

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics

## The Attributes of God

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It is difficult to clearly distinguish between the attributes and the nature of God. It is maintained by some that such a division ought not to be made; that these qualities of God which we call attributes are in reality part of His nature and essence. Whether this be exactly so or not, our purpose in speaking of the attributes of God is for convenience in the study of the doctrine of God.

It has been customary to divide the attributes of God into two classes: the natural, and the moral. The natural attributes are omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, eternity; the moral attributes: holiness, righteousness, faithfulness, mercy and loving-kindness, and love.

### 1. *The Natural Attributes*

#### A. THE OMNISCIENCE OF GOD

God is a Spirit, and as such has knowledge. He is a perfect Spirit, and as such has perfect knowledge. By omniscience is meant that God knows all things and is absolutely perfect in knowledge.

##### (1) SCRIPTURES SETTING FORTH THE FACT OF GOD'S OMNISCIENCE

*In general:* Job 11:7, 8—"Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" Job's friends professed to have discovered the reason for his affliction, for, forsooth, had they not found out the secrets of the divine wisdom unto perfection? No, such is beyond their human, finite ken. Isa. 40:28—"There is no searching of his understanding." Israel's captive condition might lead to loss of trust and faith in God. But Israel has not seen all God's plans—no man has. Job 37:16—"The wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge." Could Job explain the wonders of the natural phenomena around him? Much less the purposes and judgments of God. Psa. 147:5—"His understanding is infinite." Of His understanding there is no number, no computation. Israel is not lost sight of. He who can number and name and call the stars is able also to call each of the Jews by name even out of captivity. His knowledge is not to be measured by ours. 1 John 3:20—"God knoweth all things." Our hearts may pass over certain things, and fail to see some things that should be confessed. God, however, sees all things. Rom. 11:33—"How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past

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finding out.” The mysterious purposes and decrees of God touching man and his salvation are beyond all human comprehension.

*In detail, and by way of illustration:*

## **(a) His Knowledge is Absolutely Comprehensive.**

Prov. 15:3—“The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch upon the evil and the good.” How could He reward and punish otherwise? Not one single thing occurring in any place escapes His knowledge. 5:21—“For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings.” We may have habits hidden from our fellow creatures, but not from God.

## **(b) God Has a Perfect Knowledge of All that is in Nature.**

Psa. 147:4—“He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names.” Man cannot (Gen. 15:5). How, then, can Israel say, “My way is hid from the Lord”? Cf. Isa. 40:26, 27. Matt. 10: 29—“One ... sparrow shall not fall to the ground without your Father.” Much less would one of His children who perchance might be killed for His name’s sake fall without His knowledge.

## **(c) God Has a Perfect Knowledge of All that Transpires in Human Experience.**

Prov. 5:21—“For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings.” All a man’s doings are weighed by God. How this should affect his conduct! Psa. 139:2, 3—“Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.” Before our thoughts are fully developed, our unspoken sentences, the rising feeling in our hearts, our activity, our resting, all that we do from day to day is known and sifted by God. v. 4—“There is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.” Not only thoughts and purposes, but words spoken, idle, good, or bad. Exod. 3:7—“I have seen the affliction ... heard the cry: know the sorrows of my people which are in Egypt.” The tears and grief which they dared not show to their taskmasters, God saw and noted. Did God know of their trouble in Egypt? It seemed to them as though He did not. But He did. Matt. 10:29, 30—“But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.” What minute knowledge is this! Exod. 3:19—“And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand.” Here is intimate knowledge as to what a single individual will do. Isa. 48:18—“O that thou hadst harkened to my commandments! then had thy peace have been as a river,” etc. God knows what our lives would have been if only we had acted and decided differently.

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## (d) God Has a Perfect Knowledge of All that Transpires in Human History.

With what precision are national changes and destinies foretold and depicted in Dan. 2 and 8! Acts 15:18—“Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world [ages].” In the context surrounding this verse are clearly set forth the religious changes that were to characterize the generations to come, the which have been so far literally, though not fully, fulfilled.

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## (e) God Knows from All Eternity to All Eternity What Will Take Place.

The omniscience of God is adduced as the proof that He alone is God, especially as contrasted with the gods (idols) of the heathen: Isa. 48:5-8—“I have even from the beginning declared it unto thee; before it came to pass I showed it thee.... I have showed thee new things from this time, even hidden things,” etc. 46:9, 10—“I am God ... declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.” Here God is announcing to His prophets things that are to occur in the future which it is impossible for the human understanding to know or reach. There is no past, present, future with God. Everything is one great living present. We are like a man standing by a river in a low place, and who, consequently, can see that part of the river only that passes by him; but he who is aloof in the air may see the whole course of the river, how it rises, and how it runs. Thus is it with God.

