirit of God directs us in the new man's ways, so Christians have the struggle of following the nature of sin/the old man's ways or following the nature of righteousness/the new man's ways.

We can do right according to nature that is now in us. But it is still a choice for us, the free will can go in either directions. When our salvation is completed, glorified in the presence of God, we will only be able to do right. We are told that we as God's people are a testimony to the angels. Can you imagine the demons who will look on a believer and realize there will be a time we are perfected and will never do wrong? We will become what they will never become. That is why they are so angry and vicious towards us.

Student Question: Who created the sin nature?

Prof. Response: I just explained that! The sin nature in the plan of God was the consequence of a free choice. Both angels and humanity were created with a nature that required a test to confirm their nature. When Adam sinned, he confirmed humanity with the sin nature, which became who he was. God did not create the sin nature, as He did not create sin. He created man with the nature of choice. He did this for His own purposes, His own design, His choice. That meant that whatever Adam decided, that is what would become human nature. Adam sinned, so all men from Adam are born with a sin nature. It all goes back to the will and purpose of God. His purposes never fail.

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In Job, Satan is limited or restricted by God. We see in Job's life that Satan comes before God. in Revelation Satan is cast out of heaven. My understanding is that although the demons were distributed into Tartarus, awaiting judgement, some are permitted to roam the world to inflict mankind with their evil intentions, some of these used of God for His purposes (Saul oppressed and struggled because of an evil spirit) in the context of Christ being our Advocate, it seems that for this time, Satan has access to be the accuser.

Therefore, in my thinking when it speaks of Satan being cast out, it is a point in the future, his last opportunity to try to defeat God. there are many things I still do not understand, how Satan in his sinful nature can come before Christ in heaven. It makes me wonder how this can happen. I am reminded that God created man and his realm is earth until God makes a new heaven and earth. God has purposes going on in heaven as his purposes go on in earth. He has closed the door for us to see what is going on there.

We see in Rev. 20 that Satan is bound for 1000 years and later cast into the lake of fire. The point here is that God's power in the bible is demonstrated in restricting and controlling Satan. Eventually binding him and casting him in the lake of fire. Open theism is wrong teaching. Satan is not an equal power of bad against God's power of good. I delight to say 'the demons and Satan are tools in the hands of God and nothing more.' I remember saying such things and a lady told me I should not say such things—'Satan my choose to attack you.' 'He that is in me is greater than he that is in the world.' Some of the new books confuse Christians confuse regarding the power of Satan in our lives. Get your theology from the Bible, not from the television.

e. Death

Eph. 1:19-20: *and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,*

Re 1:18: *"I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.*

There are no limitations to the power of God.

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CLASS 6

We have been talking about the natural attributes of God.

Prof. Question: *What do we mean by natural attributes?*

Student Response: *Those attributes of God when we compare Him to nature/creation.'*

Prof. Response: *Yes, in terms of the aspects of creation, space, time, this is how we look at God in comparison.*

In this we see that when we look at nature itself, there is power in nature, but God is all-powerful. When we look at nature in terms of matter and space, matter is confined to limited space. God is not confined to limited space, so we say He is omnipresent.

B. The Omnipresence of God

1. This means that God is everywhere present.

God is present everywhere in creation. We must be sure we are not confusing this with being present 'in' everything. God is not present in everything. The system of theology that believes God is in everything is called Pantheism. The Scriptures testify that God is everywhere active and possesses full knowledge of all that transpires in every place, but not in everything.

2. God is everywhere active and possesses full knowledge of all that transpires in every place.

One of the unique things about God is that He is consciously aware of all things everywhere. He is not like a computer that has so much data that He cannot get any more. Even though He is everywhere present and conscious of everything everywhere, He is consciously in tune with His children.

3. Scriptural Statements

Jer. 23:23, 24: *"Am I a God near at hand," says the LORD, "And not a God afar off? Can anyone hide himself in secret places, So I shall not see him?" says the LORD; "Do I not fill heaven and earth?" says the LORD.*

God fills the heavens and the earth and yet He is at hand and not far off. There was a time years ago where it was seen that God existed everywhere and was transcendent; He could not be known because He was too

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great to be known. Of course the Scriptures tell us clearly He is a personal God who can be known personally

Psm. 139: 7-9: *Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,*

God is present in every aspect of His creation.

I have a question for you: if God is present everywhere and the unbeliever is separated from God in the after-life, how then can He be present there? In other words, how can God be present in hell when the judgment of sinners is to be separated from God?

There are different senses of what it means for God to be present. We know we are born separated from God and yet God is present where even the unsaved are. The key is the communion with God that the unbeliever does not have. In one sense, God is consciously aware and therefore present in every aspect of creation, even hell, but eternal life/salvation is qualified by the communion God's people have with God Himself. So even now, God is present everywhere the unbeliever is in the world, but God is in the believer. There is a different sense of His presence.

4. This truth does not say God is everywhere present in the same sense.

We know that God the Father is on the throne in heaven and Christ is at His right hand in heaven, and yet Jesus said, 'I will never leave you.' This is a true statement because the Spirit of God resides in every believer. So God is one, therefore, God is in us.

John 14:16, 17: *And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever; "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.*

Here Jesus begins by saying do not be troubled, I am going to depart from you. I will send you another comforter, one of the same kind. In essence Jesus is saying I am going to depart from you, but I am not going to depart from you. The uniqueness was that Jesus was with them, His body, his presence was with them, but His Spirit would be in them. So we see that there are different senses when it speaks of the presence of God.

Our minds cannot really comprehend this because God is not confined to His creation. We talked about His infinity in that He has no be-

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ginning, no end, and no limits. Apart from the self-imposed limits of His own nature. God is hard to understand! We will have eternity to know Him more and more.

Student Question: *When someone accepts Jesus as Saviour, where is the spirit at that time, is it sleeping in him or does it come to him.*

Prof. Response: *Does God reside in the unbeliever? No. So the person who receives Christ as Saviour is born again at that moment. What does it mean to be born again?*

Student Response: *Born of the Spirit.*

Prof. Response: *Yes! The spirit of man that was separated from God when Adam sinned, and passed to all humanity, is made alive to God again when the Spirit of God joins with the spirit of man, which is to be born again. That union was the original state of Adam when God formed man and then breathed into man. Man had physical features, made of the same components as all the animals, man had soul, intellect and will, the same as the animals but at a higher level. Genesis says the animals became living souls. Intellect, emotions and will, animals have but when God made man, the levels of these is higher. What made Adam uniquely distinct from all animals was that God breathed into him and the spirit was united in the man. It is the spirit of man, whether God is in him or not, that makes man eternal.*

When Adam sinned the Spirit of God departed from Adam's spirit and therefore, Adam was unsaved, out of communion. We call it spiritual death. It does not mean that the spirit of man has gone from man; it means the spirit of man is separated from the Spirit of God. Accepting Christ as Saviour is the point of regeneration whereby the Spirit of God restores fellowship with the spirit of man. So the difference is for the unsaved, God's presence is evident in creation, so unsaved man is aware of Him if he looks with uninfluenced (by culture, by education, be determined sin). But for the saved, God is abiding in them.

Student Question: *Since it is sin that separated man from God, when we believe in Jesus and sin, where does a man's sin go?*

Prof. Response: *Let's go back to when a man is saved, what happens to his sin when he accepts Christ?*

Student Response: *'taken away'*

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Prof. Question: Where does it go? Where does the presence of sin go when a believer confesses sin? How is it wiped out?

Student Response: By the substitution of Jesus for this.

Prof. Response: My sin was on Jesus, my sin past, my sin present, my sin future. My sin is not on me, it is on Christ. God sees the sin on Jesus, not on me. When I sin, I break fellowship with my Lord. Like a child, I disappointed and disobeyed God. But only the fellowship is broken. It is restored when I confess my sins.

C. The Omniscience of God

Let's talk about the omniscience of God, when we look at nature we see power, we see matter and space, but we also see intelligence. There is order in creation; there is design in creation; creation shouts 'intelligence' so we look at intelligence as an aspect of nature and we compare God to this intelligence. And again we see there is no limit on the intelligence or knowledge of God. Even as He is the source of all power in the universe, He is the source of all intelligence in the universe.

