

THE TRUE AND LIVING GOD
PRESENTED BY
JESS HALL, JR.
GREEN LAWN CHURCH OF CHRIST
APRIL 21, 1968

JEREMIAH 10:10--BUT THE LORD IS THE TRUE GOD, HE IS THE LIVING GOD, AND AN EVERLASTING KING: AT HIS WRATH THE EARTH SHALL TREMBLE, AND THE NATIONS SHALL NOT BE ABLE TO ABIDE HIS INDIGNATION.

I THESSALONIANS 1:9--FOR THEY THEMSELVES SHEW US WHAT MANNER OF ENTERING IT WE HAD UNTO YOU, AND HOW YE TURNED TO GOD FROM IDOLS TO SERVE THE LIVING AND TRUE GOD.

OUR SUBJECT DOES NOT DEAL WITH THOSE THEMES WHICH ARE CONSIDERED TO BE THE MOST TIMELY. I WILL NOT SPEAK OF THE GOLD DRAIN OR THE DOLLAR CRISIS; THE DEATH OF MARTIN LUTHER KING OR THE DEATH OF A PRESIDENT; THE WAR ON POVERTY OR THE WAR IN VIET NAM.

INSTEAD I AM GOING TO SPEAK TO YOU ABOUT GOD. I AM GOING TO SPEAK TO YOU ABOUT THE GOD OF WHICH JEREMIAH SAID, "BUT THE LORD IS THE TRUE GOD, HE IS THE LIVING GOD, AND AN EVERLASTING KING." (JEREMIAH 10:10). I AM GOING TO SPEAK TO YOU ABOUT THE GOD OF WHICH PAUL SPOKE TO THE THESSALONIANS WHEN HE SAID THEY "TURNED TO GOD FROM IDOLS TO SERVE THE LIVING AND TRUE GOD." (I THESSALONIANS 1:9). TO SOME SUCH SUBJECTS AS THESE ARE NOT RELEVANT TO OUR DAY. TO THEM MEN ARE MORE INTERESTED IN PRESENT PROBLEMS THAN INTANGIBLE TOPICS. FOR THEM, CONSIDERATION OF LIFE BEYOND DEATH MUST BE POSTPONED UNTIL WE HAVE SET OUR WORLD IN ORDER.

THOSE WHO FEEL THIS WAY MAY ARGUE WITH SOME PERSUASION THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO BE DONE FOR A MAN IS NOT ALWAYS THE FIRST THING TO BE DONE. IF A MAN IS DROWNING THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS TO PREACH TO HIM THE GOSPEL, BUT THE THING OF IMMEDIATE NECESSITY IS TO PULL HIM OUT OF THE WATER. CERTAINLY THIS IS SO, SINCE HE CANNOT HEAR THE GOSPEL WHEN EITHER HIS LUNGS OR HIS EARS ARE FULL OF WATER.

EVEN SO, THE ARGUMENT GOES, WHEN THE WORLD IS IN A MIRE THE ACT OF IMMEDIATE NECESSITY IS NOT TO PREACH TO THE WORLD, BUT TO PULL IT OUT. SUCH REASONING IS PERSUASIVE, BUT COMPLETELY UNTRUE.

IN THE FIRST PLACE SUCH AN APPROACH IS UNREALISTIC AND WILL NOT WORK. IT SUGGESTS THAT WE DEAL WITH SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS FIRST, AND THEN WITH GOD, WHILE IT IGNORES THAT OUR SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS CAME INTO BEING PRECISELY BECAUSE MEN FORGOT GOD AND TURNED EVERY MAN TO HIS OWN WAY. THE EVILS FOUND IN MAN WERE THERE BECAUSE GOD WAS NOT THERE. "AND EVEN AS THEY DID NOT LIKE TO RETAIN GOD IN THEIR KNOWLEDGE, GOD GAVE THEM OVER TO A REPROBATE MIND, TO DO THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT FITTING" (ROMANS 1:28).

