

**"Ye shall be
my witnesses"**

SHARING YOUR FAITH



By
**GORDON C.
OLSON**

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THE 3 M'S OF
WITNESSING
The Messenger
The Message
The Method

BIBLE RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP, INC.

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T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

The M E S S E N G E R Must Represent the Resurrected and Living Christ (Mt. 5:14).

The M E S S A G E Must Present God's Revealed Truth and Gospel (I Tim. 2:3-6).

- I. GOD'S NATURE AND CHARACTER as revealed in the Bible.
- II. HAPPINESS AND BLESSEDNESS that man was created to enjoy.
- III. REBELLION against the loving and reasonable moral government of God.
- IV. CONSEQUENCES of man's sin and persistent rebellion against God's mercy.
- V. RECONCILIATION to God and to our fellowmen with its great problems.
- VI. REDEMPTION through the advent and atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- VII. REALIZATION of the tragic consequences of our self-centered lives.
- VIII. ABANDONMENT of selfishness or supreme self-interest as an end in life.
- IX. COMMITMENT of ourselves to the atoning death of Christ as our only hope.
- X. TRANSFORMATION or purification and renewal of our whole inner being.
- XI. CONTINUATION in the love of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- XII. ESTABLISHMENT in the life of sanctification through the Holy Spirit.

The M E T H O D Must Participate in God's Loving Purposes and Activities (I Co. 3:9).

P R E F A C E

"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Lk. 19:10).

"We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God" (II Co. 5:20, ASV).

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings" (Is. 52:7, also Ro. 10:15).

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Ps. 126:6).

"What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy" (I Th. 2:19-20).

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mk. 8:36-37). The Lord Jesus viewed the winning of one soul as of such great value that all the possessions of the world would not balance it. He spent a great deal of His time speaking to one person at a time about his soul's welfare. Somewhere in the winning of every soul there must be a personal contact. Christ came to put God on exhibition, as the word "declared" tells us in John 1:18. He so lived the needs of men in His bosom that He was easily moved to tears (Mt. 9:36). Men are confronted with eternal issues which shall doom their souls. The Lord Jesus has gone on to heaven in the resurrection triumph and has left us as His only witnesses. "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (Jn. 20:21). "Ye shall be my witnesses . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8, ASV).

To be reconciled to God is not to enter into a manner of life which is superhuman or not adapted to our human existence, in which we cannot experience the normal relations and functions of life. It is rather to enter into a state of life in which we live out our intended relationships with God and man in all true intelligence and wisdom. Holiness is simply intelligence applied to our various relations in proper proportion and esteem. "In him (God) we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Co. 10:31).

Salvation is not a partial reconciliation to God or a partial transformation of heart which leaves part of our personality unconquered and unsatisfied. It is rather a full reconciliation to God in blessed fellowship and a full transformation of life, referred to in the New Testament as being "born again (or from above)" (Jn. 3:3-7). Certainly such a forceful analogy stresses a grand climactic experience that is to take place in a total revolution of our manner of living. This spiritual transformation extends to our whole personalities and is accomplished only with man's consent and participation. Man is not dead to spiritual reality or to the reality of the existence of God. Man is disturbed and has a guilt complex in a state of restlessness because he knows that he is not fulfilling his known relationships with a Supreme Being nor living rightly with his fellowmen. Man may thus be reasoned with or persuaded to repent and embrace the Gospel.

When the Scripture commands "all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30), from Old Testament times (Is. 55:6-7; Eze. 18:30-32) through our Lord's words (Mk. 1:14-15; Lk. 13:3, 5) unto the Apostle Paul in the full development of "the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:21, 24; 26:18-20), it nowhere says that man is unable to renounce his own selfish ways and turn to God. We cannot partly repent and partly not repent, or be partly selfish and partly not selfish at the same time. We either receive all the truth of God that we are convinced of, or we do not. If God would accept a partial repentance and do a partial work of grace in our hearts, there would have to be a reason for this partiality or incompleteness which a God of love and grace is unable to find. God desires to bless man to the fullest extent of His created capacities. God has planned that we should enter through the door of repentance and faith into the most glorious experience of our lives, in which we are actually cleansed from our sins and filled with vital Divine life. This spiritual transformation takes place upon a full committal of faith in the atoning death of Christ, into which climax only the penitent are led. We know that we have repented and exercised saving faith by the resulting experience.

We shall see in our present study that man's transformation is a cooperative enterprise of three agencies: Supremely, the agency or activity of the Holy Spirit; secondarily, the voluntary agency and fervent prayers of Christian witnesses; and, thirdly, the necessary agency and response of the subject. The Word of God, particularly Gospel truth, is the instrument or medium of all persuasive activity and resulting response. Repentance and the saving faith which follows is man's personal response to this Divine and human persuasion, based upon his natural discoveries and upon the Word of God which enlightens man as to his moral responsibilities and reveals the truths of the blessed Gospel. The Holy Spirit brings convicting power with great energy (Jn. 16:8-11). We are more than mere instruments that God uses to further His work. "We are laborers together with God" (I Co. 3:9), or are God's fellow-workers. We are active voluntary agents who are to go forth in the name of the Lord "to the pulling down of strongholds" (II Co. 10:4). "He that winneth souls is wise" (Prov. 11:30).

All who are owned by the Lord Jesus are to be His ambassadors. We do not give God our time. God owns our time if Jesus is our Lord and Saviour. "Glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." "Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own" (I Co. 6:19-20). It "is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain," said Paul after he had been conquered by the risen Christ (Phil. 1:21). "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you," said the greatest Friend that ever walked the earth (Jn. 15:14). If we are to represent Christ we must take on His spirit and compassion. We must take time to be "with him" before He can send us "forth to preach" (Mk. 3:13-15). We must be motivated by His love. It must become a living reality to us and continually constrain us (II Co. 5:14). We can lead others no further than we have come ourselves.

We are not to go forth in our own strength, "for without me ye can do nothing," said the Saviour (Jn. 15:5). We must go forth in the promised endowment and power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; 4:13; 6:10). But we must go forth, for unto us is committed "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 16:19). We alone have the keys to men's hearts with whom we come in contact. They are in our hands. We have the responsibility. We are "watchmen" for God and are to "hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me" (Eze. 3:17). "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some," said the Apostle Paul (I Co. 9:22).

Who can in the least fathom the Divine grief over man's sin and stupid persistent rebellion? Who can properly put himself in the mind and heart of the tender and compassionate Saviour as He traverses the earth in His resurrected glory, with all humility knocking at the heart's door of mere men seeking admittance and the opportunity of blessing them, only to be generally turned away (Re. 3:20)? Sin is the unspeakable tragedy of the universe. The Word of God expresses with mournful Divine regret that all men are not responding to God's universal overtures of mercy (Is. 55:1-3; Eze. 18:30-32; Mt. 23:37; I Tim. 2:3-4; II Pe. 3:9). The outflow of tender Divine love and compassion is limited by man's created sovereignty over his own actions, which God will not violate (Ps. 78:41). While on earth our blessed Lord enlightened men with "the light of life" (Jn. 8:12; 12:35) and confronted men with a force of persuasion as never before. His conclusion was simple but painful and remorseful: "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (Jn. 5:40). Our developed depravity or sinful tendencies become a strong persuasive force for evil, but we ourselves in our innermost personalities, our wills, have the God-given ability to choose and perpetuate sinful rebellion or insubordination, or renounce it in an energetic climax in breaking down and turning to God. Men cannot blame anyone but themselves for their lost estate and their impenitent condition.

Shall we as God's own "dear children" (Ep. 5:1-2) follow the admonition of our blessed Lord: "Occupy till I come" (Lk. 19:13)? Shall we in that great day when "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (II Co. 5:10) hear the words: "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Mt. 25:23)? Now is the day of opportunity and challenge to impart our glorious Gospel.

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The MESS ENGER Must Represent the Resurrected and Living Christ (Mt. 5:14).

"Ye are the light of the world" (Mt. 5:14).

"Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness" (I Th. 5:5).

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, who is in heaven" (Mt. 5:16).

"Dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (II Co. 7:1).

"If a man therefore purge himself from these (from what is ignoble and unclean), he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (II Tim. 2:21).

"Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (He. 12:1-2).

The Lord Jesus said concerning His plan of life: "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mt. 20:28). Through utter stupidity and gruesome rebellion Adam and Eve isolated their hearts from their great loving Creator and Benefactor and became spiritually bankrupt. The grieved and broken-hearted God in great manifestation of love had to begin a long process of moral enlightenment in an endeavor to awaken man to his moral relations and responsibilities. The ultimate purpose in view was a full reconciliation of man to a state of forgiveness and happy relationship with the Godhead and with his fellowmen. A Divine atonement for sin became necessary. This profound measure was progressively unfolded by prophecies and typified by the institution of animal sacrifices.

A groundwork of truth had to be established among mankind, which was simply the application of true intelligence to man's moral relations. A nation was called into being to represent God to the world of lost men. This nation was to be a depository of truth and provide a channel through which the Saviour might come to accomplish His mission of enlightenment and atoning sacrifice. A great step forward was the giving of a system of laws or helpful regulations through Moses, involving primarily a system of animal sacrifices for sin and particularly the moral law or Ten Commandments.

As great and blessed as this revelation of law was, it fell far short of manifesting the loving and compassionate heart of the Godhead. Man needed a perfect tangible manifestation of the moral character of God—something he could behold in the atmosphere of life's struggles. Thus it was that "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (He. 1:1-2). "For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth (or the grace and the truth, in its fullest measure) came (or came into being) through Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time (in His essential essence); the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (Jn. 1:17-18). The word "declared" is very graphic. It means to unfold, narrate, lead out, make known—literally, to exegete, to interpret or explain. Christ, then, by His life, deeds, profound teachings, and broken-hearted suffering unto death for sin, put God on exhibition before rebellious man and made salvation possible.

The Lord Jesus knew that His time on earth was short and that He must delegate to others the responsibility of spreading the glad tidings to all men after His accomplished death for sin and resurrection. Of the many disciples who followed Him at the beginning of His ministry He, therefore, after much prayer, made choice of twelve "that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils" (Mk. 3:14-15). He spent most of His time instructing them in "the mysteries of the kingdom of God." He said, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (Jn. 8:12). It would soon be true that His disciples would be the only moral light that the world would know. Viewing their extreme importance to the blessing of mankind, our Lord with great earnestness prayed

to the Father "that they may be one, even as we are" (Jn. 17:11). This spiritual oneness would be the only way that mankind would believe in the advent of the Saviour and the blessings of salvation (Jn. 17:23). Mankind must learn of the tender love and compassion of the Godhead. The only way that this could be achieved was by the disciples of the Lord to be filled with His love and manifest it to others (Jn. 17:26). They were to be "the salt of the earth" (Mt. 5:13) and manifest the sweet savor of the love of God to all men.

1. To witness is to represent something or someone with our whole personality.

It is impossible to say anything without manifesting how we feel or are reacting toward what we are saying. Our Lord denounced the religiously-strict Pharisees as hypocritical, "for they say, and do not" (Mt. 23:3). He said that they were right in what they said, but not in what they did. Thus while their words pointed one way, their actions pointed the opposite way and negated their witness.

We are so wonderfully constituted that our whole personality enters into our thoughts and actions. God has created us with the ability of reason or thought. This intelligence also has the ability to imagine or form mental pictures of the various things we think about. This is particularly true concerning the existence of God as relating to us. Our mentality cannot help making comparisons of our actions with our knowledge as to how we ought to act. Thus we have conscience, which commends or condemns. So that our lives can advance to higher thought accomplishments, our mentality was given the ability to store our former thoughts and actions, which we call memory. These complicated mental processes enter into every thought, expression, and action, without our being aware of it. It is extremely difficult to deceive ourselves as to our actual state and more difficult yet to deceive others. When James wrote, "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (1:22), he seems to imply that we cannot really deceive others.

If our thought life is extremely difficult or actually impossible to totally misrepresent, so more so our emotional life or reactions. God did not want our lives to be dull or uninteresting. Therefore He created the ability of reaction within our consciousness so that we would have an experience with everything we think upon. This we call feeling or emotion. These reactions involve physical sensations of pleasure or pain. The conscience also approves or disapproves what is being felt and the memory records the tempo of such reactions to give a more or less permanent pleasure or pain.

The lie detector functions because of man's remarkable constitution. It depends upon the activity of conscience as relating to our emotional nature and our physical reactions. If we say what our conscience affirms is not true, there is an actual physical change brought about through our emotions which delicate instruments indicate to the scientific observer. Man is "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps. 139:14). God has embedded secret weapons within man which man is never quite the master of.

The field of personality interpretation or discovery has become a very specialized one, with rash claims being made as to how much of ourselves we unwittingly manifest in whatever we do. Some say that our hand writing manifests our personality. Others our walking and carriage. Others look for mannerisms and peculiarities to reveal things that we are endeavoring to cover up. Tests are devised to reveal emotional balance or temper control under critical situations. The scrutinizers are trained to look beyond what is apparent on the surface for in-depth discoveries. It is not so much that they discover reactions that the untrained observer is unaware of, but that they dissect and segregate various character traits that the untrained observer does not take the pains to analyze.

We all are far more observing and are influenced by the total manifestations of our fellowmen than we suppose we are. The total image or impression of words, facial expressions, bodily manifestations, and the timing of events are automatically fed into our personal "computer," to use modern terminology, which

gives instant reactions of favorable or unfavorable in various degrees. From these remarks we can readily conclude that we cannot be any kind of an effective witness for our blessed Lord unless we are willing to be genuine and whole-hearted in our inner lives.

2. Thus to represent Christ in any true sense we must be Christ-like in motive and conduct.

To be Christ-like is not to manifest perfect conduct in all the relations of life, but to be humble and genuine as Christ was. It is to have "an honest and good heart," which the master-teacher likened to "good ground" that brought forth "fruit with patience" (Lk. 8:15). It is to be "perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Mt. 5:48), as the Lord commanded. This perfection which is to characterize the children of God can only refer to a perfection of motive. It could not possibly refer to a perfection of conduct. Perfect conduct requires perfect knowledge of all that is involved or can result from every action. This knowledge we will never possess since we will always be finite creatures. Absolute perfection of conduct is reserved only to God, who alone possesses infinite understanding of all relations and reactions.

Human perfection of conduct must always be relative since it depends upon the state of our knowledge and ability. Perfection of motive or intention, on the other hand, may be absolute in that we may purpose with all our heart to live in a disposition of love. Virtuous love places the welfare and happiness of God supreme in our lives in true worship and happy service, and that of our fellowmen equal with our own. The Apostle Paul revealed the inner secret of his life in the words: "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men" (Acts 24:16). In other words, he was ruled by a voluntary attitude of love up to the limit of his intelligence of what actions were right and proper. He intended to do no one harm. He had no malicious intentions motivating his actions. His rule was to "be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ" (Phil. 1:10).

We are always being influenced by the motives which others manifest to us. It is remarkable how obvious are the motives of our hearts in all our actions to those who are impartial enough to evaluate them honestly. Virtuous motives always shine out even to those who are prejudiced and hateful towards us. Courts of justice are intent upon learning whether a certain crime was premeditated and planned, and if so for how long. Lesser guilt is attached if it was believed to have been committed on the spur of the moment. Thus when men honestly seek to evaluate the moral character of their fellowmen, they look through the particular action to the motive behind it and interpret the action by the motive. Even animals seem to be able to interpret motive. Often they will attack or defend themselves against the approach of one and be friendly to another.

In interpreting motive we automatically make some evaluation of the understanding of persons and form some concept as to whether they really knew better or not. We also evaluate something of their present circumstances. What would receive favorable or passive acceptance in one situation would not in another. If we really believe a person was ignorant of a wrong action, we exonerate such, but not for long for there ought to be an increase in knowledge as to what a right action is in a given instance. The Apostle Peter wrote: "As newborn babes, desire (or intensely long for) the sincere milk of the word (the Word of God), that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious" (I Pe. 2:2-3). This growth will be a growth "in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Pe. 3:18). It will be a growth in understanding as to how we ought to act in the various situations that we meet, a growth in our sense perception "to discern both good and evil" (He. 5:14). It is that our "love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment" (Phil. 1:9).

"The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (Acts 11:26). This term was probably originated by Gentile unbelievers who had to admit that those who claimed to be Christ's followers were in truth so in their daily lives. "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (II Tim. 2:19).

The true Christian consistency which alone can qualify us to be the Lord's witnesses must consist in keeping ourselves "in the love of God" (Jude 21), or in maintaining through dependence upon the Holy Spirit an intelligent balanced attitude of love toward God and toward our fellowmen. This will always involve an aggressive reaching out for an ever-increasing perfection of conduct in all the events of life.

