

# THEOLOGY PROPER

## *The Communicable Attributes of God*

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Institutes of  
Theology

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# The Attributes/Perfections of God

1. Incommunicable or Less Communicable - Having little analogy in human beings
2. Communicable or More Communicable – Having more analogy in human beings



# *The Westminster Confession of Faith*

THERE is but one only living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute, working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, for his own glory: most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek him; and withal most just and terrible in his judgments; hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty.



## Exodus 33:18-19

Then Moses said, "I pray You, show me Your glory!"  
And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion."



## Exodus 34:6-7

Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; <sup>7</sup> who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."



# Communicable Attributes of God

- Holiness
- Wisdom
- Truthfulness
- Goodness
- Love
- Mercy
- Grace
- Patience
- Justice/Righteousness
- Jealousy



# The Wisdom of God



# I. The Declaration of God's Wisdom

- **Job 12:13** With Him are wisdom and might; To Him belong counsel and understanding.
- **Daniel 2:20** Daniel said, "Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, For wisdom and power belong to Him."
- **Romans 11:33–34** Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! <sup>34</sup> For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR?
- **Romans 16:27** ...the only wise God...



## II. The Definition of God's Wisdom

- Wisdom is more than knowledge as it involves skill in applying that knowledge.
- This attribute is related to His:
  - Omniscience: God has all knowledge
  - Goodness: He applies that knowledge to the best possible ends



## II. The Definition of God's Wisdom

*Berkhof, Systematic Theology*

God's wisdom is His intelligence as manifested in the adaptation of means to ends. It points to the fact that He always strives for the best possible ends, and chooses the best means for the realization of His purposes... We may be a little more specific and call it *that perfection of God whereby He applies His knowledge to the attainment of His ends in a way which glorifies Him most.*



# III. The Manifestations of God's Wisdom

- A. Creation (Ps 104:24, 136:5; Prov 3:19-20; Jer 10:12)
- B. Salvation (Rom 11:33-36; 1 Cor 1:18-25)
- C. Providence (Dan 2:20-21; Rom 8:28)
- D. Revelation (Ps 19:7-11; 1 Cor 2:7-11)
- E. Incarnation (1 Cor 1:30; Col 2:1-3)



# IV. The Implications of God's Wisdom

- A. Fear God and embrace His wisdom (Ps 111:10; Prov 1:7; 1 Cor 1:18-31)
- B. Trust God's wisdom in the details of your life (Prov 3:5-6)
- C. Ask God for wisdom (James 1:5)
- D. Search the Scriptures for God's wisdom (Prov 2:1-6; 2 Tim 3:16-17)



# V. Our Imitation of God's Wisdom

Seek to display wisdom in your:

- A. Words (Proverbs; Eph 4:29; Col 4:6)
- B. Conduct (Proverbs; James 3:17)
- C. Decisions (Prov 11:14, 16:19; James 4:13-17)
- D. Relationships (Col 4:5; James 3:17)



# The Truthfulness of God



# I. The Declaration of God's Truthfulness

- **Exodus 34:6** "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth;
- **Jeremiah 10:10** But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King...



## II. The Definition of God's Truthfulness

- This attribute can be described as God's
  - Truth/Truthfulness
  - Veracity
  - Faithfulness
- It includes both the person and revelation of God
- It is related to His omniscience and His immutability



## II. The Definition of God's Truthfulness

*Berkhof, Systematic Theology*

We may define the veracity or truth of God as *that perfection of His Being by virtue of which He fully answers to the idea of the Godhead, is perfectly reliable in His revelation, and sees things as they really are.*



# III. The Dimensions of God's Truthfulness

- A. Metaphysical – God is the one true God (Is 45:5; Jer 10:10; 1 Thess 1:9)
- B. Ethical – God cannot lie; all His words are true (Num 23:19; Jn 17:17; Rom 3:3-4; Heb 6:18)
- C. Logical – His understanding is perfectly accurate (Ps 147:5)



# III. The Dimensions of God's Truthfulness

*Hodge, Systematic Theology*

The true, therefore, is,

(1.) That which is real, as opposed to that which is fictitious or imaginary. Jehovah is the true God, because He is really God, while the gods of the heathen are vanity and nothing, mere imaginary beings, having neither existence nor attributes.