TRYING TO SOLVE THE WORLD'S PROBLEMS WITHOUT GOD IS LIKE TRYING TO MAKE A GASOLINE ENGINE RUN WITHOUT A SPARK. I USUALLY DISCONNECT THE SPARK-PLUG WIRE FROM MY MOWER WHEN NOT IN USE SO AS TO REDUCE THE LIKELIHOOD OF AN ACCIDENT FROM THE CHILDREN'S PLAYING WITH IT. SOMETIMES I FORGET TO REATTACH IT BEFORE CRANKING AND IT MAKES ME CRANKY TO SAY THE LEAST. IT IS JUST AS VAIN TO CRANK THE ENGINE OF SOCIETY IF THERE IS NO GOD TO PROVIDE THE SPARK, IF THERE IS NO GOD TO GIVE IT MEANING, IF THERE IS NO GOD TO WHOM WE MIGHT RELATE IT, IF THERE IS NO GOD TO MAKE IT GO.

SECONDLY, THERE IS REALLY NO ANALOGY BETWEEN THE PULLING OUT OF THE DROWNING MAN AND THE PULLING OUT SOCIETY. ONE IS A SIMPLE PHYSICAL ACT WHILE THE OTHER IS A COMPLEX MATTER INVOLVING NOT ONLY THE PHYSICAL BUT THE SOULS OF MANKIND.

FORMERLY, MEN BEGAN THE STUDY OF GOD WITH TWO PRESUPPOSITIONS: 1) GOD EXISTS, 2) GOD HAS REVEALED HIMSELF IN HIS WORD. THE CHANGE IN THIS APPROACH GAINED ITS GREATEST IMPETUS FROM A THEOLOGIAN PHILOSOPHER BY THE NAME OF FRIEDRICH SCHLEIERMACHER (1768-1834). HE WAS ONE OF THE FIRST TO DISASSOCIATE SCRIPTURE FROM THE WORD OF GOD, AND TO MAKE A DISTINCTION IN WHAT HE REFERRED TO AS THE WORD OF GOD AND THE SCRIPTURES OR THE WRITINGS OF GOD. FAITH IN SCRIPTURE AS AN AUTHORITATIVE REVELATION OF GOD WAS DISCREDITED AND THE STANDARD OF RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY BECAME HUMAN INSIGHT GAINED FROM EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE OR RATIONAL COMPREHENSION. NO LONGER WAS THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD SOMETHING THAT MAN RECEIVED. MAN BEGAN TO PRIDE HIMSELF ON BEING A "SEEKER" AFTER GOD. MAN SPOKE OF "DISCOVERING" GOD AND DIGNIFIED HIS "DISCOVERIES" WITH THE WORD "REVELATION." GOD WAS THE FINAL LINK IN A CHAIN OF REASONING OR THE CONCLUSION OF A SYLLOGISM.

MAN FELL IN LOVE WITH HIMSELF AND EXAGGERATED HIS SENSE OF ABILITY AND GOODNESS. NATURAL REVELATION WAS EXALTED TO THE THRONE FROM WHICH SUPERNATURAL REVELATION HAD BEEN CAST. THE SCRIPTURE WAS REJECTED AS AUTHORITATIVE AND MAN DEPENDED UPON HIS REASON TO LEAD HIM OUT OF THE DARKNESS OF IGNORANCE INTO THE LIGHT OF TRUE KNOWLEDGE.

HOWEVER, UNINSPIRED MAN NEVER FOUND THE GOD OF THE BIBLE FOR "THE NATURAL MAN RECEIVETH NOT THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD" (1 CORINTHIANS 2:14). IN ADDITION, A GOD WHO COULD BE DISCOVERED BY HUMAN EFFORT ALONE WOULD HARDLY BE WORTH THE EFFORT. BEING A PASSIVE OBJECT OF HUMAN INVESTIGATION HE COULD NOT BE A LIVING GOD WHO COULD SATISFY OUR SOULS.