To be effective witnesses for Christ we must live above the common failings of life so that unbelievers will take notice and ask us what the secret of our lives is. It is then that the "reason of the hope that is in you" (I Pe. 3:15) can be given with great force. Men must be able to become "followers of us, and of the Lord" (I Th. 1:6) at the same time. We must live such lives that we can say: "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you" (Phil. 4:9). We have to live by God's grace so that we can tell men to follow us as examples (II Th. 3:7-9).

Think of the victory over sin that the Apostle Paul daily experienced when he could say: "Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me" (I Co. 4:16)! This was not boastfulness but was founded upon the witness of the Holy Spirit as the source of his strength: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (I Co. 11:1). The Apostle John later wrote: "Whosoever abideth in him (the resurrected and living Christ in glory) sinneth not" (I Jn. 3:6). This was the secret of Paul's life that enabled him to be a leader of those who "turned the world upside down" for their Saviour (Acts 17:6). Like Moses he lived "as seeing him who is invisible" (He. 11:27).

3. To be Christ-like, we must be transformed continually by the indwelling Holy Spirit in a humble walk of faith.

The Christian life was not intended to be a set of regulations which we are to try to live by, but an intimate spiritual relationship with the resurrected and glorified Christ. It is to be "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). This relationship was intended to be so profound that it is called "the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known . . . as it is now revealed" (Ep. 3:4-5). It is a blessed state of being "under grace." The main characteristic is that "sin shall not have dominion over you" (Ro. 6:14).

The Saviour's love was to mean so much to those partaking of salvation that "the love of Christ" would be constraining them on in this new happy life (II Co. 5:14). This is the life real and genuine as God had created it. This life is Christ-like because it is the living Christ manifesting His resurrected life within the inner sanctum of the heart (II Co. 3:18). It is buoyant and energetic because it is quickened by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

To maintain this Christ-like life in happy and effective service to God and man, there appears to be three things that must continually engage our concentrated attention:

(1) We must continually turn away from every obviously sinful and injurious indulgence, confessing and being forgiven and cleansed from every sin.

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me," said the Saviour (Lk. 9:23). "I am dying daily," wrote the Apostle Paul (I Co. 15:31) (a present tense). When we first came to Christ in salvation, we repented of everything that hurt the heart of the loving God, that hurt ourselves and our fellowmen. The New Testament knows no salvation while continuing in a state of sinful indulgence. Sin as a manner of life is always referred to in the past tense in the Christian. "Such were some of you; but ye are washed . . ." (I Co. 6:11). "We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, . . ." (Tit. 3:3). If we have never turned from all known sin in repentance and come to the Saviour in a full committal of faith for the forgiveness of sins, we have never experienced salvation. God in great love desires to bless man with great abundance of spiritual life and happiness. Man's rebelliousness and past sin stands in the way. Man agrees fully to turn from all rebellion and be intelligently submis-

sive to his loving Creator. Man is forgiven all through faith in Christ's atoning death and fully reconciled to God. There is no other way, no half-hearted way. God would not be loving if He planned and permitted anything less.

But, sadly enough, sin has a way of working itself into our hearts again if we are not watchful. We face struggles of life which challenge us. We are in contact with endless temptation to go back and follow the ways of the world again, or at least in part. Within us memories of sin often are aroused and Satan helps to paint a false picture of gratification. The pangs of sin have been mostly forgotten because of the sweet grace and mercy of God in forgiving and cleansing us. James uses such words as tempted, drawn away, enticed, conceived and bringeth forth to describe the encroachments of sin, which without any qualification he said "bringeth forth death" (1:14-15). This departure may be in the secret recesses of our hearts or may become external and involve others. In such a state of defeat, effective witnessing for Christ is impossible.

The tender admonition has been sent forth to God's erring children: "Dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (II Co. 7:1). Thank God for the promise: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I Jn. 1:9). The grieved Holy Spirit takes the initiative to bring us back into peace of conscience and fellowship again, but unless we respond to His tender pleadings we are paralyzed as far as any spiritual service is concerned. Is it not highly embarrassing, to say the least, for anyone to plead with another to give up sinful indulgences to be saved when not willing himself to do so? This is so obviously inconsistent that no further comment should be necessary.

- (2) We must also turn away from questionable and unprofitable activities if we are to be effective witnesses for our Master.

Speaking of being "a good soldier of Jesus Christ," the Apostle Paul illustrated this separated life by referring to the necessity of being relieved from the common duties of life for army service. "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (II Tim. 2:4). There are many things that do not appear to be sinful in themselves, but we may soon find ourselves so engrossed in them that little time will be left for devotion and service to Christ. This is what the Lord Jesus meant by the words of the parable of the sower: "The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful" (Mk. 4:19). Christians simply must follow the rule, "first things first," or the urgent work of the Gospel will be crowded out by seemingly legitimate things. This must ever be a watchful activity, warding off projects and activities before they master us.

The Apostle Paul likened the uses we are making of our lives to the various uses that are being made of vessels or household utensils that make up the equipment of a large house. There are vessels of gold, silver, wood and clay. Some have elevated or honorable uses and some lowly or dishonorable. "If a man therefore purge himself from these (from what is ignoble and unclear), he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet (or highly useful) for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (II Tim. 2:21). The word "purge" is an emphatic verb indicating a climax when we thrust or cleanse out of our lives every dishonorable use of our beings. We notice that it is we ourselves who must renounce all evil or unworthy actions. It will do no good to pray God to take away what we are unwilling to let loose of. When we come to the Lord Jesus in humble penitence and faith, a miracle of the grace of God takes place. We are sanctified or purified from the inward damage of our wrongful indulgences and are brought into a state of deliverance to become highly useful to our blessed Master.

We have the twofold forsaking of sinful indulgences and hindrances to Christian service in the words: "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin

which doth so easily beset us" (He. 12:1). The verb involves a climax in our actions and might be rendered: "Having put off from yourselves." The picture is that of an athlete preparing to run a race. What would we think of a runner attempting to win a race with a hundred pound weight strapped to his back? The idea of "weight" here must be that of any encumbrance, burden or hindrance which would slow us down and make it impossible to win the race. As mentioned, things seemingly not sinful in themselves may occupy our efforts and work their way into our affections to limit our usefulness for God. There must also be the putting off of "the easily-besetting sin," or that particular form of sinful gratification which has received the greatest development in our lives. This form of selfish indulgence surrounds us more than any other and cleverly seeks to bring about our defeat. The figure is that of entangling our feet and preventing or retarding our running.

- (3) We must learn the secret of continually "looking unto Jesus" for blessed spiritual victory over every temptation and hindrance to happy Christian service.

In this passage (He. 12:1-2) we have two present tenses that are the key to spiritual victory: First, "Let us run," or "with steadfastness let us keep on running the lying before us race." Idleness is the pathway to defeat. To set our minds upon pleasing God and serving our fellowmen, and to keep endlessly at it is the first step. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Ro. 12:21). But in our "running" we are, secondly, to be continually "looking away unto Jesus, the leader and perfecter of the faith." This is a very simple concept but very difficult to learn. It is natural for us to fight sin in our own strength. This is what the Galatian Christians did. Thus the Apostle Paul wrote: "Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" (Gal. 3:3). He then admonished them: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16).

One of the most graphic promises of spiritual victory is found in the commands: "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Ro. 12:2). Or we might render the passage: "Do not keep on conforming yourselves to (or fashioning yourselves to the pattern of) this age, but be ye (continually) transformed (transfigured or changed into another form) by the renewal (or renovation) of the mind." This same word "transformed" was used concerning the Lord Jesus when He was "transfigured" before Peter, James and John on the mountain (Mt. 17:2), when "his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light." This same verb occurs also in II Corinthians 3:18, where the secret of spiritual liberty or deliverance is embodied in the words: "We all, with unveiled face beholding for ourselves as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being (continually) transformed (or transfigured) into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Spirit of the Lord." Thus it is the personal manifestation of the resurrected and glorified Christ within our minds through the indwelling Holy Spirit that is to revolutionize and sustain our lives.

This blessed state of happy Christian service is the crowning provision of "the dispensation of the grace of God" (Ep. 3:2, 6), in which it is our privilege to live. We are now confronted with the constraining love of Christ as to whether we will take the yoke of our blessed Lord upon us day by day (Mt. 11:29) and "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Ro. 12:2). The Master could say, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Mt. 11:30), because He has promised to be with us always (Mt. 28:20) and grant us the blessed fellowship of His great heart of love and spiritual enlightenment as He walks and talks "with us by the way" (Lk. 24:32).

"L I G H T" THE UNIVERSAL STANDARD OF CONDUCT FOR GOD AND MAN

True life is a voluntary choice to live according to what is right and true in our moral relations--"the light of life" (Jn. 8:12).

GOD IS "LIGHT" IN THE ABSOLUTE SENSE

Because the Godhead are living according to the dictates of Their absolute intelligence in all Their relations--God "is in the light" (I Jn. 1:7).

The three greatest statements about God in the Bible appear to be:

"God (is) Spirit"--God's essential immaterial essence (Jn. 4:24).

"God is love"--perfection of motive or voluntary character (I Jn. 4:8, 16).

"God is light"--perfection of conduct because of perfection of knowledge and perfection of motive (I Jn. 1:5).

God is, therefore, the source of all moral enlightenment--"Whatsoever doth make manifest is light" (Ep. 5:13).

OUR LORD JESUS PUT THE MORAL "LIGHT" OF THE GODHEAD ON EXHIBITION

He could say, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (Jn. 6:38). He put the Godhead on exhibition and could say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (Jn. 1:18; 14:9-11). As a result of His perfect conduct in all the struggles of life, He could say:

"I am the light of the world"--perfection of motive and conduct demonstrated (Jn. 8:12).

"The life was the light of men" (Jn. 1:4).

"Which of you convinceth me of sin?"--a challenge to His enemies (Jn. 8:46).

"Who did no sin"--His claims to Deity were the only charges that could be made against Him (I Pe. 2:22; Jn. 10:33).

"He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (Jn. 8:12).

THOSE RECONCILED TO GOD ARE NOW "THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD"

They became such by being willing to allow the "light" of God's truth to expose their past life of "darkness" and turning toward God in repentance with a commitment of faith toward the suffering Saviour (Jn. 3:19-21):

"I am come that they might have life," said the Saviour (Jn. 10:10).

"Now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light" (Ep. 5:8).

"Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day" (I Th. 5:5).

"If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another" (I Jn. 1:7).

"He that doeth truth cometh to the light" (Jn. 3:21).

"Let us . . . love . . . in deed and in truth" (I Jn. 3:18).

"If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God" (I Jn. 3:21).

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Mt. 5:16).

Our Lord said concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit that He was to "reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, . . . because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more" (Jn. 16:8, 10). There was to be a new relationship in the Holy Spirit: "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (Jn. 14:17). The Holy Spirit was to empower the lives of believers to live in victory over sin and to guide them "into all truth" (Jn. 16:13). "It is not ye that speak, but the Holy Spirit," was the Saviour's promise (Mk. 13:11). Because of Divine wisdom and boldness, the rulers "took knowledge" of Peter and John "that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). Because of this new dynamic relationship, we are to take the place of our Lord on earth and be "the light of the world" (Mt. 5:14).

The M E S S A G E Must Present God's Revealed Truth and Gospel (I Tim. 2:3-6).

"Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Pe. 1:21).

"The law was given by (or through) Moses, but grace and truth came by (or through) Jesus Christ" (Jn. 1:17). *were realized*

"Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his (Christ's) name among all nations" (Lk. 24:47).

"The gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Ga. 1:11-12).

"The gospel of Christ . . . is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Ro. 1:16).

If we are going to represent any business organization and be an effective part of the enterprise, we must spend enough time at headquarters to learn the secrets of the product and under what conditions business is to be transacted. No firm allows its sales force to choose their own terms. Often these terms are arbitrarily established by the company, based upon what the public will take and can be changed when necessity arises. But salesmen must always present what is currently authorized. The Word of God lays down specific explanations as to how sin came about and what God has done and proposes to do in our individual lives concerning it. The wonderful thing in the domain of God is that everything is final and permanent, since everything God does is based upon absolute love and wisdom. God has taken the initiative in devising and bringing to pass a way by which man could be reconciled back to Himself. There are certain unalterable conditions which Divine intelligence has dictated must take place. God has taken great pains in the progressive revelations of the Bible to bring man into agreement with truth and to win back his allegiance. Can anything be more important to the happiness of God, to ourselves, and to others than that we understand exactly what has to happen in reconciliation and what the conditions are if these glorious bounties are to become effective? We can either exert our efforts against what the Holy Spirit is seeking to do, or be positive and cooperate with His sacred efforts to bless mankind, according to our knowledge of the Divine proceedings.

Man has lost all true perspective of life in its eternal relations to God and to his fellowmen. The New Testament describes man as alienated from God (Ep. 4:18); blind (Jn. 12:40; II Co. 4:4; I Jn. 2:11); carnally or fleshly minded (Ro. 8:6, 13); corrupt (Mt. 7:17-18; I Tim. 6:5); darkened (Mt. 6:23; Jn. 3:19; Ro. 1:21; Ep. 4:18; I Jn. 1:6-7); dead in sin (Jn. 5:24; Ro. 8:6; Col. 2:13; I Tim. 5:6; I Jn. 3:14); deceived (Tit. 3:3); defiled or filthy (Is. 64:6; Tit. 1:15; II Pe. 2:20; Re. 22:11); destitute of truth (Ro. 1:18, 25; I Tim. 6:5); disobedient (Mt. 7:23; Ep. 2:2; Tit. 3:3); an enemy of God (Jas. 4:4); evil (Mt. 6:22; 12:33-35; Jn. 3:20); foolish (Mt. 7:26; Ep. 5:15; Tit. 3:3); going astray (I Pe. 2:25); hateful (Tit. 3:3); hypocritical (Mt. 6:2, 5, 16; 23:13, 28); impenitent (Ro. 2:5; He. 3:8); malicious and envious (Tit. 3:3); natural or soulless (I Co. 2:14); pleasure or world-loving (II Th. 2:12; I Tim. 5:6; II Tim. 3:4; Tit. 3:3; I Jn. 2:15); proud (Ro. 1:30; I Tim. 6:4; II Tim. 3:2, 4; Jas. 4:6; I Pe. 5:5); refusing belief (Jn. 3:36; Tit. 1:15); rejecting truth (II Tim. 4:4); resisting God (Acts 7:51); guided by Satan (Jn. 8:44; Ep. 2:2); loving himself (II Tim. 3:2); self-satisfied (Re. 3:17); a slave of sin (Jn. 8:34; Ro. 6:16-17, 20; Tit. 3:3); subordinating God (Ro. 1:25); unconscious of bondage (Jn. 8:33; Ro. 7:7); unrighteous (I Co. 6:9; Re. 22:11); and vain in his imaginations (Ro. 1:21). These many descriptions leave no question that man needs a colossal awakening and a complete re-evaluation of his entire life (Ep. 5:14).

Man has forsaken truth in his sinful rebellion. He has "changed the truth of God into a lie, and has worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever" (Ro. 1:25). He is living in "the error of his way" (Jas. 5:20) and loves "darkness rather than light" (Jn. 3:19-21). On the other hand, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (I Jn. 1:5). "Light" and "darkness" are figurative expressions referring to a manner of life that is either right or wrong, to one that will stand up to intelligent investigation or one that will not. Any plan of reconciliation must bring about such moral enlightenment in the minds of repentant sinners that they shall be purged from concepts of error and be made to

realize what is the only true life before God. Man must "come to the knowledge of the truth" (I Tim. 2:4) concerning himself and concerning God

To be saved is not only to submit to truth, but to receive "the love of the truth" (II Th. 2:10). It is to be doing "truth" (Jn. 3:21). It is to worship "in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:24). It is to have "the spirit of truth" take up His abode with us (Jn. 14:17; I Co. 6:19; Ro. 8:9). He who came to introduce "grace and truth" in a fuller measure (Jn. 1:17) and said that He was "the way, the truth, and the life" (Jn. 14:6), declared that "the truth shall make you free" (Jn. 8:32). Peter wrote that salvation involved a purifying "your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit" (I Pe. 1:22), and James that the new birth was by means of "the word of truth" (1:18). Certainly there is no salvation except by a re-entry into the realm of truth by sincere repentance from the "fables" to which man has turned. "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?" (II Co. 6:14). Man must "cast off the works of darkness, and . . . put on the armor of light" (Ro. 13:12). Man must begin to "walk honestly, as in the day" (13). Thus any plan of reconciliation must uncover error and bring man to a true perspective of life by an experimental realization of truth. Man must cease to reject his natural discoveries (Ro. 1:18-20) by being willing to conform his life to them. Man must return to "the way of truth" (II Pe. 2:2).

