

## Summary of Christian Doctrine Part II

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Editor's Note: For a more in-depth look into theology, we suggest purchasing Louis Berkhof's, "Manual of Christian Doctrine" (Eermans, Grand Rapids, 2001) and of course Berkhof's, "Systematic Theology" (Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 2000). These volumes are indispensable in any Christian's library.

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#### Part II: The Doctrine of God and Creation

#### Chapter IV: The Essential Nature of God

1. The Knowledge of God. The possibility of knowing God has been denied on several grounds. But while it is true that man can never fully comprehend God, it does not follow that he can have no knowledge of Him at all. He can know Him only in part, but nevertheless with a knowledge which is real and true. This is possible because God has revealed Himself. Left to his own resources, man would never have been able to discover nor to know Him.

Our knowledge of God is twofold. Man has an inborn knowledge of God. This does not merely mean that, in virtue of his creation in the image of God, he has a natural capacity to know God. Neither does it imply that man at birth brings a certain knowledge of God with him into the world. It simply means that under normal conditions a certain knowledge of God naturally develops in man. This knowledge is, of course, of a very general nature.

But in addition to this inborn knowledge of God man also acquires knowledge of Him by learning from God's general and special revelation. This is not obtained without efforts on man's part, but is the result of his conscious and sustained pursuit of knowledge. While this knowledge is possible only because man is born with the capacity to know God, it carries him far beyond the limits of the inborn knowledge of God.

2. The Knowledge of God as Known from Special Revelation. While it is not possible to define God, it is possible to give a general description of His being. It is perhaps best to describe Him as a pure Spirit of infinite perfections. The description involves the following elements:

a. God is a pure Spirit. The Bible contains no definition of God. The nearest approach to it is found in the words of Jesus to the Samaritan woman, "God is spirit." This means that He is essentially spirit, and that all the qualities which belong to the perfect idea of spirit are necessarily found in Him. The fact that He is pure spirit excludes the idea that He has a body of some kind and is in any way visible to the physical eye.

b. God is personal. The fact that God is spirit also involves His personality. A spirit is an intelligent and moral being, and when we ascribe personality to God, we mean exactly that He is a reasonable Being, capable of determining the course of His life. At present many deny the personality of God and simply conceive of Him as an impersonal force or power. However, the God of the Bible is certainly a personal God, a God with whom men can converse, whom they can trust, who enters into their experiences, who helps them in their difficulties, and who fills their hearts with joy and gladness. Moreover, He revealed Himself in a personal form in Jesus Christ.

c. God is infinitely perfect. God is distinguished from all His creatures by infinite perfection. His being and virtues are free from all limitations and imperfections. He is not only boundless and limitless, but also stands out above all His

creatures in moral perfection and in glorious majesty. The children of Israel sang of the greatness of God after they passed through the Red Sea: "Who is like unto Thee, O Jehovah, among the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" Ex. 15:11. Some philosophers of the present day speak of God as "finite, developing, struggling, suffering, sharing with man his defeats and victory."

d. God and His perfections are one. Simplicity is one of the fundamental characteristics of God. This means that He is not composed of different parts, and also that His being and attributes are one. It may be said that God's perfections are God Himself as He has revealed Himself to man. They are simply so many manifestations of the divine Being. Hence the Bible says that God is truth, life, light, love, righteousness, and so on.

To memorize. Passages proving:

a. That God can be known:

I John 5:20. "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ."

John 17:3. "And this is life eternal, that they should know thee, the only true God, and Him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ."

b. That God is n Spirit:

John 4:24. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

I Tim. 6:16. "Who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable; whom no man hath seen, nor can see."

c. That God is personal:

Mal. 2:10. "Have we not all one father? Hath not one God created us?"

John 14:9b. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou, Show us the Father?"

d. That God is infinite in perfection:

Ex. 15:11. "Who is like unto Thee, O Jehovah, among the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"

Ps. 147:5. "Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite."

For Further Study:

- a. Do not the following passages teach that we cannot know God? Job 11:7; 26:14; 36:26.
- b. If God is a spirit and has no body, how do you explain the following passages? Ps. 4:6; 17:2; 18:6, 8, 9; 31:5; 44:3; 47:8; 48:10, and many others.
- c. How do the following passages testify to the personality of God? Gen. 1:1; Deut. 1:34, 35,; I Kings 8:23-26; Job 38:1; Ps. 21:7; 50:6; 103:3-5; Matt. 5:9; Rom. 12:1.

Questions for Review

1. In what sense is God knowable and in what sense unknowable?
2. What is the difference between inborn and acquired knowledge of God?
3. Is it possible to define God? How would you describe Him?
4. What is involved in God's spirituality?
5. What do we mean when we speak of God as a personality?
6. What proof have WE for the personality of God?
7. What do we mean when we speak of the infinity of God?
8. How are the being of God and His perfections related?

## **Part II: The Doctrine of God and Creation**

### **Chapter V: The Names of God**

When God gives names to persons or things, they are names which have meaning and give an insight into the nature of the persons or things designated. This also applies to the names which God has given Himself. Sometimes the Bible speaks of the name of God in the singular, and in such cases the term is a designation of the manifestation of God in general, especially in relation to His people, Ex. 20:7; Ps. 113:3; or simply stands for God Himself, Prov. 18:10; Isa. 50:10. The one general name of God is split up into several special names, which are expressive of His many-sided being. These names are not of human invention, but are given by God Himself.

1. The Old Testament Names of God. Some of the Old Testament names denote that God is the High and Exalted One. 'El and 'Elohim indicate that He is strong and mighty and should therefore be feared, while 'Elyon points to His exalted nature as the Most High, the object of reverence and worship. Another name belonging to this class is 'Adonai, usually rendered "Lord," the Possessor and Ruler of all men. Other names express the fact that God enters into relations of friendship with His creatures. One of these, common among the patriarchs, was the name Shaddai or 'El-Shaddai, which indeed stresses the divine greatness,

but as a source of comfort and blessing for His people. It indicates that God controls the powers of nature, and makes them serve His purposes. The greatest name of God, however, always held sacred by the Jews, is the name Jehovah (Yahweh). Its origin and meaning is indicated in Ex. 3:14, 15. It expresses the fact that God is always the same, and especially that He is unchangeable in His covenant relationship, and is always faithful in the fulfilment of His promises. It frequently assumes a fuller form in "Jehovah of Hosts." This calls up the picture of Jehovah as the King of Glory surrounded by angelic hosts.

