# The Definition of God

Before we start:

## The Holy Scripture is Inspired and Inerrant.

## Inspired and Inerrant -

- 2 Timothy 3:15-17 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.
- 2 Peter 1:21, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.
- John 10:35b, ...and the Scripture cannot be broken
- Acts 24:14, "But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.
- Holy Scripture is the Master; Human reason is the servant. Scripture interprets Scripture
- Romans 3:4, Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: "That You may be justified in Your words, And may overcome when You are judged."
- 2 Corinthians 10:5, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,
- Psalm 119:73, Your hands have made me and fashioned me; Give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments.

How we define things according to human reason (material logic):

#### Simple Apprehension:

1. Sense Perception-We perceive it with our senses.

- 2. Mental Image-We form an image in our mind.
- 3. Concept-We conceive its meaning.

[Beyond Simple Apprehension is 4. Judgment]

- John 4:23-24, But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."
- John 1:18 No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

## The Two Properties of Simple Apprehension

- **A. Comprehension** sum of the intelligible aspects or elements. That is its essence.
  - "What is a \_\_\_\_\_?
- B. Extension "To what does \_\_\_\_\_\_ refer?

## **Modes of Knowledge**

- 1. Definition we express the comprehension of a concept (the nature of it)
- 2. Division express the extension of a concept (the parts of it)

## Unique

Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!

Isaiah 43:10 You are My witnesses," says the Lord, "And My servant whom I have chosen, That you may know and believe Me, And understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, Nor shall there be after Me.

## Division of Being according to Comprehension

- A. Substance The essential, unchanging nature of a thing
- B. Accidents The nonessential, changing characteristics

## Ten Categories of Modes of Being

- 1. Substance (with the exception of 1, all are accidents) the names of things
- 2. Quantity How much? How many?
- 3. Quality What kind is it? What is the ability/habit/figure?
- 4. Relation How is it related to other things?
- 5. Action What does it do to other things?
- 6. Passion What is being done to this thing?
- 7. Time When is the thing doing something?
- 8. Place Where is the thing?
- 9. Posture What is the posture/order of the thing?
- 10. Possession What does the thing have?

## Without Parts(simplicity, not compound)

- 1 Kings 8:27 But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built!
- Psalm 90:2-4 Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. 3You turn man to destruction, And say, "Return, O children of men." 4For a thousand years in Your sight Are like yesterday when it is past, And like a watch in the night.
- Jeremiah 23:24 Can anyone hide himself in secret places, So I shall not see him?" says the Lord; "Do I not fill heaven and earth?" says the Lord.

In God, essence and attributes are not separate. 1 Jn 4:8 God is love.

Nominal Definition – the meaning by what it stands for, identity usually by name

- a. Etymology
- b. Synonym

**Real Definition** – the nature signified by the term (Comprehension), essence

There are 4 rules

- 1. A definition should contain a generic as well as a differentiating element
- 2. The definition and the thing should be coextensive
- 3. The definition should be clearer than what is defined
- 4. The definition must be universal

## **Four Causes**

- 1. Formal Cause What is the essence(form) of a thing. What kind of thing is it?
- 2. Material Cause What is it composed of?
- 3. Efficient Cause By whom or through what was the thing brought about?
- 4. Final Cause What is the reason or purpose or use of a thing?

We cannot define God, because...

- 1. He is unique Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!
- God is great (we are only creatures, but then add in sinfulness) Job 36:26 "Behold, God is great, and we do not know Him; Nor can the number of His years be discovered.
  - Jeremiah 32:19 '**You are great in counsel** and mighty in work, for your eyes are open to all the ways of the sons of men, to give everyone according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings.
  - Romans 11:33-34 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How **unsearchable** are His judgments and His ways past finding out! 34 For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?"

Large Catechism, V. Lord's Supper

<sup>12</sup> With this Word you can strengthen your conscience and declare: "Let a hundred thousand devils, with all the fanatics, rush forward and say, 'How can bread and wine be Christ's body and blood?' Still I know that all the spirits and scholars put together have less wisdom than the divine Majesty has in his little finger.

3. Some things God has not revealed

1 Corinthians 13:12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. **Now I know in part,** but then I shall know just as I also am known.

Sirach 3:22 (KJV Apoc) But what is commanded thee, think thereupon with reverence, for it is not needful for thee to see with thine eyes **the things that are in secret**.

1 Timothy 6:13-16 I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, 14that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, 15which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.

Luther: "Who know what God is? He is above body, spirit, yes, above everything that we can say, hear, or think" (Christian Dogmatics, p.438).

FC SD XI <sup>33</sup> We should concern ourselves with this revealed will of God, follow it, and be diligent about it because the Holy Spirit gives grace, power, and ability through the Word by which he has called us. **We should not explore the abyss of the hidden foreknowledge of God**, even as Christ answered the question, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" by saying, "Strive to enter by the narrow door" (Luke 13:23, 24). Luther puts it this way: "Follow the order in the Epistle to the Romans. Concern yourself first with Christ and his Gospel so that you learn to know your sins and his grace. Then take up the warfare against sin as Paul teaches from the first to the eighth chapter. Afterward, when in the eighth chapter you are tested under the cross and in tribulation, the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters will show you how comforting God's foreknowledge is."