From these many Scriptures we can form some concept as to how far mankind have departed from that happy sphere of life for which they were created and what a revolutionary change must take place. God had to begin this long process of enlightenment directly to receptive individuals and bring about the advent and sufferings of His blessed Son, as recorded in the Bible. There came to be written 39 books in what comprises the Old Testament or the Old Covenant, written by about 30 authors over a period of about 1100 years. The great climax was the giving of the moral law, the Ten Commandments, in the wilderness of Sinai. "Moses went up unto God" upon the Mount (Ex. 19:1, 3). "God spake all these words" (Ex. 20:1), also prescribing a sacrificial system of mercy and worship which the nation Israel was to formally adhere to, although sacrificial offerings had been practiced since the days of Adam and Eve. In addition, God gave to Moses many civil or social laws for the benefit of the nation Israel as they lived before the nations of the world.

The New Testament, comprising 27 books written by 8 authors over a period of less than 50 years and covering a period of time of about 100 years, records the greatest series of events in man's history--the advent and accomplished atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. This was the culmination of man's enlightenment. "Never man spoke like this man," the officers had to admit. "Grace and truth" were brought to light. After His atoning sufferings and resurrection, He commissioned His disciples to go forth with the glad tidings of God's great condescension and abounding mercy (Mt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-18; Lk. 24:46-48; Jn. 17:18; 20:21). The Apostle Paul was given a direct commission (Ga. 1:11-12) as "the apostle of the Gentiles" (Ro. 11:13). This blessed Gospel would bring results in the lives of all who submit to it. "It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Ro. 1:16). God's servants are to "study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15).

It is fundamental in Biblical interpretation that the words used in the Bible be interpreted by their usage in various other places in the Bible and not be pressed to extreme or detailed meanings that were not intended. In other words, the Bible must be permitted to be its own interpreter or modifier of meanings. This is particularly true of analogies or figures of speech that were brought in to enliven the text, which were especially used by the Lord Jesus. Generally these illustrations were meant to convey one prominent idea. If we ponder the details of each illustration and attempt to incorporate our findings into the Biblical meaning, we may go beyond what was intended to be taught and have difficulty fitting other Scriptures into our so-called new discoveries. The Bible is God's plain message to the lowly and the simple (Mt. 11:25-26) and was not intended to require great scholarship to arrive at its essential message. Each sincere servant of Christ faces the sifting process as he seeks to discern God's mind and message. The anointing of the Holy Spirit has been promised to guide us (I Jn. 2:27), in fulfillment of the Saviour's words (Jn. 16:12-15).

I. GOD'S NATURE AND CHARACTER as revealed in the Bible.

"I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me" (Is. 45:5).

"The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy" (Is. 57:15).

"O my God, . . . thy years are throughout all generations. Thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end" (Ps. 102:24-27).

"God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (I Jn. 1:5).

"God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (I Jn. 4:8, 16).

"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come" (Re. 4:8).

"Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth" (Re. 19:6).

The foundation of all knowledge and experience of God is the acceptance of all the evidence that our minds have been confronted with in our natural observations of ourselves and our surroundings. The idea of cause and effect is deeply ingrained in every moral being. In every task performed we instinctively recognize that the result is the product of what we have done. We observe endless profound objects and arrangements which neither we or other beings like ourselves could possibly originate and sustain. Since we know that intricacies of design do not come about by chance, we are driven to the conclusion that there is a Creator and Sustainer of all the profound and great things that we observe.

This Being must be awesomely great--greater and more powerful than the energy displayed in the universe. Endless mysteries and adaptations demand that we recognize a great Designer of profound intelligence and knowledge, with unlimited capacities of wisdom. Endless beauties and satisfying experiences incorporated into all areas of design testify to the aesthetic and benevolent nature of the Designer. Goodness is manifested on every hand. No basic appetite or capacity has been created without provision for wholesome fulfillment. Absolute regularity of operations and functions indicate the precision and faithfulness of the Originator and Sustainer of all things.

The producer cannot be identical with the product. Therefore, the Designer must be distinct from and above the resulting design. The mystery of self-consciousness, by which we perceive ourselves to be above the physical body which we inhabit and control, helps us to recognize a similar spiritual mystery in the Divine Being as existing separately from the physical product. Our innate God-consciousness, the helper of the faithful and the disturber of the rebellious, greatly aids the mind in these conclusions and is the foundation of the concept of the spiritual existence of ourselves and that of the great Being of God.

We are conscious of our limitations of location and duration of life. Our great Creator and Sustainer must not be so limited, but must inhabit all space that exists and has been the sphere of creative activity, and must have unending duration to have initiated and perpetuated long cycles of events.

Many inconsistencies and antagonisms to this beautiful and profound arrangement of created existences are observed to exist. Disappointments, sorrows, injustices, struggles, hardships, sufferings, fears, and the future gloom of death and retribution are experienced. Nature appears often unfriendly and sometimes intolerable. Creatures of all sizes are antagonistic to us and to each other. However, our consciences affirm that we have been guilty of rebelling and perpetuating a moral revolution against our intelligence, of refusing to live our lives in supreme recognition of the Divine Being and the obvious rights of our fellowmen. The whole mass of humanity appear to have joined in and perpetuated this rebellion. Thus we might expect that there would be radical Divine reactions to man's refusal to conform to God's loving and wise moral government and that just consequences were being meted out by a dutiful Moral Governor. This would involve the whole creation of which man is the center. Man's consciousness of guilt does, therefore, exonerate the Creator from hasty charges of deficiencies and directs man to concentrate upon the positive aspects of his wonderful discoveries (Ro. 2:14-16).

The Scriptures in the strongest terms substantiate these firm convictions with which all moral beings are confronted and make their rejection the basis of condemnation. For example, the Psalmist wrote: "I will praise thee; for I am fear-

fully and wonderfully made" (139:14). "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork" (19:1). More literally, the first part may be rendered: "The heavens are declaring to their utmost, or are actively engaged in proclaiming the glory of God." Jeremiah wrote about the power, wisdom, and discretion of God as he pondered his observations (10:12). The Apostle Paul summed up the effects upon all men by these things which are "clearly seen, . . . even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse" (Ro. 1:19-20). That all men universally affirm the existence of a Creator based on their natural observations is attested to by the universal prevalence of religious exercises among peoples who have not heard of Biblical revelation. Some of the tortures involved testify to their deep feeling of guilt, which can only spring from great moral light.

The Bible was not given to prove the existence of God, but to reveal profound facts concerning the God that man already knows to exist from his natural observations and experiences. God has condescended to reveal inner secrets of His Being, as unfolded in compassionate redemption, in the hopes of winning man back into the happy fellowship for which he was created. We should be everlastingly grateful for this impartation of the greatest of all knowledge to lead us further toward a state of absolute confidence in the Divine character.

1. The Godhead are revealed in the Bible as a Trinity of personal spiritual Beings, living in an eternal duration of time, who have the ability of intellectual activity, who experience emotional reactions, and who possess moral freedom, or the power of self-determination or free will.

(1) A Trinity of Personalities, of equal endowments and attributes, who are in absolute oneness of purpose and activity, designated Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Ep. 4:4-6.

a. While the Old Testament emphasizes the unity of God, as distinguished from the belief of pagan nations in a great multitude of gods, there are clear references to a plurality of Persons in the Godhead and some that point to this plurality as a Trinity.

(a) Plural nouns and pronouns are applied to God: Ge. 1:1, 26; 3:22; 11:7; 48:15; Is. 6:8.

(b) Distinctions are made in the Godhead that would be uncalled for apart from a plurality of Divine Persons: Ge. 1:1-2; 6:3; 19:24; Nu. 6:24-26; Ps. 2:7 (Jn. 3:16, 18); 51:11; Is. 6:3; 63:9-11; Hosea 1:6-7; Zech. 2:10-11.

b. In the New Testament we find the threefold personality of the Godhead emphatically asserted.

(a) The Trinity of the Godhead are associated together at our Lord's baptism (Lk. 3:21-22); in the bestowal of the Holy Spirit by the Father and the Son (Jn. 14:16-17); in the baptismal formula (Mt. 28:19); in the ministry of the Holy Spirit (I Co. 12:4-6); and in the apostolic benediction (II Co. 13:14). The Father and the Holy Spirit are distinguished from each other (Ro. 8:26-27).

(b) Each of the Members of the Trinity are called God or claimed full Deity. The Father very frequently (Jn. 6:27; I Co. 8:6; Ga. 1:1, 3); the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:1, 18; 10:30, 33; 20:28; I Co. 8:6; Col. 2:9; Tit. 2:13; He. 1:8; II Pe. 1:1); the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3, 4; I Co. 2:10-11; Ep. 2:22; He. 9:14).

(2) Yet a Divine Unity of Personalities: Ex. 20:3; De. 4:35, 39; 6:4 (the Hebrew word "one" here used properly means "united" and can denote a compound unity) (Mk. 12:29-30); Is. 44:6; Jn. 10:30; 17:21-23; Jas. 2:19.

Evidently from the foregoing it is proper to refer to the Godhead in both the plural and the singular. The plural is proper because there are three Personalities so distinct that They may perform specific functions and actions separately. And yet there is a profound unity between the Members of the Godhead. Evidently this is a compound unity, as in Ge. 1:1 and 1:26, where the plural "Elohim" for God acted together in creation in such a manner that a singular verb could be used. We must, it appears, lean away from an elementary concept of unity into the realm of compound unity. This is permis-

He must
have been
stressed because
many pagans
gods "were
at one with each
other - one god - as
unit etc.

sible from Old Testament usage, and is especially supported by our Lord's own words in His high priestly prayer (Jn. 17:11, 21-23). He likened the unity subsisting between Himself and the Father to the most intimate of all human relations, the spiritual oneness between Himself and the true church, called "the body of Christ" (I Co. 12:27), and between fellow-believers by virtue of the baptism of the Holy Spirit (I Co. 12:13). They were one in heart, purpose, and life, while yet remaining separate individuals. The concept of salvation is elevated thereby and the profound nature of the glorious Trinity somewhat exposed to our limited vision.

- (3) The Godhead are spiritual in essence, not corporeal or having a physical existence. Spiritual essence is a reality, a distinct entity or substance which could be seen if we were able to endure such great revelation (Ex. 33:20). The Lord Jesus referred to the Godhead as having "shape" or "form" (Jn. 5:37). David expressed hope of beholding the "face" and "form" of God (Ps. 17:15):
- a. God's essential spiritual nature is immaterial: Jn. 4:24 ("God (is) Spirit"); Col. 1:15 ("the invisible God"); I Tim. 1:17; He. 11:27; Lk. 24:39.

We cannot now understand how personal identity can exist in a purely spiritual realm and must depend upon our own spiritual consciousness, implanted by the creative hand of God, that we exist apart from our material bodies (Lk. 16:22-31; II Co. 5:1-8; Phil. 1:21-24). Similarly, God exists apart from material substance and is to be contacted through our spiritual consciousness (Mt. 6:6; Jn. 4:23-24; Acts 17:24-29; Ro. 8:16). We have this common basis of spiritual understanding, since we were created in the "image" and "likeness" of God (Ge. 1:26). In our present sphere of life "we walk by faith, not by sight" (II Co. 5:7). "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed," said the Lord Jesus (Jn. 20:29).

- b. The essential Being of the Godhead never has and cannot be seen by our earthly material consciousness: Jn. 1:18; I Tim. 6:15-16; I Jn. 4:12.

God's intimate servants or spiritual leaders have been favored by unspeakable manifestations of the Divine essence: As Abraham (Ge. 12:7; 17:1-3; 18:1-3, 13); Jacob (Ge. 32:30); Moses (Ex. 24:9-11; 33:11, 18-23; Nu. 12:6-8, "form" or "likeness"); Gideon (Jud. 6:11, 12, 21-22); Samson's parents (Jud. 13:6, 21-22); Isaiah (6:1, 5; Jn. 12:41); Stephen (Acts 7:54-56); Paul (I Co. 9:1; II Co. 12:1-4); John, the Apostle (Re. 1:12-18).

The designations, "the angel of the Lord" and "the angel of God," appear in some of the above passages and in a number of other places in the Old Testament (as Ge. 22:11-12, 15-18; Ex. 3:2-6; 14:19-20). The Hebrew word rendered "angel" means messenger. These designations are thought to refer to the Lord Jesus in His pre-incarnate eternal existence, as they have reference to the actions of Deity and yet there are distinctions in the Godhead (as Is. 63:9-10). "The Angel of the Lord is the visible Lord God of the Old Testament, as Jesus Christ was of the New Testament" (Amp. O.T.).

- c. Since God has no material essence, no external images are to be made to represent the Divine Being: Ex. 20:4.
- d. In the resurrection the redeemed shall receive "a spiritual body" (I Co. 15:44-45) "like unto his glorious body" (Phil. 3:21). "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (I Jn. 3:2). We now have our "natural (or soulish) body" and see spiritual realities "through a glass darkly" (I Co. 13:12) and thus must "walk by faith." Evidently when we receive our "spiritual body" a whole new realm of spiritual perception will dawn. The heavenly life will be busy and happy in the direct exploration of spiritual reality—"then face to face." "His servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face" (Re. 22:3-4). The resurrected and glorified Christ now has a tangible spiritual body (Lk. 24:39), "the firstfruits of them that slept" (I Co. 15:20). Thus there has been a change in the manifestations of the Godhead since the Incarnation. "Because I live, ye shall live also," said the Saviour in anticipation of His resurrection (Jn. 14:19).

(4) The Godhead are living in an endless duration of time and have successions of thoughts, experiences, and volitions, or a chronology of events, in Their existence, as set forth in the following passages:

- a. Those describing the Godhead as living in a succession of time: Is. 57:15; Ps. 102:24-27; 95:10-11; Zeph. 3:5; Zech. 1:12; He. 13:8; Re. 1:8.
- b. Those referring to the Godhead as engaging in the process of reasoning and decision, inviting man to join in this process: Ge. 1:26-27; Is. 1:18; 55:8-9; Jer. 29:11; 44:21-22.

Our only concept of reasoning is the process of thinking one thought after another in a succession of time and coming to a conclusion, which we did not have at the beginning of the process. There is no hint in the Scriptural record that God is not actually thinking along with us in the same process of time that we are living in. Duration or succession is absolutely imperative to the reasoning process. Our ability to think is just as worthless without a duration of time to act in as an automobile would be without a road to operate upon.

- c. The Godhead are represented as experiencing emotional reactions of pleasure, grief, and indignation in accordance with man's attitude and conduct: Ge. 6:5-6; 22:12; Ps. 78:38, 56-61; 95:10-11; Is. 12:1; Eze. 16:42-43; Micah 7:18-19; Zeph. 3:17; Zech. 1:12-16; Lk. 15:7, 10.

These verses, among many others, show the variableness of Divine experiences in the duration of time, in response to man's treatment of God's love and blessings. Great climaxes of happy and grievous reactions are often involved as God observes man's obedience and extreme rebellions. God controls His vindictive emotions and manifests wrath only in righteous judgment in His responsibility as the Moral Governor of the universe.

- d. The Godhead are said to perform specific actions at definite periods or instants in a succession of time: Ge. 2:3; Ex. 20:11; 31:17; He. 4:4; De. 2:25; Josh. 10:14.

Allow God to exist in a duration or succession of time, so that He can have new thoughts, make new decisions, perform acts of unspeakable wisdom, and then look back upon His works and have Divine complacency that they are "very good" and be "refreshed" by contemplation, and all is natural and highly exciting.

- e. God is said to be exerting continual care and oversight over those in happy submission to Him, making observations, reacting thereto, and planning their protection: De. 11:12; 23:14; I Kgs. 22:19; II Chr. 16:9.

They were to live their lives in realization that their God was constantly watching their behavior. God's loving presence could only be a reality if they continued in purity of life and devotion.

- f. The Godhead have made decisions to do certain things or have made changes in Their plans, as a result of making certain observations of man's condition, rebellion, or change of attitude in humiliation and prayer: Ge. 6:5-7; Ex. 2:23-25; 32:7-14 (fervent intercession of Moses); Nu. 11:1-2; De. 9:18-19, 25; I Sam. 15:10-11, 23, 35; II Kgs. 13:3-5; 19:16, 20, 28; II Chr. 7:12-16; Jonah 3:10; 4:2.

Allow the Godhead to be living in a duration of time and we have graphic accounts of God's reactions against rebellion, and His sympathetic and moving response to humbleness and repentance. Prayer actually moves a compassionate God, who is concerned with our welfare, and changes things. In one instance we have in true sequence: A dire need, humiliation before God, earnest petition, God having heard the prayer and considering the situation, God's reactions, deliverance, and judgment upon the enemy.

