

CHAPTER I

THE BEING OF GOD

We have no intention of making labored and elaborate arguments for the existence of God. We start where the Bible starts. The Bible assumes the existence of God, and we assume that our readers will do the same. There are so many witnesses to His existence that the Bible makes no effort to prove it. There is the outer witness in nature. "*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork*" (Ps. 19:1). The voice of these witnesses has been heard in every language and in all places of the earth. It is true that in times past God "*Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways*" (Acts 14:16). "*Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness*" (Acts 14:17). His eternal power and Deity are clearly seen in the visible things He has created: "*For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:*" (Rom. 1:20).

There is also the inner witness of the human conscience. "*For when the Gentiles (heathen), which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;*" (Rom. 2:14,15). The voice of nature in creation and in conscience proclaims loudly the existence of the true and living and eternal God. And so, for all practical purposes, there is no necessity for proving the existence of God.

The Soul Feels God

A man once sought to ridicule the idea of God. He asked his Christian neighbor if he had ever seen God. The believer admitted he had not. He was then asked if he had ever heard God speak, or if he had ever tasted God, or if he had ever smelled God. The believer admitted that with the physical senses he had never apprehended God, and then shut the mouth of the atheist by asking him if he had ever told a lie. And when he confessed he had, he was further asked how he felt. He admitted that he had an uneasy or apprehensive feeling. Now this feeling was the testimony of conscience telling him there was a God, a moral Lawgiver, to whom he must give account. This is the meaning of conscience money and other things men do to ease their conscience and placate an offended Deity. Every man feels God whose conscience has not been seared or otherwise

tampered with. The atheist is the educated fool. There are no theoretical atheists among the heathen. There are no atheists among the demons; they believe and tremble: *"Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble"* (Jas. 2:19).

Sin Originated in the Affections

The Scriptures do not reason with the atheist, but rather reprove him. *"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good"* (Ps. 14:1). The error is not so much in the understanding as in the heart. The theoretical atheist (the man who denies the existence of God) has tampered with his mind until he has made it agree with his heart. It is a case of the wish being father to the thought. While there are comparatively few theoretical atheists, every man in his natural and fallen state is a practical atheist, he does not want the true God. The fool of Psalms fourteen and fifty-three is the typical fool; he represents every unregenerate man. In the context the plural is used: *"They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good"* (Psalm 14:1). *"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: there is none that doeth good"* (Psalm 53:1). Sin originated in the affections or desires, and the darkened understanding is one of the effects by way of Divine punishment. *"And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;"* (Rom. 1:28). The true God, when known, was not the God men wanted. *"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened"* (Rom. 1:21).

Moral Devolution

The true evolution, morally, takes sin into account, and is the development or unfolding of a human nature that hates the true God. It is moral devolution. The progress of sin is given *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own*

hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them" (Rom. 1:18-32).

First, men suppressed or held down the truth about God. They had the truth about God in the book of nature. His eternal power and Deity were clearly revealed in the things He had made, but men did not like this truth. They turned away from revelation and turned aside to their own reasonings. Second, they changed the truth about God into a lie, and made images or representations of God in the form of man and birds and beasts and creeping things. There was the Apollo of the Greeks, the eagle of the Romans, the bull of the Egyptians, and the serpent of the Assyrians. Men knew God and refused to worship Him, and idolatry followed as a psychological necessity. And third, idolatry was followed by sensuality. God gave them up to uncleanness and vile affections. He withdrew His restraining grace and suffered human nature to go its full length in immorality. The closing verses of Romans one reveal the terrible things men and women will do when given up by God. They not only do these things themselves, but are glad to see others do them. The lowest stage in depravity is reached when men take pleasure in seeing others sin.

No Saving Light in Nature

The witnesses of God in nature do not constitute Gospel light. They are sufficient to render all men without excuse, but they are not efficient as means of salvation. They are sufficient to make men know they are sinners, but they have nothing to say about a Savior. There must be a further revelation of God before men can know Him in the forgiveness of sins. And this revelation is His written Word as a witness to the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, by the knowledge of Whom many shall be justified. *"He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge*

shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities" (Isa. 53:11).

Man is a Religious Being

Man is by nature a religious being. By training, apart from Bible teaching and the new birth, he will either become an atheist or an idolater. This is the best education can do apart from the grace of God. A mere cultural religion deifies humanity, denies the fall, and talks only of upward development. This is the religion of the evolutionist. The god of the sensualist is his belly, his inward desires. The only law he recognizes is the craving of a depraved nature. *"Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things"* (Phil. 3:19). This is the religion of the godless business man as well as of the drunkard and libertine.

It is as bad to invent a god in the imagination as it is to make one with the hands. The old form of idolatry had its gods made with hands; the new form of idolatry has its gods spun out of the imagination and harbored in the mind. The unknown God is still the true God. The Athenians of Paul's day had monuments to many gods, and in their religious zeal had a monument to the unknown God. The unknown God was the God Paul preached to them. The true God was unknown to them. Acts 17:22-32: *"Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter."*

It is the purpose of the following pages to present the God of the Bible in His nature and personal

perfections. The reader is asked to test what is written herein with what is revealed in Holy Writ.
And may the Spirit of truth guide us into the truth!