

God's Incommunicable Attributes by Herman Bavinck

Scripture itself reveals the general attributes of God's nature before, and more clearly than, it reveals his trinitarian existence. God is independent, all-sufficient in himself, and the only source of all existence and life. yhwh is the name that describes this essence and identity most clearly: "I will be what I will be." It is in this aseity of God, conceived not only as having being from himself but also as the fullness of being, that all other divine perfections are included.

Immutability is a natural implication of God's aseity. While everything changes, God is and remains the same. If God were not immutable, he would not be God. To God alone belongs true being, and that which truly is remains. Contrary to both Deism and pantheism God who is cannot change, for every change would diminish his being. This doctrine of God's immutability is important; the very distinction between Creator and creature hinges on the contrast between being and becoming. Our reliance on God depends on his immutability. Philosophic notions of absolute becoming have no place in Christian theology, nor should immutability be understood in static philosophic terms. The unchanging God is related to his creatures in manifold ways and participates in their lives. God is transcendent and immanent. Without losing himself he can give himself and, while absolutely maintaining his immutability, he can enter into an infinite number of relations to his creatures.

When applied to time, God's immutability (or infinity) is called eternity; when applied to space it is called omnipresence. Properly understood, infinity is not a philosophical notion obtained negatively by abstraction from finite things. God is positively infinite in his characteristic essence, absolutely perfect, infinite in an intensive, qualitative sense.

God's eternity, contrary to Deism, is qualitative and not merely quantitatively an infinite extension of time. Christian theology must also avoid the error of pantheism, which simply considers eternity as the substance or essence of time itself. Eternity excludes a beginning, an end, and succession of moments. God is unbegotten, incorruptible, and immutable. Time is the mode of existence of all finite creatures. God, on the other hand, is the eternal I AM, who is without beginning or end and not subject to measuring or counting in his duration. God's eternity, however, is not static or immobile but fullness of being, present and immanent in every moment of time. God pervades time and every moment of time with his eternity; he maintains a definite relation to time, entering into it with his eternity.

Infinity in the sense of not being confined by space is synonymous with God's omnipresence. While heaven and earth cannot contain God, neither can he be excluded from space. Rather, he fills heaven and earth with his presence. This omnipresence includes God's being as well as his

power. God is not “somewhere,” yet he fills heaven and earth; he is uniquely a place of his own to himself. Here again, we need to remind ourselves that in each attribute we speak of God in human terms. God relates to space as the infinite One who, existing within himself, also fills to repletion every point of space and sustains it by his immensity.

The last of God’s incommunicable attributes, his oneness, is differentiated into the unity of singularity and the unity of simplicity. God is numerically and quantitatively one, absolutely and exclusively. Evolutionist views of development from polytheism to monotheism in the Old Testament are untenable. Scripture is monotheistic from beginning to end. Polytheism fails to satisfy the human spirit; only confession about the one true God sustains religion, truth, and morality.

The unity of simplicity insists that God is not only truthful and righteous, loving and wise, but the truth, righteousness, love, and wisdom. On account of its absolute perfection, every attribute of God is identical with his essence. Though sometimes opposed on philosophical grounds, the doctrine of divine simplicity is of great importance for our understanding of God. If God is in any sense composite, then it is impossible to maintain the perfection of his oneness, independence, and immutability. Simplicity is not a philosophic abstraction but the end result of ascribing to God all the perfections of creatures to the ultimate divine degree. It is necessary as a way of affirming that God has a distinct and infinite life of his own within himself. Nor is simplicity inconsistent with the doctrine of the Trinity, for the term “simple” is not an antonym of “twofold” or “threefold” but of “composite.” God is not composed of three persons, nor is each person composed of the being and personal attributes of that person, but the one uncompounded (simple) being of God exists in three persons.

[192] In the work of some theologians the locus of the Trinity precedes that of the attributes of God; and Frank even has serious objections to the reverse order.¹ If treating the attributes of God before the doctrine of the Trinity implied a desire to gradually proceed from “natural” to “revealed” theology, from a natural to the Christian concept of God, then this procedure would undoubtedly be objectionable. But this is by no means the case. In the doctrine of the attributes of God the tradition includes the treatment of the divine nature as it is revealed to us in Scripture, is confessed by the Christian faith, and exists—as will be evident in the locus of the Trinity—in a threefold manner. In order for us to understand in the locus of the Trinity that Father, Son, and Spirit share in the same divine nature, it is necessary for us to know what that divine nature comprises and in what ways it differs from every created nature.

In this matter of order, too, Scripture is our model. In Scripture the nature of God is shown us earlier and more clearly than his trinitarian existence. The Trinity is not clearly revealed until we get to the New Testament. The names yhwh and Elohim precede those of Father, Son, and Spirit.

The first thing Scripture teaches us concerning God is that he has a free, independent existence and life of his own that is distinct from all creatures. He has a being (“nature,” “substance,” “essence”) of his own, not in distinction from his attributes, but coming to the fore and disclosing itself in all his perfections and attributes. He bears his own names—names that do not belong to any creature. Among these names that of yhwh stands supreme (Exod. 3:14–15). This name describes him as the One who is and will always be what he was, that is, who eternally remains the same in relation to his people. He is self-existent. He existed before all things, and all things exist only through him (Ps. 90:2; 1 Cor. 8:6; Rev. 4:11). In an absolute sense he is Lord (ἰη̅ϰ̅, κυριος, δεσποτης), Lord of all the earth (Exod. 23:17; Deut. 10:17; Josh. 3:13). He is dependent on nothing, but everything depends on him (Rom. 11:36). He kills and makes alive; he forms the light and creates the darkness; he makes weal and creates woe (Deut. 32:39; Isa. 45:5–7; 54:16). He does according to his will with the host of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth (Dan. 4:35), so that people are in his hand as clay in the hands of a potter (Isa. 64:8; Jer. 18:1ff.; Rom. 9:21). His counsel and good pleasure is the ultimate ground of all that is and happens (Ps. 33:11; Prov. 19:21; Isa. 46:10; Matt. 11:26; Acts 2:23; 4:28; Eph. 1:5, 9, 11). Accordingly, he does all things for his own sake, for the sake of his name and praise (Deut. 32:27; Josh. 7:9; 1 Sam. 12:22; Ps. 25:11; 31:3; 79:9; 106:8; 109:21; 143:11; Prov. 16:4; Isa. 48:9; Jer. 14:7, 21; Ezek. 20:9, 14, 22, 44). Nor does he need anything, for he is all-sufficient (Job 22:2–3; Ps. 50:19ff.; Acts 17:25) and has life in himself (John 5:26). Thus he is the first and the last, the alpha and the omega, who is and who was and who is to come (Isa. 41:4; 44:6; 48:12; Rev. 1:8); absolutely independent, not only in his existence but consequently also in all his attributes and perfections, in all his decrees and deeds. He is independent in his intellect (Rom. 11:34–35), in his will (Dan. 4:35; Rom. 9:19; Eph. 1:5; Rev. 4:11), in his counsel (Ps. 33:11; Isa. 46:10), in his love (Hos. 14:4), in his power (Ps. 115:3), and so forth. Thus, being all-sufficient in himself and not receiving anything from outside of himself, he is, by contrast, the only source of all existence and life, of all light and love, the overflowing fountain of all good (Ps. 36:10; Acts 17:25).

Independence

Now this independence of God is more or less recognized by all humans. Pagans, to be sure, degrade the divine by drawing it down to the level of the creature and teach a theogony; however, behind and above their gods they often again assume the existence of a power to which everything is subject in an absolute sense. Many of them speak of nature, chance, fate, or fortune as a power superior to all else; and philosophers tend to speak of God as the Absolute. In Christian theology this attribute of God was called his independence (αὐταρκεια), aseity, all-sufficiency, greatness. In the East, a number of terms were used: “(θεος ἀναρχος) God, without beginning or cause, unbegotten,” and theologians preferably spoke of God as “(αὐτογεννητος) the self-generate, (αὐτοφυης) self-begotten, (αὐτουσιος) self-existent, (αὐτοθεος) self-divine, (αὐτοφως) self-luminous, (αὐτοσοφια) self-wise, (αὐτοαρετη) self-virtuous, (αὐταγαθος) self-excellent, and so on.”² All that God is, he is of himself. By virtue of himself he is goodness, holiness, wisdom, life, light, truth, and so on. As stated earlier, the church fathers usually followed Philo in grounding their description of God in the name yhwh. That was the name that described his essence par

excellence. God was the Existent One. His whole identity was wrapped up in the name: "I will be what I will be." All God's other perfections are derived from this name. He is supreme (summum) in everything: supreme being (esse), supreme goodness (bonum), supreme truth (verum), supreme beauty (pulchrum). He is the perfect, highest, the most excellent being, "than whom nothing better can exist or be thought." All being is contained in him. He is a boundless ocean of being. "If you have said of God that he is good, great, blessed, wise or any other such quality, it is summed up in a single word: he is (Est). Indeed, for him to be is to be all these things. Even if you add a hundred such qualities, you have not gone outside the boundaries of his being. Having said them all, you have added nothing; having said none of them, you have subtracted nothing."³ Scholasticism as a whole fell in line with this view,⁴ also treating this attribute under the name of the "infinity" or "spiritual greatness" of God,⁵ or under that of the "aseity" of God, meaning that as the "supreme substance," God is "what he is through or by his own self."⁶ Later Roman Catholic theologians as a rule also proceeded from this aseity or independence.⁷

In this regard the Reformation introduced no change. Luther, too, on the basis of name yhwh, described God as the absolutely existent one and as pure being. Yet, refusing to dwell on abstract metaphysical descriptions, Luther swiftly passed from "the hidden God" (Deus absconditus) to the "God revealed in Christ" (Deus revelatus in Christo).⁸ Melancthon in his *Loci* describes God as "spiritual essence." While Lutherans usually adopted this description, they often added the qualifying words "infinite," "subsisting of himself," or "independent."⁹ Among the Reformed this perfection of God comes more emphatically to the fore, though the word "aseity" was soon exchanged for that of "independence." While aseity only expresses God's self-sufficiency in his existence, independence has a broader sense and implies that God is independent in everything: in his existence, in his perfections, in his decrees, and in his works. Accordingly, while in the past theologians mostly used the name yhwh as their starting point,¹⁰ in later years God's independence occurs most often as the first of the incommunicable attributes.¹¹

