

# OUTLINE STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES

by

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## CHAPTER TWO

### THEOLOGY

#### PART ONE. THE CHARACTER OF GOD

#### TOPIC ONE: THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

##### I. SOME DEFINITIONS

###### 1. Theology.

In its restricted sense Theology means the Doctrine of God.

###### 2. Theism.

Theism is the belief in the existence of a personal God, Creator, Preserver, and Ruler of all things.

###### 3. Deism.

Deism is a denial of God's providence.

###### 4. Atheism.

Atheism is a denial of God's existence.

###### 5. Skepticism and Infidelity.

These two terms mean a doubt of or disbelief in the existence of God.

###### 6. Agnosticism.

Agnosticism is a denial that God can be known.

**NOTE:** Etymologically, agnostic and ignoramus mean the same thing. The former is from the Greek, the latter from the Latin. However, an agnostic would be insulted were he to be called an ignoramus.

## **II. DEFINITION OF GOD**

### **A. Scriptural.**

- 1. God is Spirit:** John 4:24.
- 2. God is light:** I John 1:5.
- 3. God is love:** I John 4:16.
- 4. God is a consuming fire:** Hebrews 12:29.

**NOTE:** These are perhaps not exact definitions so much as popular descriptions of God. The article before Spirit is not found in Greek or Hebrew.

### **B. Theological.**

1. “By God we understand the one absolutely and infinitely perfect Spirit who is the creator of all” (Catholic Dictionary).
2. “God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth” (Westminster Shorter Catechism).
3. “God is the infinite and perfect Spirit in whom all things have their source, support, and end” (Strong).

## **III. ORIGIN OF THE IDEA OF GOD**

The idea of God is an intuition of the moral reason; that is, it is innate in the human race. “The knowledge of God’s existence is a rational intuition. Logically, it precedes and conditions all observation and reasoning. Chronologically, only reflection upon the phenomena of nature and of mind occasions its rise in consciousness” (Strong). Intuition simply means direct knowledge; it is to be distinguished from observation and reasoning, which give knowledge by indirect means.

### **1. The belief in a personal God is called a primary or first truth.**

“A First Truth is a knowledge which, though developed upon occasion of observation and reflection, is not derived from reflection and observation; a knowledge on the contrary which has such logical priority that it must be assumed or supposed in order to make any observation or reflection possible. Such truths are not, therefore, recognized first in order of time; some of them are assented to somewhat late in the mind’s growth; by the great majority of men they are never consciously formulated at all. Yet they constitute the necessary assumptions upon which all other knowledge rests, and the mind has not only the inborn capacity to evolve them as soon as the proper occasions are presented, but the recognition of them is inevitable as soon as the mind begins to give account to itself of its own knowledge” (Strong).

Other rational intuitions or first truths are:

- (1) *intuitions of relations*, as time and space;
- (2) *intuitions of principles*, as substance, cause, final cause, right, etc.;
- (3) *intuitions of absolute Being, Power, Reason, Perfection, Personality, as God.*

**2. Primary or first truths, which may be taken as synonymous with rational intuitions, have three unfailing marks, viz: universality, necessity, and logical independence and priority.**

a. By *universality* is meant “not that all men assent to them or understand them when propounded in scientific form, but that all men manifest a practical belief in them by their language, actions, and expectations” (Strong).

The belief in God as a first truth meets this test: no race or tribe has ever been found without at least a rudimentary conception of the existence of a Supreme Being.

b. By *necessity* is meant “not that it is impossible to deny these truths, but that the mind is compelled by its very constitution to recognize them upon the occurrence of the proper conditions, and to employ them in its arguments to prove their non-existence” (Strong).

The belief in God as first truth meets this test: infinity is the inevitable correlative of finiteness; the race has an innate capacity for religion; the denial of God’s existence involves logical processes whose validity rests upon the assumption of His existence.

c. By *logical independence and priority* is meant “that these truths can be resolved into no others, and proved by no others; that they are presupposed in the acquisition of all other knowledge, and can therefore be derived from no other source than an original cognitive power of the mind” (Strong).

The belief in God as a first truth meets this test: “the intuition of an absolute reason is:

“(1) the necessary presupposition of all other knowledge, so that we cannot know anything else to exist except by assuming first of all that God exists;

“(2) the necessary basis of all logical thought, so that we cannot put confidence in any one of our reasoning processes except by taking for granted that a thinking Deity has constructed our minds with reference to the universe and to truth;

“(3) the necessary implication of our primitive belief in design, so that we can assume all things to exist for a purpose, only by making the prior assumption that a purposing God exists, can regard the universe as a thought, only by postulating the existence of an absolute Thinker;

“(4) the necessary foundation of our conviction of moral obligation, so that we can believe in the universal authority of right, only by assuming that there exists a God of righteousness who reveals His will both in the individual conscience and in the moral universe at large. We cannot prove that God is; but we can show that in order to the existence of any knowledge, thought, reason, conscience in man, man must assume that God is” (Strong).

**3. By reflection and careful analysis it is learned that the belief in God's existence as a rational intuition or first truth has a fourfold content, viz:**

- a. *A Reason*, in which man's mental processes are grounded.
- b. *A Power*, awakening a sense of dependence.
- c. *Perfection*, imposing law upon the moral nature.
- d. *A Personality*, recognized in forms of worship and prayer.

**4. There are some mistaken sources of the idea of God:**

- a. *The Bible.*

We cannot attempt to prove from the Scriptures that God exists, and then try to prove that the Scriptures are from God. This would be reasoning in circle. "A revelation takes for granted that he to whom it is made has some knowledge of God, though it may enlarge and purify that knowledge" (H. B. Smith). The sundial calls for the sun without which it has no significance or use.

- b. *Experience.*

Individual experience comes from sense-perception followed by reflection; but God is supersensible, and hence does not come within the range of experience. If by experience is meant "the accumulated results of the sensations and associations of past generations of the race," it may be asked, How did the original generation or first man at the head of the series acquire the belief in God to transmit, except as a rational intuition?

- c. *Reason.*

Reason often brings into consciousness the belief in God but cannot cause it.

"The actual rise of this knowledge in the great majority of minds is not the result of any conscious process of reasoning . . . The strength of men's faith in God is not proportioned to the strength of the reasoning faculty. On the other hand, men of greatest logical power are often inveterate skeptics, while men of unwavering faith are found among those who cannot even understand the arguments for God's existence" (Strong).

#### **IV. CORROBORATIVE EVIDENCE OF GOD'S EXISTENCE**

The Scriptures do not attempt to prove God's existence, but everywhere either assume or affirm it:

Genesis 1:1; John 1:1. The Scriptures declare that the knowledge of God is universal: Romans 1:19-21, 28, 32; 2:15. God has inlaid the evidence of this fundamental truth in the very nature of man, so that nowhere is He without witness. The preacher may confidently follow the example of Scripture by assuming it. But he must explicitly declare it, as the Scripture does.

**“For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen”** (that is, spiritually viewed); the organ given for this purpose is the mind; but then—and this forms the transition to our next division of the subject—they are **“understood by the things that are made”**: Romans 1:20.

The fact is, the existence of God is incapable of direct proof.

There is, however, a fivefold line of indirect proof which corroborates our rational intuition. By indirect proof is meant evidence which points to God’s existence as the necessary ground and condition of the existence of anything else. The five arguments for the divine existence are as follows:

- The Cosmological Argument,
- The Teleological Argument,
- The Anthropological Argument,
- The Ontological Argument,
- The Christological Argument.

