

THEOLOGY PROPER:

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

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ABBREVIATIONS

acc. – accusative case (Greek)
adj. – adjective
adv. – adverb
cf. – compare
def. – definition
e.g. – for example
et. al. – and others
ff. – and following
fr. - from
gen. – genitive case (Greek)
i.e. – that is
impl. – implication
impv. – imperative (mood)
lit. – literally

metaph. - metaphorically
n. – noun
nom. – nominative case (Greek)
part. – participle
pass. - passive
ref. – reference
tr. - translated
v. – verse (or verb)
vv. – verses
w. – with

AS – *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (Abbott-Smith)
BDB – *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Brown)
ISBE – *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Bromiley)
TDNT – *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Kittel)
EDT – *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Elwell)
LXX – Septuagint (ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament)
NIDOTTE – *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (VanGemeren)
SEC – *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* (Strong)
NSH – *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (Jackson)
TLOT – *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Jenni and Westermann)
TWOT – *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Harris)
ZPEB – *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Tenney)

INTRODUCTION TO THEOLOGY PROPER

John 17:3 – *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, 1647:

Question. 1. What is the chief end of man?

Answer. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

Augustine: *Thou movest us to delight in praising Thee; for Thou has formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee (Confessions, 45).*

I. GOD AS REVEALED IN THE BIBLE

- ❑ The Creator (Gen. 1:1)
- ❑ The Almighty (Gen. 17:1)
- ❑ The I AM (Ex. 3:14)
- ❑ The Good God (Ex. 34:6-7)
- ❑ The Holy One (Lev. 11:44)
- ❑ The Incomparable God (Is. 40)
- ❑ The True and the Living God (Jer. 10:1-16)
- ❑ The Lord of the Nations (Dan. 4:34-37)
- ❑ The Triune God (Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19)
- ❑ The God of the Gospel (Rom. 1:1-7)
- ❑ The God of Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15)
- ❑ The God of Heaven (Rev. 22:1-5)

II. BASIC DEFINITIONS

THEISM - Belief in God

- ❑ From Greek θεός (*theos*) - God

[Theism is] the worldview that an infinite, personal God created the universe and miraculously intervenes in it from time to time. God is both transcendent over the universe and immanent in it. The three great theistic religions are Judaism, Islam, and Christianity (Geisler, 722).

MONOTHEISM - Belief in one God

- ❑ From Greek μονός (*monos*) - alone, only
- ❑ Often used interchangeably with theism
- ❑ Christianity, Judaism, and Islam are monotheistic religions

POLYTHEISM - Belief in many gods

- ❑ From Greek πολυς (*polus*) – many

- ❑ Hinduism, Paganism, Mormonism

HENOTHEISM – Worship of one god without denying the existence of other gods

- ❑ From Greek $\epsilon\upsilon\varsigma$, (h) $\epsilon\upsilon$ – one
- ❑ Paradigm of OT nations (Judges 11:23-24; 1 Kings 20:23,28)

ATHEISM – Belief that God does not exist

- ❑ From Greek α (a) – negation; no, not
- ❑ Corollaries to atheism (see definitions in McKim and articles in Elwell and Geisler):
 1. Naturalism – there is no supernatural being; everything in the universe can be explained by natural causes
 2. Naturalistic Evolution – all life developed spontaneously, randomly, and gradually from non-living matter without any Divine influence
 3. Materialism – everything in the universe can be explained in terms of matter, matter is eternal
 4. Positivism – the only truth that exists is that which is known through the senses and proved through science and the scientific method
 5. Relativism – there are no objective absolutes in the universe; no absolute truth, law, or morality

AGNOSTICISM - Belief that it is not possible to know whether or not God exists

- ❑ From Greek α (a) – negation; no, not + $\gamma\iota\omicron\sigma\iota\varsigma$ (*gnosis*) – knowledge [no knowledge]
- ❑ In its practical implications and corollaries it is identical to atheism.

PANTHEISM - Belief that god is all and all is god

- ❑ From Greek $\pi\alpha\nu$ (*pan*) – all
- ❑ God and the universe are co-extensive
- ❑ Eastern religions, New Age, mysticism

According to pantheism . . . God pervades all things, contains all things, subsumes all things, and is found within all things. Nothing exists apart from God, and all things are in some way identified with God. The world is God, and God is the world. But more precisely, in pantheism all is God, and God is all (Geisler, 580).

PANENTHEISM - Belief that God is in all things

- ❑ From Greek $\pi\alpha\nu$ (*pan*) - all + $\epsilon\nu$ (*en*) - in

Panentheists think of God as a finite, changing, director of world affairs who works in cooperation with the world in order to achieve greater perfection in his nature (Geisler, 576).

This view . . . sees the world and God as mutually dependent for their fulfillment (McKim, 199).

A doctrine of God that attempts to combine the strengths of classical theism with those of classical pantheism. The term is particularly associated with the work of Charles Hartshorne (Elwell, 885).

MONISM – Belief that all reality in the universe is One ('as above, so below')

- ❑ Pantheists and panentheists are monists

The philosophical view that all reality is of one type or essence (McKim, 177)

Monism sees all as one. God and the universe are one thing. Christianity is committed to the 'many' of pluralism, holding that God differs from creation (Geisler, 495).

DUALISM – Belief in two basic coeternal principles in conflict with each other

- ❑ Mind (spirit) and matter (e.g. Platonism)
- ❑ Good and evil (e.g. Zoroastrianism, Gnosticism)
- ❑ Biblical Christianity is neither monistic or dualistic

DEISM - Belief that God created the world, but does not exert influence over the world

- ❑ From Latin *deus* – God
- ❑ God is known only through reason (no revelation)
- ❑ God is the Clockmaker who wound up the universe and left it go

The belief, based solely on reason, in the existence of God as the creator of the universe who after setting it in motion abandoned it, assumed no control over life, exerted no influence on natural phenomena, and gave no supernatural revelation ([American Heritage Dictionary](#)).

It holds that knowledge of God comes through reason rather than revelation, and that after God created the world, God has had no further involvement in it (McKim, 73).

- ❑ Emerged in 17th and 18th century France and England - the god of the Enlightenment
- ❑ Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and Thomas Paine were deists

PROCESS THEOLOGY - Belief that God is evolving

- ❑ God is evolving along with the universe
- ❑ God is not immutable or omnipotent or omniscient
- ❑ Another name for panentheism
- ❑ Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947)
- ❑ Charles Hartshorne (1897-2000)

OPEN THEISM - Belief that God does not know everything in regard to the future

These scholars call the position they advocate open theism because they like to make central the notion that, for God as well as for us, much of the future is 'open' and hence not foreknown or foreordained (Ware, 18).

- ❑ A recent development within evangelical theology (beginning in the 1980s)
- ❑ Proponents claim to hold to the inspiration of Scripture
- ❑ Denies God's immutability, omniscience, and sovereignty
- ❑ Gregory Boyd, Clark Pinnock, John Sanders

MYSTICISM – Direct communion or union with God apart from the rational

It is characteristic of mysticism that it makes its appeal to the feelings as the sole or at least as the normative, source of knowledge of divine things (Warfield, 9:651)

- ❑ Seeks to experience God
- ❑ Non-rational, subjective, sensual
- ❑ Uses techniques in reaching God (ascetism, forms of meditation, spiritual disciplines)
- ❑ Opposite of Biblical faith
- ❑ Usually associated with pantheism and panentheism

We may be mystics, or we may be Christians. We cannot be both (Warfield, 9:666).

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

I. EXISTENCE OF GOD

A. LOGICAL ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD (Geisler, 276-83; Bavinck, 59-80; Hodge, 1:204-40)

1. Cosmological Argument (argument from creation)

a. The Argument

- ❑ The universe had a beginning
- ❑ Anything that had a beginning must have been caused by something else
- ❑ Therefore the universe was caused by something else (a Creator)

b. Bonaventure (1221-1274)

2. Teleological Argument (argument from design)

a. The Argument

- ❑ All designs imply a designer
- ❑ There is design in the universe
- ❑ Therefore, there must be a Designer of the universe

b. Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274)

c. William Paley (1743-1805) - watchmaker analogy

d. Michale Behe (1952 -) – intelligent design (ID) movement

3. Ontological Argument (argument from the idea of a perfect being)

a. The Argument

- ❑ If God exists, we must conceive of him as a Necessary Being
- ❑ But by definition, a Necessary Being cannot not exist
- ❑ Therefore, if a Necessary Being can, then it must, exist

b. Anselm (1033-1109)

4. Moral Argument (argument from the existence of moral law)

a. The Argument

- ❑ Moral laws imply a Moral Law Giver
- ❑ There is an objective moral law
- ❑ Therefore, there is a Moral Law Giver

b. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)

5. The Argument from Universal Consent

This proof deduces the existence of God from the universality of religion . . . The historical study in regard to the origin of religion has resulted in the acknowledgment that history is unable to show us any age in which man lived without religion (Bavinck, 76).

6. Analysis of the Philosophical Arguments for God

a. They do not prove the existence of God

But the term proofs for these arguments is a less happy one for this reason: the latter are thereby transferred to a category to which they do not belong; namely, to the category of logical, mathematical, exact, compelling demonstration; and are thus deprived of their ethical and religious character. We receive the impression that belief in the existence of God is based entirely upon these proofs. But indeed that would be a wretched faith, which, before it invokes God, must first prove his existence (Bavinck, 78).

b. They are valuable in that they demonstrate that the Christian faith is reasonable

These should not be considered proofs but evidences of the reasonableness of the Christian faith (Bavinck, 59).

B. BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON GOD'S EXISTENCE

1. The Existence of God Is Assumed in Scripture

- ❑ Gen. 1:1 – *In the beginning, God . . .*
- ❑ Is. 66:1 – *Thus saith the Lord . . .*

It is true that Scripture does not try to prove God's existence. It presupposes God's existence and assumes that man knows and recognizes God. It does not view man as fallen so deeply that before he can believe he needs proof (Bavinck, 63).

2. The Existence of God Is Never Proved by a Logical Syllogism

It [Scripture] does not reason in the abstract. It does not make God the conclusion of a syllogism, leaving it to us whether we think the argument holds or not. But it speaks with authority. Both theologically and religiously it proceeds from God as the starting point. It shows God's virtues in his works and it demands that we recognize him (Bavinck, 63).

3. All Men Know That God Exists (Rom. 1:18-32)

- a. God has shown all men that He exists (vv. 19-20)
- b. All men suppress their knowledge of God (vv. 18, 21, 23)
- c. They suppress their knowledge of God because they are unrighteous (v. 18)

4. All Men Are Conscious of Moral Responsibility before God (Rom. 2:14-15)

5. All Men Reject the True God for Moral Reasons, Not Intellectual Reasons

- a. Man is in rebellion (cf. Jn. 3:19-20)
- b. Man seeks to be autonomous (Job 21:14-15)

6. Only Fools Question the Existence of God (Ps. 14:1)

7. The Knowledge of God Begins with Faith in His Existence and Goodness (Heb. 11:6)

- a. Faith is believing what God has said about Himself (believing His Word)
- b. Faith is not opposed to reason (i.e. faith in God's Word is not unreasonable)
- c. God cannot be known apart from faith in His self-revelation

II. REVELATION OF GOD

A. THE NEED OF REVELATION

1. The Scientific Method Cannot Be Applied to God - He cannot be observed or tested

Philosophy and science have not always been friendly toward the idea of God, the reason being that they are dedicated to the task of accounting for things and are impatient with anything that refuses to give an account of itself. The philosopher and the scientist will admit that there is much that they do not know; but that is quite another thing from admitting that there is something which they can never know, which indeed they have no technique for discovering. To admit that there is One who lies beyond us, who exists outside of all our categories, who will not be dismissed with a name, who will not appear before the bar of our reason, nor submit to our curious inquiries: this requires a great deal of humility, more than most of us possess, so we save face by thinking God down to our level, or at least down to where we can manage Him (Tozer, 26).

2. The Only Way Man Can Know God Is If He Reveals Himself

- ❑ Job 34:29; Matt. 11:27
- ❑ Is. 55:8-11

In the study of all other sciences man places himself above the object of his investigation and actively elicits from it his knowledge by whatever method may seem most appropriate, but in theology he does not stand above but

rather under the object of his knowledge. In other words, man can know God only in so far as the latter actively makes Himself known . . . Without revelation man would never have been able to acquire any knowledge of God. And even after God has revealed Himself objectively, it is not human reason that discovers God, but it is God who discloses Himself to the eye of faith (Berkhof, 34).

B. THE MEANS OF REVELATION

1. His Works

a. Creation of the Universe

- ❑ Ps. 19:1-6; Rom. 1:20
- ❑ God's attributes revealed through nature

Power	Wisdom
Goodness	Beauty
Order	
- ❑ Hymn: This Is My Father's World

*This is my Father's world
 The birds their carols raise
 The morning light, the lily white
 Declare their Maker's praise
 This is my Father's world
 He shines in all that's fair
 In the rustling grass I hear Him pass
 He speaks to me everywhere.*

Maltbie Babcock (1858-1901)

There is not an atom of the universe in which God's power and divinity are not revealed. Scripture urges us to behold heaven and earth, birds and ants, flowers and lilies, in order that we may see and recognize God in them (Bavinck, 63).

b. Creation of Man

- ❑ Gen. 1:26-27 - God created man in His image
- ❑ God's attributes revealed through the creation of man

Personal	Creative	Loving
Moral	Sovereign	Communicative
Emotional	Rational	Relational
Volitional	Purposive	

c. Miraculous Judgments

- ❑ The Flood (Gen. 6-7-8; 2 Pet. 3:5-6)
- ❑ Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19; Jude 7)
- ❑ The Plagues of Egypt (Ex. 5:2; 7:4-5; 9:14; 14:18)

d. **Miraculous Deliverances**

- ❑ The Exodus (Deut. 4:34-35)
- ❑ Deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrians (2 K. 19:33-36)
- ❑ Future Salvation of Israel (Ez. 36:32-38)

2. His Words (His words interpret His works)

- a. Spoken, orally, directly to men (Gen. 4:9; 17:1; Ex. 20:1; Nu. 12:6-8; Jonah 4:9-11)
- b. Spoken in visions and dreams (Gen. 37:5-11; Judges 7:9-15; Dan. 2:1,28; Acts 10:1-7)
- c. Mediated through angels (Matt. 1:20; Lk. 1:26-38)
- d. Mediated through prophets
 - ❑ God's spokesmen (Ex. 4:15-16; Deut. 5:23-28)
 - ❑ Sent by God (Deut. 18:18-19)
 - ❑ Received the word of the Lord (1 Sam. 3:19-21)
 - ❑ The example of Jeremiah (Jer. 1:1-10)
 - ❑ Wrote God's revelation down (Deut. 31:9-13; Jer. 36:2,32)
- e. The Written Word (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Pet. 1:19-21)
 - ❑ The inspired record of past revelation
 - ❑ The means by which we know and interpret the other forms of revelation

3. His Son

- a. John 1:1-5
 - ❑ 1:1 ο λογος (ho logos) – **the Word** – the means by which God communicates, reveals
 - ❑ Parallel to Gen. 1:1-5 (*In the beginning . . . the light shines in darkness . . .*)
- b. John 1:14,18
 - ❑ v. 14 - **We beheld His glory**
 - ❑ v. 18 - **He hath declared Him** - εξηγομαι (exegeomai) – AS – to unfold, narrate, declare
 - ❑ Jn. 14:9; 1 Jn. 1:1-5
- c. Hebrews 1:1-3
- d. It is through the written Word that we know and understand the Incarnate Word

C. GENERAL REVELATION vs. SPECIAL REVELATION

The Bible testifies to a twofold revelation of God: a revelation in nature round about us, in human consciousness, and in the providential government of the world; and a revelation embodied in the Bible as the Word of God (Berkhof, 36).

1. General Revelation (Natural Revelation)

- ❑ Communicated through nature (indirectly)
- ❑ Addressed to man as man
- ❑ Supplies the creature with a knowledge of the existence of God
- ❑ Acts 14:17; 17:24-29; Ps. 19:1-6; Rom. 1:18-25; 2:14-15

This [natural revelation] is found in nature, history, and conscience. It is communicated through the media of natural phenomena occurring in nature or the course of history; it is addressed to all intelligent creatures generally and is accessible to all; it has for its object the supplying of the natural need of the man and the persuasion of the soul to seek after the true God (Thiessen, 7).

2. Special Revelation (Supernatural Revelation)

- ❑ Communicated supernaturally (directly)
- ❑ Addressed to man as sinner
- ❑ Supplies man with a knowledge of salvation

The one is communicated through the media of natural phenomena, occurring in the course of nature or of history; the other implies an intervention in the natural course of things and is not merely in source but in mode supernatural. The one is addressed generally to all intelligent creatures, and is therefore accessible to all men; the other is addressed to a special class of sinners, to whom God would make known His salvation. The one has in view to meet and supply the natural need of creatures for knowledge of their God; the other to rescue broken and deformed sinners from their sin and its consequences (Warfield, 1:6).

3. General Revelation Is **Sufficient** for Condemnation (Rom. 1:18-25)

4. Special Revelation Is **Necessary** for Salvation (2 Tim. 3:14-15; James 1:18,21; 1 Pet. 1:23)

III. KNOWABILITY OF GOD

A. THE GROUND AND LIMITS OF GOD'S KNOWABILITY

1. Scriptural Affirmations that God Is Knowable (Is. 57:15; Jer. 9:24; 31:34; Matt. 11:27)

2. Man Was Created with the Capacity to Know God

- ❑ Man is made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27)
- ❑ God communicates with man as person to person (Ex. 33:11; Nu. 12:8)
- ❑ God communicates with man rationally, with words (Gen. 1:28-30; 2:16-17)
- ❑ To know God is to know His thoughts (Is. 55:8-11; 1 Cor. 2:13-16)
- ❑ To know God is to be reconciled to God and to love God (Jer. 31:34; Rom. 5:1)

3. Incomprehensibility vs. Knowability of God

- ❑ We can truly know God to the extent He reveals Himself to us
- ❑ We will never fully comprehend God because He is infinite and we are finite

B. THEOLOGIAN vs. MAN OF GOD

- ❑ One can know something about God without an intimate relationship with God
- ❑ The difference is in one's response to God's revelation

Something more than a theoretical knowledge of God is needed by us. God is only truly known in the soul as we yield ourselves to Him, submit to His authority, and regulate all the details of our lives by His holy precepts and commandments (Pink, The Attributes of God, 7).

C. EXAMPLES OF MEN WHO KNEW GOD

- ❑ Enoch – Gen. 5:24 - *And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.*
- ❑ Noah - Gen. 6:9 - *... and Noah walked with God.*
- ❑ Abraham - James 2:23 - *... and he was called the friend of God.*
- ❑ Moses - Ex. 33:11 - *And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaks unto his friend.*
- ❑ David - Acts 13:22 - *I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart.*

D. THE RESPONSE OF THE MAN OF GOD TO GOD'S SELF-REVELATION

- ❑ Believe God (Heb. 11:6)
- ❑ Fear God (Deut. 6:2; 10:12; Prov. 1:7; Eccl. 12:13)
- ❑ Obey God (Deut. 6:1-3; Gen. 12:1-4; Dan. 3; 1 Kings 13; Acts 5:29; Heb. 5:9)
- ❑ Love God (Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:36-38; 1 Jn. 4:19)
- ❑ Trust God (Ps. 25:2; Prov. 3:5)
- ❑ Seek God (Ezra 8:22; Ps. 34:4; Prov. 2:1-11; Is. 55:6; Jer. 29:13)
- ❑ Serve God (Deut. 13:4; 1 Chron. 28:9)
- ❑ Worship God (Ps. 29:2; 99:5)

THE NATURE OF GOD

I. NAMES OF GOD

A. SIGNIFICANCE OF NAMES OF GOD (Gen. 4:26; Deut. 28:58; Ps. 8:1; 48:10; Prov. 18:10)

- ❑ The names of God are a form of **self-revelation** (God determines His own names)
- ❑ The names of God **express** the character of God
- ❑ The names of God **represent** all that God is

... 'the name' stands for the whole manifestation of God in His relation to His people, or simply for the person, so that it becomes synonymous with God. This usage is due to the fact that in oriental thought a name was never regarded as a mere vocable, but as an expression of the nature of the thing designated (Berkhof, 47).

