

BRYAN STATION BAPTIST CHURCH
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THE NATURE OF GOD

By: C. D. Cole

By nature we mean that peculiar character of being which makes one kind of being differ from another kind of being. Thus we speak of the Divine nature, or of angelic nature, or of human nature, or of brute nature. That nature may be predicated of God is suggested by Paul talking to the Galatians before their conversion when he says in Galatians 4:8, "...when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods." This clearly implies that one existed who was, by nature, God. Peter speaks of the Divine nature in II Peter 1:4, *"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature..."*

We start with the assumption that God is a personal being, and that he has a distinct nature, called the Divine nature. He is both immanent and transcendent, that is, He is both in and above His creation. There are three marks of personality: self-consciousness, self-determination, and moral consciousness. Besides personality there are three other things which apply to God's mode of being:

THE SPIRITUALITY OF GOD

The Divine nature is a spiritual nature exclusively. Matter is not a

property of the Divine Being.

Argument:

He is the Creator of spirits, and as a spirit being is the highest order of being, He must have the nature that belongs to that order.

The Scriptures ascribe spirituality to God. John 4:24, *"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."* Hebrews 12:9, *"Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?"*

His spirituality may be argued from His immensity and eternity (infinity as to space and time). Isaiah 40:12, *"Who hath measured 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, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?"* Matter is limited as to space and time, but God is both omnipresent and eternal. Deuteronomy 33:27, *"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms..."*

His spirituality may be argued from His independency and immu-

tability. That which is material can be divided, added to, or diminished. Matter is subject to change, but God is the unchangeable One. Hebrews 6:17-18, *"Where-in God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie..."*

His spirituality may also be argued from His absolute perfection. A material body imposes limitations, and is not consistent with absolute perfection. We use the word perfection in a wider sense than sinlessness. Christ, in His human body, was sinless, but He had His limitations. He was not everywhere at the same time. He was not immune from hunger and thirst, weariness and pain.

Objection:

Many passages of Scripture ascribe bodily parts to God. They speak of His eyes, face, hands, feet, arm, nostrils, etc. Isaiah 40:10-11, *"Behold, the LORD GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his*

bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." Isaiah 52:10, "The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations..." Isaiah 53:1, "Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?" Revelation 1:13-15, "And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters." But in reply it may be said that the language is partly figurative, and partly used as an accommodation to human thought. Such language is called anthropomorph.

THE UNITY OF GOD

By the unity of God we mean that there is only one true God. To speak of more than one God is to speak of more than one Supreme Being, which is absurd. The following Scriptures are but a few of the many that emphasize the unity of God: Deuteronomy 6:4, "Here, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD." Malachi 2:10, "Have we not all one father? Hath not one God created us?..." Mark 12:29, 32, "And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: ... And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he." I Timothy 2:5, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Ephesians 4:5, 6, "One

Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." James 2:19, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." Exodus 8:10, "And he said, To morrow. And he said, Be it according to thy word: that thou mayest know that there is none like unto the LORD our God." Exodus 9:14, "For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth." Exodus 15:11, "Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" II Samuel 7:22, "Wherefore thou art great, O LORD God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears."

Objections:

The gods of the heathen are spoken of as their gods. Deuteronomy 10:17, "For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward." Joshua 22:22, "The LORD God of gods, the LORD God of gods, he knoweth, and Israel he shall know..." Psalm 96:4, 5, "For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens." I Corinthians 8:4-6, "As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. For

though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."

Reply:

The gods of the heathen are idols and an idol is nothing. Such gods are only exalted in the place of God by false conceptions.

The word "god" is applied to Moses and others. Exodus 4:16, "And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God." Exodus 7:1, "And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh..." John 10:34, 35, "Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken." Cf. Psalm 82:6, 7, "I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes."

Reply:

In the case of Moses it simply means that Moses was God's representative, vested with the authority of God. As to the passages in Psalms, the meaning is that men were delegated with great authority and power. Romans 13:1-6, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to

themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing."

The doctrine of the trinity is thought by some to be incompatible with the idea of the unity of God. The unity of God means that there is but one Divine essence undivided and uncompounded. The trinity means that in the Divine essence there are three persons subsisting, who, by virtue of that subsistence, are each God. The Arian notion made the Father the Supreme God and the Son only a Divine being in a subordinate sense. The Son was of like but not of the same substance with the Father. Christ was the first and noblest of all created beings according to Arius. His doctrine was condemned at the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. Arius was opposed by Athanasius who contended that Christ was of one substance with the Father. The Sabellian notion is that God is one person, manifesting Himself sometimes as Father, sometimes as Son, and sometimes as Holy Spirit. But this would make Him cease to exist as Father when manifested as Son.

THE TRINITY

The trinity means that there are

three persons in the Godhead. We can do no better here than to give the matter as summed up by Dr. Strong:

"God exists in the relations respectively: First, of source, origin, authority, and in this relation is the Father; Second, of expression, medium, revelation, and in this relation is the Son; Third, of apprehension, accomplishment, realization, and in this relation is the Holy Spirit."

Dr. Strong also sums up the characteristic differences between the work of the Son and the work of the Holy Spirit in four statements:

1) "All outgoing seems to be the work of Christ; all return to God the work of the Holy Spirit.

2) Christ is the organ of external revelation; the Holy Spirit is the organ of internal revelation.

3) Christ is our advocate in heaven; the Holy Spirit is our advocate in the soul.

4) In the work of Christ we are passive; in the work of the Holy Spirit we are made active."

Argument for truth of the trinity:

The doctrine of a trinity of persons in the Godhead may be proven in several ways:

By the use of plural names of God in the Scriptures. The first name of God we meet with in the Bible is in the plural: Genesis 1:1, "*In the beginning God (Elohim) created the heaven and the earth.*"

From plural expressions used by God, when speaking of Himself. At the creation of man, He said, Genesis 1:26, "*And God said, Let us make man in our image, after*

our likeness..."

A trinity of persons were manifested at the baptism of Christ. Matthew 3:16, 17, "*And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*"

The ordinance of baptism is to be administered in the name of three persons: Matthew 28:19, "*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*"

John tells us that there are three that bear record in heaven: I John 5:7, "*For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.*"



We thank thee, God, for blessings—
The big ones and the small—
Thy tender love and mercy
That guards and keeps us all.

The fresh awakening of joy
That comes with morning light,
Sunlit hours to fill the day
And restful sleep at night.

The hope, the beauty, and the love
That brighten each day's living—
We praise thee, and our hearts are filled
With joy, and with thanksgiving.

The pride that's found in work well done,
The love of those who care,
The peace of mind, the sweet content
That comes with quiet prayer.

—Author Unknown

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