## (2) CERTAIN PROBLEMS IN CONNECTION WITH THE DOCTRINE OF THE OMNISCIENCE OF GOD

How the divine intelligence can comprehend so vast and multitudinous and exhaustless a number of things must forever surpass our comprehension. “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” (Rom. 11:33). “There is no searching of his understanding; it is beyond human computation.” We must expect, therefore, to stand amazed in the presence of such matchless wisdom, and find problems in connection therewith which must for the time, at least, remain unsolved.

Again, we must not confound the foreknowledge of God with His foreordination. The two things are, in a sense, distinct. The fact that God foreknows a thing makes that thing certain but not necessary. His foreordination is based upon His foreknowledge. Pharaoh was responsible for the hardening of his heart even though that hardening process was foreknown and foretold by God. The actions of men are considered certain but not necessary by reason of the divine foreknowledge.

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## B. THE OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD

The omnipotence of God is that attribute by which He can bring to pass everything which He wills. God's power admits of no bounds or limitations. God's declaration of His intention is the pledge of the thing intended being carried out. "Hath he said, and shall he not do it?"

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### (1) SCRIPTURAL DECLARATION OF THE FACT; IN GENERAL:

Job 42:2 (R. V.)—"I know that thou canst do everything [all things], and that no purpose of thine can be restrained." The mighty review of all God's works as it passes before Job (context) brings forth this confession: "There is no resisting thy might, and there is no purpose thou canst not carry out." Gen. 18:14—"Is anything too hard for the Lord?" What had ceased to be possible by natural means comes to pass by supernatural means.

### (2) SCRIPTURAL DECLARATION OF THE FACT; IN DETAIL:

#### (a) In the World of Nature

Gen. 1:1-3—"God created the heaven and the earth. And God said, Let there be light, and there was light." Thus "he spake and it was done. He commanded and it stood fast." He does not need even to give His hand to the work; His word is sufficient. Psa. 107:25-29—"He raiseth the stormy wind ... he maketh the storm calm." "Even the winds and the sea obey him." God's slightest word, once uttered, is a standing law to which all nature must absolutely conform. Nahum 1:5, 6—"The mountains quake at him ... the hills melt ... the earth is burned at his presence ... the rocks are thrown down by him." If such is His power how shall Assyria withstand it? This is God's comforting message to Israel. Everything in the sky, in sea, on earth is absolutely subject to His control.

#### (b) In the Experience of Mankind

How wonderfully this is illustrated in the experience of Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. 4; and in the conversion of Saul, Acts 9; as well as in the case of Pharaoh, Exod. 4:11. James 4:12-15—" ... For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that." All human actions, whether present or future, are dependent upon the will and power of God. These things are in God's, not in man's, power. See also the parable of the rich fool, Luke 12:16-21.

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## (c) The Heavenly Inhabitants are Subject to His Will and Word.

Dan. 4:35 (R. V.)—"He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven." Heb. 1:14—"Are they [angels] not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

## (d) Even Satan is Under the Control of God.

Satan has no power over any of God's children saving as God permits him to have. This fact is clearly established in the case of Job (1:12 and 2:6), and Peter (Luke 22:31, 32), in which we are told that Satan had petitioned God that he might sift the self-righteous patriarch and the impulsive apostle. Finally Satan is to be forever bound with a great chain (Rev. 20:2). God can set a bar to the malignity of Satan just as he can set a bar to the waves of the sea.

## C. THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD

By the omnipresence of God is meant that God is everywhere present. This attribute is closely connected with the omniscience and omnipotence of God, for if God is everywhere present He is everywhere active and possesses full knowledge of all that transpires in every place.

This does not mean that God is everywhere present in a bodily sense, nor even in the same sense; for there is a sense in which He may be in heaven, His dwelling place, in which He cannot be said to be elsewhere. We must guard against the pantheistic idea which claims that God *is* everything, while maintaining the Scriptural doctrine that He is everywhere present in all things. Pantheism emphasizes the omnipresent activity of God, but denies His personality. Those holding the doctrine of pantheism make loud claims to philosophic ability and high intellectual training, but is it not remarkable that it is in connection with this very phase of the doctrine of God that the Apostle Paul says "they became fools"? (Rom.1.) God is everywhere and in every place; His center is everywhere; His circumference nowhere. But this presence is a spiritual and not a material presence; yet it is a real presence.