B. OLD TESTAMENT NAMES OF GOD

1. Elohim (אלהים) – **God**

a. Form

- ❑ Elohim is a plural form (Hebrew words ending in *-im* are plural)
- ❑ Also appears as *El* (shortened form) or *Eloah* (singular form)
- ❑ Significance of plural form

There is a twofold significance to the fact that Elohim is a plural Hebrew word. First, the Israelites sometimes used the plural form as a way of expressing a special meaning that could not be conveyed by using the singular form of the same word. For example, they used the plural Elohim to speak of God's greatness, incomprehensibility, majesty, and power. Second, this plural form is in perfect harmony and consistency with the doctrine of the Trinity. For example, Elohim (the triune God) said, 'Let Us make man in Our image' (Gen. 1:26) (Lightner, 131).

b. Meaning

- ❑ Possibly from a root meaning *strong* or from a root meaning *fear* (TWOT)

Genesis 1:1 is the first place in the Bible where 'Elohim' occurs. . . its meaning is set forth clearly in its first usage. By associating Elohim with the creative activity of God, it is clear that His eternal power and might are to be understood. The reader also realizes that God is the absolute and supreme Source of all things (Lightner, p. 131).

c. Usage

- ❑ 2,550x in the OT
- ❑ Gen 1:1 - first occurrence
- ❑ Used to refer to other gods (Ex. 20:3; Jer. 5:7; Is. 36:18)
- ❑ Used to refer to angels or humans having authority (Ps. 8:5; 82:1,6; 138:1).
- ❑ *Elohim is not attested outside of the OT (NIDOTTE)*

d. Compound Forms

- ❑ El Shaddai (אל שדי) (7x - Gen. 17:1; Ez. 10:5; et. al.; cf. Rev. 19:15) - **Almighty God**
- ❑ El Elyon (אל עליון) (Gen. 14:18-22; Ps. 57:2; 78:56) - **the most high God**
- ❑ El Olam (אל עולם) (Gen. 21:33; Is. 40:28) - **the everlasting God**
- ❑ El Roi (אל ראי) (Gen. 16:13) - **God who sees**

2. Adonai (אדני) - Lord

a. Form

The name Adonai may be a plural form of adon (אדן) with a first person singular suffix; the vocalization is changed slightly so as not to be confused with 'my lords.' Yet its usage suggests it is (or has become) another name for Yahweh (NIDOTTE).

b. Meaning

- ❑ Lord, master, owner (TWOT)

This name of Deity [Adonai] appears in the Old Testament with great frequency and expresses sovereign dominion and possession (Chafer, 1:268).

The universal authority of God may be the basic sense of the word (NIDOTTE).

- ❑ cf. Baal (בעל) – husband, lord, owner
- ❑ cf. NT Greek word kurios (κύριος)

c. Usage

- ❑ 449x in OT
- ❑ 315x in conjunction with *Yahweh* (Lord GOD)

- Also used to refer to a human overlord (e.g. Gen. 18:12; 1 Sam. 26:19)

3. Yahweh (יהוה) – LORD; Jehovah

a. Yahweh is the unique, personal name for God

Yahweh is the only truly personal name of God in Israel's faith; the others are titular or descriptive expressions. References to 'the name' or 'in the name' of God indicate this name (ISBE, 'Names of God').

The name [Yahweh] . . . is divinely reserved for its ineffable service as the unpolluted and unshared name of Deity. Elohim and Adonai are less distinctive since these titles are sometimes ascribed to creatures (Chafer, 1:262).

This name is, therefore, not used of any other than Israel's God, and never occurs in the construct state, in the plural or with suffixes (Bavinck, 107).

b. Form

- יהוה (YHWH) - consists of four consonants
- Known as the **tetragrammaton** (four letters)
- Pronunciation is not certain, since the original Hebrew text used only consonants
- Sometimes appears in a shortened form *Yah* (see Psalm 68:4 KJV)

c. Meaning

- This name reveals God as the self-existent God (*I AM*)

Yahweh speaks of God as the self-existing One (Lightner, 138).

- (1) The name is probably derived from the Hebrew verb (היה) meaning *to be*

Critical speculation about the origin and meaning of 'Yahweh' seems endless . . . but the Bible's own explanation in Exodus 3:14 is that it represents the simple (Qal) imperfect of היה, 'to be', I am what I am. The precise name Yahweh results when others speak of him in the third person, Yahweh, 'He is' (TWOT).

- (2) Ex. 3:14 – **I AM THAT I AM** (אהיה אשר אהיה)

- This name reveals God as the unchanging, faithful, covenant-keeping God (see Bavinck, 105-107)

- (1) Ex. 3:13-15

- (2) Ex. 6:3 – **by the name of Yahweh was I not known to them** [i.e. the Patriarchs]
 - a. The Patriarchs did know the name *Yahweh* (Gen. 14:22; 15:7; 28:13)
 - b. They did not know the significance of the name *Yahweh*
 - c. They saw the power of the Almighty (Ex. 6:3; cf. Gen. 17:1),
but they had not received the promises
 - d. Gen. 15:13-16

As a matter of fact we meet with this name [Yahweh] again and again before we come to Exodus 6. It constitutes an element in many proper names; e.g. Jochebed, Ahijah, Abijah . . . Hence Exodus 6:3 must mean that the Lord now for the first time made known to Moses the significance and import of this name (Bavinck, 106).

[T]he name was in use but was not appreciated in the redemptive significance that it acquired under Moses (TWOT).

(3) *Yahweh* is always the name used in the covenants

The word Yahweh does not occur in the Bible until after God's creation of humanity (see Gen. 2:4). Up until that point the word Elohim appears. This suggests that Yahweh is the name of God that denotes His relationship with His people. In contrast, Elohim is the name of God that refers to His power and might. Whereas Elohim identifies God as the Creator and moral Governor of the universe, Yahweh reveals Him as the faithful God of the covenant. In fact, the covenants were made in the name of Yahweh (Ex. 19:1-3; 20:2; Jer. 31:31) (Lightner, 139).

d. Usage (see TLOT)

- ❑ Occurs 6,828x on the OT
- ❑ Occurs in every OT book except Ecclesiastes and Esther
- ❑ *Yah* (shortened form) – 50x
- ❑ First use – Gen. 2:4

e. Compound Forms (see Chafer, 1:269)

- ❑ Yahweh Sabaoth (יהוה צבאות) - **the LORD of hosts**
 - (1) 245x in the OT; Jer. (71); Is. (54); Zech (53); Mal. (24)
 - (2) First use: 1 Samuel 1:3
 - (3) *Hosts* - צבאות - fr. v. צבא – fight, serve; n. – war, army
 - (a) stars (Deut. 4:19)
 - (b) armies (1 Sam. 17:55)
 - (c) angels (Gen. 32:1-2; Ps. 103:21)
 - (4) cf. Ex. 15:3; 1 Sam. 17:45; 1 Kings 22:19; 2 Kings 6:14-17; Ps. 103:19-21
- ❑ Yahweh Elyon (יהוה עליון) (Ps. 7:17; 47:2) – **the LORD most high**
- ❑ Yahweh Jireh (Gen. 22:14) - **the LORD will provide**
- ❑ Yahweh Rapha (Ex. 15:26) - **The LORD that heals**
- ❑ Yahweh Nissi (Ex. 17:8-15) - **The LORD our banner**
- ❑ Yahweh Shalom (Judg. 6:23-24) - **The LORD our peace**
- ❑ Yahweh Raah (Ps. 23:1) - **The LORD my shepherd**
- ❑ Yahweh Tsidkenu (Jer. 23:6; 33:16) - **The LORD our righteousness**
- ❑ Yahweh Shammah (Ez. 48:35) - **The LORD is there**

f. Often Constitutes an Element in Proper Names

- ❑ **Jehoram** (יהורם) - *Yahweh raised* (cf. **Jehoshaphat**, **Jehoiakim**, **Jehoash**)
- ❑ **Hezekiah** (חזקיה) - *strengthened by Yahweh* (cf. **Amaziah**, **Uzziah**, **Zedekiah**)

g. Derivation of *Jehovah* (see ISBE, 'God, Names of')

- ❑ The original Hebrew text had no vowels. Vowel pointings were added by the Masoretes (ca. A.D. 500-1000).

- ❑ The Jews came to consider the name *YHWH* too holy to pronounce (cf. Ex. 20:7).
- ❑ When pointing the text the Masoretes used the vowel pointings from *Adonai* with the tetragrammaton (YHWH) to show that the reader was to pronounce *Adonai* when reading the text. In other words they left the consonants for *Yahweh* in the text but put with them the vowels of *Adonai*.
- ❑ *Jehovah* arose by a latinized combination of the four consonants with the vowel points of *Adonai*.
- ❑ *Jehovah* is most certainly not the way in which YHWH was originally pronounced.

Though the older English versions sometimes used this hybrid form with compound names (such as Jehovah-Jireh [Gen. 22:14]), usually the divine name has been rendered by 'the LORD,' following the ancient Greek translations of the OT, which commonly rendered Yahweh by kyrios (ISBE, 'God, Names of,' 507).

4. English Translations of the Divine Names

- ❑ God = Elohim (אלהים)
- ❑ Lord = Adonai (אדני)
- ❑ LORD = Yahweh (יהוה)
- ❑ Jehovah = Yahweh
- ❑ LORD God = Yahweh Elohim (Gen. 2:4)
- ❑ Lord GOD = Adonai Yahweh (Gen. 15:2)

5. In Relation to Israel

- ❑ The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Gen. 26:24; Ex. 3:6; Ps.46:7; 47:9; Is. 2:3; et. al.)
- ❑ The (LORD) God of Israel (201x in the OT - Ex. 5:1; Mal. 2:16)

6. Other Descriptive Names of God

- ❑ The Almighty (שׁדַּי) - 30x in Job; Gen. 49:25; Ruth 1:20; Ps. 68:14; 91:1; et. al. – sovereignty
- ❑ The Most High (עֶלְיוֹן) – Nu. 24:16; Deut. 32:8; 2 Sam. 22:14; et. al. – transcendence
- ❑ The Rock (צוּר) - Deut. 32:4,15,18,30; 2 Sam. 23:3 – immutability, faithfulness, a refuge
- ❑ The Holy One [of Israel] (קְדוֹשׁ) - 30x in Is.; 2 K. 19:22; Ps. 71:22; 89:18 et. al. – holiness
- ❑ Jealous (קַנָּא) – Ex. 34:14 – will not tolerate idolatry

C. NEW TESTAMENT NAMES OF GOD

1. Theos (θεός)– **God** - most often translated for *Elohim* in the LXX
2. Kurios (κύριος) - **Lord**
 - ❑ In LXX chiefly for יהוה (Yahweh), also for אֲדֹנָי (adon), בַּעַל (baal) – see AS
3. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (see section on the Trinity)

4. God our Savior (Θεῷ σωτῆρι ἡμῶν) – 1 Tim. 1:1; 2:3; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4; Jude 25

5. Descriptive Names Carried over from the Old Testament

- ❑ Almighty (παντοκράτωρ [< πας + κρατέω]) – 2 Cor. 6:18; Rev. 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7,14; 19:15; 21:22
- ❑ The Most High (ὁ ὑψιστος) – Acts 7:48; 16:17; Heb. 7:1
- ❑ The Holy One (ὁ ἅγιος) – Lk. 4:34; Acts 3:14; 1 John 2:20

II. ANTHROPOMORPHISMS (see Culver, 25-28; Bavinck, 90-95)

1. Definition

This figure is used of the ascription of human passions, actions, or attributes to God . . . God by using this figure, condescends to the ignorance and infirmity of man (Bullinger, 871).

This word . . . signifies the representation of God in speech or writing in the form of a human being (Culver, 25).

2. Distinctions

- a. Anthropopoieses (man-action) – human activity
- b. Anthropopathism (man-passion) – human emotions
- c. Anthropomorphism (man-form) – human body parts

*Under this general heading [anthropomorphism] three different, but related, features of human efforts to represent deity may be distinguished: (1) When God's activity is expressed in the form of analogy with human activity this might properly be called **anthropopoieses** (man-action). 'All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the spirit' (Prov. 16:2) is an example. God's act of distinguishing good and evil in human beings is said to be weighing, as in a pharmacist's scale. (2) When the impassible God, whose Spirit cannot be disturbed by anything, responds to events in a manner comparable to human passion and He is said to be glad, sad, angry, etc., the figure of speech is properly called **anthropopathism** (man-passion). 'And the LORD was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart' (Gen. 6:6) is a clear example. (3) When God is represented as having bodily parts like ours – eyes, ears, nostrils, arms, hands – the literary device is called **anthropomorphism**. **So in the broad sense anthropomorphism includes anthropopoiesis and anthropopathism as well as anthropomorphism proper** (Culver, 25).*

3. Examples

- a. Body parts (anthropomorphism proper) - eyes (Ps. 11:4), nose (Deut. 33:10), ears (Ps. 55:1), lips (Job 11:5), mouth (Deut. 8:3), tongue (Is. 30:27), neck (Jer. 18:17), hand (Nu. 11:23), arm (Ex. 15:16), finger (Ex. 8:19), foot (Is. 66:1), heart (Gen. 6:6); face (Ex. 33:20)
- b. Actions (anthropopoieses) – thinking (Gen. 50:20), forgetting (1 Sam. 1:11), remembering (Gen. 8:1), answering (Ps. 3:4), resting (Gen. 2:2), working (John 5:17), seeing (Gen. 1:10), looking (Ps. 53:2), hearing (Ex. 2:24), smelling (Gen. 8:21), sitting (Ps. 9:7), rising (Ps. 68:1), going (Ex. 34:9), walking (Lev. 26:12), visiting (Gen. 21:1), repenting (Gen. 6:6)

- c. Passions (anthropopathism) – grief (Gen. 6:6), anger (Nahum 1:6), jealousy (Deut. 4:24), love (Deut. 7:8), hate (Ps. 5:5), rejoicing (Deut. 28:63; Zeph. 3:17); pleasing (Is. 53:10)
- d. Offices – king (Ps. 93:1), husband (Is. 54:5), father (Deut. 32:6), bridegroom (Is. 61:10), shepherd (Ps. 23:1)

4. Analogical Nature of Our Knowledge of God

- ❑ Our knowledge of God is understood and expressed in terms that are analogous to things we are familiar with in creation

[T]hough the distance between creature and Creator is, indeed, infinite, nevertheless, the entire universe is God's handiwork. Therefore, there is a close relation between God and the universe. God and the world are not to be conceived of as two objects or forces opposed to each other; the universe is not independent of God; it is not a second God. On the contrary, it is entirely God's handiwork, having been created in order that it might reveal God (Bavinck, 91).

To see God face to face is for us impossible, at least here on earth. If, nevertheless, God wills that we should know him, he must needs descend to the level of the creature. He must needs accommodate himself to our limited, finite, human consciousness. He must speak to us in human language. Whosoever, therefore, objects to anthropomorphisms, thereby in principle denies the possibility of a revelation of God in his creatures (Bavinck, 91).

There have been (and no doubt are) philosophers and theologians who deny it, but most have agreed that all formulated knowledge about God is analogical. This is to say that when one makes a declarative statement about God's person, essence or nature – such as 'you hate all evildoers' (Ps. 5:5) or 'The Lord is compassionate and merciful' (Jas. 5:11) – these statements are meaningful only because we know something of what hate and mercy are in ourselves and other people (Culver, 25).

Thus we understand that the image of God in mankind makes a degree of analogy (anthropomorphism) in our thoughts about God as man-like quite proper (Culver, 25).

In the very broadest sense, all affirmations about God are anthropomorphic (Culver, 26).

Even the most abstract names; e.g. essence, substance, the absolute, the one, spirit, reason, etc., are and ever remain anthropomorphisms. For man there are only two alternatives: absolute silence with reference to God, or speaking about him in a human way; either agnosticism, i.e., theoretical atheism, or anthropomorphism (Bavinck, 92).

III. ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

A. THE NEED TO THINK RIGHTLY ABOUT GOD

1. Right Thoughts About God Are Foundational to Christian Thinking and Living

That our idea of God corresponds as nearly as possible to the true being of God is of immense importance to us. Compared with our actual thoughts about Him, our creedal statements are of little consequence . . . A right conception of God is basic not only to systematic theology but to practical Christian living as well. It is to worship

what the foundation is to the temple; where it is inadequate or out of plumb the whole structure must sooner or later collapse. I believe there is scarcely an error in doctrine or a failure in applying Christian ethics that cannot be traced finally to imperfect and ignoble thoughts about God (Tozer, 2).

Before the Christian Church goes into eclipse anywhere there must first be a corrupting of her simple basic theology. She simply gets a wrong answer to the question, 'What is God like?' (Tozer, 4).

The foundation of all true knowledge of God must be a clear mental apprehension of His perfections as revealed in Holy Scripture (Pink, The Attributes, 7).

2. Right Thoughts About God Are Foundational to All True Worship

Hymn: When All Thy Mercies, O My God

*When all Thy mercies, O my God
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love, and praise.*

Joseph Addison (1672-1719)

Hymn: Begin, My Tongue, Some Heavenly Theme

*Begin, my tongue, some heavenly theme, And speak some boundless thing -
The mighty works or mightier name Of our eternal King.*

*Tell of His wondrous faithfulness And sound His power abroad;
Sing the sweet promise of His grace, The love and truth of God.*

*His very word of Grace is strong As that which built the skies;
The voice that rolls the stars along Speaks all the promises.*

*O might I hear Thy heavenly tongue But whisper, Thou art Mine.
Those gentle words should raise my song To notes almost divine.*

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

3. Cults and False Religions Always Begin with a Distorted View of God

B. DEFINITION OF AN ATTRIBUTE

An attribute of God is whatever He has in any way revealed as being true of Himself (Tozer, 12).

The attributes of God are those distinguishing characteristics of the divine nature which are inseparable from the idea of God and which constitute the basis and ground for his various manifestations to his creatures. We call them attributes, because we are compelled to attribute them to God as fundamental qualities or powers of his being, in order to give rational account of certain constant facts in God's self-revelations (Strong, 244).

They may be defined as the perfections which are predicated of the Divine Being in Scripture, or are visibly exercised by Him in His works of creation, providence, and redemption (Berkhof, 52).

C. OVERVIEW OF GOD'S ATTRIBUTES

1. The Harmony of His Attributes

God's attributes are not isolated traits of His character but facets of His unitary being. They are not things-in-themselves; they are, rather, thoughts by which we think of God, aspects of a perfect whole, names given to whatever we know to be true of the Godhead. To have a correct understanding of the attributes it is necessary that we see them all as one. We can think of them separately but they cannot be separated (Tozer, 78).

All of God's acts are consistent with all of His attributes. No attribute contradicts any other, but all harmonize and blend into each other in the infinite abyss of the Godhead. All that God does agrees with all that God is, and being and doing are one in Him (Tozer, 79).

In the study of God's attributes it is important not to exalt one attribute over another; when that is done it presents a caricature of God. It is all the attributes of God taken together that provide an understanding of the nature and Person of God (Enns, 188).

2. Classic Statement of the Nature of God

The Westminster Confession of Faith, 1647 (Schaff, 3:606-7)

Chapter II: *Of God, and of the Holy Trinity*

I. *There is but one only living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute, working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, for his own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek him; and withal most just and terrible in his judgments; hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty.*

II. *God hath all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of himself; and is alone in and unto himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which he hath made, nor deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting his own glory in, by, unto, and upon them: he is the alone foundation of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things; and hath most sovereign dominion over them, to do by them, for them, or upon them whatsoever himself pleaseth. In his sight all things are open and manifest; his knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature; so as nothing is to him contingent or uncertain. He is most holy in all his counsels, in all his works, and in all his commands. To him is due from angels and men, and every other creature, whatsoever worship, service, or obedience, he is pleased to require of them.*

3. The Classification of His Attributes

God's attributes are usually classified under two categories. The pairs of titles that are used depends on which of many contrasts the theologian wishes to emphasize (Enns, 188).