TODAY THE GOD OF THE BIBLE IS GRIPPED IN BATTLE AS NEVER BEFORE WITH THE ANCIENT GODS OF ORIENTAL RELIGIONS AND THE MODERN GODS OF OCCIDENTAL CULTS. AND IN ADDITION TO ALL OF THIS HE MUST LIKEWISE BATTLE WITH ALL OF THE RATIONAL GODS THAT MODERN DAY THEOLOGIAN HAVE SUPPOSED.

THE PROBLEM IS THAT THOSE WHO QUESTION GOD, AND THOSE WHO SEEK TO DISCOVER FOR THEMSELVES A GOD OF THEIR OWN MAKING ARE STRIKING AT THE VERY FOUNDATION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH. NOT ONLY ARE THEY QUESTIONING NOW THE ESSENCE AND THE EXISTENCE OF GOD, BUT THEY ARE LIKEWISE QUESTIONING WHETHER OR NOT IN THIS MODERN WORLD, IN THIS WORLD WHERE MAN, ACCORDING TO THEIR CONCEPT OF MAN, HAS COME OF AGE WHETHER OR NOT IN THIS WORLD THERE IS EVEN ANY ROOM AT ALL FOR THE IDEA OF GOD. ONE OF MAN'S BASIC PROBLEMS IN THE STUDY OF GOD HAS ALWAYS BEEN IN DEFINITION. CAN MAN DEFINE GOD? IF SO, IN WHAT SENSE? WE MIGHT ALSO ADD, IF SO, WHICH GOD SHALL HE DEFINE.

J. B. PHILLIPS WROTE A LITTLE BOOK ENTITLED, "YOUR GOD IS TOO SMALL." IN IT HE LISTS A NUMBER OF POPULAR MISCONCEPTIONS CONCERNING THE NATURE OF GOD. IT IS NOT THESE MISCONCEPTIONS WE ARE TRYING EITHER TO DEFINE OR TO DEFEND. WE ARE NOT INTERESTED IN A DEISTIC GOD WHICH IS UNRELATED TO THE WORLD OR A PANTHEISTIC GOD WHICH IS NECESSARILY RELATED TO THE WORLD. NEITHER ARE WE OVERLY CONCERNED WITH TILlich's GROUND OF BEING, BARTH'S WHOLLY OTHER, OR THE DEAD GOD OF EITHER NIETZSCHE OR ALTIZER. WE ARE CONCERNED WITH THE GOD WHO IS SPIRIT, SOVEREIGN, OMNIPOTENT, OMNISCIENT, OMNIPRESENT, INFINITE, ETERNAL, ABOVE THE EARTH IN BEING, MANIFEST IN PURPOSE, UNCHANGEABLE IN BEING, WISDOM, POWER, HOLINESS, JUSTICE, GOODNESS AND TRUTH.

IT IS EVIDENT THAT THE BEING OF GOD DOES NOT ADMIT OF ANY SCIENTIFIC DEFINITION. AT MOST WE CAN HAVE ONLY A DEFINITION WHICH ANALYZES OR DESCRIBES AND LEAVES THE ESSENTIAL BEING UNEXPLAINED.

NOWHERE DOES THE BIBLE SEEK TO DEFINE OR PROVE GOD. IT SIMPLY ASSUMES HIS EXISTENCE. THIS IS THE ASSUMPTION WITH WHICH THE BIBLE BEGINS: "IN THE BEGINNING GOD." THIS IS THE FAITH REQUIRED OF THOSE WHO WOULD COME: "HE THAT COMES TO GOD MUST BELIEVE THAT HE IS." THE CLOSEST THE BIBLE COMES TO DEFINING GOD IS FOUND IN GOD'S

SELF-DISCLOSURE TO MOSES: "I AM THAT I AM." HIS NATURE IS DESCRIBED IN JOHN 4:24 AS BEING SPIRIT.

