

THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF GOD

I. His Existence.

None of us doubt God's existence in the least. There are those who say, "How do you know there is a God?" Therefore, we shall consider some reasons for believing that there is a God. Among the proofs of His existence are the following: --

1. Philosophical and Theological.

(1) Argument from cause.

This means reasoning from the effect back to the cause. This argument has been stated as follows: "Every effect must have an adequate cause. The world is an effect. Therefore, the world must have had a cause outside of itself adequate to account for its existence." Things about us demand an explanation as to how they came into existence, so we conclude that there was a Creator, Who is called God.

(2) Argument from design.

This means reasoning from the design to the designer. This argument has been stated as follows: "Whatever gives proof of design must have had a designer. The universe gives proof of design. Therefore, the universe must have had a Designer." The only cause for design in the universe is God.

(3) Argument from universal belief.

This means reasoning from man's intuitive idea of God to One who corresponds to that idea. In all ages and everywhere there has been a belief in the existence of a God or gods to whom man is responsible and to whom propitiation needs to be made. A tribe or nation or race of people has never been found which did not have some conception of a Supreme Being. The universality of the idea of God in the mind of man implies His actual existence.

(4) Argument from the Bible.

The Scriptures do not attempt to prove God's existence. From this fact we infer that no proof of His existence is needed. However, the Scriptures everywhere assume or affirm that there is a God. They do so in announcing His creatorship. Genesis 1:1. They declare His existence in calling one a fool who denies it. Psalm 14:1.

2. Experimental.

Believers in Christ readily accept and are glad to know these other proofs of secondary importance. But to them, their personal experiences with Him makes the question of His existence unnecessary and absurd. They know there is a God because they have dealt with Him. Their knowledge is vital and certain.

II. His Essence.

God is a Spirit. John 4:24. He does not have a body or the limitations of matter. There is no material element in His being. He is incorporeal (Meaning without outward form) and invisible.

"God is the infinite and perfect Spirit in whom all things have their source, support and end." (Strong's Systematic Theology, page 52). The word "Spirit" denotes individuality and intelligence.

To describe God in terms suited to our understanding, we say that He is a person. There are three elements of personality: -- intellect, or the power of thinking; sensibility, or the power of feeling; and volition, or the power of willing.

If it can be proved that to God are ascribed operations of intellect, sensibility and will, then we can prove that He is a person. Note a few passages inscribing to Him --

1. The power of intellect.
Jeremiah 29:11, Acts 15:18.
2. The power of feeling.
Psalm 33:5, Psalm 103:8-13, Hebrews 12:29, James 5:11.
3. The power of will.
Psalm 115:3, Isaiah 46:10-11.

So God is a being who thinks, feels and wills. Therefore, He is not simply a force or an influence, but a person.

III. His Attributes.

An attribute is a quality which inheres in the very essence of a person or a thing. When applied to God an attribute means an essential, permanent and distinguishing characteristic or quality which inheres in the divine essence. His attributes are inseparable from His nature.

1. His natural attributes.

- (1) Self-existence.
The ground of our existence is outside of us, but God does not derive His being from an outside source. He is not dependent on the world for life.
- (2) Spirituality.
He is spirit and not matter, therefore, He is independent of time and space.
- (3) Immutability.
God is above the possibility of change in nature, purpose, will, or counsel.
Psalm 102:26-27, Malachi 3:6, James 1:17.
- (4) Omnipresence.
Being Spirit, He is not confined to any one place. There is no place in this world where He is not. This truth, of His omnipresence, is most encouraging and comforting to the believer in Christ, and yet most sobering in effect on his conduct. Psalm 139:7-10, Jeremiah 23:23-24.
- (5) Omniscience.
Omniscience is perfect knowledge of all things actual and possible.
I John 3:20, Job 37:16, Psalm 147:5.

Note some examples of God's omniscience: --

- a. God knows all that occurs in every place.
Proverbs 15:3.
- b. God knows the imaginations and thoughts of men.
Genesis 6:5, I Chronicles 28:9.
- c. God knows all the experiences of men.
Psalm 139:2-3, Proverbs 5:21.
- d. God knows every word that man speaks.
Psalm 139:4.
- e. God knows all human sorrows.
Exodus 3:7.
In due time He proves both His knowledge and His concern.

(6) Omnipotence.

By this we mean that God is unlimited in His power to do anything which is consistent with His nature and purpose and will, all of which are perfect.

a. All nature is subject to His will and word.

Genesis 1:3.

b. All men are subject to His will and word.

James 4:12.

A wise person recognizes God's will and is submissive thereto, thus becoming the recipient of happiness.

c. All angels are subject to God's will and word.

Psalms 103:20.

(7) Eternity.

God never began and can never cease to be. He always was, He is, and always will be. Exodus 3:14, Psalm 90:1-2. With Him there is no past, present or future. They are before Him as one eternal now.