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John Gill's

A BODY OF DOCTRINAL DIVINITY

Book 1—Chapter 22

OF THE VERACITY OF GOD.

The apostle says, "Let God be true, and every man a liar", (Rom. 3:4) this must be affirmed of him, whatever is said of creatures, he is true and truth itself.

1. God is true in and of himself: this epithet, or attribute, is expressive,

1a. Of the reality of his being; he truly and really exists: this is what every worshipper of him must believe (Heb. 11:6). Creatures have but a shadow of being, in comparison of his; "Every man walks in a vain show", or image; rather in appearance than in reality, (Ps. 39:6) but the existence of God is true, real, and substantial; hence he has the name Jehovah, "I AM that I AM"; which denotes the truth, eternity, and immutability of his essence. What seems to be, and is not, is not true; what seems to be, and is, is true.

1b. Of the truth of his Deity; he is the true and the living God; so he is often called, (2 Chron. 15:3; Jer. 10:10; 1 Thess. 1:9) in opposition to fictitious deities; who either have reigned themselves such, or are feigned so by others; gods only by name, not by nature; of which there have been many: but the true God is but one, and in distinction from such who are called gods in a figurative and metaphorical sense, gods by office under God; as Moses was to Pharaoh, and as kings, judges, and civil magistrates be, (Ex. 7:1; Ps. 82:1, 6, 7). But the Lord is God in a true and proper sense.

1c. This title includes the truth and reality of all his perfections; he is not only omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, eternal, and immutable, but he is truly so: what is falsely claimed by others, or wrongly given to them, is really in him; he is

not only good and gracious, holy and just, but he is truly so; what others only appear to be, he is really.

1d. This may be predicated of each Person in the Godhead; the Father is the only true God, (John 17:3) though not to the exclusion of the Son, who is also the true God and eternal life; nor of the holy Spirit, who is truth; and who, with the Father and the Son, is the one true and living God (1 John 5:20, 6, 7).--This attribute of truth removes from the divine nature everything imperfect and sinful: it is opposed to unrighteousness, (Deut. 32:4) and has the epithet of just or holy along with it, when God is spoken of in his persons, ways, and works, (Rev. 3:7, 6:10, 15:3, 16:7, 19:2) it removes from him all imputation of lying and falsehood; he is not a man, that he should lie, as men do; the Strength of "Israel will not" lie; yea, he is God that "cannot" lie; it is even "impossible" that he should, (Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29; Titus 1.2; Heb. 6:18) this frees him from all deception, he can neither deceive nor be deceived; Jeremiah, indeed, says, "O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived", (Jer. 20:7) but this must be understood either as a misapprehension and mistake of the prophet; or the sense is, if I am deceived, God has deceived me; but as that cannot be, therefore I am not deceived: though rather the words may be rendered, "thou hast persuaded me, and I was persuaded", to enter upon his prophetic office, and to proceed on in the execution of it. Moreover this attribute clears God of the charge of insincerity, hypocrisy, and dissimulation, which, if in him, he could not be true. Nor on the supposition of his decree to save some men, and not all, are his declarations chargeable with anything of that kind; as that he has no pleasure in the death of him that dies, and that he will have all men to be saved, (Ezek. 18:32; 1 Tim. 2:4) since the former respects not eternal death, but the captivity of the Jews, their return from it, upon their obedience, to their own land, and living in it. And the latter respects the will of God to save some of all sorts, of every rank and condition in life, and particularly Gentiles as well as Jews. In short, it removes all unfaithfulness from God, or any shadow of it: it strongly expresses the faithfulness of God; hence "true" and "faithful" are joined together, when the sayings or words of God are spoken of; nor is it any objection to the veracity of God, when what he has promised or threatened is not done; since thereunto a condition is either openly annexed or secretly understood; see (Jer. 18:7-10) but the faithfulness of God, in his promises, &c. will be distinctly considered hereafter. Concerning the veracity of God, let the following things be observed:

1d1. That it is essential to him, it is his very nature and essence; he is truth itself; he is not only called the God of truth, but "God the truth", (Deut. 32:4) and so Christ asserts himself to be the "truth", (John 14:6) and the Spirit is likewise so called (1 John 5:6). To be false, fallacious, and insincere, would be to act contrary to his nature, even to deny himself; which he cannot do.

1d2. It is most pure and perfect in him; as in him is light, and no darkness at all; he is righteous, and no unrighteousness is in him; is holy, and no unholiness in him; is good, and no evil in him; is wisdom, and no folly nor weakness in him; so he is truth, and no falsehood in him, not the least mixture nor appearance of it.

1d3. It is first, chief, and original in him; it is first in him, as he is the first cause; it is chief, as it is perfect in him, and all truth is originally from him; natural and rational truth, which is clear and self-evident to the mind: as the Being of God, from the works of his hands, called the truth of God made manifest in men, and showed unto them (Rom. 1:18-20, 25). Moral truth, by which men know, in some measure, though sadly depraved, the difference between moral good and moral evil (Rom. 2:14, 15). Spiritual truth, truth in the inward parts, or the true grace of God; and evangelical truth, the word of truth, and the several doctrines of it; these are not of men, but of God. All untruth is from Satan, the father of lies; but all truth is from the God of truth, and from the Spirit, who leads into all truth, as it is in Jesus.