2. The New Testament Names of God. The New Testament names are simply the Greek forms of those found in the Old Testament. The following deserve particular attention:

a. The name Theos. This is simply the word for 'God,' and is the most common name employed in the New Testament. It is frequently found with a possessive genitive as 'my God,' 'thy God,' 'our God,' 'your God.' In Christ God is the God of each one of His children. The individual form takes the place of the national form, 'the God of Israel,' so common in the Old Testament.

b. The name Kurios. This is the word for 'Lord,' a name that is applied not only to God but also to Christ. It takes the place of both 'Adonai and Jehovah, though its meaning corresponds more particularly with that of 'Adonai. It designates God as the Possessor and Ruler of all things, and especially of His people.

c. The name Pater. It is often said that the New Testament introduced this as a new name. But this is hardly correct, for the name 'Father' is also found in the Old Testament to express the special relation in which God stands to Israel, Deut. 32:6; Isa. 63:16. In the New Testament it is more individual in that it points to God as the Father of all believers. Sometimes it designates God as the creator of all, I Cor. 8:6; Eph. 3:14; Heb. 12:9; Jas. 1:17, and sometimes the first Person of the Trinity as the Father of Christ, John 14:11; 17:1.

To memorize. Passages bearing on:

a. The name of God in general:

Ex. 20:7. "Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain; for Jehovah will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain."

Ps. 8:1. "O Jehovah, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth!"

b. Particular names:

Gen. 1:1. "In the beginning God ('Elohim) created the heavens and the earth."

Ex. 6:3. "And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as God Almighty ('El Shaddai); but by my name Jehovah I was not known unto them."

Ps. 86:8. "There is none like Thee among the gods, O Lord ('Adonai); neither are there any works like unto Thy works."

Mal. 3:6. "For I, Jehovah, change not; therefore ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed."

Matt. 6:9. "Our Father who art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy name."

Rev. 4:8. "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord (Kurios) God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come."

For Further Study:

- a. What light does Ex. 8:13-16 shed on the meaning of the name Jehovah?
- b. What name of God was rather common in the times of the patriarchs? Gen. 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:38; 49:25; Ex. 6:3.
- c. Can you give some descriptive names of God? Isa. 48:3, 15; 44:6; Amos 4:13; Luke 1:78; II Cor. 1:3; 11:31; Jos. 1:17; Heb. 12:9; Rev. 1:8, 17.

Questions for Review

1. What does Scripture mean when it speaks of the name of God in the singular?
2. Are the special names of God of human origin?
3. What two kinds of names do we distinguish in the Old Testament?
4. What is the meaning of the names 'Elohim, Jehovah, 'Adonai, 'El Shaddai, and Kurios?
5. Is the name Father ever applied to God in the Old Testament?
6. In what different senses is this name used in the New Testaments?

## **Part II: The Doctrine of God and Creation**

### **Chapter VI: The Attributes of God**

God reveals Himself not only in His names, but also in His attributes, that is, in the perfections of the divine Being. It is customary to distinguish between incommunicable and communicable attributes. Of the former there are no traces in the creature; of the latter there are.

1. The Incommunicable Attributes. These emphasize the absolute distinction between God and the creature, and include the following:

a. The independence or self-existence of God. This means that God has the ground of His existence in Himself, and unlike man, does not depend on anything outside of Himself. He is independent in His Being, in His virtues and actions, and causes all His creatures to depend on Him. The idea is embodied in the name Jehovah and finds expression in the following passages, Ps. 33:11; 115:3; Isa. 40:18 ff.; Dan. 4:35; John 5:26; Rom. 11:33-36; Acts 17:25; Rev. 4:11.

b. The immutability of God. Scripture teaches that God is unchangeable. He is forever the same in His divine Being and perfections, and also in His purposes and promises, Num. 23:19; Pa 33:11; 102:27; Mal. 3:6; Heb. 6:17; Jas. 1:17. This does not mean, however, that there is no movement in God. The Bible speaks of Him as coming and going, hiding and revealing Himself. He is also said to repent, but this is evidently only a human way of speaking of God, Ex. 32:14; Jonah 3:10, and really indicates a change in man's relation to God.

c. The infinity of God. This means that God is not subject to limitations. We can speak of His infinity in more than one sense. Viewed in relation to His being, it may be called His absolute perfection. He is unlimited in His knowledge and wisdom, in His goodness and love, in His righteousness and holiness, Job 11:7-10; Psa. 145:3. Seen in relation to time, it is called His eternity. While this is usually represented in Scripture as endless duration, Ps. 90:2; 102:12, it really means that He is above time and therefore not subject to its limitations. For Him there is only an eternal present, and no past or future. Viewed with reference to space, it is called His immensity. He is everywhere present, dwells in all His creatures, filling every point of space, but is in no way bounded by space, I Kings 8:27; Ps. 139:7-10; Isa. 66:1; Jer. 23:23, 24; Acts 17:27, 28.

d. The simplicity of God. By ascribing simplicity to God we mean that He is not composed of various parts, such as the body and soul in man, and for that very reason is not subject to division. The three persons in the Godhead are not so many parts of which the divine essence is composed. The whole being of God belongs to each one of the Persons. Hence we can also say that God and His attributes are one, and that He is life, light, love, righteousness, truth, and so on.

