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ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

The attributes of God are INDIVISIBILITY, IMMUTABILITY, INFINITY, LIFE, INTELLIGENCE, WISDOM, WILL, HOLINESS, JUSTICE, TRUTH, GOODNESS, AND POWER. The first three of the series have been termed *negative, intransitive, quiescent, or immanent*, the rest, *positive, transitive, operative, or emanent*, attributes. Others have classified the divine attributes as *incommunicable* attributes, or *properties*, which are only in God and in no wise or measure in created things, and *communicable* attributes, or *perfections*, such as holiness,¹⁾ life,²⁾ etc., which may in a mode and measure be communicated to created beings, as men and angels.

INDIVISIBILITY.

God is indivisible inasmuch as he is not a compound being, not made up of component parts, or of a substance and of qualities inherent in such substance, but absolutely

1) Lev. 19, 2. 1 Pet. 1, 15. Matt. 25, 31.

2) Gen. 2, 7. John 10, 28.

simple in his divine essence or attributes. *God said unto Moses: "I am that I am."*¹⁾ Whatever God is, he is whole and entire. The divine trinity in the divine unity is not a trinity of parts in a unity of person. If it were, not one or each of the three, but only the three together, could be truly said to be the one and only God, the First and the Last, besides whom there is no God.²⁾ Man is a compound being, composed of parts, body and soul, neither of which is a man. The human soul is not a man; the human body is not a man; the two together constitute a man. But the Father is God, whole and entire; the Son is God, whole and entire; the Holy Ghost is God, whole and entire, He, who is that He is. Again, in created things, the attributes are qualities inherent in the substance. Holiness was a con-created quality of the angels; but Satan and his host have lost that attribute and have become unclean spirits;³⁾ and yet though they have not kept their first estate,⁴⁾ they are angels,⁵⁾ as really and truly as before; for God calls them so. But whatever is in God is God himself, whole and entire. In God is love, the love *of* God;⁶⁾ but God *is* Love as well,⁷⁾ love being his very essence. *In* Christ was life;⁸⁾ but he *is* life as well,⁹⁾ essentially life. With him is wisdom, the attribute of the only wise God;¹⁰⁾ but that attribute is God himself, the Maker of heaven and earth,¹¹⁾ eternal, essential Wisdom. *God said: "Let there be light;"*¹²⁾ but that Word *was* God.¹³⁾ Thus God is not his substance and the sum of his attributes, but each of his attributes is identical with his essence. There is in him neither partition nor division. *He is that he is.*

1) Exod. 3, 14.

3) Mark 1, 23.

5) Ibid. Matt. 25, 41.

7) 1 John 4, 16.

9) John 11, 25.

11) Prov. 8, 12. 14—30.

13) John 1, 1.

2) Vid. supra, pp. 7—9.

4) Jude 6. 2 Pet. 2, 4.

6) Rom. 5, 5. 8; 8, 35. 2 Cor. 13, 14.

8) John 1, 4.

10) Job 12, 13. 1 Tim. 1, 17.

12) Gen. 1, 3.

IMMUTABILITY.

God is immutable inasmuch as in his essence or attributes there never has been, nor ever will be, nor can be, any increase or decrease, any development or evolution, any improvement or deterioration, or any change of whatever kind. He says: "*I am the Lord; I change not.*"¹⁾ He is *the Father of lights, in whom there is no variableness.*²⁾ "Variableness," *παράλλαξις*, says more than "variation," *παράλλαξις*. The former excludes even the possibility of the latter. There *can* be no change in God; he is that he is.³⁾ Man is changeable and undergoes many changes. We wake and sleep; but *behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep;*⁴⁾ *the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary.*⁵⁾ We pass from youth to old age through stages of development, growth, and decay; of created things, the Psalmist says: *They shall perish . . . ; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed;*⁶⁾ but of God he says: *Thou shalt endure . . . ; thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.*⁷⁾ He is the *incorruptible God,*⁸⁾ *who only hath immortality.*⁹⁾ We change our minds; but *the counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.*¹⁰⁾ *The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent; for he is not a man, that he should repent.*¹¹⁾ In God, it has been well said, repentance is not a change of will, but a will to change, and the term itself is an anthropopathism as so many others found in Scripture.¹²⁾

That God cannot change is also, in a manner, implied in his indivisibility. His attributes must be always the same,

1) Mal. 3, 6. יהוה אל

3) Exod. 3, 14.