### (1) SCRIPTURAL STATEMENT OF THE FACT

Jer. 23:23, 24—"Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." Did the false prophets think that they could hide their secret crimes from God? Or that He could not pursue them into foreign countries? Or that He knew what was transpiring in heaven only and not upon the earth, and even in its most

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distant corners? It was false for them to thus delude themselves—their sins would be detected and punished (Psa. 10:1-14).

Psa. 139:7-12—“Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence,” etc. How wondrously the attributes of God are grouped in this psalm. In vv. 1-6—the psalmist speaks of the omniscience of God: God knows him through and through. In vv. 13-19 it is the omnipotence of God which overwhelms the psalmist. The omnipresence of God is set forth in vv. 7-12. The psalmist realizes that he is never out of the sight of God any more than he is outside of the range of His knowledge and power. God is in heaven; “Hell is naked before Him”; souls in the intermediate state are fully known to Him (cf. Job 26:2; Jonah 2:2); the darkness is as the light to Him. Job 22:12-14—“Is not God in the height of heaven? ... Can he judge through the dark cloud? Thick clouds are a covering to him that he seeth not,” etc. All agreed that God displayed His presence in the heaven, but Job had inferred from this that God could not know and did not take notice of such actions of men as were hidden behind the intervening clouds. Not that Job was atheistic; no, but probably denied to God the attribute of omnipresence and omniscience. Acts 17:24-28—“For in him we live, and move, and have our being.” Without His upholding hand we must perish; God is our nearest environment. From these and many other scriptures we are clearly taught that God is everywhere present and acting; there is no place where God is not.

This does not mean that God is everywhere present in the same sense. For we are told that He is in heaven, His dwelling place (1 Kings 8:30); that Christ is at His right hand in heaven (Eph. 1:20); that God’s throne is in heaven (Rev. 21:2; Isa. 66:1).

We may summarize the doctrine of the Trinity thus: God the Father is specially manifested in heaven; God the Son has been specially manifested on the earth; God the Spirit is manifested everywhere.

Just as the soul is present in every part of the body so God is present in every part of the world.

## (2) SOME PRACTICAL INFERENCES FROM THIS DOCTRINE

First, *of Comfort*: The nearness of God to the believer. “Speak to Him then for He listens. And spirit with spirit can meet; Closer is He than breathing, And nearer than hands or feet.” “God is never so far off, As even to be near; He is within. Our spirit is the home He holds most dear. To think of Him as by our side is almost as untrue, As to remove His shrine beyond those skies of starry blue.”—*Faber*. The omnipresence is not only a detective truth—it is protective also. After dwelling on this great and awful attribute in Psalm 139, the psalmist, in vv. 17, 18, exclaims: “How precious are thy thoughts to me

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... when I awake, I am still with thee.” By this is meant that God stands by our side to help, and as One who loves and understands us (Matt. 28:20).

Second, *of Warning*: “As in the Roman empire the whole world was one great prison to a malefactor, and in his flight to the most distant lands the emperor could track him, so under the government of God no sinner can escape the eye of the judge.” Thus the omnipresence of God is detective as well as protective. “Thou God seest me,” should serve as warning to keep us from sin.

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## D. THE ETERNITY AND IMMUTABILITY OF GOD

The word “eternal” is used in two senses in the Bible: figuratively, as denoting existence which may have a beginning, but will have no end, e. g., angels, the human soul; literally, denoting an existence which has neither beginning nor ending, like that of God. Time has past, present, future; eternity has not. Eternity is infinite duration without any beginning, end, or limit—an ever abiding present. We can conceive of it only as duration indefinitely extended from the present moment in two directions—as to the past and as to the future. “One of the deaf and dumb pupils in the institution of Paris, being desired to express his idea of the eternity of the Deity, replied: ‘It is duration, without beginning or end; existence, without bounds or dimension; present, without past or future. His eternity is youth, without infancy or old age; life, without birth or death; today, without yesterday or tomorrow.’ ”

By the immutability of God is meant that God’s nature is absolutely unchangeable. It is not possible that He should possess one attribute at one time that He does not possess at another. Nor can there be any change in the Deity for better or for worse. God remains forever the same. He is without beginning and without end; the self-existent “I am”; He remains forever the same, and unchangeable.