2. The Communicable Attributes. These are the attributes of which we find some resemblance in man. It should be borne in mind, however, that what we see in man is only a finite (limited) and imperfect likeness of that which is infinite (unlimited) and perfect in God. Here we have:

a. The knowledge of God. This is that perfection of God whereby He, in a manner all His own, knows Himself and all things possible and actual. God has this knowledge in Himself, and does not obtain it from without. It is always complete and always present in His mind. And because it is all-comprehensive, it is called omniscience. He knows all things, past, present and future, and not only the things that have real existence, but also those which are merely possible. I Kings 8:29; Ps. 139:1-16; Isa. 46:10; Ezek. 11:5; Acts 15:18; John 21:17; Heb. 4:13.

b. The wisdom of God. God's wisdom is an aspect of His knowledge. It is the virtue of God which manifest itself in the selection of worthy ends and in the choice of the best means for the realization of those ends. The final end to which He makes all things subservient is His own glory. Rom. 11:33; I Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:6, 12, 14; Col. 1:16.

c. The goodness of God. God is good, that is, perfectly holy. in Himself. But this is not the goodness we have in mind here. In this connection we refer to the divine goodness that reveals itself in doing well unto others. It is that perfection which prompts Him to deal kindly and bounteously with all His creatures The Bible refers to it repeatedly, Ps. 36:6; 104:21; 145:8, 9, 16; Matt. 5:45; Acts 14:17.

d. The love of God. This is often called the most central attribute of God, but it is doubtful whether it should be regarded as more central than the other perfections of God. In virtue of it He delights in His own perfections and in man as the reflection of His image. It may be considered from various points of view. The unmerited love of God which reveals itself in pardoning sin is called His grace, Eph. 1:6, 7; 2:7-9; Tit. 2:11. That love relieving the misery of those who are bearing the consequences of sin is known as His mercy or tender compassion, Luke 1:64, 72, 78; Rom. 15:9; 9:16, 18; Eph. 2:4. And when it bears with the sinner who does not heed the instructions and warnings of God it is named His longsuffering or forbearance, Rom. 2:4; 9:22; I Pet. 3:20; II Pet. 3:16.

e. The holiness of God. God's holiness is first of all that divine perfection by which He is absolutely distinct from all His creatures, and exalted above them in infinite majesty. Ex. 15:11; Isa. 57:15. But it denotes in the second place that He is free from all moral impurity or sin, and is therefore morally perfect. In the presence of the holy God man is deeply conscious of his sin, Job 34:10; Isa. 6:5; Hab. 1:13.

f. The righteousness of God. The righteousness of God is that perfection by which He maintains Himself as the Holy One over against every violation of His holiness. In virtue of it He maintains a moral government in the world and imposes a just law on man, rewarding obedience and punishing disobedience, Ps. 99:4; Isa. 33:22; Rom, 1:32. The justice of God which manifests itself in the giving of rewards is called His remunerative justice; and that which reveals itself in meting out punishment is known as His retributive justice. The former is really an expression of His love, and the latter of His wrath.

g. The veracity of God. This is that perfection of God in virtue of which He is true in His inner being, in His revelation, and in His relation to His people. He is the true God over against the idols, knows things as they really are, and is faithful in the fulfillment of His promises. From the last point of view this attribute is also called God's faithfulness. Num. 23:19; I Cor. 1:9; II Tim. 2:13; Heb. 10:23.

h. The sovereignty of God. This may be considered from two different points of view, namely, His sovereign will, and His sovereign power. The will of God is represented in Scripture as the final cause of all things, Eph. 4:11; Rev. 4:11. On the basis of Deut. 29:29 it is customary to distinguish between the secret and the revealed will of God. The former is the will of God's decree, which is hidden in God and can be known only from its effects, and the latter is the will of His precept, which is revealed in the law and in the gospel. God's will respecting His creatures is absolutely free, Job 11:10; 33:13; Ps. 115:3; Prov. 21:1; Matt. 20:15; Rom. 9:15-18; Rev. 4:11. The sinful deeds of man are also under the control of His sovereign will, Gen. 50:20; Acts 2:23. The power to execute His will is called His omnipotence. That God is omnipotent does not mean that He can do everything. The Bible teaches us that there are some things which God cannot do. He cannot lie, sin, deny Himself, Num. 23:19; I Sam. 15:29; II Tim. 2:13; Heb. 6:18; Jas. 1:13, 17. It does mean that He can, by the mere exercise of His will, bring to pass whatsoever He has decided to accomplish, and that, if He so desired, He could do even more than that, Gen. 18:14; Jer. 32:27; Zech. 8:6; Matt. 3:9; 26:53.

To memorize. Passages to prove God's:

a. Incommunicable attributes:

Independence.

John 5:26. "For as the Father hath life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself.

Immutability.

Mal. 3:6. "For I, Jehovah, change not; therefore ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed."

James 1:17. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning."

Eternity.

Ps. 90:2. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God."

Ps. 102:27. "But Thou art the same, and Thy years have no end."

Omnipresence.

Ps. 139:7-10. "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in Sheol, behold Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me."

Jer. 23:23, 24. "Am I a God at hand, saith Jehovah, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places so that I shall not see him' saith Jehovah. Do I not fill heaven and earth? saith Jehovah?"

b. Communicable attributes:

Omniscience.

John 21:17b. "And he said unto Him, Yea, Lord, Thou knowest all things', Thou knowest that I love Thee."

Heb. 4:13. "And there is no creature that is not manifest in His sight; but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

Wisdom.

Ps. 104:24. "O Jehovah, how manifold are Thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all."

Dan. 2:20, 21b. "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever; for wisdom and might are His.... He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that have understanding."

Goodness.

Ps. 86:5. "For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in lovingkindness unto all them that call upon Thee."

Ps. 118:29 "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for His lovingkindness endureth forever."

Love.

John 3:16. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

I John 4:8. "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."

Grace.

Neh. 9:17b. "But Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness."

Rom. 3:24. "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

Mercy.

Rom. 9:18. "So then He hath mercy on whom He will and whom He will He hardeneth."

Eph. 2:4, 5. "But God, being rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ."

Longsuffering or forbearance.

Num. 14:18. "Jehovah is slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression."

Rom. 2:4. "Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"

Holiness.

Ex. 15:11. "Who is like unto Thee, O Jehovah, among the gods? Who is like unto Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"

Isa. 6:3b. "Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory."

Righteousness or justice.

Ps. 89:14. "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Thy throne."

Ps. 145:17. "Jehovah is righteous in all His ways, and gracious in all His works."

I Pet. 1:17. "And if ye call on Him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to each man's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear."

Veracity or faithfulness.

Num. 23:19. "God is not a man, that He should lie, neither the son of man, that He should repent. Hath He said, and will He not do it? Or hath He spoken, and will He not make it good?"