1. Omniscience means 'all-knowing', God knows everything.

1 John 3:20: For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.

When John writes 'He knows all things' the text is talking about everything that is in man's heart. So the interpretation of this is 'He knows everything in the hearts of man', but by application He knows all things. If God can see in the hearts and see everything we think, then He knows everything.

2. God knows all things concerning:

a. The Number of the stars

Psm.147:4: He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name.

It does not say He knows the number of stars that are visible. Scientists say there are 4000-5000 stars visible by the naked eye, but with telescopes that are in orbit, there are billions of stars evident. God knows each one.

Is. 40:28: Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable.

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Regarding his knowledge, all eternity we will never come to understand the end of His understanding. This is the same as saying ‘His intelligence has no limits.’

b. All things concerning brute creatures

Matt. 10:29: *Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will.*

God knows all the brood creatures. The Bible tells us he sees the sparrow fall. We need to have a respect for creation. When my son was learning to use a rifle to hunt, I knew he would want to try to shoot animals, the purpose of having a gun. I know because when I was a boy, I did the same; I would wonder if I could shoot a bird on a tree and I would shoot it. When I became a Christian I realized it was not appropriate.

To kill without a purpose is not appropriate. God sees the sparrow fall. So I made a rule for my son—if you shoot it, you must eat it. So he was careful what he shot because he knew I would make him eat it. Is it appropriate to kill animals to eat, to protect your crops, or if they are a threat to your health? Absolutely! But it’s not appropriate to kill for enjoyment.

c. Humans

Matt. 6:8: *... For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.*

God knows all people and all their needs. It says he even knows before we ask.

Psm. 94:11: *The LORD knows the thoughts of man, That they are futile.*

God knows the thoughts of all people. I preached about the omniscience of God- I said ‘how embarrassed we would be if our thoughts were projected on the wall for others to see.’ People thought it would be terrible. Then I said ‘why would we feel bad when people see it, and not when God sees it, because he does see it.’ Even our thoughts must be disciplined.

Student Question: *Does Satan also know man’s thoughts?*

Prof. Response: *I think there is some wisdom Satan has because he has accumulated wisdom since he’s been around since creation. I also believe Satan has the ability to impress thoughts upon peoples’ minds. He is not all-powerful, he is not all-wise, so whether he can perceive our thoughts, perhaps in a small way, but not like God. In some small capacity we can*

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read people's thoughts. I know that when my children were small and I put something on the table like candy for them later, I knew what they were thinking.

In that same way, but more efficiently, Satan has some insight. If I lived to 500 years of age, I could read the thoughts of man by seeing them, because I learned to do this. It's really not looking at their minds, it is perceiving by their actions what they are thinking. Therefore, I think Satan, who has been around since the beginning of time, has great skills in this, along with his demons.

Student Question: *What is meant when can we say we have sins by thoughts?*

Prof. Response: *For me there is no real Bible answer that I have. To dwell on the wrong thought becomes sin. We live in a world and although the old man is dead, we have memory of the old man, it is still in our being although spiritually dead, as far as controlling. So I'm an ordinary man, so when I am driving along the road and see a beautiful woman with very little clothes on, I think the wrong thought immediately. You have to discipline yourself 'that is the wrong thing to think' and get your mind back to think things that are pure and honest. It's like the story of the Buddhist monk who carried the lady across the river. He left her there and thought no more of her. But the monk with him, who did not touch her was thinking of her all day long.*

Personally, I think the Spirit of God within us is the rule, He directs our thoughts, He convinces us. The Bible teaches we can become callous if we continue to allow wrong thoughts to continue in our mind. The Spirit of God becomes less influencing. Paul tells us in Philippians the things we are to think on. When my mind wanders away from those things, I know I am wrong.

Remember as God's people we are never condemned for sin, because Christ was condemned for our sin; we just have deal with the broken fellowship.

1 Kings 8:39: *...then hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and forgive, and act, and give to everyone according to all his ways, whose heart You know (for You alone know the hearts of all the sons of men),*

In reality it is the heart that directs the mind. So when God says he sees our hearts, he sees our motives, although we are not thinking of them

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at the moment; He sees my values although I might not be thinking of them at the time. In reality, to say He knows our hearts is to say He knows everything about us. It's a bigger understanding of who I am.

Ex. 3:7: *And the LORD said: "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their task-masters, for I know their sorrows.*

God knows our pains and our sorrows. That should be a comfort to us.

Ps 37:23: *The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way.*

Prov. 5:11,13: *Discretion will preserve you; Understanding will keep you, ... From those who leave the paths of uprightness To walk in the ways of darkness;*

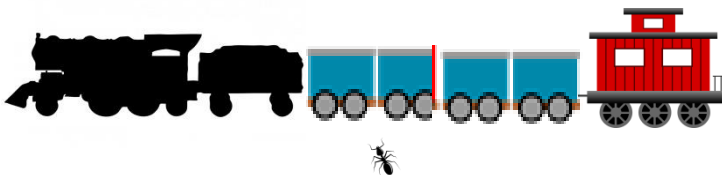
God knows the ways of men, He knows our paths, He know were we are going and where we have gone. He knows our future, he knows our tomorrow

Matt. 10: 30: *But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.*

God knows even the hairs on our head, which is a way of saying He knows everything about us.

4. God has a perfect knowledge of all that transpires in human history.

So far we looked at the areas in which God knows all things. There is an aspect of knowledge that deals in terms of time. The statement: God has a perfect knowledge of all that transpires in human history. This is called providence. I like the illustration that a prof of mine gave me. This is a great diagram of a train:



History to us is like an ant watching a train go by. That ant can only see 'there.' So his perspective of that train is only that much at any moment. That's what history is to you and to me. History is our perspective at this moment of time, right here. We call it 'the present.' I'm talking not

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about what we can learn about history, but what we can see about the present. Because we are a part of nature we have limits on our perspective of history in terms of time. So for us history is moving along and we only see 'the present.' But God who is beyond nature, beyond time, He sees all history as a photograph, it is complete, it's all in one time. This is called 'providence' as evident in the following texts:

Isaiah 48:5: *Even from the beginning I have declared it to you; Before it came to pass I proclaimed it to you*

Acts 15:18: *"Known to God from eternity are all His works.*

Is. 46:9,10: *Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,'*

God knows all His works, all of creation, from the beginning to the end. God declares the end from the beginning. there is no past, present, or future with God.' To God everything is one great living present' in His perception. These two statements I'm talking about His intellectual awareness. His knowledge which has no limits gives Him the awareness of everything at one time that transpires in history.

I am not saying that at any given moment the past, the present and the future still exist. I am not saying that if man had a time machine, he could leave the present and go back the past, or leave the present and go to the future. The past, the present and the future do not exist at one time. God created nature to exist within the present. But He knows all things past, present and future.

Let's go to the train. For the ant, like you and I, 'time', is right front of us. What has past, you and I can learn about by reading, or seeing a recording. But our visible perception of history is only 'now,' only 'the present because, in nature and in time, history is only 'now.' The past is gone, the future has not yet been. Our perception is just 'here', our view of nature and history is understood in the now. There is no scientific possibility for man to go from present time to past time or future time, even though Einstein presented the possibility of time travel.

I have found that some students think there is a possibility, if science continues, to be like God and see the past or the future, or go back and see the past. Maybe it's not an issue here.

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God's intelligence is unlimited, man's is not. I raise this issue because Hollywood influences society, this concept of time will be repeated many times. Time travel is a Hollywood theme, as demons is a Hollywood theme. It is all error and misguiding of people. We need to think of nature properly so we will be able to understand God properly.

God, with his knowledge, is aware of past present and future all at the same time. I am not saying the past, present, future exist at the same time. All that exists, the way God created, is now. So when we measure things by time there is only 'now.' God is not limited by time.

Student Response: *Can you explain it by 'I Am.'*

Student Response: *I don't think it's a reference to time. The word would include all the natural, all that is in his natural attributes, not just providence.*

D. The Immutability of God

Now let's talk about the immutability of God. If we look at nature, we see that nature changes. Everything in nature breaks down dies runs down. When we compare the changing things in nature to God, we realize that God never changes.

1. Immutability means the unchangeableness of God.

God's being, His attitude, His acts are without change.

