

THREE: SIXTEEN

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CHAPTER ONE -

For GOD

"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" (John 3:16).

John 3:16 begins where Genesis 1:1 begins - **"In the beginning God"** (Genesis 1:1) ; **"For God"** (John 3:16). In the beginning of creation - GOD. In the beginning of redemption - GOD. Without God no creation, and without God no redemption.

GOD is the greatest word in human language. It is a measureless, fathomless word. It has no height, nor depth; no length, nor breadth. It is a universal word. It will attract attention in whatever country you go. There are no peoples, no tribes, no tongues, no nations in the whole world who do not believe in the existence of a supreme Being. We do not say that they know and worship the true and living GOD, but they do recognize a deity. Furthermore, the worship of that deity dominates the life of the community.

Several years ago the author was in Indianapolis. Walking down a street he espied a Chinese laundry and decided to do a little foreign missionary work, that is to go to China in Indianapolis. The Chinaman stood with blank face and shook his head at every reference to the Lord JESUS CHRIST. Finally the writer mentioned the word "GOD" and immediately the Chinaman's face changed. He smiled, nodded his head and said, "Oh, GOD?" "Yes, GOD." He quickly stooped, reached behind the counter, and then placed upon it a squat, ugly image that was God to him.

Helms says, **"For God,"** and there you stop, for it staggers you. It is easier to climb Mount Everest than that. Before you ever begin the ascent you grow dizzy and faint. 'GOD.' Whoever climbed to the height of that word? Whoever got to the top of the first letter? Daniel Webster admits: 'There has never been but one thought that staggered me - 'GOD.' 'GOD' -the sublimest word ever penned. 'GOD.'

Over this word more volumes have been written, more discussions waged, more theological, intellectual, scientific battles fought than over all other words. 'GOD.'"

"For God" Assumes His Existence

The atheist says, **"There is no God."** John 3:16 stands up and answers, **"For God."** GOD declares the atheist to be a fool. **"The fool hath said in his heart there is no God"** (Psalm 14:1).

The man who denies the fact of GOD is a fool because the fact of GOD is positively established by the works of His hands. GOD Himself is the Instructor of men.

In Romans 1:20, we are told that revelation of GOD was given "**by the things that are made.**" It tells how long the revelation has been in existence - "**from the creation of the world.**"

From the beginning of creation GOD could be known by that which He created. This verse also tells us what has been revealed - "**The invisible things of Him**"; that is, His eternal power and Godhead. GOD's works, therefore, constitute His earliest and universal Bible. There never was a time when the Divine Personality was not revealed to man. Therefore, as Romans 1:20 puts it, men are "**without excuse**" in their denial of GOD.

A. J. Gordon writes: "No power or might of man can sweep the stars from the sky, or blot the sun from the Heaven, or efface the splendid landscape."

All these speak of GOD. The universe offers to the eye earth, sea, and sky, and He is the GOD of all. GOD is the GOD of earth. How would you account for creation apart from Him? As one man said, "Whenever I dig around the flowers in my posy bed I feel my helplessness without GOD." Who but GOD could create a hollyhock?

You may have read Edgar Guest's poem, "*The Package of Seeds*," which begins, "I paid a dime for a package of seeds." Space forbids quoting the whole poem, but we give the third stanza:

"You've a dime's worth of power which no man can create,
You've a dime's worth of life in your hand!
You've a dime's worth of mystery, destiny fate,
Which the wisest cannot understand.
In this bright little package, now isn't it odd?
You've a dime's worth of something known only to GOD!"

* * *

"I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree,
A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the earth's sweet, flowing breast;
A tree that may in summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;
Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.
Poems are made by fools like me,
But only GOD can make a tree."

- Joyce Kilmer

* * *

"Is there no God? The stream that silver flows,
The air he breathes, the ground he treads, the trees,
The flower, the grass, the sands, each wind that blows,
All speak of GOD; throughout one voice agrees,
And, eloquent, His dread existence shows;
Blind to thyself, ah! see Him, fool, in these!"

GOD is the GOD of sea. Man has spent ages trying to interpret the mystery of the sea. That sea rolled from the hands of GOD and it rolls on in obedience to His laws. Man could not create the sea. We recently told a group of farmers in North Dakota that for three or four years they had had opportunity, but that in all that time not one single farmer had created one single drop of rain. At one time Dr. Parker was crossing the Atlantic. He stood for hours by the rail of the vessel looking down into the emerald waters of the sea. One day a man intruded into the meditation with a blatant, "Well, Doctor, what do you see in the water?" Dr. Parker lifted his lion-like head, and his eyes flashed as he answered in a single word, "GOD!"