(2.) The true is that which completely comes up to its idea, or to what it purports to be. A true man is a man in whom the idea of manhood is fully realized. The true God is He in whom is found all that Godhead imports.



# III. The Dimensions of God's Truthfulness

*Hodge, Systematic Theology*

(3.) The true is that in which the reality exactly corresponds to the manifestation. God is true, because He really is what He declares Himself to be; because He is what He commands us to believe Him to be; and because all his declarations correspond to what really is.

(4.) The true is that which can be depended upon, which does not fail, or change, or disappoint. In this sense also God is true as He is immutable and faithful. His promise cannot fail; his word never disappoints.



# IV. The Implications of God's Truthfulness

- A. Worship the true God alone (Ex 20:3)
- B. Embrace the Scriptures as inerrant truth (Ps 119:151, 160; Jn 17:17)
- C. Trust God's promises (Rom 3:3-4)



# IV. The Implications of God's Truthfulness

*Hodge, Systematic Theology*

The truth of God, therefore, is the foundation of all religion. It is the ground of our assurance, that what He has revealed of Himself and of his will, in his works and in the Scriptures, may be relied upon.



# V. Our Imitation of God's Truthfulness

- A. Speak the truth to others (Col 3:9-10; Eph 4:25)
- B. Live with integrity in every situation (Ps. 15:1-2; Prov. 10:9; Luke 16:10)



# V. Our Imitation of God's Truthfulness

Grudem, *Systematic Theology*

When we lie we dishonor God and diminish his glory, for we, as those created in God's image and created for the purpose of reflecting God's glory in our lives, are acting in a way that is contrary to God's own character.



# V. Our Imitation of God's Truthfulness

- A. Speak the truth to others (Col 3:9-10; Eph 4:25)
- B. Live with integrity in every situation (Ps. 15:1-2; Prov. 10:9; Luke 16:10)
- C. Proclaim God's truth with boldness (Acts 4:29-31; Eph 6:19-20; 2 Tim 4:2 )



# The Goodness of God



# I. The Declaration of God's Goodness

- Exodus 33:19 And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you..."
- Psalm 25:8 Good and upright is the LORD...
- Psalm 34:8 O taste and see that the LORD is good...
- Psalm 100:5 For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting and His faithfulness to all generations.
- Nahum 1:7 The LORD is good...
- Mark 10:18 And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone."



## II. The Definition of God's Goodness: He IS Good

MacArthur & Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*

God's goodness is that he is the perfect sum, source, and standard (for himself and his creatures) of that which is wholesome (conducive to well-being), virtuous, beneficial, and beautiful.



# II. The Definition of God's Goodness: He IS Good

Thomas Manton

He is originally good, good of Himself, which nothing else is... He is essentially good; not only good, but goodness itself... He is infinitely good... in God there is an infinite ocean or gathering together of good. He is eternally and immutably good, for He cannot be less good than He is.



## II. The Definition of God's Goodness: He IS Good

Grudem, *Systematic Theology*

The goodness of God means that God is the final standard of good, and that all that God is and does is worthy of approval.



## II. The Definition of God's Goodness: He DOES Good

*Reymond, A New Systematic Theology*

God has always been and always will be infinitely good ... that perfection of the divine nature which prompts him to deal bountifully and kindly with all his creatures



## II. The Definition of God's Goodness: He DOES Good

A. W. Tozer

The goodness of God is that which disposes Him to be kind, cordial, benevolent, and full of good will toward men. He is tenderhearted and of quick sympathy, and His unfailing attitude toward all moral beings is open, frank, and friendly. By His nature He is inclined to bestow blessedness and He takes holy pleasure in the happiness of His people.



# III. The Expression of God's Goodness

## A. How is God's Goodness Expressed?

**Exodus 33:19** And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion."

**Exodus 34:6-7** Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; <sup>7</sup> who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin..."



