

For the purpose of comprehension, God's attributes can be grouped in different ways; however, no method of classification is perfect. The traditional (Reformed) method of classification sees two main divisions, *incommunicable* and *communicable* attributes. God's *incommunicable* attributes are those that are essential to His infinite Being and are thus non-analogous to mankind. His *communicable* attributes are those which are reflected in the *imago dei* in man. The following is a list according to principle categories:

### **Incommunicable Attributes**

1. **Self-Existence** (Ex. 3; Ps. 94:8; Jn. 5:26)
2. **Immutability** (Mal. 3:6; Jas. 1:17)
3. **Infinity** (Ps. 90:2; 139)
4. **Unity** (Deut. 6:4)

### **Communicable Attributes**

1. **Spirituality** (Jn. 4:24; 1 Tim. 6:15-16)
2. **Intelligence** (Knowledge, Wisdom, Veracity, Ps. 139; Jn. 1:48; Isa. 65:16)
3. **Morality** (Goodness, Ps. 145; Holiness, Ps. 5:4; Hab. 1:3)
4. **Sovereignty** (Omnipotence, Rom. 1:20; Rev. 1:8, 20)

Henry Thiessen prefers to list God's attributes or perfections in two different groups: His *Natural* (or *Essential*) Attributes, and His *Moral* Attributes:

1. Natural (Essential) Attributes:
  - a. **Spirituality** – “God is spirit...” (Jn. 4:24) – that is, He is immaterial as to His Being (Luke 24:39). He is also invisible (Jn. 1:18; Col. 1:15; 1 Tim. 6:16). However, this does not mean that He is inanimate... He is real.
  - b. **Life** – “living God” (Jer. 10:10; 1 Thess. 1:9); Jn. 5:26. He is the source of all life (Psalm 36:10).
  - c. **Self-Existence** (Also Autonomy, Independence) – He exists in and of Himself. (*For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself...* Jn. 5:26). Cf. Jn. 8:58; Ex. 3:14; Acts 17:25. He depends on nothing outside of Himself for His existence.
  - d. **Personality** (Personhood, see Barackman) – He is a Person, having all of the characteristics of a personal being: intelligence, reason, conscience (conscious existence) emotions, will, freedom, dominion, etc., Ex. 3:7; Ps. 103:8-14; Jn. 6:38; Eph. 1:11.

The essence of personal being is self-consciousness and free will, which the Scriptures abundantly attribute to God (Ex. 3:14; Isa. 45:5; Job 23:13; Rom. 9:11; Eph. 1:9, 11).

- e. **Infinity** (or Immensity) – God is without limits or boundaries. *“He is not limited or contained by space; on the contrary, all finite space depends on Him. He is in fact outside of space.”* [Thiessen] (Rom. 8:27; Psalm 113:4-6; Jer. 23:24).

God is infinite in all of His attributes. That is, qualitatively, His attributes know no limits or defects. The infinity of God *“has been defined as the limitless fullness and perfection of God.”* [Viertel] (Matt. 5:48; Psalm 145:3; Rom. 11:33).

God is at the same time *transcendent* and *immanent*:

- i. Transcendence – The God of the Bible is *transcendent*, that is, He is distinct from and not a part of, His creation. God is not *in* His creation, He is **over all** of it (Gen. 2:1-2; Ps. 24:1; 50:1, 10-11; Rom. 1:25).
  - ii. Immanence – Although the God of the Bible is transcendent, He is also *immanent* in His work of creation, that is, He is personally interested and involved in creation and the well-being of His creatures (Ex. 3:7-8; Mt. 10:28-31; Gal. 4:4). [Note that the immanence of God also includes the doctrines of God’s *Providence* and God’s *Preservation*.
- f. **Immutability** – God does not change in His nature or essence. His attributes remain eternally the same. (Mal. 3:6; James 1:17; Psalm 102:28).

*“God cannot change for the better, since He is absolutely perfect; for the same reason, He cannot change for the worse either; ...no amelioration nor deterioration is possible.”* [Thiessen]

- g. **Eternity** – God is without beginning and without end. He is *“infinite in relation to time... free of all succession of time... and also the cause of time.”* [Thiessen]

Psalm 90:2 – *“From everlasting even to everlasting you are God.”* Cf. Psalm 102:28; Isa. 9:5.