Now when God ascribes this aseity to himself in Scripture, he makes himself known as absolute being, as the one who is in an absolute sense. By this perfection he is at once essentially and absolutely distinct from all creatures. Creatures, after all, do not derive their existence from themselves but from others and so have nothing from themselves; both in their origin and hence in their further development and life, they are absolutely dependent. But as is evident from the word "aseity," God is exclusively from himself, not in the sense of being self-caused but being from eternity to eternity who he is, being not becoming. God is absolute being, the fullness of being, and therefore also eternally and absolutely independent in his existence, in his perfections, in all his works, the first and the last, the sole cause and final goal of all things. In this aseity of God, conceived not only as having being from himself but also as the fullness of being, all the other perfections are included. They are given with the aseity itself and are the rich and multifaceted development of it. Yet, whereas in the case of this perfection the immeasurable distinction between the Creator and creature stands out vividly and plainly, there is nevertheless a weak analogy in all creatures also of this perfection of God. Pantheism, indeed, cannot acknowledge

this, but theism stands for the fact that a creature, though absolutely dependent, nevertheless also has a distinct existence of its own. And implanted in this existence there is “a drive toward self-preservation.” Every creature, to the extent that it shares in existence, fears death, and even the tiniest atom offers resistance to all attempts at annihilating it. Again: it is a shadow of the independent, immutable being of our God.

Immutability

[193] A natural implication of God’s aseity is his immutability. At first blush this immutability seems to have little support in Scripture. For there God is seen as standing in the most vital association with the world. In the beginning he created heaven and earth and so moved from not creating to creating. And from that beginning he is, as it were, a coparticipant in the life of the world and especially of his people Israel. He comes and goes, reveals and conceals himself. He averts his face [in wrath] and turns it back to us in grace. He repents (Gen. 6:6; 1 Sam. 15:11; Amos 7:3, 6; Joel 2:13; Jon. 3:9; 4:2) and changes plans (Exod. 32:10–14; Jon. 3:10). He becomes angry (Num. 11:1, 10; Ps. 106:40; Zech. 10:3) and sets aside his anger (Deut. 13:17; 2 Chron. 12:12; 30:8; Jer. 18:8, 10; 26:3, 19; 36:3). His attitude toward the pious is one thing, his disposition to the ungodly another (Prov. 11:20; 12:22). With the pure he is pure; with the crooked he shows himself a shrewd opponent¹² (Ps. 18:26–27). In the fullness of time he even becomes human in Christ and proceeds to dwell in the church through the Holy Spirit. He rejects Israel and accepts the Gentiles. And in the life of the children of God there is a consistent alternation of feelings of guilt and the consciousness of forgiveness, of experiences of God’s wrath and of his love, of his abandonment and his presence.

At the same time the Scriptures testify that amid all this alternation God is and remains the same. Everything changes, but he remains standing. He remains who he is (Ps. 102:26–28). He is yhwh, he who is and ever remains himself. He is the first and with the last he is still the same God (Isa. 41:4; 43:10; 46:4; 48:12). He is who he is (Deut. 32:39; cf. John 8:58; Heb. 13:8), the incorruptible who alone has immortality, and is always the same (Rom. 1:23; 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16; Heb. 1:11–12). Unchangeable in his existence and being, he is so also in his thought and will, in all his plans and decisions. He is not a human that he should lie or repent. What he says, he will do (Num. 15:28; 1 Sam. 15:29). His gifts (charismata) and calling are irrevocable (Rom. 11:29). He does not reject his people (Rom. 11:1). He completes what he has begun (Ps. 138:8; Phil. 1:6). In a word, he, yhwh, does not change (Mal. 3:6). In him there is “no variation or shadow due to change” (James 1:17).

On this foundation Christian theology constructed its doctrine of divine immutability. Mythological theogony could not attain to this level, but philosophy frequently named and described God as the unique, eternal, immutable, unmoved, and self-consistent Ruler over all things.¹³ From the presence of motion in the universe Aristotle inferred the existence of a “first

mover,” an “everlasting immovable being,” who is one and eternal, necessary, immutable, free from all composition, devoid of potentiality, matter, change; and who is pure act, pure form, unadulterated essence, absolute form, “the very nature of a thing, primary substance.”¹⁴ Philo called God “unchangeable, self-consistent, invariable, steadfast, firm, fixed, unalterable.”¹⁵ And with this assessment Christian theology concurred. God, according to Irenaeus, is always the same, self-identical.¹⁶ In Augustine, God’s immutability flows directly from the fact that he is supreme and perfect being: “It is instinctual for every rational creature to think that there is an altogether unchangeable and incorruptible God.”¹⁷ This concept of an eternal and unchangeable being cannot be obtained by the senses, for all creatures, also humans themselves, are changeable; but within their souls humans see and find the immutable something that is better and greater than all the things that are subject to change.

If God were not immutable, he would not be God.¹⁸ His name is “being,” and this name is “an unalterable name.” All that changes ceases to be what it was. But true being belongs to him who does not change. That which truly is remains. That which changes “was something and will be something but is not anything because it is mutable.”¹⁹ But God who is cannot change, for every change would diminish his being. Furthermore, God is as immutable in his knowing, willing, and decreeing as he is in his being. “The essence of God by which he is what he is, possesses nothing changeable, neither in eternity, nor in truthfulness, nor in will.”²⁰ As he is, so he knows and wills—immutably. “For even as you totally are, so do you alone totally know, for you immutably are, and you know immutably, and you will immutably. Your essence knows and wills immutably, and your knowledge is and wills immutably, and your will is and knows immutably.”²¹ Neither creation, nor revelation, nor incarnation (affects, etc.) brought about any change in God. No new plan ever arose in God. In God there was always one single immutable will. “[In God the former purpose is not altered and obliterated by the subsequent and different purpose, but] by one and the same eternal and unchangeable will he effected regarding the things he created, both that formerly, so long as they were not, they should not be, and that subsequently, when they began to be, they should come into existence.” In creatures the only change is from nonbeing to being, from good to evil.²² The same idea comes back repeatedly in the scholastics and Roman Catholic theologians²³ as well as in the works of Lutheran and Reformed theologians.²⁴

This immutability of God, however, was frequently combated from the side of both Deism and pantheism. In the opinion of Epicurus the gods totally resemble excellent human beings, who make changes with respect to location, activity, and thought (etc.); and according to Heraclitus and later the Stoics, the deity as the immanent cause of the world was also caught up in its perpetual flux.²⁵ Opposition to God’s immutability in Christian theology was of the same nature. On the one hand, there is the Pelagianism, Socinianism, Remonstrantism, and rationalism, which especially opposes the immutability of God’s knowing and willing and makes the will of God dependent on—and hence change in accordance with—the conduct of humans. Especially Vorstius, in his work *On God and His Attributes*, criticized the immutability of God. He made a

distinction between God's essence, which is simple and unchangeable, and God's will, which being free does not will everything eternally and does not always will the same thing.²⁶

Much more serious even is the opposition to God's immutability from the side of pantheism. Common to all pantheistic criticism is that the idea of becoming is transferred to God, thus totally obliterating the boundary line between the Creator and the creature. The idea of God as "substance," as it occurs in Spinoza, proved to be an abstraction devoid of content. In order to breathe life into that concept, philosophy frequently substituted "becoming" for "being." In that connection it makes a big difference, naturally, whether or not this process—by which God himself comes into being—is conceived in unitarian or trinitarian terms and whether it is viewed as occurring immanently in the being of God or transitively in the world. Belonging in this category are, first of all, Gnosticism, but further also the theosophy of the Kabbalah, of Böhme, Schelling, Rothe, Hamberger, and others, having an aftereffect in the doctrine of kenosis, and finally the pantheistic philosophy of Fichte, Hegel, Schleiermacher, Schopenhauer, von Hartmann, and others. However variously it may be elaborated, the basic idea is the same: God is not, but becomes. In and of himself, in the initial moment, he is an "unknown oceanic depth ($\beta\upsilon\theta\omicron\varsigma$ $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\nu\omega\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$)," purely abstract potential being, unqualified nature, contentless idea, a dark brooding urge, a blind alogical will—in a word, a form of being that is nothing but can become anything. But from that mass of potential existence, in the form of a process, God gradually heaves himself into actuality. He is his own Creator. He produces himself. Very gradually, either within himself or in the world, he matures into personality, self-consciousness, mind, spirit.

Under the influence of this philosophical idea of the Absolute becoming, also modern theology has repeatedly denied or delimited the immutability of God and with a passion favored calling God his own cause (*causa sui*), a self-actualizing power.²⁷ As Luthardt puts it: "God is his own deed."²⁸ Others speak of "God's self-postulation."²⁹ In a special treatise Dorner, attempting to avoid both Deism and pantheism (acosmism), sought to reconcile God's immutability and his "aliveness."³⁰ He believes he can achieve this goal by locating God's immutability in the dimension of the ethical. Ethically, God is immutable and always self-consistent. He remains holy love. But for the rest, Dorner believes that as a result of the creation, the incarnation, and the atonement, a change has come about in God; that he stands in a reciprocal relation to humankind, that he only knows reality from his interaction with the world. This means that for God, too, there is a past, a present, and a future; that he becomes angry, justifies; and that in general his disposition corresponds to that of humans.³¹ Many theologians on the doctrine of God also refrain from speaking about this important attribute but on the doctrine of creation, or the incarnation, or the kenosis only let their readers know that they accept mutability in God (Ebrard, Hofmann, Thomasius, von Oettingen, et al.).