Mal. 3:6: *For I am the LORD, I do not change;*

Jam. 1:17: *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.*

There is no variableness, no shadow of turning with God. The idea here is based on the old way of measuring time with a sundial. The shadow moved to show time. Here James says there is no shadow of turning, no variableness, God does not change like the shadow of the sundial..

Heb. 6:17: *Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath,*

Prof. Question: *What does not change in this text?*

Student Response: *'His oath.'* His purposes are not changing.

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Prof. Response: Yes, What He has promised, He will complete; His promises are certain. His counsel is confirmed; what He has promised is His unchangeable purposes.

Scriptures teaches that God has never changed, He is the same from eternity past. That is the immutability of God.

E. The Eternity of God

The eternality of God we already talked about, but because nature is not eternal, not everlasting, we look at God and see that He is unique, without beginning and without ending.

Psm. 102: 24-27: *I said, "O my God, Do not take me away in the midst of my days; Your years are throughout all generations. Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will endure; Yes, they will all grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will change them, And they will be changed. But You are the same, And Your years will have no end.*

Everything shall perish but God shall not perish. He's talking about creation; everything created will perish, but God will endure forever.' The word 'endure' can be translated 'He will continue.' When you look at some theology books under this topic, they will perhaps have other things added in natural attributes. Some theologians classify the attributes of God differently. One book looks at God's attributes in regard to what is communicable and what is not communicable. It's just another way of seeing the information of organizing the information.

We looked at the natural attributes of God and for our purposes we listed his omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, immutability and eternality. As I said, in other theological books you will see a different approach. As we look at natural attributes we see that within man there is a consciousness of morality. This is another way to compare the attributes of God to what we are aware of.

IV. THE MORAL ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

A. The Love of God

1. The Bible clearly declares that "God is love"

1 John 4:7: *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.*

Here we discover *why* love is such an important part of the life that is real. Love is a valid test of our fellowship and our sonship because

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“God is love.” Love is part of the very being and nature of God. If we are united to God through faith in Christ, we share His nature. And since His nature is love, love is the test of the reality of our spiritual life¹¹

2. We know God is love from His revelation and not from one's own knowledge. It cannot be seen in nature. In fact only from God's Word do we have knowledge that He is love. Many deny the inspiration of the Bible, yet they say that God is love. If the Scriptures are not the Word of God, then how do we know that God is love? You can examine heathen religion but you never find that "God is love."

Some would argue this; some would say that because God in nature has made provision for man to be sustained, He is demonstrating His love. There is some truth to that when we minimize the definition of love. But when we grab hold of all that love is in terms of God towards us, what the Bible says is the greatest demonstration is the cross of Christ. Although there are interesting illustrations of this in nature, there are is revelation in nature that tells anyone about the reality of the cross and God dying for us. Only from God's Word do we have knowledge of God's loving sacrifice.

The love of God of is very much talked about today. There are some who see the love of God as the great attribute of God. or the main attribute of God. There are others who see 'holiness' as the foundational or main attribute of God. Every time we say something like that, we are minimizing the God of Scripture. God cannot be more a loving God than a holy God. He is all holy and He is all love. He cannot be more powerful than present because there is no limit on each of these. It is wrong to talk about the 'fundamental attribute' of God. all that He is, is the fundamental aspect of God.

The danger of studying by breaking things down is minimizing God. For believers, we probably appreciate the love of God more that the holiness of God. That is why we talk about it so much. People who do not know God, say that God is love. But unless they have truly come to receive Christ because of the cross, they have no comprehension of what God's love is.

¹¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (1 Jn 4:1–16). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

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3. The Scriptures detail the objects of God's love:

a. Jesus Christ

Matt. 3:17: *And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."*

God the Father announced His love for His Son from heaven.

John 17:24: *Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.*

Jesus declared through prayer the God's love for Him was before the foundation of the world. The love of God existed before creation, in that there was a fellowship of love within the Trinity that defined who God is.

b. the Believer

John 16:27: *... the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God.*

Here Jesus is talking about the apostles, yet the truth applies to all who believe in His Son:

John 17:23: *I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.*

c. Israel

Jer. 31:3: *The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.*

I challenge the reform theologians with this verse, it clearly is an expression of God's love to Israel to restore them to the relationship He intended for them to have. To me, it is against the love of God to say that Israel becomes the church. That is like God saying 'Well, no, you weren't the object of my love, I have denounced my love for you.' God is unchangeable.

d. The Sinner

In this I remind you that God hates sin, but loves the sinner.

John 3:16: *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

God loves the world so much He made provision for salvation for the whole world..

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Eph. 2:4, 5: *But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),*

God loved us even when we were dead in sin

Rom. 5:6-8: *For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Although the word ‘love’ is not in this text, it says while we were sinners Christ died for us. Romans tells us that demonstrated the love of God:

Ro 5:8: *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

d. How God Shows His Love

Psm. 5:5(—vs. 6 in French): *The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity.*

In this passage it says God hates all workers of iniquity.

Psm. 11:5: *The LORD tests the righteous, But the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates.*

Is it true that God loves the sinner but hates sin? It is true but the Bible also says He hates the sinner. Is this a contradiction in the Bible? One place it says God loves the sinners, another place it says He hates the sinner.

Prof. Question: *What is your answer?*

Student Response: *-It says He hates them. -He speaks of those who persist. -He loves the repentant sinner. -His love is limited to the elect?*

Prof. Response: *I ask you this because we are guilty of limiting God the way man is limited. We have no capacity to love and hate the same individual. For us, it is one or the other. Not both.*

Is God limited as man is limited? Can God hate and love at the same time? Yes. God is holy and loving at the same time. The holiness of God hates sin and the sinner, the love of God dealt with sin and provided the substitute for the sinner. So do not allow your mind to restrict God by His own nature. His holiness demands that He hate the sinner.

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We can't fully understand God, don't try to understand God. God is a consuming fire but God is also a redeeming Saviour.

It's an illustration of how we tend to limit God; it's the way we think that we reduce God to the way man is. It is easier to point this propensity to limit God in terms of love and hate than it is to talk about omnipresence or omnipotence.

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The attributes of God were viewed from the perspective of natural attributes and moral attributes. As I said, theologians often take different approaches. All of these approaches are man-made ways of trying to understand all that is revealed in Scripture regarding God the Father. So although the texts teach us objective truth, the various approaches are very subjective. There is no right way of dividing up all this information and categorizing it. At least it gives us an opportunity to examine specific truths regarding the father.

Student Question: *I want to know if Adam had not sinned, what would the relationship be between Adam and God.*

Prof. Response: *We can only surmise, and that is sometimes dangerous. The fact that God established the Son to be the Saviour before creation indicates there was a defined direction: God knew man would sin. I believe the free choice was genuine. The only thing that would give us any indication would be the situation with the angels. God created them with free choice as well. Those who were confirmed in evil made the choice to abandon God. Those who are confirmed in holiness made the choice to be loyal to God. We can surmise that if Adam had obeyed, man would have been confirmed in holiness. That is only surmising because God knew it would not happen. My only conclusion is that God, knowing man would fall, knew He would have to be Himself the Saviour was all part of God's plan and purpose. Because we are told even the angels when they look on saved man, is a lesson, they rejoice in it.*

Student Question: *Did Satan sinned before the garden of Eden?*

Exodus 20:11 says everything was created in 6 days. That tells me the angels were also created in those 6 days.

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Prof. Response: We are not given specific information in the Genesis account because that deals with man and his realm. So we really don't know how long Adam and Eve were in the garden before they sinned and we do not know how long angels were in heaven before they sinned. I would suggest that because all things were created in 6 days, the angels were not in the state of sin at the beginning of creation when Adam and Eve were in the garden.

Student Question: About the omniscience of the demons. They said to Jesus: 'We know you, you are the son of God.' do you think demons have omniscience?

Prof. Response: Only God is omniscient. We must remember angels were from the beginning of creation. Angels knew the trinity and so having the experience of one time being in the presence of God and being cast out, they still have that knowledge. The fact that angels are spirit beings would give them a different perspective of reality than we see physically. In my opinion they knew the Son of God before incarnation and recognised him in incarnation. I think that the wisdom and knowledge of demons is greater than man is because of 6000 years of learning in that time. Clearly they are a distinct creation of God that we have no understanding of, other than what Scriptures teach us.

