

# The Immutability of God

## By Hugh Binning (1627–1653)

### Exodus 3:14

## I. The Text Opened

### A. Exodus 3:14

1. "I AM" (Exodus 3:14).
2. "The Lord gives a definition of Himself".
  - a) It is short and we may not think it says much— "I AM" (Exodus 3:14).
  - b) When people seek to exalt themselves they want to be described in grand and majestic ways to flatter themselves.
  - c) But there is more majesty in this simple title "I AM" than in all others.
    - (1) *This is spiritually discerned.*
3. To compare God with others and say that He is best gives too great significance to the things which we use for comparison.
4. In this way, the Lord calls Himself "I AM", meaning "I am as if nothing else were".
  - a) Not, "I am the highest, the best and most glorious that is".
  - b) This assumes other things have some being and glory that is worth taking account of.
  - c) Rather it is "I am, and there is none else; I am alone".
  - d) Nothing else can say, "I am, I live, and there is nothing else". Everything else is dependent on God.
  - e) In this way, nothing besides God, can say, "I am".
  - f) All things are only borrowed drops of this self-sufficient fountain.
  - g) If anything comes between the stream and the fountain it is cut off and dried up.
5. See the profound mystery of God's absolute self-sufficient perfection enfolded in these three letters, I AM. If you ask what is God?
  - a) There is nothing better than this, "I AM," or, He that is.
  - b) If I would say He is the almighty, the only wise, the most perfect, the most glorious, it is all contained in this, "I am that I am". He is all those perfections simply, absolutely, and solely.

## II. The Doctrine from the Text

### A. DOCTRINE: Our God is Eternally Unchanging

1. He never was nothing and never will be nothing and may always say, "I am."
  - a) God is eternally unchanging (Psalm 90:2).
  - b) Now this is properly to be; and this only deserves the name of being.
  - c) All the generations past; where are they now?
  - d) They were, but they are not.
  - e) And we then were not, and now are; for we have come in their place and in a little time, which of us can say, "I am."
  - f) No, we "fly away as a dream" (Job 20:8).
  - g) We "are like a tale that is told," (Psalm 90:9) that makes a noise in the present and then it is past.
  - h) Within a few years this generation will pass, and no one will make mention of us.

- i) Our place will not know us, no more than we do now remember those who have been before (Psalm 103:16).
2. Christ said of John the Baptist, “he was a burning and shining light” (John 5:35); “he was,” but now he is not.
- a) But Christ may always say, “I am the light and life of men” (see John 1:4).
- b) Man is; but look backwards a little, and he was not; you will find his origin.
- c) Go forwards a little and he will not be, you will find his end.
- (1) *But God is “Alpha and Omega...the beginning and the end” (Revelation 22:13).*
- (2) *Who can find the beginning and end in such a being who is the beginning and end of all things, yet without all beginning and end?*
- (3) *The soul is enclosed between infiniteness before and infiniteness behind.*
- (4) *It is between two everlastings; whichever way it turns, there is no way out.*
- (5) *Whichever way it looks, it must lose itself in an infiniteness round about it.*
3. We change in our days and are not today what we were yesterday.
- a) But “he is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever” (Hebrews 13:8).
- b) Every day we are dying, some part of our life is taken away.
- c) We leave one more day behind us, it is gone and cannot be recovered.
- d) Though we vainly please ourselves in the number of our years and the extent of our life, the truth is that we are losing much of our being and time as it passes.
- (1) *First, we lose our childhood, then we lose our adulthood.*
- (2) *Then we leave our old age behind us also and there is no more before us.*
4. But when God moves all things, He remains immovable.
- a) Though days and years are in a continual flux and motion around Him and they carry us down with their force yet He abides the same forever.
- b) Even the earth and heavens that are established so sure grow old but He is the same, and “his years have no end” (Psalm 102:26-27).
- c) He is the beginning without any beginning; the end without an end: there is nothing past to Him, and nothing to come.
- d) He is all, before all, after all, and in all.
- e) He beholds all the changes of the creatures out of eternity.
- f) There is no change in His knowledge, as there is in ours (Acts 15:18).
- g) He can declare the end before the beginning; for He knows the end of all things, before He gives them beginning.
- h) He is never driven to make consultations in any emergency as the wisest of men are, who could not foresee all events.
- (1) *“He is in one mind”; He had it from everlasting and “who can turn Him?” (Job 23:13).*