1d4. Truth, as in God, is eternal; what is truth now, was always truth with him in his eternal mind; for "known to him are all his works from the beginning", or from eternity, (Acts 15:18) as also his "word is true from the beginning", or from eternity (Ps. 119:160). What is true with us today, might not be true yesterday, and will not be true tomorrow, because things are in a succession with us, and are so known by us; but not so with God, in whose eternal mind all things stand in one view; and besides, as veracity is his nature, his essence, it must be eternal, since that is, which contains all truth in it; and his truth will be to all generations, even for ever (Ps. 100:5, 117:2).

1d5. It is immutable and invariable, as he himself, as his nature is; truth does not always appear in the same light to men; at first more obscurely, then more clearly; it has its gradations and increase; but in God is always the same: creatures are mutable, fallacious, and deceitful; but God is the same, true and faithful, yesterday, today, and for ever. An attribute on account of which he is greatly to be praised and celebrated (Ps. 89:5; Isa. 38:19).

2. God is true in his works; or all his works are true, and his veracity is displayed in them; and these are either internal or external.

2a. Internal acts within himself; some relative to himself, to the divine persons, their modes of subsisting, and distinction from each other; as paternity, filiation, and spiration; which are true and real things: the Father is truly and properly the Father of Christ, and not in name only; and Christ is his own proper Son, not in a figurative sense, or by office, as magistrates are called the children of the most High; but the Son of the Father "in truth" and love, (2 John 1:3) and the Spirit of truth is really breathed, and proceeds from the Father and the Son, (John 15:26) others are relative to creatures; the decrees of God within himself, which are the secret actings and workings of his mind, the thoughts of his heart, the deep things of God, his counsels of old, which are "faithfulness" and "truth"; truly made, and truly performed (Isa. 25:1).

2b. External works, as the works of creation, providence, and grace, which are all true, and real things; and in which the veracity of God appears, both in making and in continuing them.

2b1. The works of creation, the heavens and the earth, which are both his handy work, and all that are in them; in which the invisible perfections of his nature are displayed and discerned, his eternal power and Godhead, and his veracity among the rest. The heavens above us, the sun, moon, and stars we behold, and the earth on which we live, are real, and not imaginary, they truly exist. Satan pretended to show to Christ "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them", (Matthew 4:8) but this was a false and delusive representation, a "deceptio visus", by which he would have imposed on Christ, but could not.

2b2. The works of providence; those in an ordinary way, by which God governs the world, and disposes of all things according to truth and righteousness; and such as are of an extraordinary kind, as those done by the hands of Moses, in Egypt; and by Christ and his apostles: these were real things, to answer some wise ends and purposes in the world; when those done by the magicians were only in show, in appearance, and by a sort of legerdemain; as those done by antichrist, in the sight of men, as they imagine, whereby he deceives them that dwell on the earth; and therefore are called "lying wonders", feigned things, which have no truth in them, (Rev. 13:13, 14; 2 Thess. 2:9, 10) but the wonderful works of God are true, and without deceit, as are all his judgments he executes by the sword, famine, pestilence, &c.

2b3. The works of grace done by him, his acts of grace, both in eternity and time; his choice of persons to eternal life, is true, firm, and real, the foundation of God, which stands sure; the covenant of grace, made in Christ, full of blessings and promises, faithfully performed; the mission of Christ into the world, and his incarnation, who was really made flesh, and dwelt among men; the truth of which the apostle confirms by the various senses of seeing, hearing, and handling (1 John 1:1). Justification by his righteousness is really imputed to his people, and by which they truly become righteous; and not in a putative and imaginary sense; pardon by his blood, which is not merely typical, as by the blood of slain beasts, but real; atonement by the sacrifice of himself, which he really and truly offered up to God; and sanctification by the Spirit, which is the new man, created in righteousness and true holiness; and not outward, typical, and ceremonial, nor feigned and hypocritical: and adoption, by which the saints are now really the sons of God; though it does not yet appear what they shall be; and to which the Spirit bears a true and real witness; and which is unto an inheritance, real, solid, and substantial.

3. God is true in his words, in his essential Word, his Son, who was "in the beginning with God"; had a true and real existence with him, and was God, really and truly God; he is true in his person and natures, the true God and eternal life, who took unto him a true body and a reasonable soul; and whose human nature is the true tabernacle God pitched, and not man: true in his offices he bears; the true prophet raised up and sent of God, the true light, that lightens men in every sense; the true priest, not of the order of Aaron, but of the order of Melchizedek; the true and only Potentate, King of kings, and Lord of lords; the true Mediator between God and men, and not a typical one, as Moses.

God is true in his written word; the scriptures are the scriptures of truth, even the whole of them, (Dan. 10:21) they are given by inspiration from God, are the breath of God, who is the God of truth, and therefore to be received, "not as the word of man, but as in truth the word of God", (1 Thess. 2:13) the legal part of them is truth; the apostle speaks of the "truth in the law", known by men, (Rom. 2:20) there is not a precept in it but what is true and right; "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether" (Ps. 19:9). And the gospel part of them is eminently the word of truth, (Eph. 1:13) and all the doctrines of it, which are "pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times" (Ps. 12:6). And the truth and veracity of God appears in the fulfilment of the predictions, promises, and threatenings contained in his word, which is the same with his faithfulness; which we shall particularly treat of in the next chapter, being naturally led to it; the veracity of God is the foundation of his faithfulness; and his faithfulness is a branch of that; and they are often put one for the other, and signify the same thing.