

## THE POWER OF GOD

### The Attributes of God

Banska Bystrica, 26th June 2016

<p>אִתְּךָ דְּבַר אֱלֹהִים וְזוֹ שְׁמַעְתִּי כִּי עוֹ לְאֱלֹהִים וְלִךְ-אֲדֹנָי קֹדֶשׁ כִּי-אִתְּךָ תְּשִׁלֵּם לְאִישׁ כְּמַעֲשָׂיו</p>	<p><b>Ps 62:11-12</b> Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this: <u>that power belongs to God</u>, <sup>12</sup> <u>and</u> that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love.</p>
<p>וְדַעְתִּי כִּי-כֹל תּוֹכֵל וְלֹא-יִבָּצֵר מִמֶּנּוּ דָּמָה</p>	<p><b>Job 42:2</b> "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.</p>
<p>ὅτι οὐκ ἄδυνατήσεται παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ πᾶν ῥῆμα.</p>	<p><b>Luke 1:36-37</b> ...this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. <sup>37</sup> For nothing will be impossible with God."</p>
<p><b>Mt 19:25-26</b> ἀκούσαντες δὲ οἱ μαθηταὶ ἐξεπλήσθησαντο σφόδρα λέγοντες· τίς ἄρα δύναται σωθῆναι; <sup>26</sup> ἐμβλέψας δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· παρὰ ἀνθρώποις τοῦτο ἀδύνατόν ἐστιν, παρὰ δὲ θεῷ πάντα δυνατά.</p>	<p><b>Mt 19:25-26</b> When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" <sup>26</sup> But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."</p>
<p>οὐ παύομαι εὐχαριστῶν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν μνεῖαν ποιοῦμενος ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν μου, <sup>17</sup> ἵνα ὁ θεὸς τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ πατὴρ τῆς δόξης, δώῃ ὑμῖν πνεῦμα σοφίας καὶ ἀποκαλύψεως ἐν ἐπιγνώσει αὐτοῦ, <sup>18</sup> πεφωτισμένους τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τῆς καρδίας [ὑμῶν] εἰς τὸ εἰδέναι ὑμᾶς τίς ἐστὶν ἡ ἐλπίς τῆς κλησέως αὐτοῦ, τίς ὁ πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης τῆς κληρονομίας αὐτοῦ ἐν τοῖς ἁγίοις, <sup>19</sup> καὶ τί τὸ ὑπερβάλλον μέγεθος τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ εἰς ἡμᾶς τοὺς πιστεύοντας κατὰ τὴν <u>ἐνέργειαν τοῦ κράτους τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ</u>. <sup>20</sup> "Ἦν ἐνήργησεν ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ ἐγείρας αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν καὶ καθίσας ἐν δεξιᾷ αὐτοῦ ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις <sup>21</sup> ὑπεράνω πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας καὶ δυνάμεως καὶ κυριότητος καὶ παντὸς ὀνόματος ὀνομαζομένου, οὐ μόνον ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι. <sup>22</sup> καὶ πάντα ὑπέταξεν ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ καὶ αὐτὸν ἔδωκεν κεφαλὴν ὑπὲρ πάντα τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ, <sup>23</sup> ἣτις ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ, τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν πληρουμένου.</p>	<p><b>Eph 1:16-23</b> I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, <sup>17</sup> that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, <sup>18</sup> having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, <sup>19</sup> and what is the <u>immeasurable greatness of his power</u> toward us who believe, according to the <u>working of his great might</u> <sup>20</sup> that he worked in Christ when he <u>raised him from the dead</u> and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. <sup>22</sup> And he put <u>all things under his feet</u> and gave him as head over all things to the church, <sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.</p>
<p><b>Rev 19:6</b> Καὶ ἤκουσα ὡς φωνὴν ὄχλου πολλοῦ καὶ ὡς φωνὴν ὑδάτων πολλῶν καὶ ὡς φωνὴν βροντῶν ἰσχυρῶν λεγόντων· ἀλληλουϊά, ὅτι ἐβασίλευσεν κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ.</p>	<p><b>Rev 19:6</b> And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God <u>omnipotent</u> reigneth.</p>

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### 0. INTRODUCTION

#### 0.1. “OMNI” ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

- (1) **omnipotence**, (2) **omniscience**, (3) **omnipresence**

[CHAMBERS] We get into difficulties over God becoming Incarnate when we bring in our own conceptions. For instance, we say that the **essential** nature of God is **omnipotence**, **omnipresence**, and **omniscience**; the New Testament reveals that the essential nature of God is holiness, and that He became the weakest thing in His own creation, viz., a Baby.<sup>1</sup>

#### 0.2. “THE REVISED IDEA OF GOD”

##### 0.2.1. OUR “INABILITY” TO THINK ABOUT THE REAL GOD

- Strawman Fallac: Substituting a person’s actual position or argument with a distorted, exaggerated, or misrepresented version of the position of the argument.
- Charles HARTSHORNE<sup>2</sup> *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*, Albany : State Univ. NY, 1984:

(1) First Mistake: God Is Absolutely Perfect and Therefore Unchangeable. (2) Second Mistake: Omnipotence. (3) Third Mistake: Omniscience. (4) Fourth Mistake: God's Unsympathetic Goodness. (5) Fifth Mistake: Immortality as a Career after Death. (6) Sixth Mistake: Revelation as Infallible.