You have good theological books in your library. You have resources here to study and find answers. You will find many different opinions in books because it is all speculation. I think in our discussion, one thing of value in theology proper is that we learn God has no limits except the limits of His own nature. We can see that does not contradict His omniscience, omnipresence etc.

Understanding should help us see that when He created man with man's nature, man was also limited in his free will after the choices. Free will meant choice. Therefore, God did not bring sin, it was man who made the choice. As with the angels, by the virtue of the nature God created them with free will, it meant choice. Seeing the confirmation of their choice in man or angels, holiness or sin nature, keeps man's choices within that limit now, in the sin nature. We can see that Armenian theology is not correct; they insist man can choose God. but if man is confirmed in his sin state it is the same as angels, they are confirmed in their nature. God has only chosen to make man reconcilable, not angels. So we have to say salvation is all of God. His election, His gift of faith, His granting of

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illumination, His regeneration, His sanctification, His glorification, it's all of God. Seeing the limitation of God's nature allows us to see the limitation of man's nature. The limitation of God's nature is simply, He cannot sin.

In our thoughts on the moral attributes of God, we began to look at His love. We saw that His love as truly given in Scripture cannot be seen outside the revelation of Scripture. So from the Scriptures we see there are objects of His love, His own Son in the incarnation was an object of His love. In essence, even though the Son became man, there was no change in the fellowship of God. The one God as three persons can be seen as the essence of what true fellowship is.

In the Trinity there is perfect love, so it didn't change when Christ became man. We see God loves the believer who puts his trust in Him; He loves Israel whom He chose in the OT to bring forth Christ and to receive the Scriptures. When it comes to all of humanity we see that God loves the sinner and hates the sinner. He is not limited like us who can love and hate at the same time. The idea of hate for God is really His condemnation and His wrath; the idea of love is giving His son to restore man and as his children he loves them and is gracious to them.

4. How God shows His love

a. By the gift of His Son for Sinful Man

1 John 4:9: *In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.*

God loved by sending His Son to provide salvation.

John 3:16: *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

While we were sinners, Christ died for us

These verses clearly teach that the gift of His son was for all mankind. We learned in Christology the provision was for all men. b. By giving them life and position in Christ.

1 John 3:2: *Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*

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The love is extended in that He calls us His children, the sons of God. God is qualifying his love for believers as distinct from His love to all the world.

Eph. 2: 5, 6: *even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,*

Here the emphasis is on the believer being 'in Christ.' Believers are seated in the heaven in Christ. There is the love that guarantees our position in Christ, having life in Him. That is the emphasis in that thought

c. By allowing us to be called the Children of God

1 John 3:1: *Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.*

The emphasis here is on the unique privilege of being called the children of God, the sons of God. In the culture of the days of the disciples, the name of an individual was very important. It expressed either honour or dishonour.

John 1:12: *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:*

God has given us His name and here we understand that He has brought us into His own family. As such we also see having become His children, God shows His love...

d. By disciplining His children.

Heb. 12:6-7: *For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father*

Here it says if He loves us, He disciplines us as His children. It is significant that the purpose is that we might bear His image.

e. By remembering His children in all the circumstances they of life.

Is. 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 bore them and carried them All the days of old.*

Regarding Israel, when His children were afflicted, He was afflicted. This is an OT example of God identifying with the suffering of His children.

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John 11:33,35: *Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. ... Jesus wept.*

Jesus was moved to weeping by identifying with Mary and Martha's suffering, even though He knew He would raise Lazarus.

Acts 9:5: *And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.*

Saul is persecuting the church and Jesus said he was persecuting Him. As His children suffered, He suffers.

Student Question: *Why is it that God does not remove the suffering of His children if He is omniscient and omnipotent? When we see our children suffer, we run to remove them from the suffering.*

Prof. Response: *You should know the answer to this. It is God's will that His people suffer. James says: My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience...*

Suffering builds character in Believer's lives, presents the testimony of God's power to the world, and draws us closer to Him in our fellowship. So He has purpose for persecution. Church history should teach us this. Every time the true church experienced persecution, the church grew greatly. That's exactly what is happening in places like Iran and China. Great persecution, martyrdom for Christ and in these countries the churches are exploding.

Is 49:15-16: *Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me.*

God cannot forget His children. Archeologists have discovered that in the OT in the time of Isaiah, anything of particular affection for individuals they would cut their hands and have that image on their hands. So this is referred to in other texts, but God in that culture uses this to say that He has put His people on the palm of His hands.

Once again it tells me that God has not forsaken Israel; they are today in darkness as any other nation, from Israel and the Arabian nations and the Chinese nation, God is calling people to His body, but God will

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restore Israel. If He does not, He is breaking His promises, and God cannot do that.

B. The Holiness of God

Holiness is self-affirming purity. In virtue of this attribute of his nature, God eternally wills and maintains his own moral excellence. In this definition are contained three elements: first, purity; secondly, purity willing; thirdly, purity willing itself.

Ex. 15:11: *Who is like You, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, Fearful in praises, doing wonders?*

Ex. 19:11-12: *And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, 'Take heed to yourselves that you do not go up to the mountain or touch its base. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death.'*

God presented Himself in the "glorious in holiness." The people of Israel must purify themselves before they come into the presence of God; **Is. 6:3:** *And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!"*

The angels surround God, declaring His holiness. Notice the contrast with the unclean lips, that must be purged with a coal from the altar:

Is. 6:6-7: *Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged."*

2 Cor. 7:1: *cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God*

1 Thess. 3:13: *so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness*

1 Thess. 4:7: *For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.*

Heb. 12:29: *our God is a consuming fire*

These passages show that holiness is the opposite to impurity, that it is itself purity.¹²

(a) Purity of substance.—In God's moral nature, as necessarily acting, there are indeed the two elements of willing and being. But the passive logically precedes the active; being comes before willing; God *is* pure before he *wills* purity. Since purity, however, in ordi-

¹² Strong, A. H. (1907). *Systematic theology* (p. 268). Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society.

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nary usage is a negative term and means only freedom from stain or wrong, we must include in it also the positive idea of moral rightness. God is holy in that he is the source and standard of the right.¹³

(b) Energy of will.—This purity is not simply a passive and dead quality; it is the attribute of a personal being; it is penetrated and pervaded by will. Holiness is the free moral movement of the Godhead.¹⁴

(c) Self-affirmation.—Holiness is God's self-willing. His own purity is the supreme object of his regard and maintenance. God is holy, in that his infinite moral excellence affirms and asserts itself as the highest possible motive and end. Like truth and love, this attribute can be understood only in the light of the doctrine of the Trinity.¹⁵

C. The Goodness of God

Goodness, in the Scriptural sense of the term, includes benevolence, love, mercy, and grace. By benevolence is meant the disposition to promote happiness; all sensitive creatures are its objects. Love includes complacency, desire, and delight, and has rational beings for its objects. Mercy is kindness exercised towards the miserable, and includes pity, compassion, forbearance, and gentleness, which the Scriptures so abundantly ascribe to God. Grace is love exercised towards the unworthy. The love of a holy God to sinners is the most mysterious attribute of the divine nature. The manifestation of this attribute for the admiration and beatification of all intelligent creatures, is declared to be the special design of redemption. God saves sinners, we are told, "That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us, through Christ Jesus." (Eph. 2:7.) This is the burden of that Epistle.

¹³ Strong, A. H. (1907). *Systematic theology* (p. 273). Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society.

¹⁴ Strong, A. H. (1907). *Systematic theology* (p. 273). Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society.

¹⁵ Strong, A. H. (1907). *Systematic theology* (p. 274). Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society.

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As all the modifications of goodness above mentioned are found even in our dilapidated nature, and commend themselves to our moral approbation, we know they must exist in God without measure and without end. In him they are infinite, eternal, and immutable.¹⁶

This concludes our Theology Proper study. I want to emphasize again the notes give examples, it is not exhaustive. We could look at many more names of god and many more of the indications of the attributes we have not mentioned. Here is a list: Eternality, *immensity*, immutability, *independence*, spirituality, *unity*.

We have defined God as omniscient but not talked about what God says about that omniscience in terms of His knowledge, His veracity, His wisdom. We have not talked about the Fatherhood of God. So there is still much more to learn in the area of theology proper. When we are learning about God, nothing replaces the personal study and the blessings from that. For those who went to dictionaries to find the Hebrew words you have the added benefit of being closer with the original languages.