Says Dr. Strong: “These arguments are probable, not demonstrative. For this reason they supplement each other, and constitute a series of evidence which is cumulative in nature. Though, taken singly, none of them can be considered absolutely decisive, they together furnish a corroboration of our primitive conviction of God’s existence which is of great practical value, and is in itself sufficient to bind the moral action of men. A consideration of these arguments may also serve to explicate the contents of an intuition which has remained obscure and only half conscious for lack of reflection.

“The arguments, indeed, are the efforts of the mind that already has a conviction of God’s existence to give to itself a formal account of its belief. An exact estimate of their logical value and of their relation to the intuition which they seek to express in syllogistic form is essential to any proper refutation of the prevalent atheistic and pantheistic reasoning.”

### **A. The Cosmological Argument, or Argument from Change in Nature.**

(Cosmological comes from the Greek *kosmos*, world or orderly arrangement, i. e., of the universe).

#### **1. Statement.**

“Everything begun, whether substance or phenomenon, owes its existence to some producing cause. The universe, at least so far as its present form is concerned, is a thing begun, and owes its existence to a cause which is equal to its production. This cause must be indefinitely great” (Strong). The same author continues: “This is not properly an argument from effect to cause; for the proposition that every effect must have a cause is simply identical and means only that every caused event must have a cause. It is rather an argument from begun existence to a sufficient cause of that beginning.”

## **2. Value.**

This argument proves that the cause of the universe must be indefinitely great. But it cannot prove:

- a. Whether this cause is a cause of matter or of phenomenon only.
- b. Whether it is a cause apart from the universe or one with it.
- c. Whether it is a caused or an uncaused cause.
- d. Whether it is finite or infinite.
- e. Whether it is intelligent or unintelligent.
- f. Whether it is one cause or many causes.

## **B. The Teleological Argument, or Argument from Order or Useful Collocation in Nature.**

(Teleological comes from the Greek *telos*, end or design).

### **1. Statement.**

“Order and useful collocation pervading a system respectively imply intelligence and purpose as the cause of that order and collocation. Since order and collocation pervade the universe, there must exist an intelligence adequate to the production of this order, and a will adequate to direct this collocation to useful ends” (Strong).

The argument as above expressed is in syllogistic form. The major premise expresses a primitive conviction, not invalidated:

- (1) by the objection that the order and useful collocation of a system may exist without being purposed;
- (2) by the objection that they may be the result of physical laws and forces.

The minor premise is the working principle of physical science, not invalidated:

- (1) by the objection that we do not always understand the end subserved by the order and collocation pervading the universe;
- (2) by the objection that we recognize in many things an imperfect order and collocation—due undoubtedly to sin.

### **2. Value.**

The teleological argument proves that there exists an intelligence and will adequate to the contrivance of the universe in its present form.

“But,” as Dr. Strong says, “whether this intelligence and will is personal or impersonal, creator or only fashioner, one or many, finite or infinite, eternal or owing its being to another, necessary or free, this argument cannot assure us.”

### **C. The Anthropological Argument, or Argument from Man's Mental and Moral Nature.**

(Anthropological comes from the Greek *anthropos*, man).

**NOTE:** This is sometimes called the "Moral Argument," but moral is too restricted a term, since man's mental constitution is considered as well as his moral nature.

#### **1. Statement.**

The argument may be represented in three parts:

a. *Man's intellectual and moral nature requires for its author an intellectual and moral Being.* Mind cannot evolve from matter, nor spirit from flesh. Consequently, a Being having both mind and spirit must have created man.

b. *Man's moral nature proves the existence of a holy Lawgiver and Judge.* Otherwise, conscience cannot be satisfactorily explained.

c. *Man's emotional and volitional nature requires for its author a Being, who, as Dr. Strong says, "can furnish in Himself a satisfying object of human affection and an end which will call forth man's highest activities and ensure his highest progress."* This author continues: "Only a Being of power, wisdom, holiness, and goodness, and all these indefinitely greater than any that we know upon the earth, can meet this demand of the human soul. Such a Being must exist. Otherwise man's greatest need would be unsupplied, and belief in a lie be more productive of virtue than belief in the truth."

#### **2. Value.**

In the words of Dr. Strong: "It assures us of the existence of a Personal Being, who rules us in righteousness, and who is the proper object of supreme affection and service. But whether this Being is the original creator of all things, or merely the author of our own existence, whether He is infinite or finite, whether He is a Being of simple righteousness or also of mercy, this argument cannot assure us."

### **D. The Ontological Argument, or the Argument from Our Abstract and Necessary Ideas.**

(Ontological comes from the Greek *on*, being).

**NOTE:** The three arguments we have just considered are called *a posteriori* arguments, that is, from effect to cause. This one is called *a priori* argument, that is, from cause to effect.

#### **1. Statement.**

This is the most difficult of all the corroborative proofs of God's existence. Indeed, it is obscure—so obscure that many keen minds confess their inability to comprehend it.

It has been likened to the Scotchman's definition of metaphysics: "one man talking about something of which he knows nothing to another man who does not understand him!" The argument has three forms:

First. *That of Samuel Clarke*, an English metaphysician of the 18th century:

"Space and time are attributes of substance or being. But space and time are respectively infinite and eternal. There must therefore be an infinite and eternal substance or Being to whom these attributes belong."

Gillespie, a Scotch theologian, put it this way: "Space and time are modes of existence. Bu space and time are respectively infinite and eternal. There must therefore be an infinite and eternal Being who subsists in these modes."

To all this it can be replied: space and time are not attributes of substance nor modes of existence. The argument would prove if the reasoning were valid, that God is not mind but matter, for, according to the argument, space and time are attributes or modes of matter.

Second. *That of Descartes*, a French metaphysician of the 16th century:

"We have the idea of an infinite and perfect Being. This idea cannot be derived from the imperfect and finite things. There must, therefore, be an infinite and perfect Being who is the cause." But to this it may be replied: the argument confounds the idea of the infinite with an infinite idea; "man's idea of the finite is not infinite but finite, and from a finite effect we cannot argue an infinite cause" (Strong).

Third. *That of Anselm*, a schoolman of the Middle Ages:

"We have the idea of an absolutely perfect Being. But existence is an attribute of perfection. An absolutely perfect Being must, therefore, exist."

To this the answer is: the argument confounds ideal existence with real existence.

"Our ideas are not the measure of external reality" (Strong). This author continues: "A Being indefinitely great, a personal Cause, Contriver, and Lawgiver, has been proved by the preceding arguments . . . To this one Being we may now ascribe infinity and perfection, the idea of which lies at the basis of the Ontological Argument— ascribe them, not because they are demonstrably His, but because our mental constitution will not allow us to think otherwise. Thus clothing Him with all perfections which the human mind can conceive, and these in illimitable fulness, we have One whom we may justly call God."

## **E. The Christological Argument.**

(Christological comes from the Greek *Christos*, the Anointed, i. e., the Messiah).

This argument rests on the following pillars:

- 1. The Bible must be accounted for.**
- 2. The fulfillment of prophecy must be accounted for.**
- 3. Miracles must be accounted for.**
- 4. The supernatural character and divine mission of Christ must be accounted for.**
- 5. The influence of Christianity in the world must be accounted for.**
- 6. The fact of conversion must be accounted for.**

And these things, severally or together, cannot be accounted for apart from the existence of God.

“While not one of the above arguments taken by itself can be called decisive, yet taken together they constitute a series of evidences cumulative and conclusive. A whole bundle of rods cannot be broken, though each rod might be broken separately” (Farr).

## **TOPIC TWO: THE PERSONALITY OF GOD**

### **I. THE DEFINITION OF PERSONALITY**

Personality may be defined as sentient existence possessed of self-consciousness and the power of self-determination in view of moral ends.

