

The Doctrine of God

by
G. H. Shinn

Nature

Definition of Nature

- General Definition: The nature of a thing or being is the sum total of all that the thing or being is and does. Essence + Attributes = Nature
- Theological Definition: By the nature of God we mean the sum total of all that is true concerning His Essence and His Attributes.

Discussion of Nature

- If something is true of God's nature, it is true of both His essence and His attributes. Positionally, believers today have become sharers in the divine nature, and so ought to live apart from "the corruption that is in the world by means of strong desire." 2 Peter 1:4ff

The Characteristics of God's Nature

Sovereign

Definition of Sovereignty

- One is sovereign when he is able to express his will without subordination to another person, thing, or force in any area of wish or determination.
- God is sovereign in that He is able to express His volition with reference to the expression of His attributes or essence without subordination to any other.

Discussion of Sovereignty

- God has two areas of will:
 - 1) Desirous will - 1 Timothy 2:3-4 *For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.(NKJV)*
 - 2) Determinative will: Ephesians 1:11 *in Him in Whom also we were chosen, having been predestined according to the purpose of the One Who works all things according to the counsel of His desire,(GHS)*
- God expresses His determinative will in various ways, for instance (but not limited to):
 - 1) Salvation: James 1:18 *While exercising His determination, He gave birth to us by a word of truth, so that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.(GHS)*
 - 2) Spiritual gifts: 1 Corinthians 12:11 *And the one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one his own gift, just as He determines.(GHS)*

Free

Definition of Freedom

- God is free in that He has liberty to express His essence and attributes apart from any inner compulsion or necessity, or from any outward constraint.

Discussion of Freedom

- God is free in two areas:
 - 1) God is free mentally: Isaiah 40:13; Romans 11:34.
 - 2) God is free causally; nothing outside of Himself causes Him to act: Romans 11:35.

The Doctrine of God

Infinite

Definition of Infinity

- God is infinite in that He has no limitations or bounds in any area of His essence or attributes. That is to say, God's nature cannot be constrained or forced in any way.

Discussion of Infinity

- God's infinite nature is expressed in Psalm 139, note especially vs. 6, 12, 17-18.

Eternal

Definition of Eternality

- God is eternal in that He inhabits eternity in such a way as to exist in one whole, indivisible, continual present, so that His is duration without succession, beginning, or end. This is not to say that God is static, and cannot experience duration or succession.

Discussion of Eternality

- God does not "live forever," rather He "inhabits eternity": Isaiah 57:15.
- Christ's statement "I am" was by way of a demonstration of His eternal deity: John 18:5, 6.

Immutable

Definition of Immutability

- God is immutable in that neither His essence nor His attributes change either consciously or unconsciously.

Discussion of Immutability

- Once it is determined, God's plan does not change, nor can He lie: Hebrews 6:13-18.
- In His programs, God has calculated changes of His actions and attitudes. Therefore, God is not a static being who has not included changes in His overall program: Malachi 3:6-7.
- Every kind of good gift and perfect giving is coming from God, concerning Whom there is no "place" change, nor "shadow caused by turning": James 1:17.

Mobile

Definition of Mobility

- God is mobile in that He is able to change His attitudes and activities or to choose the individual or compound use of His attributes.

Discussion of Mobility

- God changes His attitudes: Genesis 6:6.
- God changes His attitudes in a different way than does man: 1 Samuel 15:11, 28, 29.
- God is not always pleased with men and their actions: 2 Corinthians 5:9.
- God does not express all of His attributes all of the time equally to all people: John 3:16
Romans 9:13.
- God's changes in attitude are built into His program and applied sovereignly and freely within that program.