5) Is. 40, 28.

7) Ibid.

9) 1 Tim. 6, 16. ἀφθαρσίαν.

11) 1 Sam. 15, 29.

2) James 1, 17.

4) Ps. 121, 4.

6) Ps. 102, 26. 27.

8) Rom. 1, 23. ἀφθαρτος θεός.

10) Ps. 33, 11.

12) Vid. supra, p. 6. 7.

since each attribute of God is his essence, his whole essence. Being essentially Love, he must always be love, or he would cease to be God. And so with every other divine attribute, each being essentially God, to suppose even a momentary cessation would be tantamount to a denial of God.

INFINITY.

God is infinite, inasmuch as he is not limited by space or time, there being in him no distinction of here and there, sooner or later, his essence and attributes being unmeasurable, omnipresent, eternal. In God there is not quantity, but immensity, not succession, but permanence. *The heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain him,*¹⁾ who says of himself: "*Do not I fill heaven and earth?*"²⁾ If we ask, "Is God in heaven?" the Scriptures answer, Yes, *our God is in the heavens,*³⁾ and we are taught to pray to him, saying: *Our Father, which art in heaven.*⁴⁾ And if we ask, "Is God on earth?" the Scriptures answer, Yes, he is *the Lord in the midst of the earth;*⁵⁾ he was with Adam in Paradise,⁶⁾ with Pharaoh's host in the Red Sea,⁷⁾ with Moses on the mountain;⁸⁾ he is not far from every one of us;⁹⁾ he dwells in the hearts of all believers.¹⁰⁾ But if we ask, is he included in any space, great or small, Scripture tells us that he who *dwells with him that is of a contrite heart and humble spirit*¹¹⁾ is *the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity,*¹²⁾ whose habitation is infinity; for the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain him. While he fills heaven and earth, he is not encompassed by heaven and earth, but is *higher than the heavens,*¹³⁾ yea, he *hath meas-*

1) 1 Kings 8, 27. 2 Chron. 2, 6.

2) Jer. 23, 24.

3) Ps. 115, 3.

4) Luke 11, 2.

5) Exod. 8, 22.

6) Gen. 2, 18-22; 3, 8-10.

7) Exod. 14, 24.

8) Exod. 19, 18 ff.; 34, 2. 3.

9) Acts 17, 27. 2 Cor. 6, 16.

10) Rom. 8, 9. 11. 1 Cor. 3, 16. Is. 57, 15. John 14, 23.

11) Is. 57, 15.

12) Ibid.

13) Hebr. 7, 26.

ured the waters in the hollow of his hand and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure,¹⁾ and in him we live and move and have our being.²⁾ Being indivisible, he is not diffused through space, not extended through and beyond the universe, but he whom the heavens cannot contain is whole and entire in the heart of a little child. Even finite spirits are not related to space in the same manner as material substances, which exist in space circumscriptively. Our souls are not partly in the head and partly in the feet, and thus by division distributed throughout the various parts of our bodies; it is the same soul that feels in the fingertips, hears through the ears, and sees through the eyes, and an amputation of a foot is not a diminution of the soul. But the human soul is finite, existing definitely, confined to a somewhere, while God, being infinite, is everywhere. There is no fleeing from his presence, as the Psalmist says: *Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou (whole and entire) art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there (whole and entire). 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.*³⁾

The ubiquity of God is a ubiquity of all his attributes, each of which is himself; his power, his wisdom, his goodness, his truth is everywhere. *Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep; O Lord, thou preservest man and beast,*⁴⁾ says David. Therefore, *let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him,*⁵⁾ and as the Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all: *bless the Lord,*

1) Is. 40, 12.

3) Ps. 139, 7—10.

5) Ps. 33, 8.

2) Acts 17, 28.

4) Ps. 36, 6. 7.

