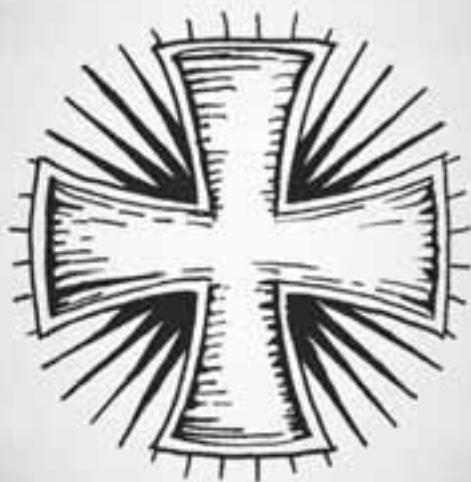


EXPLORING THEOLOGY

A Guide for Systematic Theology and Apologetics

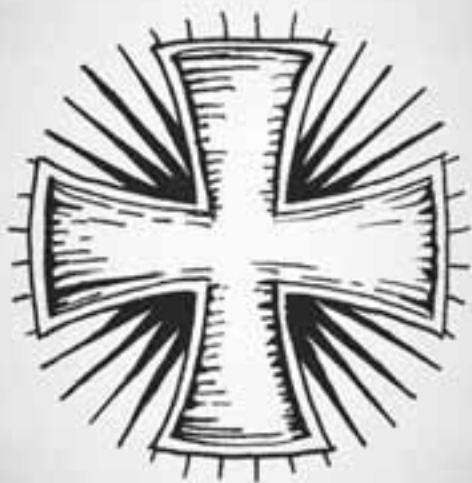


Three Books in One

CLARENCE H. BENSON AND ROBERT J. MORGAN

CROSSWAY BOOKS
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BOOK ONE:
THE ONE TRUE GOD



CLARENCE H. BENSON



THE NATURE OF GOD

THE STUDY OF GOD is the greatest one in which man can engage. It is one subject that is truly inexhaustible. The source for all knowledge of God is God Himself, who has chosen to reveal Himself to men through the universe that He created and through the Scriptures that He inspired. Theologians speak of *natural theology* (that which can be known of God through nature) and *revealed theology* (that which can be known of God through the Scriptures).

Certain evidences of God rise from man's observation of the world about him. To those who have eyes to see, "the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork" (Ps. 19:1). God is the great need of the vast creation in which we live, and consequently He must exist. One might as well think of throwing a rope into the air and climbing up it or building a tower on nothing and expecting it to stand as to explain creation without a creator.

Is knowledge of nature or natural theology sufficient for a knowledge of God? Read Romans 1:18-25. Here is a picture of the heathen to whom God speaks through nature. The statement of Paul that "the world by wisdom knew not God" (1 Cor. 1:21) is strictly true of the history of religious systems. No heathen religion ever embodied the true conception of God, though some have had most monstrous ideas of Him. Man needs the revelation of God's Word and God's Son to really know God.

GOD IS A LIVING BEING

Shown by Nature

There is much evidence in nature to substantiate faith in the existence of God. Using facts found in nature, Christian theologians over the centuries have developed rational arguments to attest God's existence. The most enduring of these are:

The Cosmological Argument

For every effect there must be a corresponding cause. Since the universe (cosmos) is an effect, there must be a cause adequate to bring it into existence. That cause is God.

THE TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

The Greek word for “bring to an end, finish, complete, carry out” is *teleo*. Our world reveals intelligence, harmony, and purpose. From the evidences of design and purpose in the universe as studied through the telescope and the microscope, it must be concluded that the cause or creator is intelligent.

THE MORAL ARGUMENT

Since man is a moral being, possessing a sense of right and wrong, his creator and judge must be moral.

THE ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

Since the concept of the absolute being is necessary in man’s thinking, such an absolute being must in point of fact exist. If this is not the case, then all of man’s reasoning is merely relative. The Greek word *ontos* means “in point of fact” or “in reality” or “truly.”