**NOTE:** The distinguishing difference between a human being on the one hand and a plant or animal on the other hand is understood to be that while a human being has self-consciousness (that is, the capacity for self-knowledge) a plant and an animal have not.

### **II. THE CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS OF PERSONALITY**

The constituent elements of personality are three: intellect, or the power of thinking; sensibility, or the power of feeling; and volition, or the power of willing. Associated with these are conscience and the freedom of choice.

### **III. THE DIVINE PERSONALITY**

If it can be proved that to God are ascribed operations of intellect, sensibility, and will, then we may affirm His personality.

**QUERY:** Has God a conscience?

**1. Intellect:** The following passages, to cite only a few of many, ascribe to God operations of intellect: Proverbs 15:3; Jeremiah 29:11; Acts 15:18; Hebrews 4:13.

**2. Sensibility:** The following passages, to cite only a few of many, ascribe to God the power of feeling: Psalm 33:5; 103. 8-13; Hebrews 12:29; James 5-11.

**3. Volition:** The following passages, to cite only a few of many, ascribe to God the power of will: Psalm 115:3; Isaiah 46:10, 11; Daniel 4:35; Matthew 19:26.

## **TOPIC THREE: THE TRINITY OF GOD**

### **I. DEFINITION OF TRINITY**

The Trinity of God is His tri-personal existence as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**NOTE:** It is not certain by whom the term trinity was invented as applied to the Godhead. Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch (A. D. 168-183), seems to have been the first one to use it. Trinity is from the Latin *trinus*, threefold.

### **II. CONTENTS OF DOCTRINE**

The trinity of the Godhead involves two elements, namely:

- 1. The unity of God:** Exodus 20:3-7; Deuteronomy 6:4, 5.
- 2. The distinction of persons in the Godhead:** Matthew 28:19; John 14-16, 17, 20-23; II Corinthians 13:14.

**NOTE:** With reference to the Godhead the word “person” must be understood in a somewhat modified sense, namely, to signify that the distinctions between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are of a personal nature. Thus, the Scriptures reveal:

- 1. The deity of each member of the Godhead:** John 1:1; Acts 5:3, 4.
- 2. Their mutual knowledge and love:** Matthew 11:27; I Corinthians 2:10; Matthew 3:17; John 3:35; 4:34; 5:30; Romans 8:27.
- 3. Their distinct yet relative offices:** I Corinthians 12:4-6; Ephesians 2:18-22.

### **III. ORTHODOX FORMULA**

The orthodox formula of the doctrine of the trinity is: “Three in One and One in Three.”

**NOTE:** By maintaining the two elements of the trinity as above stated and by holding fast to the orthodox formula we are preserved from several serious errors, namely:

- 1. Sabellianism**, or a modal trinity which holds that there are but three aspects or manifestations of one person.
- 2. Arianism**, which holds that the Son is subordinate to the Father.
- 3. Swedenborgianism**, which holds that “the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three essentials of one God, which make one, just as the soul, body, and spirit make one in man.”
- 4. Tritheism**, which holds to three Gods. Midway between Sabellianism and Tritheism, which holds to three Gods, is Trinitarianism, which is the orthodox position.

The Athanasian Creed reads: “We worship one God in trinity and trinity in unity, neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance.”

The Century Dictionary well says: “The received doctrine of the Christian Church among Trinitarians may be fairly stated to be that we are taught by the Scriptures to believe that there is but one God and yet three equal subjects in the Godhead, who are described as persons, but that we are unable to determine in what sense these three are separate and in, what Sense they are united in one.”

#### IV. SCRIPTURE PROOF OF TRINITY

As to *statement* the Scripture revelation of the doctrine of the trinity is not definite and explicit, there are some that claim that I John 5:7 is an interpolated passage. However, the *proof* of the trinity is conclusive and satisfactory, because indirect and apparently incidental.

Notice the following:

1. The plural noun Elohim (God) with a singular verb *bara* (created) in Genesis 1:1.
2. The expression “**Let us make**” in Genesis 1:26.
3. The priestly benediction, in Numbers 6:24-27.
4. The Tersanctus or Trisagion, in Isaiah 6:3 and Revelation 4:8.
5. The formula of baptism in Matthew 28:19.
6. The Apostolic benediction in II Corinthians 13:14.

#### V. ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE TRINITY

The trinity is purely a matter of revelation. Moreover, it is a profound mystery. Analogies to it in nature there are none, for it is above finite experience and human reason, though not contrary thereto. “All attempts therefore,” says Dr. Farr, “to represent it are in vain, and while illustrations are sometimes useful in overcoming objections, it is unwise to press them too far.”

The following illustrations have been suggested:

1. **The fountain, stream, and river.**
2. **The cloud, rain, and rising mist.**
3. **Color, shape, and size.**
4. **The actinic, luminiferous, and calorific elements in the ray of light.**
5. **The three infinite dimensions of space.**
6. **The union of intellect, sensibility, and will in personality.**
7. **The thinker, the thought, and the relation between them.**
8. **The thought, the breath, and the uttered word.**
9. **The three angles of a triangle.**
10. **The spirit, soul and body in man.**
11. **The legislative, judicial and executive functions of government.**

**NOTE:** Of these the tenth in order would seem to be the best.

## **TOPIC FOUR: THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD**

### **I. DEFINITION OF ATTRIBUTE**

An Attribute may be defined as an essential, permanent and distinguishing quality or characteristic, which may be affirmed of a subject; as, the color and fragrance of a rose.

**NOTE:** In thought an attribute is separable from its subject, but not so in experience; thus, we can think of the color or fragrance of a rose as an abstract quality, apart from the substance of the rose, but we could not take the color or fragrance away from the rose without thereby losing the rose.

### **II. DEFINITION OF DIVINE ATTRIBUTES**

The Divine Attributes are those essential, permanent, and distinguishing characteristics, which may be affirmed of the Triune God.

**NOTE:** The divine attributes may be considered by themselves, but they essentially inhere in God, in the sense that if we were to take them away from God we should thereby lose God Himself.

### **III. BASIS OF CLASSIFICATION**

This should be on the ground of that which is determinative in the subject. In God this is Personality.

**NOTE:** Theologians are not in agreement as to the classification or number of the divine attributes. Some include as attributes everything which may be predicated of God from the light of nature, the deduction of reason, and the revelation of Scripture. The alphabet could be exhausted more than once in this way.

Dr. Strong makes two great classes: the Absolute, or Immanent, and the Relative, or Transitive attributes.

- The first class involve the mutual relations of the Godhead, as life, personality, self-existence, immutability, unity, truth, love, holiness.
- The second class involve God's relations to the universe, as eternity, immensity, omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, veracity and faithfulness, mercy and goodness, justice and holiness.

### **IV. THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES**

There are three divine attributes corresponding to the three essential elements of personality.

- The three essential elements of personality are: Intellect, Sensibility, and Will.
- The three divine attributes are: Omniscience, Goodness, or Benevolence, and Omnipotence.

## **A. Omniscience—Infinity of knowledge.**

(The word omniscience comes from two Latin words, viz: *omnis* signifying all, and *scientia* signifying knowledge).

The following passages of Scripture reveal and prove the omniscience of God: I Samuel 16:7; I Kings 8:39; I Chronicles 28:9; II Chronicles 16:9; Job 26:6; 28:23, 24; 34:22, 25; 37:16; 42:2; Psalm 44-21; 94:11; 103:14; 119:168; 139 (whole psalm); 147:4; Proverbs 3:19, 20; 5:21; 16:2; 24:12; Isaiah 29:15; 40:13, 14, 27, 28; 41:4; 42:9; 44:7; 45:4; 46:10; 48:5, 6; Jeremiah 17:10; 23:24; 32:19; 51:15; Ezekiel 11:5; Daniel 2:20, 22, 28; Amos 4:13; 9:2-4; Matthew 6:4, 18, 32; 10:29, 30; Acts 1:24; 2:23; Romans 8:27-29; 11:33, 34; I Corinthians 3:20; I Thessalonians 2:4; II Timothy 2:19; Hebrews 4:13; I John 3:20.