### (1) SCRIPTURAL STATEMENT OF THE FACT: THE ETERNITY OF GOD

Hab. 1:12—“Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One?” Chaldea had threatened to annihilate Israel. The prophet cannot believe it possible, for has not God *eternal* purposes for Israel? Is He not holy? How, then, can evil triumph? Psa. 90:2—“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.” Short and transitory is the life of man; with God it is otherwise. The perishable nature of man is here compared with the imperishable nature of God. Psa. 102:24-27—“I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years are throughout all generations. Of old thou hast laid the foundations of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt

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thou change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end." With the perishable nature of the whole material creation the psalmist contrasts the imperishable nature of God. Exod. 3:14—"And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM." The past, present and future lie in these words for the name of Jehovah. Rev. 1:8—"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

## (2) SCRIPTURAL STATEMENT OF THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD:

Mal. 3:6—"I am the Lord, I change not." Man's hope lies in that fact, as the context here shows. Man had changed in his life and purpose toward God, and if God, like man, had changed, man would have been destroyed. James 1:17—"The Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." There is no change—in the sense of the degree or intensity of light such as is manifested in the heavenly bodies. Such lights are constantly varying and changing; not so with God. There is no inherent, indwelling, possible change in God. 1 Sam. 15:29—"And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent." From these scriptures we assert that God, in His nature and character, is absolutely without change.

## Does God Repent?

What, then, shall we say with regard to such scriptures as Jonah 3:10 and Gen. 6:6—"And God repented of the evil, that he said he would do unto them." "And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." In reply we may say that God does not change, but threatens that men may change. "The repentant attitude in God does not involve any real change in the character and purposes of God. He ever hates the sin and ever pities and loves the sinner; that is so both before and after the sinner's repentance. Divine repentance is therefore the same principle acting differently in altered circumstances. If the prospect of punishment answers the same purpose as that intended by the punishment itself, then there is no inconsistency in its remission, for punishment is not an end, it is only a means to goodness, to the reign of the law of righteousness." When God appears to be displeased with anything, or orders it differently from what we expected, we say, after the manner of men, that He repents. God's attitude towards the Ninevites had not changed, but they had changed; and because they had changed from sin unto righteousness, God's attitude towards them and His intended dealings with them as sinners must of necessity change, while, of course, God's character had in no wise changed with respect to these people, although His dealings with them had. So that we may say that God's *character* never changes, but His *dealings* with men change as they change from ungodliness to godliness and from disobedience unto obedience. "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



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every change in the temperature of the surrounding atmosphere. When a man bicycling against the wind turns about and goes with the wind instead of going against it, the wind seems to change, although it is blowing just as it was before.” — *Strong*.

## 2. *The Moral Attributes*

### A. THE HOLINESS OF GOD

If there is any difference in importance in the attributes of God, that of His holiness seems to occupy the first place. It is, to say the least, the one attribute which God would have His people remember Him by more than any other. In the visions of Himself which God granted men in the Scriptures the thing that stood out most prominent was the divine holiness. This is clearly seen by referring to the visions of Moses, Job, and Isaiah. Some thirty times does the Prophet Isaiah speak of Jehovah as “the Holy One,” thus indicating what feature of those beatific visions had most impressed him.

The holiness of God is the message of the entire Old Testament. To the prophets God was the absolutely Holy One; the One with eyes too pure to behold evil; the One swift to punish iniquity. In taking a photograph, the part of the body which we desire most to see is not the hands or feet, but the face. So is it with our vision of God. He desires us to see not His hand and finger, denoting His power and skill, nor even His throne as indicating His majesty. It is His holiness by which He desires to be remembered as that is the attribute which most glorifies Him. Let us bear this fact in mind as we study this attribute of the divine nature. It is just this vision of God that we need today when the tendency to deny the reality or the awfulness of sin is so prevalent. Our view of the necessity of the atonement will depend very largely upon our view of the holiness of God. Light views of God and His holiness will produce light views of sin and the atonement.

#### (1) SCRIPTURAL STATEMENTS SETTING FORTH THE FACT OF GOD’S HOLINESS

Isa. 57:15—“Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place.” Psa. 99:9—“Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at his holy hill: for the Lord our God is holy.” Hab. 1:13—“Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.” 1 Pet. 1:15, 16—“But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation. Because it is written, Be ye holy: for I am holy.” God’s personal name is holy. John 17:11—“Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me.” Christ here contemplates the Father as the Holy One, as the source and agent of that which He desires for His disciples, namely, holiness of heart and life, being kept from the evil of this world.