PERHAPS ONE REASON IT IS DIFFICULT FOR US TO DEFINE GOD IS THAT IT IS DIFFICULT FOR US TO THINK OF GOD. IT IS DIFFICULT THEOLOGICALLY BECAUSE, ALTHOUGH GOD IS SPIRIT, HE HAS REVEALED HIMSELF IN ANTHROPOMORPHIC LANGUAGE WHICH CAUSES US TO THINK OF HIM IN MATERIAL TERMS. GOD SAID ISRAEL THOUGHT "THAT I WAS ALTOGETHER SUCH AN ONE AS THYSELF" (PSALMS 50:21). IN OTHER WORDS, BECAUSE GOD HAD REVEALED HIMSELF IN THE LANGUAGE OF MAN, THEY THOUGHT HE WAS ALTOGETHER AS MAN AND THAT ALL OF THE LIMITATIONS THAT WERE IMPOSED ON MAN WERE ALSO IMPOSED UPON GOD AND THAT IN REALITY GOD WAS NOTHING MORE THAN GLORIFIED MAN.

THINKING OF GOD IS DIFFICULT PSYCHOLOGICALLY BECAUSE IT IS HARD FOR US TO THINK ABSTRACTLY. WE PREFER TO THINK IN TERMS OF THAT "WHICH WE HAVE HEARD, WHICH WE HAVE SEEN WITH OUR EYES...AND OUR HANDS HAVE HANDLED" (1 JOHN 1:1). BUT WE CANNOT DO THIS WITH GOD FOR GOD IS SPIRIT. THIS WAS PRECISELY PHILIP'S DIFFICULTY WHEN HE SAID, "LORD, SHOW US THE FATHER, AND IT SUFFICETH US" (JOHN 14:8). IT WAS HARD FOR HIM TO CONCEIVE OF THE SPIRITUAL GOD THAT JESUS WAS REVEALING. YET JESUS AS GOD INCARNATE IS THE SOLUTION TO THE DIFFICULTY. "HE THAT HATH SEEN ME HATH SEEN THE FATHER" (JOHN 14:9).

ASSUMING, THEN, THAT MAN CAN DEFINE GOD AT LEAST TO THE DEGREE THAT GOD HAS REVEALED HIMSELF IN HIS WORD AND IN HIS SON, THERE IS YET ANOTHER BASIC CONSIDERATION BEFORE WE CAN PROCEED. CAN WE KNOW GOD, AND, IF SO, HOW? EVEN INSPIRATION ASKS THIS QUESTION. "CANST THOU BY SEARCHING FIND OUT GOD? CANST THOU FIND OUT THE ALMIGHTY UNTO PERFECTION?" (JOB 11:7). "TO WHOM THEN WILL YE LIKEN GOD? OR WHAT LIKENESS WILL YE COMPARE UNTO HIM?" (ISAIAH 40:18).

FOR MANY THIS QUESTION IS ANSWERED NEGATIVELY. THE SUPPOSED LIMITS OF THE HUMAN FACULTY OF COGNITION ARE POSED AS PROHIBITING MAN FROM KNOWING GOD. IT IS SUGGESTED THAT THE MIND OF MAN IS NOT CAPABLE OF KNOWING ANYTHING WHICH LIES BEYOND OR BEHIND NATURE AND IS THEREFORE IGNORANT OF DIVINE OR SUPERNATURAL PHENOMENA. IT IS TO THIS GROUP WHICH HUXLEY APPLIED THE TERM "AGNOSTIC."

OTHERS SUGGEST THAT MAN CAN ONLY KNOW BY ANALOGY--THAT IS, WE CAN ONLY KNOW THOSE THINGS THAT BEAR SOME RESEMBLANCE TO OUR OWN NATURE OR EXPERIENCE. TWO FACTORS ARE OVERLOOKED: 1) MAN LEARNS ALSO BY CONTRAST WHICH IS OFTEN MORE ARRESTING THAN ANALOGY. 2) THERE IS ANALOGY BETWEEN GOD AND MAN WHO IS MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE.