[PERRAULT *Le chat botte*] ‘I have been told,’ said the cat, ‘that you have the gift of turning yourself into all kinds of animals, for instance, that you could change into a lion or an elephant.’ ‘That’s quite true,’ replied the Ogre roughly, ‘and to prove it, watch me turn into a lion.’ The cat was so scared to see a lion standing before him that immediately he sprang up on the roof, which was quite difficult and dangerous because of his boots, which were no good for climbing over tiles. Some time later, seeing that the Ogre had gone back to his original shape, the cat came down, admitting that he had been really frightened. ‘I have also been told,’ he said, ‘but I can scarcely believe it, that you also have the power of taking the shape of tiny little animals, for instance of turning into a rat or a mouse, but I must confess that I think it quite impossible.’ ‘Impossible?’ retorted the Ogre; ‘just wait and see’; and in a moment he changed himself into a mouse, which began to run about the floor. No sooner had the cat seen it than he jumped on it and ate it up.

##### 0.2.2. GREAT INVENTIVENESS IN THINKING ABOUT THE WORLD

- physics – Einstein; Bohr; Heisenberg; ...Hawking
  - “miracles” of time-travel; “miracles” of getting something out of nothing (the law of conservation of mass?); “miracles” of the dark matter, dark energy; “miracles” of parallel universes...
- mathematics – set theory...
  - ⇒ great imaginations; paradoxes; contradictions...

Though it has at various times been triumphed, mocked, misinterpreted, and ignored, the concept of higher dimensions beyond space and time has become a central feature of modern theoretical discussion. If it is true, it would mean that the world we perceive is only a fraction of a greater invisible reality. Length, width, breadth, and duration would be supplemented by unseen directions, outside the range of our senses.<sup>3</sup>

- evolution → nature as omnipotent; infallible; animals self-creating...
- sci-fi literature – “I have yet to see any problem, however complicated, which when you looked at it in the right way, did not become still more complicated.” (Poul ANDERSON – Internet)

<sup>1</sup> CHAMBERS, O. *The Psychology of Redemption*. In *Complete Works*, Grand Rapids : Discovery House, 2000, p. 1101.

<sup>2</sup> pronounced “Harts-horne”

<sup>3</sup> HALPERN, P. *The Great Beyond*, Hoboken : John Wiley, 2004, p. 1

### 0.3. PROBLEMS WITH THE IDEA OF OMNIPOTENCE

- [AQUINAS] I q. 25 a. 3 arg. 2 “Praeterea, peccare aliquid agere est. Sed Deus non potest peccare, neque seipsum negare, ut dicitur 2Tim. 2:13 (...if we are faithless, he remains faithful- for he cannot deny himself.). Ergo Deus non est omnipotens.” ... To sin is to fall short of a perfect action hence the power to sin is the power to fall short in action, which is repugnant to omnipotence. Therefore it is that God cannot sin, because of His Omnipotence.”
- [BAVINCK] God “...cannot lie, he cannot repent, he cannot change, he cannot be tempted (Nu 23:19; 1Sa 15:29; Heb 6:18; James 1:13, 17), and he cannot deny himself (2Tim 2:13)”.

[SWINBURNE] A logically impossible action is not an action. It is what is described by a form of words which purport to describe an action, but do not describe anything which it is coherent to suppose could be done. It is no objection to ^4's omnipotence that he cannot make a square circle. This is because 'making a square circle' does not describe anything which it is coherent to suppose could be done.<sup>4</sup>

### 0.4. THE UNITY OF GOD'S ATTRIBUTES

[FENELON] Je conçois clairement, par toutes les réflexions que j'ai déjà faites, que le premier être est souverainement un et simple; d'où il faut conclure que toutes ses perfections n'en font qu'une, et que si je les multiplie, c'est par la faiblesse de mon esprit, qui, ne pouvant d'une seule vue embrasser le tout qui est infini et parfaitement un, le multiplie pour se soulager, et le divise en autant de parties qu'il a de rapports à diverses choses hors de lui.<sup>5</sup>

- omnipotence cannot be understood, only in unity with the other attributes of God
  - (1) necessary being, (2) immutable, (3) wise,