Nevertheless, the doctrine of God's immutability is highly significant for religion. The difference between the Creator and the creature hinges on the contrast between being and becoming. All

that is creaturely is in process of becoming. It is changeable, constantly striving, in search of rest and satisfaction, and finds this rest only in him who is pure being without becoming. This is why, in Scripture, God is so often called the Rock (Deut. 32:4, 15, 18, 30, 31, 37; 1 Sam. 2:2; 2 Sam. 22:3, 32; Ps. 19:14; 31:3; 62:2, 7; 73:26; etc.). We humans can rely on him; he does not change in his being, knowing, or willing. He eternally remains who he is. Every change is foreign to God. In him there is no change in time, for he is eternal; nor in location, for he is omnipresent; nor in essence, for he is pure being. Christian theology frequently also expressed this last point in the term “pure actuality” (*purus actua*). Aristotle thus conceived God’s being as the “primary form” (reality) without any change (*δυναμις*), as absolute actuality (*ἐνεργεια*). Scholasticism, accordingly, began to speak of God as “utterly pure and simple actuality” to indicate that he is perfect and absolute being without any capability (*potentia*) for nonbeing or for being different. Boethius states, for example, that God does not change in essence “because he is pure actuality.”³² For that reason, too, the expression “*causa sui*” (his own cause) was avoided with reference to God.

The idea of the absolute becoming was first clearly voiced by Heraclitus and subsequently recurs again and again in philosophy. Plotinus more than anyone else made use of this concept, applying it not only to matter but also to that which he held to be absolute being. He taught that God had brought forth his own being—that he was active before he existed.³³ Granted, Christian theology indeed spoke of God as “a being who exists of himself” and hence of his aseity. Lactantius, Synesius, and Jerome, moreover, used the expression “*causa sui*” (his own cause). Jerome wrote: “The God who always is does not have any other beginning; he is his own origin and the cause of his own substantiation, nor can any other thing be imagined to exist that stands on its own.”³⁴ But this expression was always understood to mean that, while God existed of himself, he had not become or been brought forth by himself.³⁵

Descartes later accorded primacy to the will of God over his intellect and made the essence of all things depend on that will; he indeed made God’s existence the product of his own will. Said he: “God in truth preserves himself.” God is his own cause and derives from himself—not in a negative but in a positive sense. “God is the efficient cause of his own existence.” He derives his being “from the real immensity of his own power.”³⁶ Hearing these things said by him, a few of his followers did adopt this expression (*causa sui*), but Reformed theologians wanted the expressions (“his own cause,” “self-derived existence”) interpreted exclusively in a purely negative sense.³⁷ Being “one’s own cause” in a positive sense is an impossibility because in that case the self same object is at one and the same time said to exist, insofar as it produces itself, and not to exist, insofar as it is being produced. Now it is not hard to understand why monistic philosophy should resort to this idea of absolute becoming in order to furnish at least a semblance of an interpretation of reality. But Herbart rightly subjected this idea to sharp criticism, and his adherents³⁸ have not without reason expressed their amazement at the fact that this idea should be so well received in speculative theology. Indeed, the idea of becoming predicated of the divine being is of no help whatever in theology. Not only does Scripture testify that in God there is no variation nor shadow due to change [James 1:17], but reflection on this matter also leads to the same conclusion.

Becoming presupposes a cause, for there is no becoming without a cause. But being in an absolute sense no longer permits the inquiry concerning a cause. Absolute being is because it is. The idea of God itself implies immutability. Neither increase nor diminution is conceivable with respect to God. He cannot change for better or worse, for he is the absolute, the complete, the true being. Becoming is an attribute of creatures, a form of change in space and time. But God is who he is, eternally transcendent over space and time and far exalted above every creature. He rests within himself and is for that very reason the ultimate goal and resting place of all creatures, the Rock of their salvation, whose work is complete. Those who predicate any change whatsoever of God, whether with respect to his essence, knowledge, or will, diminish all his attributes: independence, simplicity, eternity, omniscience, and omnipotence. This robs God of his divine nature, and religion of its firm foundation and assured comfort.³⁹

This immutability, however, should not be confused with monotonous sameness or rigid immobility. Scripture itself leads us in describing God in the most manifold relations to all his creatures. While immutable in himself, he nevertheless, as it were, lives the life of his creatures and participates in all their changing states. Scripture necessarily speaks of God in anthropomorphic language. Yet, however anthropomorphic its language, it at the same time prohibits us from positing any change in God himself. There is change around, about, and outside of him, and there is change in people's relations to him, but there is no change in God himself. In fact, God's incomprehensible greatness and, by implication, the glory of the Christian confession are precisely that God, though immutable in himself, can call mutable creatures into being. Though eternal in himself, God can nevertheless enter into time and, though immeasurable in himself, he can fill every cubic inch of space with his presence. In other words, though he himself is absolute being, God can give to transient beings a distinct existence of their own. In God's eternity there exists not a moment of time; in his immensity there is not a speck of space; in his being there is no sign of becoming. Conversely, it is God who posits the creature, eternity which posits time, immensity which posits space, being which posits becoming, immutability which posits change. There is nothing intermediate between these two classes of categories: a deep chasm separates God's being from that of all creatures. It is a mark of God's greatness that he can condescend to the level of his creatures and that, though transcendent, he can dwell immanently in all created beings. Without losing himself, God can give himself, and, while absolutely maintaining his immutability, he can enter into an infinite number of relations to his creatures.

Various examples have been employed to illustrate this truth. The sun itself does not change, whether it scorches or warms, hurts or animates (Augustine). A coin remains a coin whether called a price or a pledge (*idem*). A pillar remains unchanged whether a person sees it on her right or on her left (Thomas). An artist does not change when he gives shape to his inner vision in words or in tone, in voice or in color, nor does a scholar when he puts down his ideas in a book. None of these comparisons is perfect, but they do suggest how a thing may change in its relations while remaining the same in essence. This is especially true of God since he, the immutable One, is himself the sole cause of all that changes. We should not picture God as putting himself in any

relation to any creature of his as though it could even in any way exist without him. Rather, he himself puts all things in those relations to himself, which he eternally and immutably wills—precisely in the way in which and at the time at which these relations occur. There is absolutely no “before” or “after” in God; these words apply only to things that did not exist before, but do exist afterward.⁴⁰ It is God’s immutable being itself that calls into being and onto the stage before him the mutable beings who possess an order and law that is uniquely their own.

Infinity

[194] When applied to time, God’s immutability is called eternity; when applied to space, it is called omnipresence. From time to time the two have been included under the umbrella term of “divine infinity.” As such the term “infinity,” however, is ambiguous. In the first place, it can be used negatively in the sense of “endless.” A thing is called endless when in fact it has no end though conceivably it could have. In philosophy the term has often been applied to God in that sense. Neoplatonism, for example, viewed God in that sense as being without boundary and form, totally indeterminate, boundless, an overflowing fullness from which the universe emanated.⁴¹ Similarly, the Kabbalah spoke of God as the boundless one (אין סוף), without limit and form, who in the ten sephiroth created intermediate forms between the infinite and the finite.⁴² Later, Spinoza’s philosophy won acceptance for this concept of God’s infinity. Spinoza’s “substance,” that is, God, is not a being distinct from the world; rather, it is that which constitutes the basic stuff in creatures and hence is automatically infinite, absolutely undetermined being. All determination, accordingly, is negation, deprivation, a lack of existence. God, however, transcends all limitation and definition. He is nondetermined substance. Extension is one of his attributes.⁴³ In Hegel this concept of infinity again acquires another meaning because he conceives of Spinoza’s substance, not as eternal and immutable being, but as absolute becoming. Hence, God was called infinite because he could become anything and everything, somewhat like “the infinite” (ἄπειρον) in Anaximander’s system, which, though itself indeterminate, could produce all sorts of things.

The error of this view is that it takes the lowest common denominator the intellect can obtain from finite things by abstraction and equates this abstraction with the infinite. It was precisely the goal of the philosophy of identity to derive the particular from the general, the specific from the nonspecific, the finite from the infinite, by process thinking. God as such is infinite potentiality; he then becomes finite, personal, conscious, determinate in the creatures, which are his self-manifestation. But this view is untenable. Infinity is not a negative but a positive concept; it means, not that God has no distinct being of his own, but that he is not limited by anything finite and creaturely. Of course, such a denial of creaturely limitation can be variously construed. If one means that God cannot be confined by time, his infinity coincides with his eternity. If one means that God cannot be confined by space, then his infinity coincides with his omnipresence. This in fact is how God’s infinity is often defined.⁴⁴ But infinity can also be construed in the sense that God is unlimited in his virtues, that in him every virtue is present in an absolute degree. In

that case infinity amounts to perfection.⁴⁵ But then even this attribute of divine infinity has to be properly understood. This divine infinity is not an infinity of magnitude—in the sense in which people sometimes speak of the infinite or boundless dimensions of the spatial universe—for God is incorporeal and has no extension. Neither is it an infinity of number—as in mathematics we speak of something as being infinitesimally small or infinitely large—for this would conflict with God’s oneness and simplicity. But it is an “infinity of essence.” God is infinite in his characteristic essence, absolutely perfect, infinite in an intensive, qualitative, and positive sense. So understood, however, God’s infinity is synonymous with perfection and does not have to be treated separately.