THE RELIGIOUS ARGUMENT

Archaeologists and anthropologists tell us that mankind throughout history has been religious. No culture has been or now is totally devoid of religion. Since the phenomenon of religion is universal, there must be some truth to it.

Perhaps none of these arguments alone carries compelling proof, but together they testify forcibly to the reasonableness of Christian belief in a living God.

Affirmed by Scripture

Scripture gives unqualified affirmation to the existence of God. The opening phrase of Genesis, “In the beginning God,” sets forth the basic assumption of the Bible, and in the rest of the Scriptures it is never denied or even debated. So indelibly impressed on virtually every page of the Word is the Living God that to consent to its teachings is to brand atheism as sheer heresy. The best that the Bible can say of the atheist is that he is a fool whose reasoning stems from the heart rather than the mind (Ps. 14:1; 53:1).

GOD IS A PERSONAL BEING

The fact that God is a person is of great consequence. It is because God is a person that revelation, fellowship, and prayer are not only possible but also meaningful. God is not mere energy or blind force, nor is He the sum total of everything (pantheism). Rather God is a person who speaks, hears, sends, and blesses among other activities. Because God is a person, man can trust Him, know Him, love Him, worship Him, and serve Him. The fact that God is a person is clearly revealed in the Scriptures.

The Multitude of Biblical Inferences

Throughout the Bible names and personal pronouns are ascribed to God. These names and personal pronouns undeniably prove that He is a person. In addition to this, He is everywhere pictured as possessing the three essentials of personality—intellect, emotion, and will. The Bible clearly asserts that God knows (Ps. 139:1-6), God feels (Nahum 1:2-3; John 3:16), and God wills (1 Thess. 4:3; 5:18).

Explicit Biblical Statement (Exod. 3:13-14)

Moses had been commissioned to declare to enslaved Israel that the God of their fathers had sent him to deliver them from bondage. Moses said to God, “Behold . . . they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?” God’s answer was, “I AM THAT I AM. . . . Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.”

This name is most significant. The main idea is that of self-existence and personality. The words signify the eternal God, “which art, and wast, and art to come” (Rev. 11:17). This likely is the origin of the Hebrew personal name for God, *Jehovah*. This name occurs in the Old Testament over six thousand times. Each occurrence is a testimony to the personality of God.

GOD IS A SPIRIT BEING

The Teaching of Christ (Luke 24:39; John 4:24)

Grammatically simple but theologically profound is the statement, “God is spirit” (literal translation), uttered by the Lord in response to the Samaritan woman’s query. This remarkable statement deals directly with the nature of God as is clearly seen when “a,” the indefinite article, which is never found in the Greek, is deleted. In His very essence God is spirit.

The basic meaning of *spirit* is clarified by the Lord’s remark to His followers after the resurrection. When they saw Him, they were terrified,

thinking Him to be a spirit or ghost. He banished those fears by stating that “a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.” From this it is apparent that spirit stands in contrast to that which is material or corporeal. God, being spirit, is not composed of material parts. For this reason it is true that “no man hath seen God at any time” (John 1:18).

The Second Commandment (Exod. 20:4-5; Ps. 145:3)

The Ten Commandments are best understood in the light of the nature of God. The second commandment illustrates this principle. Because God is spirit, He cannot faithfully be represented by anything that is material. Any tangible, visible object, no matter how cleverly fashioned, serves only to distort the worshiper’s comprehension of God. Not only is the concept distorted by the image, but it is also limited. That which is material is limited to time and space, whereas God, being spirit, is limited by neither.

The Image of God (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15)

If God were of a material or bodily nature, He could be reproduced. But God is not of the nature of the material world since He cannot be seen with material eyes (John 1:18). In fact, Moses was told that no man could look upon God’s face and live (Exod. 33:20). If God is spirit, what is meant by the statement that man was made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27)? Elsewhere the Bible declares that this image consists of righteousness, knowledge, and holiness (Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24). The image of God in man, therefore, consists in personal and moral likeness rather than in physical resemblance.

