

**OUR GOD IS ONE:**  
**The Monotheistic Unity: Internal Integrity/Perfection—Holy, Holy, Holy Is He!**  
Is 6:3; Rev 4:8; Heb 1:9

**I. PERFECT/PURE SPIRIT: Transcendent Being**—Jesus: “God is spirit” (Jn 4:24)

- A. Holy/Wholly Other, apart/separate from material/temporal creation
- B. “To be real is to be one.” Aquinas: “*one* means undivided *being*,” and “*one* is the same as *being*”; as Supreme Being, God must be the Invisible/Indivisible One

**II. PERFECT SOURCE of Transcendentals**

- A. Scripture affirms & Nature (reason) confirms (cf. Plato, Aquinas, C.S. Lewis)
  - 1. **Goodness** (Ps. 100:5—“The LORD is good”; Jesus, in Lk 18:19—“No one is good but God alone;” Aquinas: good=what is desirable; Augustine: “hearts restless until rest in Thee;” what is desirable is so insofar as it is perfect: the *summum bonum* Alpha & Omega
    - a. Holy=Health (OE: *halig*)—internal well-being, perfected nature
    - b. Creation “very good” (Gen 1:31) & reflects His Being—thus standard set in beings/natures; He “works for good” (Rom 8:32)—thus Will evident
    - c. Called, said Socrates, “to leave every other kind of knowledge and seek to follow one thing only,” i.e., “to learn to discern between good and evil.”
  - 2. **Truth** (Dt 32:4—“a God of truth;” Jesus, in Jn 14:6—“I am the truth;” Paul, in Col 1:17—“He [Christ] is before all things, and in Him all things consist”
    - a. Holy=Coherence/Unity—internal intellectual perfection (Word of words—as illustrated in artist’s idea taking form)
    - b. Creation “true” to His design, informed by His Word; Aquinas: “Natural things are said to be true in so far as they express the likeness of the ideas that are in the divine mind”
    - c. He requires “truth” in disciples (conforming being to His Being, conforming thoughts to His Word/Design); “children following the truth, just as we have been commanded” (2 John 4)
  - 3. **Beauty/Glory**—Ps 24:7—“King of glory;” Jn 1:14—“we have beheld his glory;” Mt 6:13—“thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory”
    - a. Holy=wholeness/cohesion/symmetry/sublimity—internal aesthetic perfection (e.g. Michelangelo’s *Pieta*), beautiful to behold, pleases when seen;
    - b. Creation—“He has made everything beautiful” (Ecc 3:11); manifesting: 1) integrity/perfection; 2) proportion/harmony; 3) brightness/clarity
    - c. Called to “worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness” (Ps 29:2)
  - 4. **Justice/Righteousness**—Is 30:18: “the LORD is a God of justice;” Jer 23:6—“He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS;” Acts 3:14, Jesus is “the Holy One and the Just;” N.B. God’s extraordinary/supernatural blend: Wrath & Mercy—cf. Is 30:18 & Hab 3:2
    - a. Holy=Right-ness, inner order, balance, proportionate blending—giving (distributive justice) what is due to all (e.g. hands to human beings)
    - b. Creation—“Universe”—turned toward One; balance, order, harmony; “all creatures great and small”
    - c. “Seek first “kingdom of God and His righteousness/justice” (Mt 6:33).
- B. Trinitarian Particularity Specially Revealed—“Holy, Holy, Holy” IS the LORD
  - 1. **Life**—HE WHO IS=Father; the Source of Son and of all that is
    - a. Supreme Being most basic, *begetting* Son (“Word of life”—I Jn 1:1), giving & sustaining life
    - b. Creating, mysteriously transforming of non-living matter into living, procreating creatures
    - c. New/Eternal Life (salvation/sanctity) infused
  - 2. **Light/Logos/Word**—eternally begotten Son informing all (“God is light”—I Jn 1:5)
    - a. “I am the light of the world”—granting Logos/being & truthfully illuminating all that is
    - b. Wise Men (following star) still seek Him—“he that doeth truth cometh to the light” (Jn 3:21)
  - 3. **Love/Agape**—Holy Spirit, “proceeding from Father and Son”—Agape bond
    - a. “Lord and giver of life”), eternally animating Source of all “hovering over the face of the waters” (Gn 1:1)
    - b. Infusing life (both physical and spiritual)—“born of the Spirit” (Jn 3:8), thus *theosis*; “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost” (Ro 5:5)
    - c. “Receive the Holy Spirit” (Jn 20:22)

## “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord”

Is 6:3; Rev 4:8; Heb 1:9

367 // We may with perfect propriety say, therefore, that the nature of God consists in holy love, but in this statement we neither identify nor confuse the terms.