The object of classification is order, and the object of order is clearness. So far as this end is secured, it is a good. But the great diversity of the methods which have been proposed, is evidence that no one method of arrangement has such advantages as to secure for it general recognition (Hodge, 1:374).

a. Absolute and Relative Attributes

By an **absolute attribute** is meant one which belongs to God, considered in Himself, and which implies no relation to other beings; by a **relative attribute** is meant one which implies relation to an object (Hodge, 1:375).

ABSOLUTE	RELATIVE
Aseity (Self-Existence)	Holiness
Unity	Omnipotence
Infinity	Omniscience
Eternality	Justice / Righteousness
Immutability	Goodness
Omnipresence / Immensity	Truth

b. Immanent and Transitive Attributes

The former [**immanent**] are those which do not go forth and operate outside the divine essence, but remain immanent, such as immensity, simplicity, eternity, etc.; and the latter [**transitive**] are such as issue forth and produce effects external to God, as omnipotence, benevolence, justice, etc. (Berkhof, 55).

c. Incommunicable and Communicable Attributes

The former [**incommunicable**] are those to which there is nothing analogous in the creature, as aseity [self-existence], simplicity, immensity, etc.; the latter [**communicable**] those to which the properties of the human spirit bear some analogy, as power, goodness, mercy, righteousness, etc. (Berkhof, 55).

INCOMMUNICABLE	COMMUNICABLE
Aseity (Self-Existence)	Holiness
Unity	Love
Infinity	Mercy
Eternality	Justice / Righteousness
Immutability	Goodness
Omnipresence / Immensity	Truth

d. Greatness and Goodness (Non-Moral and Moral)

GREATNESS (NON-MORAL)	GOODNESS (MORAL)
Aseity (Self-Existence)	Holiness
Unity	Goodness
Infinity	Love
Eternality	Justice / Righteousness
Omnipotence	Mercy
Omniscience	Truth
Personality (Personal)	Faithfulness
Simplicity (Spirit)	Grace
Life (Living)	Longsuffering
Immutability	Jealous
Omnipresence / Immensity	

D. SOME IMPORTANT SCRIPTURES WHICH DESCRIBE GOD

Gen. 1	Jer. 10
Ex. 15:1-19; 34:6-7	Dan. 2:20-22; 4:34-35
1 Sam. 2:1-10	Nahum 1:1-7
1 Chr. 29:10-13	Rom. 11:33-36
Ps. 29, 93, 99, 103, 139	Rev. 4-5
Is. 40-48	

E. ALPHABETICAL LIST OF SOME OF GOD'S ATTRIBUTES

ATTRIBUTE	DEFINITION	SCRIPTURE
Absolute	Independent, without need (self-existent)	Ex. 3:14
Aseity	Literally <i>from Himself</i> (self-existent)	Ex. 3:14
Eternal	Without limit in reference to time, outside time	Deut. 33:27; Is. 57:15
Faithful	Utterly reliable in regard to His promises	Deut. 7:9
Free	Unrestricted by anyone or anything, independent	Ex. 3:14; Is. 46:10
Good	All that is comely, excellent, and desirable	Ps. 107:1

Gracious	Shows unmerited favor toward sinners	Gen. 6:8; Eph. 1:6-7
Great	Immeasurably superior to His creation	Ps. 48:1
Holy	Utterly set apart from His creation, morally pure	Is. 6:3
Immanent	Intimately involved in His creation	Job 12:10; Col. 1:17
Immensity	Without spatial limitations	1 Kings 8:27
Immutable	Unchanging, unchangeable, ever the same	Ps. 102:27; Mal. 3:6
Impassibility	Incapable of suffering, without passion, blessed	Acts 14:15; Rom. 1:25
Incomparable	Without comparison in the universe	Is. 40:25
Incomprehensible	Cannot be exhaustively known	Rom. 11:33-34
Independent	Not contingent on anyone or anything	Ex. 3:14; John 5:26
Infinite	Without limitation in all His attributes	Is. 57:15; Ps. 139
Jealous	Protects and defends His own glory	Deut. 4:24
Just	Impartial, rewards all according to their works	Ps. 89:14; 119:137
Living	Active, real, as opposed to idols	Jer. 10:10; Ps. 115
Longsuffering	Slow to anger, patient towards sinners	Ex. 34:6; Nahum 1:3
Love	Self-communicating, self-giving for the benefit of His creation	1 John 4:8
Majestic	Full of splendor, glory, beauty	Ps. 93:1; Job 40:10
Merciful	Pity towards those who are in misery or distress	Ex. 34:6; Ps. 106:1
Omnipotent	All-powerful, without limit in regard to power	Gen. 17:1; Rom. 8:31
Omnipresent	Everywhere present, not limited by space	Ps. 139:7-10
Omnisapient	All-wise	Col. 2:3; Rom. 11:33-36
Omniscient	All-knowing, without limit in regard to the knowledge of all things past, present and future	Is. 40:13-14
Perfect	Without defect, weakness, spot, or contamination	Ps. 18:30; Matt. 5:48
Personality	A self-conscious, rational, moral Being	Gen. 1:26-27; Ex. 3:14
Righteous	Acts in accordance with His own holy nature	Ps. 119:137
Self-Conscious	Knows Himself completely	Ex. 3:14
Self-Determination	Free, unrestricted by anyone or anything	Is. 40:13-29; Dan. 4:35
Self-Existent	The ground of His own existence	Ex. 3:14

Simplicity	Undivided, indivisible, without parts	John 4:24
Sovereign	Reigns over all creation, King of the universe	Ps. 93; 1 Chr. 29:11-12
Spirit	Immaterial, invisible, distinct from the world	John 4:24; 1 Tim. 6:16
Transcendent	God is infinitely above His creation	Is. 55:8-9
True	Genuinely God; cannot lie; the ground of truth	John 17:3; Titus 1:2
Unity	There is only one God (monotheism)	Deut. 4:39; 6:4
Veracity	Truthful, cannot lie	Titus 1:2
Wise	His purposes, ways, and plans are absolutely perfect	Ps. 104:24; Rom. 16:27

F. A DESCRIPTION OF THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

1. God Is a Person

Gen. 1:27 – *So God created man in his own image . . .*

Gen. 2:16,18; 3:9 – *And the LORD God commanded . . . the LORD God said . . . the LORD called unto Adam*

- ❑ God is not an impersonal force
- ❑ He has the characteristics of a person (intellect, will, emotion, etc.)
- ❑ God acts, thinks, plans, communicates, possesses, sees, hears, understands, etc.

The Scriptures represent God as a personal being. By personality we mean the power of self-consciousness and of self-determination (Strong, 252; see also Thiessen, 77; Shedd, 1:178 ff.).

A person is a subject who thinks . . . there is a kind of relationship of persons to persons that is unique to persons . . . I am thou to thee and thou art thou to me. This again is unique to persons. Anything other than a person with whom I relate myself as a person is an 'it' . . . From the way the Bible speaks of God and from the way God speaks therein, always an 'I' addressing a 'thee' or 'ye' (plural) and referring to 'him', 'her' or 'them,' we know God to be a person (Culver, 67).

2. God Is Living (Active)

Deut. 5:26 - *For who is there of all flesh, that hath heard the voice of the **living God** speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?*

Ps. 115:3 – *But our God is in the heavens: **he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.***

Jer. 10:10 – *But the LORD is the true God, he is the **living God**, and an everlasting King . . .*

Josh. 3:10; 1 Sam. 17:26; 2 Kings. 19:16; Ps. 42:2; 84:2; Matt. 16:16; 26:63; Jn. 6:69; Acts 14:15; Rom. 9:26; 2 Cor. 3:3; 6:16; 1 Tim. 3:15; 4:10; 6:17; Heb. 3:12; 9:14; 10:31; 12:22; Rev. 7:2; et. al.

- ❑ He does things; He is living and active; He is the Creator
- ❑ As opposed to idols who cannot see, hear or speak
- ❑ Ps. 115:3-10; Is. 40:19-23; Jer. 10:10-16; Dan. 2:20-23; Acts 14:15; 1 Thess. 1:9

3. God Is Spirit

John 4:24 - **God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.**

1 Tim. 1:17 - **Now unto the King eternal, immortal, *invisible*, the only wise God . . .**

John 1:18; Col. 1:15; 1 Tim. 6:16; 1 Jn. 4:12,20

a. God is an immaterial, invisible, personal Being

. . . a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts . . . (Westminster Confession, ch. II)

By teaching the spirituality of God, theology stresses the fact that God has a substantial Being all His own and distinct from the world, and that this substantial Being is immaterial, invisible, and without composition or extension (Berkhof, 65-66).

Spirit is a non-material, personal, reality (Culver, 66).

b. Simplicity

- ❑ God is undivided and indivisible

By this term [simplicity] it is indicated that the divine Being is uncompounded, incomplex, and indivisible. Man is a compound of spirit and matter (Chafer, 1:212; see also Berkhof, 62).

[The simplicity of God is] expressive of the inner and qualitative unity of the Divine Being. When we speak of the simplicity of God, we use the term to describe the state or quality of being simple, the condition of being free from division into parts, and therefore from compositeness. It means that God is not composite and is not susceptible of division in any sense of the word. This implies among other things that the three Persons in the Godhead are not so many parts of which the Divine essence is composed, that God's essence and perfections are not distinct, and that the attributes are not superadded to His essence (Berkhof, 62).

c. Unity

Deut. 6:4 – **Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD.**

1 Tim. 2:5 – **For there is one God . . .**

- ❑ There is only one God, and therefore He is unique (excludes polytheism)
- ❑ Expressive of the external and quantitative unity of God (as opposed to simplicity)
 - sets Him apart from other beings

This attribute [unity] stresses both the oneness and the unicity of God, the fact that He is numerically one and that as such He is unique (Berkhof, 61).

4. God Is Self-Existent

Ex. 3:14 – *And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM*

a. Aseity - God is the ground of His own and all other being

God is causa sui [His own cause], having the ground of his existence in himself. Every being must have the ground of its existence either in or out of itself. We have the ground of our existence outside of us. God is not thus dependent. He is a se [from himself]; hence we speak of the aseity of God (Strong, 256).

John 5:26 – *For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given the Son to have life in himself.*

Col. 1:17 – *... by Him all things consist.*

Heb. 1:2 – *... upholding all things by the word of His power ...*

b. Independent – not contingent on anyone or anything

Rom. 11:34-35 – *... who hath been his counselor? Or who hath first given to him and it shall be recompensed unto him again?*

Ps. 50:12 – *If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine and the fulness thereof.*

And thus, perhaps, He would show, in a very striking way, to those who have eyes for such things, how independent He is of what He makes, and how it is of His own gratuitous goodness He creates, since from eternity He dwelt without creatures in no less perfect a blessedness (Augustine, The City of God, 238).

c. Free – not restrained or constrained by anyone or anything

Dan. 4:35 – *... He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?*

d. Absolute – perfect, without need, external sustenance or support

Rom. 1:25 – *... the Creator, who is **blessed for ever**. Amen.*

As used of God [i.e. absolute], Christian theologians mean to say that God has independent existence, being utterly without need, without external sustenance or support or stimulation either to exist or to be happy ... God has always been the 'blessed and only Sovereign' (1 Tim. 6:15) and 'blessed forever' (Rom. 1:25)(Culver, 91).

e. Impassibility - incapable of suffering, of being acted upon by anyone or anything (Acts 14:15; Rom. 1:25; see also Job 35:6-8)

□ This is closely related to God's immutability

For our part, we dare not believe that God is affected in one way when He works, in another when He rests. Indeed, to say that He is affected at all, is an abuse of language, since it implies that there comes to be something in His nature which was not there before. For he who is affected is acted upon, and whatever is acted upon is changeable. His leisure, therefore is no laziness, indolence, inactivity; as in His work is no labor, effort, industry. He can act while He reposes, and repose while He acts (Augustine, The City of God, 237-238).

In defining God to be 'a most pure spirit without passions,' it must be remembered that the term passion is used etymologically. It is derived from patior, to suffer. Passion implies passivity. It is the effect of an impression from without . . . God has no passions. He stands in no passive and organic relations to that which is not himself. He cannot be wrought upon, and impressed, by the universe of matter and mind which he has created from nothing. Creatures are passively correlated to each other, and are made to be affected by other creatures; but the Creator is self-subsistent and independent of creation, so that he is not passively correlated to anything external to himself . . . The forces of nature do not make an impression upon the Divine essence (Shedd, 1:170-171).

It is important to remember this signification of the term passion, and the intention in employing it. Sometimes it has been understood to be synonymous with feeling or emotion, and the erroneous and demoralizing inference has been drawn, that the Divine nature is destitute of feeling altogether (Shedd, 1:172).

While therefore God as a most pure spirit has no passions, he has feelings and emotions. He is not passively wrought upon by the objective universe, so that he experiences physical impressions and organic appetites, as the creature does, but he is self-moved in all his feelings (Shedd, 1:178).

God is blessed forever (Rom 1:25; 9:5), never before time began, nor since, in need of anything to be supremely happy. He created the world sovereignly by will and word, but not out of any inner or outer necessity, nor swayed by emotion. That there is something in God which is commensurable by analogy with human emotions cannot be doubted. But it is not per se passion, pain, feeling in any ordinary sense (Culver, 216).

In theology, to be impassible means primarily to be incapable of suffering (Culver, 217).

5. God Is Immutable (Unchanging)

Deut. 32:8 – *He is the Rock . . .*

Ps. 102:26-27 – *They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.*

Mal. 3:6 - *For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.*

James 1:17 - *. . . the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*

Nu. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29; Ps. 33:11; 119:89-91; Jer. 33:35-37; Rom. 11:29; Heb. 6:17; 13:8

- ❑ His character and attributes are immutable (Ps. 102:27; Mal. 3:6)
- ❑ His word, promises, and judgments are immutable (Ps. 33:11; 119:89)
- ❑ His will, plan, and counsel are immutable (Ps. 33:11; Rom. 11:29)
- ❑ God's immutability is closely related to His faithfulness (Ps. 119:89-90)

God is unchangeable in his essence, attributes, consciousness, and will. All change must be to the better or the worse, but God cannot change to the better, since he is absolutely perfect; neither can he change to the worse, for the same reason. He is exalted above all causes and above even the possibility of change. He can never be wiser, more holy, more just, more merciful, more truthful, nor less so. Nor do his plans and purposes change (Thiessen, 83).

The immutability of God is a perfection . . . [A]s God is infinite in essence, infinitely good, wise, holy; so it is a perfection necessary to his nature, that he should be immutably all this, all excellency, goodness, wisdom, immutably all that he is; without this he would be an imperfect Being . . . Immutability is a glory belonging to all the attributes of God (Charnock, 1:317-18).

6. God Is Infinite

1 Kings 8:27 – . . . *behold the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee . . .*

Ps. 147:5 – . . . *his understanding is infinite.*

Job 5:9; 9:10; 11:7; 26:14; Ps. 40:5; 145:3; Is. 40:28; Rom. 11:33

- ❑ God cannot be measured
- ❑ God is without limit in regard to all His attributes
 - Eternal – infinite in regard to time
 - Omnipresent – infinite in regard to space
 - Omnipotent – infinite in regard to power
 - Omniscient – infinite in regard to knowledge
 - Omniscient – infinite in regard to wisdom
 - Infinite in regard to holiness
 - Infinite in regard to goodness and mercy

The fact of the infinity of God relates itself to all attributes in that they are what they are to an infinite degree, or without termination. God transcends all limitations which time or space impose. He cannot be imprisoned either in time or space. In like manner, He knows all things perfectly. He is able to bring things to pass, even to create as He wills apart from means or material, and always in measureless perfection. In every moral quality He is complete to infinity (Chafer, 1:215).

This is an idea which can only be defined negatively. We mean by it that God's being and attributes are wholly without bounds (Dabney, 173).

7. God Is Eternal

Is. 57:15 – *For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity . . .*

1 Tim. 1:17 – *Now unto the King eternal . . .*

Rev. 1:8 – *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.*

Gen. 21:33; Deut. 33:27; Ps. 90:2; 93:2; 102:24-27; Is. 9:6; 40:28; 44:6; 48:12; Jer. 10:10; Micah 5:2; Hab. 1:12; Rom. 16:26; 1 Tim. 6:15-16; Rev. 1:11; 22:13

- ❑ God is infinite in relation to time
- ❑ Time is applicable only to creatures (time was created by God)
- ❑ He is not limited by time

- ❑ He has no beginning or end and He is not restricted by a succession of moments
- ❑ All time is before God at once

Time is the measure of creaturely existence (Bavinck, 156).

The concept eternity has three characteristics; namely, that it excludes beginning, end and also succession of moments (Bavinck, 155).

Though God is the author of time, He is neither conditioned nor confined by it (Lightner, 113).

God's eternity should rather be conceived of as an eternal present, without past or future. With God all is present (Bavinck, 156).

That God appears at time's beginning is not too difficult to comprehend but that He appears at the beginning and end of time simultaneously is not so easy to grasp; yet it is true (Tozer, 40).

8. God Is Omnipresent (Immensity)

Ps. 139:7 – *Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?*

Jer. 23:24 – *Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD.*

1 Kings 8:27; 2 Chron. 16:9; Ps. 139:7-10; Prov. 15:3; Is. 57:15; Matt. 18:20; 28:20; Jn. 14:16-17; Acts 17:27-28; Eph. 1:23

- ❑ God is not limited by space
- ❑ Space is applicable only to creatures (space was created by God)
- ❑ God is not spatial (God is not an infinitely large Being)
- ❑ God, in the totality of His Being, is present everywhere at all times

By the omnipresence of God, we mean that since God is infinite, transcending all spatial limitations, He is present everywhere with His whole Being at the same time (Lightner, 122).

We should guard against thinking that God extends infinitely far in all directions so that he himself exists in a sort of infinite, unending space. Nor should we think that God is somehow a 'bigger space' or bigger area surrounding the space of the universe as we know it. All of these ideas continue to think of God's being in spatial terms, as if he were simply an extremely large being. Instead, we should try to avoid thinking of God in terms of size or spatial dimensions. God is a being who exists without size or dimensions in space (Grudem, 174-5).

For He is everywhere while He is nowhere, for 'where' has to do with matter and space, and God is independent of both. He is unaffected by time or motion, is wholly self-dependent and owes nothing to the worlds His hands have made (Tozer, 26-7).

- ❑ **Immensity vs. Omnipresence** – these two terms are virtually synonymous but some theologians make a distinction:

In a certain sense the terms 'immensity' and omnipresence,' as applied to God, denote the same thing, and can therefore be regarded as synonymous. Yet there is a point of difference that should be carefully noted. 'Immensity' points to the fact that God transcends all space and is not subject to its limitations, while 'omnipresence' denotes

that He nevertheless fills every part of space with His entire Being. The former emphasizes the transcendence, and the latter, the immanence of God (Berkhof, 61).

By [**immensity**] we mean that God's nature (a) is without extension; (b) is subject to no limitations of space; and (c) contains in itself the cause of space. Immensity is infinity in its relation to space. God's nature is not subject to the law of space. God is not in space. It is more correct to say that space is in God . . . By [**omnipresence**] we mean that God, in the totality of his essence, without diffusion or expansion, multiplication or division, penetrates and fills the universe in all its parts (Strong, 278-9).

9. God Is Transcendent

Ps. 97:9 – *For thou, LORD, art high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods.*

Ps. 113:4-5 – *The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high.*

Gen. 14:18-22; 2 Sam. 22:14; Ps. 7:17; 9:2; 46:4; 47:2; Ps. 71:19; 92:8; 93:4; 97:9; 99:2; 113:4-5; 138:6; Is. 66:1; Dan. 4:34; 5:18; Mic. 6:6

a. The Creator is infinitely higher than the creation

Is. 57:15 – *For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place . . .*

When we speak of God as transcendent we mean of course that He is exalted far above the created universe, so far above that human thought cannot imagine it. To think accurately about this, however, we must keep in mind that 'far above' does not here refer to physical distance from the earth but to quality of being. We are concerned not with location in space nor with mere altitude, but with life (Tozer, 69).