# III. The Expression of God's Goodness

## A. How is God's Goodness Expressed?

1. Love
2. Grace
3. Mercy
4. Patience
5. Benevolence (Ps 13:6; 103:2-5)



# III. The Expression of God's Goodness

Arthur Pink

The goodness of God is seen in the variety of natural pleasures which He has provided for His creatures. God might have been pleased to satisfy our hunger without the food being pleasing to our palates—how His benevolence appears in the varied flavors which He has given to meats, vegetables, and fruits! God has not only given us senses, but also that which gratifies them; and this too reveals His goodness.



# III. The Expression of God's Goodness

- A. How is God's Goodness Expressed?
- B. To Whom is God's Goodness Expressed?
  1. All of His Creation (Ps 145:7-9, 13-16)
  2. His People (Ps 31:19, 84:11; Lam 3:25; Rom 8:28)
  3. His Enemies (Neh 9:35; Matt 5:45; Acts 14:17)



# IV. The Implications of God's Goodness

- A. We find our ultimate good in God alone and so should seek Him above all else (*Ps 73:25-28*)
- B. We must recognize that every good gift comes from God and so give thanks to Him (*James 1:17*)
- C. We should delight in all that is good and beautiful as an expression of God's character and a gift from His hand (*1 Tim 4:4-5*)
- D. We should trust all that God brings into our lives as coming from His good hand (*Rom 8:28*)
- E. We should anticipate God's goodness in this life and unto eternity (*Ps 23:6*)



# V. Our Imitation of God's Goodness

- A. Do good to others (Gal 6:10)
  - 1. Be generous and eager to share
  - 2. Be patient and kind
  - 3. Be quick to forgive
- B. Walk in good works (Eph 2:10)



# The Love of God



# I. The Declaration of God's Love

- **Exodus 34:6** Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness..."
- **2 Co 13:11** ...the God of love and peace will be with you.
- **1 John 4:8** The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.



## II. The Definition of God's Love

MacArthur & Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*

God's perfect love is his determination to give of himself to himself and to others, and is his affection for himself and his people.

Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*

...that perfection of God by which He is eternally moved to self-communication.



## II. The Definition of God's Love

Jack Cottrell, *The Faith Once for All*

God's love is his self-giving affection and selfless concern that leads him to actively seek the happiness and well-being of his image-bearing creatures.



# III. The Dimensions of God's Love

- A. His Love of Benevolence or Kindness
- B. His Love of Complacency or Delight

Beeke and Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology*  
Divine love acts in both kindness and delight. Theologians distinguish between the love of benevolence (Latin *benevolentia*, "good will, kindness") and the love of complacency (Latin *complacentia*, "pleasure, satisfaction").



# III. The Dimensions of God's Love

- A. His Love of Benevolence or Kindness
- B. His Love of Complacency or Delight

## *Frame, Systematic Theology*

We may say that God loves us first (benevolence and beneficence), and then loves us because of his work in us (complacency), including our response of obedience.



# IV. The Expressions of God's Love

- A. Within the Trinity (Matt 3:17; Jn 3:35, 5:20; 14:31)
- B. Toward all of Humanity (Matt 5:43-47; Jn 3:16, Titus 3:4)
  - 1. Common grace
  - 2. Compassion
  - 3. Warning of judgment
  - 4. Universal offer of salvation



# IV. The Expressions of God's Love

- A. Within the Trinity (Matt 3:17; Jn 3:35, 5:20; 14:31)
- B. Toward all of Humanity (Mt 5:43-47; Jn 3:16, Tt 3:4)
- C. Toward those He has Chosen as His (Jn 13:1, 17:23; 2 Th 2:16; 1 Jn 3:1, 4:16)
  - 1. Election (Eph 1:4-5)
  - 2. Salvation (Eph 2:4-5)
  - 3. Adoption (1 Jn 3:1)
  - 4. Discipline (Heb 12:6; Rev 3:19)



# V. The Demonstration of God's Love

**Romans 5:8** But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

**1 John 4:9–10** By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. <sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.



# V. The Demonstration of God's Love

**Romans 8:35-39** Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? <sup>37</sup> But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.



# VI. Our Imitation of God's Love

- A. Love the Lord with all your Heart (Deut 6:5; Matt 22:37)
- B. Love your Neighbor as Yourself (Matt 22:39; Eph 5:1-2; 1 Jn 4:11)
- C. Love your Wife as Christ Loved the Church (Eph 5:25)



# The Mercy of God



# I. The Declaration of God's Mercy

- **Exodus 34:6** Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious..."
- **Deut 4:31** For the LORD your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them.
- **Lam 3:22** The LORD's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail.
- **Eph 2:4** But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us...