ANOTHER OBJECTION IS THAT MAN KNOWS ONLY WHAT HE CAN GRASP IN ITS ENTIRETY; BUT IF THIS BE SO, MAN KNOWS PRECIOUS LITTLE, IF HE KNOWS ANYTHING AT ALL. IN ADDITION, SUCH AN OBJECTION PROCEEDS ON THE FALSE PREMISE THAT PARTIAL KNOWLEDGE CANNOT BE REAL KNOWLEDGE. CERTAINLY OUR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IS NOT EXHAUSTIVE, BUT IT IS ADEQUATE FOR OUR PRESENT NEEDS. WE MAY KNOW A THING CORRECTLY SO FAR AS WE KNOW IT, EVEN THOUGH WE DON'T KNOW ALL ABOUT IT. WE CERTAINLY CAN SET FORTH THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD REVEALED TO MAN, AND THESE ARE TO BE REGARDED AS TRUE.

OTHERS DENY THE POSSIBILITY OF KNOWING GOD ON THE BASIS THAT ALL WE PREDICATE OF GOD IS NEGATIVE AND CANNOT FURNISH ANY REAL KNOWLEDGE. WHILE IT IS TRUE THAT MUCH WHICH WE PREDICATE OF GOD IS NEGATIVE, IT DOES NOT MEAN THAT POSITIVE IDEAS CANNOT BE CONVEYED. SUCH CONCEPTS OF GOD AS HIS BEING UNDERIVED BEING, SELF-EXISTENT, SELF-SUFFICIENT, LOVE AND HOLINESS ARE AMONG THE POSITIVE.

FINALLY, IT IS CLAIMED THAT WE CANNOT KNOW GOD BECAUSE ALL KNOWLEDGE IS RELATIVE TO THE KNOWING SUBJECT, THAT IS, IN THE PROCESS OF KNOWING WE DISTORT AND COLOR THAT WHICH IS KNOWN. THIS REDUCES TO SKEPTICISM, FOR IF THIS IS TRUE OF ALL KNOWLEDGE THEN MAN HAS NO REAL KNOWLEDGE AT ALL.

WHAT WE NEED TO REMEMBER IS THAT THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD DIFFERS FROM ALL OTHER KNOWLEDGE IN ONE IMPORTANT POINT. IN THE PURSUIT OF ALL OTHER KNOWLEDGE MAN PLACES HIMSELF ABOVE THE OBJECT OF HIS STUDY AND LEARNS FROM IT BY WHATEVER MEANS ARE PROPER; IN THE STUDY OF GOD, MAN STANDS UNDER THE OBJECT OF HIS KNOWLEDGE AND CAN ONLY LEARN THAT WHICH THE OBJECT OF HIS KNOWLEDGE (GOD) IS WILLING TO MAKE KNOWN (REVEAL) ABOUT HIMSELF. "BUT AS IT IS WRITTEN, EYE HATH NOT SEEN, NOR EAR HEARD, NEITHER HAVE ENTERED INTO THE HEART OF MAN, THE THINGS WHICH GOD HATH PREPARED FOR THEM THAT LOVE HIM." (SO OFTEN WHEN THAT VERSE IS READ, IT IS THEN APPLIED TO HEAVEN AND THE WONDERS WHICH SHALL THERE AWAIT THE CHILDREN OF GOD, BUT SUCH IS A MISAPPLICATION OF THIS PASSAGE. IT IS NOT SPEAKING IN THE CONTEXT OF HEAVEN, ITS WONDERS, AND ITS BEAUTIES, BUT RATHER IT IS SPEAKING ABOUT THE REVELATION THAT GOD HAS MADE OF THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION AND IT IS REFERRING TO THE WONDERS THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR HIS CHILDREN TO ENJOY IN THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION.) "BUT GOD HATH REVEALED THEM UNTO US BY HIS SPIRIT; FOR THE SPIRIT SEARCHETH ALL THINGS, YEA, THE DEEP THINGS OF GOD. FOR WHAT MAN KNOWETH THE THINGS OF A MAN, SAVE THE SPIRIT OF MAN WHICH IS IN HIM? EVEN SO THE THINGS OF GOD KNOWETH NO MAN, BUT THE SPIRIT OF GOD. NOW WE HAVE RECEIVED, NOT THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD, BUT THE SPIRIT WHICH IS OF GOD; THAT WE MIGHT KNOW THE THINGS THAT ARE FREELY GIVEN TO US OF GOD. WHICH THINGS ALSO WE SPEAK, NOT IN THE WORDS WHICH MAN'S WISDOM TEACHETH, BUT WHICH THE HOLY GHOST TEACHETH; COMPARING SPIRITUAL THINGS WITH SPIRITUAL. BUT THE NATURAL MAN RECEIVETH NOT THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD: FOR THEY ARE FOOLISHNESS UNTO HIM; NEITHER CAN HE KNOW THEM, BECAUSE THEY ARE SPIRITUALLY DISCERNED." (I CORINTHIANS 2:9-14).

