Attributes Paper

Assignment 3-1 for ST5534 Systematic Theology 1

Jarret Hutchison

The attribute I chose to discuss is spirituality because this topic is one that I felt I needed to go over more personally. Spirituality falls within chapter 11 under God’s greatness and is discussed by Erickson as “God is spirit; that is, he is not composed of matter and does not posses a physical nature.”[[1]](#footnote-1) God has many attributes but this one stands out because many struggle with understanding how God can be everywhere at once without being bound by location. God by nature is not tied to similar constraints that we are as humans and sometimes we forget this.

Erickson deals with spirituality from a few different angles within scripture and they include God’s indestructibility as well as His anthropomorphic attributes that coincide with His spirituality. I find it interesting how Erickson puts it that we as humans attempt to express the truth about God using analogies that help make these truths easier for us to comprehend. Wayne Grudem speaks to this attribute of spirituality as well when he brings up John 4:21 where Jesus talks to the woman at the well about worshiping God in any location as Grudem states “God is spirit and this apparently signifies that God is in no way limited to a special location.”[[2]](#footnote-2) Grudem takes it a step farther and says God does not even want us thinking about his very being in a similar way to anything in physical creation, which is why God gave us the second commandment.

Spirituality is defined by Grudem as “God’s spirituality means that God exists as a being that is not made of any matter, has no parts or dimensions, is unable to be perceived by our bodily senses, and is more excellent than any other kind of existence.”[[3]](#footnote-3) Grudem reminds us that we should meditate on the fact that this attribute of God makes Him far superior to anything that we know. Augustus Strong also tries to tackle this attribute in his Systematic Theology book and defines it by saying, “Spirit is not a refined form of matter but an immaterial substance, invisible, uncompounded, indestructible. God is not dependent upon matter.”[[4]](#footnote-4) Strong deals with spirituality in a similar manner that Erickson takes and also references God’s anthropomorphic attributes. Strong also gives us some warning about different analogies we use by saying “Humanity tends too much to rest in the material and the sensuous, and we must avoid all representations of God which would identify the Being who is worshiped with the helps used in order to realize his presence.”[[5]](#footnote-5) Strong is saying we must be careful relying to heavily on physical descriptions because they can only take us so far in understanding God.

These points that I have talked about in regards to God’s spirituality are only just skimming the surface about who God is. God’s spirituality is so important for us as believer to understand because it helps us to worship God as well as understand more about who He is. We cannot hope to have a close and intimate relationship with God if we do not understand anything about Him. God also calls us in John 4:24 to worship in “spirit and truth” which to follow this completely we must study God’ spiritualty.

1. Christian Theology 3rd Edition, Millard J. Erickson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2013) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Systematic Theology, Wayne Grudem (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Systematic Theology, Wayne Grudem (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Systematic Theology, Augustus Hopkins Strong (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1907) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Systematic Theology, Augustus Hopkins Strong (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1907) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)