

## THE LOVE AND THE JUSTICE OF GOD

The Attributes of God

Banska Bystrica, 27th November 2016

<p><b>Ps 85:11</b> חֶסֶד וְאֱמֻנָה נִפְגְּשׁוּ צְדָקָה וְשָׁלוֹם נִשְׁקִי</p>	<p><b>Ps 85:10</b> Steadfast <u>love</u> and <u>faithfulness</u> meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other.</p>
<p><b>Ps 145:17</b> צְדִיק יְהוָה בְּכָל־דַּרְכָּיו וְחַסִּיד בְּכָל־מַעֲשָׂיו</p>	<p><b>Ps 145:17</b> The LORD is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works.</p>
<p><b>Ps 89:15</b> צְדָק וּמִשְׁפָּט מִכּוֹן כִּסֵּאֲךָ חֶסֶד וְאֱמֻנָה יִקְדָּמוּ פָּנֶיךָ</p>	<p><b>Ps 89:14</b> Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you</p>
<p><b>1Jn 4:8</b> ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν οὐκ ἔγνω τὸν θεόν, ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν. <b>1Jn 4:16</b> καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐγνώκαμεν καὶ πεπιστεύκαμεν τὴν ἀγάπην ἣν ἔχει ὁ θεὸς ἐν ἡμῖν. Ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν, καὶ ὁ μένων ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ ἐν τῷ θεῷ μένει καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐν αὐτῷ μένει</p>	<p><b>1Jn 4:8</b> Anyone who does not love does not know God, because <b>God is love</b>. <b>1Jn 4:16</b> So we <u>have come to know and to believe</u> the love that God has for us. <b>God is love</b>, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him</p>
<p><b>Gn 18:25</b> הַשֹּׁפֵט כָּל־הָאָרֶץ לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה מִשְׁפָּט</p>	<p><b>Gn 18:25</b> Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what <b>is just?</b>"</p>
<p><b>Mt 5:6</b> μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται</p>	<p><b>Mt 5:6</b> "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.</p>

### OUTLINE

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#### 0. INTRODUCTION

- "Hallowed be thy Name" ⇒ let God's attributes [= the "Name"] be (1) understood and admired, (2) revered and worshiped, (3) treasured and desired

[CALVIN] Certainly these three things are especially necessary for us to know: (1) mercy, (*miser cordia*) on which alone the salvation of us all rests; (2) judgment, (*iudicium*) which is daily exercised against

wrongdoers, and in even greater severity awaits them to their everlasting ruin; (3) justice, (*iustitia*) whereby believers are preserved, and are most tenderly nourished. When these are understood, the prophecy witnesses that you have abundant reason to glory in God.<sup>1</sup>

### 0.1. THE “COMMUNICABLE” ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

- incommunicable: (1) **omni**potence, (2) **omni**science, (3) **omni**presence
- → ethical (communicable attributes)
- (1) via negationis/hodos apphaireseos, (2) via eminentiae/hodos hyperoches. (3) via causalitatis/hodos aitias

[DIONYSIOS] ...the One which is beyond thought surpasses the apprehension of thought (νοῦς ἀνόητος), and the Good which is beyond utterance (λόγος ἄρρήτος) surpasses the reach of words.<sup>2</sup>

### 0.2. OUR PROBLEMS WITH UNDERSTANDING JUSTICE

- Time: **Ecc 8:11** Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the children of man is fully set to do evil.
- justice: (1) ethical [“righteousness”]; (2) political [“fairness”]; (3) religious [“holiness”]

### 0.3. OUR PROBLEMS WITH UNDERSTANDING LOVE

- “Almost two thousand years – and not a single new god!” cried Nietzsche in 1888. But he was wrong. The new god was there – indeed was right under his nose. That new god was love. Human love. **Human love**, now even more than then, is widely tasked with achieving what once only divine love was thought capable of: to be our ultimate source of meaning and happiness, and of power over suffering and disappointment.”<sup>3</sup>