**NOTE:** I. Calvin defined omniscience as “that attribute whereby God knows Himself and all other things in one eternal and most simple act.”

**NOTE:** 2. Wisdom may be classed under omniscience. It is that whereby God produces the best possible results by the best possible means.

## **B. Goodness, or Benevolences—Infinity of feeling.**

Dr. Farr says: “Benevolence means that God desires the welfare of His creatures with a desire that is supremely powerful and pure.”

Of the divine goodness, or benevolence, there are five modes or manifestations:

### **1. Holiness, or Righteousness.**

Fundamentally and Scripturally, holiness and righteousness are the same.

By many this is made to be the essential attribute of God. It is not altogether easy to define divine holiness. Thus Oehler, contrasting it with glory, says: “Holiness is glory concealed; glory is holiness revealed.” But this is a description, not a definition. Dr. Strong says: “Holiness is self-affirming purity. In virtue of this attribute of His nature, God eternally wills and maintains His own moral excellence. In this definition are contained three elements: first, purity; secondly, purity willing; thirdly, purity willing itself.” Dr. Clarke says: “Holiness is the fulness of the glorious goodness of God, consistently held as the principle of His own action, and the standard for His creatures.”

The following passages reveal and prove the holiness of God: Exodus 15:11; Leviticus 11:44; 19:2; 20:26; 21:8; Deuteronomy 32:4; Joshua 24:19; I Samuel 2:2; 6:20; Job 6:10; 34:10; Psalm 11:7; 22:3; 30:4; 47:8; 60:6; 89:35; 92-15; 99-3, 5, 95 119-142; Isaiah 5:16; 6:3; 43:14, 15; 47:4; 49:7; 57:15; Hosea 11:9; Habakkuk 1:12; Matthew 5:48; Luke 1:49; John 17:11; I Peter 1:15, 16; I John 1:5; 2:20; Revelation 4:8; 6:10; 15:4.

## **2. Justice.**

Justice has been called transitive holiness; that is, holiness dealing with moral beings. The term righteousness is frequently employed in this sense. Thus, someone has said, "Justice is the execution of righteousness."

Dr. Strong says: "By justice and righteousness we mean the transitive holiness of God, in virtue of which His treatment of His creatures conforms to the purity of His nature, righteousness demanding from all moral beings conformity to the moral perfection of God, and justice visiting nonconformity to that perfection with penal loss and suffering."

The divine justice is both individual and public, that is, it is visited upon an individual for his private sins and upon a nation or a people for their corporate sins: Matthew 22:12-14; 25:2-12; Amos 1:1-15; Matthew 11. 20-24; Revelation 20:11-15.

The following passages reveal and prove the justice of God: Genesis 18:23-33; Deuteronomy 10:17; 32:4; Joshua 24:19; I Samuel 2:3; Job 37:23; Psalm 11:4, 7; 19:9; 33:5; 62:12; 84:11; 96:13; 103:6; 129:4; Isaiah 30; Jeremiah 9:24; Ezekiel 33:7-19; Acts 17:31; Romans 1:32; 2:2-16; 11:22; II Thessalonians 1:5-9; Hebrews 6:10; 12:22, 23, 29; I Peter 1:17; II Peter 2:9; I John 1:9; Jude 6; Revelation 11:18; 16:5-7; 19:2.

## **3. Mercy.**

Mercy has been defined as that "eternal principle of God's nature which leads Him to seek the temporal good and eternal salvation of those who have opposed themselves to His will, even at the cost of infinite self-sacrifice."

Dr. Farr says:

- "The grace of God is His benevolence exercised toward the guilty or undeserving.
- "The mercy of God is His benevolence exercised toward the miserable as well as guilty.
- "The patience of God is His benevolence exercised in forbearing to punish the guilty without delay.
- "The wisdom of God is His omniscience guided by His benevolence in securing the best ends by the best means."

The following passages reveal and prove the mercy of God: Genesis 18:26-32; Exodus 15:13; 20:2, 6; 22:27; 33:19; Numbers 14:18-20; Deuteronomy 7:9; I Kings 8:23; I Chronicles 16:34; Nehemiah 9:17, 27-31; Job 33:14-30; Psalm 25:6; 36:5; 62:12; 69:16; 103:3-17; Isaiah 55:7-9; Jeremiah 33:8-11; Lamentations 3:22-33; Daniel 9:4; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Matthew 18:11-14; Luke 1:50, 77, 78; Acts 3:19; Ephesians 2:4; I Timothy 1:13; Hebrews 4:16; 8:12; James 2:13; 5:11; I Peter 1:3; II Peter 3:9.

## **4. Love.**

Like holiness, many believe love to be the central attribute of God. It is indeed of the very essence of His being: I John 4:16.

Dr. Strong makes love a composite of mercy and goodness, defining the latter thus:

“Goodness is the eternal principle of God’s nature which leads Him to communicate of His own life and blessedness to those who are like Him in moral character. Goodness, therefore, is nearly identical with the love of complacency; mercy, with the love of benevolence.”

The author quotes these passages: Romans 2:4; Titus 3:4; Matthew 5:44, 45; John 3:16; II Peter 1:3; Romans 8:32; I John 4:10.

The following passages, in addition, reveal and prove the love of God: Deuteronomy 4:37; 7:7, 8, 13; 33:3; Job 7:17; Psalm 42:8; 63:3; 103:13; 146:8; Isaiah 43:4; Jeremiah 31:3; Hosea 11:1; Malachi 1:2; John 3:16; 14:21; 16:27; 17:23, 26; Romans 1:7; 5:8; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 2:4; Hebrews 12:6; I John 3:1; 4:8-16; Jude 20, 21.

## **5. Truth.**

The divine truthfulness takes two forms, namely, veracity and faithfulness.

Dr. Strong says: “By veracity and faithfulness we mean the transitive (that is, active) truth of God in its twofold relation to His creatures in general and to His redeemed people in particular . . . In virtue of His veracity, all His revelations to creatures consist with His essential being and with each other. In virtue of His faithfulness, He fulfils all His promises to His people, whether expressed in words or implied in the constitution He has given them.”

The author quotes these passages: Psalm 138:2; John 3:33; Romans 3:4; 1:25; John 14:17; I John 5:6; I Corinthians 1:9; I Thessalonians 5:24; I Peter 4:19; II Corinthians 1:20; Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18; I John 1:9; Psalm 84:11; 91:4; Matthew 6:33; I Corinthians 2:9 (the order is that of Dr. Strong).

The following passages in addition reveal and prove the veracity of God: Deuteronomy 32:4; I Samuel 15:29; Psalm 25:10; 33:4; 43:3; 100:5; Isaiah 25:1; Jeremiah 10:10; John 17:17; Titus 1:2. The following passages, in addition, reveal and prove the faithfulness of God: Genesis 9:16; 28:15; Deuteronomy 7:8, 9; I Kings 8:23, 24, 56; Psalm 36:5; 89:1; 92:1, 2; Isaiah 42:16; 51:6; Jeremiah 29:10; 33:14; Hebrews 6:10-19; 10:23; II Peter 3:9; I John 1:9.

## **C. Omnipotence—Infinity of Power.**

(The word omnipotent comes from two Latin words, viz: *omnis* signifying all, and *potentia* or *Potens* signifying power). The following passages reveal and prove the omnipotence of God: Genesis 17:1; 18:14; Job 42:2; Isaiah 26:4; Matthew 19:26; Luke 1:37; Acts 26:8; Revelation 19:6; 31:22.