II Tim. 2:13. "If we are faithless, he abideth faithful; for He cannot deny Himself."

Sovereignty.

Eph. 1:11. "In whom also we were made a heritage, having been foreordained according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the council of His will."

Rev. 4:11. "Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they were, and were created."

Secret and revealed will.

Deut. 29:29. "The secret things belong unto Jehovah our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."

Omnipotence.

Job 42:2. "I know that Thou canst do everything." Matt. 19:26. "With God all things are possible." Luke 1:37. "For with God nothing shall be impossible."

For Further Study:

a. Give instances in which the Bible identifies God and His attributes, Jer. 28:6; Heb. 12:29; I John 1:5; 4:16.

b. How can God be just and gracious to the sinner at the same time, Zech. 9:9; Rom. 3:24-26?

c. Prove from Scripture that God's foreknowledge includes conditional events. I Sam. 23:10-13; II Kings 13:19; Ps. 81:13-15; 48:18; Jer. 38:17-20; Ezek. 3:6; Matt. 11:21.

Questions for Review

1. How do we divide the attributes of God?
2. Which belong to each one of these classes?
3. What is the independence of God?
4. What is His immutability?
5. How can we explain the fact that the Bible apparently ascribes change to God?
6. What is God's eternity and immensity or omnipresence?
7. What is the simplicity of God, and how can we prove it?
8. What is the nature and extent of God's knowledge?

9. How is His wisdom related to His knowledge?
10. What is the goodness of God? Are any other names used for it?
11. Should we speak of love as more central in God than His other attributes?
12. How do we distinguish God's grace, mercy, and longsuffering?
13. What is the holiness of God?
14. In what does God reveal His righteousness?
15. What is included in the veracity of God?
16. What distinction do we apply to the will of God?
17. Do the secret and the revealed will of God ever conflict?
18. Does God's omnipotence imply that He can do everything?

## **Part II: The Doctrine of God and Creation**

### **Chapter VII: The Trinity**

1. Statement of the Doctrine. The Bible teaches that, while He exists in three Persons, called Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These are not three persons in the ordinary sense of the word; they are not three individuals, but rather three modes or forms in which the Divine Being exists. At the same time they are of such a nature that they can enter into personal relations. The Father can speak to the Son and vice versa, and both can send forth the Spirit. The real mystery of the Trinity consists in this that each one of the Persons possesses the whole of the divine essence, and that this has no existence outside of and apart from the Persons. The three are not subordinate in being the one to the other, though it may be said that in order of existence the Father is first, the Son second, and the Holy Spirit third, an order which is also reflected in their work.

2. Scripture Proof for the Trinity. The Old Testament contains some indications of more than one Person in God. God speaks of Himself in the plural, Gen. 1:26; 11:7; the Angel of Jehovah is represented as a divine Person, Gen. 16:7-13; 18:1-21; 19:1-22; and the Spirit is spoken of as a distinct Person, Isa. 48:16; 63:10. Moreover, there are some passages in which the Messiah is speaking and mentions two other Persons, Isa. 48:16; 61:6; 63:9, 10.

Due to the progress of revelation, the New Testament contains clearer proofs. The strongest proof is found in the facts of redemption. The Father sends the Son into the world, and the Son sends the Holy Spirit. Moreover, there are several passages in which the three Persons are expressly mentioned, such as the great commission, Matt. 28:19, and the apostolic blessing, II Cor. 13:13. Cf. also Luke 3:21, 22; 1:35; I Cor. 12:4-6; I Pet. 1:2.

This doctrine was denied by the Socinians in the days of the Reformation, and is rejected also by the Unitarians and the Modernists of our own day. If they speak of the Trinity at all, they represent it as consisting of the Father, the man Jesus, and a divine influence which is called the Spirit of God.

3. The Father. The name 'Father' is frequently applied in Scripture to the triune God, as the creator of all things, I Cor. 8:6; Heb. 12:9; Jas. 1:17; as the Father of Israel, Deut. 32:6; Isa. 63:16; and as the Father of believers, Matt. 5:45; 6:6, 9, 14; Rom. 8:15. In a deeper sense, however, it is applied to the First Person of the Trinity, to express His relation to the Second Person, John 1:14, 18; 8:54; 14:12, 13. This is the original Fatherhood, of which all earthly fatherhood is but a faint reflection. The distinctive characteristic of the Father is that He generates the Son from all eternity. The works particularly ascribed to Him are those of planning the work of redemption, creation and providence, and representing the Trinity in the Counsel of Redemption.

4. The Son. The second person in the Trinity is called 'Son' or 'Son of God.' He bears this name, however, not only as the only begotten of the Father, John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; Gal. 4:4, but also as the Messiah chosen of God, Matt. 8:29; 26:63; John 1:49; 11:27, and in virtue of His special birth through the operation of the Holy Spirit, Luke 1:32, 35. His special characteristic as the Second Person of the Trinity is that He is eternally begotten of the Father, Ps. 2:7; Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5. By means of eternal generation the Father is the cause of the personal existence of the Son within the Divine Being. The works more particularly ascribed to Him are works of mediation. He mediated the work of creation, John 1:3, 10; Heb. 1:2, 3, and mediates the work of redemption, Eph. 1:3-14.

5. The Holy Spirit. Though Socinians, Unitarians, and present day Modernists speak of the Holy Spirit merely as a power or an influence of God, He clearly stands out on the pages of the Bible as a Person, John 14:16, 17, 26; 15:26; 16:1-15; Rom. 8:26. He has intelligence, John 14:26, feeling, Isa. 68:10; Eph. 4:30, and will, Acts 16:7; I Cor. 12:11. Scripture represents Him as speaking, searching, testifying, commanding, revealing, striving, and making intercession. Moreover, He is clearly distinguished from His own power in Luke 1:35; 4:14; Acts 10:38; I Cor. 2:4. His special characteristic is that He proceeds from the Father and the Son by spiration, John 15:26; 16:7; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6. In general it may be said that it is His task to bring things to completion both in creation and redemption, Gen. 1:3; Job 26:13; Luke 1:35; John 3:34; I Cor. 12:4-11; Eph. 2:22.