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Is it not remarkable that this attribute of holiness is ascribed to each of the three persons of the Trinity? God the Father is the Holy One of Israel (Isa. 41:14); God the Son is the Holy One (Acts 3:14); God the Spirit is called the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30).

## (2) THE SCRIPTURAL MEANING OF HOLINESS AS APPLIED TO GOD

Job 34:10—“Be it far from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty that he should commit iniquity.” An evil God, one that could commit evil would be a contradiction in terms, an impossible, inconceivable idea. Job seemed to doubt that the principle on which the universe was conducted was one of absolute equity. He must know that God is free from all evil-doing. However hidden the meaning of His dealings, He is always just. God never did, never will do wrong to any of His creatures; He will never punish wrongly. Men may, yea, often do; God never does. Lev. 11:43–45—“Ye shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creepeth, neither shall ye make yourselves unclean with them, that ye should be defiled thereby. For I am the Lord your God; ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. ... Ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.” This means that God is absolutely clean and pure and free from all defilement.

The construction of the Tabernacle, with its holy and most holy place into which the high priest alone entered once a year; the Ten Commandments, with their moral categories; the laws of clean and unclean animals and things—all these speak to us in unmistakable terms as to what is meant by holiness as applied to God.

Two things, by way of definition, may be inferred from these Scriptures: first, negatively, that God is entirely apart from all that is evil and from all that defiles both in Himself and in relation to all His creatures; second, and positively, by the holiness of God is meant the consummate holiness, perfection, purity, and absolute sanctity of His nature. There is absolutely nothing unholy in Him. So the Apostle John declares: “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.”

## (3) THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD’S HOLINESS

Prov. 15:9, 26—“The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord. The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination unto the Lord.” God hates sin, and is its uncompromising foe. Sin is a vile and detestable thing to God. Isa. 59:1, 2—“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.” Israel’s sin had raised a partition wall. The infinite distance between the sinner and God is because of sin. The sinner and God are at

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opposite poles of the moral universe. This in answer to Israel's charge of God's inability. From these two scriptures it is clear that God's holiness manifests itself in the hatred of sin and the separation of the sinner from Himself.

Herein lies the need of the atonement, whereby this awful distance is bridged over. This is the lesson taught by the construction of the Tabernacle as to the division into the holy place and the most holy place.

Prov. 15:9—"But he loveth him that followeth after righteousness." John 3:16—"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," etc. Here God's holiness is seen in that He loves righteousness in the life of His children to such a degree that He gave His only begotten Son to secure it. The Cross shows how much God loves holiness. The Cross stands for God's holiness before even His love. For Christ died not merely for our sins, but in order that He might provide us with that righteousness of life which God loves. "He died that we might be forgiven; he died to make us good." Do we love holiness to the extent of sacrificing for it?

## (4) PRACTICAL DEDUCTIONS FROM THE DOCTRINE OF GOD'S HOLINESS

First, we should approach God with "reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12:28). In the story of Moses' approach to the burning bush, the smiting of the men at Bethshemesh, the boundary set about Mt. Sinai, we are taught to feel our own unworthiness. There is too much hilarity in our approach unto God. Eccl. 5:1-3 inculcates great care in our address to God.

Second, we shall have right views of sin when we get right views of God's holiness. Isaiah, the holiest man in all Israel, was cast down at the sight of his own sin after he had seen the vision of God's holiness. The same thing is true of Job (40:3-5; 42:4-5). We confess sin in such easy and familiar terms that it has almost lost its terror for us.

Third, that approach to a holy God must be through the merits of Christ, and on the ground of a righteousness which is Christ's and which naturally we do not possess. Herein lies the need of the atonement.

## B. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JUSTICE OF GOD

In a certain sense these attributes are but the manifestation of God's holiness. It is holiness as manifested in dealing with the sons of men. Holiness has to do more particularly with the character of God in itself, while in righteousness and justice that character is expressed in the dealings of God with men. Three things may be said in the consideration of the righteousness and justice of God: first, there is the imposing of righteousness, laws and demands, which may be called legislative holiness, and may be known as the

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righteousness of God; second, there is the executing of the penalties attached to those laws, which may be called judicial holiness; third, there is the sense in which the attributes of the righteousness and justice of God may be regarded as the actual carrying out of the holy nature of God in the government of the world. So that in the righteousness of God we have His love of holiness, and in the justice of God, His hatred of sin.