- g. The incarnation of the Lord Jesus into humanity brought about changes and experiences in the inter-personal relations of the Godhead which cannot be conceived of apart from a succession of time or a true chronology of events: Jn. 1:1-2, 14; 6:38; 8:42; 12:23, 28; 16:27-28; 17:4-5, 11-12; 20:17; Acts 2:32-33; Ga. 4:4-5; Phil. 2:5-11; Re. 3:20-21.

There was an eternal duration of past time when the Triune Members of the Godhead had Their perfect fellowship together before the Second Person took upon Himself a catastrophic change of existence through His incarnation by way of the Virgin Birth. Then there was a period of time when the Son of God as the Son of Man "tabernacled among us" in the special enduement of the Holy Spirit and in sacred prayer fellowship with the Father. Then there was the second greatest event in the history of mankind, second only to creation, when the Saviour in His lonely atoning sufferings said, "It is finished." Then subsequently resurrection life and ascension introduced a change into the very realm of the Godhead--a God-man in the heavens, ever living "to make intercession." How can anyone in simple-mindedness conceive of such immense inter-personal changes in the essential nature and experiences of the Godhead without allowing a true chronology of succession in the Divine existence? These tremendous facts confound philosophical speculations.

- h. The Holy Spirit began His special earthly activity in the present dispensation at a distinct point of time, involving inter-personal events in the experiences of the Godhead: Jn. 7:39; 14:16-17, 26; 16:7-8; Acts 1:5; 2:1-4, 33; Ep. 3:2-6.

The Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the blessed Trinity, is the executive agent in bringing to pass the program of God on earth, particularly as regards man's salvation and the communication of the will of God to man. In Old Testament times the Holy Spirit came upon selected individuals at selected times to reveal truth, guide, and energize in bestowing spiritual gifts. Profound changes were to be made in the Gospel age, in that a new intimate spiritual relationship with the resurrected and glorified Christ was to be established through the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit. New profound blessings and manifestations were to be the common experience of those reconciled to God. This new "dispensation of the grace of God" could not be bestowed until the advent, atoning death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus. Thus we have a specific point of time in the durative experiential life of the Godhead when these new manifestations of the Holy Spirit began. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter," said the Lord Jesus concerning that then future time of accomplishment (Jn. 14:16). Obviously there is a genuine chronology in the experiences of the Godhead. Frequent reference is made in the New Testament to another distinct point in time when these blessed privileges shall be terminated in a future climax of judgment.

- i. God is represented as having made many decisions concerning distant plans which He expects to bring to pass in the process of time, representing them as future in His own activity: Ge. 3:15; 12:1-3; I Sam. 2:35; Is. 7:14; Dan. 2:44; Acts 1:7 ("authority"); II Tim. 1:9-10 and Tit. 1:2 ("before age times" or "long ages ago," lit., "before times eternal," ASV); I Pe. 1:10-12; Acts 15:14-17; Ep. 1:10; Re. 1:1; Acts 17:31; 1:11.

These passages have been selected to represent long distant plans that God the Father has made in His dispensations of love and mercy toward mankind. Because of man's rebellion and persistence in wickedness, God has had to modify His plans and also pursue dispensations of justice and judgment as a righteous Moral Governor. These plans are general in scope, although they often involve many details, and do not necessarily involve a knowledge of all that shall develop or be decided upon in the course of time. They indicate that God the Father has taken forethought, experienced reactions, and has made decisions in a past duration of time, and has declared many future events which He has determined to bring to pass in His great mercies and regulation of world affairs.

The theological dogma that God is an "eternal now," or that time or succession is not an element in the Divine existence, is evidently a philosophical rather than a Biblical concept. In the Bible God is presented as a living Being who walks or dwells with men, performs definite acts at definite times, who rests, observes, thinks and is reasoned with, remembers, is grieved, is

jealous, is provoked to anger and then causes His wrath to rest, is moved with compassion, who forgives and comforts, delights and rejoices, hearkens unto men, repents, changes His plans, makes new decisions, etc. These various acts, states of mind, or experiences obviously conflict and cannot coexist at the same instants, and thus require the chronological element of time for their occurrence. God is "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity," whose "years are throughout all generations" and which "shall have no end."

When one endeavors to show how a God who is timeless or an "eternal now," or who does not have a succession of actions or events in His basic existence, can make a choice in time which is not a reality to enter into a succession of time and bring about a chronology of thoughts, reactions, decisions, and actions, which were always being experienced in His timeless existence, grave complications arise which the plain and simple record of Scripture appears to know nothing about. An "eternal now" God would not have a duration of time to make choice in to enter into a duration or chronology.

- (5) The Godhead are represented in the Bible as possessing the abilities of personality. Man is said to have been created in the "image" and "likeness" of God as to his spiritual or immaterial nature, his essential personality (Ge. 1:26-27). Our analysis of our own abilities of personality, therefore, will aid greatly in understanding the nature of the great Divine Personalities.

We shall see in our discussion of man's constitution that we are not to think of ourselves as having "spirit" and "soul" segments that can act independently, but rather that we are whole personalities with functions or abilities and act as a complete unit in all that we do. We evaluate personality, therefore, in terms of what such a being is able to do. Personalities have the mysterious ability to originate action and are not controlled by some causation acting upon the will. To be able to make a decision for action, there must be the ability of reason or intelligence, which enables one to have a mental picture of a proposed action in a perspective of our moral relations. The mind works with the will in the development of action in the process of reasoning. The will directs the mind to think upon a certain action and the process of analysis has a reflex action back to the will as to whether the process begun is to be pursued further. The will is the mystery of personality which originates action and decides what we shall be occupied with. This ability of personality to originate and be responsible for all actions is the foundation of moral responsibility and accountability.

Free will and intelligence could function on the basis of what is right and proper, but would lack the delicacy and sensitivity of contemplation if there was no capacity of emotional response. All might be mechanically right, but would be monotonous if there were no reactions of evaluation, no ability to appreciate the desirable and avoid the undesirable, no pleasure or pain, no happiness or disappointment, no joy or sorrow. It must be remembered that in the functioning of personality, emotional response is not under the direct control of the will but is an automatic reaction to what the mind is being directed to consider, observe, or reason upon. But it is this ability to respond or react that forms the incentive to keep on thinking upon or continuing in a certain course of action. Without the ability of response we could not have the joy of appreciating moral worth. We could not venerate and worship the great Being of the Godhead.

It appears that conscience is not a separate entity of personality, but is a continuous operation of the mind in approving what we know to be right and condemning what we know to be wrong. When our minds approve what we are occupied with, this pleasurable satisfaction promotes a desire to keep on being so occupied. It brings about a deep restfulness that we are living according to true intelligence, or in a state of love. Love, then, is a directive of will in choosing to fulfill what is right and proper in our moral relations, but it is not a directive without warmth of conscience and emotional pleasure. In the darkest hours of our Saviour's life, just before the Cross, He prayed that His dear disciples "might have my joy fulfilled in themselves"

(Jn. 17:3). It was "the joy that was set before him" that gave our Saviour the inner satisfaction to endure the "contradiction of sinners" and finally "the cross, despising the shame" (He. 12:2-3). In His mind He envisioned the great multitude of repentant sinners in happy reconciliation to God because of His life and atonement. Such joy comes because of the ability of personality to have satisfaction and pleasure when we know we are giving ourselves for that which is right and for the greatest good. The Lord Jesus could give His joy only to those who would join Him in devoting their lives to the most worth-while objectives, to anyone who will "deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Lk. 9:23).

To our happy discovery, the Bible describes the Godhead, not as some immense impersonal force in haphazard activity, but rather as living Personalities, having the abilities of evaluation and invention, of sensitive reactions in contemplation, and of creative origination of activity. The Godhead are not under a fate of activity, a victim of Their own impulses, but have the mysterious ability of voluntary moral choice, or self-direction. They have chosen to use Their immeasurable energies in a constructive or benevolent manner, the results being called "the wisdom of God."

It should overwhelm us with joy to learn that the Bible does not represent God as a great First Cause who entered into creation without emotional sensitivity and delight. The God of the Bible is not some sort of accidental force on the loose in the universe originating things at random (as evolutionary theories seem to imply), nor a concentrated immeasurable force programmed for some kind of activity (to use computer language). In fact, there would be no Bible if these tragic concepts were true. We would all be at the mercy of gigantic impersonal forces.

The Bible is an account of God's love and sensitivity toward man in providing for and seeking man's reconciliation. Could anything be more moving than the tender account as to how "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground," and then animated His creation by breathing "into his nostrils the breath of life," so that "man became a living soul" in the Divine image? (Ge. 2:7). Man being a tiny replica of his great spiritual Creator could only find happiness in relating himself to the Source of his life. We have considered the in-depth declaration of the Lord Jesus: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." In other words, multiply our Lord's earthly "exhibition" of the Godhead as "the Son of Man" by the infinity of greatness and we are challenged to view with profound humility and worship an ever-enlarging concept of the Personalities of the Godhead.

- a. The Godhead possess intellectual activity or personal intelligence:
I Sam. 2:35; Is. 1:18; 41:21; 55:8-9; Jer. 29:11; Ex. 32:7-14, 30-33;
II Kgs. 19:14-28; Jer. 2:1-13; Micah 6:1-3.
- b. Experience emotional reactions of happiness or disappointment in accordance with man's attitude: Ge. 6:5-6; II Chr. 16:9; Ps. 78:38, 58-61; 95:10-11; Is. 12:1; Eze. 6:9-10; Micah 7:18-19; Zeph. 3:17; Zech. 1:14-16; Mt. 18:23, 27, 34-35; 23:37; Lk. 15:7, 10; Jn. 4:23; Re. 3:20.
- c. Possess the power of self-determination or free will: Ge. 1:26; 3:22-24; 6:6, 12-13; 9:11-12; Ex. 32:7-14, 30-33; II Kgs. 20:5-6; Is. 12:1; Jn. 5:21; 10:18; Acts 1:7; I Co. 12:11; Jas. 1:18; I Jn. 4:14.

2. The Godhead are revealed in the Bible as possessing profound natural attributes of unspeakable greatness.

An attribute is a description of some quality of being or character, or of something that is true about a person or thing. A personality is not a bundle of attributes, so to speak, but possesses such an existence concerning which it may be said that certain qualities or characteristics are always there. The following attributes are natural, involuntary, or inherently belong to the essential Being of the Godhead:

- (1) Eternity of Being: Ps. 90:2; Ge. 21:33; De. 33:27; Ps. 9:7; 41:13; 93:2; 103:17; Is. 26:4; 40:28; 44:6; 48:12; Ro. 1:20; 16:26; He. 9:14; Re. 4:8.

From our natural observations we conclude that we ourselves had a beginning, and as far as this earthly life is concerned have a termination. There must be a cause that is not subject to our temporary limitations. We were caused or brought into existence by our parents, they by theirs, and so back through the ages. A point is reached in the long chain of cause and effect where a First Cause is arrived at. This First Cause must have self-sustaining or uncaused life, so the idea of eternal existence springs up in our minds. God being uncaused must therefore be independent of our limitations. The Bible overwhelmingly establishes the idea that time or duration is an element in God's existence, and equally asserts that the Being of God is without beginning or ending. God, therefore, inhabits eternity, and beyond this we cannot go in our thinking.

The idea of eternity also springs up within our minds from the observed constancy of many things and operations about us. If astronomers would be disturbed if a variation of one second in a century should crop up, the Being back of all this cannot be subject to the laws of temporary existence.

(2) Omnipresence is a natural attribute of the Godhead, by which it is intended that the Being of God pervades all space and is everywhere manifested at all times: Jer. 23:24; Ps. 139:7-10; Prov. 15:3; I Kgs. 8:22-24, 27; Is. 57:15; Mt. 18:20; 28:20; Acts 17:24, 27-28; Ep. 4:6; He. 4:13.

Just as it is our very nature to be localized in one place, so it is God's very nature to be everywhere present at the same time. While God occupies all space, He is not identified with the objects of space. God is everywhere present in spiritual essence. This is beyond our understanding and places the nature of God's Being in the realm of mystery. The mystery is not surprising since we cannot comprehend the vital relation of our own spiritual essence with our physical body. We know from our own experience and observation that we are more than the mere physical, yet to define ourselves we cannot.

While the Godhead are everywhere present in the universe, Their essence is particularly concentrated or manifested in a distinct place in the universe called "heaven," where the "throne" or rule of God is in operation: I Kgs. 8:27; Ps. 11:4; 103:19; Mt. 6:9; Jn. 14:2-3; Acts 7:55-56; II Co. 12:2-4; Re. 3:21; 4:2; 5:11-13; 20:11; 21:2, 22-23.

We act upon and assume evidences for the existence of things on every hand that we do not understand. Who understands how our rooms can be filled with television waves and with radio waves from all over the world, without our being in the least impaired thereby? Who understands why light and sound waves travel as they do? What proof do you have that there is a wind? Various theories exist, but who understands? Thus in our daily lives we act upon what we have evidence for, and so it must be concerning God. If we understood all about the nature of God, God would not be God.

The existence of God is not established by direct understanding, therefore, but: (1) By natural evidences; (2) by observations of present Divine activity and response; and (3) by spiritual consciousness. We conclude from life's experiences and observations: (1) That every harmonious arrangement of existences must have an adequate First Cause; (2) that there is great uniformity in sustaining and regulating greatly diverse existences, and strong reactions towards moral beings in accordance with their voluntary attitudes and actions; and (3) that by virtue of our creation in the moral image of God we find ourselves asserting our own spiritual consciousness as having a separate existence and able to dominate our physical constitution, and thus we can visualize the spiritual essence of God creating and dominating the physical creation. The idea of the spiritual only needs to be proved when we deny our native consciousness. Tribes of peoples throughout the world have devised modes of religious worship seeking to gain the favor and appease the Deity they have concluded must exist, exhibiting great guilt of conscience and fear. Man can only fear what he visualizes as existing. His exertions of fear will be in proportion to the vividness of his persuasions.

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To the true Christian, the great final evidence for the existence of God is the vital consciousness of his conversion experience (Jn. 3:3), and the many evidences of God's presence along the way of life (Jn. 14:21, 23). The New Testament is filled with descriptions of vital spiritual experiences that are to take place in our consciousness (see Section X on Transformation). Spiritual experiences with God become the strongest evidence of all, since they are direct (Ro. 8:16) and do not have to be interpreted by the mind as do all human experiences. It was the vitality of Christian experience that empowered the early church with such energy of persuasion that opposers said: "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also (Acts 17:6). In the early terrible persecutions, it was the overwhelming fullness of Divine persuasion that enabled the Christians to view the lions as their friends who would soon usher them into the very presence of their Lord. The multitudes of antagonists who came to see Christians devoured soon found that their unbelief was being devoured instead, as their dying songs of love and victory haunted them. God must be a reality if human beings can experience such overwhelming persuasion. Great final efforts to stamp out Christianity around 300 A.D. failed, so the Roman rulers had to make peace with this great spiritual army or be conquered. But sadly enough, the conquest of Christianity into acceptability became the beginning of deterioration--what persecution could not do, popularity did.

- (3) Omniscience, or a knowledge of all that is knowable, is a natural attribute of the Godhead. "His understanding is infinite (or beyond measure)," said the Psalmist (147:5). "There is no searching of his understanding," wrote Isaiah (40:28). Job was told of the God who is "perfect in knowledge" by his advisers (37:16). The Apostle Paul extolled the greatness of God: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" (Ro. 11:33). John wrote of the extensiveness of God's knowledge: "God . . . knoweth all things" (I Jn. 3:20). There are no objects of knowledge withheld from God. "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (He. 4:13).

There is considerable evidence from the Scriptures that future choices of moral beings, when acting freely in their moral agency, have not been brought into existence as yet and thus are not fixities or objects of possible knowledge. This applies to actions of the Godhead as well as to the self-caused actions of men. To say that the smallest details of Divine action down through the countless ages of eternity have always been in the Divine mind, is to say that God never experiences climaxes of decisions as a result of contemplation, or that God never originates anything new. This is fate applied to the Infinite. Choice is impossible without the origination of something new.

But God is represented in the Bible as making new decisions, as pondering situations and as making up His mind in conformity thereto, and as changing His mind when certain reactions took place. The Scriptures do not even hint that these descriptions of Divine actions are mere adaptations to our way of thinking, but simply and beautifully put them forth as revelations of the great God. These profound portrayals of the great unknown should excite all of us as they seek to lift the veil of our limited vision.