To memorize. Passages to prove:

a. The Trinity:

Isa. 61:1. "The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon Me" (the Messiah), cf. Luke 4:17, 18.

Matt. 28:19. "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

II Cor. 13:14. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God; and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all."

b. Eternal generation:

Ps. 2:7. "I will tell of the decree: Jehovah said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten Thee."

John 1:14, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth."

e. Procession of the Holy Spirit:

John 15:26. "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall bear witness of Me."

For Further Study:

a. In what sense can we speak of a general Fatherhood of God? I Cor. 8:6; Eph. 3:14, 15; Heb. 12:9; Jas. 1:17. Cf. also Num. 16:22.

b. Can you prove the deity of the incarnate Son? John 1:1; 20:28; Phil. 2:6; Tit. 2:13; Jer. 28:5, 6; Isa. 9:6; John 1:3; Rev. 1:8; Col. 1:17; John 14:1; II Cor. 13:14.

c. How do the following passages prove the personality of the Holy Spirit? Gen. 1:2; 6:3; Luke 12:12; John 14:26; 15:26; 16:8; Acts 8:29; 13:2; Rom. 8:11; I Cor. 2:10, 11.

d. What works are ascribed to the Spirit in Ps. 33:6; 104:30; Ex. 28:3; II Pet. 1:21; I Cor. 3:16; 12:4 ff.?

Questions for Review

1. Can we discover the doctrine of the Trinity from nature?
2. Are there three separate individuals in God?
3. Is one Person subordinate to another in God?
4. How can we prove the Trinity from the Old Testament?
5. What is the strongest proof for the Trinity?
6. What New Testament passages best prove it?
7. In what different senses is the name 'Father' applied to God?
8. What works are more particularly ascribed to each one of the Persons?
9. In what different senses is the name 'Son' applied to Christ?
10. What is the special characteristic of each Person?
11. How can you prove that the Holy Spirit is a Person?

## Part II: The Doctrine of God and Creation

### Chapter VIII: The Divine Decrees

1. The Divine Decrees in General. The decree of God is His eternal plan or purpose, in which He has foreordained all things that come to pass. Since it includes many particulars, we often speak of the divine decrees in the plural, though in reality there is but a single decree. It covers all the works of God in creation and redemption, and also embraces the actions of men, not excluding their sinful deeds. But while it rendered the entrance of sin into the world certain, it does not make God responsible for our sinful deeds. His decree with respect to sin is a permissive decree.

a. Characteristics of the decree. The decree of God is founded in wisdom, Eph. 3:9-11, though we do not always understand it. It was formed in the depths of eternity, and is therefore eternal in the strictest sense of the word, Eph. 3:11. Moreover, it is effectual, so that everything that is included in it certainly comes to pass, Isa. 46:10. The plan of God is also unchangeable, because He is faithful and true, Job 28:13, 14; Isa. 46:10; Luke 22:22. It is unconditional, that is, its execution does not depend on any action of man but even renders such action certain, Acts 2:23; Eph. 2:8. Moreover, it is all-inclusive, embracing the good and the wicked actions of men, Eph. 2:10; Acts 2:28, contingent events, Gen. 50:20, the duration of man's life, Job 14:5; Ps. 39:4, and the place of his habitation, Acts 17:26. With respect to sin it is permissive.

b. Objections to the doctrine of the decrees. Many do not believe in the doctrine of the decrees, and raise especially three objections. (1) It is inconsistent with, the moral freedom of man. But the Bible clearly teaches not only that God has decreed the free acts of man, but also that man is none the less free and responsible for his acts, Gen. 50:19, 20; Acts 2:23; 4:27-29. We may not be able to harmonize the two altogether, but it is evident from Scripture that the one does not cancel the other. (2) It makes people slothful in seeking salvation. They feel that, if God has determined whether they will be saved or not, it makes no difference what they may do. But this is hardly correct, because man does not know what God has decreed respecting him. Moreover, God has decreed not only the final destiny of man, but also the means by which it will be realized. And seeing that the end is decreed only as the result of the appointed means, it encourages rather than discourages their use. (3) It makes God the author of sin. It may be said, however, that the decree merely makes God the author of free moral beings, who are themselves the authors of sin. Sin is made certain by the decree, but God does not Himself produce it by His direct action. At the same time it must be admitted that the problem of God's relation to sin remains a mystery which we cannot fully solve.

2. Predestination. Predestination is the plan or purpose of God respecting His moral creatures. It pertains to men, both good and bad, to angels and devils, and to Christ as the Mediator. Predestination includes two parts, namely, election and reprobation.

a. Election. The Bible speaks of election in more than one sense, as (1) the election of Israel as the Old Testament people of God, Deut. 4:37; 7:6-8; 10:15; Hos. 13:5; (2) the election of persons to some special office or service, Deut. 18:5; I Sam. 10:24; Ps. 78:70; and (3) the election of individuals unto salvation, Matt. 22:14; Rom. 11:6; Eph. 1:4. The last is the election to which we refer in this connection. It may be defined as God's eternal purpose to save some of the human race in and by Jesus Christ.

b. Reprobation. The doctrine of election naturally implies that God did not intend to save all. If He purposed to save some, He naturally also purposed not to save others. This is also in harmony with the teachings of Scripture, Matt. 11:25, 26; Rom. 9:13, 17, 18, 21, 22; 11:7, 8; II Pet. 2:9; Jude 4. Reprobation may be defined as God's eternal purpose to pass some men by with the operation of His special grace, and to punish them for their sin. It really embodies a twofold purpose therefore: (1) to pass some by in the bestowal of saving grace; and (2) to punish them for their sins.

It is sometimes said that the doctrine of predestination exposes God to the charge of injustice. But this is hardly correct. We could speak of injustice only if man had a claim on God, and God owed man eternal salvation. But the situation is entirely different if all men have forfeited the blessings of God, as they have. No one has the right to call God to account for electing some and rejecting others. He would have been perfectly just, if He had not saved any, Matt. 20:14, 15; Rom. 9:14, 15.

To memorize. Passages pertaining to:

a. God's decree in general:

Eph. 1:11. "In whom also we were made a heritage, having been foreordained according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His will."