He is as high above an archangel as above a caterpillar, for the gulf that separates the archangel from the caterpillar is but finite, while the gulf between God and the archangel is infinite. The caterpillar and the archangel, though far removed from each other in the scale of created things, are nevertheless one in that they are alike created. They both belong in the category of that-which-is-not-God and are parted from God by infinitude itself (Tozer, 70).

b. The Creator is incomparable

Ex. 15:11 – *Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? . . .*

Is. 40:25 – *To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.*

Ex. 8:10; 9:14; Deut. 33:26; 1 Sam. 2:2; Ps. 86:8-10; 89:6-8; 113:5; Is. 40:18; 46:5,9; Jer. 10:6; Mic. 7:18

- ❑ He cannot be compared to any other being or thing
- ❑ Idolatry is man's sinful tendency to compare God to something in creation
- ❑ Ex. 20:4-5; Deut. 4:15-18; Ps. 50:21; Rom. 1:21-23; Acts 17:29

c. The Creator is incomprehensible (see passages under 'God Is Infinite')

Is. 55:9 – *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

Rom 11:33 – *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*

- ❑ God's character, thoughts, and ways are beyond our comprehension
- ❑ Although we can know God truly and understand certain things about Him, yet we will never comprehend Him
- ❑ We cannot comprehend God because we are finite, while God is infinite

God, in his own essence, being, and existence, is absolutely incomprehensible. His nature being immense, and all his holy properties essentially infinite, no creature can directly or perfectly comprehend them, or any of them. He must be infinite that can perfectly comprehend that which is infinite; wherefore God is perfectly known unto himself only (Owen, 65).

*When it is said that God can be known, it is not meant that He can be comprehended. **To comprehend is to have a complete and exhaustive knowledge of an object** . . . God is past finding out . . . To comprehend is (1) To know the essence as well as the attributes of an object. (2) It is to know not some only, but all of its attributes. (3) To know the relation in which these attributes stand to each other and to the substance to which they belong. (4) To know the relation in which the object known stands to all other objects (Hodge, 1:337).*

While, therefore, it is admitted not only that the infinite God is incomprehensible, and that our knowledge of Him is both partial and imperfect; that there is much in God which we do not know at all, and that what we do know, we know very imperfectly; nevertheless our knowledge, as far as it goes, is true knowledge. God really is what we believe Him to be, so far as our idea of Him is determined by the revelation which He has made of Himself in his works, in the constitution of our nature, in his Word, and in the person of his Son (Hodge, 1:338).

10. God Is Immanent

Job 12:10 – *In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.*

Col. 1:17 – *And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.*

Ps. 139:1-10; Acts 17:24-28; Rom. 8:28; 11:36; Eph. 1:11; Heb. 1:3

- ❑ The Creator is intimately involved in His creation
- ❑ God is upholding all things continually
- ❑ God is providentially working through all the events of the universe

When applied to God, this [immanence] means He is within the world, acting within and through His creation, rather than from without and upon it (Lightner, 123).

God is also very much involved in creation, for it is continually dependent on him for its existence and its functioning. The technical term used to speak of God's involvement in creation is the word immanent, meaning 'remaining in' creation. The God of the Bible is no abstract deity removed from, and uninterested in his creation (Grudem, 267).

- ❑ To emphasize transcendence without immanence is to move toward deism.
- ❑ To emphasize immanence without transcendence is to move toward pantheism.
- ❑ God is both transcendent and immanent. He is infinitely above and separate from His creation, even while He is intimately involved in the movement of every atom.

11. God Is Holy

Lev. 20:26 – *And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine.*

Is. 6:3 – *And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.*

Ex. 15:11; Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:3; 21:8; Josh. 24:19; 1 Sam. 2:2; 6:20; Ps. 22:3; 98:1; 99:3,5,9; 145:17; Is. 5:16; 57:15; Jn. 17:11; 1 Pet. 1:16; Rev. 4:8; 6:10; 15:3-4 (see also references to the 'Holy One', God's 'holy name' and the 'Holy Spirit')

a. Hebrew vocabulary

- ❑ קדש (qadash) – to be holy
- ❑ Definitions of the Hebrew Lexicons

BDB: *be set apart, consecrated*

TWOT: *be hallowed, holy, sanctified; to consecrate, sanctify, prepare, dedicate*

NIDOTTE: *be holy, withheld from ordinary use, treated with special care, belonging to the sanctuary*

- ❑ Origin of the Word

The Hebrew word for to be holy, qadash, is derived from the root qad, which means to cut, to separate. Consequently it points to separation (Berkhof, 73).

Possibly original idea of separation, withdrawal (BDB)

The suggestion that the root 'qdsh' is derived from an original biliteral 'qd' (cut) is attractive but tenuous in view of the uncertainties surrounding the transmission of biliteral roots to the trilateral form. The meaning 'to separate' is favored by many scholars, but the fact that qdsh rarely, if ever, occurs in a secular sense makes any possible conclusion in this regard difficult because of the limited evidence on which to base philological comparison (TWOT).

- ❑ Occurrence of the Root - includes verbs, nouns, and adjectives (TLOT, 3:1106-1107)
 Lev. (152x); Ez. (105x); Ex. (102x); Num. (80x); Is. (73x); Ps. (65x)
 Total in the OT (842x + Aramaic 'qaddis' 13x in Dan.)
- ❑ Usage in the OT - mostly used of things or people set apart for God and His worship

(1) **God's Dwelling Place:** holy ground (Ex. 3:5), holy place (Ex. 26:34), holy sanctuary

(Lev. 16:33), holy habitation (Ps. 68:5), holy mountain (Is. 11:9), holy city (Neh. 11:1), holy hill (Ps. 2:6), holy temple (Ps. 5:7), holy heaven (Ps. 20:6), holy house (1 Chr. 29:3)

(2) **God's People:** holy people (Deut. 7:6), holy nation (Ex. 19:6), holy camp (Deut. 23:14), holy man of God (2 Kings 4:9), holy seed (Ezra 9:2)

(3) **Things Dedicated to God's Worship:** holy altar (Ex. 40:10), holy garments (Ex. 28:2), holy crown (Ex. 29:6), holy linen coat (Lev. 16:4); holy Sabbath (Ex. 16:23); holy days (Ex. 35:2), holy convocation (Lev. 23:8), holy things (28:38), holy vessels (1 Kings 8:4), holy instruments (Nu. 31:6), holy oil (Ex. 30:31), holy water (Nu. 5:17), holy ointment (Ex. 30:25), holy offerings (Lev. 2:3), holy promise (Ps. 105:42), holy chambers (Ez. 44:19), holy land (Zech. 2:12)

(4) **God's Name** (Lev. 20:3; 22:2; Ps. 103:1; Ez. 20:39; et. al.)

(5) **God Himself** (Ex. 15:11; Lev. 11:44-45)

(6) **The Holy One (of Israel)** – 40x in OT; 30x in Is.; (also 6x in NT)

□ Development in the Old Testament

- (1) Set apart to God, separate from the world
- (2) Ceremonial purity (clean v. unclean)
- (3) Ethical, moral purity; purity of heart

b. Greek Vocabulary

□ *αγιαζω* (hagiazō) – verb – *to make holy, consecrate, sanctify* (AS) - 29x in NT

- (1) God's children are sanctified at conversion (e.g. Acts 20:32; 1 Cor. 1:2; 6:11)
- (2) God's children are sanctified progressively (e.g. John 17:17; 1 Thess. 5:23)
- (3) Things in the temple are sanctified (Matt. 23:17,19)
- (4) God's name is sanctified (Matt. 6:9; Lk. 11:2)
- (5) Jesus is sanctified (Jn. 10:36; 17:19)

□ *αγιος* (hagios) – adj. – *dedicated to the gods, sacred, hence holy* (AS) – 240x in NT

- (1) The Holy Spirit / Holy Ghost (Πνεύματος Ἁγίου) – 94x in NT
- (2) Saints (ἅγιοις) – 60x in NT
- (3) The sanctuary / holy place (substantively) – 10x – all in Hebrews
- (4) God is the Holy One (1 John 2:20)
- (5) Christ is the Holy One of God (Lk. 4:34; Acts 3:14; cf. Acts 2:27; 13:35)
- (6) The Scriptures are holy (Rom. 1:2; 7:12; 2 Pet. 2:21)
- (7) Holy Apostles and prophets (Lk. 1:70; Acts 3:21; Eph. 3:5; 2 Pet. 3:2)
- (8) Holy angels (Mk. 8:38; Acts 10:22; Rev. 14:10)
- (9) Holy kiss (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26)

□ *αγιασμος* (hagiasmos) – n. – (1) *consecration*; (2) *sanctification* (AS) – 10x in NT
- Sanctification of believers (Rom. 6:19,22; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2)

- ❑ Other relevant nouns: αγιοτης – holiness (1x); αγιωσυνη – holiness (3x)

c. Description of God's Holiness

- ❑ God is Separate - transcendent

In Scripture the quality of holiness applies first of all to God and as applied to Him its fundamental idea is that of unapproachableness. And this unapproachableness is based on the fact that God is divine and therefore absolutely distinct from the creature (Berkhof, 531).

We know nothing like the divine holiness. It stands apart, unique, unapproachable, incomprehensible and unattainable (Tozer, 104).

Though God hath crowned the angels with an unspotted sanctity, and placed them in a habitation of glory, yet, as illustrious as they are, they have an unworthiness in their own nature to appear before the throne of so holy a God; their holiness grows dim and pale in his presence. It is but a weak shadow of that Divine purity, whose light is so glorious, that it makes them cover their faces out of weakness to behold it, and cover their feet out of shame in themselves. They are not pure in his sight, because, though they love God (which is a principle of holiness) as much as they can, yet, not so much as he deserves; they love him with the intensest degree, according to their power; but not with the intensest degree, according to his own amiableness; for they cannot infinitely love God, unless they were as infinite as God, and had an understanding of his perfections equal with himself, and as immense as his own knowledge (Charnock, 2:117).

- ❑ God is Pure - morally perfect

Holiness is self-affirming purity. In virtue of this attribute of his nature, God eternally wills and maintains his own moral excellence (Strong, 268).

The development of the conception of holiness in Hebrew history was doubtless a gradual one. At first it may have included little more than the idea of separation from all that is common, small and mean. Physical cleanliness and hatred of moral evil were additional elements which in time became dominant. We must remember however that the proper meaning of a term is to be determined not by the earliest but by the latest usage (Strong, 268).

This [holiness] is a general term for the moral excellence of God (Hodge, 1:413).

Freedom from impurity is the primary idea of the word [holiness]. To sanctify is to cleanse; to be holy, is to be clean (Hodge, 1:413).

NOTE: When God's character is called pure, one might incorrectly surmise that there is a moral standard outside of God to which God is subject. God is not subject to a moral standard, He is the moral standard. God is the epitome and definition of perfection, there is no spot or guile in any of His attributes, He is excellent to an infinite degree.

Holiness in God cannot be defined in the same terms in which holiness in man or angel is defined, namely, as conformity to the moral law. The moral law supposes a superior being whose love and service are obligatory upon the inferior (Shedd, 1:362).

Holy is the way God is. To be holy He does not conform to a standard. He is that standard. He is absolutely holy with an infinite, incomprehensible fullness of purity that is incapable of being other than it is (Tozer, 105).

His very being is made up of holiness, as light is of the essence of the sun (Watson, 83).

In him is no flaw or fault, excess of deficiency, error or iniquity. He is wholly excellent, and is therefore called holy. In his words, thoughts, acts, and revelations as well as in himself, he is perfection itself (Spurgeon, 4:386).

□ God is Light

1 John 1:5 - ... *God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.*

- (1) Just as light reveals all things and penetrates all things, so God's holiness consumes all darkness. Nothing can stand before His brightness, nothing can be hid, for He is perfect light.
- (2) Just as light is not only pure, but absolutely unsusceptible to pollution, so God is utterly, unchangeably pure. Indeed light may expose and thereby come in contact with the most foul and rotten kinds of matter and yet in its substance it remains unaltered in its purity and without mixture. Even so the light of God's character endures forever as clear, clean and pure though it exposes the most heinous sin (see Candlish, 33-34).
- (3) God's holiness is in a sense the summation of all that makes God, God, of all that sets him apart from everything else. When all of His attributes are combined His holiness comes into view. Just as white light can be separated into the various colors of the spectrum, so God's attributes may be considered individually, but the white light unseparated is the holiness of God - all that makes God, God.

His holiness is not really an attribute that is coordinate with the other attributes, but is rather coextensive with them all. It denotes the perfection of God in all that he is (Thiessen, 84).

Holiness is the harmony of all the virtues. The Lord has not one glorious attribute alone, or in excess, but all glories are in him as a whole: this is the crown of his honor and the honor of his crown. His power is not his choicest jewel, nor his sovereignty, but his holiness (Spurgeon, 4:387).

□ God is a Consuming Fire

Deut. 4:24 – *For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.*

Is. 33:14 – *The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?*

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

*Eternal Light, Eternal Light, How pure the soul must be
When placed within Thy searching sight,
It shrinks not, but with calm delight, Can live and look on Thee.*

*The spirits that surround Thy throne, Can bear the burning bliss
But that is surely theirs alone,*

For they have never, never known a fallen world like this.

*But how shall I whose native sphere is dark, Whose mind is dim
Before the Ineffable appear,
And on my naked spirit bear the uncreated Being.*

*There is a way for man to rise, To that sublime abode
An Offering and a Sacrifice,
A Holy Spirit's energies, An Advocate with God.*

*These, these prepare us, For the sight of Holiness above
And the sons of ignorance and night,
Can dwell with the Eternal Light, Through the Eternal Love.*

Thomas Binney (1798-1874)

Quoted by A.W. Tozer

The Attributes of God (vol.2, cassette 4)

12. God Is Omniscient (All Knowing)

1 Chr. 28:9 - *... the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts . . .*

Job 37:16 - *Dost thou know . . . the wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge?*

Prov. 15:3 - *The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.*

1 Sam. 23:10-12; Ps. 44:21; 94:7-11; 139:1-6,23-24; 147:5; Prov. 15:11; Is. 40:13-14; Jer. 17:10;
23:23-24; Ez. 11:1-5; Matt. 10:30; 11:21-23; Acts 15:18; Rom. 11:33-34

a. The Nature of Man's Knowledge

□ Epistemology

- (1) What does it mean 'to know'?
- (2) How do we know what we know?
 - (a) Empiricism – experience is our source of knowledge
 - (b) Rationalism – reason is our source of knowledge
 - (c) Biblical – revelation is our source of knowledge

□ The Nature of Our Knowledge

- (1) Derived / acquired not absolute (we are dependent on a source)
- (2) Fallible not infallible (we are often mistaken)
- (3) Limited not infinite (we are generally ignorant)
- (4) Fleeting not permanent (we are liable to forget)

b. The Nature of God's Knowledge

□ His Knowledge Is Perfect (Job 37:16; Ps. 147:5; Prov. 15:3; Matt. 10:30)

- (1) His knowledge is infinite
- (2) His knowledge is accurate

(3) His knowledge is unchanging

- ❑ His Knowledge Is Absolute (Is. 40:13-14; Rom. 11:33-34)
 - (1) It is not derived or acquired
 - (2) He has never been instructed or taught
 - (3) He has never learned or forgotten
- ❑ He Knows All Things, Past, Present, and Future (Acts 15:18)
- ❑ He Knows All Things Possible (1 Sam. 23:10-12; Matt. 11:21-23)
- ❑ He Knows the Hearts of Men Perfectly (1 Chr. 28:9; Ps. 139:1-6; Prov. 15:11; Jer. 17:10)
- ❑ Omniscience and Omnipresence in Scripture (Jer. 23:23-24; Ps. 94:9; 139; Prov. 15:3)

This knowledge of God is not only all-comprehending, but it is intuitive and immutable. He knows all things as they are . . . This infinite knowledge of God is not only clearly and constantly asserted in Scripture, but is also obviously included in the idea of an absolutely perfect being. Such a being cannot be ignorant of anything; his knowledge can neither be increased nor diminished. The omniscience of God follows also from his omnipresence. He knows our thoughts far better than they are known to ourselves. This plenitude of divine knowledge is taken for granted in all acts of worship. We pray to a God who, we believe, knows our state and wants, who hears what we say, and who is able to meet all our necessities. Unless God were thus omniscient, He could not judge the world in righteousness. Faith in this attribute in its integrity is, therefore essential even to natural religion (Hodge, 1:397).

Neither does He see in one fashion by the eye, in another by the mind, for He is not composed of mind and body; nor does His present knowledge differ from that which it ever was or shall be, for those variations of time, past, present, and future, though they alter our knowledge, do not affect His, 'with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning' (Augustine, The City of God, 216).

c. The Significance of God's Knowledge

- ❑ The Foundation of Our Knowledge (Ps. 93:5; Jn. 14:6; 18:37)
 - (1) He is the source of all truth
 - (2) Relationship between faith and knowledge (cf. Heb. 11:1)
- ❑ Necessary to His Perfect Rule
 - (1) His Perfect Judgment of Sinners
 - (2) His Perfect Care of the Righteous

Is God omniscient, and his eye chiefly upon the heart? Wear the girdle of truth about you, and never leave it off (Watson, 59).

Christian, thou settest hours apart for God, thy thoughts run upon him as thy treasure; God takes notice of every good thought (Watson, 59).

13. God Is Wise

Job 9:4 - *He is wise in heart . . .*

Ps. 104:24 - *O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.*

Ps. 147:5; Prov. 2:6; 3:19-20; 21:30; Jer. 10:12; Dan. 2:20-23; Rom. 11:33-34; Col. 2:3; 1 Tim. 1:17 (KJV); James 1:5; Jude 25 (KJV)

- ☐ God knows the best ends and the best means to the best ends
- ☐ God's purposes and plans are without flaw
- ☐ God's wisdom is seen in His works: creation, providence, redemption
- ☐ God is the source of all wisdom

God's wisdom is His intelligence as manifested in the adaptation of means to ends. It points to the fact that He always strives for the best possible ends, and chooses the best means for the realization of His purposes . . . it is that perfection of God whereby He applies His knowledge to the attainment of His ends in a way which glorifies Him most (Berkhof, 69).

If God be infinitely wise, let us go to him for wisdom, as Solomon did . . . Go then to God. Lord, do thou light my lamp; in thy light shall I see light; give me wisdom, to know the fallacy of my heart, the subtleties of the old serpent; to walk jealously towards myself, religiously towards thee, prudently towards others; guide me by thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory (Watson, 77).

14. God Is Omnipotent (All Powerful)

Gen. 17:1 - *. . . I am the Almighty God . . .*

Prov. 21:1 - *The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.*

Gen. 28:3; Job 5:17; Ps. 115:3; 135:6; Eccl. 3:14; Is. 40:22-24; 46:10; Jer. 10:12-13; 32:27; Dan. 4:35; Matt. 19:26; Jude 24-25; Rev. 1:8; 4:8

- ☐ God's power is without limit
- ☐ God has complete power over nature, animals, men, and angels
- ☐ There is no person, spirit, or force that can resist His power

a. The Nature of God's Omnipotence

Power in God may be called the effective energy of His nature, or that perfection of His Being by which He is the absolute and highest causality (Berkhof, 79).

We can do very little. God can do whatever He wills. We, beyond very narrow limits, must use means to accomplish our ends. With God means are unnecessary. He wills, and it is done. He said, Let there be light; and there was light . . . This simple idea of the omnipotence of God, that He can do without effort, and by a volition, whatever He wills, is the highest conceivable idea of power, and is that which is clearly presented in the Scriptures (Hodge, 1:407).

