

7. The goodness of God
  - a. The meaning of goodness

Charles Hodge, in his *Systematic Theology* (Washington: Scribner, 1871), Volume One, p. 427, states:

Goodness, in the Scriptural sense of the term, includes benevolence, love, mercy, and grace. By benevolence is meant the disposition to promote happiness; all sensitive creatures are its objects. Love includes complacency, desire, and delight, and has rational beings for its objects. Mercy is kindness exercised towards the miserable, and includes pity, compassion, forbearance, and gentleness, which the Scriptures so abundantly ascribe to God. Grace is Jove exercised towards the unworthy.

William G. T. Shedd, in his *Dogmatic Theology* (reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n. d. ), Volume One, pp. 384-390, states:

The Goodness of God is the Divine essence viewed as energizing benevolently, and kindly, towards the creature. It is an eminent, or transitive attribute, issuing forth from the Divine nature, and aiming to promote the welfare and happiness of the universe. It is not that attribute by which God is good; but by which he does good. As good in himself, God is holy; as showing goodness to others, he is good or kind...

Goodness is a special attribute with varieties under it. 1. The first of these is Benevolence. This is the affection which the Creator feels towards the sentient and conscious creature, as such. Benevolence cannot be shown to insentient existence; to the rocks and mountains. It grows out of the fact that the creature is his workmanship. God is interested in everything which he has made. He cannot hate any of his own handiwork....

2. Mercy is a second variety of the Divine Goodness. It is the benevolent compassion of God towards man as a sinner. This attribute, though logically implied in the idea of God as a being possessed of all conceivable perfections, is free and sovereign in its exercise....

Grace is an aspect of mercy. It differs from mercy, in that it has reference to sinful man as guilty, while mercy has respect to sinful man as miserable. The one refers to the culpability of sin, and the other to its wretchedness. The two terms, however, in common use are interchangeable. Grace, like mercy, is a variety of the Divine goodness.

Both mercy and grace are exercised in a general manner, towards those who are not the objects of their special manifestation. All blessings bestowed upon the natural man are mercy, in so far as they succor his distress, and grace, so far as they are bestowed upon the undeserving. Matt. 5:45, "He maketh his sun to rise upon the evil."