369 //@ We may say then, that holiness belongs to the essential nature of God in a deeper and more profound sense than merely as one attribute among others.

370 // The perfect revelation of God’s holiness is found in the incarnate Son of whom it is written, *Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows* (Heb. 1:9). Holiness, then, is primarily that disposition which is back of all the attributes—a disposition or a nature which manifests itself in a love for righteousness and in a hatred for iniquity. It is holy love.

371 // Holiness in the ethical aspect of the Divine Being is characterized by the separateness of God in essence from all other beings. It belongs to the integrity of His being rather than to His relationships. Holiness is immanent and essential to the very idea of God. Love indeed has its seat in the free relations of the persons of the Divine Trinity, but holiness belongs to the necessary relationships. Holiness is therefore more fundamental in some sense than love, at least it must be given logical priority, though love may occupy the more exalted sphere. “The kingdom of love,” says Martensen, “is established on the foundation of holiness. Holiness is the principle that guards the eternal distinction between the Creator and the creature, between God and man, in the union effected between them; it preserves the divine dignity and majesty from being infringed by the divine love; it eternally excludes everything evil and impure from the divine nature. The Christian mind knows nothing of a love without holiness” (Martensen, *Christian Dogmatics*, p. 99ff).

We may further refer in this connection to the trisagion found in Isaiah 6:3, *Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts*, and also in Rev. 4:8 where the “living creatures” corresponding to the seraphim of Isaiah, rest not day nor night saying, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come*.

372 // . . . [Jesus said] *God is a Spirit* (John 1:5), and this was further interpreted by the New Testament writers as *life* (John 5:26), *light* (I John 1:5) and *love* (I John 4:8). In the Trinity, therefore, Life is peculiarly the property of the Father, Light of the Son, and Love of the Spirit. But basic and fundamental to each is ascribed a nature characterized as holy, and the threefold ascription of adoration and praise is not on the ground of life or light or love, but of holiness. We may say, then that holiness in the Father is the mystery of life, separate, distinct and unoriginated; holiness in the Son is light, which down to the depths of His infinite being, reveals no darkness, nothing undiscovered, nothing unfulfilled, nothing which needs to be brought to perfection; holiness in the Spirit is the disclosure of love by which exists between the Father and the Son and is by St. Paul called the bond of perfectness. In the Father, holiness is original and underived, in the Son holiness is revealed, and in the Spirit holiness is imparted.

## THE EVIDENTIAL POWER OF BEAUTY

Thomas Dubay's *The Evidential Power of Beauty: Science and Theology Meet* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, c. 1999) fleshes out a statement by the noted theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar: "Every experience of beauty points to infinity." Still more, as Fyodor Dostoyevsky asserted in *The Brothers Karamazov*, "'beauty is the battlefield where God and Satan contend with each other for the hearts of men'" (p. 20).

"Every human person," Dubay declares, "is drawn to beauty," (p. 11). Just as we desire to eat and drink, to think and speak, we desire to behold beauty. "But few of us seem to be aware that the beautiful packs a power not only to fascinate but also to convince a mature and honest mind of solidly grounded truth" (p. 11). As the poet John Keats said so memorably: "'Beauty is truth, truth beauty'—that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know." So too, the eminent physicist Richard Feynman explained, "'you can recognize truth by its beauty and simplicity'" (p. 13). Interestingly enough, "'All of the most eminent physicists of the twentieth century agree that beauty is the primary standard for scientific truth'" (p. 114). Beauty and truth, importantly, are objective (discerned within real beings), not subjective feelings (differing from person to person).

Our love for beauty is almost always derived from our awareness of nature. Whether gazing at a sunset or investigating the intricacies of genetics, whether marveling at the Canadian geese flying overhead or pondering the inexplicable instinct that drives the migration pattern of monarch butterflies, there's an unfailing allure in the world around us. What is there in all these phenomena that elicits our wonder at the beautiful? "Philosophical realism," the position Dubay advocates, "through the centuries has taught us that the beautiful is that which has unity, harmony, proportion, wholeness and radiance" (p. 34). When we think clearly we see things as they are. "We are intellectually alive to the extent that we appreciate the real and respond appropriately to it: notice, linger, appreciate, wonder, exult, praise, love" (p. 178).