*“For God, eternity is a ‘now’, an eternal present... God sees all the procession [of time] as a whole, even though He is conscious of the succession and procession [of time].”* [Thiessen]

- h. **Omnipresence** – God is completely present everywhere, simultaneously.

Psalm 139:7-12; Rom 8:27; Matt. 28:20  
Jer. 23:23-24

- i. **Omniscience** – God knows all things. “God possesses infinite knowledge. He knows Himself and knows all things perfectly, from all eternity, whether they are real or merely possible, whether they are past, present, or future. He knows all things in a way that is immediate, simultaneous, exhaustive, and true.” [Thiessen] He knows them independently (Isa. 40:13-14) and intuitively.

Psalm 147:4-5

Hebrews 4:13; Isa. 46:10; Acts 15:17-18; Matt. 10:30

- j. **Omnipotence** – God is all powerful and does whatever He wills.

Matt. 19:26; Cf. Jer. 32:17

Job 42:2; Gen. 17:1; Cf. Heb. 1:3

But the omnipotence of God includes the power of self-limitation [Thiessen]. He acts only in harmony with His perfections (attributes). He will not act in ways that are incompatible or contradictory to His nature. Hence God cannot lie, approve of sin, or be tempted.

God also endows His creatures with responsibility that is real. All that happens is not necessarily the direct result of God’s action. Thankfully, all that He does is under the control of, and in accordance with, His holy will and wisdom.

## 2. Moral Attributes:

*“The moral attributes of God are the essential predicates of the divine nature that imply moral qualities.”* [Thiessen]

- a. **Holiness** – the holiness of God includes several aspects. God is separate, set apart and distinct from all of His creatures, and elevated above them. [Thiessen] It also means that God is morally pure and perfect, separated from all that is impure.

Isa. 6:3 – *“Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of Hosts...”*

Hab. 1:13; 1 Jn. 1:5; 1 Peter 1:15, 16, and Lev. 11:44.

- b. **Justice** (Righteousness) – God deals with His creatures in a way that is just and equitable. [Note that the Biblical concept of the Justice of God can be significantly different from the human concept of “fairness”].

*“It is His nature to be ‘just’, and impossible for Him to act otherwise. For God, justice is the principle that establishes and maintains moral order in the world. His justice implies truth and wrath.”* [Hammond, *Frères, Je ne veux pas que vous ignoriez*, p. 56-7]. It means that there is no wrong in His being but includes also His opposition to wrong.” [Viertel, *La Doctrine Chrétienne de Dieu*, p. 85]

- Gen. 18:25; 2 Ch. 12:6; Cf. Dan. 9:14; 2 Tim. 4:8.
  - God's justice requires condemnation / retribution – Rom. 3:10; 6:23
  - To justly inflict punishment is called *punitive justice* (Ex. 34:6-7)
  - To justly recompense is called *remunerative justice* (Rom. 2:7; 1 Cor. 3:12-15)
  - It is only in Jesus Christ and by the grace of God that a person can be declared just (righteous) before God (Rom 3:21-26)
- c. **Goodness** – God's goodness implies that He continually seeks what is good for His creation. There is no indication that evil was purposefully willed by God in His creation [Hammond].
- Ps. 34:8 – *Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!*
  - Psalm 145:9 – *The LORD is good to all, And His tender mercies are over all His works.*
  - Acts 14:17 - *Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.*

God seeks the well being of His creatures. The goodness of God should lead mankind to repentance (Rom. 2:4) and God causes all things to work “*for good to those who love God*” (Rom. 8:28).

- d. **Mercy** (Compassion, Pity) – One can say that the Mercy of God is “*His goodness manifested with regard to those who are in misery and distress.*” [Thiessen]
- Ephesians 2:4 - *But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us...*
  - Romans 11:30-32 – God is merciful toward nations and toward those who seek Him (Isaiah 55:7).
- e. **Grace** – The grace of God is the favor that He grants us without any obligation on His part and which we do not deserve. “*It is His goodness manifested toward those who do not merit it.*” [Thiessen] Grace is understood in the light of humankind that is both sinful and guilty.
- Eph. 2:8 - *For by grace you have been saved through faith...*
  - Titus 2:11 - *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men...*

For the believer, God's grace is sufficient and strengthens us (2 Cor. 12:9)

- f. **Patience** (Longsuffering) – God long endures wrong, insults, and slander from unbelieving and disobedient human beings, without reaction.
- Ex. 34:6 - *And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth..."*

- 1 Peter 3:20 - *who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared...*
- Rom. 2:4; Psalm 103.8-13

g. **Truth** – *“God is truth... God is a true God in that He is both truthful and faithful. He is the source of all truth.”* [Thiessen]

“In His relationships with His creatures, His truth is known as His veracity and His faithfulness. His veracity concerns what He reveals of Himself and what He says.” [Ibid.]