Again righteousness, as here used, has reference to the very nature of God as He is in Himself—that attribute which leads God always to do right. Justice, as an attribute of God, is devoid of all passion or caprice; it is vindicative, not vindictive. And so the righteousness and justice of the God of Israel were made to stand out prominently as contrasted with the caprice of the heathen gods.

## (1) SCRIPTURAL STATEMENT OF THE FACT

Psa. 116: 5—“Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful.” The context here shows that it is because of this fact that God listens to men, and because, having promised to hear, He is bound to keep His promises. Ezra 9:15—“O Lord God of Israel, thou art righteous.” Here the righteousness of Jehovah is acknowledged in the punishment of Israel’s sins. Thou art just, and thou hast brought us into the state in which we are today. Psa. 145:17—“The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.” This is evident in the rewards He gives to the upright, in lifting up the lowly, and in abundantly blessing the good, pure, and true. Jer. 12:1—“Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee.” That is to say, “If I were to bring a charge against Thee I should not be able to convict Thee of injustice, even though I be painfully exercised over the mysteries of Thy providence.”

These scriptures clearly set forth not only the fact that God is righteous and just, but also define these attributes. Here we are told that God, in His government of the world, does always that which is suitable, straight, and right.

## (2) HOW THE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JUSTICE OF GOD ARE REVEALED

In two ways: first, in punishing the wicked: retributive justice; second, in rewarding the righteous: remunerative justice.

### (a) In the Punishment of the Wicked

Psa. 11:4–7—“The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord’s throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men. The Lord trieth the righteous; but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone and an horrible tempest. This shall be the portion of their cup.” This is David’s reply to his timid advisers. Saul may reign upon the earth and do wickedly, but

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God reigns from heaven and will do right. He sees who does right and who does wrong. And there is that in His nature which recoils from the evil that He sees, and will lead Him ultimately to punish it. There is such a thing as the wrath of God. It is here described. Whatever awful thing the description in this verse may mean for the wicked, God grant that we may never know. In Exod. 9:23–27 we have the account of the plague of hail, following which are these words: “And Pharaoh sent ... for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.” Pharaoh here acknowledges the perfect justice of God in punishing him for his sin and rebellion. He knew that he had deserved it all, even though cavillers today say there was injustice with God in His treatment of Pharaoh. Pharaoh himself certainly did not think so. Dan. 9:12–14 and Rev. 16:5, 6 bring out the same thought. How careful sinners ought to be not to fall into the hands of the righteous Judge! No sinner at last will be able to say, “I did not deserve this punishment.”

## **(b) In Forgiving the Sins of the Penitent**

1 John 1:9 (R.V.)—“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Ordinarily, the forgiveness of sin is associated with the mercy, love, and compassion of God, and not with His righteousness and justice. This verse assures us that if we confess our sins, the righteousness and justice of God are our guarantee for forgiveness—God cannot but forgive and cleanse us from all sin.

## **(c) In Keeping His Word and Promise to His Children**

Neh. 9:7, 8—“Thou art the Lord the God, who didst choose Abram ... and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites ... to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous.” We need to recall the tremendous obstacles which stood in the way of the fulfillment of this promise, and yet we should remember the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. When God gives His word, and makes a promise, naught in heaven, on earth, or in hell can make that promise void. His righteousness is the guarantee of its fulfillment.

## **(d) In Showing Himself to Be the Vindicator of His People from All Their Enemies**

Psa. 129:1–4—“Many a time have they afflicted me ... yet they have not prevailed against me. The Lord is righteous: he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.” Sooner or later, God’s people will triumph gloriously as David triumphed over Saul. Even in this life God will give us rest from our enemies; and there shall assuredly come a day when we shall be “where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.”

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## (e) In the Rewarding of the Righteous

Heb. 6:10—“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed towards his name, in that ye have ministered unto the saints, and do minister.” Those who had shown their faith by their works would not now be allowed to lose that faith. The very idea of divine justice implies that the use of this grace, thus evidenced, will be rewarded, not only by continuance in grace, but their final perseverance and reward. 2 Tim. 4:8—“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing.” The righteous Judge will not allow the faithful believer to go unrewarded. He is not like the unrighteous judges of Rome and the Athenian games. Here we are not always rewarded, but some time we shall receive full reward for all the good that we have done. The righteousness of God is the guarantee of all this.