The possession of omnipotence does not demand the exercise of his power, certainly not the exercise of all his power. God can do what he wills to do, but he does not necessarily will to do anything. That is, God has power over his power (Thiessen, 82).

b. Distinctions in God's Power - Absolute v. Ordinate

- ❑ *potentia absoluta* vs. *potentia ordinata*
- ❑ The distinction as defined by Hodge (1:410) and Thiessen (82):

Absolute power - that which God does immediately without secondary causes
(creation, miracles, regeneration)

Ordinate power - that which God does through secondary causes
(providence, natural laws)

*A distinction is commonly made between **potentia absoluta** and the **potentia ordinata** of God. By the latter is meant the efficiency of God, as exercised uniformly in the ordered operation of second causes; by the former, his efficiency, as exercised without the intervention of second causes. Creation, miracles, immediate revelation, inspiration, and regeneration, are to be referred to the *potentia absoluta* of God; all his works of providence to his *potentia ordinata*. This distinction is important, as it draws the line between the natural and supernatural, between what is due to the operation of natural causes, sustained and guided by the providential efficiency of God, and what is due to the immediate exercise of his power (Hodge, 1:410).*

- ❑ The distinction as defined by Berkhof (80) and Charnock (2:12):

Absolute power - God's power to do anything possible

Ordinate power - God's power to perform that which He has decreed

Absolute, is that power whereby God is able to do that which he will not do, but is possible to be done; ordinate, is that power whereby God doth that which he hath decreed to do, that is, which he hath ordained or appointed to be exercised; which are not distinct powers, but one and the same power. His ordinate power is a part of his absolute; for if he had not a power to do everything that he could will, he might not have power to do everything that he doth will (Charnock, 2:12).

c. Application to the Christian Life

My sins, says a child of God, are potent. I have no power against this army that comes against me; I pray, and humble my soul by fasting; but my sins return upon me. Ay, but dost thou believe the power of God? The strong God can conquer thy strong corruption; though sin be too hard for thee, yet not for him; he can soften hard hearts and quicken the dead. 'Is any thing too hard for the Lord?' Gen. 18:14. Set his power to work, by faith and prayer. Say, Lord! it is not for thy honor that the devil should have so strong a party within me; oh, break the head of this leviathan! Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee (Watson, 81).

God's mercy pardons us, but his power preserves us. He who by his power keeps the stars that they do not fall from their orbs, keeps our grace that it does not fail or annihilate (Watson, 82).

15. God Is Sovereign (see: Works of God – Sovereign Rule)

- ❑ God is King
- ❑ Sovereignty is probably better understood as a work of God rather than attribute of God

By many writers, sovereignty is not included among the attributes of God. It is more properly a prerogative of God than an attribute and owes all its reality to the divine perfections which have here been named (Chafer, 1:222).

16. God Is Good

Ps. 34:8 – *O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.*

Ps. 107:8-9 – *Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.*

Nahum 1:7 – *The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.*

Ex. 18:9; 33:19; 34:6-7; 1 K. 8:66; Ps. 27:13; 33:5; 52:1; 65:4; 73:1; 86:5,15; 100:5; 103; 107; 119:68; 135:3; 145:8-9; Jer. 31:12; 33:11; Lam. 3:25; Hos. 3:5; Zech. 9:16-17; Matt. 5:44-45; Mk. 10:18; Acts 14:17; Rom. 2:4; 11:22; 2 Thess. 1:11; James 1:17

Broad v. Narrow Definition of God's Goodness

In the larger sense of the term, the goodness of God includes all the qualities that answer the conception of an ideal personage; that is, it includes such qualities as God's holiness, righteousness, and truth, as well as his love, benevolence, mercy, and grace . . . In the narrower sense, however, the term is limited to the last four qualities named (Thiessen, 85).

➤ Broad Definition – includes all the moral attributes of God

- ❑ Holiness
- ❑ Righteousness, justice
- ❑ Truth, faithfulness
- ❑ Love, grace, mercy, longsuffering
- ❑ God is perfect in goodness – there is no evil, deceit, impurity or wickedness in Him
- ❑ God's goodness extends to all His ways and works – they are all good

This is the true and genuine character of God; he is good, he is goodness, good in himself, good in his essence, good in the highest degree, possessing whatever is comely, excellent, desirable (Charnock, 2:214).

➤ Narrow Definition – limited to His kindness toward His creatures

- ❑ God is kind to all His creatures (Job 38:41; Ps. 147:9; Matt. 6:26-30; 10:29)
- ❑ God bestows blessing upon all men (Matt. 5:44-45; Acts 14:17; James 1:17)
- ❑ God eternally blesses the elect in Christ (Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:3)
- ❑ God is benevolent, kind, loving, gracious, merciful, longsuffering

It [goodness] is that perfection of God whereby he delights in his works, and is beneficial to them (Charnock 2:219).

God's goodness is, to creatures, one of His loveliest attributes; because it is from this that all the happiness which all enjoy flows, as water from a spring. Goodness is the generic attribute of which the love of benevolence, grace, pity, mercy, forgiveness, are but specific actings, distinguished by the attitude of their objects, rather than by the intrinsic principle. Goodness is God's infinite will to dispense well-pleasing, in accordance with His other attributes of wisdom, righteousness, etc., and on all orders of His creatures according to their natures and rights (Dabney, 169).

The goodness of God is that which disposes Him to be kind, cordial, benevolent, and full of good will toward men. He is tenderhearted and of quick sympathy, and His unfailing attitude toward all moral beings is open, frank, and friendly. By His nature He is inclined to bestow blessedness and He takes holy pleasure in the happiness of His people (Tozer, 82).

We are to trust in God alone and look to Him and expect from Him nothing but good, as from one who gives us body, life, food, drink, nourishment, health, protection, peace, and all necessities of both temporal and eternal things. He also preserves us from misfortune. And if any evil befall us, He delivers and rescues us. So it is God alone from whom we receive all good and by whom we are delivered from all evil. So, I think, we Germans from ancient times name God (more elegantly and appropriately than any other language) from the word 'good.' It is as though He were an eternal fountain that gushes forth abundantly nothing but what is good. And from that fountain flows forth all that is and is called good (Martin Luther's Large Catechism, Part I in McCain, 361).

17. God Is Love

Jn. 3:16 - *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

1 Jn. 4:8 - *He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.*

Deut. 4:37; 7:7-8; 10:15; 1 K. 10:9; Is. 43:4; Jer. 31:3; Jn. 3:16; 5:20; 14:31; 15:9,10; 17:23-26; Rom. 5:8; 8:31-39; 2 Cor. 13:11; Eph. 2:4-5; 2 Thess. 2:13; Titus 3:3-7; 1 Jn. 4:7-10,16,19

a. Love within the Trinity

- ❑ The Father loves the Son (Jn. 3:17; 5:20; 15:9; 17:23,24,26)
 - (1) The Father delights in the Son (Matt. 3:17)
 - (2) The Father communicates His will to the Son (Matt. 11:27; Jn. 5:20)
 - (3) The Father glorifies the Son (Jn. 12:28; Phil. 2:9-11)
- ❑ The Son loves the Father (Jn. 8:29; 14:31; 15:10; 17:4)
 - (1) The Son delights to do the will of the Father (Ps. 40:8)
 - (2) The Son obeys the Father (Jn. 8:29; 15:10; Phil. 2:8)
 - (3) The Son glorifies the Father (Jn. 17:4-5)

b. God's Love for Sinners

- ❑ How can God, who is holy, love sinners? (Rom. 5:6-8; Eph. 2:4-5)
- ❑ Does God love all sinners?
 - (1) God hates the wicked (Ex. 20:5-6; Deut. 7:9-10; Ps. 5:5; 7:11)
 - (2) God offers mercy to the wicked (Ez. 18:23,32; Matt.23:37; Jn. 3:16; 1 Tim. 4:10; 2 Pet. 3:9)

- (3) God loves the righteous (i.e. the justified and regenerated)

The love of a holy God to sinners is the most mysterious attribute of the divine nature (Hodge, 1:427).

c. God's Love for His Children

□ God's love is sovereign

- (1) Discriminating (Deut. 7:7-8; Eph. 2:4-5)
- (2) The ground of His election (Deut. 4:37; 10:15; Rom. 8:29)
- (3) Uninfluenced (Deut. 7:7-8; Rom. 5:8-10; Eph. 2:4-5)

By this we mean, there was nothing whatever in the objects of His love to call it into exercise, nothing in the creature to attract or prompt it . . . The only reason why God loves any is found in His own sovereign will . . . (Pink, The Attributes of God, 77-78).

- (4) God's love is governed by His will and His reason

The immanent love of God is a rational and voluntary affection, grounded in perfect reason and deliberate choice . . . God's love is no arbitrary, wild, passionate torrent of emotion . . . and we become like God by bringing our emotions, sympathies, affections, under the dominion of reason and conscience (Strong, 264-265).

□ God's love is immeasurable (Rom. 8:31-39)

- (1) Infinite - unbounded, without limit
- (2) Eternal - no beginning or ending
- (3) Immutable - unchanging
- (4) Commensurate with His other attributes

□ God delights in those He loves (Deut. 10:15; 2 Sam. 22:20; Zeph. 3:17)

Love includes complacency, desire, and delight, and has rational beings for its objects (Hodge, 1:427).

Love of necessity involves feeling, and if there be no feeling in God, there can be no love. That He produces happiness is no proof of love. The earth does that unconsciously and without design. Men often render others happy from vanity, from fear, or from caprice. Unless the production of happiness can be referred, not only to a conscious intention, but to a purpose dictated by kind feeling, it is no proof of benevolence. And unless the children of God are the objects of his complacency and delight, they are not the objects of his love (Hodge, 1:428-429).

□ God's love involves the giving of Himself for the good of others

God's love means that God eternally gives of himself to others. This definition understands love as self-giving for the benefit of others. This attribute of God shows that it is part of his nature to give of himself in order to bring about blessing or good for others (Grudem, 198).

By love we mean that attribute of the divine nature in virtue of which God is eternally moved to self-communication (Strong, 263).

□ How God's love is manifested to His children

- (1) He reveals Himself to His children (Matt. 11:25-27; Lk. 24:45)
- (2) He gave His Son to redeem His children (Jn. 3:16; 1 Jn. 4:7-10; Rom. 5:8)

- (3) He forgives the sins of His children (justification) (Eph. 1:7; Col. 2:13-14)
- (4) He gives His children eternal life (regeneration) (Jn. 1:12-13; 10:28)
- (5) He purifies His children (Rom. 8:29; Titus 2:14)
- (6) He leads, provides for, protects, and cares for His children (Ps. 23; Jn. 10:1-30)
- (7) He disciplines His children (Heb. 12:6)
- (8) He gives His children an eternal inheritance (Rom. 8:17-18; Rev. 21:7)

❑ God's love is incomprehensible

*O the deep, deep love of Jesus, Vast, unmeasured, boundless, free!
 Rolling as a mighty ocean, In its fullness over me,
 Underneath me, all around me, Is the current of Thy love,
 Leading onward, leading homeward, To my glorious rest above.*

*O the deep, deep love of Jesus, Spread His praise from shore to shore!
 How He loveth, ever loveth, Changeth never, never more.
 How He watches o'er His loved ones, Died to call them all His own;
 How for them He intercedeth, Watcheth o'er them from the throne!*

S. Trevor Francis (1834-1925)
 Hymn: *O the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus*

18. God Is Gracious

Gen. 6:8 - *But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.*

Jonah 4:2 - *. . . for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.*

Ex. 22:27; 34:6; Nu. 6:25; Neh. 9:17,31; Ps. 84:11; 86:15; Prov. 3:34; Joel 2:13; Acts 20:24;
 Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:6-7; 2:5-9; Col. 1:6; Titus 2:11; 1 Pet. 2:3

- ❑ God shows favor to undeserving sinners
- ❑ God blesses those who are under condemnation
- ❑ God's grace is only extended to the elect

[Grace is] the unmerited goodness or love of God to those who have forfeited it, and are by nature under a sentence of condemnation (Berkhof, 71).

. . . Grace is His goodness directed toward human debt and demerit. It is by His grace that God imputes merit where none previously existed and declares no debt to be where one had been before. Grace is the good pleasure of God that inclines Him to bestow benefits upon the undeserving (Tozer, 93).

Divine grace is the sovereign and saving favor of God exercised in the bestowment of blessings upon those who have no merit in them and for which no compensation is demanded from them. Nay, more; it is the favor of God shown to those who not only have no positive deserts of their own, but who are thoroughly ill-deserving and hell-deserving. It is completely unmerited and unsought, and is altogether unattracted by anything in or from or by the objects upon which it is bestowed (Pink, The Attributes, 66).

Grace is a perfection of the Divine character which is exercised only toward the elect (Pink, The Attributes, 66).

19. God Is Merciful

Ps. 103:11 – *For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.*

Ps. 145:9 – *The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.*

Gen. 39:21; Ex. 15:13; 20:6; 33:19; 34:7; Nu. 14:18-19; Deut. 7:9; Ps. 36:5; 51:1; 86:5,15; 100:5; 103:8-18; 106:1; 107:1; 108:4; 118:1-4; 130:7; 136:1-26; 145:8-9; Is. 55:7; Micah 7:18-20; Rom. 9:15-18; 15:9; 2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 2:4; Phil. 2:27; Titus 3:5; James 5:11; 1 Pet. 1:3; Jude 21

a. Vocabulary

□ Hebrew: רַחֻם (cheched) – goodness, kindness (BDB)

(1) Occurs 245x in OT; including 127x in Psalms (TLOT, 2:449)

(2) Translated in the KJV variously as: *mercy* (149x); *kindness* (40x); *lovingkindness* (30x); *goodness* (12x); *kindly* (5x); et. al.

(3) Translated by ἐλεος in the LXX

(4) For a review of the suggestion that the main idea in this word is ‘covenant faithfulness’ see TWOT, 1:305-307

□ Greek: ἐλεος (eleos) – mercy, pity, compassion (AS)

b. Description of God’s Mercy

□ God’s mercy involves the withholding of judgment where judgment is deserved
(Ps. 51:1; 103:10-11; 130; Is. 55:7)

□ God’s mercy involves pity on those who are in misery
(Ps. 31:9; 40:11-13; 41:4; 2 Cor. 1:3)

[The mercy of God] may be defined as the goodness or love of God shown to those who are in misery or distress, irrespective of their deserts (Berkhof, 72).

God’s mercy means God’s goodness toward those in misery and distress (Grudem, 200).

[Mercy] is an innate propenseness in God to pity and succour such as are in misery (Watson, 93).

□ God’s mercy extends to all of creation (Ps. 145:9)

20. God Is Longsuffering (Patient, Slow to Anger)

Ex. 34:6 - *And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth*

2 Pet 3:9 - *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

Num. 14:18; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Jer. 15:15; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Nahum 1:3; Rom. 2:4; 9:22; 1 Tim. 1:16; 1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 3:15

- ❑ God does not bring immediate retribution upon the sinner (Gen. 4:1-17; 6:3)
- ❑ God endures rebellion against Himself for a time (Gen. 15:16; Acts 17:30)
- ❑ God's longsuffering is not to be misconstrued as tolerance or indifference (Eccl. 8:11-13)
- ❑ God's longsuffering is His goodness shown toward the rebellious and stubborn (Rom. 2:4-6)

God's patience means God's goodness in withholding of punishment toward those who sin over a period of time (Grudem, 200).

'God is slow to anger because great in power. He has no less power over Himself than over His creatures.' It is at the above point, we think, that God's patience is mostly distinguished from His mercy. Though the creature is benefitted thereby, the patience of God chiefly respects Himself, a restraint placed upon His acts by His will; whereas His mercy terminates wholly upon the creature. The patience of God is that excellency which causes Him to sustain great injuries without immediately avenging Himself (Pink, The Attributes of God, 62 - commenting on Charnock).

21. God Is Just (Righteous)

In the inspired Scriptures justice and righteousness are scarcely to be distinguished from each other. The same word in the original becomes in English justice or righteousness, almost, one would suspect, at the whim of the translator (Tozer, 86).

Gen. 18:25 - *... shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*

Rev. 16:5 - *And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.*

Deut. 32:4; 1 Sam. 2:10; Ezra 9:15; Neh. 9:33; Ps. 7:8; 9:8; 11:7; 45:7; 50:6; 89:14; 116:5; 119:137-138; 129:4; 145:17; Eccl. 12:14; Is. 45:21; Jer. 9:24; 12:1; 17:10; Lam. 1:18; Dan. 9:14; Zeph. 3:5; Jn. 17:25; Acts 3:14; 7:52; Rom. 3:26; 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Jn. 2:1; Rev. 15:3; 16:7; 19:2

a. Vocabulary

- ❑ Hebrew: צַדִּיק (tsedek) – rightness, righteousness; what is right, just, normal (BDB)

This root basically connotes conformity to an ethical or moral standard. It is claimed by Snaith . . . "the original significance of the root צַדִּיק to have been 'to be straight'" (TWOT).

The root occurs 523x in the Hebrew OT (excluding proper names) plus 1x [in] Aramaic (TLOT).

❑ Greek:

δικαίος (dikaios) – adj. – righteous, chiefly in the broad sense of the person or thing corresponding to the Divine standard of right (AS)

δικαιοσύνη (dikaiosune) – n. – in broad sense, righteousness, conformity to the Divine will in purpose, thought and action (AS)

b. Righteousness in the Pentateuch (Ex. 20:1-17; 22:21-25; 23:1-9; Lev. 19:11-18; Deut. 25:1, 13-16)

- ❑ The Standard: The Decalogue (Ten Commandments) (Ex. 20:1-17)
- ❑ Love of God and love of neighbor (Deut. 6:4-5; Lev. 19:18; cf. Matt. 22:37-40)
- ❑ Just weights and measures (Deut. 25:13-16)
- ❑ Integrity in judgment – condemn the guilty, justify the innocent (Lev. 19:15; Deut. 25:1)
- ❑ Reasonable punishment of offenders
 - (1) Penalty (Ex. 21:12-17)
 - (2) *Lex taliones* (law of retaliation) (Ex. 21:23-25)
 - (3) Restitution (Ex. 22:1-6)
- ❑ Equality before the law - no respect of persons (Ex. 23:1-9)
- ❑ No taking of bribes (Ex. 23:8)
- ❑ No lying, false witness, defrauding (Lev. 19:11-13)
- ❑ No taking advantage of the helpless, widow, orphan, stranger (Ex. 22:21-24)

c. Description of God's Justice

- ❑ God is just in Himself - He always does what is right and just (Deut. 32:4; Ps. 145:17)
- ❑ God's commandments, laws, and decrees are perfectly just (Ps. 19:7-9)
- ❑ God always renders unto others their just due (Eccl. 12:14; Rom. 2:6-10)
- ❑ God is impartial in His judgment (Deut. 10:17; Rom. 2:11)

Justice is to give every one his due. God's justice is the rectitude of his nature, whereby he is carried to the doing of that which is righteous and equal . . . God is an impartial judge (Watson, 87-88).

He is a righteous ruler; all his laws are holy, just, and good. In his moral government He faithfully adheres to those laws. He is impartial and uniform in their execution. As a judge He renders unto every man according to his works. He neither condemns the innocent, nor clears the guilty; neither does He ever punish with undue severity (Hodge, 1:416).

Justice manifests itself especially in giving every man his due, in treating him according to his deserts (Berkhof, 75).

d. Absolute vs. Relative Justice

- ❑ Absolute Justice of God - God is just in Himself

. . . that rectitude of the divine nature, in virtue of which God is infinitely righteous in Himself (Berkhof, 74).

- ❑ Relative Justice of God - God administers justice in His creation

... that perfection of God by which He maintains Himself over against every violation of His holiness, and shows in every respect that He is the Holy One (Berkhof, 75).

- ❑ The **absolute justice** of God is God's moral perfection in Himself, while the **relative justice** of God is God's demand from all moral beings of conformity to His moral perfection.

e. Rectoral vs. Distributive Justice

- ❑ Rectoral Justice – God imposes righteous laws on His creation

... that which is concerned in the imposition of righteous laws and in their impartial execution (Hodge, 1:416).

In virtue of [rectoral justice] He has **instituted** a moral government in the world, and **imposed** a just law upon man, with promises of reward for the obedient, and threats of punishment for the transgressor (Berkhof, 75).

(1) In this connection, God is a Lawgiver and a righteous Ruler.

(2) Is. 33:22 - ... *the LORD is our Lawgiver* ...

- ❑ Distributive Justice - God renders unto every man just reward

Prov. 24:12 - ... *shall not He render to every man according to his works?*

... that which is manifested in the righteous distribution of rewards and punishment (Hodge, 1:416).

[**Distributive justice**] usually serves to designate God's rectitude in the **execution** of the law, and relates to the **distribution** of rewards and punishments (Berkhof, 75).

(1) In this connection, God is a just Judge.