Ps. 33:11. "The counsel of Jehovah standeth fast forever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations."

Isa. 46:10. "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done; saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

b. Predestination:

Eph. 1:11, cf. above under a.

Ps. 2:7. "I will tell of the decree: Jehovah said unto me. Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten Thee."

Eph. 1:4, 5. "Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before Him in love, having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will."

Rom. 11:5. "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace."

Rom. 9:13. "Even as it is written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

Rom. 9:18. "So then He hath mercy on whom He will, and whom He will He hardeneth."

For Further Study.

a. Is foreknowledge the same as foreordination or predestination? Acts 2:23; Rom. 8:29; 11:2; 1 Pet. 1:2.

b. How does the Bible indicate that Christ was also an object of predestination? Ps. 2:7; Isa. 42:1; 1 Pet. 1:20; 2:4. In what sense is this to be understood?

c. What indications have we that the angels were also objects of predestination? 1 Tim. 5:21. How should we conceive of this?

Questions for Review

1. What is the divine decree?
2. Why do we sometimes speak of 'decrees' in the plural?
3. What are the characteristics of the decree?
4. What is the nature of God's decree respecting sin?
5. What objections are raised against the doctrine of the Decrees?
6. What can be said in answer to these?
7. How is predestination related to the decree in general?
8. Who are the objects of predestination?
9. How must we conceive of the predestination of the angels and of Christ?
10. In what different senses does the Bible speak of election?
11. What does reprobation include, and what proof is there for it?
12. Does the doctrine of predestination involve injustice on the part of God? If not, why not?

## Part II: The Doctrine of God and Creation

### Chapter IX: Creation

The discussion of the decrees naturally leads on to the study of their execution, which begins with the work of creation. This is the beginning and basis of all revelation, and also the foundation of all religious life.

1. Creation in General. The word creation is not always used in the same sense in the Bible. In the strict sense of the word it denotes that work of God by which He produces the world and all that is in it, partly without the use of pre-existent materials, and partly out of material that is by its nature unfit, for the manifestation of His glory. It is represented as a work of the triune God, Gen. 1:2; Job 26:13; 38:4; Ps. 33:6; Isa. 40:12, 13; John 1:3; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15-17. Over against Pantheism we must maintain that it was a free act of God. He did not need the world. Eph. 1:11; Rev. 4:11. And over against Deism, that He created the world so that it always remains dependent on Him. He must uphold it from day to day, Acts 17:28; Heb. 1:3.

a. The time of creation. The Bible teaches us that God created the world "in the beginning," that is, at the beginning of all temporal things. Back of this beginning lies a timeless eternity. The first part of the work of creation mentioned in Gen. 1:1 was strictly creation out of nothing or without the use of preexistent material. The expression "creation out of nothing" is not found in the Bible, but in one of the apocryphal books, II Mace. 7:28. However, the idea is clearly taught in such passages as Gen. 1:1; Ps. 33:9; 148:5; Rom. 4:7; Heb. 11:3.

b. The final purpose of creation. Some find the final end or purpose of creation in the happiness of man. They say that God could not make Himself the final end, because He is sufficient unto Himself. But it would seem to be self-evident that God does not exist for man, but man for God. The creature cannot be the final end of creation. The Bible teaches us clearly that God created the world for the manifestation of His glory. Naturally, the revelation of the glory of God is not intended as an empty show to be admired by the creature, but also aims at promoting their welfare and attuning their hearts to the praise of the Creator. Isa. 43:7; 60:21; 61:3; Ezek. 36:21, 22; 39:7; Luke 2:14; Rom. 9:17; 11:36; I Cor. 15:28; Eph. 1:5, 6, 12, 14; 8:9, 10; Col. 1:16.

c. Substitutes for the doctrine of creation. They who reject the doctrine of creation resort to one of three theories for the explanation of the world. (1) Some say that original matter is eternal, and out of it the world arose, either by mere chance, or by some higher directing force. But this is impossible, because you cannot have two eternals and therefore two infinities alongside of each other. (2) Others maintain that God and the world are essentially one, and that the world is a necessary issue (outflow) of the divine being. But this view robs God of His

power of self-determination, and men of their freedom and of their moral and responsible character. It also makes God responsible for all the evil there is in the world. (3) Still others take refuge in the theory of evolution. But this is clearly a mistake, since evolution offers no explanation of the world. It already presupposes something that evolves.

2. The Spiritual World. God created not only a material but also a spiritual world, consisting of the angels.

a. Proof for the existence of angels. Modern liberal theology has largely discarded the belief in such spiritual beings. The Bible, however, assumes their existence throughout and ascribes to them real personality, II Sam. 14:20; Matt. 24:36; Jude 6; Rev. 14:10. Some ascribe to them airy bodies, but this is contrary to Scripture. They are pure spiritual beings (though sometimes assuming bodily forms), Eph. 6:12; Heb. 1:14, without flesh and bone, Luke 24:39, and therefore invisible, Col. 1:16. Some of them are good, holy and elect, Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; II Cor. 11:14; I Tim. 5:21; Rev. 14:10, and others are fallen from their original state, and therefore evil, John 8:44; II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6.

b. Classes of angels. There are evidently different classes of angels. The Bible speaks of cherubim, who reveal the power, majesty, and glory of God, and guard His holiness in the garden of Eden, in tabernacle and temple, and at the descent of God to the earth. Gen. 3:24; Ex. 25:18; II Sam. 22:11; Ps. 18:10; 80:1; 99:1; Isa. 37:16. Alongside of these are seraphim, mentioned only in Isa. 6:2, 3, 6. They stand as servants round about the throne of the heavenly King, sing His praises, and are ever ready to do His bidding. They serve the purpose of reconciliation and prepare men for the proper approach to God.