### C. THE MERCY AND LOVING-KINDNESS OF GOD

By these attributes is meant, in general, the kindness, goodness, and compassion of God, the love of God in its relation to both the obedient and the disobedient sons of men. The dew drops on the thistle as well as on the rose.

More specifically: Mercy is usually exercised in connection with guilt; it is that attribute of God which leads Him to seek the welfare, both temporal and spiritual, of sinners, even though at the cost of great sacrifice on His part. “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us. . . . God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Eph. 2:4; Rom. 5:8.)

Loving-kindness is that attribute of God which leads Him to bestow upon His obedient children His constant and choice blessing. “He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8:32.)

#### (1) SCRIPTURAL STATEMENT OF THE FACT

Psa. 103:8—“The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.” For, instead of inflicting pain, poverty, death—which are the wages of sin—God has spared our lives, given us health, increased our blessings and comforts, and given us the life of the ages. Deut. 4:31—“(For the Lord thy God is a merciful God); he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers.” God is ready to accept the penitence of Israel, even now, if only it be sincere. Israel will return and find God only because He is merciful and does not let go of her. It is His mercy that forbids His

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permanently forsaking His people. Psa. 86:15—“But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.” It was because God had so declared Himself to be of this nature that David felt justified in feeling that God would not utterly forsake him in his time of great stress and need. The most striking illustration of the mercy and loving-kindness of God is set forth in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32). Here we have not only the welcome awaiting the wanderer, but also the longing for his return on the part of the anxious and loving father.

## (2) HOW THE MERCY AND LOVING-KINDNESS OF GOD ARE MANIFESTED

In general: We must not forget that God is absolutely sovereign in the bestowal of His blessings—“Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy” (Rom. 9:18). We should also remember that God wills to have mercy on all His creatures—“For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy to all them that call upon thee” (Psa. 86:5).

### (a) Mercy—Towards Sinners in Particular

Luke 6:36—“Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.” Matt. 5: 45—“That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust.” Here even the impenitent and hard-hearted are the recipients of God’s mercy; all sinners, even the impenitent are included in the sweep of His mercy.

Isa. 55:7—“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord: and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” God’s mercy is a holy mercy; it will by no means protect sin, but anxiously awaits to pardon it. God’s mercy is a city of refuge for the penitent, but by no means a sanctuary for the presumptuous. See Prov. 28:13, and Psa. 51:1. God’s mercy is here seen in pardoning the sin of those who do truly repent. We speak about “trusting in the mercy of the Lord.” Let us forsake sin and then trust in the mercy of the Lord and we shall find pardon.

2 Pet. 3:9—“The Lord ... is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” Neh. 9:31—“Nevertheless for thy great mercies’ sake thou didst not utterly consume them; for thou art a gracious and merciful God.” Here is mercy manifested in forbearance with sinners. If God should have dealt with them in justice they would have been cut off long before. Think of the evil, the impurity, the sin that God must see. How it must disgust Him. Then remember that He could crush it all in a moment. Yet He does not. He pleads; He sacrifices to show His love for sinners.

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Surely it is because of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, and because His compassions fail not. Yet, beware lest we abuse this goodness, for our God is also a consuming fire. "Behold, the goodness and the severity of God." The mercy of God is here shown in His loving forbearance with sinners.

## (b) Loving-Kindness Towards the Saints, in Particular

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Psa. 32:10—"But he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about." The very act of trust on the part of the believer moves the heart of God to protect him just as in the case of a parent and his child. The moment I throw myself on God I am enveloped in His mercy—mercy is my environment, like a fiery wall it surrounds me, without a break through which an evil can creep. Resistance surrounds us with "sorrow"; but trust surrounds us with "mercy." In the center of that circle of mercy sits and rests the trusting soul.

Phil. 2:27—"For indeed he was sick nigh unto death; but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow." Here God's loving-kindness is seen in healing up His sick children. Yet remember that "He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy." Not every sick child of God is raised. Psa. 6:2, 4—"Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak: O Lord, heal me.... Deliver my soul for thy mercies' sake." The psalmist asks God to illustrate His mercy in restoring to him his spiritual health. From these scriptures we see that the mercy of God is revealed in healing His children of bodily and spiritual sickness.

Psa. 21:7—"For the king trusteth in the Lord, and through the mercy of the most High he shall not be moved." David feels that, because he trusts in the mercy of the Lord, his throne, whatever may dash against it, is perfectly secure. Is not this true also of the believer's eternal security? More to the mercy of God than to the perseverance of the saints is to be attributed the eternal security of the believer. "He will hold me fast."