(2) Is. 33:22 – *The LORD is our judge* ...

f. Remunerative vs. Retributive Justice

- ❑ These are aspects of God's distributive justice.
- ❑ Remunerative Justice - the distribution of rewards (Matt. 25:21,34-40; Rom. 2:6-7; 1 Cor. 3:13-14; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 2:7,11,17,26-28; 3:5,12,21)
- ❑ Retributive Justice - the infliction of punishment (Deut. 7:10; 29:18-21; 1 Sam. 2:10; Matt. 25:41-46; Rom. 2:9; 2 Thess. 1:8; Rev. 14:10-11; 20:11-15; 21:8)

(1) Ultimately, God's punishment of the wicked is not remedial in nature

(2) Ultimately, God's punishment of the wicked is not preventive in nature

[**Retributive justice**] is an expression of the divine wrath (Berkhof, 75).

Punishment, properly speaking is evil inflicted in satisfaction of justice (Hodge, 1:417).

Many deny the strict punitive justice of God and claim that God punishes the sinner to reform him, or to deter others from sin; but these positions are not tenable. The primary purpose of the punishment of sin is the maintenance of right and justice. Of course, it may incidentally serve, and may even, secondarily, be intended, to reform the sinner and to deter others from sin (Berkhof, 75-76).

22. God Is True (Veracity, Integrity)

Deut. 32:4 - *He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.*

John 17:3 – *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God . . .*

Ex. 34:6; Num. 23:19; 1 K. 17:24; 2 Chron. 15:3; Ps. 19:9; 25:10; 31:5; 33:4; 43:3; 57:10; 71:22; 86:15; 96:13; 100:5; 117:2; 119:142,151,160; Jer. 10:10; Dan. 4:37; Jn. 14:6,17; 15:26; 17:17; 1 Thess. 1:9; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18; 1 Jn. 5:20; Rev. 3:7; 6:10; 15:3; 16:7; 19:2,9,11

We may define the veracity or truth of God as that perfection of His Being by virtue of which He fully answers to the idea of the Godhead, is perfectly reliable in His revelation, and sees things as they really are (Berkhof, 69).

❑ God is Real, Not Imaginary (Ps. 96:5; Jer. 10:10; Jn. 17:3; 1 Thess. 1:9)

The true, therefore, is, (1) That which is real, as opposed to that which is fictitious or imaginary. Jehovah is the true God, because He is really God, while the gods of the heathen are vanity and nothing, mere imaginary beings, having neither existence nor attributes (Hodge, 1:437).

❑ God is All That God Should Be

He is the truth first of all in a metaphysical sense, that is, in Him the idea of Godhead is perfectly realized; He is all that He as God should be. . . (Berkhof, 69).

A true man is a man in whom the idea of manhood is fully realized. The true God is He in whom is found all that Godhead imports (Hodge, 1:437).

❑ The Knowledge and Revelation of God Correspond to Reality (Num. 23:19; Ps. 19:9; 119:160; Jn. 17:17; Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:18)

God is truth. His knowledge, declarations, and representations eternally conform to reality (Thiessen, 87).

Truth in God is surety that what He has disclosed is according to the nature of things and that His disclosures may be depended upon with plenary certainty (Chafer, 1:207).

This attribute therefore constitutes the principle and guarantee of all revelation (Strong, 262).

He is also the truth in an ethical sense, and as such reveals Himself as He really is, so that His revelation is absolutely reliable (Berkhof, 69).

- ❑ God is the Source of All Truth and the Ground of All Knowledge (Deut. 32:4; Ps. 57:10; 93:5; 100:5; Jn. 15:26; cf. Prov. 2:6)

There is nothing true but what is in God or comes from God (Watson, 99).

He is also the truth in a logical sense, and in virtue of this He knows things as they really are, and has so constituted the mind of man that the latter can know, not merely the appearance, but also the reality, of things. Thus the truth of God is the foundation of all knowledge (Berkhof, 69).

The truth of God is not only the foundation of all religion, but also of all knowledge . . . He is the source of all truth. The conviction that the senses do not deceive, that consciousness is trustworthy, that things are what they appear to be, and that existence is not merely a dream, rests ultimately upon the truth of God (Thiessen, 87).

All truth among men, whether mathematical, logical, moral, or religious, is to be regarded as having its foundation in this immanent truth of the divine nature and as disclosing facts in the being of God (Strong, 261).

23. God Is Faithful

Deut. 7:9 - *Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.*

Ps. 36:5 - *Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.*

Ps. 40:10; 88:11; 89:1-5,8,24,33; 92:2; 119:75,90; 143:1; Is. 25:1; 49:7; Lam. 3:23; 1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13; 1 Thess. 5:24; 2 Thess. 3:3; Heb. 10:23; 1 Pet. 4:19; 1 Jn. 1:9; Rev. 3:14; 19:11

- ❑ God will always keep His word
- ❑ God's faithfulness is founded on His truth and immutability
- ❑ God's faithfulness makes His word, promises, and covenants certain

God's faithfulness means that God will always do what he has said and fulfill what he has promised. He can be relied upon, and he will never prove unfaithful to those who trust what he has said (Grudem, 195).

He is ever mindful of His covenant and fulfils all the promises which He has made to His people. This faithfulness of God is of the utmost practical significance to the people of God. It is the ground of their confidence, the foundation of their hope, and the cause of their rejoicing (Berkhof, 70).

Upon God's faithfulness rests our whole hope of future blessedness. Only as He is faithful will His covenants stand and His promises be honored. Only as we have complete assurance that He is faithful may we live in peace and look forward with assurance to the life to come (Tozer, 81).

Hymn: Great Is Thy Faithfulness

*Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee
Thou changest not, Thy compassions they fail not,
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.*

*Great is thy faithfulness, Great is thy faithfulness,
Morning by morning new mercies I see
All I have needed, Thy hand hath provided,
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord unto me.*

Thomas Chisholm (b. 1866)

24. God Is Jealous

Deut. 4:24 - *For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.*

Nahum 1:2 - *God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.*

Ex. 20:5; 34:14; Num. 25:11; Deut. 5:9; 6:15; 29:20; 32:16,21; Josh. 24:19-20; 1 Kings 14:22-24; Ps. 78:58-59; Is. 48:11; Ez. 16:38,42; 23:25; 38:19; 39:25; Joel 2:18; Nahum 1:2; Zeph. 1:18; 3:8; Zech. 1:14; 8:2; 1 Cor. 10:22; James 4:5

- ❑ God protects His own honor and glory (Is. 48:11)
- ❑ God's jealousy is provoked by idolatry (Ex. 20:5; 34:14; Deut. 5:9; et. al.)
- ❑ God's jealousy arouses God's wrath and evokes God's vengeance (1 Kings 14:22-26; Ps. 78:58-67; Ez. 16:38; 38:19; Nahum 1:2)

God's jealousy means that God continually seeks to protect his own honor (Grudem, 205).

When jealousy is attributed to God, the word is used in a good sense. The language is, of course, anthropomorphic; and it is based upon the feeling in a husband of exclusive right in his wife. God is conceived as having wedded Israel to Himself, and as claiming, therefore, exclusive devotion. Disloyalty on the part of Israel is represented as adultery, and as provoking God to jealousy (Forrester, "Jealousy," in Orr, ISBE, 3:1572).

EXCURSUS ON THE WRATH OF GOD:

Ex. 15:7 - *And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble.*

Deut. 7:9-10 - *Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; **And repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face.***

Gen. 6-8,19; Ex. 7-14; Nu. 11-16,21,25; Deut. 7:10; 28:15-68; 29:18-21; 32:41-42; Job 21; Ps. 2, 78, 88, 90 Is. 2:5-22; 13; 24; Ez. 16,21,23; Obadiah; Nah. 1:1-6; Zeph. 1:14-18; Mal. 3:1-5; 4:1-3; Matt. 11:20-24; 21:12-13; 23; Rom. 1:18-32; 2 Thess. 1-2; Rev. 6-19

➤ DEFINITION OF GOD'S WRATH AND BIBLICAL TERMINOLOGY

A. DEFINITION OF GOD'S WRATH

An expression of the righteousness of God in relation to human sin and its just punishment (McKim, 118).

Wrath is God's reaction to the breaking of His law (Culver, 553).

[W]rath (from which retributive justice cannot be separated) is concerned with the protection of God's holy interests; i.e. his holy nature, his love, and the objects of his love. Hence, wrath is inseparably related to God's love, holiness, and jealousy. Indeed, the wrath of God speaks directly of God maintaining himself completely and absolutely as a holy God who loves his covenant people with an infinite passion and therefore is very jealous over them. When either people from without, or the covenant people themselves, profane, thwart or reject this love of the covenant God, God expresses his vexation, agitation, displeasure, anger and/or hatred: he pours out his wrath (TWOT, 2:808).

- ❑ God's wrath is a manifestation of His righteousness (i.e. His moral perfection)
- ❑ God's wrath is an expression of His hatred of evil and wickedness
- ❑ God's wrath results in just punishment of evil-doers
- ❑ God's wrath is fierce, but righteous
- ❑ God's wrath is not capricious or arbitrary
- ❑ God is slow to anger (longsuffering)

B. BIBLICAL TERMINOLOGY

1. Hebrew Vocabulary

- ❑ אָנַף (anaph) **be angry** – v. – (breathe, snort) be angry (BDB)
– 14x in OT, all in ref. to God's anger (Deut. 1:37; Ps. 2:12; Ezr. 9:14)
- ❑ אָפַּח (aph) – **anger, wrath** – n. – (< אָנַף) nostril, nose, face, anger (BDB)
– in ref. to God's wrath – 168x (TLOT) (Ex. 4:14; Nu. 25:3; Deut. 6:15; Ps. 2:5; Is. 13:13)

The main use of 'aph' is to refer to the anger of men and of God. This anger is expressed in the appearance of the nostrils. 'aph' gives specific emphasis to the emotional aspect of anger and wrath . . . (TWOT).

- ❑ קָצַף (qatsaph) – **be angry** – v. – be displeased, angry; fret oneself (TWOT)
– in ref. to God's wrath – 23x (TWOT) (Deut. 9:19; Nu. 16:22; Zech. 1:2)
- ❑ קִסְפָּה (qeseph) – **wrath** – n. – indignation, wrath (TWOT)
– in ref. to God's wrath – 25x (TLOT) (Nu. 16:46; Deut. 29:28; Ps. 38:1)
- ❑ חֵמָה (chemah) – **wrath, fury** – n. – heat, rage, burning anger (BDB)
– in ref. to God's wrath – 89x (TLOT) (Nu. 25:11; Deut. 9:19; 2 K. 22:13; Ps. 79:6)

In view of the meaning of the root, the basic meaning of 'chemah' may indicate 'being hot (from excitement),' thus e.g. 'boiling,' then 'wrath' . . . The distinction from 'aph' would then be seen in the fact that 'aph' describes more

the physically visible state of excitement of an individual breathing heavily as a consequence of anger, while 'chemah' emphasizes more the inner emotion, the inner fire of anger. Nevertheless, one may hardly recognize an essential distinction in meaning or in usage between 'aph' and 'chemah' as demonstrated by the fact that 'chemah' appears in conjunction with 'aph' about 40x (TLOT).

2. Greek Vocabulary

- ❑ ὀργή (orge) – **anger, wrath** – n. – in LXX chiefly for ἦν (aph) - anger, wrath (AS)
– 36x in NT; 29x in ref. to God's wrath (Matt. 3:7; Jn. 3:36; Rom. 1:18; Col. 3:6; Rev. 6:16)
- ❑ θυμός (thumos) – **wrath** – n. – passion, hot anger, wrath (AS)
– 18x in NT; 7x in ref. to God's wrath, all in Rev. (Rev. 14:10,19; 15:1,7; 16:1,19; 19:15)

After considerable development, 'thumos' and 'orge' came to refer to the passion of anger, the strongest of all passions, impulses, and desires. Although the grammarians and philologists spent some time distinguishing these words, there are a number of passages where they cannot be distinguished. The grammarians and philologists only assumed that the words were not used indifferently on every occasion and concluded that 'thumos' refers to turbulent commotion, the boiling agitation of the feelings. Basil the Great called 'thumos' 'an inebriation of the soul' that will either subside and disappear or else settle down into 'orge,' which is more of an abiding and settled habit of mind ('an enduring anger') that is focused on revenge . . . So Gregory Nazianzene said, 'thumos' is the sudden boiling of the mind, 'orge' is enduring 'thumos.'" Where the words occur together, Theodoret noted: 'Through 'thumos' is revealed suddenness, and through 'orge' continuation' (Trench, 145-147).

➤ **EXAMPLES OF GOD'S WRATH**

- ❑ The Flood (Gen. 6-8)
- ❑ Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19)
- ❑ Pharaoh and Egypt (Ex. 7-14)
- ❑ Israelites in the wilderness (Ex. 32; Lev. 10; Nu. 11-14,16,20,25)
- ❑ Northern kingdom of Israel (2 K. 17)
- ❑ Judah (2 K. 25; Ez. 16,21,23)
- ❑ Babylon (Jer. 50-51; Rev. 17-18)
- ❑ Nineveh (Nah. 1:1-6)
- ❑ Day of the Lord (Is. 2,13,24; Zeph. 1:14-18; Mal. 3-4; 2 Thess. 1-2; Rev. 6-19)

➤ **THE OBJECTS OF GOD'S WRATH**

A. HIS ENEMIES

1. God's wrath is poured out on those who oppose Him
 - ❑ Those who hate God (Deut. 7:10; 32:41)
 - ❑ Those who break His law (Zeph. 1:17; Rom. 1:18)
 - ❑ Those who exalt themselves (Is. 2:12; 13:11)
 - ❑ Those who serve other gods (Deut. 29:18-21; 2 K. 17)
2. God's wrath is poured out on various groups of moral creatures
 - ❑ Satan and demons (Jude 6; Rev. 20:1-3,10)
 - ❑ Individuals (e.g. Pharaoh, Jezebel, Judas, Antichrist)

- ❑ Cities (e.g. Sodom & Gomorrah, Jerusalem, Babylon, Nineveh, Capernaum)
- ❑ Nations (e.g. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Edom, Israel)
- ❑ Generations (e.g. Matt. 23:32-36)
- ❑ The whole world (Gen. 6-8; Is. 13:11-13; Rev. 6:17)

3. In Adam, we are all born under the wrath of God (Jn. 3:36; Rom. 5:12; Eph. 2:1-3)

B. HIS CHILDREN

1. Jesus propitiated God's wrath on our behalf (Jn. 3:36; Rom. 5:1; 8:1; Gal. 3:13; 1 Jn. 2:1-2)

2. God is sometimes angry with His children, though in a limited way

- ❑ Moses (Ex. 4:14)
- ❑ Aaron (Deut. 9:20)
- ❑ Uzziah (2 Chr. 26:16-21)
- ❑ Hezekiah (2 Chr. 32:25)
- ❑ Peter (Matt. 16:22-23)

3. God chasten's His children

- ❑ 1 Cor. 3:17; 5:5; 11:27-32
- ❑ Heb. 12:5-11

4. His children are not subject to the eschatological wrath of God (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9; Rev. 3:10)

➤ THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD'S WRATH

- ❑ Tribulation (Prov. 10:24; 2 Thess. 1:6)
- ❑ Death (Is. 13:15-19; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor. 3:17)
- ❑ Destruction (2 Thess. 1:9)
- ❑ Desolation (Is. 13:20-22; 24:1; Zeph. 1:15)
- ❑ Fire and brimstone (Gen. 19; Rev. 14:10; 20:14-15; 21:8)
- ❑ Darkness (Zeph. 1:15)
- ❑ Torment (Rev. 14:10)

➤ GOD'S ESCHATOLOGICAL WRATH

- ❑ The Day of the Lord (Is. 24; Rev. 6-19)
- ❑ Hell (Rev. 20:11-15)

EXCURSUS ON FALSE GODS AND IDOLATRY

Ps. 96:5 – *For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens.*

1 Jn. 5:21 – *Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.*

Gen. 31:30-34; 35:1-4; Ex. 12:12; 20:3-6; 23:13,24; 32; Lev. 19:4; 26:1,30; Deut. 13; 31:16-18; Josh. 24; Judg. 2-3; 1 K. 11:1-13; 12:25-33; 18:17-46; 2 K. 16,17,21; Ps. 115; 135; Is. 2:5-22; 40:18-20; 44:6-20; Jer. 10:1-16; 44; Ez. 6; 8; 14:1-11; Acts 17:16-34; 19:23-41; Rom. 1:18-32; 1 Cor. 8; 10; Col. 3:5; 1 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 13:14-15; 17-18

➤ **THE PRESENCE OF FALSE GODS**

A. PRESENT BEFORE THE FLOOD?

1. No explicit mention of false gods before the flood
2. Nephilim? (Gen. 6:1-7)

B. UBIQUITOUS AFTER THE FLOOD

1. The Patriarchs (Josh. 24:2; Gen. 31:30-34; 35:1-4)
2. Among the Nations (Ex. 12:12; Deut. 13:6-7; Judges 2:12; 10:6; Ps. 96:5; Acts 17:16)
3. Always a Temptation to the People of God (Judges; 2 K. 17; 1 Jn. 5:21)

C. NAMES OF FALSE GODS IN THE BIBLE

- ❑ Ashtaroath (Judg. 2:13; 10:6; 1 Sam. 7:3) – goddess of the Canaanites
- ❑ Baal (Nu. 22:41; Judg. 2:13; 6:25 ff.; 1 K. 16:31) – god of the Canaanites
- ❑ Bel (Is. 46:1; Jer. 50:2) – chief god of the Babylonians
- ❑ Chemosh (Nu. 21:29; Judg. 11:24; 1 K. 11:7) – god of the Moabites
- ❑ Dagon (Judg. 16:23; 1 Sam. 5:2-7) – god of the Philistines
- ❑ Milcom (1 K. 11:5) – god of the Ammonites
- ❑ Molech (Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5; 1 K. 11:7; Jer. 32:35) – god of the Ammonites
- ❑ Nebo (Is. 46:1) – god of the Babylonians
- ❑ Queen of Heaven (Jer. 7:18; 44:17-25)
- ❑ Tammuz (Ez. 8:14) – god of the Babylonians

➤ **THE ORIGIN OF FALSE GODS**

- ❑ Man's Rejection of the True and Living God (Rom. 1:18-32)
- ❑ The Imagination of Man (Rom. 1:21-23)
- ❑ Babylon (Gen. 11:1-9; Rev. 17:5)
- ❑ Satan (Deut. 32:17; Ps. 106:36-38; 1 Cor. 10:20)

➤ **THE WORSHIP OF FALSE GODS**

- ❑ Prohibited by God (Ex. 20:3-5)
- ❑ Foolish (Ps. 115:4-8; Jer. 10:1-16)
- ❑ Idolatry / spiritual adultery (Lev. 20:5; Ez. 16; James 4:1-4)
- ❑ Associated with occult practices (Deut. 18:9-14)
- ❑ Accompanied by lies, false doctrine, deception, false prophets
- ❑ Accompanied by immorality and sensuality (Ex. 32:6,25; Lev. 18-20)
- ❑ Results in the judgment of God

➤ **THE CORRUPTION OF THE WORSHIP OF GOD**

- ❑ Neglect of God's commandments (Lev. 18:1-5)
- ❑ Introduction of pagan practices into the worship of the Lord (Ex. 32:1-6; Judg. 17-18; 1 K. 12:28-33)
- ❑ Secret worship of pagan gods (Deut. 13:6; 2 K. 17:9; Ez. 8:7-12)
- ❑ Public worship of pagan gods alongside worship of the Lord (2 K. 16:1-15; 17:33)
- ❑ Public worship of pagan gods (2 K. 21:1-9)

THE TRIUNITY OF GOD

I. DEFINITION OF THE TRINITY

Christians worship one God who exists in three Persons - God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (Lightner, 91).

Father and Son and Spirit are one God, yet the Son is not the Father, nor the Spirit the Son, but . . . they are differentiated by a peculiar quality (Calvin, 1:126).

The Trinity is composed of three united Persons without separate existence - so completely united as to form One God (Chafer, 1:276).

A proper definition then must include the distinctness and equality of the three persons within the Trinity as well as the unity within the Trinity. The word Triunity may better express the doctrine (Enns, 199).

The doctrine that there is one only and true God, but in the unity of the Godhead there are three coeternal and coequal Persons, the same in substance but distinct in subsistence (Warfield, 2:133).