**NOTE:** “The omnipotence of God must be explained in such wise as not to contradict either the nature of God or the nature of things. It is morally impossible for God to lie or to die, and is naturally impossible for God to make two parallel lines meet, or to create two mountains without a valley between them” (Farr).

## **TOPIC FIVE: THE PERFECTIONS OF GOD**

There are several modes of the divine existence, usually classed as divine attributes, which are better regarded as divine perfections. They are: spirituality, unity, independence, immutability, eternity, and omnipresence.

### **I. SPIRITUALITY**

Like personality, spirituality is fundamental to the Being of God: John 4:24. It is not an attribute but rather a mode of God’s complete and tripartite existence. Says Dr. Farr: “God is something more than a condition of being like space or time. He acts as well as exists. He is an Agent, an Actor, a Living Being, and Spirit Life: John 6:63; Genesis 1:3; Psalm 139:7; John 4:24; Exodus 20:4; Isaiah 40:26; Romans 1:20; Colossians 1:15; I Timothy 1:17. In Psalm 139:7 and John 4:24, God’s omnipresence seems to be accounted for by His spirituality. Matter presupposes the existence of space as a condition of its existence, but spirit does not. There is no evidence that spirit fills any part of space, or that the Infinite Spirit is dependent on space.”

### **II. UNITY**

There is but one God. The trinity must be held in harmony with the singleness of the divine essence or substance: Deuteronomy 6:4; II Samuel 7:22; Psalm 86:10; Isaiah 43:10; Matthew 19:17; I Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 3:20; I Timothy 2:5.

### **III. INDEPENDENCE**

Independence may be affirmed of God with respect to four things:

- 1. His existence, which is underived and absolute:** Exodus 3:14; John 5:26.
- 2. His knowledge:** Hebrews 4:13.
- 3. His action:** Genesis 1:1; Acts 17:24.
- 4. His happiness:** Ephesians 1:3; I Timothy 6:15, 16.

### **IV. IMMUTABILITY**

Immutability means unchangeableness. “God always remains what He is without development or change. He cannot change for the better, because He is best; nor for the worse, because He would thereby cease to be perfect” (Farr): Psalm 102:27; Isaiah 40:28; Malachi 3:6; James 1:17; Hebrews 1:12.

### **V. ETERNITY**

Eternity means existence without beginning or end: Psalm 90:2. See also Deuteronomy 32:40; Isaiah 41:4; I Timothy 1:17; II Peter 3:8; Revelation 10:6. "Some suppose that the idea of timeless being is also involved in the word (i. e., eternity). It seems implied in John 3:13, 8:58, and James I:17, and existence in time also seems inseparable from imperfections and limitations."

He continues: "On the other hand, the Scriptures generally speak of God as if His life were divisible into periods of past and future, and our minds are unable to conceive of real existence independent of time. Eternity is infinity in duration" (Farr).

## VI. OMNIPRESENCE

"The Scriptures represent God as filling immensity. He is present everywhere and there is no point in the universe where He is not" (Farr). God is omnipresent both in His works and in His personality: I Kings 8:23; II Chronicles 6:18; Isaiah 43:2; 66:1; Jeremiah 23:24; Amos 9:2; Psalm 139:7-12; Acts 17:27, 28; Matthew 28:20.

**NOTE:** The atheist wrote, "God is nowhere." But his little daughter read it, "God is now here." And it converted him. The omnipresence of God must be held in harmony with His transcendence and immanence.

- Divine transcendence means that God is above His works;
- Divine immanence means that He is within them.

Again, immanence must be distinguished from pantheism. One who holds to the divine immanence separates God from His works; but the pantheist identifies God with His works.

## TOPIC SIX: THE NAMES OF GOD

In our modern occidental life, proper names, particularly names of persons, have no special significance, except perhaps Indian names and those of some other primitive tribes. But in the ancient East (and to some extent in the modern East) it was otherwise.

In the Bible, proper names are invested with peculiar significance.

- The Lord appears unto Jacob, and he calls the place "**Bethel**," "*the house of God*": Genesis 28:16-19.
- Rachel dies and calls her son "**Benoni**," "*the son of my sorrow*": Genesis 35:18.

Again, the same person or place often had two names.

- The ancient name of Bethel was Luz, signifying "*almond tree*."
- Jacob called Benoni, Benjamin, meaning "*son of my right hand*": Genesis 28:19; 35:18.

In His names God reveals His character and His manifold relations to His creatures. New crises

or peculiar needs among His people called forth fresh names; and there can be no emergency among believers to which some name of God does not apply. “Even human nature and sin but evoke new and fuller revelations of the divine fulness.”

The principal names of God are nine, falling into three classes of three names each and suggesting, many think, the trinity.

## **FIRST**

There are three primary names: God, LORD, and Lord.

### **I. God**

The Hebrew is *El*, *Elah*, or *Elohim*. See Genesis 1:11. *El* means strength or the Strong One. *Alah*, the verb from which *Elah* and *Elohim* come, means to bind oneself by an oath, i. e., faithfulness. *Elohim* is a plural noun with singular meaning; in it the trinity is latent. See Genesis 1:26, 27; 3:22.

### **II. LORD**

The Hebrew is *Yahwe*, English form Jehovah. See Genesis 2:4 where *Yahwe Elohim* occurs. *Yahwe* comes from the verb *havah* signifying both to be and to become, and means “the self-existent One who reveals Himself,” or, “the Coming One.” See Exodus 3:13-17. Also Genesis 4:16.

- *Elohim* is the creation name of God;
- *Yahwe* the covenant-keeping or redemptive name.

Accordingly, *Elohim* occurs in Genesis 1 and *Yahwe* in Genesis 2. LORD, representing *Yahwe*, is printed in capitals.

**NOTE:** Jehovah is a hybrid word, composed of the consonants of the unpronounceable sacred name represented by *Yahwe* and the vowels of the Hebrew word for master.

### **III. Lord**

The Hebrew is *Adon* or *Adonai*. See Genesis 15:2. *Adonai*, master, is applied to both God and man; when applied to man it is written with a small letter *l*. *Adonai* means master, or husband. See Genesis 24:9, 10, 12; 18:12.

To us Christ is both Master and Husband. See Hosea 21:6, 20; John 13:13; II Corinthians 11:2, 3.

## **SECOND**

There are three names compounded with *El*: Almighty God, Most High, or Most High God, and Everlasting God.

## I. Almighty God

The Hebrew is *El Shaddai*. See Genesis 17:1. *El* signifies, of course, the Strong One. The meaning of *Shaddai* is uncertain. “*The God who is enough*,” “*the All-sufficient One*,” “*the All-bountiful One*” have been suggested.

It is quite probable that *Shaddai* comes from the Hebrew noun *shad* signifying breast, and “invariably used in Scripture for a woman’s breast”: Genesis 49:25; Job 3:12; Psalm 22:9; Song of Solomon 1:13; 4-5; 7:3, 7, 8; 8:1, 8, 10; Isaiah 28:9; Ezekiel 16:7.

“*Shaddai* therefore means primarily ‘the breasted.’ God is *Shaddai* because He is the Nourisher, the Strength-giver and so, in a secondary sense, the Satisfier, who pours Himself into believing lives. As a fretful, unsatisfied babe is not only strengthened and nourished from the mother’s breast, but also is quieted, rested, and satisfied, so *El Shaddai* is that name of God which sets Him forth as the Strength-giver and Satisfier of His people.”

Both fruitfulness and chastening are in this word: Genesis 17:1-8; 28:3, 4; Hebrews 11:12; Ruth 1:20; John 15:2; Hebrews 12:10.