The extent of God's knowledge can only be learned from a painstaking reading of the Bible. The Berean Christians thus examined the teachings of the Apostle Paul (Acts 17:11). "Theology has much to unlearn before it will be either reasonable or Biblical," said one. Some of the main passages of Scripture will be cited as we seek to summarize the extent of the Divine knowledge of present and future events.

- a. God has absolutely perfect knowledge of all that is taking place at the present time in the entire universe, extending to men's thoughts as well as actions, the disposition of every particle of matter, the action of every force, and the like: I Kgs. 8:39; Prov. 15:3; Jer. 32:19; Eze. 11:5; Mt. 12:36-37; Jn. 2:24; Acts 1:24; He. 4:13. Each Member of the Godhead is pictured as continually active in searching, investigating, or examining men's innermost beings: Ro. 8:27; Re. 2:23; I Co. 2:10 ("all things").

- b. Many future choices, actions, and mass reactions of men appear to be known to God beforehand and form the basis for many detailed plans of events that God purposes to bring to pass in making reconciliation possible for all men and in His government of world affairs. For example:

Ge. 3:15; Is. 53:2-3, 12; Zech. 12:10; Mk. 8:31; 9:12, 31; Mt. 20:17-19; 21:33-39, 45—The atoning death and rejection of Christ could be prophesied in Old Testament writings and by our Lord, because of God's purpose to bring the Saviour into the world to die for all men's sins and because of God's profound knowledge as to how the immaculate holiness of Christ would result in violent rejection by the religious leaders (Jn. 7:7). Satan would finally be utterly conquered (Lk. 10:17-18; Ro. 16:20; Re. 20:1-3, 10), but only after having "bruised" the Saviour because the religious leaders and the great mass of the people had allowed Satan to have full sway in their lives (Mt. 4:9; Jn. 8:44; Mt. 27:20).

De. 31:16-21—God revealed to Moses that after his death Israel would rebel and require judgments to bring them back to repentance and forgiveness. Many times God had experienced Israel as "a stiffnecked people" (De. 9:13) and observed "their imagination" or inner attitude then, even before the blessings of the promised land (De. 31:21). Moses affirmed that they were rebellious while he was still with them, "and how much more after my death" (31:27).

Jer. 1:5, 7—Jeremiah, the prophet (626-580 B.C.), was a subject of knowledge before conception, evidently because of God's special plan and purpose to raise up a prophet to give final warning to Judah of the approaching Babylonian captivity because of their sins. He experienced very special Divine influence and endowment from early life that appears to be almost compelling and went forth with great devotion and sincerity.

Mt. 24:14; II Th. 2:3-4; I Tim. 4:1-3; II Tim. 3:13—Because of God's knowledge of man's extreme unwillingness to receive the truth and repent of sin, God knows that the world will never be converted to Christ but will become more and more determined in pursuit of selfish gratification. The Lord Jesus was asked, "Are there few that be saved?" (Lk. 13:23), and had to agree with great heaviness of heart. Comparatively few would enter "the strait gate" and walk the "narrow" way to life (Mt. 7:13-14). Thus God has had to make His plans accordingly and is presently taking out "a people for his name" from all nations (Acts 15:13-14).

II Tim. 1:9-10—The passage refers to the "purpose and grace" of God to make possible the forgiveness of sins through the sacrificial death of Christ, which was determined upon "before age times," or "long ages ago."

I Pe. 1:20—The verse may be rendered: "Having come to be perceived beforehand, indeed before (the) foundation of (the) world." The concept of the plan of atonement through the sufferings of Christ was worked out as a possibility before the foundation of the world and the creation of man, and resolved upon as a certainty from (the) foundation of (the) world" (Re. 13:8). "The Lamb . . . came to be slain" in the mind of God as a certainty to be brought to pass in the duration of time the moment man sinned and made redemption necessary.

Acts 15:18—The most authoritative Greek texts have only three words in this verse, rendered "known from (the) age," or "known from of old" (ASV, 1901, also ASB). James has summarized God's general program to be that of gathering out from the world all who will respond to the Gospel, and then to fulfill Old Testament prophecies by the return of Christ and the establishment of the millennial kingdom (15:13-17). He then affirmed that it is God "who is doing these things, known from of old," or that God's plan was not anything new but was made a long time ago.

- c. Many events and future plans that God has decided upon and prophesied as certain to come to pass appear to be associated with the idea of causation. Scripture reveals that God can control the human will in the absolute sense—setting aside in such acts its normal moral freedom and accountability, and placing it temporarily under a law of cause and effect (as De. 2:25; Jer.

*God knows things
when convenient*

50:9; Re. 17:17). In matters of personal salvation, however, God never coerces the will, but always maintains a delicate balance of moral freedom (as De. 30:19, 15-20; Is. 1:18-20; Jn. 5:40; Ro. 2:5-11; Re. 3:20).

Ge. 15:13-15—Abraham's descendants would spend about 400 years in Egypt, actually becoming 430 years (Ex. 12:40-41).

Ex. 3:19-20—"The king of Egypt will not let you go." God purposed to judge Egypt for their sins and cruel persecution of the Israelites, and would harden Pharaoh's heart or allow him to remain unpersuaded in his stubbornness to be the occasion for these righteous judgments (Ex. 11:9-10). God finally destroyed the Egyptian army in the Red Sea by hardening the hearts of Pharaoh and the Egyptians to pursue the Israelites with great violence and determination (14:4, 5, 8, 17). God's causation extended from their minds into the physical realm. "He bound the wheels of their chariots and made them drive with difficulty" (14:23-25).

Is. 44:28-45:4—Cyrus, king of Persia, was prophesied about 150 years before his great mission of making provision for the returning Jewish remnant from the 70 year captivity which God had determined upon. God could cause him to be so named, brought into power at the desired period, and move him to make his proclamation (II Chr. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4).

Jer. 25:11-12; 29:10-14—The 70 year Babylonian captivity was determined upon by God as judgment upon Judah for their rebellion against God's rulership. They were earnestly warned of this coming catastrophe which God planned to bring upon them, particularly by Jeremiah, who as a last measure was instructed to write in a book and publish these warnings. "It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them" (Jer. 36:1-7). The warning was rejected (37:2).

Is. 52:13-53:12; Zech. 12:10; Mt. 20:17-19; Jn. 12:32-34—The only means of reconciling man to God was through an atoning sacrifice of a holy and worthy substitute. This death had to be from spiritual suffering because of identification with the sins of the world (Jn. 1:29; 6:51; 10:17; I Pe. 2:24). God is faced with the certainty that His immaculate Son will not be tolerated on earth because of His exposure of sin and hypocrisy (Jn. 7:7). He will be speedily put to death by stoning, the Jewish method of capital punishment. This would instantly terminate consciousness and thus frustrate the Atonement.

The Roman method of capital punishment was crucifixion, which often prolonged conscious physical agony for many days. God resolved to exert a causative mental preference in the minds of the Jewish rulers and the rebellious mob to demand crucifixion rather than stoning (Mt. 27:20-23). This would not lessen their moral responsibility and would provide that duration of the Saviour's consciousness on the cross which would allow His holy Being to exhaust its endurance in intense spiritual suffering over man's awful guilt in rebelling against a holy and loving God.

Accordingly, descriptions representing the dreadfulness of such double agony (spiritually and physically) were given by inspiration in Old Testament times, particularly to Isaiah and the Psalmist David (Psalm 22). They were brought into many trying experiences to prepare them to write such solemn things. Our Lord with deepest realization foretold His crucifixion and agonized in the Garden to be delivered from that threatened violent death that would make impossible the Atonement for which He came (He. 5:7). His precious side would be pierced to prove to the whole world that He died from a broken heart because of men's sins and not from the crucifixion, as was prophesied (Jn. 19:32-37).

Is. 9:6-7; Jer. 23:5-6; Dan. 2:44; 7:13-14; Mt. 24-25; Acts 1:11;

I Th. 4:16-17; Re. 1:1, 7; 4-22—God's knowledge of man's extreme unwillingness to respond to His overtures of reconciliation has led Him to make many detailed plans as to the course of the ages. God planned and prophesied the advent of the Saviour and the accomplishment of redemption, as we have seen. He also has planned the bodily return of the Lord Jesus to

establish an earthly kingdom of righteousness, many details of which were prophesied in the Old Testament and much more by our Lord and the New Testament writers. God will judge nations and individuals in absolute righteousness. Their destiny will be determined upon the basis of their reactions to God's measures of mercy. The many details foretold in Revelation chapters 4 to the end will take on new meaning when they are being fulfilled, and will show God's wisdom in revealing them. The sum total of all of God's dispensations will be a grand and unending oblation to the Triune Godhead (Re. 19:1-9).

God can prophesy these many things because He has determined to bring them to pass by His direct causation. He is "the Lord God Almighty." The exact time of the return of the Lord Jesus from heaven to close the present church age of God's great mercy does not appear to be a fixity in the Divine mind. We are in a great parenthesis which does not seem to have been prophesied in Old Testament times. The prophets were given to see the two peaks of Christ's first and second coming, without visualizing the valley of time in between. There appears to have been a great extension of this parenthesis of time in the mercy of God, over what was expected in New Testament times, as we shall see.

- d. Many Bible passages, when taken in their natural meaning, appear to indicate that God does not have absolute foreknowledge over all His own future actions, nor over all those of His moral creatures. Examples are:
Ge. 6:3, 5-7—Here God is said to have repented or regretted that man had been created, when it became manifest how stupendous and persistent man's indulgence in sinful rebellion had become. The word "repent" and its derivatives is used to describe the actions of God some 33 times in the Old Testament, and can only indicate an aroused state of grief and disappointment, except in some instances where God changed His mind because of happy reactions. See Section W-Me-VIII-5, Item 5, (1), a on "repent."
Ge. 22:12—God experienced a climax of blessing when Abraham was about to carry through God's strange command to slay his son Isaac on an altar.
Ex. 32:7-14—God was determined to wipe out the whole nation Israel after the golden calf apostasy and start a new nation through Moses, but changed His mind through the humble and reasoning intercession of Moses.
Ex. 33:5—God was waiting to see how the nation Israel reacted in humility after the golden calf crisis before determining His judgment upon them.
Nu. 11:1-2—Israel's complaining amidst blessings suddenly brought forth God's judgment, which was stayed by their humility and the prayer of Moses.
De. 8:2—God expected to discover from the 40 year wandering in the wilderness Israel's true heart and reactions to His loving provisions.
Jud. 2:20-22—God had changed His mind about driving out some of the nations of Palestine because of Israel's sin. Compare 3:1-5 with Ex. 33:2; 34:24. God expected to find out from these nations whether Israel would be faithful and true or not.
I Sam. 15:10-11, 23, 35—God very reluctantly gave Saul to be king over His chosen people Israel, in response to their demands (8:6-7). Although Saul had an impressive background and was "a choice young man" (9:1-2), and was anointed with the Holy Spirit and was given "another heart" (10:6, 9-11), he disobeyed God's directions. God was thereby grieved and rejected him as king in favor of David. The natural interpretation is that if God had foreseen Saul's rebellion He would not have chosen him to be king. Samuel's grief must have reflected God's (15:11).
II Kgs. 20:1-7—God changed His mind and decided to add 15 years to King Hezekiah's reign over Judah because of his humble prayer.
I Chr. 21:11-15—Of the three means of punishment offered to him, David elected to fall under the direct judging hand of God for he felt that God was more merciful than men. God sent an angel to destroy Jerusalem, but in the process God was moved with mercies and changed His mind, staying the angel's hand from further judgment.

II Chr. 12:5-8—When King Rehoboam of Judah and the leaders humbled themselves when threatened with judgment, God changed His mind and granted them "some deliverance," or modified the severity of His planned judgment.

Jer. 18:5-10—God here declares that He will change His purposes of judgment and blessing in accordance with man's reactions toward His dispensations.

Jer. 26:2-7, 12-13—Jeremiah received a special commission to plead with and warn Judah of the coming Babylonian captivity of 70 years, which God had determined to bring to pass against them for their rebellion against His loving plans (25:8-11). Jeremiah proclaimed in the temple the possibility of God changing His purpose of judgment if they would respond in repentance, all to no avail. He was brought to justice and threatened with death.

Joel 2:12-14—Joel during a previous period of judgment set forth the fact that God might be induced to repent of His pronounced judgments by sincere repentance on man's part, if in deep humility and exposure of heart.

Jonah 3:2, 4, 10; 4:2—God sent Jonah to pronounce Nineveh's destruction in 40 days, but changed His mind and spared the city when one of the greatest recorded repentance took place. This is exactly what Jonah feared might happen because of God's great mercy.

Mt. 10:2-4; Lk. 6:12-13; Mk. 3:14-15—Judas was chosen to be one of the twelve apostles to serve God and be a witness to the Gospel and revealed truth, which he obviously was partaking of, but rebelled and became an apostate, thus frustrating the loving plans of his Master (Acts 1:25). If the Lord Jesus chose to bestow extended labor of preparation upon one whom He certainly foresaw would fail of the intended mission, it would appear that an unwise and inconsistent choice was made.

(a) The Lord Jesus chose the Twelve from His disciples after an all night of prayer to the Father: Lk. 6:12-13.

(b) The threefold purpose in calling the Twelve is plainly declared: Mk. 3:14-15.

(c) Judas was in a state of salvation when chosen and sent forth to represent Christ: Lk. 9:1-2; Mt. 10:8 (12:25-26); 10:16, 20 (Jn. 8:44); Mk. 6:7, 12; Lk. 9:6; Jn. 13:20.

(d) Judas rebelled against his Master (Jn. 6:64, 70-71), joined himself to Satan (Lk. 22:3; Jn. 13:2), and thus fell from his "ministry and apostleship" (Acts 1:17, 25).

(e) It does not appear that the treachery of Judas was specifically prophesied in the Old Testament, nor that the Lord Jesus expected his apostasy until He perceived its development in his mind. If our Lord expected it all the time, why was He heart-stricken at its development (Jn. 13:21)? It is obviously presented as a tragic surprise. The following are the passages involved and suggested literal renderings:

Jn. 6:64—"But there are some of you who are not believing. For Jesus was knowing from the beginning who they are who are not believing and who it is who would deliver Him up." "From the beginning" most likely refers to their unbelief or turning of heart, which Jesus was observing (Jn. 2:24-25). See Mt. 19:4, 8; Acts 11:15; 26:4; Phil. 4:15.

Jn. 6:70—"Did not I choose out for Myself you the twelve, and out of you one a devil is?" This strongly implies that he was not such originally, but became so (Lk. 22:3; Jn. 13:2).

Jn. 6:71—"For this one was about to be delivering Him up, one out of the twelve." Nothing is prophetic here, merely stating his purpose.

Jn. 13:11—"For He was knowing him who was delivering Him up, therefore He said, Ye are not all clean."

Jn. 13:18—"Not concerning all of you am I speaking; I Myself am knowing the ones I did choose out for Myself; but thus is the Scripture fulfilled (or again illustrated): He who is eating My bread did lift up against Me his heel." Our Lord is referring back to a purely historical event in the life of David, where his counselor Ahithophel betrayed him and joined Absalom's rebellion (Ps. 41:9, see II Sam.

15:12; 16:23), which was similar to His sad experience. In Jn. 13:18 and 17:12 we have the conjunction "hina" with a verb "to fulfill," which may be translated either "in order that might be fulfilled," or "so that was fulfilled," indicating a refulfillment of an Old Testament situation or declaration.

Jn. 17:12—"While I was with them I Myself was keeping them in Thy name whom Thou didst give me, and I guarded (them), and no one out of them perished (or did destroy himself), except the son of perdition, so that the Scripture was fulfilled." What Scripture our Lord had in mind is not known, perhaps Ps. 41:9, as above.

Acts 1:16-17, 20—"Men, brethren, the Scripture, which the Holy Spirit did speak beforehand through David's mouth, must have been fulfilled in the case of Judas, who became a guide to those who took Jesus. For that having been numbered with (us), he was among us and did receive the allotted portion of this ministry. . . For it has been written in the Book of Psalms, Let his habitation become desolate and let no one dwell in it, and his office let another take." Reference is back to Ps. 69:25, where we notice a plural pronoun used, not a singular pronoun which would be the case if this was a specific prophecy to Judas. The other reference is to Ps. 109:8, where the words, "let another take his office," are a part of a context extending from verse 6 to verse 19. This whole passage is a pronouncement against "adversaries from the Lord" (20). Since only one small part of this passage is referred to, it would appear that the brief quotation in Acts 1:20 is intended as an application of a previously pronounced judgment upon a typical enemy of God.

Mk. 13:32; Mt. 24:36—The day of Christ's return is not now firmly fixed as a matter of knowledge. Neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit knows. It will occur when the Father in His authority decides that it should (Acts 1:7), which is His supreme prerogative (Jn. 14:28; I Co. 11:3; Re. 1:1).