II. BIBLICAL TESTIMONY CONCERNING THE TRINITY

A. OLD TESTAMENT (see Warfield, 2:139-142)

1. The Unity of God is Established in the Old Testament (Deut. 6:4; Is. 43:10-11; 46:9)

2. The Triunity of God is Intimated in the Old Testament

- ❑ Plural form of the Divine name *Elohim*
- ❑ The use of plural pronouns with reference to God (Gen. 1:26; 3:22; 11:7; Is. 6:8)
- ❑ Distinctions made between God and God (Ps. 45:6-7; 110:1; Is. 44:6; Hos. 1:7)
- ❑ Threefold liturgical formulas (Num. 6:24-26; Is. 6:3)
- ❑ Appearances of the Angel of the Lord - identified with Yahweh, yet distinct from Him (Gen. 16:2-13; 22:11-16; 31:11-13; Ex. 3:2-5; Judg. 13:20-22)
- ❑ The Word and Wisdom of God personified (Ps. 33:4,6; Prov. 8:12-31)
- ❑ The Deity of the Messiah (Is. 7:14; 9:6; 40:3,10; Micah 5:2; Zech. 14:3-4)
- ❑ References to God, Messiah, and the Spirit of God in the same passage (Ps. 33:6; Is. 61:1; 63:8-12; Hag. 2:5-6)

It would seem clear that we must recognize in the Old Testament doctrine of the relation of God to His revelation by the creative Word and the Spirit, at least the germ of the distinctions in the Godhead afterward fully made known in the Christian revelation (Warfield, 2:141).

The Old Testament may be likened to a chamber richly furnished but dimly lighted; the introduction of light brings into it nothing which was not in it before; but it brings out into clearer view much of what is in it but was only dimly or even not at all perceived before. The mystery of the Trinity is not revealed in the Old Testament; but the mystery of the Trinity underlies the Old Testament revelation, and here and there almost comes into view. Thus the Old Testament revelation of God is not corrected by the fuller revelation which follows it, but only perfected, extended and enlarged (Warfield, 2:141-142).

B. NEW TESTAMENT

1. The Unity of God is Affirmed (John 17:3; 1 Cor. 8:4; 1 Tim. 2:5)
2. Deity Attributed to Three Persons
 - ❑ The Father is called God (John 6:27; Rom. 1:7; 2 Cor. 8:6)
 - ❑ The Son is called God (John 1:1; Col 2:9; Heb. 1:8)
 - ❑ The Spirit is called God (Acts 5:3-4; 1 Cor. 3:16)
3. The Three Persons Mentioned Together in Such a Way That Implies Equality
(Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 2:18; 1 Pet. 1:2; see also Eph. 3:2-5; 4:4-6; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 1 Thess. 1:2-5; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; Titus 3:4-6; Heb. 2:3-4; 6:4-6; Jude 20-21)
4. The Three Persons Are Distinct
 - ❑ Baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3:16-17)
 - ❑ Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-6)
 - ❑ "I – Thou" relationship (John 14:16,23,26; 17:1-5)
5. The Revelation of the Trinity is Essential to God's Redemptive Plan

*The Old Testament was written before its [the Trinitarian doctrine] revelation; the New Testament after it. The revelation itself was made not in word but in deed. It was made in the incarnation of God the Son, and the outpouring of God the Holy Spirit. The relation of the two Testaments to this revelation is in the one case that of preparation for it, and in the other that of product of it. The revelation itself is embodied just in Christ and the Holy Spirit. **This is as much as to say that the revelation of the Trinity was incidental to, and the inevitable effect of, the accomplishment of redemption.** It was in the coming of the Son of God in the likeness of sinful flesh to offer Himself a sacrifice for sin; and in the coming of the Holy Spirit to convict the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment, that the Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead was once for all revealed to men (Warfield, 2:144).*

The real reason for the delay in the revelation of the Trinity, however, is grounded in the secular development of the redemptive purpose of God: the times were not ripe for the revelation of the Trinity in the unity of the Godhead until the fulness of the time had come for God to send forth His Son unto redemption, and His Spirit unto sanctification (Warfield, 2:145).

In a word, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are the fundamental proof of the doctrine of the Trinity (Warfield, 2:146).

III. HISTORICAL STATEMENTS OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

A. THE NICENE CREED (A.D. 325)

I believe in one God the Father Almighty; Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one essence with the Father . . . And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified . . . (Schaff, 2:58-59).

B. THE ATHANASIAN CREED (4th or 5th c.)

. . . we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the Persons nor dividing the Substance. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one, the Glory equal, the Majesty coeternal (Schaff, 2:66).

C. THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH (1647)

In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son (Schaff, 3:607-608).

IV. NATURE OF THE TRINITY

A. THREE IN ONE

1. There Is in the Divine Being One Indivisible Essence (Deut 6:4; James 2:10 - the unity of God)

God is one in His essential being or constitutional nature (Berkhof, 87).

2. There Are Three Distinct Persons in The One Divine Being

. . . the self-distinctions in the Divine Being imply an 'I' and 'Thou' and 'He,' in the Being of God, which assume personal relations to one another (Berkhof, 88).

All admitted the truth of the word of Augustine, 'We speak of three persons, not in order thereby completely to express it, but in order that it may not be left wholly unexpressed.' In the doctrine of the trinity the word 'person' simply expresses the truth that the three persons in the Deity are not modes of manifestation merely, but have distinct and actual existence (Bavinck, 300).

3. The Whole Undivided Essence of God Belongs Equally to Each of the Three Persons

This means that the divine essence is not divided among the three persons, but is wholly with all its perfection in each one of the persons, so that they have a numerical unity of essence (Berkhof, 88).

In the highest trinity one is as much as the three together, nor are two anything more than one; moreover they are infinite in themselves. So both each is in each, and all are in each, and each is in all, and all are in all, and all are one (Augustine, quoted in Bavinck, 302).

4. The Three Persons are Coequal and Coeternal

5. The Trinity is an Incomprehensible Mystery

The Trinity is a mystery, not merely in the Biblical sense that it is a truth, which was formerly hidden but is now revealed; but in the sense that man cannot comprehend it and make it intelligible. . . It [the church] has never tried to explain the mystery of the Trinity, but only sought to formulate the doctrine of the Trinity in such a manner that the errors which endangered it were warded off (Berkhof, 89).

As the doctrine of the Trinity is undiscoverable by reason, so it is incapable of proof from reason. There are no analogies to it in Nature, not even in the spiritual nature of man, who is made in the image of God. In His trinitarian mode of being, God is unique; and, as there is nothing in the universe like Him in this respect, so there is nothing which can help us to comprehend Him (Warfield, 2:134-135).

B. GENERATION AND SPIRATION

1. Language of the Nicene Creed and Westminster Confession

*. . . the Son is **eternally begotten** of the Father; the Holy Ghost **eternally proceeding** from the Father and the Son (The Westminster Confession of Faith, 1647).*

2. Eternal Generation of the Son - eternally begotten

The term generation suggests the Trinitarian relationship in that the Son is eternally begotten of the Father (Enns, 200).

3. Eternal Spiration of the Spirit – eternally proceeding

The word procession suggests the Trinitarian relationship of the Father and the Son sending the Spirit (Enns, 200).

4. Significance of the Language

Paternity, filiation, and procession are not to be viewed as accidental properties of God's being; but as the eternal modes of existence of, and the eternal, immanent relations within that being (Bavinck, 303-304).

*They who err in this article depart from the confession of a doctrine which the entire Church of God has taught and enforced from the days of the apostles. And the denial of this truth carries with it the most perilous consequences. (1) If there be no generation or procession, and if the names Father, Son and Spirit have respect merely to the covenant of grace, it would follow that these names are but official names, and have no essential relation underlying them. (2) It would follow that the Father could act in an isolated way without the Son and Holy Spirit, and that they, again, could act from themselves apart from the Father, without any natural and necessary relation of the one to the other. (3) It would follow that the bond of unity between the Persons was really subverted or overthrown. These perilous consequences, especially the two last, may be repudiated; and far be it from me to burden any man or class of men with consequences which they do not themselves accept and avow. But the consequences which are admitted are one thing, and the consequences which follow logically from an opinion are another thing. The consequences may be of potent influence though neither suspected nor acknowledged. **The point to which we have adverted is at the foundation of the unity and distinction in the Godhead. The three Persons have a natural relation to each other, both in subsistence and action. They are one in essence and in operation** (Smeaton, 107-108).*

C. ECONOMICAL SUBORDINATION v. ONTOLOGICAL SUBORDINATION

1. The Language of Subordination (John 8:28-29; 14:26; 16:13-14; 1 Cor. 15:28; Gal. 4:4)

2. Economical Subordination

There is, of course, no question that in 'modes of operation,' as it is technically called - that is to say, in the functions ascribed to the several persons of the Trinity in the redemptive process, and, more broadly, in the entire dealing of God with the world - the principle of subordination is clearly expressed. The Father is first, the Son is second, and the Spirit is third, in the operations of God as revealed to us in general, and very specially in those operations by which redemption is accomplished. Whatever the Father does, He does through the Son by the Spirit (Warfield, 2:165).

3. Ontological Subordination

But it is not so clear that the principle of subordination rules also in 'modes of subsistence,' as it is technically phrased; that is to say, in the necessary relation of the Persons of the Trinity to one another. The very richness and variety of expression of their subordination, the one to the other, in modes of operation, create a difficulty in attaining certainty whether they are represented as also subordinate the one to the other in modes of subsistence (Warfield, 2:165).

V. HISTORICAL ERRORS

A. SUBORDINATIONISM - makes the Son inferior to the Father or the Spirit infer. to the Father and Son

Tertullian (c. 160 - c. 215) was the first to use the term 'Trinity' and to formulate the doctrine, but his formulation was deficient, since it involved an unwarranted subordination of the Son to the Father. Origen (c. 185- c. 254) went even farther in this direction by teaching explicitly that the Son is subordinate to the Father in respect to essence, and that the Holy Spirit is subordinate even to the Son. He detracted from the essential deity of these two persons in the Godhead, and furnished a stepping stone to the Arians, who denied the deity of the Son and of the Holy Spirit by representing the Son as the first creature of the Father, and the Holy Spirit as the first creature of the Son. . . . and the three persons of the Godhead were made to differ in rank (Berkhof, 82).

B. TRITHEISM – makes the three Persons three distinct Gods

- ❑ Not consciously held by any Christians through the ages
- ❑ Cults and monotheistic religions that deny the Trinity accuse Christians of tritheism

C. MODALISM - makes the three Persons, three modes of existence or manifestations of God
(i.e. at one time God is manifested as Father, at other times as Son, and at others as Spirit)

They acknowledged the true divinity of Christ, but denied any personal distinction in the Godhead. The same person is at once Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; these terms expressing the different relations in which God reveals Himself in the world and in the church (Hodge, 1:452).

1. Sabellianism – originated with Sabellius (c. 200)

Sabellianism was an attempt to solve the problem of how to accept the deity of Christ and also maintain the unity of God. The Sabellians achieved this at the expense of a trinity of persons in the Godhead. They reduced the status of the persons to modes or manifestations of the one God (Douglas, 'Sabellianism').

2. Modalistic Monarchianism (synonymous with Sabellianism) – primacy of the Father

The term [Sabellianism] is frequently coupled with the word 'monarchy' to denote the primacy of God as the Father. The Son and Holy Spirit are thus revelatory and apparently temporal modes of God the Father's self-revelation (Douglas, 'Sabellianism').

3. Patripassianism (synonymous with Sabellianism and Monarchianism) – the Father suffered

If God the Father became incarnate, then He also suffered (Douglas, 'Sabellianism').

D. ARIANISM – the Son is the highest created being, but is not equal to the Father

1. Arius (c. 250-336)

- ❑ Presbyter of Alexandria
- ❑ Essentially taught the Christology of Origen (c. 185-c. 254) (see Hodge 1:451-53)

2. Summary of the Teaching

- ❑ The Son is begotten in the sense that he had a beginning
- ❑ The Son was the first and highest created being
- ❑ The Father created the world by the Son
- ❑ The Son is inferior to the Father in essence
- ❑ The Son is subordinated to the Father in his nature

3. Council of Nicea (325 A.D.)

- ❑ Called by Constantine to deal with the question of Arianism
- ❑ Defined the relationship between the Father and the Son:

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one essence with the Father (The Nicene Creed)

4. Athanasius (c. 296-373) – became the great opponent of Arianism after Nicea

5. Jehovah's Witness – very similar to Arianism in its Christology

5. SOCINIANISM (see NSH, 'Socinus')

- ❑ Faustus Socinus (1539-1604): *Plurality of persons in one divine essence is impossible*
- ❑ Denied the Trinity
- ❑ Christ was a man, not God
- ❑ Unitarianism
- ❑ Theological Liberalism

THE WORKS OF GOD

I. CREATION

Gen. 1:1 – *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*

Rev. 4:11 – *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.*

Gen. 1-2; 5:1-2; 6:7; 7:4; 9:6; Ex. 4:11; 20:11; 31:17; Deut. 4:32; 1 Chron. 16:26; Neh. 9:6; Job 38-40; Ps. 8; 19:1-6; 24:1-2; 33:1-9,15; 95:3-6; 96; 104; 115:15-16; 136:5-9; 139:13-16; 148; Prov. 8:22-29; Eccl. 7:29; 12:1; Is. 40:12-31; 42:5; 45; 65:17-18; Jer. 10:10-13; Mal. 2:10; Matt. 19:4-6; Mk. 10:6-9; 13:19; Acts 17:24-29; Rom. 1:18-25; 1 Cor. 11:7-9; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:1-3; 11:3; 1 Pet. 4:19; 2 Pet. 3:4-13; Rev. 10:6; 14:7; 21:1-2

A. GOD CREATED ALL THINGS

Ex. 20:11 – *For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is . . .*

1. God created all things material (Gen. 1:1; Ex. 20:11; Col. 1:16)
 - a. The heavens and all things in it
 - b. The dry land and all things on it
 - c. The sea and everything in it
 - d. The laws that govern the material world
2. God created all things immaterial
 - a. Angelic beings (Ez. 28:13-15; Col. 1:16)
 - b. The spirits of men (Gen. 2:7; Eccl. 12:7; Zech. 12:1)
 - c. The laws that govern the immaterial world: reason, logic, language, morality
3. God created time, space, light, energy, and life

B. HOW GOD CREATED

1. The Hebrew Vocabulary

- a. בָּרָא (bara) KJV: *created* – shape, fashion, create, always of divine activity (BDB)
 - ❑ 54x in OT (Gen. 1:1,21,27; 2:3,4; 5:1,2; Ps. 51:10; Eccl. 12:1; Is. 40:28; 45:7)
 - ❑ 7x in Gen. 1-2 (1:1,21,27(3x); 2:3,4)
 - ❑ God is always the subject
 - ❑ Emphasis on the initiation of an object, i.e. its creation (TWOT)

God is always the subject of the expression, indeed, always Israel's God, never a foreign deity . . . To the extent that the OT reserves the verb exclusively for God, this type of creation has no analogy and is, therefore, beyond

conceptualization; divine activity can be perceived only insofar as it remains comparable to human activity. Therefore the verb expresses nothing further concerning the method of creation (TLOT).

b. עָצַר (asa) KJV: *made* – do, make (BDB)

- ❑ 2,627x in OT – third most common verb in the OT (TLOT)
- ❑ 12x in Gen. 1-2 (1:7,11,12,16,25,26,31; 2:2(2x),3,4,18)
- ❑ Used both of divine and human agency
- ❑ A broad word with an emphasis on shaping rather than initiating an object

The word occurs with great frequency in the Genesis account of creation which is the first great act of God in history . . . The word 'asa' is much broader in scope [than 'bara'], connoting primarily the fashioning of the object with little concern for special nuances (TWOT).

c. יָצַר (yatsar) KJV: *formed* – form, fashion (BDB)

- ❑ 63x in OT (Gen. 2:7,8,19; Ps. 74:17; Jer. 1:5; Amos 4:13; Zech. 12:1)
- ❑ 3x in Gen. 2 (2:7,8,19)
- ❑ Used both of divine and human agency
- ❑ Emphasis on shaping or forming
- ❑ Often used of a potter, i.e. 'the one who shapes' (e.g. Jer. 18:1-6)

The basic meaning of this root is 'to form,' 'to fashion.' while the word occurs in synonymous parallelism with bara (create) and asa (make) in a number of passages, its primary emphasis is on the shaping or forming of the object involved (TWOT).

2. God Created Out of Nothing (ex nihilo)

- ❑ There was no preexisting material out of which God created
- ❑ Gen. 1:1 – *in the beginning God created (bara)* . . .

The verb bara ('to create') expresses better than any other verb the idea of an absolute creation, or creation ex nihilo. The qal stem of this verb is employed exclusively in the Old Testament for God's activity; the subject of the verb is never man. God is said to create the wind (Amos 4:13), a clean heart (Ps. 51:10), and new heavens and a new earth (Is. 65:17). Genesis 1 emphasizes three great beginnings, each initiated by God (cf. 1:1, 21, 27) . . . The creative act of God reflected in verse 1, therefore, involved no preexisting material; a sovereign, all-powerful God created the heavens and the earth from nothing (John Davis, quoted by Thiessen, p. 112).

No material from which God 'creates' is ever mentioned (TLOT)

- ❑ Heb. 11:3 - *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*

3. God Created By His Word

- ❑ God spoke everything into existence (Ps 33:6; 148:5; Jer. 10:13)
- ❑ Gen. 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24 – *And God said (let there be) . . . (and there was) . . .*

4. God Created By His Son (John 1:1-3; Col. 1:15-17; Heb. 1:1-3)

5. God Created All Things in Six Days

a. The reason God created in six days

- ❑ To set an example for man of work and rest (Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:11)
- ❑ The seven day week – the only time measurement not based on astronomy

b. Biblical evidence of twenty-four hour days

- ❑ Day = cycle of light and darkness defined as evening and morning

Gen. 1:5 – *And God called the light day, and the darkness he called night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.*
(see also Gen. 1:8,13,19,23,31)

- ❑ Use of ordinal numbers with *day* (*first day . . . second day . . .*) – always, in the OT, refers to a literal day
- ❑ Ex. 20:11

c. The reason many Christians deny a literal 24-hour day

- ❑ Secular scientists believe the earth is 4.5 billion years old
- ❑ If the Bible is taken literally, the earth cannot be much more than 6,000 years old
- ❑ Secular scientists believe living creatures evolved gradually over millions of years
- ❑ The Bible teaches that everything was created in one week

d. The significance of maintaining six literal days

- ❑ Hermeneutical problems (i.e. principles of interpretation)
 - (1) Applying the same principles to other Scripture
 - (2) Turning Genesis 1-3 into myth (as opposed to history)
- ❑ Theological problems
 - (1) Death in the plant and animal world before sin
 - (2) Was there a literal Adam & Eve?
 - (a) Original sin (Rom. 5:12)
 - (b) Imputation (Rom. 5:15-18)
 - (c) Accuracy of the teaching of Christ (Matt. 19:4-5)

C. WHY GOD CREATED

1. God Created All Things for His Pleasure and Glory (Ps. 8:1; 19:1; Rom. 11:36; Rev. 4:11)
2. God Created As a Means of Self-Revelation (Ps. 19:1-6; Rom. 1:19-20)

D. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GOD AS CREATOR

1. God Possesses the Creation (Ex. 9:29; 19:5; Deut. 10:14; Job. 41:11; Ps. 24:1; 50:10-12; Is. 66:1-2; 1 Cor. 10:26)
2. God Sustains the Creation (Neh. 9:6; Ps. 75:3; Rom. 11:36; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3)
3. God Rules the Creation (Ps. 93:1-2; Matt. 11:25; Acts 17:24)
4. Man's Obligation to God
 - Praise God (Ps. 33:1-6; 148)
 - Fear God (Ps. 33:8-9)
 - Worship God (Ps. 95:3-6)
 - Trust God (Matt. 6:25-34)

II. SOVEREIGN RULE

A. GOD IS KING

Ps. 29:10 – *The LORD sitteth upon the flood; yea, the LORD sitteth King for ever.*

Ps. 93:1-2 – *The LORD reigneth, he is clothed with majesty; the LORD is clothed with strength, wherewith he hath girded himself: the world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved. Thy throne is established of old: thou art from everlasting.*

Ex. 15:18; 1 Chron. 16:31; 29:11-12; Ps. 10:16; 29:10; 47; 93; 96:10; 97; 99; 115:3; 146:10; Prov. 16:9; 21:1; Is. 10:5-15; 40:12-31; 46:10-11; Jer. 10:1-16; Ez. 24:14; Dan. 4:34-35; Rom. 8:28-30; 1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 11:15-17

1. Definition of God's Sovereignty

- ☐ He is King over all creation; He reigns (Ps. 93:1; 97:1; 99:1)
- ☐ Everyone and everything is subject to His authority and His will
- ☐ His perfect will is accomplished perfectly according to His perfect timing
- ☐ Everything is for His glory

*He is represented as the Creator, and His will as the cause of all things. In virtue of His creative work heaven and earth and all that they contain belong to Him. He is clothed with absolute authority over the hosts of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth. He upholds all things with His almighty power, and determines the ends which they are destined to serve. **He rules as King in the most absolute sense of the word, and all things are dependent on Him and subservient to Him** (Berkhof, 76).*

The sovereignty of God. What do we mean by this expression? We mean the supremacy of God, the kingship of God, the godhood of God. To say that God is sovereign is to declare that God is God (Pink, The Sovereignty of God, 19).