¹⁶ Hodge, C. (1997). *Systematic theology* (Vol. 1, p. 427). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

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APPENDIX A

God, Being and Attributes of

Inherent characteristics of God revealed in Scripture and displayed in God's actions in biblical history. They are characteristics equally of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God's attributes are revealed in progressively richer and fuller ways within the history of redemption.

According to the Bible, the entire creation shows God's glory, deity (Godhead KJV), and eternal power (Ps 19:1–6; Rom 1:20). God's providence also reveals certain of his attributes (Mt 5:45; Lk 6:35; Acts 14:16, 17; 17:22–31). The fullest revelation of God's attributes is seen in his work of redemption through Jesus Christ.

How does Scripture express the characteristics of God? First, in the divine names by which God revealed himself (Gen. 1:1; 2:4; 17:1; Ex 3:6, 14, 15; 6:2–5). Some of God's attributes are revealed implicitly in the biblical accounts of creation, fall, flood, Babel, and the exodus, and more fully in the various covenants God made with his people. To Israel he identified himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Ex 3:15). To the pharaoh he identified himself as the “God of Israel” or the “God of the Hebrews” (5:1, 3).

By the time the people of Israel had reached Mt Sinai the revelation of God's attributes in the biblical narrative had become more explicit: “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation” (Ex 34:6, 7). This summary is repeated elsewhere with slight variations (Nm 14:18; Neh 9:17; Ps 103:8; Jer 32:18; Jon 4:2).

Historically, theologians have often discussed the attributes of God in abstract, speculative, scholastic ways. That never happens in the Bible. God's disclosure of his attributes led Moses to fall on his knees in worship to confess Israel's sin and pray for pardon (Ex 34:8, 9). In other summary passages the response was similar. A sinful appeal to God's attributes was made by Jonah in his angry prayer (Jon 4:1–4). To Christian believers,

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Scripture presents God's attributes as a standard for living: his people are to be holy, loving, and the like, because God is (Lv 19:2; 1 Jn 4:8, 11).

Essence and Attributes

Under the influence of Greek philosophy, scholastic theologians of the Middle Ages usually separated God's attributes from his "essence." God's essence was viewed in an abstract way; they spoke of "pure Being" or "absolute essence." His essence was generally considered unknown, or known only as "pure Being," whereas his attributes could be known by humankind.

Some theologians have thought that the essence of God could be defined by one attribute—independence, infinity, or absolute will. From a liberal perspective, Albrecht Ritschl (1822–89) thought of love as the chief attribute of God, a view prominent in contemporary theology. Rudolf Otto (1869–1937) described God as "the Holy"; some contemporary theologians also regard holiness as God's chief attribute. Others think of the essence of God as being more complex so that each attribute is part of God's total essence.

All such views are speculative. The attributes should be viewed as inherent characteristics of God, and no separation should be made between essence and attributes. The attributes are the biblical description of God's essence; they state who God really is and what he is like. God revealed himself in relation to his creatures, but in that revelation he gave an authentic description of himself.

Classification of Attributes

The historic Christian confessions refer to various characteristics of God without calling them attributes or classifying them. The Westminster Shorter Catechism (1647) shows a tendency toward classification, describing God as "a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth." The first four attributes qualify the others.

Several ways of classifying the attributes have been suggested. Generally such schemes divide the divine attributes into pairs: negative and positive, natural and moral, absolute and relative, immanent and eminent, intransitive and transitive, quiescent and operative, antithetical and synthetic, or incommunicable and communicable. Roman Catholics prefer the distinction of negative and positive, or natural and moral. Lutherans generally favor the distinction between quiescent and operative attributes.

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Reformed and evangelical scholars usually distinguish incommunicable and communicable attributes. Karl Barth (1886–1968) grouped the attributes under freedom and love and then proposed pairs of attributes that reflect freedom-love or love-freedom. In spite of the diversity of labels given the groups of attributes, surprising agreement exists in the attributes listed under each group.

This article will make a distinction between incommunicable and communicable attributes without considering the classification itself as significant. No classification of God’s attributes is fully satisfactory. The *incommunicable* attributes emphasize the absolute distinctness of God, his transcendent greatness and exalted nature. Such attributes have little or no analogy in God’s creatures. The *communicable* attributes find some reflection or analogy in human beings created in God’s image. They indicate the immanence of God in relation to creatures. Yet all the attributes are God’s attributes; the distinction between God and man, between Creator and creature, is always basic.

Incommunicable Attributes

Acknowledging some diversity of theological opinion, the following attributes will be considered incommunicable: unity, spirituality, independence, immutability, eternity, and immensity. In addition, the incomprehensibility of God must be mentioned.

God’s *incomprehensibility* is sometimes included in lists of his attributes. It seems preferable to regard it as a description of human inability to understand God fully. Incomprehensibility is therefore not an attribute, although it is a given in every discussion of God. Through his revelation God is truly known by faith, yet no creature will ever comprehend God the Creator. Likewise, no one will ever fully understand any one of God’s attributes. Acknowledgment of God’s incomprehensibility should contribute to a spirit of humility in every consideration of God and his attributes (Pss 139:6; 145:3; Is 40:28; 55:8, 9; Mt 11:25–27; Rom 11:33–36; 1 Cor 2:6–16; 13:8–13).

God’s *unity* is an expression of monotheism—the fact that the God of Scripture is the only, living, true God (Dt 6:4; Mk 12:29; Jn 17:3). All other gods are idols and figments of human imagination. This attribute is reflected in the first commandment: “You shall have no other gods before me” (Ex 20:3; Mt 4:10).

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God's *spirituality* indicates that God is not physical and is invisible. Positively it means that God is personal, living, self-conscious, and self-determining. The invisible God cannot be seen by human eyes (Ex 33:20), so the second commandment forbids every visible representation of God (20:4). Because God is Spirit, he must be worshiped in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:24).

God's *independence* or self-existence indicates that he is not dependent upon anything outside himself. He is self-sufficient in his existence, in his decrees, and in all his works. God has "life in himself" (Jn 5:26) and he "gives to all men life and breath and everything" (Acts 17:25). To Israel he revealed himself as "'I Am'" (Ex 3:14), and he made Israel a covenant people for his own possession. God continues to work out his will in the world, and even though he uses various means, his independence remains intact. Thus he enters into fellowship with his covenant people, and he publishes the gospel through human agents.

God's *immutability* or constancy expresses his changelessness and his faithfulness to himself, to his decrees, promises, and works. He remains forever the same true God who undergoes no change from within or from anything outside himself. And so in James 1:17 (RSV) we read: "Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." God's oath to Abraham expressed his immutability so that his covenant people could be sure of the "unchangeable character of his purpose" (Heb. 6:17). Samuel told King Saul that the Lord would not "change his mind; for he is not a man" (1 Sm 15:29 NIV; cf. Nm 23:19). "For I the Lord do not change" (Mal 3:6). That was God's explanation for not destroying sinful Judah; he shows mercy and keeps his covenant. Because "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever," Christians are warned not to be "led by diverse and strange teachings" (Heb. 13:8, 9).

God's immutability or constancy does not imply that he is static or immobile. He is a dynamic, living God who is constantly working (Jn. 5:17). Sometimes God is described as being sorry, repenting, or changing his mind (Gn. 6:6, 7; 1 Sm 15:11; Jon 3:10). In their contexts, such figurative expressions show the constancy of God who, in holiness and righteousness, always abhors sin and reacts against it. In his grace and mercy he forgives the penitent, and he carries out his promises without fail (Jer. 18:7-10; Ps 110:4; Is 46:10; Eph. 1:11). Thus the constancy of God is sig-

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nificant in all human relationships with him, including petitions offered in prayer.

God's *eternity* indicates his transcendence over time. He is timeless and everlasting. He has no beginning or end; he does not undergo growth, development, or maturation. He existed before the creation of the world; he dwells now in eternity; he will continue as the eternal God even when history ends. Scripture speaks of God as "eternal" (Dt 33:27), "the King" (1 Tm 1:17 NIV), "the beginning and the end" (Rv. 22:13). He "inhabits eternity" (Is 57:15) and his "years have no end" (Ps 102:27; cf. 2 Pt 3:8). Although God is above time and is timeless, time is his creation and history is the arena of his work. "When the time had fully come God sent forth his Son" (Gal 4:4); Jesus Christ died on a Friday and rose on the third day. In response to the eternal God, Christians confess that their "times are in thy hands" (Ps 31:15), the powerful hands of the Lord of history.