[*Encyclopedia of Psychology*] John Lee in The colors of love distinguishes between six types of love. (1) Eros is a romantic and sexual love, a need to know everything about the loved one and experience her or him fully. (2) Mania is an obsessive and demanding love, often accompanied by pain and anxiety because the need for attention from the other is insatiable. (3) Ludis is a self-centered, playful love; love is treated as a game to be won. (4) Storge is a companionate love, a solid peaceful love between close friends. (5) Agape is a saintly “thou”-centered love, always patient, forgiving, and kind. (6) Pragma is practical and logical love, given only after one has determined whether or not the partner is a “good catch.”<sup>4</sup>

### 0.4. THE CROSS – THE MEETING POINT OF LOVE AND JUSTICE

- (1) The character of God, (2) the infinite punishment, (3) the infinite forgiveness

## 1. WHY THE CONFLICT?

### 1.1. LOVE

What is good for the individual.

- a “Hollywood” understanding of love: pleasure; romance; beauty; dreaming; sex; → getting
- understanding; identification; empathy; benevolence; sacrifice; [→ individualism]
- Max Stirner (*unde?*)

<sup>1</sup> CALVIN, J. *Institutes* 1.10.2.

<sup>2</sup> *The Divine Names* 1.1.

<sup>3</sup> MAY, S. *Love, A History*, New Haven : Yale University Press, 2011, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> HATFIELD, E. *Love*. In: CORSINI, R. J. *Encyclopedia of Psychology* 2, New York : Wiley, 1994, p. 353.

I exist only for myself. Everything I do, I do to expand and protect my sphere of influence. I am “good” to people only to take pleasure in them and to assert myself and increase my power. And I wrong all those who might hinder, disturb, or restrain me, who stand in the way of my enjoying life. I live for myself and for nothing else.

What is Love? Malinowski, de Rougemont, Mead and the social anthropologists answer: it is sexual love; the troubadours' songs; jealousy; matrimony, both primitive and civilized. Freud, Reik, Homey, Fromm and the psychologists answer: love is neurotic and normal, productive and destructive. De Beauvoir, D'Arcy, Niebuhr and the philosophers answer: its role differs in the life of men and women, but it is the major power for good or ill.<sup>5</sup>

## 1.2. JUSTICE

What is good for the whole.

- ideas of “rights”, “equality”, “dignity”, “life standards”...

[Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy] Traditionally defined by the Latin tag ‘*suum cuique tribuere*’<sup>6</sup> - to allocate to each his own - justice has always been closely connected to the ideas of desert and equality ... A common division of the topic distinguishes between corrective and distributive justice...

(1) the distributive justice of God: **Mt 25:15** To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability (κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν δύναμιν). Then he went away. → giving/love

(2) the corrective justice of God: → **Ex 34:6-7** "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, <sup>7</sup> keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, (וְחַטָּאת אָבֹתָם לֹא יִנְקָה) visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."

- “...in Scripture, while God’s retributive justice is real, his remunerative justice is far more prominent.”<sup>7</sup>
- JUSTICE ⇒ truth; requirements; norms; performance; suitability (“fitness”) → totalitarianism
- “right-ness” (based on ontology & truth) → price tags! (Campolo)

## 2. LOVE AND JUSTICE IN GOD

- remember the *simplicitas* of God!

[CHAMBERS] God is love. No one but God could have revealed that to the world, for men, and we all indeed, see nothing but its contradiction in our own limited world of experience. It needs but little imagination to construe the life of hundreds of this great city’s inhabitants into a vehement laughter at such a declaration as “God is love.” From shattered, broken lives, from caverns of despair where fiends seem living rather than men, comes the existing contradiction to any such statement. No wonder the carnal mind, the merely intellectually cultured, consider us infatuated, mere dreamers, talking of love when murder and war and famine and lust and pestilence, and all the refinement of selfish cruelty is abroad in the earth. But, oh the sublimity of the Abraham-like faith that dares to place the centre of its life and confidence and action and hope in an unseen and apparently unknown God, saying, “God is love,” in spite of all appearances to the contrary; saying “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” Such faith is counted to a man for righteousness.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> KRICH, A. M. *The Anatomy of Love*. New York : Dell Publishing Co. 1960.