### III. The Text Applied

#### A. Our Response to the Unchanging God

1. Job’s response to knowing God as He is was to humble himself and repent (Job 42:5-6).
- a) Here is the true knowledge of God’s majesty, which uncovers within you a mystery of iniquity.
- b) Here is the knowledge of God indeed, which abases all things besides God, not only in opinion but in affection.
- c) It attracts and unites your soul to God, and draws it from yourself and all created things.

d) This is a right revelation of divine purity and glory, that stains the pride of all glory.

(1) *True knowledge empties a soul of itself and humbles a soul in itself, that it may be full of God.*

(2) *He that thinks he knows any thing, knows nothing as he ought to know.*

2. This then is the first evidence of the saving knowledge of God.
  - a) It removes all grounds for empty confidence so that a soul cannot trust in itself.
  - b) The purpose of this is that a soul may trust in God and depend on Him in all things.
  - c) For this purpose the Lord has called Himself by many names in Scripture which correspond to our various needs and difficulties.
  - d) This is so that He might make known to us how all-sufficient He is, so that we may turn our eyes and hearts towards Him.
  - e) This was the purpose of this name, I AM; that Moses might have support for his faith (Exodus 3:14). "I AM;" I, who give all things a being, will give a being to my promise.
    - (1) *I will make Pharaoh listen and the people obey.*
3. What is there that this name of God will not answer?
  - a) It is a creating name—a name that can bring all things out of nothing by a word.
  - b) If He is what He is, then He can make what He wishes from us. It is a name that brings us comfort (Isaiah 41:12).
  - c) If we believed this how we would submit to His blessed will.
  - d) If we believed this would we not make Him our dwelling-place?
  - e) Would we not be assured of our own stability and the stability of His church because of His unchangeable eternity? (Psalm 89:1; Psalm 102:27-28).
  - f) How can we think of such a fountain-Being without acknowledging ourselves to be shadows of His goodness?
  - g) We owe to Him what we are, and so must dedicate ourselves to His glory.
  - h) How can we consider such a self-Being, independent and creating Goodness without a desire to cleave to Him and confidence to trust in Him?
    - (1) *This is to know Him.*

## B. Ourselves Compared to the Unchanging God

1. When we think on His unchangeableness let us consider our own vanity.
  - a) Our glory and perfection is like a summer flower, or like a vapor ascending for a little time, our best estate is altogether vanity.
  - b) Our plans are soon broken off and made of no effect, our resolutions change.
  - c) This is mortality, we are not always the same. To be one thing now and then another thing is a characteristic of sinful and wretched man.
  - d) Therefore let us "cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils" (Isaiah 2:22).
  - e) Do not trust in princes who will die, far less in ourselves who are less than the least of men (Psalm 146:3).
  - f) Let us put our trust in God who does not change and we will not be consumed (Malachi 3:6).
2. We will never be ashamed of any hope we have in Him.
  - a) There is nothing else you trust in which will not, without doubt disappoint you.
  - b) Whatever you hear or know of God is vain and empty, unless it descends into the heart to shape it with fear and love to Him.

- c) It must extend into the outward actions and conform it to obedience.
- d) Otherwise when you “know God” you “do not glorify Him as God” and that knowledge will be worse to you than ignorance.
- e) It will only harden you and ultimately be your solemn accuser and witness (Romans 1: 21-24).
- f) The true knowledge of Jesus Christ is never unfruitful.
- g) The things that spring from its root are humility, self-abasing confidence in God, patience in tribulations, meekness in provocations, temperance and sobriety in lawful things (2 Peter 1:5-8).

### C. Conclusion

1. It is a source of wonder as well as comfort to contemplate a God whose being, plans and promises never change.
  - a) This should draw us to God again and again.
    - (1) *He can keep our hearts steadfast.*
    - (2) *Whatever else and whoever else may change, let us seek to have an unwavering devotion, obedience and love to Him by His grace.*