GOD IS ONE BEING

Christianity vs. Polytheism (Deut. 6:4-5; 1 Kings 8:60; Isa. 42:8-9; 44:6-8; 45:5-6, 14; 46:9; Mark 12:29-30; John 10:30; 1 Cor. 8:4; Eph. 4:6; 1 Tim. 2:5)

There was abundant reason for the first commandment to be thundered from Sinai’s summit. The worship of the sun, as the most prominent and most powerful agent in the kingdom of nature, was widely disseminated through the nations of the ancient world. In Egypt the sun was worshiped under the title Ra. Baal of the Phoenicians, Molech of the Ammonites, Hadad of the Syrians, and Bel of the Babylonians were also deities of the sun. The worship of the sun and moon and other heavenly bodies is one of the sins most unsparingly denounced in Scripture. One of the first warnings to Israel was to take heed “lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the

stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldst be driven to worship them, and serve them” (Deut. 4:19). The utter overthrow of the nation was predicted should this law be violated, and as for the nation, so for the individual. Any man, woman, or child who worshiped the sun or moon or any of the hosts of heaven, when convicted of working “such abomination,” was to be put to death (Deut. 17:2-5).

Israel lived in the midst of polytheistic nations (Josh. 24:2, 14-15; Judg. 10:6; 2 Kings 17:33). It appears that the great purpose in their being called out as a chosen and separate people was to witness to the unity of God. No other truth receives more prominence in the Old Testament. More than fifty passages teach that God is one, that there is no other, and that He has no equal.

It is to be expected, then, if the Lord is one God, that the first and great commandment is the unity of all man’s powers in concert and concentration on loving God (Deut. 6:4-5; Mark 12:29-30). An undivided God justly claims the undivided allegiance and worship of His creatures. He will not recognize any other claimant to divine honor: “My glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images” (Isa. 42:8). All human religion is an abomination to God, and it is not for us to try to discover how much good there is in beliefs that fail to give God His undisputed right to exclusive worship. God will not accept a niche in the pantheon of heathendom. He must be all or nothing.

Christianity vs. Unitarianism (Gen. 1:26; 3:22; Isa. 6:8; Matt. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 13:14)

From the earliest centuries of the church, evangelical Christians have insisted upon the doctrine of the Trinity. This doctrine has been defined by A. H. Strong: “In the nature of the One God there are three eternal distinctions . . . and these three are equal. The doctrine of the Trinity does not on one hand assert that three persons are united as one person, or three beings in one being, or three Gods in one God (tritheism); nor on the other hand that God merely manifests himself in three different ways (modal Trinity of manifestations); but rather that there are three eternal distinctions in the substance of God” (*Systematic Theology* [Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1907], p. 144). The Trinitarian doctrine has been assailed vigorously by various types of Unitarians through the centuries. Unitarianism charges that Trinitarianism is nothing more than tritheism or veiled sophisticated polytheism, thus violating the oneness of God.

While the term *trinity* is not a biblical expression, the doctrine of the Trinity is biblical. It is totally a product of revelation that man’s rea-

son could never discover. The doctrine is to be believed because the inspired Scriptures teach it. It is one of the most profound and difficult mysteries in the Word of God. Although the truth of the Trinity lies outside the capacity of our minds to fully comprehend and explain, the doctrine is clearly taught in the Bible. God is unique in this respect. There is nothing in nature that perfectly illustrates this aspect of God's being. Examples such as a circle divided into three parts; light, heat, energy; three musical notes comprising a chord; ice, water, steam; the body, soul, and spirit of man all fall short of clarifying the truth they seek to illustrate.