GOD is the GOD of sky. The Psalmist was right when he said that the heavens declare the glory of GOD. GOD spake and worlds dropped from His lips as words drops from yours. Whatever has been flung into the broad expanse of the universe came from GOD. Just one paragraph from Sir James Jeans will stagger you: "A few stars are known, which are hardly bigger than the earth, but the majority are so large that hundreds of thousands of earths could be packed inside each and leave room to spare; here and there we come upon a giant star large enough to contain millions and millions of earths. And the total number of stars in the universe is probably something like the total number of grains of sand on all the seashores of the world."

"There is a GOD" all nature cries, I see it painted on the skies,
I see it in the flowering spring, I hear it when the birdlings sing,
I see it on the flowering main, I see it in the fruitful plain,
I see it stamped on hail and snow,
I see it in the clouds that soar, I hear it when the thunders roar,
I see it when the morning shines, I see it when the day declines,
I see it in the mountains' height, I see it in the smallest mite,
I see it everywhere abroad,
I feel, I know there is a GOD."

Another says, "*There cannot be a here without a there. There cannot be a before without an after. There cannot be an upper without a lower. There cannot be a creation without a creator. The universe is steeped in thought. Now thought implies a thinker, and a thinker is a person. Action demands an actor; knowledge, a being that knows. If there is an act there must be an agent; if an effect there must be a cause.*"

Thus creation bears its testimony to GOD. Notice that the fool says in his heart, "**There is no God.**" It is in his heart as what he desires rather than what he believes. It is in his heart because his heart is corrupt and because he would love to have it so, for, facing the fact of GOD, he is a

lost man. The folly is rooted in the heart, not the head, and folly of the heart - is folly of the worst kind.

"For God" Attests His Personality

GOD is a personal Being. GOD is not a force. GOD is not a mere influence. How could either force or influence love? GOD is not the "cosmic flux." GOD is not "social consciousness." GOD is not the "soul of the universe." GOD is not nature.

Dr. Buswell, in his book *"What is God?"* reports a radio speaker: "We believe in God just as much as any generation of people has ever believed in God, but we have changed the meaning of the word. God for us is nature." Then the speaker quoted a little poem which has the familiar refrain:

"Some call it Autumn,
Others call it God.
Some call it evolution,
Others call it God.
Some call it nature,
Others call it God."

Then Dr. Buswell told of Abraham Lincoln, who used to ask his audience, "If you call a dog's tail a leg, how many legs has the dog?" Most people would reply, "Five," whereupon Mr. Lincoln would reply, "No, you are wrong. It makes no difference what you call his tail, the dog has four legs just the same."

It makes no difference what you call nature. Nature still remains nature. GOD is a living, intelligent Being, capable of thinking, speaking, acting, deciding, and loving.

There are two kinds of personalities in the universe, created and uncreated. The created personalities are angelic and human. GOD is not an angel. GOD is not a human being. GOD is an uncreated Personality. It is impossible for finite personalities to understand the Infinite Personality.

You are limited in intellect; you are limited in power; you are limited in love; while GOD is unlimited in all. His infinity makes GOD incomprehensible. It was that we might understand Him better that He became Incarnate; that is, assumed a living bodily form.

"For God" Asserts His Love

This text is permeated with love:

"For God" gives the source of love;

"so loved," the fact of love;

"the world," the object of love;

"that He gave," the act of love;

"His only begotten Son," the gift of love;
"that whosoever believeth," the message of love;
"should not perish but have everlasting life," the fruit of love.

GOD **"so loved"** because GOD is love. The words **"God is love"** are probably the greatest words ever written (I John 4:8, 16). Who can grasp them? This is Scripture's greatest definition of GOD, and where will you find another satisfactory one?

The Westminster catechism says, "GOD is spirit, infinite, unchangeable, eternal in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." Undoubtedly this is one of the best theological definitions ever written, but the amazing thing is that the authors have left out the one word that defines GOD - love. The one word you would expect to find in it is not there. The great definition is **"God is love."** GOD is not only loving; He is essentially and fundamentally love. He is loving because He is love.

Words can no more define love than they can depict GOD. GOD said, **"Let there be light"** and there was light, but you never read that GOD said, "Let there be love" and there was love, for love is Himself. Love has no origin because love is GOD and GOD has no origin.

When you talk of the Incarnation of GOD, you talk of the Incarnation of love. When you talk of the manifestation of GOD, you talk of the manifestation of love. When you read of the sacrifice of love, you read of the sacrifice of GOD, for it is the sacrifice of self. Helms has written of love: "When we study the attributes of GOD, they are, after all, only different ways of spelling His love.