<sup>6</sup> “...what is the relevant criterion whereby it should be determined who deserves what, and who is fit to make such a judgment?” (*Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*)

<sup>7</sup> BAVINCK, H. *Reformed Dogmatics*.

<sup>8</sup> CHAMBERS, O. *The love of God*. Complete Works, p. 655.

## 2.1. THE JUSTICE OF GOD

“By the righteousness or justice of God we designate the manner in which his **holiness** finds expression in the **government** of the universe. ...The principles which determine his judgment find illustration in Jesus' attitude to his contemporaries; in the strictness of his ethical standards, his insistence upon the motive as everywhere determining, his uncompromising warfare against all sham and insincerity, as well as his tenderness and compassion to humility and penitence, wherever found.”<sup>9</sup>

- justice → according to law (?)
- justice → truth (JASHAR, FAITHFUL); holiness; goodness; (conformed to the image of God)

### 2.1.1. CORRECTIVE

- **Rom 3:5-6** ...That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) <sup>6</sup> By no means! For then how could God judge the world?
- no favoritism (προσωποληψια) → for all universe to see...
- judging according to the ultimate reality (1) His sovereignty, (2) moral agents' abilities, opportunities and positions...
- the problem of eternal punishment → God's wrath (the Revelation)

[BAVINCK] This wrath—the basic words for which relate in part to the verb “to burn,” in part express a vehement, uncontrollable emotion—is often compared to a burning (Lev. 10:6; Deut. 32:22; Ps. 21:9), a fire (Deut. 32:22; 2 Kings 23:26; Ps. 2:11; Isa. 30:27; Jer. 15:14; 17:4), and is therefore called “hot” (Ps. 58:9; Deut. 13:17; 2 Chron. 28:11; Job 20:23; Isa. 13:9, 13) and “smoking” (Deut. 29:27–28; Ps. 74:1).

### 2.1.2. DISTRIBUTIVE

- giving
- [BAVINCK] “The manifestation of God's righteousness is simultaneously the manifestation of his grace (Ps. 97:11–12; 112:3–6; 116:5; 118:15–19).”

## 2.2. THE LOVE OF GOD

[MOODY] I know of no truth in the whole Bible that ought to come home to us with such power and tenderness as that of the Love of God; and there is no truth in the Bible that Satan would so much like to blot out.

- The love of God is compared to the love of a mother for her child (**Is 49:15** "Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.; **Is 66:13** As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you;).
- [CHAMBERS] (1) In Creation....(2) In His Wisdom. ...(3) In His Power. ...(4) In His Justice.
- LOVE: (1) ability, (2) willingness/attitude, (3) activity – of IDENTIFICATION (giving one's self to/for the loved one)

[GEISLER] GOD'S OMNIBENEVOLENCE (ALL-LOVINGNESS) One of the best-known moral attributes of God is His love. Some theologians stress God's love to the neglect of His holiness and justice; others diminish it by limiting it to only some people. The former tend toward universalism, while the latter use it as a basis for particularism, i.e., limited atonement (see Volume 3). It is debated by orthodox theologians whether goodness and love are the same thing or whether they are different. And, if different, whether love is an attribute of God or an activity of God. Some hold that goodness is an attribute of God and that love is an act of His goodness. But 1 John 4:16 says God is love, seemingly applying the term to His essence.

DEFINITION OF GOD'S OMNIBENEVOLENCE If “love” is defined as “willing the good of its object,” then for all practical purposes “love” and “goodness” can be treated synonymously. Literally, the word omnibenevolent means “all-good.” Biblically, the basic Hebrew term for “love” (chesed) used of God means “goodness,” “affection,” “good-will,” “loving-kindness” or “tender loving-kindness.” The Greek word agape used of God's love means “benevolence,” a self-less “sacrificial” love. Theologically, God's omnibenevolence refers to His infinite or unlimited goodness.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> BROWN, W. A. *Christian Theology in Outline*, New York : Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906, p. 108.