Although the Old Testament is not as explicit as the New Testament in this area of truth, there are strong inferences that are best explained in the light of the Trinity. The plural pronouns *us* and *our* (Gen. 1:26; 11:7; Isa. 6:8) cannot speak of creatures such as men and angels and hence must speak of God. Passages referring to the Messiah (Isa. 9:6; Micah 5:2; Ps. 45:6-7) indicate that He is one with Jehovah and yet distinct from Him. The Angel of Jehovah is described in a similar manner (Gen. 16:9, 13; 22:11, 16; 31:11-13; 48:15-16; Ex. 3:2, 4-5; Judg. 13:20-22). The Hebrew word for God, *Elohim*, is actually a plural form, although generally it takes a singular verb. These and other inferences in the Old Testament may find an explanation in the doctrine of the Trinity.

It is in the New Testament that the truth becomes more precise. Clearly the New Testament teaches the complete deity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit while at the same time distinguishing between them. Only the doctrine of the Trinity does justice to the plain teachings of the New Testament.

That the doctrine of the Trinity is taught in Scripture, there can be no doubt. By comparing Scripture with Scripture, it can be known even if it cannot be perfectly understood. In subsequent lessons we shall see how frequently and plainly the Bible teaches not only that Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit possess the same essence as God the Father, but that they are equal with Him in power and glory. One illustration will suffice at this time: The Father is God (Rom. 1:7). The Son is God (Heb. 1:8). The Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4). The New Testament clearly recognizes each member of the Trinity as true Deity and presents its message upon this premise.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. In what two ways can a knowledge of God be secured?
2. What is our most complete source for knowledge of God?

3. What are the rational arguments for the existence of God?
4. What is the basic assumption of the Scriptures?
5. Give biblical evidence to prove that God is a person.
6. Of what practical significance is the fact that God is a person?
7. What is meant by *spirit*?
8. How does the second commandment indicate that God is a spirit?
9. What is meant by the statement that man was made in the image of God?
10. How did the call of Israel witness to the unity of God?
11. Briefly state the doctrine of the Trinity in your own words.
12. Why is the doctrine of the Trinity to be believed?

APPLYING DOCTRINE TO LIFE

1. Why is it imperative that Christians know about the nature of God?
2. How should knowledge of God affect one's life and ministry?



THE INFINITUDE OF GOD

THE PSALMIST WROTE, “Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable” (Ps. 145:3). Even the atomic age with its vast scientific knowledge does not change this humble confession. The Bible clearly sets forth the attributes of God, but each characteristic has a dimension that is beyond human comprehension. All that God is, He is to the perfect or infinite degree. Man being finite in his being and understanding cannot measure God. He only can stand in awe of His greatness. To acknowledge this unsearchable, limitless dimension, we speak of the infinitude of God.

GOD IS ETERNAL

To confess that God is eternal is to affirm that His life is infinite. We cannot fathom the unknown future, but we might think back as far as the mind can go and try to imagine eternity. We speak of Genesis as the book of the beginnings. We read of the beginning of the nations, the beginning of man, the beginning of creation. But that was not the beginning. We may go back to the time when the angels were created—those sublime, empyreal (or celestial) sons of God, who were present to sing an oratorio on that prehistoric day when the earth was created (Job 38:7). But that was not the beginning. We may enter eternity where God the Creator dwelt alone, with all creation resting in His mighty, gigantic thought. We may go back, back, back as far as our imagination can fly and yet never arrive at the beginning, for there is no beginning or end to eternity.

While God has created such immortal beings as angels and men, He alone is without beginning and thus may be said to be the sole inhabitant of eternity. Men have a past, present, and future. God knows only the present, for both past and future are now to Him. Men are everlasting; God is eternal (Deut. 32:40; Ps. 90:2; 1 Tim. 6:16).

Alpha and omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet,

the language in which the New Testament was originally written. The use of these letters in Revelation 1:8 indicates that God was at the very beginning and will be at the end of all time. While eternity has neither beginning nor end, time has both. Time is swallowed up in eternity, and none can comprehend eternity but the eternal God.