God's *immensity* and *omnipresence* express his transcendence over space. God fills heaven and earth (Jer 23:23, 24). Heaven is his throne and the earth his footstool, so he is not restricted to temple buildings (Is 66:1; Acts 17:24). Yet God is immanent in the world and is actively at work in it to establish his kingdom. No one can hide from the omnipresent God (Ps 139:6–12). Jesus promised "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Mt 28:20). Since Pentecost (Acts 2) the Holy Spirit is said actually to dwell within the bodies of believers (1 Cor. 6:19).

Communicable Attributes

Many attributes of God can be classified under this heading, although it is sometimes difficult to say which biblical references to God should be regarded as attributes. A rich diversity of terminology is found in Scripture, with many synonyms. For convenience the communicable attributes are often classified as intellectual, moral, and volitional.

Intellectual Attributes. God's *knowledge* indicates that in a unique way God knows himself and all things possible and actual. *Omniscience* means that "*he knows everything*" (1 Jn. 3:20). "*Even before a word is on my tongue, lo, O Lord, thou knew it altogether*" (Ps 139:4), the secret thoughts of a person's heart. God's righteous judgment is rooted in the fact that he "knows the thoughts of man" (Ps 94:11). Acknowledging that God's omniscience is incomprehensible, the psalmist finds it a source of comfort (139:1–5). All the "treasures of wisdom and knowledge" are hidden in Christ (Col 2:3); therefore the Christian is told to bring every thought cap-

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tive to obey Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). Christian sanctification includes renewal in knowledge to become more like Christ (Col 3:10).

God's *wisdom* indicates that he uses his knowledge in the best possible manner to achieve his goals. God's works are varied, but they are all done in wisdom (Ps 104:24). "The Lord by wisdom founded the earth" (Prov. 3:19); his providence also displays his wisdom (Gn. 50:20). Redemption through Jesus Christ reveals God's wisdom (1 Cor. 1:24) and awakens awe and praise (Rom 11:33–36). Human beings should seek wisdom (Prov. 3:21)—wisdom rooted in the fear of God (Job 28:28; Ps 111:10; Prov. 9:10). Christians are said to be "wise in Christ" (1 Cor. 4:10), and Christ charges them to act wisely (Mt 10:16), thus emulating the wisdom of God.

God's *veracity* expresses his truthfulness and faithfulness. He is the truth and he is faithful to himself, to his Word, and to his promises (2 Tm 2:13). "God is light and in him is no darkness at all" (1 Jn 1:5); therefore his followers are to walk in the light (vv. 6, 7). Jesus is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (Jn. 14:6); hence Christians are to walk in the truth and show faithfulness in their lives.

Moral Attributes. The most comprehensive description of God's moral character is his *goodness*. God deals bountifully and kindly with all his creatures. He is "good to all" (Ps 145:9). Jesus insisted that "No one is good but God alone" (Mk 10:18; Lk 18:19). The redeemed praise God for his goodness (1 Chr. 16:34; 2 Chr. 5:13; Psm. 106:1; 107:1; 118:1; 136:1; Jer. 33:11) and are called upon to emulate this divine characteristic (Mt 5:45; Lk 6:27–36).

God's *love* is the heartbeat of the gospel. Perfect love flows between the Persons of the Trinity (Jn. 3:35; 17:24). At Sinai God revealed himself as "abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Ex 34:6, 7), and all his covenantal relations with Abraham's descendants showed his steadfast love. The chief manifestation of God's love was the sending of his Son, Jesus Christ (Jn 3:16). The apostle John, who declared that "God is love," pointed to the cross to indicate what that love really meant: "he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins" (1 Jn. 4:8, 10).

Since the rise of liberalism, many theologians have cheapened God's love for sinners by suppressing God's holiness and righteousness. The catastrophe of sin is minimized, and the cross as an atoning sacrifice and satisfaction of God's justice is denied. But God's holy and righteous love

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should not be romanticized or cheapened. Love is neither God's chief attribute nor a full description of his nature. Yet Jesus Christ and the cross do express the marvelous love of God—a sovereign, righteous, holy, immutable love (Rom 8:29, 30, 35–39).

God's love shown to undeserving sinners is called *grace* (Eph 1:6–8; 2:7–9; Ti 3:4). *Mercy* is God's love (sometimes his goodness) shown to those in misery and distress. God is *longsuffering* or patient in his love; he gives time for repentance.

God's *holiness* depicts the moral purity and excellence of God. The description of Jesus' holiness is applicable to each of the Persons of the Trinity: "holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens" (Acts 3:14, Heb. 7:26). The root idea of holiness is to be separate or set apart. Because of his inherent holiness, God is distinct from everything impure or unholy. God alone is holy; his name is holy, and he bears the name the "Holy One" (Pss 78:41; 89:18; 99:3, 9; 111:9; Is 12:6; Jer. 51:5; Rv. 15:4). Angels praise God's holiness (Is 6:3; Rv. 4:8); that revelation led the prophet Isaiah to recognize his own unholiness (Is 6:5). Objects, places, and people are called holy when set apart for the worship of God. Because God is holy his people are called to holiness (Lev. 11:44, 45; 19:2; 1 Pt 1:14, 15). God's discipline of his people is aimed at making them "share his holiness" (Heb. 12:10). The holiness of God is so prominent in Scripture that some have (mistakenly) regarded it as God's chief attribute.

Volitional Attributes. God's *sovereignty* indicates the divine authority with which he rules the entire creation and in his sovereign good pleasure does whatever he wills. God is king over the entire creation, and he rules the destiny of human beings and nations. He restores his kingdom through Jesus Christ; the risen Lord revealed that "all authority in heaven and on earth" was given him (Mt 28:18). Election to salvation in Christ is "according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will" (Eph. 1:11). God's sovereign will, though free, is not arbitrary; it is righteous and holy. He created the world and gave his Law as the rule for his people's lives; he covenants, blesses, and judges. God is the "King of kings and Lord of lords" (1 Tm 6:15); he calls all his subjects to obedient love (Dt 6:4, 5; Mt 22:37–40; 1 Jn. 5:3).

God's *sovereign power* means that he is without bounds or limit in ability; he is *omnipotent* or almighty (Rv. 4:8). By his powerful word he

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created all things, and upholds “the universe by his word of power” (Heb. 1:3). There is nothing too hard for the Lord God Almighty (Gn. 18:14; Jer. 32:27; Mt 19:26); he keeps his gracious covenant and fulfills all his promises (Lk 1:37; Heb. 6:18; 2 Tm 2:13). The gospel is “the power of God for salvation” (Rom 1:16) for Christ is “the power of God” to save (1 Cor. 1:24). Hence believers must come to know “the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe, according to the working of his great might which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places” (Eph. 1:19, 20).

God's Glory. All the attributes of God are summarized in Scripture's references to the *glory* of God. The majesty, splendor, beauty, and brilliance of God who dwells in unapproachable light are expressed by this indefinable term. “The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham” (Acts 7:2); God showed his glory to Moses (Ex 33:18, 19; 34:6, 7). The God of the Lord Jesus Christ is “the Father of glory” (Eph. 1:17). The heavens declare the glory of God (Ps 19:1); “the majesty and glory” of God fill heaven and earth (8:1). When finally every tongue shall confess Jesus as Lord, it will be “to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:11). Human beings were created for God's glory and Christian believers are instructed to do everything for the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31), thus reflecting in themselves his inherent glory. FRED H. KLOOSTER¹⁷

GOD is and he may be known. These two affirmations form the foundation and inspiration of all true religion. The first is an affirmation of faith, the second of experience. Since the existence of God is not subject to scientific proof, it must be a postulate of faith; and since God transcends all his creation, he can be known only in his self-revelation.

The Christian religion is distinctive in that it claims that God can be known as a personal God only in his self-revelation in the Scriptures. The Bible is written not to prove that God is, but to reveal him in his activities. For that reason, the biblical revelation of God is, in its nature, progressive, reaching its fullness in Jesus Christ his Son. In the light of his self-

¹⁷ Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (876–880). Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House.