*ye his angels . . . , bless the Lord, all his works in all places of his dominion; bless the Lord, O my soul.*¹⁾

But God is likewise unlimited by time; he is eternal. There is in him no sooner nor later, no past nor future, but a continual, unbroken, eternal present. David the psalmist lived in his time, from the day of his birth to the day of his death, long after the days of creation. But God says by David to him who is before David, "*Thou art my son: THIS DAY have I begotten thee.*"²⁾ God's day is not time but eternity, not only without end, but also without beginning, as Moses says: *Before the mountains were brought forth, or even thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God.*³⁾ He is *the everlasting God,*⁴⁾ *the king eternal.*⁵⁾ He is *the Lord, the first and the last,*⁶⁾ who says: "*Before me there was no God, neither shall there be after me.*"⁷⁾ Having no one before him and no one after him, he existed before all other existence and exists in endless existence; or he would not be God. There is in God no succession. When he says: "*I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending,*"⁸⁾ and describes himself as *the Lord which is and was, and which is to come,*⁹⁾ he does not thereby ascribe to himself inception and termination and succession of existence, but indeterminate existence, having no *ante*, no *post*, no *prius*, no *posterius*. *Being* himself the beginning, he *had* no beginning; *being* himself the end, he *has* no end; being at once he who *is* and *was* and *is to come*, he does not exist successively, but simultaneously. *One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day,*¹⁰⁾ in him neither the one nor the other is time, made up of successive hours, the number of which determines the difference between a

1) Ps. 103, 19—22.

3) Ps. 90, 2.

5) 1 Tim. 1, 17.

7) Is. 43, 10.

9) Ibid.

2) Ps. 2, 7.

4) Is. 40, 28. Gen. 21, 33.

6) Is. 41, 4; 44, 6.

8) Rev. 1, 8.

10) 2 Pet. 3, 8.

day and a thousand years. With God there is no such difference. To us the moments, the seconds and minutes and hours and days come and go and pass away from us, we ourselves being finite. But God is infinite, and there is no passing away from him. As he is present to all things regardless of space, he is also present to all things regardless of time. A thousand years are to God precisely what a thousand miles are to him, simply presence; and a day and a mile are to him likewise presence. There is with him no difference of space and no difference of time, because there is with him neither space nor time, all distances being *here* with him, and all durations being *now* with him.

LIFE.

God is life inasmuch as he has his being of himself, and of himself knows, wills, and does whatever he knows, wills, and does. Scripture says, *the Lord is the true God, he is the living God,*¹⁾ and the Psalmist's *heart and his flesh crieth out for the living God.*²⁾ God is *the king eternal, immortal;*³⁾ he says: "*I lift up my hand to heaven and say, I live forever.*"⁴⁾ *Christ, the Son of God, is the resurrection and the life,*⁵⁾ *the way, the truth, and the life.*⁶⁾ *In him was life, and the life was the light of men.*⁷⁾ Of him St. John says: *For the life was manifested, and we have seen it.*⁸⁾ A living creature is a being which individually determines itself from within according to its individual nature. Created life implies spontaneity of development, of growth, and, in its higher forms, of motion and action, and the higher the forms of created life are, as vegetable, animal, human, spiritual life, the more pronounced is this self-determination and spontaneity which underlies the various manifestations of life. But this spon-

1) Jer. 10, 10; cf. Josh. 3, 10. Acts 14, 15.

2) Ps. 84, 2.

3) 1 Tim. 1, 17.

4) Deut. 32, 40.

5) John 11, 25.

6) John 14, 6.

7) John 1, 4.

8) 1 John 1, 2.

taneity of created things has its limits. They have their being as living beings not of themselves, but of other living beings, from which they have sprung by propagation, which is itself a function or manifestation of the life in which propagated life has originated, the first source of all life being God.¹⁾ But as God is infinite, his life also is infinite. *As the Father HATH LIFE IN HIMSELF, so hath he given to the Son to have life IN HIMSELF.*²⁾ God's life has not originated in the life of another. The Son, while he is begotten of the Father from eternity, being God, *has life in himself*, even as the Father, being God, *has life in himself*. Thus also, while human life, and created life of every kind is in a measure determined from without, God is life in the highest sense of the term, being determined only from within himself. Our very existence is derived from and conditioned upon causes without ourselves. *In God we live and move and have our being,*³⁾ and a multitude of second or intermediate causes have concurred in making us what we are; our acts also are largely prompted from without us, when they are not properly our acts with the consent of our will. But God is of himself alone whatever he is, and all his works have all their cause or causes within him. Of himself and the Father Christ says in a peculiar sense: "*My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.*"⁴⁾ All causality of the works or acts of God is in God; for God is life essentially, and that essence is one. This is what Christ says; when the Jews were angry because he "*made himself equal with God,*" *then answered Jesus and said unto them: Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth; and he will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father*

1) Gen. 1, 21. 26. 30; 2, 4. 5. 7.

