

Psa. 145:9, "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." Ps. 145:15, 16, "The eyes of all wait upon thee."

Augustus Hopkins Strong, in his *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: Judson, 1907), Volume I, pp. 236-266, 289, says:

By love we mean that attribute of the divine nature in virtue of which God is eternally moved to self-communication.

A. Negatively:

(a) The immanent love of God is not to be confounded with mercy and goodness toward creatures. These are its manifestations, and are to be denominated transitive love.

(b) Love is not the all-inclusive ethical attribute of God. It does not include truth, nor does it include holiness.

(c) Nor is God's love a mere regard for being in general, irrespective of its moral quality.

(d) God's love is not a merely emotional affection, proceeding from sense or impulse, nor is it prompted by utilitarian considerations.

B. Positively:

(a) The immanent love of God is a rational and voluntary affection, grounded in perfect reason and deliberate choice.

(b) Since God's love is rational, it involves a subordination of the emotional element to a higher law than itself, namely, that of truth and holiness.

(c) The immanent love of God therefore requires and finds a perfect standard in his own holiness, and a personal object in the image of his own infinite perfections. It is to be understood only in light of the doctrine of the Trinity.

(d) The immanent love of God constitutes a ground of the divine blessedness. Since there is an infinite and perfect object of love, as well as of knowledge and will, in God's own nature, the existence of the universe is not necessary to his serenity and joy.

(e) The love of God involves also the possibility of divine suffering, and the suffering on account of sin which holiness necessitates on the part of God is itself the atonement.

By mercy and goodness we mean the transitive love of God in its two-fold relation to the disobedient and to the obedient portions of his creatures.

(a) Mercy is that eternal principle of God's nature which leads him to seek the temporal good and eternal salvation of those who have opposed themselves to his will, even at the cost of infinite self-sacrifice.

(b) Goodness is the eternal principles of God's nature which leads him to communicate of his own life and blessedness to those who are like him in moral character. Goodness, therefore, is nearly identical with the love of complacency; mercy, with the love of benevolence.