THE REVELATION WHICH GOD HAS MADE OF HIMSELF IS TWOFOLD. THESE TWO METHODS HAVE BEEN VARIOUSLY REFERRED TO, BUT WE SHALL REFER TO THEM AS GENERAL REVELATION AND SPECIAL REVELATION. GENERAL REVELATION IS ADDRESSED TO ALL MEN AND IS ACCESSIBLE TO ALL; SPECIAL REVELATION, WHICH MAKES KNOWN SALVATION, IS GIVEN TO SPECIAL MEN WHO ARE COMMISSIONED TO TELL. GENERAL REVELATION HAS TO DO WITH GOD'S REVELATION OF HIMSELF IN NATURE, AND SPECIAL REVELATION HAS TO DO WITH DIRECT VERBAL REVELATIONS TO SPECIAL PERSONS. GENERAL REVELATION IS ROOTED IN CREATION; SPECIAL REVELATION IS ROOTED IN GOD'S REDEMPTIVE PURPOSE. THIS DOES NOT IGNORE THE SPECIAL REVELATION WHICH GOD HAS GIVEN IN JESUS CHRIST; RATHER, IT IS INCLUDED IN THAT REVELATION WHICH IS WRITTEN, APART FROM WHICH WE WOULD HAVE NO KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST.

THE BIBLE SPEAKS OF GENERAL REVELATION. "THE HEAVENS DECLARE THE GLORY OF GOD; AND THE FIRMAMENT SHEWETH HIS HANDYWORK" (PSALMS 19:1). "NEVERTHELESS HE LEFT NOT HIMSELF WITHOUT WITNESS, IN THAT HE DID GOOD, AND GAVE US RAIN FROM HEAVEN, AND FRUITFUL SEASONS, FILLING OUR HEARTS WITH GOOD AND GLADNESS" (ACTS 14:17). "BECAUSE THAT WHICH MAY BE KNOWN OF GOD IS MANIFEST IN THEM; FOR GOD HATH SHEWED IT UNTO THEM. FOR THE INVISIBLE THINGS OF HIM FROM THE CREATION OF THE WORLD ARE CLEARLY SEEN, BEING UNDERSTOOD BY THE THINGS THAT ARE MADE, EVEN HIS ETERNAL POWER AND GODHEAD" (ROMANS 1:19,20).

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF VARIATIONS OF THE ARGUMENTS FROM GENERAL REVELATION BUT THEY MAY BE REDUCED TO FOUR BASIC ONES. THEY ARE SOMETIMES REFERRED TO AS CLASSICAL PROOFS. THEY ARE SOMETIMES REFERRED TO, AND PARTICULARLY ROMAN CIRCLES, AS BEING NATURAL THEOLOGY.