2) John 5, 26.

3) Acts 17, 28.

4) John 5, 17.

*raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.*¹⁾ This is the wonderful economy of life in the Trinity. Personally the Father and the Son are distinct, and the Father *gives* to the Son; but what he gives is what he, the Father, has, *to have life in himself*;²⁾ the Father showeth the Son; but he *showeth him all the things that himself doeth*; and thus, though personally distinct from, yet essentially one with, the Father, *the Son can do nothing of himself*, but, his life being essentially that of the Father, of whose essence he is, he can do only *what he seeth the Father do*, divine works, such as quickening whom he will.

INTELLIGENCE.

Intelligence is an attribute of God inasmuch as he beholds or perfectly knows himself and all that besides him is, has been, will be, can be, or might be. *The Lord is a God of knowledge.*³⁾ The Spirit of God *searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God*;⁴⁾ and *the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.*⁵⁾ *No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son.*⁶⁾ God is greater than our heart and *knoweth all things.*⁷⁾ God is omniscient. God's knowledge is not progressive or successive, not acquired by observation or experiment, induction or deduction, but immediate and simultaneous, not partial and gradual, but ever total, perfect, and complete. All things are to him *known from eternity*, *γνωστὰ ἀπ' αἰῶνος.*⁸⁾ God knows not only the things that exist and come to pass, but also their order of existence and the sequence of events, not, however, as created intelligence knows them, the past by remembrance or tradition, the present by perception or intuition, the

1) John 5, 19—21.

3) 1 Sam. 2, 3.

5) 1 Cor, 2, 11.

7) 1 John 3, 20; cf. John 21, 17.

8) Acts 15, 18; Codd. N, B. C.

2) John 5, 26.

4) 1 Cor. 2, 10.

6) Matt. 11, 27.

future, if at all, by conjecture or computation: but all at once, directly, without any increase in quantity or quality, extension or intensity, completeness or certainty. What is in man, no man knows but the spirit of man that is in man.¹⁾ But of God the Psalmist says: *O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising; thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. . . .*²⁾ Before God, *the very hairs of our heads are all numbered.*³⁾ *All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.*⁴⁾ In short, *Great is the Lord and of great power; his understanding is INFINITE.*⁵⁾ Nor can it be otherwise, since God's understanding is, again, his essence, and that is infinite. And hence, as we cannot comprehend the infinite, we say with the inspired Singer: *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.*⁶⁾ It is, therefore, by divine condescension that God speaks to us of his knowledge *κατ' ἀνθρώπων*, anthropopathically, when he says; *And God REMEMBERED Noah, and every living thing;*⁷⁾ or: *The Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded;*⁸⁾ or when David says: *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts;*⁹⁾ *Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.*¹⁰⁾

Thus, also, prescience, or foreknowledge, is ascribed to God in a sense compatible with his infinity, according to which there is in him no before and after, earlier or later, but a continuous now and present. As created things have a beginning in time, and time itself had a beginning, and God has no beginning, and his knowledge had no be-

1) 1 Cor. 2, 11.

4) Hebr. 4, 13.

7) Gen. 8, 1.

10) Ps. 26, 2.

2) Ps. 139, 1—4.

5) Ps. 147, 5.

8) Gen. 11, 5.

3) Matt. 10, 30.

6) Ps. 139, 6.

9) Ps. 139, 24.

ginning, it was in this respect before time and created things and all temporal events, BEFORE *the foundation of the world*,¹⁾ BEFORE *the mountains were brought forth*;²⁾ and thus his ever-present knowledge is foreknowledge of temporal things, which are ever present to God also in their temporal order, the creation of the world as being before the end of the world, the *day and hour* of which he knows.³⁾ *The Lord knoweth the DAYS of the upright*,⁴⁾ and our *times* are known to him; for they are in his hand.⁵⁾

The prescience of God includes, also, a knowledge of the acts of men, both good and evil. *The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous*,⁶⁾ and *the proud he knoweth afar off*.⁷⁾ *The Lord knoweth the thoughts of men, that they are vanity*,⁸⁾ and to the house of Jacob he says: *I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously*.⁹⁾ But knowing all things as they are, God knows the acts of men as the acts of rational and responsible beings who have a will of their own and act according to the counsels of their hearts;¹⁰⁾ and thus the foreknowledge of God does not exclude but rather includes the agency of the human will and the causality of human counsels.