## II. The Definition of God's Mercy

*Berkhof, Systematic Theology*

...the goodness or love of God shown to those who are in misery or distress, irrespective of their deserts.

*Frame, Systematic Theology*

...a sympathetic view of another's distress, motivating helpful action.



# III. The Expression of God's Mercy

## A. How is God's Mercy Expressed?

1. Compassion (Matt 15:32)
2. Provision (Acts 17:25)
3. Deliverance (Matt 9:27; 14:14; Php 2:27)
4. Salvation (Eph 2:4-5; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet 1:3)



# III. The Expression of God's Mercy

- A. How is God's Mercy Expressed?
- B. To Whom is God's Mercy Expressed?
  1. All of His Creation (Ps 145:9)
  2. Those who come Humbly to Him (Ps 103:13; Luke 1:50)
  3. Those who Reject Him (Luke 6:35-36)



# IV. The Implications of God's Mercy

- A. Cry out to God in your times of need (Ps 69:16-17; Ps 107)
- B. Confess your sin to the Lord, seeking His forgiveness (Ps 51:1; Prov 28:13)
- C. Give praise to the Lord with a grateful heart (Ps 89:1; 103:1-4; 107:1, 8-9)



# IV. Our Imitation of God's Mercy

- A. Proclaim the gospel of God's mercy (Is 55:7)
- B. Have compassion for and extend care to those in distress and difficult circumstances (Prov 14:21, 31; Luke 6:35-36; 1 Jn 3:17)
- C. Be eager to forgive (Matt 5:7; 18:21-35)



# The Grace of God



# I. The Declaration of God's Grace

- **Exodus 34:6** Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious..."
- **Psalms 111:4** The Lord is gracious and compassionate.
- **John 1:14** And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.
- **Titus 2:11** For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men...
- **1 Peter 5:10** ...the God of all grace...



## II. The Definition of God's Grace

*Berkhof, Systematic Theology*

...the unmerited goodness or love of God to those who have forfeited it, and are by nature under a sentence of condemnation.

*Beeke and Smalley, Reformed Systematic Theology*

Whereas mercy emphasizes the kindness shown to someone in misery, grace stresses free generosity to someone to whom the giver owes nothing.



# III. The Expressions of God's Grace

- A. The Gift of our Salvation (Rom 3:23-24; Eph 1:4-8; 2:5, 8-9)
- B. Our Growth in Sanctification (1 Cor 15:10; 2 Thess 1:11-12; Titus 2:11-12; 1 Peter 5:10)
- C. Our Ministry and Spiritual Gifts (2 Cor 9:8; Eph 3:7-8; 4:7-8; 1 Peter 4:10-11)



# IV. The Implications of God's Grace

- A. We are to be exceedingly grateful (2 Cor 9:15)
- B. God alone deserves the glory (Eph 1:6; 2:8-9; Rom 11:36)
- C. We should be humble before Him and others (1 Cor 1:30-31; 4:7)
- D. If you are in Christ, you are eternally secure (Rom 5:2)



# VI. Our Imitation of God's Grace

- A. Be gracious in your conduct and speech toward others (Eph 4:29; Col 4:6)
- B. Be eager to forgive (Col 3:13)



# The Patience of God



# I. The Declaration of God's Patience

- **Exodus 34:6** Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger..."
- **Nahum 1:3** The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, And the Lord will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. In whirlwind and storm is His way, And clouds are the dust beneath His feet.



## II. The Definition of God's Patience

*Berkhof, Systematic Theology*

...that aspect of the goodness or love of God in virtue of which He bears with the forward and evil in spite of their long continued disobedience

*Grudem, Systematic Theology*

God's goodness in withholding of punishment toward those who sin over a period of time.