GOD IS IMMUTABLE

Only God is unchanging and unchangeable. God is above all causes of change and even the possibility of it. This unchangeableness or immutability of God is closely associated with His immensity (He exceeds space to the infinite degree) and eternity (He exceeds time to the infinite degree). In contrast to the ever-changing world, of Him it can be said, "They shall be changed: But thou art the same" (Ps. 102:26-27).

God Cannot Change His Nature

As an infinite and absolute being, self-existent and absolutely independent, God is exalted above all the causes and even the possibilities of a change. He can neither increase nor decrease. He is subject to no process of development or self-evolution. His knowledge and power can never be greater or less. He can be neither wiser nor holier; He cannot be more righteous or more merciful than He ever has been or ever will be. He is absolutely above all law that governs time and change, for His word is law.

God cannot change in His relation to men and women. What encouragement would there be to lift up our eyes to one who was of one mind today and another mind tomorrow? Would we trust a vacillating ruler? It was because God is unchangeable in His mercy that there was hope for apostate Israel: "I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Mal. 3:6).

God Cannot Change His Word (Ps. 119:160; Matt. 5:18; John 10:35b)

It is the most natural thing in the world for a human's word to be broken. Why is it that our friends and relatives have a legal, written form for the slightest business transactions? Isn't it because we may fully expect man's spoken word to be broken? Is not man a changeable creature? How many times have we been deceived by those in whom we placed confidence? Is not man a limited creature? Does he not often find himself a victim of circumstances and unable to fulfill his obligations, however much he may desire to do so? Altogether, then, it is not only possible but quite probable that man's word will be broken. In sharp contrast we find that the word of God remains the same.

God Cannot Change His Will (1 Sam. 15:11; Jer. 26:13)

If God cannot change, how do we explain the Bible passages that speak of God as “repenting”?

This repentant attitude of God does not involve any real change in His character and purpose. He ever hates sin and ever pities and loves the sinner. This attitude is just as true before as after the sinner’s repentance. There is no change fundamentally in God’s attitude, although He may change his *dealings* in view of man’s change. For example, God’s attitude toward the wickedness of Israel did not change. He hated her sin, and because she persisted in associating herself with sin, of necessity she shared its penalties.

But when Israel, whom God always loved and pitied, repented and separated herself from her sin, God’s dealing with her in consequence changed. As Strong says, “God’s immutability is not that of the stone, that has no internal experience, but rather that of the column of mercury that rises and falls with every change in the temperature of the surrounding atmosphere” (*Systematic Theology*, p. 258). God may will a change, but He cannot change His will.

GOD IS OMNISCIENT

By *omniscience* is meant that God’s knowledge is infinite. The knowledge of God is as precise, minute, and certain as it is vast and all-embracing. All that He says and does is absolutely true and right. He is too wise to make any mistakes. He can neither err nor fail. We have but to dwell upon this vast subject to cry out like Paul in wonder and astonishment, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God” (Rom. 11:33).

God Knows All the Past (Acts 15:18; 1 John 3:20)

Man is a forgetful creature. Even with the benefit of papers and books with which to refresh his memory, he remembers little of the past. True, he may study what has been recorded on the pages of history. He may dig down and unearth the archives of ancient nations to learn something about the past. But how imperfect his knowledge, and how quickly he forgets it!

God Knows All the Present

GOD’S PERFECT KNOWLEDGE OF NATURE

(GEN. 15:5; PS. 147:4-5; ISA. 40:26)

God challenged Abraham to count the stars, that he might have some conception of the great numbers who would constitute his descendants.

But no scientist of Abraham's day would have ventured to compare the stars with the sands of the sea (Gen. 22:17). Hipparchus, the ancient astronomer, counted 1,022 stars, and later Ptolemy recorded 1,026. Jeremiah's declaration that the host of heaven could not be numbered (Jer. 33:22) would seem a scientific inaccuracy were it not for the fact that our latest instruments have revealed an almost inconceivable and incalculable number of stars.