Eternity

Infinity in the sense of not being determined by time is the eternity of God. Scripture nowhere speaks of a beginning of or an end to God’s existence. Though he is often most vividly pictured as entering into time, he still transcends it. He is the first and the last (Isa. 41:4; Rev. 1:8), who existed before the world was (Gen. 1:1; John 1:1; 17:5, 24) and who continues despite all change (Ps. 102:27–28). He is God from eternity to eternity (Ps. 90:2; 93:2). The number of his years is unsearchable (Job 36:26). A thousand years in his sight are as brief as yesterday is to our mind (Ps. 90:4; 2 Pet. 3:8). He is the everlasting God (Isa. 40:28; Rom. 16:26), who inhabits eternity (Isa. 57:15), lives forever and ever (Deut. 32:40; Rev. 10:6; 15:7), swears by his life (Num. 14:21, 28), is called “the living and enduring God” (1 Pet. 1:23), the immortal God (Rom. 1:23; 1 Tim. 6:16), who is and who was and who is to come (Exod. 3:14; Rev. 1:4, 8). Here too, to be sure, Scripture speaks of God in human fashion, and of eternity in the forms of time. At the same time it clearly indicates that God transcends time and cannot be measured or defined by the standards of time. The Deism of past and present, however, defines eternity as time infinitely extended in both directions. According to it, the difference between time and eternity is merely quantitative, not qualitative; gradual, not essential. The difference is not that eternity excludes the succession of moments but that it is without beginning and end. The past, present, and future exist not only for humans but also for and in God. So taught the Socinians⁴⁶ and many people after them.⁴⁷ Pantheism, on the other hand, similarly confused eternity and time. According to it, God and the world are related as “nature begetting” (*natura naturans*) and “nature begotten” (*natura naturata*).⁴⁸ Eternity, says pantheism, is not essentially distinct from time but rather the “substance,” the immanent cause of time, while time is the “mode,” the “accident” of eternity, as waves are the incidental forms in which the ocean appears to us. God himself is pulled down into the stream of time and only comes to full relation in time.⁴⁹ Strauss voiced this view clearly: “Eternity and time relate to each other as substance and its accidents,”⁵⁰ while Schleiermacher cautiously defined God’s eternity as “God’s absolutely timeless causality, which conditions all that is temporal and even time itself.”

Also, with respect to this perfection of God, Christian theology must avoid the errors of both Deism and pantheism. It is of course true that one distinction between eternity and time is that the latter has a beginning and an end (at least potentially) and the former does not. But this does

not exhaust the difference between them. The marks of the concept of eternity are three: it excludes a beginning, an end, and the succession of moments. God is unbegotten (ἀγεννητος) and incorruptible (ἀφθαρτος) but also immutable.⁵¹ Between eternity and time there is a distinction not only in quantity and degree but also in quality and essence. Even though he thought he could conceive of motion in a world without any beginning, Aristotle already commented that though time is not synonymous with motion, it is most intimately connected with it, with “becoming,” that is, with the transition from the potential to the actual. Augustine expressed this somewhat differently by saying that time exists only where the present becomes past and the future becomes present.

“What, then, is time? If no one asks me, I know; if I want to explain it to someone who asks me, I do not know. I can state with confidence, however, that this much I do know: if nothing passed away, there would be no past time; if there was nothing still on its way, there would be no future time; and if nothing existed, there would be no present time.”⁵² Time is not a separate substance, a real something, but a mode of existence. If there were no creatures, there would be no time. “Time began with the creature” is a truer statement than that which says, “The creature began with time.”⁵³ On the other hand, time is also not merely a subjective form of observation either, as Kant thought.⁵⁴ Admittedly, there is an element of truth here, too, and Augustine reasoned that for humans to measure and compute time, a thinking mind is required—a mind that retains the past by recollection, exists in the present, and expects the future, and to that extent measures the times within itself.⁵⁵ But in saying this, Augustine did not imply that there would be no measurable and divisible movement of things if there were no thinking mind that counted and measured it. A distinction needs to be made, however, between extrinsic and intrinsic time. By extrinsic time we mean the standard by which we measure motion. In a sense this is accidental and arbitrary. We derive it from the motion of the heavenly bodies, which is constant and universally known (Gen. 1:14ff.). Time in this sense will one day cease (Rev. 10:6; 21:23ff.). But intrinsic time is something else. It is the mode of existence by virtue of which things have a past, present, and future as so many parts which, whatever the standard employed, can be measured and counted. Now whatever can be measured and counted is subject to measure and number and thus limited, for there always remains a measure and a number greater than that which was measured and numbered.

Accordingly, the essential nature of time is not that either with respect to the earlier or the later it is finite or endless, but that it encompasses a succession of moments, that there is in it a period that is past, a period that is present, and a period that comes later. But from this it follows that time—intrinsic time—is the mode of existence that is characteristic of all created and finite beings. One who says “time” says motion, change, measurability, computability, limitation, finiteness, creature. Time is the duration of creaturely existence. “Time is the measure of motion in a movable object.” Hence, there can be no time in God. From eternity to eternity he is who he is. There is in him “no variation or shadow due to change” [James 1:17]. God is not a process of becoming but an eternal being. He is without beginning and end, but also knows no earlier and

later. He can neither be subjected to measuring or counting in his duration. A thousand years are to him as a day. He is the eternal I AM (John 8:58). God's eternity, accordingly, should be thought rather as an eternal present without past or future. "To God all things are present. Your today is eternity. Eternity itself is the substance of God, which has in it nothing that is changeable."⁵⁶ Concerning God's eternity Boethius stated that "God comprehends and at the same time possesses a complete fullness of endless life."⁵⁷ And Thomas described this eternity "as a complete and at the same time a full possession of endless life."⁵⁸ And so speak all the theologians, not only the Roman Catholic but the Lutheran and the Reformed as well.⁵⁹

Nevertheless, God's eternity should not for that reason be conceived as an eternally static, immobile moment of time. On the contrary: it is identical with God's being and hence with his fullness of being. Not only is God eternal; he is his own eternity.⁶⁰ A true analogy of it is not the contentless existence of a person for whom, as a result of idleness or boredom, grief or fear, the minutes seem like hours and the days do not go but creep. The analogy lies rather in the abundant and exuberant life of the cheerful laborer, for whom time barely exists and days fly by. From this perspective there is truth in the assertion that in hell there is no eternity but only time, and that the more a creature resembles God and is his image, the more he or she will rise above the imperfections of time and approach eternity.⁶¹ Hence, God's eternity does not stand, abstract and transcendent, above time, but is present and immanent in every moment of time. There is indeed an essential difference between eternity and time, but there is also an analogy and kinship between them so that the former can indwell and work in the latter. Time is a concomitant of created existence. It is not self-originated. Eternal time, a time without beginning, is not conceivable. God, the eternal One, is the only absolute cause of time. In and by itself time cannot exist or endure: it is a continuous becoming and must rest in immutable being. It is God who by his eternal power sustains time, both in its entirety and in each separate moment of it. God pervades time and every moment of time with his eternity. In every second throbs the heartbeat of eternity. Hence, God maintains a definite relation to time, entering into it with his eternity. Also, for him time is objective. In his eternal consciousness he knows time as a whole as well as the succession of all its moments. But this fact does not make him temporal, that is, subject to time, measure, or number. He remains eternal and inhabits eternity, but uses time with a view to manifesting his eternal thoughts and perfections. He makes time subservient to eternity and thus proves himself to be the King of the ages (1 Tim. 1:17).

Omnipresence

[195] Infinity in the sense of not being confined by space is synonymous with God's omnipresence. This attribute too is most vividly represented in Scripture. God is the creator, and all that exists is and remains his in an absolute sense. He is the Lord, the possessor of heaven and earth (Gen. 14:19, 22 kjv; Deut. 10:14), exalted above all creatures, also above all space. Heaven and earth cannot contain him, how much less an earthly temple (1 Kings 8:27; 2 Chron. 2:6; Isa. 66:1; Acts

7:48), but neither is he excluded from space. He fills heaven and earth [with his presence]. No one can hide from him. He is a God at hand no less than a God from afar (Jer. 23:23, 24; Ps. 139:7–10; Acts 17:27). In him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). In the different places of his creation he is even present to a different degree and in a different manner. All of Scripture assumes that heaven, though also created, has in a special sense been God's dwelling and throne from the first moment of its existence (Deut. 26:15; 2 Sam. 22:7; 1 Kings 8:32; Ps. 11:4; 33:13; 115:3, 16; Isa. 63:15; Matt. 5:34; 6:9; John 14:2; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:3; Rev. 4:1ff.; etc.). But from there he also comes down to earth (Gen. 11:5, 7; 18:21; Exod. 3:8), walks in the garden (Gen. 3:8), appears repeatedly and at various locations (Gen. 12, 15, 18, 19, etc.), and comes down to his people especially on Mt. Sinai (Exod. 19:9, 11, 18, 20; Deut. 33:2; Judg. 5:4). Whereas he allowed the Gentiles to walk in their own ways (Acts 14:16), he dwells in a special way among his people Israel (Exod. 19:6; 25:8; Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 26:19; Jer. 11:4; Ezek. 11:20; 37:27), in the land Canaan (Judg. 11:24; 1 Sam. 26:19; 2 Sam. 14:16; 2 Kings 1:3, 16; 5:17), in Jerusalem (Exod. 20:24; Deut. 12:11; 14:23, etc.; 2 Kings 21:7; 1 Chron. 23:25; 2 Chron. 6:6; Ezra 1:3; 5:16; 7:15; Ps. 135:21; Isa. 24:23; Jer. 3:17; Joel 3:16, etc.; Matt. 5:34; Rev. 21:10); in the tabernacle and in the temple on Zion, which is called his house (Exod. 40:34–35; 1 Kings 8:10; 2 Kings 11:10, 13; 2 Chron. 5:14; Ps. 9:11; Isa. 8:18; Matt. 23:21), and above the ark between the cherubim (1 Sam. 4:4; 2 Sam. 6:2; 2 Kings 19:15; 1 Chron. 13:6; Ps. 80:1; 99:1; Isa. 37:16). Again and again, however, the prophets warn against a complacent and carnal trust in this dwelling of God in the midst of Israel (Isa. 48:1–2; Jer. 3:16; 7:4, 14; 27:16). For the Lord is far from the wicked (Ps. 11:5; 37:9f.; 50:16f.; 145:20) but the upright will behold his face (Ps. 11:7). He dwells with those who are of a contrite and humble spirit (Isa. 57:15; Ps. 51:17–19). When Israel forsakes him, he comes to them again in Christ, in whom the fullness of the deity dwells bodily (Col. 2:9). Through him and through the Spirit whom he sends, he dwells in the church as his temple (John 14:23; Rom. 8:9, 11; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; Eph. 2:21; 3:17), until one day he will dwell with his people and be everything to everyone (1 Cor. 15:28; Rev. 21:3).