## II. Most High or Most High God

The Hebrew is *El Elyon*, *Elyon* signifying highest See Genesis 14:17-24. The distinctive meaning of the name is given in verse 19, “**the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth.**” *El Elyon* seems to be the name of God known by and in reference to the Gentile nations: Deuteronomy 32:8; Daniel 3:26; 4:17, 24, 25, 32; 5:18, 21; see also Isaiah 14:13, 14; Matthew 28:18; II Samuel 22:14, 15 Psalm 9:2-5; 21:7; 47-2-45 57-2, 3 5 82-6 8; 83:18; 91:1-12.

## III. Everlasting God

The Hebrew is *El Olam*. See Genesis 21:33. *Olan* expresses eternal duration: Psalm 90:2. It is the equivalent of the Greek *axon*, signifying age or dispensation. *Olam* also expresses the idea of secrecy or hidingness. “The Everlasting God is therefore that name of Deity in virtue of which He is the God whose wisdom has divided all time and eternity into the mystery of successive ages or dispensations. It is not merely that He is everlasting, but that He is God over everlasting things”: Ephesians 1:9, 10; 3:3-6.

## THIRD

There are three names compounded with *Yahwe*: LORD God, Lord LORD, and LORD of Hosts.

### I. LORD God

The Hebrew is *Yahwe Elohim*. See Genesis 2:4. This divine name is used, first, of God’s relationship to man:

- As Creator, Genesis 2:7-15;
- As Master, Genesis 2:16, 17;
- As Ruler, Genesis 2:18-24; 3:14-19, 22-24;
- As Redeemer, Genesis 3:8-15, 21.

And second, of God's relationship to Israel, Genesis 24:7; Exodus 3:15, 18; Deuteronomy 12:1.

## II. Lord LORD

The Hebrew is *Adonai Yahwe*. See Genesis 15:2. This compound name emphasizes the first part rather than the second part, that is, the thought of Master: Genesis 15:1, 8; Deuteronomy 3:24; 9:26; Joshua 7:7.

## III. LORD of Hosts

The Hebrew is *Yahwe Sabaoth*. See I Samuel 1:3. *Sabaoth* signifies host or hosts.

The word occurs with special reference to warfare or service. It is used of Jehovah as manifesting His power and glory: Psalm 24:10. It occurs in the Old Testament mostly in the crises of Israel's need. Thus, in his extremity the psalmist cries out, "**The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge**": Psalm 46:7, 11.

By hosts, "primarily the angels are meant, but the name gathers into itself the idea of all divine or heavenly power as available for the needs of God's people."

Yahwe is compounded with seven names or words, thus:

1. **Jehovah-jireh**, "*the LORD will provide*": Genesis 22:13, 14.
2. **Jehovah-rapha**, "*the LORD that healeth*": Exodus 15:26.
3. **Jehovah-nissi**, "*the LORD our banner*": Exodus 17-8-15-
4. **Jehovah-shalom**, "*the LORD our peace*," or "the LORD send peace": Judges 6:24.
5. **Jehovah-ro'i**, "*the LORD my shepherd*": Psalm 23.
6. **Jehovah-tsidkenu**, "*the LORD our righteousness*": Jeremiah 23:6.
7. **Jehovah-shammah**, "*the LORD is present*": Ezekiel 48:35.

## THEOLOGY

### PART TWO. THE WORKS OF GOD

#### TOPIC ONE: THE DECREES OF GOD

##### I. DEFINITION

The Decrees of God comprehend His eternal purpose which is worked out in time through the various ages or dispensations: Romans 8:28; Ephesians 1:11; 3:11.

In I Timothy 1:17 Christ is called (lit. Greek) the King of the ages.

Strong thus defines: “By the decrees of God we mean that eternal plan by which God has rendered certain all the events of the universe, past, present, and future.”

## II. EXTENT

The divine decrees include creation, providence, and redemption. More particularly, they may be classified into two divisions, namely: first, decrees concerning nature—creation and preservation; and second, decrees concerning moral beings—providence and redemption, including grace.

**NOTE:** To our view the decrees are many, because they are worked out successively in time; but in their nature and from the divine standpoint they are one. What a plan is to an architect, that, so to speak, the decrees are to God.

## III. SCRIPTURE PROOF

Taking a comprehensive view, we may say that the Scriptures teach that all things, both great and small are included within the divine decrees: Isaiah 14:26, 27 46:10, 11; Daniel 4:35; Ephesians 1:11.

But to particularize:

- 1. The stability of the physical universe:** Psalm 119:89-91.
- 2. The outward circumstances of nations:** Acts 17:26.
- 3. The length of human life:** Job 14:5.
- 4. The mode of our death:** John 21:19.
- 5. The free acts of men, both good acts and evil acts:** Isaiah 44:28; Ephesians 2:10; Genesis 50:20; I Kings 12:15 Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 4:27, 28; Romans 9:17; I Pet 2:8; Revelation 17:17.
- 6. The salvation of believers:** I Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 1 3, 10, 11.
- 7. The establishment of Christ's kingdom:** Psalm 2:7, 8; I Corinthians 15:23.
- 8. The work of Christ and His people in establishing it:** Philippians 2:12, 13; Revelation 5:7.

**NOTE: 1.** The divine decrees are in harmony with God's foreknowledge, wisdom, immutability, and benevolence. “A universe without decrees would be as irrational and appalling as would be an express train driving on in the darkness without headlight or engineer, and with no certainty that the next moment it might not plunge into the abyss” (A. J. Gordon).

**NOTE: 2.** Objections are raised to the decrees:

**1. That they are inconsistent with the free moral agency of man.** But the same objection may be made to the divine foreknowledge. Moreover, it confounds the decrees with their execution—quite a different thing.

**2. That they take away all motive for human exertion.** But the decrees are not fatalistic; and they were framed, we may believe, in full view of man's cooperation in their execution.

**3. That they make God the author of sin.** This is true in a permissive sense. However, God is not the author of sin, but the author of beings who are themselves the authors of sin. Ingersoll asked, "Why did God create the devil?" This answer was given him: "God did not create the devil—it was the devil who made the devil. God made a holy and free spirit who abused his liberty, himself created sin, and so made himself a devil."

Says Dr. Strong: "There are four questions which neither Scripture nor reason enables us completely to solve and to which we may safely say that only the higher knowledge of the future state will furnish the answers.

These questions are:

- First, how can a holy God permit moral evil?
- Second, how could a being created pure ever fall?
- Third, how can we be responsible for inborn depravity?
- Fourth, how could Christ justly suffer?

The first of these questions now confronts us. A complete theodicy (*theos*, God, and *dike*, justice) would be a vindication of the justice of God in permitting the natural and moral evil that exists under His government. While a complete theodicy is beyond our powers, we throw some light upon God's permission of moral evil by considering:

- (1) *that freedom of will is necessary to virtue;*
- (2) *that God suffers from sin more than does the sinner;*
- (3) *that, with the permission of sin, God provided a redemption;*
- (4) *that God will eventually overrule all evil for good."*

#### **IV. PRACTICAL BEARINGS**

The doctrine of the divine decrees has practical bearings:

- 1. It inspires humility in the believer in the presence of God's sovereignty.**
- 2. It teaches confidence in Him who works all things together for good to them that love God.**
- 3. It warns the impenitent sinner that his punishment, though it be long delayed, will surely overtake him.**
- 4. It invites the sinner to make his peace with God before it is too late.**

**NOTE:** This doctrine of the divine decrees is often a stumblingblock to the beginner in the Christian life, because it is full of intellectual difficulties. But it proves to be of great comfort to the mature believer, particularly in times of trial and bereavement: Romans 8:28. Here Arminians pray like Calvinists and Calvinists preach like Arminians, and both sing alike.