But while man even today cannot count the stars, God not only knows the number but knows the names of every one of them. Can you conceive of any man having sufficient knowledge to call each one of the millions of inhabitants of this globe by name? And yet God knows the names of all the stars in our own galaxy, and an incalculable number in ten million other galaxies.

GOD'S PERFECT KNOWLEDGE OF MEN

- (1) Man's ways (Job 24:23; Ps. 119:168; 139:3; Prov. 5:21; Heb. 4:13).
- (2) Man's words (Ps. 19:14; 139:4).
- (3) Man's thoughts (Ps. 139:2; Luke 11:17; 1 Cor. 3:20).
- (4) Man's desires (Acts 1:24; Rom. 8:27).

God Knows All the Future (Isa. 41:21-23; 42:9; 46:10; 48:5-7)

In no way is the Bible better attested as the Word of God than in its revelation of God's foreknowledge. More than one-fourth of the Bible is prophecy. We have but to read what God said would be the end of Babylon and Nineveh and then walk through the ruins of these once magnificent cities to realize God's foreknowledge.

No prophet gives us a greater glimpse of God's foreknowledge than Isaiah. Judah was to be carried away by the powerful armies of Babylon. All the prophets had declared that, but it was left for Isaiah to challenge the gods of Babylon, if they were gods at all, to declare things to come.

Very minutely Isaiah foretells the coming of Cyrus, the conqueror of Babylon (45:1-4; 46:11). This prophecy was spoken when Assyria, and not Babylon, was in the ascendancy, and it was spoken of Persia, an inferior nation. In fact, the name of Cyrus was revealed 180 years before he was born.

Christ again and again predicted His crucifixion and resurrection (Matt. 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19; 26:1-2; Mark 10:33-34). He thus proved not only that He knew the future, but that He was God. These predictions were so seemingly improbable and even impossible that the disciples were not able to comprehend them (Mark 8:31-33; 9:31-32).

Not a thing shall transpire in the next thousand years that is not already known to the infinite mind of God. Not a deed shall be transacted tomorrow or the next day or the next—there is nothing that shall transpire in eternity—but God knows it altogether.

God's Right Use of Knowledge (Isa. 40:13-14)

With all man's knowledge, he lacks the necessary wisdom to make a right use of that knowledge. Man is constantly making mistakes. "To err is human." But not so with God; His wisdom is infinite. Only God is removed beyond the possibility of making a mistake. He never experiments; He never changes His plans. The ages have not taught Him anything, and He cannot improve upon what He has already done, for His wisdom assures perfection in the first place.

GOD'S WISDOM IN CREATION (PROV. 3:19; ISA. 40:12)

In a musical instrument there is first the skill of the workman in the construction, then of the artisan in tuning its strings, and finally the technique of the musician in expressing the beauty of its tones. So in the works of creation we see the wisdom of God first in framing the world, then in tuning its parts to perfect harmony, and finally in expressing its marvelous utility in His wise government of all its creatures. The wisdom of creation appears in:

Its Variety (Ps. 104:24; 1 Cor. 15:41)

One never completes his studies of zoology or botany, for there appear to be endless species of creatures and a countless variety of plants. There are wonderful similarities, and yet even more marvelous differences in two leaves growing on the same tree. Even "one star differeth from another star in glory" (1 Cor. 15:41).

Its Beauty and Harmony (Eccl. 3:11)

The lilies of the field are more beautiful and fragrant than the most exquisite artificial flower. The movements of the planets in perfect harmony with each other are what constitute the safety and sublimity of the solar system.

Its Fitness and Usefulness (Prov. 30:24-28)

Divine wisdom is even more marvelous in its purposes than in its creation. There is a spider on the wall, but he takes hold on king's palaces and spins his web to rid the world of noxious flies. There is a tiny sea creature under the water, but it builds an island. The star in the sky guides a great vessel.