In polytheism, Gnosticism, and Manichaeism this omnipresence of God could not be acknowledged. But even in the Christian church there were many who, though willing to recognize the omnipresence of God's power, wanted nothing to do with the omnipresence of his being. The Anthropomorphites could not conceive of God without a definite form and location. In order to safeguard God from being commingled with material substance and the impurity of the world, some church fathers went so far in their opposition to the Stoics as to assert that God was "far removed as to being but as near as possible in power,"⁶² that he dwelt in heaven as the human mind does in the head.⁶³ Yet in saying this these authors do not deny the essential presence of God in every place. Not until later was God's omnipresence definitely denied and opposed by Augustine Steuchus, bishop of Eugubium (d. 1550), in his commentary on Psalm 138, and also by Crell, who while accepting an "operative omnipresence," denied God's "essential omnipresence," restricting the latter to heaven.⁶⁴

Remonstrantism expressed itself cautiously on this issue, described the question as one of little significance, and as in the case of God's eternity, tended to refrain from taking a definite stand.⁶⁵

Coccejus, too, was accused of limiting the omnipresence of God exclusively to “the most efficacious will of God by which he sustains and governs all things,” a charge against which he defended himself in letters to Anslar and Alting.⁶⁶ The Cartesians asserted that God was omnipresent not by the extension of his being, but by a simple act of his mind or a powerful deed of his will, acts that were one with his being, and denied that the idea of “location” could be attributed to God.⁶⁷ Rationalism went even further, confining God’s essential presence to heaven and separating it deistically from the world.⁶⁸ Deism arrived at this restriction of the omnipresence of God out of fear of the pantheistic error of identifying God with the world and of polluting the divine being with the moral and material impurity of created things. And indeed, that fear is not unfounded. The Stoics already taught that the deity—like fire, ether, air, or breath—permeates all things, also those that are filthy and ugly.⁶⁹ Spinoza spoke of substance as corporeal, described God as an “extended thing,” and taught a presence of God that coincides with the being of the world.⁷⁰ In Hegel God’s omnipresence is identical with his absolute substantiality.⁷¹ In line with this view is Schleiermacher’s description of the omnipresence of God as “the absolutely spaceless causality of God, which conditions not only all that is spatial but space itself as well.”⁷² In the same way Biedermann writes that the pure “being-in-itself of God” is the very opposite of all spatiality and to that extent transcendent, but that as ground of the universe God is immanent in it, and that this Ground-of-being (*Grundsein*) is God’s very own being.⁷³

Here again, Christian theology avoided both Deism and pantheism. This is not surprising since Scripture clearly teaches that God transcends space and location and cannot be determined or confined by them (1 Kings 8:27; 2 Chron. 2:6; Jer. 23:24). Even where Scripture speaks in human terms and—with a view to giving us an image of God’s being—as it were, infinitely enlarges space (Isa. 66:1; Ps. 139:7; Amos 9:2; Acts 17:24), the underlying idea is still that God transcends all spatial boundaries. Accordingly, just as there is an essential difference between eternity and time, so also between God’s immensity and space. Aristotle defined space or location as “the immovable boundary of an enclosing entity.”⁷⁴ This definition, however, proceeds from a conception of space that is too external in character. Space, to be sure, is the distance of a certain object from other fixed points. But if we were to imagine just one simple object, even then space and location would pertain to it on account of its relation to imaginary points we could assume in our mind. Hence space and location are attributes of all finite beings. It is implied as such in whatever is finite. Whatever is finite exists in space. Its limited character carries with it the concept of a “somewhere.” It is always somewhere and not at the same time somewhere else. Regardless of all measurable distance from other points (extrinsic location), an intrinsic location is characteristic of all creatures, not excepting even spiritual beings. In another dispensation distances may be totally different from those we know here on earth, just as steam and electricity have already greatly altered our ideas of distance. Yet a limited and local existence will nevertheless always be characteristic for all creatures.

Space, accordingly, is not a form of perception (Kant), but a mode of existence characteristic of all created beings. Even less true is the idea that space is a form of external perception, while time is a form of internal perception, so that the idea of space would apply only to the physical universe, and that of time only to the spiritual or intellectual world. On the contrary, both time and space are internal modes of existence characteristic of all finite beings. From this it follows, however, that neither space nor time can be predicated of God, the infinite One. He transcends all space and location. Philo and Plotinus already spoke along these lines,⁷⁵ and Christian theology likewise stated that God “contains all things and he alone is uncontained.”⁷⁶ In his Manichaean days Augustine believed that, like a fine ether, God was spread throughout endless space in every direction.⁷⁷ But later he learned to see things differently. God transcends all space and location. He is not “somewhere,” yet he fills heaven and earth. He is not spread throughout space, like light and air, but is present with his whole being in all places: “whole and entire in every place but confined to none.”⁷⁸ There is no place or space that contains him; hence, instead of saying that he is in all things, it would be better to say that all things are in him. Yet this is not to be understood to mean that he is the space in which things are located, for he is not a place. Just as the soul in its entirety is present in the body as a whole and in every part of it, and just as one and the same truth is acknowledged everywhere, so also, by way of analogy, God is in all things and all things are in God.⁷⁹ And these thoughts of Augustine surface again later in the works of the scholastics.⁸⁰ Catholic and Protestant theologians have not added anything essentially new.⁸¹

Of course, neither space nor location can be predicated of God. Space is a form of existence characteristic of finite beings. Immensity pertains to God alone and not to any creature, not even to the human nature of Christ. Implied in it, first of all, is that God infinitely transcends all space and location. “God is uniquely a place of his own to himself.”⁸² “Within his very self he is wholly everywhere.” In that sense it can be equally well said of God that he is nowhere and somewhere (Philo, Plotinus), for the idea of a specific location does not apply to him. The term omnipresence, however, does not in the first place express this being of God within himself, but especially denotes the specific relation of God to the space that was created along with the world. Here, too, of course, we can only speak of God in creational terms. Scripture even refers to God’s going, coming, walking, and coming down. It employs human language, the kind of language to which we too are bound. “To discover where he is, is hard; to discover where he is not, is even harder.”⁸³ It is therefore a good thing in connection with each attribute to remind ourselves that we are speaking of God in human terms.⁸⁴ It is precisely the realization that God cannot be measured by time or space—even if this is purely negative—that keeps us from depriving God of his transcendence over all creatures. Again, in the negation lies a strong affirmation. God’s relation to space cannot consist in the notion that he is in space and is enclosed by it, in the manner in which, in Greek mythology, Uranos and Chronos were powers over Zeus. For God is not a creature. “If he were confined to a particular place, he would not be God.”⁸⁵ He is neither a body extended throughout space and “circumscriptively” present in space, nor is he a finite created spirit permanently bound to a specific location, and therefore “definedly” present in space. Nor can the relation be such that space is within him and bounded by him as the larger unbounded space, as some in the past conceived of God when they called him “the spatial container (τοπος) of the

universe,” and Weisse speaks of infinite space as being immanent in God.⁸⁶ For in the nature of the case, space is a mode of existence that is characteristic of finite creatures and not of God, the infinite One. But the relation of God to space is such that as the infinite One, existing within himself, God fills to repletion every point of space and sustains it by his immensity.

To be avoided here, certainly, is the pantheism that reduces God’s being to the substance of things and thereby also makes the divine being spatial. Equally to be resisted, however, is the Deism that pictures God as omnipresent in power but not in essence and nature. Though God is essentially distinct from his creatures, he is not separate from them. For all parts of existence and every point of space require nothing less than the immensity of God for their existence. The deistic notion that God dwells in a specific place and from there governs all things by his omnipotence is at war with God’s nature. Actually, it negates all his attributes, his simplicity, his immutability, and his independence; it reduces God to a human and renders creation independent. God is present in his creation, but not like a king in his realm or a captain aboard his ship. His activity is not a form of remote control. As Gregory the Great put it, he is present in all things: “By his being, presence, and power God is internally, presently, and powerfully present here and everywhere.” His omnipresence is right at hand: in hell as well as in heaven, in the wicked as well as in the devout, in places of impurity and darkness as well as in the palaces of light. Because his being, though omnipresent, differs from that of creatures, he is not polluted by that impurity. Anselm, accordingly, stated that it is better to say that God is present side by side with time and space than that he is present in time and space.⁸⁷

Nevertheless, this does not alter the fact that in another sense God is present in his creatures in different ways. There is a difference between his physical and his ethical immanence. To suggest an analogy: people, too, may be physically very close to each other, yet miles apart in spirit and outlook (Matt. 24:40–41). The soul is present throughout the body and in all its parts, yet in each of them in a unique way, one way in the head and another in the heart, in the hands differently from in the feet.

“These things the one true God makes and does, but as the same God—that is, as he who is wholly everywhere, included in no space, bound by no chains, mutable in no part of his being, filling heaven and earth with omnipresent power, not with a needy nature. Therefore he governs all things in such a manner as to allow them to perform and exercise their own proper movements. For although they can be nothing without him, they are not what he is.”⁸⁸ God’s immanence is not an unconscious emanation but the conscious presence of his being in all creatures. For that reason that presence of God differs in accordance with the nature of those creatures. Certainly all creatures, even the tiniest and least significant, owe their origin and existence solely to God’s power, to nothing less than the being of God himself. God dwells in all his creatures, but not in all alike.⁸⁹ All things are indeed “in him” (in eo) but not necessarily “with him” (cum eo).⁹⁰ God does not dwell on earth as he does in heaven, in animals as in humans, in the inanimate as in the

animate creation, in the wicked as in the devout, in the church as he does in Christ. Creatures differ depending on the manner in which God indwells them. The nature of creatures is determined by their relation to God. Therefore, though all creatures reveal God, they do so in differing degrees and along different lines. “With the pure you show yourself pure; and with the wicked you show yourself perverse” (Ps. 18:26 nrsv). God dwells in all creatures through his being, but in no one other than Christ does the whole fullness of deity dwell bodily [Col. 2:9]. In Christ he dwells uniquely: by personal union. In created beings God dwells according to the measure of their being: in some in terms of nature, in others in terms of justice, in still others in terms of grace or of glory. There is endless diversity in order that all of them together might reveal the glory of God.