1) THE COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT. THIS ARGUMENT, BRIEFLY STATED, IS THAT EVERY EXISTING THING IN THE WORLD MUST HAVE AN ADEQUATE CAUSE; THE UNIVERSE IS AN EXISTING THING; THEREFORE, THE UNIVERSE MUST HAVE AN ADEQUATE CAUSE. THE WRITER OF HEBREWS SEEMS TO LEND CREDENCE TO THIS ARGUMENT WHEN HE WRITES, "FOR EVERY HOUSE IS BUILT BY SOME MAN; BUT HE THAT BUILT ALL THINGS IS GOD" (HEBREWS 3:4).

2) THE TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT. THIS ARGUMENT STATES THAT ORDER AND USEFUL ARRANGEMENT IN A SYSTEM IMPLY INTELLIGENCE AND PURPOSE IN THE ORIGINATING CAUSE. THE UNIVERSE IS CHARACTERIZED BY ORDER AND USEFUL ARRANGEMENT; THEREFORE, THE UNIVERSE HAS AN INTELLIGENT AND PURPOSIVE ORIGINATING CAUSE. THE USEFULNESS OF RAINS AND SEASONS WAS A WITNESS OF GOD IN ACTS 14:17 (SEE ABOVE).

3) THE ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT. THIS ARGUMENT STATES THAT SINCE WE HAVE AN IDEA OF AN ABSOLUTELY PERFECT BEING, AND SINCE EXISTENCE IS AN ATTRIBUTE OF PERFECTION, AN ABSOLUTELY PERFECT BEING MUST EXIST. THE REJOINER OF THE PHILOSOPHER, KANT, THAT HIS IMAGINING HE HAD A HUNDRED DOLLARS DOES NOT BRING THEM INTO EXISTENCE AND THAT THE REAL CANNOT CONTAIN MORE THAN THE POSSIBLE REALLY MISSES THE MARK. ACCORDING TO ANSELM, THE PROPOUNDER OF THE ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT, THE ARGUMENT WAS NOT INTENDED TO APPLY TO THE FINITE, BUT ONLY TO THE INFINITE, TO A SUPREME BEING WHOSE ESSENCE AND EXISTENCE ARE ONE AND THE SAME. THE ARGUMENT WAS NEVER MEANT TO APPLY TO ANYTHING LESSER AND IT IS TO THINGS LESSER THAT KANT LOOKS FOR THE ILLUSTRATIONS OF HIS ARGUMENTS. EVEN IF IT BE ADMITTED THAT THE ARGUMENT IS WEAK IN PROVING THE EXISTENCE OF GOD, IT IS STRONG IN SHOWING WHAT GOD MUST BE, IF HE EXISTS. THE ARGUMENT IS ONE LINK IN A CHAIN OF CUMULATIVE EVIDENCE WHICH POINTS TO THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

4) THE MORAL ARGUMENT. ALTHOUGH KANT DID NOT HAVE MUCH CONFIDENCE IN THE CLASSICAL PROOFS (THOUGH HE SAID WE MUST TREAT THE TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT WITH GREAT RESPECT), HE DID BELIEVE IN A SUPREME BEING. HE ARRIVED AT THIS FAITH THROUGH THE MORAL ARGUMENT. THIS ARGUMENT STATES SIMPLY THAT THERE IS NO REASONABLE WAY TO ACCOUNT FOR THE SENSE OF "OUGHTNESS" IN MAN EXCEPT BY THE POSTULATION OF GOD. BASICALLY IT PLEADS AS EVIDENCE MAN'S CONSCIENCE, OR SENSE OF RIGHT AND WRONG (SEE ROMANS 2:14-16). THIS SENSE OF OUGHTNESS HAD TO COME FROM A SOURCE EXTERNAL TO OURSELVES. IT COULD NOT HAVE BEEN SELF IMPOSED, NEITHER COULD IT HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED FROM INSTINCTS BY LIFE IN SOCIETY AS IS EVIDENCED BY THE FACT THAT THE SENSE OF DUTY HAS NO REGARD TO OUR INCLINATIONS, PLEASURES, FORTUNES, NOR TO PRACTICES OF SOCIETY, BUT IS OFTEN IN CONFLICT WITH THEM.