<sup>10</sup> GEISLER, N. *Systematic Theology*.

- **Jn 15:13** Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends (ἵνα τις τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ θῆ ὑπὲρ τῶν φίλων αὐτοῦ).

### 2.2.1. THE POWER OF LOVE

- THE UNIFYING FORCE OF THE UNIVERSE! → unity in plurality; plurality in unity
- **John 17:21-23** that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup> The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, <sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.
- ...the *works* of God → power
- ...the *feelings* of God ("soul") → mercy, compassion...

### 2.2.2. THE JOY OF LOVE

- **2Cor 5:14-15** For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; <sup>15</sup> and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.
- **Ro 14:17** the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of (1) righteousness and (2) peace and (3) joy in the Holy Spirit. → "attributes" of God's love

[Henri de TOURVILLE *Letters of Direction*] As for that which is beyond your strength, be absolutely certain that our Lord loves you, devotedly and **individually**: loves you just as you are. How often that conviction is lacking even in those souls who are most devoted to God! They make repeated efforts to love Him, they experience the joy of loving, and yet how little they know, how little they realize, that God loves them incomparably more than they will ever know how to love Him. Think only of this and say to yourself 'I am loved by God more than I can either conceive or understand'. Let this fill all your soul and all your prayer and never leave you. You will soon see that this is the way to find God. It contains the whole of St. John's teaching: 'As for us, we have believed in the love which God has for us.' I have asked God to teach me this and now I understand it. I know that it is the true way, the best way and the way which is so often lacking in souls. Find it without delay.

## 3. THE CROSS OF CHRIST

- the Reformation → Luther (God: Just *and* Justifier)

### 3.1. THE CROSS – THE WRATH OF GOD

- **Rom 5:8** God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
- **Gal 3:13** Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us – for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"

### 3.2. THE CROSS – THE LOVE OF GOD

- ...Christ knew not sin, God has made him a [sacrificial] victim for sin, (תִּשְׁבֹּחַ), so that in him we might become the justice of God (2 Cor 5:21)

[LUTHER] ...non amabam, imo odiebam iustum et punientem peccatores Deum.... Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that 'the just shall live by faith' [Romans 1:17]. Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before the 'justice of God' had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gate of heaven. (Ich konnte den gerechten, die Sünder strafenden Gott nicht lieben, im Gegenteil, ich haßte ihn sogar. Wenn ich auch als Mönch untadelig lebte, fühlte ich mich vor Gott doch als Sünder, und mein Gewissen quälte mich sehr. Ich wagte nicht zu hoffen, daß ich Gott durch meine Genugtuung versöhnen könnte. Und wenn ich mich auch nicht in Lästerung gegen Gott empörte, so murrte ich doch heimlich gewaltig gegen ihn: Als ob es noch nicht genug wäre, daß die elenden und durch die Erbsünde ewig verlorenen Sünder durch das Gesetz des Dekalogs mit jeder Art von Unglück beladen sind - mußte denn

Gott auch noch durch das Evangelium Jammer auf Jammer häufen und uns auch durch das Evangelium seine Gerechtigkeit und seinen Zorn androhen?)<sup>11</sup>

- → *Theology of the Cross* ...

#### **4. TO REMEMBER**

- Before we can understand God's love, or justice, we have to see our misunderstandings of these words in our culture.
- To know God as just and loving means to take into account the whole reality → his sovereignty, all of history and eschatological future.
- No study will give us the full understanding of God of love and justice, we need the Holy Spirit and revelation.

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<sup>11</sup> LUTHER, M. *Vorrede zu Band I der lateinischen Schriften der Wittenberger Luther-Ausgabe* (1545). Martin Luther: Gesammelte Werke, S. 1081.