- His omnipotence is but the arm of His Love.
- His omniscience is but the medium through which He contemplates the object of His love.
- His wisdom is but the scheme of His love.
- The offers of the gospel are but the invitations of His love.
- The threatenings of His law are but the warnings of His love.

They are the hoarse voice of His love saying, 'Man, **do thyself no harm.**' They are but a fence of love thrown around the pit of destruction to prevent rash man from rushing to his ruin. His tears are but the dewdrops of His love. His justice is love dealing righteously. The earth is but the theatre for the display of His love. What is Heaven but the Alps of His love, from whose summits His blessings flow down in a thousand streams to water and refresh the world? No marvel that the disciple who felt the beat of that great heart shouted, '**God is love!**'"

"For God" Announces His Purpose

These words look not only forward; they look also backward. **"For God"** compels a consideration of the verses which precede, and to the writer the preceding verses are among the most precious in the Word, for they are the text used by a faithful preacher on that night when GOD for Christ's sake forgave his sins and transformed him into a new creature in CHRIST. John 3:14 and 15: **"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."**

The record of the brazen serpent is found in Numbers 21. Israel, in the wilderness, sinned against GOD. In consequence, GOD sent fiery serpents among them, which bit many and caused death. When the people cried to GOD, He instructed Moses to make a serpent of brass and to put it upon a pole so that it might be seen by the people, and when a serpent-bitten and dying Israelite looked upon that brazen serpent upon the pole, he lived. This case of physical salvation in the Old Testament illustrates spiritual salvation in the New Testament. How startling!

In the midst of the seething, writhing, shrieking mass of humanity there rises a lonely pole. In the midst of vast hordes of human sinners, sin-bitten, dying, there rises a lonely Cross!

The brazen serpent was made in the likeness of that which brought death. Even so JESUS CHRIST was made in the likeness of that which brought death, for **"sin entered into the world, and death by sin,"** and **"He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin."** GOD's promise to the serpent-bitten Israelite was that the one who looked would be healed. When Moses put the serpent on the pole, the means of salvation was completed. When JESUS CHRIST died upon the Cross, He did a finished work. It takes only a look of faith to Him to deliver from sin.

John 3:14 says, **"Even so must."** John 3:16 means, "For GOD must," for GOD in love is dealing with sin.

How does love always deal with sin? What can love do for sin but spend itself in redemption? What can GOD, Who is love, do for the sinner but pour Himself out in costly sacrifice to redeem? **"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."** The Cross is love stooping to redeem. There would have been no Cross if GOD had not loved the world.

Someone has said, "God is the greatest of all advertisers. In order to attract the attention of the world to His love for it, He shows the Cross. Calvary is GOD's advertisement of His love. Can any other means be thought of that could be used with more telling effect?" You might not like the phraseology, yet it is true that no one can view the Cross and doubt the source of that sacrifice - the love of GOD. **"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself."**

"Hast thou ever seen the Lord, CHRIST the Crucified?
Hast thou seen those wounded hands? Hast thou seen His side?
Hast thou seen the cruel thorns woven for His crown?
Hast thou, hast thou seen His Blood, dropping, dropping down?
Hast thou seen who that one is who has hurt Him so?
Hast thou seen thyself, sinner, cause of all His woe?
Hast thou seen how He, to save, suffers thus and dies?
Hast thou seen on whom He looks with His loving eyes?
Hast thou ever, ever seen love that was like this?
Hast thou given up thy life wholly to be His?"

The purpose of GOD has to do with His marred creation, for GOD's love is seen in both creation

and incarnation.

Clow is right when he says that love must create. It cannot be inactive. It must plan and toil and spend its resources and exert its energy. "God does not love the world simply because He created it. He created this world of life and beauty and order because He is love. It is always love that builds a home. It is always love that makes a garden. It is always love that peoples a wilderness."

But GOD is a personal Being, and so must have a personal love. He cannot be satisfied with a garden or wilderness. Personal love demands personal love, and so GOD said, "**Let us make man in our image.**" He created man that man might respond to His love. Man was made in the image of GOD. He came from the hand of GOD, but he broke away from GOD. However, it still stands that it was for love that GOD created man; and we believe that there is still something that ties man back to GOD. We know that the sinner is not the child of GOD, but the sinner is the creature of GOD with an intuition that relates him to GOD.