It is not much to our advantage to deny God’s omnipresence. He makes it felt in our heart and conscience. He is not far from any of us. What alone separates us from him is sin. It does not distance us from God locally but spiritually (Isa. 59:2). To abandon God, to flee from him, as Cain did, is not a matter of local separation but of spiritual incompatibility. “It is not by location but by incongruity that a person is far from God.”⁹¹ Conversely, going to God and seeking his face does not consist in making a pilgrimage but in self-abasement and repentance. Those who seek him, find him—not far away, but in their immediate presence. For in him we live and move and have our being. “To draw near to him is to become like him; to move away from him is to become unlike him.”⁹²

Do not think, then, that God is present in certain places. With you he is such as you have been. What is the sort of person which you have been? He is good, if you have been good; and he seems evil to you if you have been evil; a helper if you have been good, an avenger if you have been bad. There you have a judge in your own heart. When you want to do something bad, you withdraw from the public and hide in your house where no enemy may see you; from those parts of the house that are open and visible you remove yourself to go into your own private room. But even here in your private chamber you fear guilt from some other direction, so you withdraw into your heart and there you meditate. But he is even more deeply inward than your heart. Hence, no matter where you flee, he is there. You would flee from yourself, would you? Will you not follow yourself wherever you flee? But since there is One even more deeply inward than yourself, there is no place where you may flee from an angered God except to a God who is pacified. There is absolutely no place for you to flee to. Do you want to flee from him? Rather flee to him.⁹³

Unity

[196] The last of the incommunicable attributes is God’s oneness, differentiated into the unity of singularity and the unity of simplicity. By the first we mean that there is but one divine being, that in virtue of the nature of that being God cannot be more than one being and, consequently, that

all other beings exist only from him, through him, and to him. Hence, this attribute teaches God's absolute oneness and uniqueness, his exclusive numerical oneness, in distinction from his simplicity, which denotes his inner or qualitative oneness. Scripture continually and emphatically proclaims this attribute and maintains it over against all polytheism. All agree that this is true of the New Testament and the later writings of the Old Testament. Many critics believe, however, that monotheism does not yet occur in the earlier parts of the Old Testament, and that especially as a result of the witness and activity of the prophets, it gradually developed from the earlier polytheism that was generally dominant also in Israel. But against this view so many objections are being raised that its untenability is becoming increasingly more apparent. It is clear that the prophets were not at all conscious of bringing to their people a new religion in the form of an ethical monotheism. On the contrary, they view themselves as standing on the same foundation as the people of Israel, the foundation of yhwh's election and covenant. They regard idolatry as apostasy, infidelity, and a breach of the covenant, and call the people back to the religion of yhwh, which they have willfully forsaken.

Furthermore, no one can tell us what Israel's actual religion was before the ethical monotheism of the prophets gained acceptance. Critics speak of animism, fetishism, totemism, ancestor worship, and polydaemonism, and are especially at a loss when it comes to the character of yhwh. According to one, he was a fire god akin to Molech; according to another, he was a storm god from Mt. Sinai; according to a third, a tribal deity who had already acquired certain ethical traits. And with respect to his origin, there is an even broader array of answers. Canaan and Phoenicia, Arabia and Syria, Babylon and Egypt have all had their turn as being the answer. However, quite apart from these divergent beliefs concerning Israel's earlier religious state, if under the influence of the prophets, polytheism developed into ethical monotheism, the manner in which this occurred should certainly be made somewhat clear. At this point, however, a new difficulty presents itself. The evolutionistic viewpoint, which underlies the position of the critics, naturally precludes the idea that ethical monotheism made its appearance as something entirely new, as an invention of the prophets. The principle at work here demands that the ethical monotheism of the prophets must have existed, at least in a primitive form, long before the time of the prophets.

So now the critics face a dilemma: They can refrain from providing further explanation [as to the rise of ethical monotheism], continue to be stumped by the sudden appearance of ethical monotheism in the writings of the prophets, hide behind the currently popular notion of "the mystery of personality," and join Wellhausen in saying: "Even if we were able to trace the development of Israel's religion more accurately, this would fundamentally explain very little. Why, for example, did not Chemosh of the Moabites become the God of righteousness and the Creator of heaven and earth? No one can give a satisfactory answer to that question."⁹⁴ In fact, the promise and prospect of a satisfactory answer had been repeatedly held out as a result of the new critical method. Many others, accordingly, regarding this position unacceptable, resorted to the second alternative: they are prepared to concede that monotheism existed long before the prophets—in the time of Abraham and in the case of Moses. They explain this in light of the

influence of the religions surrounding Israel, in light of the “tendencies converging toward monarchy in the world of the gods,” tendencies that can already be discerned in Syria, Palestine, and Canaan, at least among the “intellectual elite,” or in light of the “monotheizing ideas” that penetrated Canaan from Babylonia and perhaps also from Egypt.⁹⁵ So, by way of a history-of-religions approach, the theory arises that from very ancient times polytheism rested on a more or less conscious monotheism, somewhat analogously to the way in which, according to Haeckel, the origin of life needs no explanation because it is nothing new, but something in principle inherent already in the inorganic world and in fact in all atoms.

Thus scholars shift from one extreme position to another. Nevertheless, the latter view has an advantage over the former: it is not compelled by a principle—by a preconceived idea of development—either to deny the presence of monotheism in the earlier parts of the Old Testament or for that reason to shift it to a much later time. Indeed, Scripture is monotheistic—not only in its later, but also in its earlier parts. Though yhw’s interaction with humans is described in very dramatic, graphic, and anthropomorphic language, yhw is nevertheless the Creator of heaven and earth, the Maker of humankind, the Judge of all the earth. He destroys the human race in the flood, is present and active in all parts of the world, divides humankind over the earth, and by calling Abraham prepares for his election of Israel.⁹⁶ Even though there is certainly a kind of progression in revelation and development in its ideas, the entire Old Testament, with its teaching of the unity of the world and of the human race, the election of, and covenant with, Israel, and its teaching of the religion and morality described in the law, is based from beginning to end on the oneness of God. yhw is the Creator of the world (Gen. 1 and 2), the Owner and Judge of the whole earth (Gen. 14:19, 22; 18:25), the only Lord (Deut. 6:4), who will tolerate no other gods before him (Exod. 20:3). Besides him there is no other god (Deut. 4:35; 32:39; Ps. 18:31; 83:18; Isa. 43:10; 44:6; 45:5ff.; etc.), and the gods of the Gentiles are idols, nongods, dead gods, lies and deception, not Elohim but elilim [worthless gods] (Deut. 32:21; Ps. 96:5–6; Isa. 41:29; 44:9, 20; Jer. 2:5, 11; 10:15; 16:19; 51:17–18; Dan. 5:23; Hab. 2:18–19; etc.) and insofar as real powers are worshiped as idols, they are considered demonic (Ps. 106:37; 1 Cor. 10:20). In the New Testament this singularity of God becomes even clearer in the person of Christ (John 17:3; Acts 17:24; Rom. 3:30; 1 Cor. 8:5–6; Eph. 4:5–6; 1 Tim. 2:5).

With this confession of the only true God the Christian church made its debut in the Gentile world. Though in that world official religion had in many cases become a target of ridicule for the intellectual elite, polytheism was still enormously influential in the political and social life of the people and continued to be so also in the worldview of those who took a philosophical position or sought to elevate themselves above popular religion by adopting some kind of religious syncretism. Hence, from the very beginning the Christian church saw itself involved in a serious conflict, and in waging this battle its spokesmen employed not only defensive but also offensive means. Feeling strong in their confessional position, Christian thinkers proved the uniqueness of God not only by appealing to Scripture but also by deriving arguments for the truth they proclaimed from every domain of human knowledge. They appealed to the witness of the human

soul, to pronouncements made by many Gentile philosophers and poets, to the unity of the world and the human race, to the unitary nature of truth and morality, to the nature of the divine being, which tolerates no equals. And along with polytheism they attacked all things directly or indirectly connected with it: demonism and superstition, mantic and magic, the deification of humans and emperor worship, the theaters and the games.⁹⁷ In this mighty, centuries-long struggle polytheism was overcome and deprived both religiously and scientifically of all its power. However, this does not alter the fact that polytheistic ideas and practices survived in various forms, repeatedly found fresh acceptance, and especially in modern times powerfully reasserted themselves. When the confession of the one true God weakens and is denied, and the unity sought in pantheism eventually satisfies neither the intellect nor the heart, the unity of the world and of humankind, of religion, morality, and truth can no longer be maintained. Nature and history fall apart in fragments, and along with consciously or unconsciously fostered polytheistic tendencies, every form of superstition and idolatry makes a comeback. Modernity offers abundant proof for this state of affairs, and for that reason the confession of the oneness of God is of even greater significance today than it was in earlier times.⁹⁸

Simplicity

[197] The oneness of God does not only consist in a unity of singularity, however, but also in a unity of simplicity. The fact of the matter is that Scripture, to denote the fullness of the life of God, uses not only adjectives but also substantives: it tells us not only that God is truthful, righteous, living, illuminating, loving, and wise, but also that he is the truth, righteousness, life, light, love, and wisdom (Jer. 10:10; 23:6; John 1:4–5, 9; 14:6; 1 Cor. 1:30; 1 John 1:5; 4:8). Hence, on account of its absolute perfection, every attribute of God is identical with his essence.