## D. THE LOVE OF GOD

Christianity is really the only religion that sets forth the Supreme Being as love. The gods of the heathen are angry, hateful beings, and are in constant need of appeasing.

### (1) SCRIPTURAL STATEMENTS OF THE FACT

1 John 4:8-16—"God is love." "God is light"; "God is Spirit"; "God is love." Spirit and light are expressions of God's essential nature. Love is the expression of His personality corresponding to His nature. It is the nature of God to love. He dwells always in the atmosphere of love. Just how to define or describe the love of God may be difficult if not impossible. It appears from certain scriptures (1 John 3:16; John 3:16) that the love of God



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is of such a nature that it betokens a constant interest in the physical and spiritual welfare of His creatures as to lead Him to make sacrifices beyond human conception to reveal that love.

## (2) THE OBJECTS OF GOD'S LOVE

### (a) Jesus Christ, God's Only-Begotten Son, is the Special Object of His Love.

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Matt. 3:17—"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Also Matt. 17:5; Luke 20:13. Jesus Christ shares the love of the Father in a unique sense, just as He is His Son in a unique sense. He is especially "My chosen." "The One in whom my soul delighteth," "My beloved Son"—literally: the Son of mine, the beloved. And we can readily understand how that He who did the will of God perfectly should thus become the special object of the Father's love. Of course, if the love of God is eternal, as is the nature of God, which must be the case, then, that love must have had an eternal object to love. So Christ, in addressing the Father, says: "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

### (c) Believers in His Son, Jesus Christ, are Special Objects of God's Love.

John 16:27—"For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God." 14:21-23—"He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father. ... If a man love me ... my Father will love him." 17:23—"And hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." Do we really believe these words? We are not on the outskirts of God's love, but in its very midst. There stands Christ right in the very midst of that circle of the Father's love; then He draws us to that spot, and, as it were, disappears, leaving us standing there bathed in the same loving-kindness of the Father in which He Himself had basked.

### (d) God Loves the World of Sinners and Ungodly Men.

John 3:16—"For God so loved the world" was a startling truth to Nicodemus in his narrow exclusivism. God loved not the Jew only, but also the Gentile; not a part of the world of men, but every man in it, irrespective of his moral character. For "God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). This is wonderful when we begin to realize what a world in sin is. The love of God is broader than the measure of man's mind. God desires the salvation of all men (1 Tim. 2:4).

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## (3) HOW THE LOVE OF GOD REVEALS ITSELF

### (a) In Making Infinite Sacrifice for the Salvation of Men

1 John 4:9, 10—“In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” Love is more than compassion; it hides not itself as compassion may do, but displays itself actively in behalf of its object. The Cross of Calvary is the highest expression of the love of God for sinful man. He gave not only a Son, but His only Son, His well-beloved.

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### (b) In Bestowing Full and Complete Pardon on the Penitent

Isa. 38:17—“Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.” Literally, “Thou hast loved my soul back from the pit of destruction.” God had taken the bitterness out of his life and given him the gracious forgiveness of his sins, by putting them far away from Him. Eph. 2:4, 5—“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ,” etc. Verses 1–3 of this chapter show the race rushing headlong to inevitable ruin. “But” reverses the picture; when all help for man fails, then God steps in, and by His mercy, which springs from “His great love,” redeems fallen man, and gives him not only pardon, but a position in His heavenly kingdom by the side of Jesus Christ. All this was “for,” or, perhaps better, “in order to satisfy His great love.” Love led Him to do it.

### (c) In Remembering His Children in All the Varying Circumstances of Life

Isa. 63:9—“In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.” Here is retrospection on the part of the prophet. He thinks of all the oppressions of Israel, and recalls how God’s interests have been bound up with theirs. He was not their adversary; He was their sympathetic, loving friend. He suffered with them. Isa. 49:15, 16—“Can a woman forget her sucking child? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee on the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.” It was the custom those days to trace upon the palms of the hands the outlines of any object of affection; hence a man engraved the name of his god. So God

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could not act without being reminded of Israel. God is always mindful of His own. Saul of Tarsus learned this truth on the way to Damascus.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Evans, W., & Coder, S. M. (1998, ©1974). *The great doctrines of the Bible*. Includes index. (Enl. ed.) (28). Chicago: Moody Press.