These components of beauty are, of course, immaterial "forms" discerned by the intelligence, not mere material entities. "Form is the deep root of a being's actuality, which gives it its basic whatness. It is the actualizing principle of a thing, the mysterious taproot that makes that thing to be what it is, and thus why it is different from every other kind of being" (p. 50). The beauty of great classical music cannot be reduced to sound waves or particular instruments. (As one of Shakespeare's characters, in *Much Ado About Nothing*, quipped: "Is it not strange that sheep's guts should hale souls out of men's bodies?") Consequently, Dubay explains: "A performance of classical music is a melodic unity whose harmonies are in exquisite proportion . . . . Coming from the Greek, *sym-phony* means "'sounding together'" (p. 55).

To hear the beauty in music requires a disposition, an humble openness to it. If we close our eyes—or look only on the vulgar—we'll never discern the beauty in Michelangelo's *Pieta* (described by Dubay as "light in stone"). If we never listen to music—or listen only to the cacophony of perversions such as "rap music"—we'll fail to know the exaltation of Handel's *Messiah* or Beethoven's *Ninth*. Having eyes, we may fail to see; having ears we may fail to hear. But even the least sensitive of us, unlike the irrational animals, have the innate potential to do so. Dogs certainly have a sharper sense of smell and eagles see far better, but we alone have the ability to come "alive to beauty." That we fail to do so is a result of original sin. "Moral

depravity,” Dubay says, “explains why men cast aside ‘perfectly plain’ evidences. They reject these eloquent testimonies to the divine Artist because by their ‘impiety and depravity’ they ‘keep truth imprisoned in their wickedness’. They are therefore ‘without excuse’ (Rom 1:18-20)” (p. 69).

Having set forth his argument, Dubay devotes a section of the book to “savoring the symphony,” introducing us to the beauties of mathematics and astronomy, as well as music and architecture. We wonder at the starry heavens above and the intricacies of the tiniest cells within our bodies. We’re amazed at the complexities of the Big Bang and the flying capacities of birds. Though he claims no expertise as a scientist, he’s clearly read and rejoiced at a host of detailed reports regarding the natural world. Consider, for example, the information encoded in DNA. “‘The information necessary to specify the design of all the species of organisms which have ever existed on the planet, a number according to G. G. Simpson of approximately one thousand million, could be held in a teaspoon and there would still be room left for all the information ever written’” (p. 171).

Surely this means there is intelligence, design, purpose in all that is. Still more, “Berkeley physicist Henry Pierce Stapp adds the thought that ‘everything we know about nature is in accord with the idea that the fundamental processes of nature lie outside space-time but generate events that can be located in space-time’” (p. 200). Physics leads, necessarily, to metaphysics. We can no more think about the world around us without acknowledging its design than we can square a circle. It follows, then, Dubay says, “Once a person admits that the universe makes sense, that it is comprehensible, that there are overwhelming beauties in it, he logically must be a theist” (p. 202).

To be a theist leads to beholding the “divine glory,” the focus of the book’s third section. Though the physical world abounds in beauty, its crown (in accord with the “anthropic principle”) is mankind, created in the very image of God. “If we fully realized who and what we are, we would burst into shouts of continual praise, wonder, and thanksgiving—just as Scripture says we should” (p. 230). We are “fearfully and wonderfully made.” And our real grandeur shines forth most wonderfully in the “beauty of sanctity.” Living virtuously, “putting on Christ,” far more than physical or intellectual ability, makes radiant the glory of the Lord. Loving others, putting others’ interests before one’s own, staying faithful despite trying times, manifests the beauty of sanctity. Wisely did Malcolm Muggeridge title his book on Mother Teresa of Calcutta *Something Beautiful for God*.

But far above even the finest of the earthly looms God Himself. “The most beautiful men and women on earth, the saints, are what they are solely because of their complete Yes to the person, teaching, and grace of the crucified risen One” (p. 306). In Christ we once and for all behold the beauty of the Lord. “He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power” (Heb 1:3, RSV). And in time, God willing, we shall be with Him and like him, delighting in what C.S. Lewis memorably titled “the weight of glory.”