God keeps His word and His promises. He is worthy of our confidence.

- John 17:3 – *And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*
- 1 John 5:20 – *...that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.*
- John 14:6 – *I am the way, the truth, and the life...*
- Cf. Jn. 3:33, 1 Thess. 1:9
- Heb. 6:18 - *that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation...*

h. **Hatred (Wrath)** – The hatred or wrath of God is His reaction to sin or the sinner because of his holy nature. The hatred of God reveals itself through His wrath (Rom 1:18; John 3:36), and eventually through His judgment (Mt. 25:46; Rev. 15:1).

i. **Love** – Christianity is the only “religion” that presents God as a God of love.

The Love of God is His rational and voluntary affection by which He is eternally compelled to reveal Himself and give of Himself, even toward those who do not deserve it, for their own well-being (1 John 4:8, 16).

- His love is universal – Jn. 3:16
- His love is full of grace – Rom. 5:6-10
- His love is sacrificial – Jn. 3:16; Eph. 5:25
- For the believer, it is among the most important character traits to possess (Col. 3:14; 1 Cor. 13; 1 Jn. 4:7-21; Mt. 5:44; 22:36, 39; Jn. 13:35).

## VI. The Works of God

### A. Creation

#### 1. The Method of Creation

We believe that God created the universe *ex nihilo* (out of nothing), according to the biblical account, in other words, He spoke, and it came into being (Genesis 1,2; Heb. 11:3).

## 2. The Age of Creation

We believe God's creative fiat was immediate, i.e., that it brought about immediate results rather than taking millennia to occur, and that the entire process of God's creative activity took six literal days to complete, as stated in the Bible (Gen. 1:31-2:2).

## 3. Creation versus Evolution

Although we accept that there are certain scientifically demonstrable variations within a given species that derive *naturally*, in accordance with the **specific theory** of evolution [micro-evolution], we reject the **general theory** of evolution [macro-evolution] which presupposes a strictly naturalistic worldview and postulates inter-species mutation and the progression of lower life forms to higher (see Gen. 1:11-12, 20-25). We do not believe that the so-called "geological evidence" purporting to support the general theory of evolution does indeed support it, and we see no logical or scientific contradiction between modern geological discoveries and the creation account in Genesis, particularly if one takes into account the cataclysmic upheavals brought about by the Genesis flood (Gen. 7:10-24).

## B. Revelation

*The Mighty One, God the LORD, Has spoken and called the earth From the rising of the sun to its going down.* – Psalm 50:1

The revelation of God is His Self-disclosure to mankind, created in His image. Throughout all time God has revealed Himself through His creation (Psalm 19:1-4; Rom. 1:19-20), through His sovereign governance of His creation (Providence and Preservation), through His mighty acts in history (His Covenants and Dispensations), and through Special Revelation (the Incarnation and the Scriptures).

### 1. God's Covenants (Conditional and Unconditional)

God's plan for mankind can be traced specifically through EIGHT covenants – some conditional, some unconditional:

- 1) EDENIC – Gen.1:26-31; 2:16-17 (Conditional)
- 2) ADAMIC – Gen. 3:14-19 (Unconditional)
- 3) NOAHIC – Gen. 9:1-18 (Unconditional)
- 4) ABRAHAMIC – Gen. 12:1-4; 13:14-17; 15:1-7; 17:1-8 (Unconditional)
- 5) MOSAIC (or SINAITIC) – Ex. 19:5 – 31:18 (Conditional)
- 6) PROMISED LAND – Deut. 30:1-10 (Conditional)
- 7) DAVIDIC – 2 Sam. 7:4-16; 1 Chr. 17:3-15 (Unconditional)
- 8) NEW COVENANT with ISRAEL – Jer. 31:31-33; with the CHURCH – Matt. 26:26-27; Heb. 8:8-13 (Unconditional)