## TOPIC TWO: CREATION

### I. DEFINITION

Creation may be defined as “that free act of the triune God by which in the beginning and for His own glory He made, without the use of preexisting material, the whole visible and invisible universe” (Strong).

**NOTE:** The popular definition of creation as “production out of nothing” is open to objection: nothing is not a substance, nor an object of thought, nor a source of being. The better expression is “without the use of preexisting material.”

### II. PROOF

Scripture proof of creation is both direct and indirect:

#### 1. Direct.

This is found in two striking passages, viz: Genesis 1:1 and Hebrews 11:3.

##### a. Genesis 1:1.

The Hebrew verb translated “**created**” is *bara*, which is found three times in chapter 1, viz: verse 1, of matter; verse 21, of animal life; and verses 26 and 27, of human life. This shows that there is an impassable gulf between plant life and animal life on the one hand, and between animal life and human life on the other hand.

**NOTE:** The Hebrew verb *bara* is to be distinguished from two other Hebrew verbs, viz: *asah*, to make, and *yatsar*, to form. *Bara* is used in Genesis 1:1 and *asah* in Genesis 2:4 of the creation of the heaven and earth.

Of earth, both *yatsar* and *asah* are used in Isaiah 45:18. In regard to man, in Genesis 1:27 we find *bara*; in Genesis 1:26 and 9:6, *asah*; and in Genesis 2:7, *yatsar*. In Isaiah 43:7 all three are found in the same verse: “whom I have *bara* for my glory, I have *yatsar*, yea, I have *asah* him.” In Isaiah 45:12, “*asah* the earth, and *bara* man upon it”; but in Genesis 1:1 we read: “God *bara* the earth,” and in 9:6 “*asah* man.” Isaiah 44:2—“the Lord that *asah* thee (i. e. man) and *yatsar* thee”; but in Genesis 1:27 God “*bara* man.” Genesis 5:2—“male and female *bara* He them.” Genesis 2:22—“the rib *asah* He a woman”; Genesis 2:7—“He *yatsar* man”; i. e. *bara* male and female, yet, *asah* the woman and *yatsar* the man. *Asah* is not always used for transform: Isaiah 41:20—“fir tree, pine, box-tree” in nature —*bara*; Psalm 51:10—“*bara* in me a clean heart”; Isaiah 65:18— God “*bara* Jerusalem into rejoicing.”

This somewhat interchangeable use of these three verbs has led some to state that *bara* does not mean to create. But as Dr. Strong says, “If *bara* does not signify absolute creation, no word exists in the Hebrew language that can express this idea.”

b. Hebrews 11:3.

This passage teaches that “the world was not made out of sensible and preexisting material, but by the direct fiat of omnipotence” (Strong). The following passages may also be consulted: Exodus 34:10; Numbers 16:30; Isaiah 4:5; 41:20; 45:7, 8; 57:19; 65:17; Jeremiah 31:22; Romans 4:17; I Corinthians 1:30; II Corinthians 4:6; Colossians 1:16, 17.

## 2. Indirect.

This is found in many passages:

- a. *The past duration of the world is limited*: Mark 13-19; John 17:5; Ephesians 1:4.
- b. *Each of the persons of the Godhead existed before the world began to be*: Psalm 90:2; Proverbs 8:23; John 1:1 ; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 9:14.

## III. AUTHOR

God is the author of creation, acting through the twofold agency of the Word and the Spirit. More particularly the work of creation is ascribed to each of the three persons of the trinity:

1. **The Father**: Genesis 1:1; I Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 3:9.
2. **The Son**: John 1:3; I Corinthians 8:6; Hebrews 1:2; 11:3; Colossians 1:16.
3. **The Spirit**: Genesis 1:2; Job 26:13; 33:4.

**NOTE:** In every work of God there is an agency of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Thus in creation the Father conceives, the Son executes, and the Spirit brings to completion. The illustration may be used of the architect planning, the builder erecting, and the decorator furnishing the interior of a house.

In Genesis 1:1-3 we have the trinity: God the Father in verse 1; God the Spirit in verse 2; and God the Son in verse 3—”**And God said**” (Christ the spoken word; see John 1:1 and Hebrews 11:3).

## IV. SPHERES OF CREATION

There are seven spheres of creation: 7

1. **Angelic host**: Colossians 1:16.
2. **Universe of matter**: Genesis 1; on 1st, 2nd, and 4th days.
3. **Vegetation**: Genesis 1; on 3rd day.
4. **Fish**: Genesis 1; on 5th day.
5. **Fowl**: Genesis 1; on 5th day.
6. **Animals—beast, cattle, reptile**: Genesis 1; on 6th day.
7. **Man**: Genesis 1; on 6th day.

**NOTE:** Three interesting topics may be briefly noted:

First, *the agreement between science and revelation*. As to the order of creation, there is entire agreement, though the account of creation in Genesis 1 and 2 is in popular language. For example, light before the sun, inorganic matter before organic life, invertebrates before vertebrates, animals before man, etc. As to the time of creation, some scientists estimate 10,000 years; others 10,000,000 years. As to the creation of man, there is no good reason for putting it earlier than our accepted chronology, i. e., about B. C. 4,000 years.

Second, *the meaning of the word “day” in Genesis 1*. Two views are held, viz: that of 24 hours and that of an indefinite period. Both views seem to be sustained by Scripture. As to the latter, see Genesis 1:5—a day before there was a sun; 1:8—evening and morning being a day; 2:2—a day that has not yet ended; 2:4; Isaiah 2:12; Zechariah 14:7; II Peter 3:8.

Third, *the method of interpretation*. We reject the allegorical or mythical view and accept the literal view—the hyper-literal view. In other words, we accept without question the historicity of the early chapters of Genesis.

## V. PURPOSE IN CREATION

Scripture reveals a fourfold divine purpose in creation:

- 1. In God Himself:** Proverbs 16:4; Romans 11:36; Colossians 1:16.
- 2. In His own will and pleasure:** Ephesians 1:5, 6, 9; Revelation 4:11.
- 3. In His own glory:** Isaiah 43:7; 60:21; 61:3; Luke 2:14.
- 4. In the making known of His power, wisdom, and holy name:** Psalm 19:1; Ephesians 3:9, 10.

**SUMMARY:** “God’s supreme end in creation is nothing outside of Himself, but is His own glory—in the revelation in and through creatures of the infinite perfection of His own being” (Strong).

## TOPIC THREE: PRESERVATION

### I. DEFINITION

Preservation may be defined as “that continuous agency of God by which He maintains in existence the things He has created together with the properties and powers with which He has endowed them” (Strong).

**NOTE:** Creation has to do with the origin of things; preservation with their continuance.

### II. PROOF

The following passages reveal and prove the divine preservation: Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 36:6; 145:20; Acts 17:28; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:2, 3.

**NOTE:** Psalm 105 has been called “a long hymn to the preserving power of God, who keeps alive all the creatures of the deep, both small and great.”

### **III. METHOD**

How is preservation maintained? There are three views:

#### **1. Deism.**

“This view represents the universe as a self-sustained mechanism, from which God withdrew as soon as He had created it, and which He left to a process of self-development” (Strong). The illustration may be used of a clock, which one winds up and then lets it run of itself. The chief objection to this view is that logically it denies in full God’s interposition in His universe, in the introduction of life, in incarnation, in regeneration, in history, in all providential occurrences, and in answers to prayer.

#### **2. Continuous Creation.**

“This view regards the universe as from moment to moment the result of a new creation” (Strong).