God's Wisdom in Providence (Ps. 104:13-14, 27- 28)

This can be shown in a multitude of ways. One example is the earth. We know how thin a covering of the surface of the earth is the atmosphere, that envelope of gases surrounding the earth, which sustains life. The atmosphere, so little appreciated because of its seeming abundance, is the medium of both light and sound and the means of both heat and protection.

THE MEDIUM OF LIGHT

If it were not for the air surrounding us, it would be dark except where the sun shines directly upon us. At sunrise, we would be plunged into immediate daylight, and at sunset into immediate darkness. It would not get lighter or darker gradually; there would be no dawn or twilight.

THE MEDIUM OF SOUND

If it were not for the air, we could never make or hear a sound of any kind. All sounds are made and carried by air vibrations.

THE MEANS OF HEAT

The atmosphere serves as a blanket to hold the heat of the sun. Except for this air-blanket around the earth, the daytime heat would be too great, and the cold at night would be too severe for life to exist on the earth. It is the atmosphere that makes artificial heat possible.

THE MEANS OF PROTECTION

Were there no atmosphere, thousands of meteorites, traveling in space and attracted to the earth, would fall with deadly impact upon its surface. The atmosphere serves as a cushion to arrest their velocity and break the violence of their fall.

God's Wisdom in Redemption

CHRIST, THE WISDOM OF GOD (1 COR. 1:24)

Wise men went to Jerusalem to find the King of kings, but the poor, humble shepherds went to Bethlehem and found Christ at once. God chose a lowly manger instead of a king's splendid palace as the birthplace of His Son. None was poorer, none humbler, none more lowly from an earthly standpoint than the only Redeemer of God's elect. Therefore, no one can say Christianity is only for the wise, the wealthy, or the noble. God makes it possible for all sinners to be saved and makes their salvation depend not upon their wisdom but upon their faith.

THE CHURCH, THE WISDOM OF GOD (1 COR. 1:21)

God chose twelve uneducated men to evangelize the world, to make it evident that it is the wisdom of the Gospel and not the wisdom of men that wins human hearts. God chose not warriors but weaklings to proclaim the Gospel, and the “foolishness” of their message conquered continents. They spread the Gospel, and the Lord received the glory—not the apostles.

GOD IS OMNIPOTENT

God’s power is infinite and has no bounds or limitations except His own will. For Him to think is to act; to resolve is to execute. “Hath he said, and shall he not do it?” (Num. 23:19). He speaks, and it is done. Since His wisdom is perfect, He does not experiment but once for all executes a work that cannot be improved.

God’s Power in Creation (Ps. 33:4-9; Isa. 40:12-17)

The first chapter of Genesis is not the only account of creation in the Bible. God’s marvelous wisdom and power in the construction of the earth are reiterated again and again. The psalmist declared that by God’s word the heavens were made and that the starry host was brought into existence “by the breath of his mouth.”

When we are inclined to feel the world is getting larger and man is growing great, we would do well to read Isaiah 40. Note specifically how God’s power is magnified in verses 12-17.

God’s Power in Providence (Jer. 32:17-24)

Jeremiah was in prison when he offered this wonderful prayer. This was in the last days of Jerusalem, when the city was being besieged by Nebuchadnezzar. Because the faithful prophet persisted in proclaiming the ultimate capture of the city, he was imprisoned. But his sad predicament did not lessen his faith in the Almighty. He approached God with an acknowledgment that there is nothing too hard for Him who made the heaven and the earth (v. 17), and it is interesting to notice that when his prayer was finished, God answered him in the same language of His omnipotence (v. 27). Jeremiah magnified God’s power in His specific dealings with Israel (vv. 20-24).

God’s Power over Nature (Ps. 107:25-29; Matt. 8:24-27)

In Psalm 107 we have a picture of a storm at sea. The towering waves threaten to overwhelm the vessel as it rides one moment on the crest of the billow and then drops down to the depths beneath. The sailors stag-

ger on deck like “a drunken man, and are at their wits’ end.” But how quickly the storm subsides and the waves are still when God is asked to intervene. God’s special intervention in the laws of nature is called a miracle. These miracles in nature were not limited to the time of Christ, for many today can testify to remarkable answers to prayer: when rain has been provided, a scourge of insects has been stayed, or a forest fire has been diverted.