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revelation in the Scriptures, there are several fundamental affirmations that can be made about God.

I. His Being

In his being God is self-existing. While his creation is dependent on him, he is utterly independent of the creation. He not only has life, but he is life to his universe, and has the source of that life within himself. God is utterly independent of every environment in which he wills to make himself known. This quality of God's being probably finds expression in his personal name, Yahweh, and in his self-affirmation: 'I am who I am', *i.e.* 'I am the one that has being within himself' (Ex. 3:14).

This perception was implied in Isaiah's vision of God: 'The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary. He gives strength to the weary, and increases the power of the weak' (Is. 40:28–29). He is the Giver, and all his creatures are receivers. Christ gave this mystery its clearest expression when he said 'For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself' (Jn. 5:26). This makes independence of life a distinctive quality of deity. Throughout the whole of Scripture God is revealed as the Fountainhead of all there is, animate and inanimate, the Creator and life-giver, who alone has life within himself.

II. His nature

In his nature God is pure spirit, which means intelligent energy. Christ made this disclosure about the God who is the object of our worship to the woman of Samaria: 'God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth' (Jn. 4:24;). In this respect we must distinguish between God and those of his creatures that are spiritual. When we say that God is pure spirit, it is to emphasize that he is not part spirit and part body as man is. He is simple spirit without form or parts, and for that reason he has no physical presence. When the Bible writers speak of God as having eyes, ears, hands and feet, they are ascribing to God powers that correspond to what these physical parts enable us humans to do. If we did not speak of God in physical terms in this way we could hardly speak of him at all. This, of course, does not imply any imperfection in God, since his life as Spirit is not a limited or restricted form of existence.

When we say that God is infinite spirit, we pass completely out of the reach of our experience. We are limited as to time and place, as to knowledge and power. God is essentially unlimited, and every element of

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his nature is infinite. His infinity in relation to time we call his *eternity*, in relation to space his *omnipresence*, in relation to knowledge his *omniscience*, and in relation to power his *omnipotence*. God is eternal, all-present, all-knowing and all-powerful.

His infinity likewise means that God is *transcendent* over his universe. It emphasizes his distinctness as self-existing spirit, from all his creatures. He is not shut in by what we call nature, but infinitely exalted above it. Even those passages of Scripture which stress his local and temporal manifestation, lay emphasis also on his exaltation and omnipotence as a being external to the world, its sovereign Creator and Judge (*cf.* Is. 40:12–17).

At the same time God's infinity implies his *immanence*. By this we mean his all-pervading presence and power within his creation (*cf.* Ps. 139). He does not stand apart from the world, a mere spectator of the work of his hands. He pervades everything, organic and inorganic, acting from within outwards, from the centre of every atom, and from the innermost springs of thought and life and feeling, in a continuous sequence of energizing effect.

In such passages as Is. 57 and Acts 17 we have an expression of both God's transcendence and his immanence. In the first of these passages his transcendence finds expression as 'the high and lofty One who lives for ever, whose name is holy', and his immanence as the one who dwells 'with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit' (Is. 57:15, NIV). In the second passage, Paul, in addressing the men of Athens, affirmed of the transcendent God that 'the God who made the world and everything in it, is the Lord of heaven and earth, and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else', and then affirms his immanence as the one who 'is not far from each one of us, for "In him we live and move and have our being"' (Acts 17:24, 28).

III. His character

God is personal. SEE CLASS NOTES

IV. His will

God is sovereign. That means that he makes his own plans and carries them out in his own time and way. His sovereignty in willing and working is simply an expression of his supreme intelligence, power and wisdom. God's will is not arbitrary, but acts in complete harmony with his charac-

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ter. It is the forth-putting of his power and goodness, and is thus the final determinant of all existence for the divine glory.

There is, however, a distinction between God's will which prescribes what *we* shall do, and his will which determines what *he* will do. So theologians distinguish between the *decretive will* of God by which he ordains whatsoever comes to pass, and his *perceptive will* by which he enjoins upon his creatures the duties that belong to them. The decretive will of God is thus always accomplished, while his perceptive will is often disobeyed.

When we conceive of the sovereign sway of the divine will as the ultimate ground of all that happens, either actively bringing it to pass (*cf.* Ps. 135:5–12), or passively permitting it to come to pass (*cf.* Acts 14:16), we need to recognize the distinction between the active will of God and his permissive will. The entrance of sin into the world, and its continued prevalence, must be attributed to the permissive will of God, since sin is a contradiction of his holiness and goodness. There is, therefore, a realm in which God's will to act is dominant, and a realm in which man's liberty appears in exercise against God. The Bible presents both in operation. The note which rings through the OT is that struck by Nebuchadnezzar: 'He does what he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"' (Dn. 4:35). In the NT we come across an impressive example of the divine will resisted by human unbelief, when Christ uttered his agonizing cry over Jerusalem: 'How often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!' (Mt. 23:37). Nevertheless, the sovereignty of God ensures that all will be overruled to serve his eternal purpose, and that ultimately Christ's petition, which his followers echo, 'Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven' (Mt. 6:10; 26:39–42) shall be answered.

It is true that we are not able to reconcile God's sovereignty and man's responsibility within a single logical frame. That is because we do not understand the full range of divine knowledge and comprehension of all the laws that govern human conduct. The Bible teaches us that all life is lived in the sustaining will of God 'in whom we live and move and have our being', and that as a bird is free in the air, and a fish in the sea, so we humans have our own real freedom in the will of God who created us for himself. God sustains us all in the responsible freedom of being accountable to him for what we choose to do, and without this the deeper freedom

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of living for him in faith and love, and enjoying him as our supreme good, could not be.

V. His essential life

In his essential life God is a fellowship. The supreme revelation of God given in the Scriptures is that God's life is eternally within himself a loving fellowship of three equal and distinct persons, Father, Son and Spirit, and that in his relationship to his moral creatures God is extending to them the fellowship that is essentially his own. This truth might perhaps be read into the dictum that expressed God's deliberate will to create man: 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.' That form of words stands as an expression of the will of God, not only to reveal himself as a fellowship, but to open the divine life of fellowship to moral creatures made in his image and so fitted to enjoy it. While it is true that through sinning man lost his fitness for that holy fellowship, it is also true that God willed to restore it to him. This was the grand end of redemption: here we see God in Three Persons acting for our restoration, in electing love that claimed us, in redeeming love that emancipated us, and in regenerating love that recreated us for his fellowship (*TRINITY). It is the fitting climax of the biblical revelation that John affirms on the basis of Christ's redeeming work, linked with the divine plurality and fellowship of which he had spoken earlier (1 Jn. 1:3–2:2; 3:24–4:6), 'God is love' (1 Jn. 4:8–10, 16).

VI. His Fatherhood

The personal God can enter into personal relationships, and the closest and tenderest that the Bible knows is that of Father. This was Christ's most common designation for the One to whom he prayed and of whom he taught, and in theology the name of Father is reserved specially for the first Person of the Trinity. There are four types of relationship in which the word 'Father' is applied to God in Scripture.

1. There is his *Creational Fatherhood*. The fundamental relationship of God to man, whom he made in his own image, finds its most full and fitting illustration in the natural relationship which involves the gift of life. It is, more particularly, for man's spiritual nature that this relationship is claimed. In Heb. God is called 'the Father of our spirits' (12:9), and in Nu. 'the God of the spirits of all mankind' (16:22). Paul, when he preached in the Areopagus, used this consideration to drive home the irrationality of rational man worshipping idols of wood and stone, quoting the poet Aratus ('For we are his offspring') to indicate that man is a creature of God. The

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creature-hood of man is thus the counterpart of the general Fatherhood of God. Without the Creator-Father there would be no human race, no family of mankind at all.

2. There is the *Theocratic Fatherhood*. This is God's relationship to his covenant-people, Israel. In this, since it is a collective relationship that is indicated rather than a personal one, Israel, as covenant-people, was the child of God (Ex. 4:22–23), and she was challenged to recognize and respond to this filial relationship: 'If I am a father, where is the honour due me?' (Mal. 1:6, cf. 2:10; Is. 64:8). But since the covenant relationship was redemptive in its spiritual significance, this may be regarded as a foreshadowing of the NT revelation of the divine Fatherhood.