Theology later taught this doctrine of Scripture under the term “the simplicity of God.” Irenaeus calls God “all thought, all perception, all eye, all hearing, the one fountain of all good things.”⁹⁹ Over against Eunomius the three Cappadocians were forced especially to defend the correctness of the different divine names and attributes, but Augustine again and again reverted to the simplicity of God. God, said he, is pure essence without accidents. Compared to him, all created being is nonbeing.¹⁰⁰ In the realm of creatures there are differences between existing, living, knowing, and willing; there are differences of degree among them. There are creatures that only exist; other creatures that also live; still others that also think. But in God everything is one. God is everything he possesses. He is his own wisdom, his own life; being and living coincide in him.¹⁰¹ After Augustine we find this teaching in John of Damascus,¹⁰² in the works of the scholastics,¹⁰³ and further in the thought of all Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed theologians.¹⁰⁴

Others, however, firmly rejected and criticized the doctrine of the simplicity of God. Eunomius, who did in fact teach the absolute simplicity of God, concluded from it that all the divine names

were merely sounds, and that the divine being coincided with his “nonbegottenness” (ἀγεννησία). This one attribute, he believed, made all the others superfluous and useless.¹⁰⁵ The Anthropomorphites of earlier and later date rejected the simplicity of God inasmuch as they ascribed a body to God. Arabian philosophers held to the simplicity of God but used it as a means of opposing the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, since according to them the three persons were simply “names added to the substance.”¹⁰⁶ Duns Scotus, who for that matter expressly taught the doctrine of God’s simplicity,¹⁰⁷ came into conflict with it insofar as he assumed that the attributes are formally distinct from each other as well as from the divine essence.¹⁰⁸ Nominalism, being even much more radical, held that there were realistic distinctions between the attributes among themselves. In the period of the Reformation this view was adopted by the Socinians. In the interest of assuring the independence of humans, they arrived at the idea of finitizing the divine being and as a result were at a loss to know what to do with God’s simplicity. Socinus questioned whether Scripture permits us to ascribe simplicity to God. The Catechism of Rakow totally omits this attribute. Schlichting, Volkelius (et al.) denied that the attributes coincide with God’s being and asserted that a fullness of attributes is not inconsistent with his oneness.¹⁰⁹ Vorstius, agreeing with this view and basing himself especially on the doctrine of the Trinity, stated that with reference to the divine being we must distinguish between matter and form, essence and attributes, genus and differentiae. Scripture, accordingly, reports that God swore “by his soul” (Jer. 51:14 MT) and that the Spirit is “within him” (1 Cor. 2:11). There is a difference, said Vorstius, between knowing and willing, between the subject that lives and the life by which the subject lives.¹¹⁰

The Remonstrants were of the same opinion. In the second chapter of their Confession they said that Scripture does not contain a single syllable about the simplicity of God, that it is a purely metaphysical doctrine and not at all necessary for Christians to believe. They especially raised the objection that the idea of the simplicity of God is incompatible with the freedom of his will and the changing character of his disposition. While Episcopius still listed the simplicity of God among the attributes and believed that the “relations, volitions, and free decrees” could be harmonized with it,¹¹¹ Limborch no longer mentioned it. In rationalistic works it was either completely relegated to the background or left undiscussed altogether.¹¹² Bretschneider writes that Scripture knows nothing of these philosophical subtleties.

Nor was pantheism able to recognize or appreciate the doctrine of God’s simplicity. It equated God with the world, while Spinoza, one of its exponents, even attributed to God the attribute of extension. Thus the attribute of God’s simplicity almost totally disappeared from modern theology. Its significance is no longer understood, and sometimes it is vigorously opposed. Schleiermacher refused to put the simplicity of God on a par with the other attributes, regarding it only as “the unseparated and inseparable mutual inherence of all divine attributes and activities.”¹¹³ In the works of Lange, Kahnis, Philippi, Ebrard, Lipsius, Biedermann, F. A. B. Nitzsch, Kaftan, von Oettingen, Haering, van Oosterzee (et al.), this attribute no longer occurs.

Others vigorously oppose it, especially on the following two grounds: it is a metaphysical abstraction and inconsistent with the doctrine of the Trinity.¹¹⁴

This simplicity is of great importance, nevertheless, for our understanding of God. It is not only taught in Scripture (where God is called “light,” “life,” and “love”) but also automatically follows from the idea of God and is necessarily implied in the other attributes. Simplicity here is the antonym of “compounded.” If God is composed of parts, like a body, or composed of genus (class) and differentiae (attributes of differing species belonging to the same genus), substance and accidents, matter and form, potentiality and actuality, essence and existence, then his perfection, oneness, independence, and immutability cannot be maintained. On that basis he is not the highest love, for then there is in him a subject who loves—which is one thing—as well as a love by which he loves—which is another. The same dualism would apply to all the other attributes. In that case God is not the One “than whom nothing better can be thought.” Instead, God is uniquely his own, having nothing above him. Accordingly, he is completely identical with the attributes of wisdom, grace, and love, and so on. He is absolutely perfect, the One “than whom nothing higher can be thought.”¹¹⁵

In the case of creatures all this is very different. In their case there is a difference between existing, being, living, knowing, willing, acting, and so on. “All that is compounded is created.” No creature can be completely simple, for every creature is finite. God, however, is infinite and all that is in him is infinite. All his attributes are divine, hence infinite and one with his being. For that reason he is and can only be all-sufficient, fully blessed, and glorious within himself.¹¹⁶ From this alone it is already evident that the simplicity of God is absolutely not a metaphysical abstraction. It is essentially distinct from the philosophical idea of absolute being, the One, the only One, the Absolute, or substance, terms by which Xenophanes, Plato, Philo, Plotinus, and later Spinoza and Hegel designated God. It is not found by abstraction, that is, by eliminating all the contrast and distinctions that characterize creatures and describing him as the being who transcends all such contrasts. On the contrary: God’s simplicity is the end result of ascribing to God all the perfections of creatures to the ultimate divine degree. By describing God as “utterly simple essence,” we state that he is the perfect and infinite fullness of being, an “unbounded ocean of being.” Far from fostering pantheism, as Bauer thinks,¹¹⁷ this doctrine of the “utterly simple essence of God” is diametrically opposed to it. For in pantheism God has no existence and life of his own apart from the world. In the thought of Hegel, for example, the Absolute, pure Being, Thought, Idea, does not exist before the creation of the world, but is only logically and potentially prior to the world. All the qualifications of the Absolute are devoid of content—nothing but abstract logical categories.¹¹⁸

In describing God as “utterly simple essence,” however, Christian theology above all maintains that God has a distinct and infinite life of his own within himself, even though it is true that we can only describe that divine being with creaturely names. Pantheistic philosophy’s Absolute,

Supreme Being, Substance—favorite names used for the divine being in this philosophy—are the result of abstraction. All qualifiers have been stripped from things until nothing is left but the lowest common denominator: pure being, unqualified existence. This “being” is indeed an abstraction, a concept for which there is no corresponding reality and which may not be further defined. Every further qualification would finitize it, make it into something particular, and hence destroy its generality. “All determination is negation.” But the being ascribed to God in theology is a unique, particular being distinct from that of the world. It describes God not as a being with which we cannot make any association other than that it is, but as someone who is all being, the absolute fullness of being. This simplicity of being does not exclude the many names ascribed to him, as Eunomius thought, but demands them. God is so abundantly rich that we can gain some idea of his richness only by the availability of many names. Every name refers to the same full divine being, but each time from a particular angle, the angle from which it reveals itself to us in his works. God is therefore simple in his multiplicity and manifold in his simplicity (Augustine). Hence, every qualification, every name, used with reference to God, so far from being a negation, is an enrichment of our knowledge of his being. “The divine essence is self-determined and is distinct from everything else in that nothing can be added to it.”¹¹⁹ Nor, taken in this sense, is this simplicity of God inconsistent with the doctrine of the Trinity, for the term “simple” is not used here as an antonym of “twofold” or “threefold” but of “composite.” Now, the divine being is not composed of three persons, nor is each person composed of the being and personal attributes of that person, but the one uncompounded (simple) being exists in three persons. Every person or personal attribute is not distinguishable in respect of essence but only in respect of reason. Every personal attribute is indeed a “real relation” but adds nothing real to the essence. The personal attributes “do not make up but only distinguish [the persons].”¹²⁰

1 John of Damascus, *The Orthodox Faith*, I, 6ff.; P. Lombard, *Sent.*, I, dist. 2ff.; Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, I, 2ff.; P. M. Vermigli, *Loci comm.*, 36ff.; F. H. R. Frank, *System der christlichen Wahrheit*, 2 vols. (Erlangen: A. Deichert, 1878–80), I, 151ff.; A. von Oettingen, *Lutherische Dogmatik* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1897–1902), II, 243ff.

2 Cf. J. C. Suicerus, *Thesaurus ecclesiasticus*, s.v. “*αὐταρκεια*.”

3 Bernard de Clairvaux, *De consideratione* (Utrecht: Nicolaus Ketelaer and Gerhardus Leempt, 1473), I, 5, ch. 6.

4 Anselm, *Monologion*, 6; P. Lombard, *Sent.*, I, dist. 8; T. Aquinas, *Summa theol.*, I, qu. 2, art. 3; I, qu. 13, art. 11; *idem*, *Summa contra gentiles*, I, 43.

5 T. Aquinas, *Summa theol.*, I, qu. 7; *idem*, *Summa contra gentiles*, I, 43.

6 Anselm, *Monologion*, 6.

7 Dionysius Petavius, “De Deo deque proprietabus,” in *De theologicis dogmatibus*, I, ch. 6; *Theologia Wirceburgensi*, III, 38ff.; G. Perrone, *Prael. theol.*, II, 88–90; J. B. Heinrich, *Dogmatische Theologie*, III, 326; G. Jansen, *Prael. theol.*, II, 26ff. A. Straub, in several articles on “Die Aseität Gottes,” *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 16–17 (1903–4), properly distinguishes, speaking of the divine essence as basic metaphysical being (*ens metaphysicum*) and aseity as the first attribute of that being.

8 J. Köstlin, *Luthers Theologie in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung und ihrem inneren Zusammenhange*, 2d ed., 2 vols. (Stuttgart: J. F. Steinkopf, 1901), II, 302ff.

9 H. F. F. Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. Charles A. Hay and Henry Jacobs, 5th ed. (Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publication House, 1899), §17.

10 A. Hyperius, *Methodi theologiae moralis*, 87, 135; Georg Sohn, *Opera sacrae theologiae*, II, 48; III, 261; Amandus Polanus, *Syn. theol.*, 135.

11 Peter van Mastricht, *Theologia*, II, 3; J. H. Heidegger, *Corpus theologiae christianae*, III, 30; S. Maresius, *Systema theologicum* (Groningen: Aemilium Spinnaker, 1673), 2, §17; Johannes á Marck, *Het Merch der christene Got-geleerheit* (Rotterdam: Nicolaas en Paulus Topyn, 1741), IV, §20; L. Meijer, *Verhandelingen over de goddelyke Wigenschappen*, 4 vols. (Groningen: Jacob Bolt, 1783), I, 39–110.

