

GLEANINGS — July 5, A.D. 2015
"Uncontainable"

The attributes of God are the various qualities or characteristics of His infinite and perfect being. Examples: God is holy, God is loving, God is just, God is immutable (unchanging). Another glorious attribute of God is **eternity** – God is **eternal**. He has no beginning or end. The burden of this meditation is to correct a common mistake about what that means.

It seems that we are disposed to regard eternity as a "medium" inside of which God exists, instead of as an attribute of His being. We imagine that God lives inside an infinite, incomprehensible sea. We think of Him like we might think of the largest known animal, the blue whale. There are many other dwellers beneath the waves, but none as great as that air breathing, deep diving behemoth of the bounding main.

In a similar way, even if we recognize Him as the Creator and Sustainer of everything else, but think of God as only the mightiest and most important being in the "Everything Ocean," we do not think of Him aright. Eternity does not contain God, eternity is an attribute of God.

Conceiving of a great medium or ocean which is greater than God actually demeans God! Though a majestic creature indeed, the blue whale is still contained by something greater than itself. But there is nothing greater than God! As King Solomon said, as he got busy with the great project of building the temple:

"...who is able to build Him a temple, since heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him? Who am I then, that I should build Him a temple, except to burn sacrifice before Him?" (2 Chronicles 2:6)

Now those reading this who know their Bible well might be thinking of a word of truth which is not only a precious promise to the God loving and God fearing soul, but one which seems to overturn the whole point of this contemplation:

"...thus says the high and lofty One **Who inhabits eternity**, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.' (Isaiah 57:15)

It says He **INHABITS** eternity...gotacha! Aah, but we must remember that bedrock reality of God's being, that holy and beautiful mystery, namely that the One God eternally exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! In various places in Scripture, the three divine Persons are spoken of as being **IN** one another. The Lord Jesus asked His disciples "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?" (John 14:10,11). The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Son (cf. Romans 8:9-11), Who both send Him forth (John 14:26, 15:26).

Now is the time for a big theological word: **PERICHORESIS**. It is term which has implications for the life of the church, but to expound on them is beyond the scope of this short writing. The term refers to the intimate union, mutual indwelling, or mutual interpenetration of the three members of the Trinity with each other. In short, the church should reflect the relationships within the being of the triune God Whose name is Love.

Due to their mysterious and incomprehensible state of being **IN** one another, any of the divine Persons accurately can be said to "inhabit eternity," because each Person abides in the others. Each person possesses the attribute of eternity! For example, when the eternal Son became incarnate, He didn't wade out of the "Everything Ocean" that contained Him along with His Father and the Spirit. He came forth from the bosom of His Father, filled without measure with the Holy Spirit. (John 1:18, 3:34)

Let us give greater glory to God by recognizing that eternity is something possessed by Him. It is an attribute of His uncreated being, not something which contains Him and all creatures.