

God the Holy Ghost.^19

A third question which has been raised is this: Must revelation be exhaustive in order to count as divine disclosure? Can revelation which is partial nevertheless be genuine? Among others, Wolfhart Pannenberg raises this issue. He says:

Every activity and act of God can indirectly express something about God As acts of God, these acts cast light back on God himself. That does not of course mean that they reveal God ... for every individual event which is taken to be God's activity illuminates the being of God only in a partial way Thus no one act could be a full revelation of God. The isolated conception of a single divine action as the revelation of God most often leads to a distorted view, to an idol."

Here we must raise a counter-question: Is a full self-disclosure of God required if it is to count as a revelation? And if so, what counts as self-disclosure? For example, does God's revelation of His nature in the form of attributes count as a self-disclosure? Not if what we call God's attributes or characteristics are simply qualities which *we* conceive of and then ascribe to God. Not if God's self-disclosure must be a complete self-disclosure of the entirety of God's essence, so that a partial self-disclosure is no disclosure at all. Not if the revelation of *some* divine attributes, not being exhaustive of God's being, is no revelation at all!

Conservative theology holds that when God tells us something about His nature in terms of His attributes or perfections, He is telling us something meaningful about Himself. He is not simply telling us something which He *wants* us to believe, or something that is *good* for us, or something by which He wishes to *regulate* our lives so as to accomplish His purposes. He is telling us who and what He really is! When the Westminster divines formulated their answer to question 4 of the *Shorter Catechism* they were attempting to gather up the truths given in God's revelation of Himself, and express them in a brief, but not exhaustive summary. They said "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth."

When conservative theologians attribute characteristics to God, they are