12 Ed. note: This translation adds to the niv (“shrewd”) the notion of Bavinck’s original *Statenvertaling*: *worstelaar* (wrestler).

13 Philolaus et al., according to E. Zeller, *Philosophie der Griechen*, 4th ed, I, 425, 488; II, 928. Ed. note: ET: *The Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics*, trans. Oswald J. Reichel (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962).

14 E. Zeller, *Philosophie der Griechen*, 4th ed., II, 359–65.

15 A. F. Dähne, *Geschichtliche Darstellung der jüdisch-alexandrinischen Religions-Philosophie*, 2 vols. (Halle: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1834), I, 118.

16 Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, IV, 11; Origen, *Contra Celsus*, I, 21; IV, 14.

17 Augustine, *Literal Meaning of Genesis*, VII, 11.

18 Idem, *On Grace and Free Will*, II, 6; idem, *On Christian Doctrine*, I, 9; idem, *Confessions*, VII, 4.

19 Idem, *The Trinity*, V, 2.

20 *Ibid.*, IV.

21 Idem, *Confessions*, XIII, 16.

22 Idem, *De ordine*, II, 17; idem, *City of God*, XII, 17.

23 John of Damascus, *The Orthodox Faith*, I, 8; Thomas, *Summa theologia*, I, qu. 9; P. Lombard, *Sent.*, I, dist. 8, 3; Bonaventure, *Sent.*, I, dist. 8, art. 2, qu. 1–2; D. Petavius, “*De Deo*,” in *Theol. dogm.*, III, chs. 1–2.

24 J. Gerhard, *Loci theol.*, II, c. 8, sect. 5; Jerome Zanchi(us), *Op. theol.*, II, 77–83; A. Polanus, *Syn. theol.*, II, c. 13; cf. Gallican Confession, art. 1; Belgic Confession, art. 1.

25 E. Zeller, *Philosophie der Griechen*, IV, 133ff., 430ff.

26 I. Dorner, *Gesammelte Schriften aus dem Gebiet der systematischen Theologie* (Berlin: W. Hertz, 1883), 278.

27 Richard Rothe, *Theologische Ethik*, 2d rev. ed., 5 vols. (Wittenberg: Zimmermann, 1867–71), §§16–38; H. L. Martensen, *Christian Dogmatics*, trans. W. Urwick (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1856), 94ff., 124ff.; cf. *idem*, *Christliche Ethik*, I, 90.

28 C. Luthardt, *Apologetische Vorträge über die Grundwahrheiten des Christenthums* (Leipzig: Dörffling & Franke, 1870), I, 45. Ed. note: ET: *Apologetic Lectures on the Truths of Christianity* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1870). Cf. J. Müller, *Die christliche Lehre von der Sünde* (Breslau: J. Max & Co., 1849), 171ff.; Ed. note: ET: *The Christian Doctrine of Sin*, trans. W. Urwick, 5th ed., 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1868).

29 I. A. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine*, trans. A. Cave and J. Banks, rev. ed., 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1888–91), I, 258–59; F. H. R. Frank, *System der christlichen Wahrheit*, I, 116.

30 I. A. Dorner, “Über die richtige Fassung des dogmatischen Begriffs der Unveränderlichkeit Gottes,” in *Gesammelte Schriften* (1883), 188–377.

31 C. H. Weisse, *Philosophische Dogmatik oder Philosophie des Christentums*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1855–62), I, 573; F. A. B. Nitzsch, *Lehrbuch der evangelische Dogmatik*, 3d ed. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1902), 365.

32 Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, III; T. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I, qu. 3.

33 C. A. Thilo, *Kurze pragmatische Geschichte der neueren Philosophie* (Cöthen: O. Schulze, 1874), 352ff.

34 Jerome, *Commentary on Ephesians*, in Ronald E. Heine, *The Commentaries of Origen and Jerome on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 156–59 (on Eph. 3:15).

35 H. Klee, *Katholische Dogmatik*, II, 43.

36 René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, in *Descartes’ Philosophical Writings*, selected and trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: MacMillan, 1952), 228–31 (“Meditation III”).

37 Frans Burmann, *Synopsis theologiae*, I, 15, 2; Leonardus Ryssen, *De oude rechtsinnige waerheit verdonkert* (Middleburgh: Benedictus Smidt, 1764); Maastricht, *Theoretico-practica theologia*, II, c. 3, §22; Bernhard de Moor, *Comm. in Marckii Comp.*, I, 590ff.

38 C. A. Thilo, *Die Wissenschaftlichkeit der modernen speculativen Theologie in ihren Principien* (Leipzig: Fleischer, 1851), 25; O. Flügel, *Die spekulativ Theologie in der Gegenwart* (Cöthen: O. Schulze, 1888), 201; idem, *Die Probleme der Philosophie und ihre Lösungen* (Cöthen: O. Schulze, 1888), 10; F. A. Trendelenburg, *Logische Untersuchungen* (Hindelsheim: Gg. Olms, 1870), II, 440.

39 Chr. Pesch, "Ist Gott die Ursache seiner selbst?" *Theologische Zeitfragen* (Freiburg: Herder, 1900), 133–67.

40 Augustine, *City of God*, XII, 17.

41 E. Zeller, *Philosophie der Griechen*, V, 485ff., 497.

42 Adolphe Franck, *The Kabbalah* (New York: Arno Press, 1973), 179.

43 Spinoza, *Ethics*, I, prop. 8.

44 A. Polanus, *Syn. theol.*, II, c. 10–11; J. Zanchi(us), *Op. theol.*, II, 90.

45 T. Aquinas, *Summa theol.*, I, qu. 7.

46 Faustus Socinus, *Praelectiones theologiae* (Racoviae: Sebastiani Sternacii, 1627), c. 8; J. Crell, *Liber deo ejusque attributis*, c. 18; *The Racovian Catechism*, trans. Thomas Rees (London, 1609; reprinted, London, 1818), qu. 60; O. Fock, *Der Socianismus*, 427ff.

47 F. V. Reinhard, *Grundriss der Dogmatik* (Munich: Seidel, 1802), 166; J. A. L. Wegschneider, *Institutiones theologiae christianae dogmaticae*, §63; I. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine*, I, 145ff.; idem, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 322.

48 Spinoza, *Ethics*, I, prop. 29.

49 Spinoza, *Cogitata metaphysica*, I, c. 4; II, c. 1; ed. note: ET: *The Principles of Descartes' Philosophy*, trans. Halbert Hains Britan (Chicago: Open Court, 1974). G. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* (1830; reprinted, Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1959), §§257ff.; ed. note: ET: *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, trans. Steven A. Taubeneck (New York: Continuum, 1990); E. von Hartmann, *Philosophie des Unbewussten*, 11th ed., I, 281ff.; A. E. Biedermann, *Christliche Dogmatik*, II, 518ff.

50 D. E. Strauss, *Die christliche Glaubenslehre*, 2 vols. (Tübingen: C. F. Osiander, 1840–41), I, 562.

51 D. Petavius, “De Deo,” in *Theol. dogm.*, III, ch. 3, §6.

52 Augustine, *Confessions*, XI, 14.

53 Idem, *Literal Meaning of Genesis*, V, 5; idem, *City of God*, XI, 6.

54 I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's; Toronto: MacMillan, 1965 [1929]), 76 (“Time”).

55 Augustine, *Confessions*, XI, 23–28; cf. the same idea, but developed and applied quite differently in Josiah Royce, *The Conception of Immortality* (London, 1906), 162ff.

56 Augustine, *Confessions*, XI, 10–13; *De vera religione*, c. 49.

57 Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, V.

58 T. Aquinas, *Summa theol.*, I, qu. 10, art. 1.

59 Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, I, 8; Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, NPNF (2), V, 33ff., I; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio in novam Dominicam*, 38, II; Pseudo-Dionysius, *On the Divine Names*, cn. 5, §4; Anselm, *Monologion*, c. 18–24; idem, *Proslogion*, c. 18; P. Lombard, *Sententiae*, I, dist. 8, 2; T. Aquinas, *Summa theol.*, I, qu. 10; D. Petavius, “De Deo,” in *Theol. dogm.*, III, chs. 3–6; J. Gerhard, *Loci thologici*, II, c. 8; J. Zanchi(us), *Op. theol.*, II, 73–77; H. Alting, *Theologia problematica*, loc. 3, probl. 20.

60 T. Aquinas, *Summa theol.*, I, qu. 10, art. 2.

61 T. Aquinas, *Summa theol.*, I, qu. 10, art. 3, ad. 3, arts. 4–5.

62 Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, II, c. 2.

63 Lactantius, *De opificio Dei* (Coloigne: Quentell, 1506), c. 16; *The Divine Institutes*, VIII, 3.

64 J. Crell, *Liber de Deo ejusque attributis*, c. 27.

65 S. Episcopius, *Institutiones theologiae*, IV, 2, 13; P. Limborch, *Theologia christiana*, II, 6.

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80 Anselm, *Monologion*, c. 20–23; P. Lombard, *Sent.*, I, dist. 36–37; T. Aquinas, *Summa theol.*, I, qu. 8; idem, *Summa contra gentiles*, III, 68; Bonaventure, *Sent.*, I, dist. 37.

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82 Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, c. 5; Theophilus, *To Autolytus*, II, 10; John of Damascus, *The Orthodox Faith*, I, 13.

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94 J. Wellhausen, *Die christliche Religion: Mit Einschluss der israelitisch-judischen Religion*, I, IV, 1, 15, in *Die Kultur der Gegenwart*, ed. Paul Hinneberg, 24 vols. (Berlin and Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1905–23). Cf. Nödelke, who would rather admit that “Israel was to him an enigma than explain this phenomenon by accepting a revelation” (in H. H. Kuyper, *Evolutie of revelatie* [Amsterdam: Höveker & Wormser, 1905], 67).

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