Again, God's foreknowledge of his own acts, especially of the rulings of his providence, does not exclude, but includes the prayers of his children, which he in his counsel has answered before they were uttered,¹¹⁾ permitting them to enter as a powerful factor¹²⁾ into the government of the universe.¹³⁾

WISDOM.

Wisdom is that attribute of God by which he chooses, disposes, and directs the proper means to the proper ends. Thus wisdom and counsel go together, the former being the

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| 1) Eph. 1, 4. | 2) Ps. 90, 2. | 3) Matt. 24, 36. |
| 4) Ps. 37, 18. | 5) Ps. 31, 15. | 6) Ps. 1, 6. |
| 7) Ps. 138, 6. | 8) Ps. 94, 11; cf. Ps. 139, 1—4 supra. | |
| 9) Is. 48, 8. | 10) Jer. 7, 24. | 11) Is. 65, 24. |
| 12) James 5, 16 f. | 13) Ps. 33, 10—22; 145, 13—19. | |

faculty, the latter, its exertion. *With him is WISDOM and strength; he hath COUNSEL and understanding.*¹⁾ And as the wisdom of God is divine, being God himself, so also his counsels are above all the counsels of created minds. Thus God is said to be *the only wise God*,²⁾ and his ways, the means and measures he employs for the achievement of his ends, are said to be higher than our human ways as the heavens are higher than the earth.³⁾ It is the peculiar prerogative of the wise to ponder the nexus of cause and effect; while the fool's horizon is narrow, encompassing only the present moment, the wise man looks backward and ahead and calculates the consequences and effects of what is and has been upon that which is to come. But while human wisdom often fails, God's wisdom is unfailing. *I am God, says he, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done.*⁴⁾ And, being God, he can continue: *My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.*⁵⁾ Men may devise ways and means, but they are often unable to carry their wisest counsels into effect; but in God there is *wisdom and strength*,⁶⁾ and therefore his counsels stand and he carries them into execution. Men who lack wisdom are in need of counselors to direct them and show them the ways they must go to reach their ends, and even the wise, their wisdom being limited, will counsel together, assisting and supplementing each other in devising and disposing proper means to secure proper ends. But *who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counselor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge and showed to him the way of understanding?*⁷⁾

The two greatest exhibitions of the wisdom of God are the *plan of creation* and the *plan of salvation*. Of the

1) Job 12, 13.

2) 1 Tim. 1, 14.

3) Is. 55, 8. 9.

4) Is. 46, 9.

5) Ibid. v. 9.

6) Job 12, 13.

7) Is. 40, 13.

former, the Psalmist says: *O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom thou hast made them all, and the earth is full of thy riches.*¹⁾ And in Job we read: *Whence cometh wisdom, and where is the place of understanding? . . . God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof. For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven; to make the weight for the winds, and he weigheth the waters by measure. When he made the decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder: then did he see it and declare it; he purposed it, yea, and searched it out.*²⁾ And of the plan of salvation St. Paul writes: *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace, wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence.*³⁾ And again: *That now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Jesus Christ our Lord.*⁴⁾ But though these counsels have been in a measure revealed to us, there are many things which God in his wisdom has reserved to himself, and with the apostle we say: *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out. For who hath known the mind of God, or who hath been his counselor?*⁵⁾ This, however, we know, that with what he has hidden as well as with what he has revealed, God has devised and directed the best ways and means for the ultimate achievement of his highest end and aim, the glory of his holy name, as St. Paul also says: *For of him, and through him, and TO HIM are all things, to whom be glory for ever. Amen.*⁶⁾ A. G.

1) Ps. 104, 24.

3) Eph. 1, 7. 8.

5) Rom. 11, 33. 34.

2) Job 28, 20—27.

4) Eph. 3, 10. 11.

6) Rom. 11, 36.

(To be continued.)