Mt. 16:27-28; 24:34; Ro. 13:11-12; Phil. 4:5; Jas. 5:8-9; I Pe. 4:7; I Jn. 2:18; Re. 1:1, 3; 3:11; 22:6, 7, 10, 12, 20—The coming of Christ and the fulfillment of end-time prophecies of judgment and the establishment of the millennial kingdom was expected to take place during apostolic or New Testament times, but has been delayed these many centuries by the long-suffering and mercy of God. How could New Testament revelation uniformly portray the soon coming of Christ if it were fixed in the Divine mind that some 1900 years would elapse?

Re. 3:5; 22:18-19—Names can be blotted out of the Book of Life, plagues can be added, and souls shut out from the tree of life upon certain conditions of persistent rebellion against God. If the entire course and destiny of everyone were known to God, those who do not continue faithful unto the end would never be written in the Book of Life or have an expected part in the tree of life.

(4) Omnipotence, or the possession of power or energy of personality without limitation, is a natural attribute of the Godhead: Ge. 17:1; Ex. 6:1-3, 6-7; Job 33:4; Ps. 91:1; Jer. 32:17-19; Eze. 10:4-5; Joel 1:14-15 ("Almighty" used 47 times in the Old Testament); II Co. 6:16-18; Re. 1:8; 4:8; 11:15-17; 15:2-4; 19:5-9, 14-16; 21:22.

Thus the Bible inspires the concept that God is all-powerful, or possesses power or energy of personality without limitation as far as force is concerned. Nothing shall fail to be done for want of Divine energy. This, however, does not mean that there are no limitations imposed upon Divine omnipotence. God has power over His power.

a. Natural impossibilities are limitations in the operations of Divine omnipotence. For example, God "cannot deny himself" (II Tim. 2:13); cannot modify His natural attributes (He. 11:6); cannot make a thing to be and not to be at the same time; cannot abolish the laws of mathematics, two and two can never equal five in any realm.

- b. God's nature and moral character imposes limitations. God is able to do whatever He wills (except with moral beings), but His will is limited to doing those things which are in harmony with His wise and holy and perfect character. God cannot do things contrary to Himself. This is not a defect in Divine omnipotence but a perfection of the Divine Being.
- c. God's will limits His abounding energy, in that God simply has not chosen to bring to pass everything that is possible. God has not exhausted Himself in what He has purposed to bring into existence.
- d. Man as an endowed moral being has been given the ability to limit the omnipotence of God. Mankind by their rebellion against God and their obstinacy in refusing the mercy of forgiveness through the atoning death of Christ have imposed very great limitations upon God's will and happiness. God in creating moral creatures with the power of contrary choice made this a possibility. Evidently the achievement of a moral world of beings who would voluntarily choose to live intelligently was deemed of greater value than an unlimited display of omnipotence.

3. Another class of attributes, designated as moral attributes, are said to characterize the Members of the Godhead.

Moral attributes involve the element of choice, or have a voluntary causation to them. They are not natural attributes in that they are not endowments of God's existence, but are moral in the sense that they are the result of a disposition of will. They exist because each Member of the Godhead perpetually chooses that they should be so. Moral character must be an active something. It cannot be a static fixity of some sort back of the will, causing its actions. Moral character is dynamic; it is the whole personality in action; it is what we are doing with our endowments or abilities of personality.

Before summing up what the Bible has to say about God's moral character, we must remind ourselves as to what are the essentials of moral action and what kind of action determines moral character. Since man has been created in the moral image of God (Ge. 1:26-27), what principles are true of God will also be true of man.

If there is to be moral action and moral character, there must first be the endowments of personality. We have abundantly seen that the Divine Being is not an impersonal force but a Triune Personality. God possesses personal intelligence, or the faculty of reason and perception with its ability of self-evaluation or conscience. God also possesses that endowment of being that can have a response, or emotional experiences which develop the sense of the valuable. Finally, God possesses ability of free will or the power to originate action. Free will is the ability of self-direction or self-decision, that something that can put intelligence to work in arriving at a decision for action, that propulsion of will or energy to get things done, that faculty of self-determination or self-causation that has only one's self to blame for one's own actions.

Secondly, for such a personal being to have moral action, the intelligence must be in possession of intellectual comprehension of truth and understanding to give direction to what choices ought to be made. There must be moral light as to what is right conduct and what is wrong conduct, all things considered. We read in I John 1:5 that "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." Our Lord Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" (Jn. 8:12). God is, then, the very essence of moral light and is able to guide His own actions to absolute perfection. The Psalmist said, in addressing God: "O Lord God of truth" (31:5). The Holy Spirit is called "the Spirit of truth" (Jn. 14:17). In the mind of God, therefore, is the absolute standard of what moral actions are right and proper, viewing all moral beings in absolute perspective of their relationships and character. This perfect moral light is possessed by each of the Personalities of the blessed Trinity.

Thirdly, we need to understand the true nature of moral action and moral character. Not all actions of a moral being are of the same importance. Some actions result from other actions or dispositions. A moral action must be an act of will, not something back of the will causing it to act as it does.

A moral action is to act in accordance with the moral light of truth residing in the intelligence, or to act contrary to it. Such moral actions of will must be positive and definite and cannot be partial, in the sense that a moral being may partly will to take a certain action and partly refuse at the same time. A decision of will may change from moment to moment, but when acting in a certain direction it is always definite and positive, and cannot be partial.

As we break down the many actions of a moral being, we discover that there are ultimate or supreme choices, which determine the overall destination of life, and subordinate choices that are made to further the prevailing ultimate choice. All who analyze moral character seek to press a person's actions back to the ultimate motive or reason for doing things, and recognize that any action that can be traced further back as to why it was done does not in itself determine moral character. We must, therefore, press the chain of decisions of will back to the point where we encounter a state of will that has no reason for its existence, except that the personality involved has so chosen of his own independent volition. In other words, the underlying motivating force of life is the supreme reason why anything is done, and thus determines one's moral character.

Having considered these essentials of personality and moral character, we are now prepared to enumerate and classify the moral attributes of the Godhead. An attribute is a quality or characteristic, and a moral attribute is such a trait of character that is true in the realm of voluntary activity. We shall observe that some of the moral attributes are dependent upon others. In fact, all of the moral attributes of the Godhead are reducible to two: (1) A supreme choice by each Member of the Godhead to be motivated by love or perfect benevolence in all that is done, and (2) the absolute faithfulness or unchangeable persistency in perpetually maintaining this disposition of love. Let us allow our hearts to rise in profound worship and adoration as we consider what appears to be the greatest revelation of the Divine Being vouchsafed to man. Many dark questions of providence and judgment are viewed in a very different light under this simplification of Divine actions and reactions.

- (1) The essential or basic moral attribute of the Godhead is embodied in the words, "God is love" (I Jn. 4:8, 16). "Love" as so used is not primarily an emotional state, but is an attitude of will to bestow kindnesses upon others according to perfect intelligence of what is right and proper.

The word "good" is frequently used to describe the essential goodness of God: II Chr. 30:18-19; Ps. 25:8; 34:8; 86:5; 100:5; 106:1; 119:68; 145:9; Jer. 33:11; Nahum 1:7; Mt. 5:44-48; 19:16-17; 20:12-15. Also the word "goodness:" Ex. 33:19; 34:6-7; Ps. 27:13; 31:19; 33:5; Jer. 31:12; Zech. 9:17; Ro. 2:4.

There are only two directions that a moral being can take in a supreme rule of life. A personality can choose to be intelligent or unintelligent, to fulfill all obligations toward all moral beings or not to do so, to be impartial or partial. An admixture is impossible. The one is a state of virtuous love, the other a state of selfishness. God possesses a perfect comprehension of what is right and proper in every circumstance. Each Member of the Godhead perpetually chooses to be motivated by love or perfect benevolence in all that is done, fulfilling all obligations with absolute impartiality by treating every moral being with perfect intelligence.

The love of God the Father is the source of all true love in the world: Jn. 3:16-17; Ro. 5:5; 8:38-39; II Co. 13:11, 14; I Jn. 2:15; 4:7-8, 16. The love of Christ is referred to in Jn. 15:9; Ro. 8:35; II Co. 5:14; Ep. 3:19; II Tim. 1:13. The Holy Spirit is known by His operations of love, as in Ro. 5:5; 15:30; Ga. 5:22.

This loving disposition of God was the mainspring of redemption: Ro. 5:8; Ep. 2:4; I Jn. 4:9-12; Jn. 15:13; Ga. 2:20; Ep. 5:2; Re. 1:5. God's evaluation of the importance of love is set forth in I Co. 13. The nature of love as a voluntary disposition, to be entered upon and maintained, is illustrated in God's commands to men: Jn. 5:42; 15:9-10; I Co. 16:13-14; Ep. 5:1-2; I Tim. 1:5; I Jn. 2:5; 4:16; 5:3; Jude 21. This portrayal of the moral character of the Godhead is the most profound revelation of the Bible.

John 16: 27

- (2) Holiness is a moral attribute of the Godhead, or more properly is an attribute of love: Le. 11:44; Is. 6:3; I Pe. 1:15-16; Re. 4:8. The primary idea of the Hebrew word rendered "holy" is that of cutting off or separation, and thus properly means worthy of veneration or reverend. The New Testament Greek equivalent has a similar significance.

Because "God is love" (I Jn. 4:8, 16), or is living in a state of good-will or true benevolence, and because "God is light" (I Jn. 1:5), or is the embodiment of perfectly intelligent conduct, God is holy or is worthy of the veneration and worship of all. Holiness in God is a dynamic state of being, rather than a static or fixed something somewhere in the Divine nature. It is descriptive of the character of God which is established by right moral action. "God is light" because "he is in the light" (I Jn. 1:7). God's conduct is in accordance with the scrutiny of absolute intelligence. The Lord Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" (Jn. 8:12), by which He meant that His manner of living was its standard. He could say, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" (Jn. 8:46), and thus was "separate from sinners" and was called "holy" (He. 7:26). He affirmed that this walk in the light is true life.

Holiness, therefore, is a descriptive term applied to moral beings who are voluntarily fulfilling their moral obligation, or are conforming to their moral light or perception of truth. Holiness is an evaluation that is due to virtuous moral beings. It is a tribute of praise and veneration because a moral being has chosen to be virtuous when such a one might have chosen otherwise. Holiness does not do anything, therefore, and consequently is not properly a moral attribute, but attaches an atmosphere of sanctity to the whole character and actions of the Godhead because They have chosen to be guided by intelligence in all Their actions—without the least taint of arbitrariness, partiality, or self-assertiveness. The perception of the Godhead of Their moral obligation is absolutely perfect and complete. God's voluntary conformity is perfect and uninterrupted. Therefore God's holiness or moral worth is absolute (Re. 4:8). "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (Le. 11:44; I Pe. 1:16) is plainly a description of God's manner of living, with a strong admonition to man to follow in the ways of his Creator. Holiness is not something one has, but something one is.

- (3) Righteousness is a moral attribute of God, or more properly is an attribute of love: Ge. 18:25; De. 32:4; Job 36:1-2; Ps. 11:7; Dan. 9:7, 14; Hosea 14:9; Jn. 17:25; Ro. 14:17; He. 1:8-9; Re. 15:3. psalm 7:11

Righteousness is simply a disposition to deal rightly with every moral character. Righteousness as a moral attribute of God is God's determination to treat every moral being according to his conduct and to dispense justice between moral beings. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right," declared Abraham (Ge. 18:25). Just as holiness describes the voluntary disposition of love back of all actions, so righteousness describes the many individual actions that issue forth from this disposition of love in the conduct of God's responsibilities toward His moral creatures. If God should show leniency and partiality toward some and be more strict with others, He would have to do so for some selfish reason. But if there is any selfish reason for any of God's actions, God has ceased to be benevolent and impartial. Thus righteousness toward all moral beings is dictated by the perfect virtuous love of God.

- a. The righteousness of God is manifested in Divine reactions against disobedience and pleasure in obedience of His moral creatures (Jas. 4:6-7; He. 6:10), with a registry of every guilty and virtuous action.
- b. In establishing a court of final judgment to evaluate the guilt of each moral being in all fairness before all (He. 9:27).
- c. In the eternal separation of those who love Him and desire to live virtuously from those who have insisted on pressing on in their own rebellion of heart, with due rewards and sufferings (Dan. 12:2; Mt. 25:46; II Th. 1:6-10).
- d. In the forgiveness of repentant sinners through faith in the substituted sufferings of the Lord Jesus (Ro. 3:24-26; I Jn. 1:9).

- (4) Loving-kindness and mercy is a moral attribute of God, or more properly is an attribute of love: Is. 54:8; Ps. 86:5; Lam. 3:22; Ro. 2:4; Ep. 2:4; Jas. 5:11; II Pe. 3:9.

The choice to live lovingly or in a state of voluntary good-willing does something to all our relations, for we read, "Love suffereth long, and is kind" (I Co. 13:4). This is the opposite of allowing the righteous feelings of vindictive justice towards those who have injured us to hold sway in our beings. The loving disposition of the Godhead has completely overcome all feelings of vindictive justice, which man's rebellion and persistence in wickedness has caused to arise in the Divine Being. Now, instead of this insistence on strict justice, mercy and forgiveness is offered upon certain necessary conditions which will make happy reconciliation possible.

Loving-kindness and mercy is a tendency to be lenient and kind toward the unworthy, which is the meaning of the word "grace" so often applied to the Godhead (Tit. 2:11). This is the quality of humiliation and self-abasement, a willingness to jeopardize proper standing and recognition out of compassion to the undeserving. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." It is a sacrificial impartation of life rather than a conservation of life. It sacrifices its own welfare and just due to grant to other moral beings its storehouse of blessings. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," wrote the Apostle Paul of the willingness of the Son to leave the profound serenity of heaven and enter the area of our humiliation so that He might give His life in a sacrificial death for the sins of the whole world (Phil. 2:5).

- Pardon and forgiveness cannot be brought to pass unless God's righteous obligations can be satisfied and unless man is willing to repent and embrace the conditions of mercy. It is here that the blessed atonement of Christ enters as the greatest fact of world history: (1) It upholds God's moral government by showing forth the awful nature of sin and its just due of eternal punishment. (2) It reveals God's inner hatred of sin and how terrifying have been the effects of sin upon the Members of the Godhead. (3) It furnishes the crushing force to subdue the tremendous structure of human pride, humbling man to the place where God can pour out His storehouse of blessings in tender kindness. (4) It provides the means for man's complete transformation and affectionate motivation in a newness of life. The only thing left is for man to repent of all sin and stupidity and seek the face of God in proper humbleness, identifying himself in a committal of faith to the sufferings of Christ for his sins, as the only hope of his forgiveness and spiritual restoration from a state of ruin. God, then, can become joyful in loving forgiveness, consistent with His righteous obligations, "because he delighteth in mercy" (Micah 7:18-19).
- (5) Wisdom is a moral attribute of God, or more properly is an attribute of love, since wisdom is the benevolent use of the abilities of personality: Ro. 11:33; Ps. 104:24; 136:1-9; Prov. 3:19; Jer. 51:15; I Co. 2:7 (1-10); Ep. 3:10; Col. 2:3.

Wisdom is intellectual ability and knowledge put to work by love to devise designs and plans that tend to good and usefulness. Wisdom, then, is the net product of the personal abilities of God, the knowledge of God, and the willingness to use these endowments in a benevolent or loving way. It is the net end product of the Being and character of God. It is what God's personality and knowledge can do when applied in a benevolent or loving way. It is an amalgamation of a loving purpose with an intellectual ability to design, an emotional ability to guide and evaluate, and an energy of personality to bring to pass.

Wisdom is more than moral character, since it is caused by or is the fruit of moral character. Wisdom is higher than knowledge, since it is the benevolent use of knowledge. Wisdom is knowledge tempered by and harnessed by goodness. Wisdom is more than the endowments of personality. It is the product of personality, lived in a right and useful way. Thus wisdom is one of the most crowning moral attributes of the Godhead.

While the design and creation of the vast universe with all its furnishings is a product of God's wisdom, it appears that the greatest achievement of God's wisdom relates to the accomplishment of redemption and the spiritual blessings granted to those who respond. The blessed plan of salva-

tion through the sufferings of a substituted Saviour was a crowning manifestation, and also its accomplishment in spite of man's rejection and violence against his own redeemer (I Co. 2:1-10). Profound wisdom is also manifested in the plan of the mystical church of Christ, as amalgamated together in a living organism by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in this glorious age of grace (Ep. 3:1-12). Throughout the endless ages of eternity, the redeemed shall marvel at the unending manifestation of the wisdom of the Godhead.

