

4. The Confession of the Free-Will Baptists (A. D. 1834), Chapter II

The Scriptures teach that there is only one true and living God, who is a Spirit, self-existent, eternal, immutable, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, independent, good, wise, holy, just, and merciful; the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of the universe; the Redeemer, Saviour, Sanctifier, and Judge of men; and the only proper object of Divine worship.

The mode of his existence, however, is a subject far above the understanding of man-finite beings can not comprehend him. There is nothing in the universe that can justly represent him, for there is none like him. He is the fountain of all perfections and happiness. He is glorified by the whole inanimate creation, and is worthy to be loved and served by all intelligences.

B. Preliminary Considerations Regarding the Doctrine

1. What is meant by "characteristics"?

Augustus Hopkins Strong, in Volume I of his *Systematic Theology*, states:

The attributes of God are those distinguishing characteristics of the divine nature which are inseparable from the idea of God, and which constitute the basis and ground for his various manifestations to his creatures. We call them attributes, because we are compelled to attribute them to God as fundamental qualities or powers of his being, in order to give rational account of certain constant facts in God's self-revelation.

Millard J. Erickson, in Volume I of his *Christian Theology*, states:

When we speak of the attributes of God, we are referring to those qualities of God which constitute what he is. They are the very characteristics of his nature. We are not referring here to the acts which he performs, such as creating, guiding, and preserving, nor to the corresponding roles he plays -- Creator, Guide, Preserver.

The attributes are qualities of the entire Godhead. They should not be confused with properties, which, technically speaking, are the distinctive characteristics of the various persons of the Trinity. Properties are functions (general), activities (more specific), or acts (most specific) of the individual members of the Godhead.

The attributes are permanent qualities. They cannot be gained or lost. They are intrinsic. Thus, holiness is not an attribute (a permanent, inseparable characteristic) of Adam, but it is of God. God's attributes are essential and inherent dimensions of his very nature.

While our understanding of God is undoubtedly filtered through our own mental framework, his attributes are not our conceptions projected upon him. They are objective characteristics of his nature. In every biblical case where God's attributes are described, it is evident they are part of his