Two angels are mentioned by name. The first of these is Gabriel, Dan. 8:16; 9:21; Luke 1:19, 26. Evidently it was his special task to convey divine revelations to man and to interpret them. The second is Michael, Dan. 10:13, 21; Jude 9; Rev. 12:7. In the Epistle of Jude he is called the archangel. He is the valiant warrior fighting the battles of Jehovah against the enemies of the people of God and against the evil powers in the spirit world. Besides these the Bible mentions in general terms principalities, powers, thrones, dominions, Eph. 1:21; 3:10; Col. 1:16; 2:10; I Pet. 3:22. These names point to differences of rank and dignity among the angels.

c. Work of the angels. The angels are represented as praising God continually, Ps. 103:20; Isa. 6; Rev. 5:11. Since the entrance of sin into the world they serve those who inherit salvation, Heb. 1:14, rejoice at the conversion of sinners, Luke 15:10, watch over believers, Ps. 3:7; 91:11, protect the little ones, Matt. 18:10, are present in the Church, I Cor. 11:10; Eph. 3:10; I Tim. 5:21, and convey believers to the bosom of Abraham, Luke 16:22. They also frequently bear special revelations of God, Dan. 9:21-23; Zech. 1:12-14, communicate blessings

to His people, Ps. 91:11, 12; Isa. 63:9; Dan. 6:22; Acts 5:19, and execute judgments on His enemies, Gen. 19:1, 13; II Kings 19:85; Matt. 18:41.

d. Evil angels. Besides the good there are also evil angels, who delight in opposing God and destroying His work. They were created good, but did not retain their original position, II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6. Their special sin is not revealed, but they probably revolted against God and aspired to divine authority, cf. II Thess. 2:4, 9. Satan, who was evidently one of the princes among the angels, became the recognized head of those that fell away, Matt. 26:41; 9:34; Eph. 2:2. With superhuman power he and his hosts seek to destroy the work of God. They seek to blind and mislead even the elect, and encourage the sinner in his evil way.

3. The Material World. In Gen. 1:1 we have the record of the original creation of heaven and earth. The rest of the chapter is devoted to what is often called secondary creation, the completion of the work in six days.

a. The days of creation. The question is frequently debated, whether the days of creation were ordinary days or not. Geologists and evolutionists speak of them as long periods of time. Now the word 'day' does not always denote a period of twenty-four hours in the Scripture. Cf. Gen 1:5; 2:4; Ps. 50:16; Eccl. 7:14; Zech. 4:10. Yet the literal interpretation of the word 'day' in the narrative of creation is favored by the following considerations:

(1) The Hebrew word yom (day) primarily denotes an ordinary day, and should be so understood unless the context demands another interpretation.

(2) The repeated mention of morning and evening favors this interpretation.

(3) It was evidently an ordinary day which Jehovah set aside and hallowed as a day of rest.

(4) In Ex. 20:9-11 Israel is commanded to labor six days and to rest on the seventh, because Jehovah made heaven and earth in six days and rested on the seventh day.

(5) The last three days were evidently ordinary days, for they were determined by the earth's relation to the sun. And if they were ordinary days, why not the others?

b. Work of the six days. On the first day light was created, and by the separation of light and darkness day and night were constituted. This does not conflict with the idea that sun, moon, and stars were created on the fourth day, for these are not themselves light, but light-bearers. The work of the second day was also a work of separation, the separation of the waters above from the waters below by the establishment of the firmament. On the third day the work of separation is

continued in the separation of the sea and the dry land. In addition to that the vegetable kingdom of plants and trees was established. By the word of His power God caused the earth to bring forth flowerless plants, vegetables, and fruit trees, each yielding seed after their kind. The fourth day brought the creation of sun, moon, and stars, to serve a variety of purposes: to divide day and night, to serve as signs of weather conditions, to determine the succession of the seasons and of days and years, and to function as lights for the earth. The work of the fifth day consisted in the creation of birds and fishes, the inhabitants of the air and of the water. Finally, the sixth day is marked by the climax of the work of creation. The higher classes of land animals were created, and the whole work was crowned by the creation of man in the image of God. His body was formed out of the dust of the earth, while his soul was an immediate creation of God. On the seventh day God rested from His creative labors and delighted in the contemplation of His work.

c. The theory of evolution. Evolutionists want to substitute their view of the origin of things for the Scriptural doctrine. They believe that from the simplest forms of matter and life all existing species of plants and animals (including man), and also the various manifestations of life, such as intelligence, morality, and religion, developed by a perfectly natural process, purely as the result of natural forces. This is merely an assumption, however, and one that fails at several points. Moreover, it is in hopeless conflict with the narrative of creation as it is found in the Bible.

To memorize. Passages bearing on:

a. The fact of creation:

Gen: 1:1. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Ps. 33:6. "By the word of Jehovah were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth."

John 1:3. "All things were made through Him; and without Him was not anything made that hath been made."

Heb. 11:3. "By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which appear."

b. The final end of creation:

Isa. 43:6, 7. "Bring... every one that is called by my name."

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b. The final end of creation:

Isa. 43:6, 7. "Bring... every one that is called by my name, and whom I have created for my glory, whom I have formed; yea, whom I have made."

Ps. 19:1, 2. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork."

Ps. 148:13. "Let them praise the name of Jehovah; for His name alone is exalted: His glory is above the earth and the heavens." Cf. the connection.

c. Angels:

Ps. 103:20. "Bless Jehovah, ye His angels, that are mighty in strength, that fulfil His word, hearkening unto the voice of His word."

Heb. 1:14. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?"

Jud. 6. "And the angels that kept not their principality, but left their proper habitation, He hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day."

d. Time of creation:

Gen. 1:1. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

Ex. 20:11. "For in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore Jehovah blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it."

For Further Study:

- a. In what sense is the word 'to create' used in Ps. 51:10; 104:30; Isa. 46:7?
- b. Do Gen. 1:11, 12, 20, 24 favor the idea of evolution? Cf. Gen. 1:21, 25; 2:9.
- c. Do the following passages tell us anything about the sin of the angels? if so, what? II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; cf. also II Thess. 2:4-12.

Questions for Review

1. What is creation?
2. Was creation a free or a necessary act of God?
3. Is the word 'create' always used in the same sense in Scripture?
4. Does the Bible prove creation out of nothing? Where?
5. What two views are there as to the final end of creation?
6. In what sense is the glory of God the final end?
7. What substitutes have been suggested for the doctrine of creation?
8. What is the nature of the angels?
9. What orders of angels are named in Scripture?
10. What is the function of Gabriel and Michael?
11. What is the work of the angels?
12. What proof have we for the existence of evil angels?
13. Were they created evil?
14. Were the days in Genesis ordinal days or long periods?
15. What did God create on each of the six days?
16. Is the theory of evolution consistent with the doctrine of creation?
17. Can you name some of the points on which they differ?