- (6) Truthfulness is a moral attribute of God, or more properly is an attribute of love: Ex. 34:6; Ps. 25:10; Is. 65:16; Jn. 14:6, 17; 17:3, 17; I Th. 1:9; II Tim. 2:15.

As long as God is love, he must be truthful, since there would be nothing to prompt untruthfulness. By untruthfulness a selfish heart attempts to gain something that is not due to it, and to cover up its true character. But God's perfect benevolence simply desires to manifest itself in its true character and has nothing to cover up or conceal. It would, therefore, be impossible for God to speak any kind of falsehood or in any way misrepresent Himself to man while love prevails. God has declared Himself in the Bible to be "abundant in goodness and truth" (Ex. 34:6), and inspired the Psalmist to write, "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth" (25:10). "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit," wrote Peter in accounting for the existence of the Bible (II Pe. 1:21). God the Father is said to be "the God of truth;" the Lord Jesus could affirm, "I am the way, the truth, and the life;" the Holy Spirit is "the Spirit of truth." Truthfulness in absolute perfection is a must, therefore, as long as impartial love prevails.

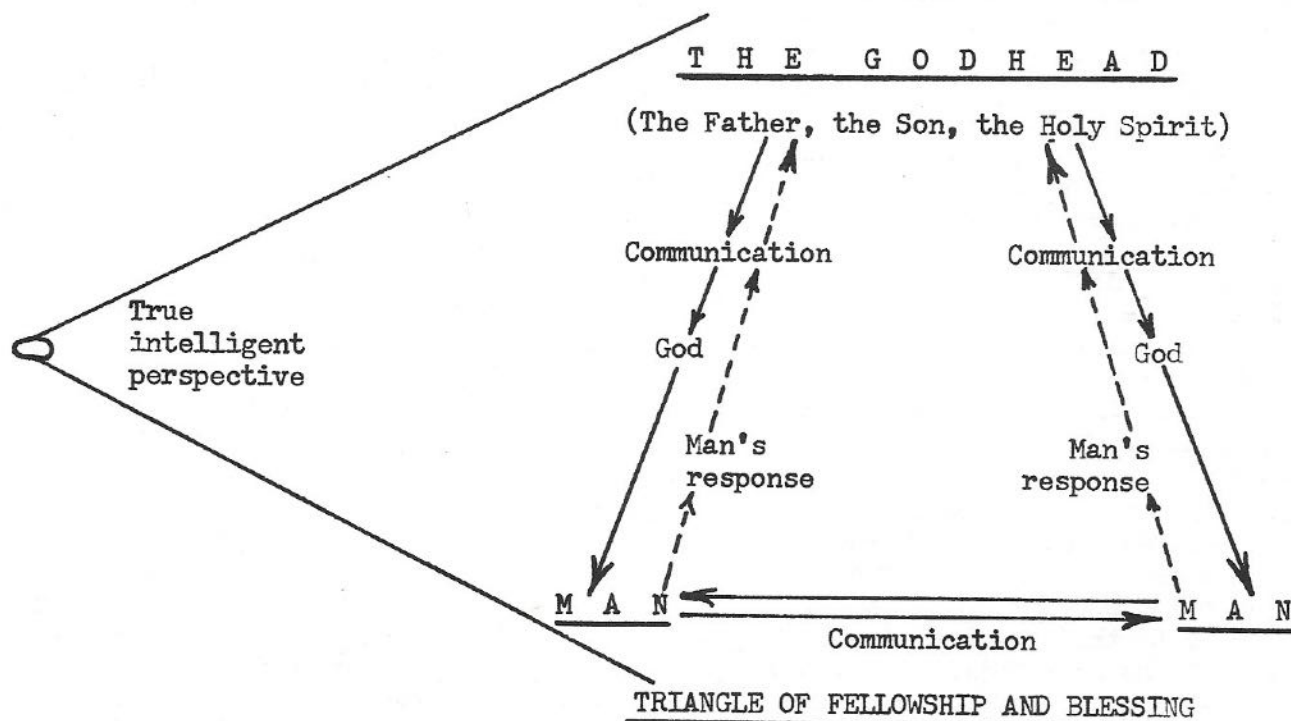
SUMMARY: To sum up those moral attributes of God which are in reality attributes of God's voluntary moral character of perfect love or impartial good-will toward all moral beings, we may say: That perfect love must treat every moral being in absolute righteousness; will be tempered by loving-kindness and mercy toward all, when righteousness is not sacrificed thereby; will engage the faculties and endowments of personality to devise and produce manifestations of wisdom; and will be perfectly truthful in all revelations and expressions of factual knowledge. Holiness is the proper evaluation of this whole wonderful proceeding, but since all proceeds from love, holiness more specifically is a true evaluation of the voluntary disposition of love.

- (7) Faithfulness or unchangeableness is a moral attribute of God: De. 7:9; Ps. 102:25-27; Lam. 3:23; Mal. 3:6; I Co. 10:13; II Tim. 2:13; Ha. 1:18; Jas. 1:17; I Pe. 4:19; Re. 1:5-6; 5:9-10.

When it is said that God is faithful or unchangeable, it is intended that the Triune Personalities of the Godhead have always maintained and will always maintain a voluntary disposition of impartial good-will toward all moral beings. Or we may say that "God is love" in essential moral character, always has been in a state of love, and always will be in a state of love. Because of this absolute stability, we may have perfect confidence that God will always deal righteously, will always be merciful when possible, will always exercise wisdom in all actions, and will always be perfectly truthful in all manifestations.

In moral character, therefore, the Triune Godhead are absolutely committed to a state of perfect love, without the slightest interruption. Thus Moses could write: "Thy God, he is God, the faithful God" (De. 7:9). The Psalmist could say: "Thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end" (102:25-27). Jeremiah could extol God in the words: "Great is thy faithfulness" (Lam. 3:23). Malachi could quote God as saying: "I am the Lord, I change not" (3:6). Paul could confidently affirm: "God is faithful," and "he abideth faithful" (I Co. 10:13; II Tim. 2:13). In Hebrews it could be declared: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever" (1:18). James not only could say, "with whom is no variableness," but also, "neither shadow of turning (or shadow cast by turning)" (1:17). Peter admonished his fellow-Christians to "commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" (I Pe. 4:19). This perfectly virtuous and uninterrupted conduct of the Godhead form the foundation of the heavenly chorus, where every superlative will be heralded as God's holy will is done in every iota (Re. 1:5-6; 5:9-10).

THE GOD--MAN AND MAN--MAN RELATIONSHIP



"The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him" (II Chr. 16:9).

"The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:23-24).

"This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (Jn. 17:3).

"In Him (God) we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

"Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Co. 10:31).

"If a man love me (said Jesus), he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him" (Jn. 14:23).

"That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us" (Jn. 17:21).

"That ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (I Jn. 1:3).

"They . . . did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people" (Acts 2:46-47).

"That I (Paul) may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed" (Ro. 15:32).

"Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy" (Paul to Timothy, II Tim. 1:4).

II. HAPPINESS AND BLESSEDNESS that man was created to enjoy.

- "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over . . . all the earth. . . So God created man in his own image" (Ge. 1:26,27).
 "God . . . hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth. . . In him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:26, 28).
 "Ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ep. 2:22).
 "Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (II Co. 6:16).
 "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Co. 10:31).
 "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him" (II Chr. 16:9).
 "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing" (Zeph. 3:17).
 "Be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ep. 5:18-19).

Happiness has been defined as a state of well-being and pleasurable satisfaction. Blessedness is a state of the most refined happiness, arising from the purest and warmest benevolent and religious feeling. It is the enjoyment of spiritual happiness. The Godhead in Their satisfaction of blessed fellowship (Jn. 17:5) desired to create an order of beings who could evaluate and become a part of these joyous experiences. The blessed possibilities of happy fellowship in God-man and man-man relationships in pursuit of the mystery of life in a physical world and universe setting was the motivating purpose in creation.

1. Man is qualified by his endowments of personality to enter into happy fellowship with his Creator and with his fellowmen.

Man in his spiritual or real essence was created as a tiny replica of the great God, to possess in finite miniature the abilities and qualities of being that God possesses in His infinite realm. Certainly this is implied in the narrative in Ge. 1:26-27 and 2:7. The words "image" and "likeness" are very similar in meaning. "Image" conveys the idea of a shadowing forth, from a root, to shade. It is thus a shadow, phantom, resemblance, or likeness. "Likeness" is defined as a similitude, image, or resemblance, from a root, to be like, to compare. The word is used of shapes cast in molds (II Chr. 4:3) and of an appearance resembling something (Eze. 1:16). The similitude of man to God is also implied in admonitions of comparison, as in I Pe. 1:16 (from Le. 11:44) and Mt. 5:48. The Lord Jesus in His essential humanity so resembled the Being of God that He could say: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (Jn. 14:9). Man like God, therefore, has been given functional capacities of personality that make possible individuality and moral character, with the possibility of blessed fellowship:

- (1) Ability of intellect, or reasoning powers and understanding, imagination or a mental picture of what is not seen, self-consciousness and God-consciousness, conscience or self-evaluation, and memory or an indelible record in complete perspective of what has taken place. This ability is commonly referred to in Scripture as an ability of "spirit" and "mind;" Job 20:3; Prov. 20:27; Is. 1:18; 26:3, 9; 55:8-9; Mk. 12:28-31; Jn. 4:23-24; Ro. 7:23-25; 12:1-2; I Co. 2:11-12, 16; Ep. 2:3; 4:23; Phil. 4:8; Tit. 1:15; He. 8:10.
- (2) Ability of emotion or experience, as a reaction to what is thought or acted upon, the area of satisfaction and happiness, of pleasure and pain, of worship and adoration, commonly referred to as an ability of "soul;" Ge. 2:7; I Co. 15:45, 44; Nu. 21:4; Job 10:1; Ps. 42:1, 5-6; 63:5-7; 84:2; Is. 61:10; Mt. 11:28-30; 22:36-37; Lk. 1:46-47; 12:19-21; I Pe. 1:22-23.
- (3) Ability of free will or self-determination, the ability to originate our own actions, the self-caused energy of personality, the essence of moral character, commonly referred to as the "heart" of man; Ex. 36:2; De. 4:29; 5:29; I Sam. 7:3; I Kgs. 8:38-40; Ps. 10:4-6; 57:7; Jer. 17:9-10; 29:12-13; Dan. 1:8; Mk. 7:21-23; 11:22-24; Acts 7:39; 11:23; Ro. 6:17 (16-18); 10:9-10; II Co. 9:7; He. 3:8 (7-9), 12.

Man is not to be thought of as a divisible being, with distinct parts that can be segregated and examined independently. Man is rather to be thought of as an integrated whole personality, with the above endowments or abilities incorporated into his consciousness. Each of these abilities involves the whole personality in a unified action. Man is a psycho-physical personality having both spiritual and physical elements. Man is, therefore, a whole personality, created in the moral image of God, an integrated whole having: (1) An intellectual function or mind, or a spiritual function enabling man to be God-conscious; (2) a soulish function qualifying for self-consciousness; (3) a heart function or the mysterious endowment of self-determination; and (4) a bodily function or a physical activity.

2. The real essence of man's life was intended to consist in the full expression of his personality in blessed fellowship with God and with his fellowmen, with supreme satisfaction and happiness.

Man has been placed in relationships that afford this opportunity for expressing his whole personality. This was God's plan. For this man was designed and created. "In him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Co. 10:31). "Ye are also builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ep. 2:22). The word "habitation" stresses the idea of a permanent dwelling place in contrast to a sojourner. The blessed fulfillment of these planned relationships can only be found in man's proper recognition of his relationships and fulfillment of their obligations. Man was never intended to find happiness in selfish independence, but was to be a supplementary outlet for the great Being of God.

- (1) Spiritually or vertically, man was created to have an absolutely intimate relationship with God, making possible perfect and continued fellowship: Ge. 1:26-27; 17:1; Ex. 33:11, 14; I Chr. 28:9; II Chr. 6:30 (ASV); 16:9; Is. 57:15; Zeph. 3:17; Mt. 28:20 (Ga. 2:20; Col. 1:27); Jn. 2:24-25; 4:23-24; 14:23; 17:3, 23; Acts 17:24-28; He. 4:13; I Jn. 4:16; Re. 3:20. Man's relationship to God was to be absolutely unique in that it was not to depend upon external manifestations, as every other relationship of man's does. Our relationship to God was to be direct and real and continuous in a blessed state of communion and enjoyment of the Divine Personalities.
- (2) Socially or horizontally, human associations with means of manifestation and communication through the five senses: Seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching: Ge. 2:18, 20 (man "alone" amidst the animals); Acts 17:26 ("one blood" or likeness); Ge. 11:1, 4 (companionship is natural); I Sam. 18:1, 3 (David and Jonathan); Mt. 22:36-40 (the twofold relationship); Jn. 17:21-23 ("all may be one"); Acts 2:41-47 (the early church); Ro. 15:32 ("refreshed" by friendship); Ep. 4:25 ("members one of another"); II Tim. 1:3-5 (Paul and Timothy); I Pe. 3:7 ("heirs together of the grace of life," a spiritually related marriage); I Jn. 1:3-4, 7 ("fellowship one with another"). How happy are the possibilities of human friendship in the mutual presence of God!
- (3) Physically or materially, the world and the universe, with its diverse life and activity, as a profound environment contributing to man's relationship and happiness with God and with his fellowmen:
 - a. The world and the universe is a tangible manifestation of the character and greatness of God that greatly inspires admiration, confidence, gratitude and worship: Ps. 8:3-6; 104:24; 136:1-9; Prov. 3:19; Jer. 51:15.
 - b. Man's surroundings were also intended to present a congenial and inspiring atmosphere for fellowship and happiness with one another, with endless fascinating discoveries, as well as being designed exactly to meet every physical need. Happy occupation would provide a constructive medium of communication. Toil, antagonisms of nature, pain, sickness and death were to be unknown in buoyant invigorating activity (Ge. 2:8-17).

3. The unalterable condition of happiness for the Godhead and for all moral creatures must be an intelligent recognition of all moral relationships and a devoted fulfillment of all obligations perceived by the mind.

This unchangeable condition of happiness is a willingness to conform our lives to the dictates of intelligence, or to live in a manner that is right and proper in all our moral relations. The Godhead are fulfilling Their obligations with absolute perfection, and thus it is said that "God is light" (I Jn. 1:5). We are to conduct ourselves according to the enlightenment received from our own minds as they perceive our moral relations and obligations, and from the Bible as the Word of God (Jn. 3:19-21). God will never require anything that is arbitrary, but only what is founded in absolute reason and truth. This involves the perpetual recognition of God as the Supreme Ruler of the moral universe and others equal with ourselves as happy subjects of the kingdom of God: Ps. 5:2; 84:3; Mt. 5:3; 6:33; 7:21-23; 18:1-4; Jn. 3:3; Ro. 14:17.

- (1) The Ten Commandments were given to define man's obligations (Ga. 3:19) and can never be changed or suspended in our present relationships (Ps. 19:7; Mt. 5:17; Ro. 7:12; I Tim. 1:8). As recorded in Ex. 20:1-17 and De. 5:1-22, they require: (1) Supreme love to God (De. 6:5), forbidding every form of mental idolatry; (2) prohibit the making and worshipping of images; (3) declare against false swearing, blasphemy, and the irreverent use of the name of God; (4) against profanation of the sabbath and idleness; (5) command honor and love to parents; (6) declare against murder; (7) adultery; (8) theft; (9) false witness or misrepresentations of every sort; and (10) covetousness, a dissatisfied state of mind which the New Testament calls idolatry (Ep. 5:5; Col. 3:5).

Evidently Moses and the people thought that the law was holy, blessed and reasonable, and that they were able to keep it if they so chose: Ex. 24:3; De. 5:1; 6:24-25; 10:12-13; 11:22; 26:16-19; 28:47, 58-59; 30:8, 11-14. Evidently Joshua also thought so (22:5), also Ezra (7:23-26), also David (Ps. 19:7; 40:8) and another psalmist (119:165-168), also a prophet (II Kgs. 17:13, 7-18); also Daniel (9:9-11).