Luther "We are at our wits' end when we try to define God." (Christian Dogmatics, p.439, footnote 72)

1 Corinthians 2:12-16, Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. 13These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. 16For "who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

## God cannot be defined, but with the Word, one is able to **describe his revelation**.

Ap IV <sup>67</sup> But one cannot deal with God or grasp him except through the Word.

- I. The Essence Attributes (substance "is or is not," who He is, His being) of God
  - a. In the divine unity
  - b. The relationships, properties or concepts of the three persons of the Godhead
- II. The will of God
  - a. Revealed in universal activity (creation and sustaining of it)
  - b. In special activity for the church (redeeming, etc)

#### The Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried. And the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. And he will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, whose kingdom will have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church, I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen

#### The Athanasian Creed, Lutheran Worship, p.134-135

#### Large Catechism, II.

63 Here in the Creed you have the entire essence of God, his will, and his work exquisitely depicted in very short but rich words. In them consists all our wisdom, which surpasses all the wisdom, understanding, and reason of men. Although the whole world has sought painstakingly to learn what God is and what he thinks and does, yet it has never succeeded in the least. But here you have everything in richest measure. 64 In these three articles God himself has revealed and opened to us the most profound depths of his fatherly heart, his sheer, unutterable love. He created us for this very purpose, to redeem and sanctify us. Moreover, having bestowed upon us everything in heaven and on earth, he has given us his Son and his Holy Spirit, through whom he brings us to himself. 65 **As we explained before, we could never come to recognize the Father's favor and grace were it not for the Lord Christ, who is a mirror of the Father's heart.** Apart from him we see nothing but an angry and terrible Judge. But neither could we know anything of Christ, had it not been revealed by the Holy Spirit.

66 These articles of the Creed, therefore, divide and distinguish us Christians from all other people on earth. All who are outside the Christian church, whether heathen, Turks, Jews, or false Christians and hypocrites, even though they believe in and worship only the one, true God, nevertheless do not know what his attitude is toward them. They cannot be confident of his love and blessing. Therefore they remain in eternal wrath and damnation, for they do not have the Lord Christ, and, besides, they are not illuminated and blessed by the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

#### Augsburg Confession, I. [GOD]

<sup>1</sup> We unanimously hold and teach, in accordance with the decree of the Council of Nicaea, <sup>2</sup> that there is one divine essence, which is called and which is truly God, and that there are three persons in this one divine essence, equal in power and alike eternal: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. <sup>3</sup> All three are one divine essence, eternal, without division, without end, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, one creator and preserver of all things

visible and invisible. <sup>4</sup> The word "person" is to be understood as the Fathers employed the term in this connection, not as a part or a property of another but as that which exists of itself

<sup>5</sup> Therefore all the heresies which are contrary to this article are rejected. Among these are the heresy of the Manichaeans, who assert that there are two gods, one good and one evil; also that of the Valentinians, Arians, Eunomians, Mohammedans, and others like them; <sup>6</sup> also that of the Samosatenes, old and new, who hold that there is only one person and sophistically assert that the other two, the Word and the Holy Spirit, are not necessarily distinct persons but that the Word signifies a physical word or voice and that the Holy Spirit is a movement induced in creatures.

**John 1:12-13** But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

"Whenever  $\delta vo\mu\alpha$ , "name," is used in connections like this, "name" always means the **complete self-revelation of Christ in his redemptive grace.** At times one or the other feature of that revelation is indicated by the context. Whether we read: "believe in him" (Christ), or: "believe in his name," make no difference, for we know "him" only be means of his "name," i.e. his saving self-revelation. As far as the names of Christ are concerned, the special terms by which we designate his person, these are only concentrated and thus especially valuable portions of his self-revelation. Their value consists only in their rich content which reveals to us Christ's person and his work. Thus "they that believe in his name" are they whose heart's trust and confidence extends ( $\epsilon i\varsigma$ ) to the blessed revelation they have received from him." (Lenski, on John, p. 62-63)

**John 3:18** He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

When stating the charge and the verdict, we again meet  $\tau \delta \ \delta vo\mu \alpha$  (compare 1:12): he has not believed "on the name" of the Only-begotten Son of God. In all such connections "the name" denotes **the revelation of the Son that is made to a person**. Jesus was now making this revelation to Nicodemas. "The name" is thus the Word (v.11). It tells all about **this wonderful Savior and his grace and this work for us.** "The name" is thus used in these connections because it contains the trust-producing power." (Lenski, on John, p. 269)

John 14:13 "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

This important phrase does not mean: by my authority; in my stead; through my merits; in the element of my life; in my spirit and for my sake; etc. In all the connections in which this important phrase occurs  $\tau o \ddot{o} vo\mu \alpha$  denotes **the revelation by which we know Jesus**; see 1:12. **This revelation covers his person as well as his work.** ... To pray in Jesus' name naturally involves **faith in the revelation**, also that they petition abide in the circle of that revelation. (Lenski, on John, p. 991)

**John 14:26** "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

"In my name" evidently cannot mean "on my authority," but, as in all similar instances, "in connection with me and with my revelation( $\delta vo\mu \alpha$ )." (Lenski, on John, p. 1014).