# III. The Demonstration of God's Patience

## A. Some Biblical Examples

1. Adam and Eve
2. The Days of Noah
3. Israel and Judah
4. Nineveh



# III. The Demonstration of God's Patience

A. Some Biblical Examples

B. Some Biblical Expressions

1. Restrains His wrath for a time (Rom 2:4; 9:22; 1 Pet 3:20, 2 Pet 3:15)
2. Bears with our needs and weaknesses (Ps 86)



# IV. Our Imitation of God's Patience

- A. Patiently wait for the coming of the Lord (James 5:7-8)
- B. Be patient with others (Eph 4:1-2)
  - 1. When their growth and progress seems slow (Example of Jesus; 1 Thess 5:14)
  - 2. When they sin against you (Col 3:12-13)
- C. Bear up under the trials in this life (Lam 3:25-26; James 1:2-4; 5:10-11)



# The Justice of God



# I. The Declaration of God's Justice

- **Deut 32:4** The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He.
- **Psalms 89:14** Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Lovingkindness and truth go before You.
- **Nahum 1:2** A jealous and avenging God is the LORD; The LORD is avenging and wrathful. The LORD takes vengeance on His adversaries, And He reserves wrath for His enemies.



## II. The Definition of God's Justice

MacArthur & Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*

God's righteousness is his perfect absolute justice in and toward himself, his prevention of any violation of the justice of his character, and his revelation of himself in acts of justice

Grudem, *Systematic Theology*

God's righteousness means that God always acts in accordance with what is right and is himself the final standard of what is right



# III. The Dimensions of God's Justice

- A. Absolute: He is the standard of all that is righteous and just
  - 1. God's character
  - 2. God's law
- B. Relative: He does what is right and just
  - 1. Retributive - The Judgment of Sinners (Rom 2:5-8; 2 Thess 1:6-9)
  - 2. Remunerative - The Rewarding of the Righteous - (Ps 58:11; Heb 11:6; 2 Tim 4:8)



# IV. The Demonstration of God's Justice

**Romans 3:23–26** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; <sup>25</sup> whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; <sup>26</sup> for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.



# V. Our Imitation of God's Justice

- A. Live justly (Prov 21:3; Micah 6:8; James 2:1-9; 1 Jn 3:7)
- B. Seek justice while awaiting the coming of God's final judgment (Rom 12:19; 13:1ff)



# The Jealousy of God



# I. The Declaration of God's Jealousy

- **Ex 34:14** for you shall not worship any other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God
- **Deut 4:24** For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.
- **Nahum 1:2** A jealous and avenging God is the LORD...



## II. The Definition of God's Jealousy

MacArthur & Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*

God's jealousy is his zealous protectiveness of all that belongs to him (himself, his name, his glory, his people, his sole right to receive worship and ultimate obedience, his land, and his city).



## Grudem, *Systematic Theology*

People sometimes have trouble thinking that jealousy is a desirable attribute in God. This is because jealousy for our own honor as human beings is almost always wrong. We are not to be proud, but humble. Yet we must realize that the reason pride is wrong is a theological reason: it is that we do not deserve the honor that belongs to God alone (cf. 1 Cor. 4:7; Rev. 4:11).



## Grudem, *Systematic Theology*

It is not wrong for God to seek his own honor, however, for he deserves it fully. God freely admits that his actions in creation and redemption are done for his own honor. Speaking of his decision to withhold judgment from his people, God says, "For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it ... *My glory I will not give to another*" (Isa. 48:11). It is healthy for us spiritually when we settle in our hearts the fact that God deserves all honor and glory from his creation, and that it is right for him to seek this honor. He alone is infinitely worthy of being praised. To realize this fact and to delight in it is to find the secret of true worship.



# III. The Implications of God's Jealousy

- A. God alone deserves all glory (Is 42:8; 48:11)
- B. God alone is to be worshipped (Ex 20:3; 34:14; Matt 4:10)



# V. Our Imitation of God's Jealousy

- A. Be zealous for God's Glory (Ps 115:1; 1 Cor 10:31)
- B. Be careful to love God above all else (Deut 6:5; James 4:4-5)
- C. Be faithful in your relationships, especially your marriage (Mal 2:14-15; Heb 13:4)



## Exodus 33:18-19

Then Moses said, "I pray You, show me Your glory!"  
And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you..."



## Exodus 34:6-7

Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; <sup>7</sup> who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."