- (2) The Lord Jesus reaffirmed the perpetuity of the Ten Commandments and divided them in a twofold way: Mt. 22:36-40; Mk. 12:28-34; Lk. 10:25-28. "On these two commandments hang (is being hung or suspended) all the law and the prophets" (Mt. 22:40).
- a. "The first and great commandment"—supreme obligation of love to God, embracing the first four of the Ten Commandments. This was previously summarized by Moses in De. 6:5 (3-7).
 - b. "The second"—equal obligation and love to our fellowmen, embracing the last six of the Ten Commandments. This was previously given by God through Moses, Le. 19:18, and by the Lord in Mt. 7:12.
- (3) New Testament revelation further reduces the Ten Commandments to one word "love:" Ro. 13:8-10; Ga. 5:14; I Tim. 1:5; Jas. 2:8-10. "Love" as here used is not basically an emotional quality, or a static inactive something, but rather a voluntary state of impartial good-will toward all moral beings, which results in a conduct according to intelligence and truth without any admixture of arbitrariness. C. G. Finney wrote: "Love is benevolence or good willing. . . It consists in choosing the highest good of God and of universal-being, for its own intrinsic value, in a spirit of entire consecration to this as the ultimate end of existence." (Systematic Theology, 1878, pp. 135-136). Man's moral obligation becomes very simple and logical. It is to live according to intelligence or according to what is true in our moral relationships. It is to fit ourselves into the true perspective of the moral universe and be willing to live accordingly. It is to refuse to be a misfit in the realm of God. It is to be willing to live like God lives. "Be ye holy: for I am holy" (I Pe. 1:16).

Holiness is a descriptive term of all who are motivated by a voluntary disposition of love. Just as "God is love" (I Jn. 4:8, 16), so "every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God" (I Jn. 4:7). Christians are admonished: "Keep yourselves in the love of God" (Jude 21). "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Ro. 13:10). An attitude of loving benevolence toward all is all that God asks or can ask (I Jn. 5:3). Love, or a conformity to intelligence, therefore, is the unalterable condition of happiness for all moral beings—for both God and man.

4. Man was to be regulated by an appeal to the right exercise of free choice in a moral government.

Moral government is an association of moral beings under intelligent supervision of a benevolent Ruler. Moral government is an arrangement to regulate the conduct of moral beings by enlightening their minds as to what actions are right and proper, and by solemn pronouncement that certain consequences will follow right action and opposite consequences wrong action. Moral government, therefore, functions upon the principle of promising rewards for obedience and threatening appropriate punishment for disobedience. The subject is allowed to determine for himself what consequences shall be his.

A moral being or moral agent is a creature capable of right and wrong action, or a being endowed with the ability to perceive what is right and proper conduct in his various relations and thus able to be governed by truth addressed to his intelligence. Moral government must be founded upon truth that can be perceived by the mind, so that the idea of oughtness can be developed in the minds of the subjects. The need for such government to guarantee the rights and well-being of all moral beings must be affirmed by the reason. The worthiness and ability of the Supreme Governor must be recognized. It thus becomes the obligation of the Supreme Ruler to govern and the subjects to submit to such wise and necessary rulership.

Moral creatures are a distinct order of creation, the only classification bearing "the image of God," and obviously cannot be regulated by the same procedures as the balance of creation. Every influence consistent with his moral freedom is being brought to bear upon man's personality to get him to make the right choices (as De. 30:19; Josh. 24:15; Is. 1:19-20; Jer. 21:8; Mt. 23:37; Jn. 5:40; Ro. 2:5-11; Re. 3:20). Moral beings must be allowed to be the author of their own actions or their created "image" will be rendered inoperative. If the may or may not of free choice is not allowed to exist, then moral government ceases and all becomes a government of cause and effect. If man was created as a being whose actions had to be caused, God might delight in the profoundness of His operations but could never experience the joy of observing moral creatures who choose of their own self-caused volition to be in happy submission and admiration of His great attributes and moral character (II Chr. 16:9; Zeph. 3:17).

It must at once be obvious that absolute control over moral beings acting in their created ability and freedom of choice is an impossibility. The crowning feature of their existence is that they have been given the freedom to originate their own actions, which must be uncertain and unpredictable in any final analysis. The Lord appeared to Abraham and said: "I am the Almighty; walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Ge. 17:1). If there was any way for God to cause Abraham to walk perfectly, then all would become mechanical and moral values would evaporate. Moral government involves an amazing study in contrasts as the great God is represented as appealing in humility to the heart of man, so profoundly small in limitations, to conform to His wise and holy ways in blessed fellowship (as Re. 3:20). It is the very essence of moral government that man is the sole author of his own actions. While God exerts strong persuasive influences, in no sense is God the cause of man's moral choices.

- (1) Free responsible moral action is to be distinguished from all actions that result from external or internal causation.

All substances and creatures of every sort must be under some form of government or regulation, or total chaos will result. God would be negligent if He should allow such a catastrophe to develop. Possessing the ability to create, God must also possess the ability to control, as much as is possible in the nature of the case. "Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth" (Re. 19:6). "The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all" (Ps. 103:19). "The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works. . . Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations" (Ps. 145:9-13). The ovations of heaven will testify to God's righteous rulership: "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints" (Re. 15:3).

- a. From actions in inanimate creation under the law of cause and effect; Is. 45:5-7, 12, 18; Col. 1:16-17; He. 1:1-3. Here Divine omnipotence operates by sheer force, either directly or by what we call the laws of nature. Created substances, great and small, do not possess a life of growth or self-locomotion and must be perpetually acted upon to produce whatever results are desired. The cause being brought into existence, the result always follows. This is a simple procedure to a God of unbounding energy and immeasurable intelligence.
- b. From actions in animate non-moral creation under instinct, often supplemented by direct Divine impulses: Ge. 9:2; De. 32:11-12; I Kgs. 17:4, 6; Mt. 8:20; 17:27. In these more intricate areas of creation most mysterious entities have been incorporated, which produce growth with profound results, establish tendencies of life, and all sorts of curious actions—all of which is totally unexplainable. No doubt these unending marvels of created instincts and impulses to action have been brought into existence to overwhelm man with proof of the Divine existence. From all these wonders man establishes inner conclusions that can never be expressed. They create obligation to recognize Deity by sheer mental impact.

In non-moral government, under the law of cause and effect, under implanted instincts, or by direct Divine impulses, the results are always certain to occur simply because there is no alternative to do otherwise. God designed and created these various existences to be controlled in just this manner. The results may be admirable as a tribute to Divine wisdom and power, but there can be no praise-worthiness or blame-worthiness, since all results are simply the product of Divine causation.

- c. From actions of moral beings under governmental providence, which often involves a temporary suspension of moral freedom by God's direct agency: Ex. 11:9-10; De. 2:25; Josh. 11:20; Ps. 22:28; Dan. 4:17; Lk. 4:28-30; Jn. 7:30; Re. 17:17.

Since our first parents refused to remain intelligent as voluntary members of the kingdom of God, God has had to introduce innovations in His moral government to maintain a workable world order and to bring to pass various events in His dispensations of mercy. Selfishness does not have what it takes to produce a tolerable society if allowed to proceed unrestrained. Man refusing voluntary restraint, God in mercy had to introduce methods of producing involuntary restraint for man's own ultimate good. This was not a part of God's original plan and would not have been necessary if sin had not introduced the confusion of moral values and relationships.

The Scriptures present a whole array of passages describing God's operations in the enforced realm of providence, which are in complete contrast to the many passages that portray God's humble appeal for entrance and acceptance in men's hearts. God's operations in this abnormal realm are varied and complicated. As we shall see, oppressive measures have had to be instituted against man from the realm of nature and from the animal kingdom. Instead of pleasant occupation as an outlet for intelligent activity, toil and struggle, pain and hardship, with death at the end of life, have had to be introduced as a judgment for sin and to restrain its further development.

In all forms of regulation by force, by instinct, or by mental coercion, the exact desired effects are achieved. The nature of control is certain and positive because an adequate cause has been provided to achieve a definite result, as contrasted with the uncertainty involved when man is allowed to choose his own actions unrestrained in moral accountability.

- (2) Man's enlightenment upon his relations and obligations is the directive of right moral action and moral government.

If man is to be held accountable for his actions, he must not only be endowed with intellectual ability but must actually understand what his essential obligations to God and to his fellowmen are. He must be exposed to an atmosphere of truth that will foster and not hinder these spontaneous mental

deductions. Right action can only follow right understanding. He must also understand that moral government does not consist in his being caused to act rightly toward other moral beings, but in his being admonished and urged to do so--enforced by appropriate consequences. He must have some understanding of the rightfulness and blessedness of the consequences that follow virtuous action, and the rightfulness and awful tragedy of the consequences that follow wrongful and rebellious action. These must be so vivid in his imagination as to be an incentive to obey the light of conscience and fear disobedience.

We now ask, "Do all men possess such a compelling enlightenment of mind and conscience as to render them guilty for disobedience and worthy of the threatened eternal punishment of separation from God? If so, what do the Scriptures reveal as the source of this information?"

a. Man is exposed to very great moral light through his natural observations.

"Light" is a figurative expression referring to that which reveals to us what our actions ought to be. "Whatsoever doth make manifest is light" (Ep. 5:13). We have seen that "God is light," or is absolute moral perfection in character and conduct, and that the Lord Jesus was "the light of the world." Man is subject to unending observations which portray to him his obligation to God and men. The Scripture affirms the great guilt of every person who has attained the age of accountability and is in possession of his reasoning powers.

(a) These natural observations are the basis of guilt and condemnation: Rom. 1:18-20; 2:11-12, 14-16; 3:19, 23 ("all the world . . . guilty").

Notice that all who have never heard of the Bible nor of the Gospel are still "without excuse" (Ro. 1:20). While the Gospel greatly adds guilt to those ~~rejecting it~~, it is not the primary basis of condemnation.

(b) This moral light appeals directly to the mind for acceptance and may be dimmed or its force eliminated by philosophical reasoning: Acts 17:28; Ro. 1:18; Col. 2:8; II Tim. 4:4. Our native unreasoned reactions are very dependable. If we do not want to comply with them, we set about to reason them away. It is thus that men "suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Ro. 1:18, ASB), and are taken "captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men" (Col. 2:8, ASB). The idea in the last passage is that of being carried off as a prey or as booty, a continuous action.

(c) The sources of this moral light, from which we build our concepts of reality. Our inner personalities and abilities are profound to contemplate (Ps. 8:4). There is within us the ability to think, to reason, to view facts and draw conclusions therefrom, to react in emotional response, and to originate our own actions—all functioning as an integral whole in a physical existence. Our bodies or external selves are wonderfully made, beyond comprehension, enabling us to contact the world without through our five senses: Seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and touching (Ps. 139:14). Our surroundings or external observations could provide an eternity of investigation—from the infinitesimal to the inconceivably immense (Ps. 19:1; Is. 40:26; Jer. 10:12; Ro. 1:20). These wonders so overwhelm the mind with evidence of a great Designer and Creator that great effort must be put forth by all who refuse to be guided thereby in their moral decisions. Daily contact with our fellowmen places us, secondarily, under human obligation.

b. Man is exposed to direct moral influences of the Godhead, enlightening the mind and quickening the conscience: Jn. 1:9; 16:8-11; Ro. 1:18; 2:15; Acts 17:27; Jn. 12:32 (there must be a mysterious drawing power of love being exerted to all who will in the least respond to enlightenment).

c. Man was given special moral enlightenment by Divine revelation before the Fall, progressively after the Fall, the giving of the law through Moses, and finally through the advent and Saviourhood of Christ. Adam and Eve experienced happy climaxes of God's visitations before their rebellion (Ge. 3:8-10), and had specific instructions as to that submission and confidence that would please God (2:16-17; 3:2-3).

- (3) Pronounced consequences of right and wrong moral action are the enforcement of moral government.

Sanction as a legal term is "that which induces observance of law or custom." In law it is "the detriment, loss of reward, or other coercive intervention, annexed to a violation of a law as a means of enforcing the law." Sanctions may be considered as positive and negative, rewards of blessings or penal consequences of suffering. As a simpler term, the word "consequences" has been chosen to represent the sanctions that the righteous God imposes upon moral creatures for their conduct.

The idea of sanctions or consequences, therefore, is unavoidably associated with moral government or a government of moral beings. A moral law is a description of what is right conduct for a moral being in a given relationship. Moral law is always an expression of true intelligence and is to be a help toward maintaining a happy relationship in moral government. But for a moral law to have any force or persuasive energy, consequences must be pronounced to follow conformity or non-conformity. Submission to loving and intelligent rules of action always will be rewarded by blessing and happiness. Rebellion or a refusal to be intelligent in one's manner of living always will be rewarded with appropriate suffering and unhappiness. The whole strength and effectiveness of moral government rests in the pronouncement of just consequences and in their unwavering fulfillment. Apart from consequences, moral law would merely be advice and would achieve nothing toward happy moral relations which is the purpose of moral government.

- a. There must of necessity be consequences in moral government:

- (a) Or, moral government must collapse, for this is the only means of control: De. 11:26-28; 30:15-20; Is. 3:10-11; 26:9; Jer. 18:7-10; Jn. 3:36; Ro. 2:6-10; 6:16.
- (b) Or, God would be neglectful and cease to be love if He did not enforce His government for the good of His moral creatures: Ge. 18:25; De. 7:9-11.
- (c) Or, God would cease to be righteous and impartial if He did not treat moral beings according to their actions: Ps. 7:9; Jer. 9:24; I Co. 4:5; II Tim. 4:8; He. 6:10.

- b. These consequences must be according to exact justice:

- (a) God declares His strict impartiality, or that He does not favor one above another in personal salvation or consequences: De. 10:17; II Chr. 19:7; Ps. 62:12; Prov. 24:12; Eze. 18:30; Lk. 20:21 (said of Christ); Acts 10:34-35; Ro. 2:6-11; Ga. 2:6; Ep. 6:9; Col. 3:25; Jas. 2:8-9; I Pe. 1:17; Re. 2:23.
- (b) They are based solely upon personal merit or demerit as known only to God: De. 24:16; II Chr. 25:4; Ps. 94:23; Jer. 31:30; 32:19; Eze. 18:20; Ro. 2:6-11; 14:11-12; I Pe. 1:17.
- (c) They are and will be in exact accord or in proportion to merit and demerit: Jer. 32:19; Ro. 2:6, 12 (guilt in proportion to moral light); Ga. 6:7-8.

5. The rewards of conformity to God's loving and reasonable requirements are most blessed.

These happy experiences are what man was created and endowed to enjoy. They were to exist in unbroken abundance forever. Man in happy submission to God:

- (1) Experiences favor and friendship with God and with his fellowmen: Ge. 3:8; 5:24; 15:1; Ex. 19:5-6; 33:10-11; Mt. 23:37; Jn. 14:23; II Co. 6:16-18; Ep. 2:22; Re. 3:20.
- (2) Allowed to partake of the life-giving energy of God: Ge. 2:9 ("tree of life . . . in the midst"); 2:16 ("freely eat"); Jn. 1:4; 4:14; 5:21, 26; 6:33, 56-57; Ro. 8:11; I Jn. 5:12

Before the Fall man was permitted to "freely eat" of "the tree of life," which evidently maintained his body in perfect health and prevented any deterioration. Through grace the resurrected Christ is to be made living and real through the indwelling Holy Spirit to become the source of our spiritual life and energize our bodies to greater endurance.

- (3) Results in a blessed state of peace, joy, and praise.
- a. A blessed state of peace in the depths of the heart: Ps. 29:11; 119:165; Is. 26:3; Jn. 14:27; Acts 24:16; Ro. 8:6; 14:17; II Co. 13:11; Phil. 4:7; I Jn. 3:19-21.
 - b. The buoyancy of overflowing joy: Le. 23:40 (Feast of Tabernacles); De. 30:9-10 (God's rejoicing); Ne. 12:43; Ps. 16:11; 89:15-16; Zeph. 3:17 (God's joy); Jn. 16:22, 24; Ro. 14:17, 22; Ep. 5:18-21; I Pe. 1:8.
 - c. Spontaneous praise or worship, with singing: I Chr. 16:31, 34; 29:9-13; II Chr. 5:13-14; Ps. 47:6-7; 98:4-6; 139:14; Lk. 24:50-53; Acts 2:46-47; Ep. 5:20; Phil. 1:11; He. 13:5, 15; Re. 19:5-7.
- (4) An endless duration of life in God's presence: Jn. 17:3.
- a. Adam and Eve continued in perfect happiness with their Creator and with one another before their rebellion: Ge. 1:27-31; 2:7-9, 15-17; 3:2-3.
 - b. The blessed Gospel makes possible a reconciliation to God with endless duration of life for all returning to conformity: Ps. 23:6; Dan. 12:2; Mt. 25:34, 46; Lk. 18:28-30; 20:34-36; Jn. 3:14-16; 4:14; 5:24; 6:50-51; 14:2-3; Ro. 6:22-23; II Co. 5:1; Tit. 3:7; He. 5:9; I Jn. 2:25; 5:10-13, 20; Jude 21.

By the great grace and mercy of God through the atoning death of the Lord Jesus, repentant sinners may be restored in some respects to joys even greater than Adam and Eve experienced before their rebellion against God.