### 0.5. GOD'S OMNIPOTENCE IN THE BIBLE

#### 0.5.1. THE WORDS

- παντοκράτωρ 191x (יהוה זבאות) → the LORD of hosts (ESV); the LORD God Almighty (NIV);
- δεσπότης (*lord, master, owner* – אדון) → **Sovereign** Lord (ESV); **Jos 5:14** He said, "No; rather I indeed come now *as* captain of the host of the LORD." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, "What has my lord to say to his servant?"
- אֱלֹהֵינוּ עֲלִיּוֹן – God Most High (ESV); **Ps 47:2** For the LORD, the Most High, is to be **feared**, a great king over all the earth.
- אֱלֹהֵי שָׁמַיִם – (“všemohúci“ Roh 59x, SEP 56x) God Almighty (ESV) **Gn 17:1** When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless,

#### 0.5.2. EXAMPLES

- **Gn 18:14** Is anything too difficult for the LORD? (הוֹפְלָא מִיְהוָה דְּבַר)
- **Is 45:7** I form light and create darkness (יוֹצֵר אֹרֶךְ וּבּוֹרֵא הַחֹשֶׁךְ), I make well-being and create calamity (עֹשֶׂה שְׁלוֹמִים וּבּוֹרֵא רָע), I am the LORD, who does all these things.
- **Is 43:13** Also henceforth I am he; there is none who can deliver from my hand; I work, and who can turn it back?" (גַּם-מִיּוֹם אֲנִי הוּא וְאֵין מַדְרִי מִצִּיל אֲפַעֵל וּמִי יִשְׁבַּחַנִּי)

## 1. THE FORMS OF THE POWER OF GOD

### 1.1. THE POWER OF GOD'S BEING

- (we have discussed it under the title “The Life of God”)
- the power of His life → aseitas; glory; YHWH
- **Ex 33:20** ...man shall not **see me** and **live**. (לֹא-יִרְאֵנִי הָאָדָם וְחָי)

<sup>4</sup> SWINBURNE, R. *The Coherence of Theism*, Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1993, p. 153-4.

<sup>5</sup> FENELON, *Oeuvres de Fenelon I*, Paris : Louis Vives, 1854, p. 138-9.

## 1.2. THE POWER OF GOD'S WILL

- **Rev 4:11** "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created (ὅτι σὺ ἔκτισας τὰ πάντα καὶ διὰ τὸ θέλημά σου ἦσαν καὶ ἐκτίσθησαν).
- the power to CREATE: Gn 1:1 – "If it creates of nothing, it is then omnipotent..."<sup>6</sup>
- the power to SUSTAIN the creation: **Heb 1:3** ...he upholds the universe by the word of his power
- the power to RAISE THE DEAD (Eph 1:19 the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τοῦ κράτους τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ)

## 2. THE EXECUTION OF THE POWER OF GOD

### 2.1. DIRECT

- the Word → Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, (26 → "let us make")
- the Spirit of God →

### 2.2. DELEGATED (→ FAITH)

- **Ex 3:14** **God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM."** And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"
- **Ex 4:16** He shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be your mouth, and **you** shall be as **God to him**. (הוּא יְהוָה לְפִי לִפְנֵי תַּהְיֶינְיָ לְאֱלֹהִים)
- ἀπόστολος (apostle) – **Rom 1:1** ...an **apostle**, set apart for the gospel of God,
- χριστός (anointed) – **Acts 4:26** The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his **Anointed**'

### 2.3. INDIRECT

- **1Chr 21:1** Then Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel.
- **2Sa 24:1** Again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, "Go, number Israel and Judah."
- the Cross → Satan's defeat

## 3. GOD'S POWER FOR FAITH

- Ps 62:11 [SPURGEON] "Twice have I heard this." Our meditative soul should hear the echo of God's voice again and again. What he speaks once in revelation, we should be always hearing. Creation and providence are evermore echoing the voice of God"<sup>7</sup>

[TOZER] Omnipotence is not a name given to the sum of all power, but an attribute of a personal God we Christians believe to be the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and of all who believe on Him to life eternal. The worshipping man finds this knowledge a source of wonderful strength for his inner life. His faith rises to take the great leap upward into the fellowship of Him who can do whatever He wills to do, for whom nothing is hard or difficult because He possesses power absolute.

## 4. TO REMEMBER

- Allow the omnipotence of God to be beyond your understanding. ("Let God be God!")
- Be sure to use the power, God delegated to you, faithfully.
- Make the power of God your source of faith and confidence.

<sup>6</sup> CHARNOCK, C. *The Existence and Attributes of God*, London : Henry G. Bohn, 1899, p. 19.

<sup>7</sup> SPURGEON, C. H. *The Treasury of David III*, London : Marshall Brothers, ND, p. 52.