## **Part II: The Doctrine of God and Creation**

### **Chapter X: Providence**

Since God not only created the world but also upholds it, we naturally pass from the doctrine of creation to that of divine providence. This may be defined as that work of God in which He preserves all His creatures, is active in all that happens in the world, and directs all things to their appointed end. It includes three elements, of which the first pertains primarily to the being, the second to the activity, and the third to the purpose of all things.

1. The Elements of Divine Providence. We distinguish three elements:

a. Divine preservation. This is that continuous work of God by which He upholds all things. While the world has a distinct existence and is not a part of God, it nevertheless has the ground of its continued existence in God and not in itself. It endures through a continued exercise of divine power by which all things are maintained in being and action. This doctrine is taught in the following passages: Ps. 136:25; 145:15; Neh. 9:6; Acts 17:28; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3.

b. Divine concurrence. This may be defined as that work of God by which He co-operates with all His creatures and causes them to act precisely as they do. It implies that there are real secondary causes in the world, such as the powers of nature and the will of man, and asserts that these do not work independently of God. God works in every act of His creatures, not only in their good but also in their evil acts. He stimulates them to action, accompanies their action at every moment, and makes this action effective. However, we should never think of God and man as equal causes; the former is the primary, and the latter only a secondary cause. Neither should we conceive of them as each doing a part of the work like a team of horses. The same deed is in its entirety both a deed of God and a deed of man. Moreover, we should guard against the idea that this co-operation makes God responsible for man's sinful deeds. This doctrine is based on Scripture, Deut. 8:18; Ps. 104:20, 21, 30; Amos 3:6; Matt. 6:45; 10:29; Acts 14:17; Phil. 2:13.

c. Divine government. This is the continued activity of God whereby He rules all things so that they answer to the purpose of their existence. God is represented as King of the universe both in the Old and in the New Testament. He adapts His rule to the nature of the creatures which He governs; His government of the physical world differs from that of the spiritual world. It is universal, Ps. 103:19; Dan, 4:34, 35, includes the most insignificant things, Matt. 10:29-31, and that which is seemingly accidental, Prov. 16:33, and bears on both the good and the evil deeds of man, Phil. 2:18; Gen. 50:20; Acts 14:16.

2. Misconceptions of Divine Providence. In the doctrine of providence we should guard against two misconceptions:

a. The Deistic conception. This is to the effect that God's concern with the world is of the most general nature. He created the world, established its laws, set it in motion, and then withdrew from it. He wound it up like a clock, and now lets it run off. It is only when something goes wrong that He interferes with its regular operation. God, is only a God afar off.

b. The Pantheistic conception. Pantheism does not recognize the distinction between God and the world. It identifies the two, and therefore leaves no room for providence in the proper sense of the word. There are, strictly speaking, no such things as secondary causes. God is the direct author of all that transpires in the world. Even the acts which we ascribe to man as really acts of God. God is only a God that is near, and not a God afar off.

3. Extraordinary Providences or Miracles. We distinguish between general and special providences, and among the latter the miracles occupy an important place. A miracle is a supernatural work of God, that is a work which is accomplished without the mediation of secondary causes. If God sometimes apparently uses secondary causes in the production of miracles, He employs them in an unusual way, so that the work is after all supernatural. Some regard miracles as impossible, because they involve a violation of the laws of nature. But this is a mistake. The so-called laws of nature merely represent God's usual method of working. And the fact that God generally works according to a definite order does not mean that He cannot depart from this order, and cannot without violating or disturbing it bring about unusual results. Even man can lift up his hand and throw a ball into the air in spite of the law of gravitation and without in any way disturbing its operation. Surely, this is not impossible for the omnipotent God. The miracles of the Bible are means of revelation. Num. 16:28; Jer. 32:20; John 2:11; 5:36.

To memorize. Passages referring to:

a. Preservation:

Ps. 36:6b. "O Jehovah, thou preservest man and beast."

Neh. 9:6. "Thou art Jehovah, even thou alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all things that are thereon, the seas all that is in them, and thou preservest them all."

Col. 1:17. "And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist."

b. Concurrence.

Deut. 8:18a. "But thou shalt remember Jehovah thy God, for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth."

Amos 3:6. "Shall the trumpet be blown in a city, and the people be not afraid? shall evil befall a city, and Jehovah hath not done it?"

Phil. 2:13. "For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for His good pleasure."

c. Government.

Ps. 108:19. "Jehovah hath established His throne in the heavens; and His Kingdom ruleth over all."

Dan. 4:3b. "His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation."

I Tim. 6:15. "Which in its own times He shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords."

d. Miracles and their design:

Ex. 16:11. "Who is like unto Thee, O Jehovah, among the gods? Who is like Thee glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"

Ps. 72:18. "Blessed be Jehovah God, the God of Israel, who alone doeth wondrous things."

Mark 2:10. "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, He saith to the sick of the palsy, I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thy house."

John 2:11. "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him."

For Further Study:

a. Name some examples of special providences. Cf. Deut. 2:7; I Kings 17:6, 16; II Kings 4:6; Matt. 14:20.

b. How should belief in divine providence affect our cares? Isa. 41:10; Matt. 6:32; Luke 12:7; Phil. 4:6, 7; I Pet. 5:7.

c. Name some of the blessings of providence. Cf. Isa. 25:4; Ps. 121:4; Luke 12:7; Deut. 33:28; Ps. 37:28; II Tim. 4:18.

Questions for Review

1. How is the doctrine of providence related to that of creations?
2. What is divine providence?
3. What is the difference between general and special providence?
4. What are the objects of divine providence?
5. What are the three elements of providence, and how do they differ?
6. How must we conceive of the divine concurrence?
7. How far does the divine government extend?
8. What is a miracle, and what purpose do the scriptural miracles serve?
9. Why do some consider miracles impossible?

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