In the early days of Ohio, while it was still an unbroken forest, a young husband and his wife went into the dense woods and built a little home. They were alone, save GOD and the baby - yes, the babe. The husband struggled to make that wilderness blossom as the rose. One day, when the babe was two and a half years' old, hearing its father's axe sounding in the far off wood, it toddled out among the trees to find the father, but alas! it followed the echo rather than the axe, and wandered far. Some roving Indians going through picked it up and took it with them to the far Northwest.

That father and mother hunted for days. They tried to live in that little cabin, but they couldn't stand it. There were the cradle and the crude playthings, and the sand pile. They left them all and went into far Wisconsin.

Fourteen years they lived with heavy hearts, and then one day there came news that some Indians at the trading post had a girl with them that did not look like an Indian girl, and the father went like a wild man to see that girl. Their babe had had a mole on the right shoulder. This girl had a mole on her right shoulder. He told her that she was his daughter, but this white Indian girl laughed in his face. He got the mother, and she was convinced that this was their child. She fell on the ground and hugged the girl's feet. But that girl, her daughter, spat upon her mother.

The mother sank to the ground, torn with a sorrow unto death. At last, almost beside herself, she broke out in the cradle songs she used to sing over the little babe: "*Rock-a-bye, Baby,*" "*Papa's Pet,*" "*Home, Sweet Home.*" The girl raised her eyes as in a dream, looked up, gazed afar, walked as in a trance, and threw herself into her mother's arms. She had heard the voice of long-ago calling her. There was her tie to her mother. GOD created man long ago, long ago, but man was carried captive by Satan. Nevertheless there is the tie - the voice of GOD in the soul of man that says, "Thou art Mine."

We doubt that an atheist ever lived. We, too, once read Bob Ingersoll, Tom Payne, and the like, and parrot-like quoted their infidelity, but it all came from a fool who said in his corrupt heart, "**There is no God,**" doing his best to disregard the fact of his tie to GOD, and his responsibility to his MAKER.

When man sinned, GOD came seeking him, walking in the garden in the cool of the day and crying, "**Where art thou?**" I like the comment of Griffith Thomas on this question: "**Where art thou?**" This is the call of Divine justice which cannot overlook sin. This is the call of Divine sorrow which grieves over the sinner. This is the call of Divine love which offers redemption for sin." It was this Divine love which wrought out that redemption by way of the Incarnation and the Cross.

When John B. Gough, the great temperance orator, was entertained by some friends in an eastern city, the mother of the household called him aside and asked him to go to her son Edward and have a talk with him. She said that Edward had been a wayward son; in fact, had gone so far in disgracing them that the father forbade him to enter the house. She said that she had pleaded with the father and had prevailed; that the father had consented to permit Edward to have a room where he would never have to see him. She said, "Mr. Gough, Edward came home intoxicated a couple of days ago and is still in his room. I have been caring for him. Will you go and have a little talk with him?" Mr. Gough said, "My dear mother, if you with all your love and patience can do nothing with him, I think that I scarcely can."

With a mother's persistency she finally persuaded Mr. Gough to talk with her son.

He knocked at the door and entering found Edward. Mr. Gough said, "Edward, aren't you tired of the kind of life that you are leading?"

Edward said, "Yes, Mr. Gough, I am sick and tired of it."

"Then why do you not quit it?"

"Quit it? I can't, Mr. Gough; I am bound hand and foot with an evil habit."

"Then why do you not pray, Edward?"

"Pray? I don't believe in prayer; I don't believe in GOD; I don't believe in anything."

"Oh, yes, you do, Edward," replied Mr. Gough. "You believe in something. You believe that your mother loves you."

Edward replied, "I do not believe anything about it; I know she loves me."

"Then, Edward," continued Mr. Gough, "you believe that there is such a good thing in this world as love, and I am going to leave you here and I want you to promise me that after I go out, you will get down on your knees and pray to love."

"Pray to what?" said Edward.

"Pray to love, for that is the only thing that you say you believe in."

After much persuasion, Edward promised. He afterward said that he felt very foolish when he knelt down to pray to love, but he had promised, and he tried to fulfil his promise. He knelt and

cried, "O love, love, help me"; and straightway, as if through the cleft Heaven, this text sounded as a voice in his heart, "**God is love**"; and, still looking up, he said, "O GOD!" and there came to him the verse that he had learned years before, "**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.**"

And he cried, "Oh, CHRIST!" - and it was done.

He rushed out of his room to find his mother, and, when he did, he threw his arms around her neck and said, "Mother, I have found the CHRIST."

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him" (I John 4:9).

Do you believe it?

~ end of chapter 1 ~