WHILE GENERAL REVELATION CAN SHOW POSSIBILITY AND EVEN PROBABILITY, IT IS INCOMPLETE WITHOUT SPECIAL REVELATION. WHILE THE HEAVENS ABOVE AND THE EARTH BENEATH SHOW SOME OF THE POWER AND WISDOM OF GOD, THEY DO NOT SHOW IT FULLY FOR GOD HAS NOT EXHAUSTED HIMSELF IN CREATION. GENERAL REVELATION MAY SHOW POWER ABOVE MAN'S, BUT NOT NECESSARILY OMNIPOTENCE. IT IS POSSIBLE TO CONCEIVE OF THERE BEING MORE STARS AND MORE COMPLICATED PATTERNS OF THE STARS IN THEIR ORBITS.

NEITHER CAN GENERAL REVELATION FULLY DISPLAY THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD. THE PRESENCE OF EVIL IN THE WORLD HAS LED MANY WHO DEPEND ONLY UPON NATURAL OR GENERAL REVELATION TO DENY GOD ALTOGETHER OR TO SUGGEST A FINITE GOD WHO DOES NOT HAVE POWER OVER EVIL.

GENERAL REVELATION WAS NOT ENOUGH EVEN IN EDEN. GOD SPOKE TO ADAM BEFORE THE FALL AND TOLD HIM THINGS HE COULD NOT OTHERWISE HAVE KNOWN. WHEN ADAM WAS PLACED IN THE GARDEN HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO, NOR WOULD ANY STUDY OF THE GARDEN HAVE TOLD HIM. HE RECEIVED HIS INSTRUCTION BY SPECIAL DIVINE REVELATION AND IT WAS IN SPECIAL REVELATION THAT THE GOD OF EDEN WAS IDENTIFIED.

NATURE CAN SPEAK OF POWER AND INTELLIGENCE, BUT NOT OF CHARACTER. THREE LINES OF A LETTER FROM AN ARTIST MIGHT TELL MORE OF HIS CHARACTER THAN A CLOSE SCRUTINY OF ALL OF HIS WORKS. IN THE BIBLE WE HAVE A LETTER FROM GOD IN WHICH HE REVEALS HIMSELF.

IF IT BE OBJECTED THAT THE CHRIST IS THE GREATEST SPECIAL REVELATION OF GOD, I WILL NOT DISAGREE. I WILL BUT REMIND THE OBJECTOR THAT HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR SPOKEN REVELATION TO IDENTIFY THE CHRIST CHILD HE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN KNOWN AS A SAVIOR (LUKE 2:11,12).

FROM THE STAR IT WAS EVIDENT THAT THE WORLD WAS IN THE PRESENCE OF GREATNESS BUT IT TOOK SPECIAL REVELATION TO DIRECT MEN TO THAT GREATNESS AND TO REVEAL TO THEM THAT THEY WERE NOT SIMPLY IN THE PRESENCE OF GREATNESS, BUT IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD. HAD THAT REVELATION (AND OTHERS AS WELL) NOT BEEN PRESERVED IN GOD'S WORD, THE BIBLE, WE WOULD HAVE NO KNOWLEDGE OF IT TODAY.

IT IS BECAUSE OF THIS REVELATION THAT WE CAN SING:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY! LORD GOD ALMIGHTY!
EARLY IN THE MORNING OUR SONG SHALL RISE TO THEE;
HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, MERCIFUL AND MIGHTY!
GOD IN THREE PERSONS, BLESSED TRINITY.

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY! LORD GOD ALMIGHTY;
ALL THY WORKS SHALL PRAISE THY NAME, IN EARTH, AND SKY, AND SEA;
HOLY, HOLY, HOLY! MERCIFUL AND MIGHTY!
GOD OVER ALL, AND BLEST ETERNALLY.