The main objections to this view are:

- (1) *it denies the testimony of consciousness as to the sway of natural law;*
- (2) *it exalts God’s omnipotence at the expense of His truth, love, and holiness;*
- (3) *it denies our own objective personal existence and thus destroys all responsibility for moral act.*

#### **3. Divine Power Operating through Natural Forces.**

This view, which we hold to be the true one, may be thus stated: Though God has established an order of natural forces, yet He exercises a special and continuous activity in the upholding of the universe with its powers. This activity is the activity of Christ, who is the mediating agent in preservation as well as in creation: Hebrews 1:3. This passage gives warrant for the view that natural law is only another name for the exercise of God’s personal will.

## **TOPIC FOUR: PROVIDENCE**

### **I. DEFINITION**

Providence may be defined as “that continuous agency of God by which He makes all the events of the physical and moral universe fulfil the original design with which He created it” (Strong).

**NOTE:** While creation has to do with the beginning of things and preservation with their continuance, providence has to do with their development and fruition.

Or, creation concerns the existence, preservation the maintenance, and providence the care and control of all things. Providence here means both prevision, foreseeing, and provision, forecaring.

## II. PROOF

The Scriptures bear witness to:

### 1. A general providential government and control:

- a. *Over the universe at large:* Psalm 103:19; Daniel 4:35; Ephesians 1:11.
- b. *Over the physical world:* Job 37:5, 10; Psalm 104:14; 135:6, 7; Matthew 5:45; 6:30.
- c. *Over the brute creation:* Psalm 104:21, 28; Matthew 6:26; 10:29.
- d. *Over the affairs of nations:* Job 12:23; Psa-22:28; 66:7; Acts 17:26.
- e. *Over man's birth and lot in life:* I Samuel 16:1; Psalm 139:16; Isaiah 45:5; Jeremiah 1:5; Galatians 1:15, 16.
- f. *Over the outward successes and failures of men's lives:* Psalm 75:6, 7; Luke 1:52.
- g. *Over things seemingly accidental and insignificant:* Proverbs 16:33; Matthew 10:30.
- h. *In the protection of the righteous:* Psalm 4:8; 5:12; 63:8; 91:3; Romans 8:28.
- i. *In the supply of the wants of God's people:* Genesis 22:8, 14; Deuteronomy 8:3; Philippians 4:19.
- j. *In the arrangement of answers to prayer:* Psalm 68:10; Isaiah 64:4; Matthew 6:8, 32, 33.
- k. *In the exposure and punishment of the wicked:* Psalm 7:12, 13; 11:6; II Peter 2:9; Revelation 20:11-15.

Still further the Scriptures bear witness to:

### 2. A government and control extending to the free actions of men:

- a. *To men's free acts in general:* Exodus 12:36; I Samuel 24:18; Psalm 33:14, 15; Proverbs 16:1; 19:21; 20:24; 21:1; Jeremiah 10:23; Philippians 2:13; Ephesians 2:10; James 4:13-16.
- b. *To the sinful acts of men:* II Samuel 16:10; 24:1; Romans 11:32; II Thessalonians 2:11, 12.

**NOTE:** 1. With respect to man's evil acts God's providence is:

- 1. Preventive**—*withholding from sin:* Genesis 20:6; 31:24; Psalm 19:13; Hosea 2:6.
- 2. Permissive**—*refusing to withhold from sin:* II Chronicles 32:31; Psalm 17:13, 14; 81:12, 13; Isaiah 53:4, 10; Hosea 4:17; Acts 14:16; Romans 1:21, 28; 3:25.
- 3. Directive**—*overruling evil for good:* Genesis 50:20; Psalm 76:10; Isaiah 10:5-7; Acts 4:27, 28.
- 4. Determinative**—*prescribing its bounds and effects:* Job 1:12; Psalm 124:2, 3; I Corinthians 10:13; II Thessalonians 2:7; Revelation 20:2, 3.

**NOTE:** 2. To the second class we may refer passages concerning Pharaoh: Exodus 4:21; 7:13; 8:15; Romans 9:17, 18.

God hardened Pharaoh's heart:

- First, by permitting him to harden his own heart;
- Second, by giving him light and then leaving him to resist it;
- Third, by abandoning him to the evil working of his will;
- Fourth, by causing his sin to be manifested in one direction more than another.

### III. KINDS

The providence of God is of two kinds, namely: unconditional and conditional.

#### 1. Unconditional

There is a providence of God which is in no wise dependent upon the meeting of conditions by its subjects. It is extended over:

- a. *The physical universe*: Psalm 103:19; 135:6, 7; Daniel 4:35; Ephesians 1:11; Hebrews 1:3.
- b. *The vegetable world*: Matthew 6:28-30.
- c. *The animal creation*: Psalm 104:21, 27; Matthew 6:26; 10:29.
- d. *Man—as to certain general creature comforts*: Matthew 5:45; Acts 14:17; 17:28.

#### 2. Conditional.

There is a providence of God which is dependent upon the meeting of conditions in its subjects. These can be met only by true believers. They are: obedience, prayer, faith, and trust: John 14:13, 14; 15:7; Mark 11:24; Philippians 4:6, 7; James 5:14-16.

**NOTE:** Unconditional providence is sometimes called “General Providence”; conditional providence, “Special Providence.”

### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. What are the two general divisions of Theology?
2. Define: the restricted meaning of theology, theism, deism, atheism, skepticism, and agnosticism.
3. Give four Scriptural definitions of God.
4. Give a theological definition of God.
5. What is the origin of the idea of God?
6. What are the unfailing marks of a primary or first truth?
7. Can you show that the idea of God meets the unfailing marks of a primary or first truth?
8. What are the mistaken sources of a belief in God?
9. What is the attitude of the Scriptures towards the existence of God?
10. What are the five corroborative proofs of God's existence?
11. With the exception of the Christological proof, state any one of the corroborative proofs, pointing out its defects and value.

12. What is meant by “personality”?
13. What are the constituent elements of personality?
14. How may the personality of God be shown?
15. What is meant by the trinity of God?
16. What are the two elements of the doctrine of the trinity which must be carefully guarded?
17. How is the term “person” to be understood with respect to the trinity?
18. What is the orthodox formula of the doctrine of the trinity?
19. Can you give six Scripture proofs of the trinity of God?
20. Mention five illustrations of the trinity. Which satisfies you most?
21. Define attribute.
22. Define divine attributes.
23. What is the basis of classification of divine attributes?
24. Mention and give Scripture proof for the divine attributes.
25. Mention, define, and give Scripture proof for the divine perfections.
26. Show how Scripture proper names have special significance.
27. What do the names of God reveal?
28. Discuss briefly the significance of the name God.
29. Discuss briefly the significance of the name LORD.
30. Discuss briefly the significance of the name Lord.
31. Discuss briefly the significance of the name Almighty God.
32. Discuss briefly the significance of the name Most High God.
33. Discuss briefly the significance of the name Everlasting God.
34. Discuss briefly the significance of the names LORD God, Lord GOD, and LORD of Hosts.
35. What are the seven divine names compounded with Jehovah? Give references.
36. Define the decrees of God.
37. What do they include?
38. Give Scripture proof (the eight points).
39. What are the practical bearings of the doctrine?
40. Define creation.
41. Give the direct Scripture proof.
42. Give the indirect Scripture proof.
43. Who is the Author of creation?
44. What are several spheres?
45. What is the fourfold end?
46. Define preservation.
47. Give the Scripture proof of the doctrine.
48. State the three views as to method of preservation.
49. Define providence.
50. Give Scripture proof—any eight points.
51. State the fourfold providence of God as to man’s evil acts.
52. What are the two kinds of providence? Give Scripture references.

~ end of chapter 2 ~

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