

**THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD**

The Attributes of God

Banska Bystrica, 27th January 2019

<p><b>Jas 1:17</b> πάντα δόσεις ἀγαθὴ καὶ πᾶν δῶρημα τέλειον ἄνωθέν ἐστιν καταβαῖνον ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων, παρ' ᾧ οὐκ ἔνι παραλλαγή ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα</p>	<p><b>Jas 1:17</b> Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change</p>
<p><b>Mal 3:6</b> כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה לֹא יִתְּנֶה עָלַי וְיִתְּנֶה עֲלֵיכֶם</p>	<p><b>Mal 3:6</b> For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.</p>
<p><b>Heb 13:8</b> Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ἐχθές καὶ σήμερον ὁ αὐτὸς καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας</p>	<p><b>Heb 13:8</b> Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever</p>

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**0. INTRODUCTION**

- (TOZER) “To say that God is immutable is to say that He never differs from Himself.”
- (CHAMBERS) “One of the most immutable things on earth is mutability.”
- (SPURGEON) the first sermon in London (December 18th, 1853), text: James 1:17
  - the first sermon of the “New Park Street Pulpit” series (January 7th, 1855): *The Immutability of God* (Mal 3:6)

**0.1. THE POINT OF COMPARISON**

- the principle behind idolatry → to change God into an idol that suits our taste... ⇒ conflict of our changeability with God’s immutability
- God → the solid rock of eternal reality, values and never changing principles... WE WILL BE JUDGED BY

## 0.2. THE WORD

- **immūtābilitās (inm-), ātis, f. [ immutabilis ], un-**  
**changeableness, immutability, Fal. 17.**
- James 1:17 (παραλλαγή ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα) → (1) a passing from hand to hand, transmission, (2) variation, change;
  - τροπή, ἡ, (τρέπω) *a turn, turning, the turning of the enemy,*
  - ἀποσκίασμα, ατος, τό literally *shadow* as caused by an object that blocks rays of light
- Mal 3:6 (יִנְיֹשׁ אֱלֹהִים) BDB: [ינש] change; mentally = *grow insane*;

## 0.3. IMMUTABILITY AMONG THE OTHER ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

[SPURGEON *The Immutability of God*] I am not much of an argumentative preacher, but one argument that I will mention is this—the very existence and Being of a God seem to me to imply immutability. Let me think a moment. There is a God. This God rules and governs all things—this God fashioned the world—He upholds and maintains it. What kind of Being must He be? It does strike me that you cannot think of a changeable God. I conceive that the thought is so repugnant to common sense that if you for one moment think of a changing God, the words seem to clash and you are obliged to say, “Then He must be a kind of man,” and you have a Mormonism idea of God.

- [SPURGEON] **perfection** → cannot change either to better or to worse
- [SPURGEON] **infinity** → cannot increase
- “faithfulness” → the Word of God
- “aseitas” → the independence, self-existence of God
- “living” → the infinite living activity of God

## 1. GOD IMMUTABLE IN HIS BEING

⇒ independent of created beings (“soul” implies “dependence”; matter is based on ceaseless movement...)

- misconceptions of the Divine immutability (1) Pythagoras (mysticism of numbers); (2) Parmenides (illusion of change → identity in the absolute absence of diversity); (3) Plotinos (God totally immobile)
- opposite: (1) process theology [HARTSHORNE – dipolar theism], (2) open theism...
- → between *fate* and *fortune* ...

### 1.1. THE MEANING OF IMMUTABILITY

- ETHICAL → God does not grow better or worse
- PSYCHOLOGICAL → God does not learn or forget; is not growing wiser or forgetful
- ONTOLOGICAL → God does not change in his eternal, transcendent divinity

### 1.2. THE BASIS FOR FEAR & FAITH

- → reliability
- not *fatum* – an utterance, prophetic declaration, oracle, → that which is ordained, destiny, fate (fortuna, fors, sors, casus)
- [eternity] Ps 102:25-27 Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. <sup>26</sup> They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, <sup>27</sup> but **you are the same (וְאַתָּה הוּא)**, and your years have no end.
- Isa 40:28 The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary (לֹא יִנְיֹשׁ וְלֹא יִיָּגֵד); his understanding is unsearchable.

## 2. GOD IMMUTABLE IN TIME/HISTORY

⇒ independent of historical developments (Zeitgeist; culture; fashion; plausibility)

- John 10:35 ...Scripture cannot be broken...

## 2.1. THE OLD AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

- the misconceptions about the God of the Old Testament being different from the Father of Jesus Christ (→ MARKION)
- **Jude 1:15** ...all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him (πάντων τῶν σκληρῶν).

## 2.2. THE BASIS FOR FEAR & HOPE

- → expectations
- **1Cor 10:1-6** I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, <sup>2</sup> and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, <sup>3</sup> and all ate the same spiritual food, <sup>4</sup> and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. <sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. <sup>6</sup> Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. ... **11** Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction (ἐγράφη δὲ πρὸς νοουθεσίαν ἡμῶν.), on whom the end of the ages has come.
- → faith like Abraham (**Gn 15:6** And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness)
- →

## 3. GOD IMMUTABLE IN HIS CHARACTER

⇒ independent of our sins or our good works (the LAW of God still the same)

- Jas 1:17; Heb 13:8 (Jesus Christ)
- → election and perseverance

### 3.1. THE HOLINESS OF GOD

- → our conflict with God
- Mal 3:6 – you are not consumed
  - be complete, at an end, finished, accomplished, spent
  - cease, perish (**Psalm 90:7** or we are brought to an end by your anger; by your wrath we are dismayed. כִּי-כָלֵינוּ בְּאַפֶּיךָ וּבַחֲרוֹתֶיךָ נִבְהַלְנוּ)
- truth → faithfulness → being → holiness of God
- → salvation assured by the immutability of God; → the reason why Calvinism/Augustianism is an encouraging doctrine!

### 3.2. THE BASIS FOR FEAR & LOVE

#### 3.2.1. SUBMISSION

- (C.S.LEWIS *Membership*) “Obedience is the road to freedom, humility the road to pleasure, unity the road to personality.”

#### 3.2.2. TRUST

- Isa 40-45 → the only real God → lean on him in times of trouble

#### 3.2.3. ASSURANCE

- → perseverance Heb 13:8

## 4. TO REMEMBER

- The constancy of God is more than we can imagine under the word “stability”.
- The immutability of God is the basis for our faith, hope and love in the midst of chaotic change in and around us.
- In conflict with God’s truth it is always us who have to change. ...despite the modern ideas of God adjusted to our tastes...