

**AN ENQUIRY RESPECTING
LOVE, AS ONE OF THE
DIVINE ATTRIBUTES**

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An Enquiry Respecting Love, as One of the Divine Attributes by Thomas Gisborne

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THOMAS GISBORNE

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L O V E,
AS
ONE OF THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES.

"God is love."—1 John, iv. 8. 16.

BY THOMAS GISBORNE, M.A.
PREBENDARY OF DURHAM.

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENTS.

GOD is *Love* : concentrated, unchanging, perfect Love. Such is the declaration of the Scriptures.

Such, objectors affirm, is not the conclusion of research and experience.

We hear and we read discussions on the Divine Benevolence. What is benevolence? It is qualified Love : Love proceeding to a certain degree. Literally, it is good will. Good will implies a degree of friendly regard, a kind feeling, a portion of Love towards the individual contemplated. Yet it does not necessarily imply that the friendly regard, the kind feeling, the portion of Love, is in all cases, or in the

particular case, very large. Benevolence not only is capable of gradations, but it is not the spirit of Love without circumscription. It may exist with a warmth of affection and a diffusiveness of expansion falling far short of concentrated and perfect Love; far short of that Love which so characterizes a being in whom it dwells as to be justly identified with Him. Writers who contend for the Divine benevolence, according to the usual acceptation of the term, may thus set before themselves a seemingly easier task: but they do not contend for the character of God as declared by His Spirit. In God dwells Love in immutable perfection: so pervading, if we may thus speak, the whole essence of the Deity, so directing all His counsels and all His operations, that Love may be rightly identified with Him, and He with Love. *God is Love*. When we speak, therefore, of the benevolence of God, we employ a term lowering the attribute which we design to ascribe to Him; and tending to excite and to establish in our minds indefinite, and inadequate, and therefore unworthy thoughts of the glorious perfection which we profess to extol. Let us take our stand on the ground provided for us

in His own word: *God is Love*. Believers in His truth and in the Christian Revelation, we believe the assertion upon the credit of the Divine veracity. But we may lawfully rejoice in finding corroborations furnished to it by research and experience.

God is the sole self-existent Being. The objects, therefore, as to which His Love is exercised and exemplified must be the sentient beings whom He has created.

The numbers and the diversities of the sentient beings dispersed throughout the universe, the workmanship of His power and the recipients of His bounty, may be vast beyond the reach of the most exuberant imagination. That it is thus vast is unquestionable. Consider this little globe which we inhabit, this atom in illimitable space; and try to approach towards a computation of the various tribes and kinds of living essences known to exist on its surface and in the seas, from the elephant down to the minutest insect discoverable by the most powerful microscope, from the whale to the animated particle which builds the coral reef. What, then, must be the incalculable ramifications and modes of vital existence, the count