3. There is *Generative Fatherhood*. This belongs exclusively to the second Person of the Trinity, designated the Son of God, and the only begotten Son. It is, therefore, unique, and not to be applied to any mere creature. Christ, while on earth, spoke most frequently of this relationship which was peculiarly his. God was his Father by eternal generation, expressive of an essential and timeless relationship that transcends our comprehension. It is significant that Jesus, in his teaching of the Twelve, never used the term 'Our Father' as embracing himself and them. In the resurrection message through Mary he indicated two distinct relationships: 'My Father, and your Father' (Jn. 20:17), but the two are so linked together that the one becomes the ground of the other. His Sonship, though on a level altogether unique, was the basis of their Sonship, by virtue of the faith-communion and Holy Spirit-union that bound them to him.

4. There is also the *Adoptive Fatherhood*. This is the redeeming relationship that belongs to all believers, and in the context of redemption it is viewed from two aspects: that of their standing in Christ, and that of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in them. This relationship to God is basic for all believers, as Paul reminds the Galatians: 'For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith' (Gal. 3:26). In this living union with Christ they are adopted into the family of God, and they become subjects of the regenerative work of the Spirit that bestows upon them the nature of children: one is the objective aspect, the other the subjective. Because of their new standing (justification) and their relationship (adoption) to God the Father in Christ, they become partakers of the divine nature and are born into the family of God. John made this clear in the opening chapter of his gospel: 'To all who received him, to those who believed in his

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name, he gave the right (authority) to become children of God - children born, not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God' (Jn. 1:12, 13). And so they are granted all the privileges that belong to that filial relationship: '*if children, then heirs*' is the sequence (Rom. 8:17).

It is clear that Christ's teaching on the Fatherhood of God restricts the relationship to his believing people. Nowhere is he reported as assuming this relationship to exist between God and unbelievers. Not only does he not give any hint of a redeeming Fatherhood of God towards all men, but he said pointedly to his opponents: '*You belong to your father, the devil*' (Jn. 8:44).

While it is under this relationship of Father that the NT brings out the tenderest aspects of God's character, his love, his faithfulness and his watchful care, it also brings out the responsibility of our having to show God the reverence, the trust and the loving obedience that children owe to a father. Christ has taught us to pray not simply 'Our Father', but 'Our Father who art in heaven', thus inculcating reverence and humility. However intimate, rich and warm-hearted his love, God remains God, majestic, amazing and awesome.

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¹⁸ Wood, D. R. W., & Marshall, I. H. (1996). *New Bible dictionary* (3rd ed.) (418–420). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

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APPENDIX B

WHAT IT MEANS TO POSSESS PERSONAL SALVATION

The terms saved and salvation occur 268 times in Scripture. The Hebrew word *yaw-shah'* translated "saved" in the Old Testament, and its New Testament Greek synonym '*sode'-zo*' can best be defined by the word deliverance. It cannot be ignored nor cast aside that man stands separated from Holy God because of sin, that sin holds man in bondage in this life, and that all mankind stands condemned as a result. Although it may go against the grain of man's pride and self-sufficiency, Scripture presents a clear and logical answer for our helplessness. God's answer is personal salvation and is foundational upon several truths of Scripture.

The *first* of these truths is that "*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Rom. 3:23 NIV). Adam's fallen state of spiritual death earlier examined is the inheritance of all mankind and results in the bondage of every person to sin - wrong thinking, wrong decisions, wrong actions, and to emotional disorder. Sin is falling short of God's perfection. Every person is on need of deliverance.

The *second* of these truths is that "*the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" (Rom. 6:23 NIV) Whereas every person earns the penalty of sin (spiritual separation from God in the present life and eternal separation from God after this life), *salvation is a gift*. A gift is something unearned, granted out of love, and received out of gratitude.

The *third* of these truths is that "*God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*" (John 3:16 NIV) The gift of salvation was provided out of the unconditional love of God for every person. This gift of love was provided by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God's own Son on the cross of Calvary, proved sufficient to transform man from the state of death to spiritual life in Christ by the resurrection of Jesus.

The *fourth* of these truths is that "*it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no-one can boast.*" (Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV) *Salvation is by grace*. Grace is something that is undeserved. When a person is caught

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wilfully breaking the law that person knows some penalty or punishment is due. If the prosecuting authority in some way states that he or she will be *gracious* in judgment, the guilty person immediately recognizes the hope of escaping the deserved punishment. Nevertheless, no true justice will excuse severe and wilful wrongdoing no matter what efforts are made by the guilty party to compensate. For example; saving a child from drowning can never compensate for premeditatedly taking the life of an adult. However, if the debt (penalty or punishment) has been paid then grace can rule and the undeserved can be acquitted. Salvation is the graciousness of God accepting the paid debt of sin by the sacrifice of God's Son and justly pardoning the guilty.

After hearing the gospel explained, people often say, "You mean there's nothing I can do to deserve it? That's too easy." It seems natural for people to object to the idea that God's unmerited favour can be given so freely to unworthy sinners. Many find it difficult to trust a God who offers salvation as a free gift.

Salvation is free to man but cost God much. His own Son actually became man's substitute. Where man is unable to change his standing before God through any self-effort, Christ died in his place: "*For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*" (Rom. 5:6) It is man's responsibility to believe and receive the free gift of life. "*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*" (Rom. 10:9-10)

The language of Scriptures knows nothing about a 'cross of example,' or a 'cross of martyrdom for the cause.' Although Calvary was a cross of grace, a cross of goodness, a cross of courage, a cross of suffering and a cross of perseverance, it was foremost a cross of substitution. "*For he (God) has made him (Jesus) to be sin for (in the place of) us, who (Jesus) knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*" (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Salvation is free but not cheap, and it is anyone's for the asking 'in faith.' "*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*" (Rom. 10:13) Charles Spurgeon, known as 'the prince of preachers,' once wrote, "It will not save me to know that Christ is a Saviour; but it will save me to trust him to be my Saviour. I shall not be

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delivered from the wrath to come, by believing that his atonement is sufficient; but I shall be saved by making that atonement my trust, my refuge and my all."

Believers must be reminded of these Bible verses. "*If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*" (Rom. 10:9-10) It has been said of this verse that people can miss heaven by eighteen inches, the distance between the mind which hears that safety lies in Christ, and the heart which refuses to reach in faith and accept Him.

The Bible clearly states that faith in Christ alone secures salvation. "*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*" (Rom. 10:13) This is a faith that turns the heart in sorrow from sin (repentance) to acceptance of Christ's substitutional death (belief). Therefore, the securing of salvation is not dependent upon any works of man such as being baptized or joining a church but upon a point of decision. The epistle of John emphasises this point of decision. "*He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the children of God, [even] to them that believe on his name.*" (John 1:11-12) This decision to 'receive' Christ as personal saviour restores the relationship of each individual (in the fallen state of spiritual death) to spiritual life in Christ. At the moment of this decision by faith the Spirit of God enters into the individual, quickening (or making alive) the spirit of man (Ephesians 2:5). This new state or 'new birth' (John 3:3) allows the believing individual to be spiritually led by God and empowered by God and to be delivered not only from eternal punishment (John 3:16) but also from present bondage (Galatians 5).

For each individual who has heard of God's free offer of salvation by faith through the death and resurrection of Jesus, there is a window of opportunity to accept the gift of life from God. God has secured the means of spiritual rescue from present bondage and eternal loss by dealing with the penalty and the power of sin on the Cross of Calvary. It is now up to each individual to reach out by faith and receive that gift. It is this gift of life that is the foundation for deliverance, not only from the eternal penalty of sin but also from the present bondage of sin and weakness. The beauty of that expression of faith is that no one will ever be disappointed; Jesus'

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promise is always kept. "*For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*" (Rom. 5:6, 10:13).



Earl has 25 years of pastoral experience in Ontario, Canada. He received a Ph.D. degree in Biblical Studies from Pensacola Christian College. During his 25 years of pastoral ministry Earl was involved as a chaplain at the

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Along with serving the Lord and enjoying his family, Earl's favourite pastime is canoeing and fishing the lakes of beautiful Muskoka, Ontario, Canada, where he and his wife Kathi reside.

