

17. In the third and fourth stanzas of the Proverb, wisdom places herself in the soul of the mature believer and reports the results of her application to life.

Verse 13: Wisdom's Disapproval of Evil:

Proverbs 8:13 - "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverted mouth, I hate."
(NASB)

1. To the English reader, this verse seems to contradict all of Wisdom's previous proclamations of her integrity. The impression is left that Wisdom is involved in two sins: fear and hatred.
2. These are anthropopathisms, whose dictionary definition is: "**anthropopathy**, the attributing of human feelings and passions to gods or objects."¹
3. In Scripture, an anthropopathism is classified as "language of accommodation" and must be understood in the light of divine essence. The Bible has enumerable passages that contain anthropopathisms and Proverbs 8 is no exception, therefore, a study of this doctrine is required.

The Doctrine of Anthropopathisms

I. Definition and Description:

1. Anthropopathism is a compound of two Greek words, *anthrōpos* (ἄνθρωπος), meaning "man," and *pathos* (πάθος), meaning "to suffer." Together they form the Classical Greek word *anthrōpopatheō* (ἀντηρωποπαθέω): "to have human feelings."²
2. An anthropopathism is "language of accommodation" that ascribes to God a human characteristic which He does not actually possess, but is used to reveal and explain God's policy toward mankind in terms familiar to a human frame of reference.
3. Accommodation means that human modus operandi is ascribed to God, such as human affection or human sins, so that man can understand divine policy, attitude, and function.
4. Misunderstanding language of accommodation leads to confusion about the essence of God and the stability of His divine attributes.
5. In order for the infinite modus operandi of God to be understood by the finite human mind, certain human characteristics are ascribed to God to help explain His statements and actions.
6. Some of the anthropopathisms ascribed to God in Scripture are love, compassion, and longsuffering; hatred, anger, wrath, and vengeance.
7. The purpose of biblical anthropopathisms is to explain to man in language he can understand divine function toward humanity, both individual and collective.

II. Classifications of Anthropopathisms:

¹ *Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language*, 2d ed., s.v.: "anthropopathy."

² Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, comps., "ἄνθρωπο-πάθεια," in *A Greek-English Lexicon*, rev. Henry Stuart Jones (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 141.

A. Non-sinful:

1. **Love.** The anthropopathism is not the same as the divine attribute. The former expresses divine motivation, approval, and acceptance. The latter is an absolute which means it cannot change. Divine love always functions in a rational manner, devoid of either emotional content or any system of irrationality.

On the other hand, the anthropopathism of love indicates approval from the human frame of reference whereas His wrath denotes disapproval.

2 Corinthians 9:7 - Every one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

2. **Compassion.** Pity, a synonym for compassion, implies sorrow for one in misery or distress. Compassion implies pity coupled with an urgent desire to aid or to spare. These are emotional reactions to others' trials and God is not emotional.

Emotion is a response to an outside event. God is not emotional because His omniscience prevents anything from catching Him by surprise.

The emotion of compassion is used to characterize in human terms the grace and mercy of God toward man. Grace is the policy of the plan of God which provides for man what he cannot do for himself; mercy is amplified grace which shows forbearance.

Psalm 78:38 - But He, being compassionate [רחום *rachum*], forgave their [the Israelites'] iniquity and did not destroy them; and often He restrained His anger and did not arouse all His wrath [grace and mercy].

3. **Longsuffering.** The Greek word for patience is *ὑπομονή*, *hupomonē* and is never used in Scripture with God as the subject. Instead there is the word "longsuffering": *μακροθυμέω*, *makrothumeō*, a compound of *macro*, long, and *thumos*, anger and it refers to the application of understanding and patience. This means that God will put up with your foolishness far longer than anybody else will.

2 Peter 3:9 - The Lord is slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient [μακροθυμέω, *makrothumeō*: **longsuffering**] toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

B. Sinful:

1. **Hatred.** God does not sin, therefore, He does not hate. It is ascribed to God merely to express divine disapproval since man understands hatred as a sinful emotion that expresses such.

Romans 9:13 - Just as it is written [Malachi 1:2-3], "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

This verse references a quote from Malachi but refers to a sequence of events chronicled in Genesis 25:27-34 where Isaac's firstborn, Esau, sold his birthright to his younger brother, Jacob, in exchange for a bowl of stew. The line of Christ originally went through Esau:

The Edenic promise of the Satan-Bruiser was fixed in the family of Abraham (Genesis 3:15). The order of promise was Able, Seth, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Esau. As the first-born Esau was in the distinct line of the promise to Abraham of the Earth-Blesser (Genesis 12:3). For all that was revealed, these great promises might have been realized in Esau. For a fleeting, fleshly gratification Esau sold this birthright.³

In every case, those who made up the line of Christ were believers. Esau was not but Jacob was. Therefore, it was the will of God that the birthright owned by Esau be passed over to Jacob. Reason? God loved Jacob but he hated Esau.

In order to understand biblical passages that assign to God terms of human emotion or sinfulness, the student must be able to distinguish the difference between divine attributes and anthropathisms.

The divine attribute of love is an absolute; it is undiminished and never affected by the successes or failures of mankind. God *is* love, therefore, as a divine attribute it does not require an object.

The anthropathism of love takes the human characteristic and assigns it to God in order to explain divine policy in terms of human frame of reference and is designed to show approval or acceptance.

Hatred on the other hand is a sin and is obviously not among those attributes that make up the essence of God.

Consequently, when hatred is assigned to God it is simply language of accommodation showing divine disapproval.

Therefore, when Paul writes that God loves Jacob, the verb is an anthropathism showing divine approval of the younger brother because of his faith in Messiah.

Conversely, when Paul writes that God hates Esau, the verb is an anthropathism showing divine disapproval of the elder brother because of his rejection of Messiah.

³ Merrill F. Unger, "Esau," in *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, 3d ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1957, 1961, 1966), 321.