God’s Power over Man (Exod. 5:2; 12:30-31; Dan. 4:30-37)

Some of the world’s greatest monarchs defied Almighty God only to discover that all kings owe their place and power to God (Prov. 8:15-16). When the great Napoleon set out to conquer Russia at the head of the Grand Army of Europe, someone reminded him that “man proposes, but God disposes.” The conqueror of Europe replied, “I am he that both proposes and disposes.” His magnificent army seemed invincible, but God used tiny snowflakes to overwhelm it. The flower of European militia perished in the snowbanks of Russia. And God also used a storm to defeat the invincible Armada of Philip II of Spain.

God’s Power over Satan (Job 1:10, 12; 2:6; Luke 22:31-32)

Satan, a fallen angel and the prince of the powers of darkness, is called “the god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4), so completely does he dominate it. But Satan has no power over any of God’s children except as God allows. This fact is clearly established in the cases of Job and Peter. God can set a limit to the power of Satan, just as He can stop the raging waves of the ocean. One day the Lord God omnipotent will reign over heaven and earth, and the devil will be “cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Rev. 20:10).

God’s Power in Redemption (Acts 9:3-6; 16:30-34)

How quickly God transformed the lives of Saul the persecutor and the jailer of Philippi who was about to commit suicide! Thousands today could give similar testimony to the saving power of God. One of the most convincing accounts of the grace of God is that of the transformation of the savage, spear-ruled Auca Indians who came under the influence of the Gospel through the martyrdom of five missionaries in Ecuador in 1956. This dramatic account is told in story and picture in Elisabeth Elliot’s *The Savage My Kinsman*.

God's Power to Will

God's omnipotence is dependent upon His will. Even greater than God's omnipotence is His perfect character that controls it. Character is not so much made up of impulses as restraints. God's high moral character makes it impossible for Him to misuse His omnipotence. God's will, then, is dependent upon His character.

- God is infinitely wise and cannot will what is foolish.
- God is infinitely just and cannot will what is unfair.
- God is infinitely good and cannot will what is evil.
- God is infinitely pure and cannot will what is unholy.

GOD IS OMNIPRESENT

The omnipresence of God is closely associated with His omnipotence and omniscience. "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD" (Jer. 23:24). All-seeing presupposes God being always present. Pantheists declare that God is everything, but Scripture teaches that the Creator is apart from His creation. Astronomers have been unable to measure the bounds of the universe; thus it is most difficult for men to comprehend this attribute of God. We must simply accept the scriptural statement of the fact. The 139th Psalm speaks of the omniscience of God (vv. 1-6) and the omnipotence of God (vv. 13-19) but dwells particularly on His omnipresence (vv. 7-12). David realized that he was never out of the sight of God any more than he was outside of the range of His knowledge and power. In these and many other Scriptures (including Job 22:12-14; Jer. 23:23-24) it is clearly taught that God is everywhere personally present and acting.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by the infinitude of God?
2. How is *everlasting* different from *eternal*?
3. Name three things God cannot change.
4. How does the fact that God is immutable benefit the believer?
5. About what three periods of time does God know everything?
6. What does God know about the stars?
7. How does God's foreknowledge prove that the Bible is the Word of God?
8. How does God's wisdom eliminate the possibility of His making a mistake?

9. How is God's wisdom shown in the events associated with the coming of Christ?
10. What suggestions of God's power in creation are shown in Isaiah 40?
11. Illustrate ways in which God's will is dependent upon His character.
12. What is the scriptural teaching concerning the omnipresence of God?

APPLYING DOCTRINE TO LIFE

1. What personal witness should be presented to a person who does not believe in the existence of God?
2. How should the omniscience of God affect one's life and ministry?