2. The Extent of His Kingdom - Heaven and earth

a. He Rules over All Creation

- ❑ Animals (Gen. 7:8-9; Nu. 22:28; Job 39-41; 1 Ki. 13:20-24; 2 Ki. 2:24; Dan. 6; Jon. 1:17)
- ❑ Oceans, seas, rivers (Gen. 7:11; Ex. 14:21-29; Josh. 3:15-17; Ps. 104:6-9)
- ❑ Weather (Ps. 135:6-7; Jer. 10:13; 1 Samuel 12:16-18; Matt. 8:23-27)
- ❑ Sun, moon, stars, planets (Ex. 10:21-23; Josh. 10:12-13; Ps. 147:4; Matt. 2:2; Rev. 6:12-14)

b. He Rules over Mankind

- ❑ Civilization and history
 - (1) Nations (Gen. 15:13-16; Ex. 7-14; Lam. 2:17; Dan. 2,7)
 - (2) Rulers (Prov. 21:1; Is. 10:5-15; 40:23-24; 45:1; Dan. 4; Jn. 19:11; Acts 12:18-23)
 - (3) Battles (Josh. 10:10-14; Judges 7; 1 Sam. 17:47; 1 K. 20:13-14,22-29; 22)
 - (4) Economics, technology, arts, education, sciences, medicine
- ❑ Affairs of His chosen people
 - (1) The nation of Israel (Ez. 36:22-38; Mal. 3:6)
 - (2) The church (Matt. 16:18; Col. 1:18)
- ❑ Affairs of each person (cf. Job, Abraham, Lot, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Ruth, Saul, David, Ahab)
 - (1) 1 Sam. 2:1-10; 1 Chron. 29:11-12; 1 Cor. 4:7
 - (2) Life and death
 - (3) Blessings and tragedies; successes and failures
 - (4) Riches and poverty; sickness and health
 - (5) Marriage and children; houses and lands
 - (6) Gifts and calling
- ❑ Salvation (Ps. 3:6; Prov. 16:4; Jon. 2:9; Matt. 11:25-27; Jn. 1:12-13; 6:37,44; Acts 13:48; Rom. 8:29-30; 9:13-23)
- ❑ Hearts of men (will, thoughts, emotions, decisions, actions, plans)
 - (1) He gives peace, strength, wisdom
 - (a) Ex. 31:1-6; Job 34:29; Prov. 2:6; 1 K. 3:12; Dan. 2:20-23
 - (b) Samson, Solomon, Daniel, Paul
 - (2) He withholds peace, strength, wisdom (Pharaoh, Saul, Belshazzar, Goliath, Haman)
 - (3) He directs steps, choices, actions (Prov. 16:9)
 - (a) Pharaoh at the Exodus
 - (b) Ahab in his death (1 K. 22)
 - (c) David's census (cf. 2 Sam. 24:1-4; 1 Chr. 21:1-15)

c. He Rules over the Invisible World

- ❑ He rules over the angelic world (Ps. 104:4)
- ❑ He rules over the demons (Matt. 8:28-32; Jude 6)
- ❑ He rules over Satan (Ez. 28:15-19; Zech. 3:1-2; Rev. 12:9; 20:2-3,10)

d. **He Rules over Evil**

- ❑ Natural disasters, tragedies, catastrophes, earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, volcanoes, floods, famine, snow storms (Is. 45:7)
- ❑ Sickness, plagues, blindness, disease, death (Ex. 4:11; Jn. 9:1-3)
- ❑ Evil rulers and kingdoms, wars, traitors (Deut. 2:30; Ps. 105:25; cf. Balaam, Judas, Antichrist)
- ❑ Sin (Genesis 50:20; Acts 4:27-28)
- ❑ False teachers and deception (2 Thess. 2:11-12; Rev. 13)

3. The Nature of His Reign

a. His Rule Is Absolute (Prov. 21:30; Is. 46:10)

b. His Rule Is Good

- ❑ In wisdom (Jer. 10:12)
- ❑ In righteousness (Deut. 32:4; Ps. 145:17)
- ❑ In benevolence (Matt. 6:26-30)
- ❑ It results in peace (Ps. 46:8-10; Is. 9:6-7)

c. He Is the Moral Ruler of the Universe

- ❑ Legislative powers – He makes laws
- ❑ Executive powers – He enforces laws
- ❑ Judicial powers – He judges laws
- ❑ All moral creatures give an account to Him (Eccl. 12:13-14)

4. The Evidence of His Reign – Prophecy

- a. Declarations – Isa. 46:10; 48:3-8
- b. Examples – Gen. 15:13-16; Ex. 3:12; 1 K. 22; Dan. 11; Revelation

5. The Necessity of God's Absolute Sovereignty

- a. If God is not sovereign, He is not omnipotent – someone or something could thwart His will
- b. If God is not sovereign, His Word may not come to pass – His promises and warnings may come to naught after all
- c. If God is not sovereign, He is not omniscient – He cannot know the future
- d. If God is not sovereign, He is not Lord of all and truly is not God (cf. Deut. 4:39)

Either God is sovereign and has absolute control over the world and universe or God does not have sovereign control, and the world and universe carry on in defiance of His holy will. Of course, the former is true; the world does not operate by chance. God has absolute control (Enns, 204).

B. DECREE OF GOD – The Plan of God

Is. 46:10-11 - *Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.*

Eph. 1:11 - ... *who works all things after the counsel of his own will.*

Ps. 33:10-11; 115:3; 135:6; Prov. 19:21; Dan. 4:35; Acts 4:27-28; Rom. 8:28-30; 9:10-23;

Eph. 3:9-11; 2 Tim. 1:9

1. Definition of God's Decree

The decrees of God are his eternal purpose according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass (The Westminster Shorter Catechism, 1647).

The decrees of God may be defined as God's eternal purpose or purposes, based on his most wise and holy counsel, whereby he freely, unchangeably, for his own glory, ordained either efficaciously or permissively all that comes to pass (Thiessen, 100).

2. Nature of God's Decree

a. **God's Decree Is a Single Plan, Encompassing All Things**

- ❑ Eph. 1:11; 3:11; 2 Tim. 1:9 - singular 'purpose' used

His knowledge is all immediate and simultaneous rather than successive like ours, and His comprehension of it is always complete. And the decree that is founded on it is also a single, all-comprehensive, and simultaneous act. As an eternal and immutable decree it could not be otherwise. There is, therefore, no series of decrees in God, but simply one comprehensive plan, embracing all that comes to pass (Berkhof, 102).

They [the decrees of God] are reducible to one eternal purpose (Hodge, 1:535).

He has sovereignly determined from all eternity whatsoever will come to pass, and works His sovereign will in His entire creation, both natural and spiritual, according to His pre-determined plan (Berkhof, 100).

b. **God's Decree Is Founded in God's Wisdom** (Ps. 104:24; Rom. 11:33; Eph. 3:9-11)

c. **God's Decree Is Eternal** (Eph. 1:4; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pet. 1:20)

That the decrees of God are eternal, necessarily follows from the perfection of the divine Being. He cannot be supposed to have at one time plans or purposes which He had not at another. He sees the end from the beginning; the distinctions of time have no reference to Him who inhabits eternity (Hodge, 1:538).

d. **God's Decree Is Immutable**

He is not deficient in knowledge, veracity, or power. Therefore He need not change His decree because of a mistake of ignorance, nor because of inability to carry it out. And He will not change it, because He is the immutable God and because He is faithful and true (Berkhof, 105).

e. **The Purpose of God's Decree Is God's Glory** (Is. 48:11; Rom. 11:36; Rev. 4:11)

As God is infinite, and all creatures are as nothing in comparison with Him, it is plain that the revelation of his nature and perfections must be the highest conceivable end of all things, and the most conducive to secure all other good subordinate ends (Hodge, 1:537).

3. God's Decretive Will vs. God's Permissive Will

There are some things in which God is the author [the directive will of God]; He actively brings about the events. He creates; He controls the universe; He establishes kings and governments; He elects people to be saved . . . Even though God has determined all things, He may actively bring them about Himself, or He may bring them about through secondary causes [permissive will of God]. Sinful acts, for example, do not frustrate the plan of God, but neither is God the author of them. They are within the scope of God's decree and are part of His eternal plan and purpose, but man is nonetheless responsible for sinful acts (Enns, 205).

It is customary to speak of the decree of God respecting moral evil as permissive. By His decree God rendered the sinful actions of man infallibly certain without deciding to effectuate them by acting immediately upon and in the finite will. This means that God does not positively work in man 'both to will and to do,' when man goes contrary to His revealed will. It should be carefully noted, however, that this permissive decree does not imply a passive permission of something which is not under the control of the divine will. It is a decree which renders the future sinful act absolutely certain, but in which God determines (a) not to hinder the sinful self-determination of the finite will; and (b) to regulate and control the result of this sinful self-determination (Berkhof, 105).

4. God's Decretive Will vs. God's Preceptive Will (Secret Will vs. Revealed Will)

- ❑ Decretive will = God's sovereign will (Is. 46:10; Rom. 9:19) – revealed through history
- ❑ Preceptive will = God's commandments (Ex. 20:1-17; 1 Thess. 4:3) – revealed in Scripture

The decretive will of God concerns his purposes, and relates to the futuration of events. The preceptive will relates to the rule of duty for his rational creatures. He decrees whatever he purposes to effect or to permit. He prescribes, according to his own will, what his creatures should do, or abstain from doing. The decretive and preceptive will of God can never be in conflict. God never decrees to do, or to cause others to do, what He forbids. He may, as we see He does, decree to permit what He forbids. He permits men to sin, although sin is forbidden (Hodge, 1:404).

God's revealed will is made known in His Word, but His secret will is His own hidden counsels. God's revealed will is the definer of our duty and the standard of our responsibility . . . God's revealed will is frequently crost, but His secret will is never thwarted (Pink, The Sovereignty of God, 243).

The secret will of God is His eternal, unchanging purpose concerning all things which He hath made, to be brought about by certain means to their appointed ends . . . The revealed will of God contains not His purpose and decree but our duty, - not what He will do according to His eternal counsel, but what we should do if we would please Him, and this is expressed in the precepts and promises of His Word (Pink, 244).

C. PROVIDENCE OF GOD – The Means By Which the Plan of God Is Brought About

Gen. 50:20 - *But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*

Prov. 16:9 - *A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.*

Gen. 24:15; 40:23; Judg. 9:23; 1 K. 12:15; 22:34; Esth. 6:1,4; Ps. 57:2; Prov. 21:1; Dan. 4:25;
Rom. 8:28; Acts 2:23; 4:27-28

1. Definition of God's Providence

That continued exercise of the divine energy whereby the Creator preserves all His creatures, is operative in all that comes to pass in the world, and directs all things to their appointed end (Berkhof, 166).

God's works of providence are his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions. Providence, therefore, includes preservation and government (Hodge, 1:575).

2. Description of God's Providence

- a. The means by which God governs the universe
- b. All of creation is governed this way – animals, weather, nature, the actions of men and angels
- c. All events are under God's providential guidance (Rom. 8:28)
- d. All events are coordinated (*all things work together* – Rom. 8:28)
- e. All events are being guided toward a predetermined end (according to His decree)
- f. All events work toward His glory and the good of His chosen ones (Ps. 57:2; Rom. 8:28; 11:36)
- g. Generally, providence is accomplished through secondary causes
 - ❑ Natural laws of the universe (astronomical, biological, chemical, physical, etc.)
 - ❑ Free choices of moral creatures (men and angels)
 - ❑ The exceptions are miracles or direct interventions of God (Josh. 10:13; 2 K. 20:11)
- h. Providence is a divine mystery

3. Examples of God's Providence

- a. Technically, every event in history is an example of God's providence, but certain events especially illustrate how things work together for the good of God's people
- b. Examples from Scripture
 - ❑ The life of Joseph
 - ❑ The life of Ruth
 - ❑ The life of Esther
- c. Examples from History
 - ❑ The life of Martin Luther & the Reformation
 - ❑ The founding of Plymouth Plantation
 - ❑ The American War of Independence

D. OBJECTIONS TO GOD'S ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGNTY

1. Presence of Evil and Sin in the Universe

a. The Objection

- ❑ If God is sovereign . . .
- ❑ And, if God is good and wise . . .
- ❑ How can there be sin, rebellion, death, pain, suffering, and sorrow in the universe?

b. Biblical Response

- ❑ On the One Hand . . .
 - (1) God has decreed all that comes to pass
 - (2) God could have prevented sin and evil from entering the universe
 - (3) Sin and evil are somehow part of God's inscrutable plan
- ❑ On the Other Hand . . .
 - (1) Sin and evil are the result of the fall of Satan (Is. 14) and the fall of man (Gen. 3)
 - (2) Man is morally responsible for his own fall (Rom. 5:12)
 - (3) God is not the author of sin
 - (4) God's ways are perfect and holy (Deut. 32:4; Ps. 145:17)
- ❑ The choices of even wicked men fulfill God's will (Acts 1:16; 2:23; 4:27-28; Rev. 13)

. . . God works through evil people, and he uses evil decisions and actions, but God never, never, never himself does evil. God, who through the wicked actions of evil people put his Son on the cross, is fully glorious, righteous, and praiseworthy in his action, while the evil people God used to crucify his Son are fully despicable, deserving of judgment, and blameworthy. God ordains evil, uses evil, and accomplishes infinitely good purposes through evil, but he never does evil (Ware, 212).

c. Why Did God Allow Sin?

- ❑ We are not told specifically in Scripture why God allowed sin (cf. Deut. 29:29; Eccl. 8:17)
- ❑ God's moral attributes could only be seen against a backdrop of sin and evil
- ❑ Without sin there would have been no cross

2. Free Will of Man

a. The Objection

- ❑ If God is sovereign man does not have free will
- ❑ If God is sovereign aren't we just robots?
- ❑ If God is sovereign how can man be held responsible for his actions?

b. Biblical Response

- ❑ On the One Hand . . .
 - (1) God is sovereign and directs the affairs of man (Prov. 16:9; Rom. 9:20)
 - (2) No one can resist God's plan (Prov. 21:30; Dan. 4:35)
 - (3) God has decreed all that comes to pass
- ❑ On the Other Hand . . .
 - (1) Man has a free will and genuinely chooses according to his desires
 - (2) Man's choices have real consequences

(3) Man is justly held responsible for his choices

- ❑ Man's genuine choices fulfill God's divine decree

E. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY FOR THE CHRISTIAN

1. All glory belongs to God
 - a. For our salvation (Rom. 3:27; 1 Cor. 4:7)
 - b. For everything (Rom. 11:36)
2. We must receive everything in life as ultimately being from His hand, for our good
 - a. We must be content with our lot and circumstances (Phil. 4:11-13)
 - b. We must receive all things with humility and thanksgiving (James 1:2-4)
 - c. Trials, tragedies, mistakes, and accidents all have a purpose (Rom. 8:28-29)
3. We can let go of the past (Phil. 3:13)
 - a. Not denying our responsibility and need of confession of sin or folly
 - b. Not denying there are real consequences to past sins and failures
 - c. But even these things God somehow uses for our good
 - d. Let us humble ourselves and let go of the past, leaving regrets at the Cross
4. God's sovereignty is not an excuse for sin, laziness, folly, or ignorance
5. God's sovereignty gives significance to our daily labors (Ps. 90:17; Acts 18:9-10; 1 Cor. 15:58)

III. REDEMPTION

A. REDEMPTION IS PART OF SOTERIOLOGY

- ❑ Although properly a work of God, redemption falls under the branch of theology known as *soteriology* (salvation), so only a brief outline will be included here

B. AN OUTLINE OF REDEMPTION

1. Redemption is the work of God whereby He delivers His elect from sin and death
2. Redemption is exclusively and entirely the work of God (Is. 59:16; Eph. 1:3-8; Col. 1:20-22)
 - a. Planned by the Father
 - b. Accomplished by the Son
 - c. Applied by the Spirit
3. Redemption was accomplished by the blood of Christ (Rom. 3:24-25; Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:18-19)
 - a. Christ died in the place of sinners – as their Substitute (Is. 53; 1 Pet. 2:24)
 - b. Christ accomplished our justification (Is. 53:11; Rom. 3:24; 5:1)
 - c. Through his blood our sins are forgiven (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14)

4. Redemption results in our sanctification and glorification
 - a. Those who are redeemed are holy unto the Lord (Lev. 20:26; 1 Pet. 1:15-16)
 - b. Those who are redeemed are being purified (Titus 2:14; 1 Jn. 3:3)
 - c. Those who are redeemed will be glorified (Rom. 8:30; 1 Jn. 3:2)
5. God Has Brought Redemption for His Own Glory (Ez. 36:21-32; Eph. 1:12)

THE GLORY OF GOD

I. THE NATURE OF GOD'S GLORY

- A. GOD'S GLORY IS THE SUM OF HIS ATTRIBUTES (Ex. 33:18-34:8)
- B. CONCEPTS CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH GOD'S GLORY
 - ☐ Sovereignty and Holiness (Is. 6:1-4; cf. John 12:41)
 - ☐ Unapproachability (Numbers 16:42-45; 1 Tim. 6:16)
 - ☐ Consuming Fire (Numbers 16:42-45)
- C. TERMS CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH GOD'S GLORY
 - ☐ Majesty (1 Chr. 29:11; Job 40:10; Ps. 96:6; 104:1; Jude 25)
 - ☐ Beauty (Job 40:10; Ps. 96:6)
 - ☐ Excellence (Job 40:10; Ps. 8:1,9)
 - ☐ Power, Strength, and Dominion (1 Chr. 29:11; Jude 25)
 - ☐ Honor (Ps. 96:6; 104:1)
- D. MANIFESTATIONS AND SYMBOLS OF GOD'S GLORY
 - ☐ Light (Ex. 24:17; Is. 60:1; Ez. 1:28; Matt. 17:1-6; Rev. 21:23)
 - ☐ Fire (Det. 19:18; 1 K. 18:38; Acts 2:3)
 - ☐ Clouds / Smoke (Ex. 16:10; 24:16; 1 Kings 8:11; Is. 6:4)

II. THE REVELATION OF GOD'S GLORY

- ☐ In His Works (Ps. 19:1; Is. 35:2)
- ☐ In Salvation (Ez. 36:21-32)
- ☐ In His People (Eph. 1:12)
- ☐ In His Word (2 Cor. 3:18)
- ☐ In Christ (Is. 40:5; Jn. 1:14)

III. MAN'S RESPONSE TO GOD'S GLORY

- ☐ Fall on the Face (Ez. 1:28; 44:4; Rev. 1:17)
- ☐ Fear (Ex. 20:18-19; Matt. 17:6; Lk. 2:9)
- ☐ Repentance and Obedience (Job 42:5-6; Is. 6:5)
- ☐ Worship (Ex. 34:8; Rev. 4:10-11)
- ☐ Singing (Ps. 138:5; Rev. 5:8-10)