

CON
TEM
AT
G

CONTEMPLATING
GOD SERIES



The
FOUNTAIN
of LIFE



*Contemplating the
Aseity of God*



SAMUEL G.
PARKISON

PL
INC
GOD

“God made you to delight in thinking about him. Grasp that divine purpose, and by grace, you’ll treasure profound little volumes like this exploration of aseity—the breathtaking reality that God exists entirely from himself, an infinite wellspring of love, life, and holiness. This trinitarian self-sufficiency unveils the blazing core of God’s eternal joy in himself, the Father forever generating the Son and breathing forth the Spirit in explosive delight. God’s triune nature ‘is what makes the happy doctrine of aseity happy.’ And because our God needs absolutely nothing, his choice to create and redeem us erupts from pure, unrestrained love. If it is our great and glorious destiny to magnify God by enjoying him forever, then being thunderstruck by the majesty of divine aseity isn’t a distraction to life—it’s the very substance of our God-given purpose, elevating this little book to the level of essential reading in our age of distraction.”

Tony Reinke, author, *12 Ways Your Phone Is Changing You*

“This is a wonderfully clear and lively account of God’s aseity—how he alone is the source of life and being. It is a fresh call not only to worship God but also to throw ourselves upon him in happy dependence.”

Sam Allberry, Associate Pastor, Immanuel Nashville, Tennessee; author, *One with My Lord*

“Who would have thought that the aseity of God—a doctrine often tucked away in the corners of systematic theology—could awaken such awe and wonder today? Samuel Parkison shows us why this attribute is anything but dusty or dull. Without it, God is not God. With clarity and reverence, Parkison unfolds the significance of divine self-existence, inviting us to behold the glory of the triune God, to pause in contemplation, and to bow in worship.”

Trevin Wax, Vice President of Resources and Marketing, North American Mission Board; Visiting Professor, Cedarville University; author, *The Thrill of Orthodoxy* and *The Gospel Way Catechism*

“You may not know it yet, but you were made for books like this one. To contemplate God is not an escape from but an exercise in reality—and it’s surprisingly practical in the most important ways. God made you not just to reflect his image on the move but also to pause and ponder him with the awestruck wonder he deserves. He is worthy of our deliberate contemplation, and he means to nourish our hungry souls through feeding on him. It is no waste of time to quiet your restless, modern striving and enjoy God. Here you’ll find theology at its best—in the unapologetic service of worshiping God’s majesty.”

David Mathis, Senior Teacher and Executive Editor, *Desiring God*; author, *Habits of Grace: Enjoying Jesus Through the Spiritual Disciplines*

The Fountain of Life

Contemplating God

Edited by Matthew Barrett

The Fountain of Life: Contemplating the Aseity of God, Samuel G.
Parkison

The Fountain of Life

Contemplating the Aseity of God

Samuel G. Parkison

 **CROSSWAY®**

WHEATON, ILLINOIS

The Fountain of Life: Contemplating the Aseity of God

© 2026 by Samuel G. Parkison

Published by Crossway

1300 Crescent Street

Wheaton, Illinois 60187

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher, except as provided for by USA copyright law. Crossway® is a registered trademark in the United States of America.

Cover design: David Fassett

Cover images: Getty Images, Rawpixel, and Wikimedia Commons

First printing 2026

Printed in the United States of America

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. The ESV text may not be quoted in any publication made available to the public by a Creative Commons license. The ESV may not be translated in whole or in part into any other language.

Scripture quotations marked KJV are from the King James Version of the Bible. Public domain.

All emphases in Scripture quotations have been added by the author.

The poem “John” from Malcolm Guite, *Sounding the Seasons: Seventy Sonnets for the Church Year* (Canterbury, 2012), 6, which is quoted in chapter 6 of this book, is reproduced with permission of the Licensor through PLSclear.

Trade paperback ISBN: 978-8-8749-0082-3

ePub ISBN: 978-8-8749-0084-7

PDF ISBN: 978-8-8749-0083-0

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Parkison, Samuel G. author

Title: The fountain of life : contemplating the aseity of God / Samuel G. Parkison.

Description: Wheaton, Illinois : Crossway, 2026. | Series: Contemplating God | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2025004021 (print) | LCCN 2025004022 (ebook) | ISBN 9798874900823 (trade paperback) | ISBN 9798874900830 (pdf) | ISBN 9798874900847 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: God (Christianity)—Eternity | God (Christianity)—Immutability

Classification: LCC BT153.I47 P37 2026 (print) | LCC BT153.I47 (ebook)

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2025004021>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2025004022>

Crossway is a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

VP 35 34 33 32 31 30 29 28 27 26
15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

Series Preface *vii*

- 1 More Eternal 1
- 2 Creation's Independent Creator 9
- 3 I AM 21
- 4 In the Beginning Was the Word 35
- 5 Only Begotten God 43
- 6 Come and See 55
- 7 Consume the Son and Live Forever 69

General Index 77

Scripture Index 81

Series Preface

About Credo

Credo exists to retrieve classical Christianity for the sake of creating and cultivating reformation in the church today. *Credo* is Latin for “I believe.” In our age of unbelief, Credo says, “I believe.” From the creeds of the church fathers to the confessions of the Reformers, Christians have faithfully confessed the faith across the church catholic (universal). By bridging the gap between church and academy, Credo helps churchgoers, pastors, and students alike retrieve classical Christianity for the sake of biblical and orthodox fidelity, fostering theological renewal in the church today. Credo invites you to read *Credo Magazine*, listen to the Credo podcast, and participate in the Credo Conference. To that end, as the founder of Credo, I now invite you to pick up and read Credo’s *Contemplating God* series published by Crossway.

About the Series

Christians are called to confess the faith “once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). This does not mean merely adhering to dusty, old articulations of the faith in a lifeless or dull manner. The best articulations of Christianity that have been passed down through the ages are not dull; they are unimaginably vibrant because the God whom they describe is the plentitude of life. In our call to confess the faith once for all delivered to the saints, we are invited to “gaze upon the beauty of the LORD” (Ps. 27:4) and to sit at the feet of the Lord Jesus, learning from him and enjoying his presence (Luke 10:39).

This kind of meditation on the glory of God is what Christians throughout the centuries have called “contemplation.” It is marked by humility as we stand *coram Deo*, before the incomprehensible splendor and infinite blessedness of our God. Unfortunately, books written for the express purpose of contemplating God and his glory are far too rare. Contemplation was the hallmark of classical Christian theology, but now we moderns imagine theology is worthwhile only to the degree of its “utility” in “practical” daily living. Theology, for many of us, has become a means to some other lesser end.

The books in Credo’s Contemplating God series strive to cast a different vision for theology and the Christian life. They invite readers to wonder at the majesty of our triune God not as some means to another end but as *the greatest end itself*. After all, to “glorify God and enjoy him forever” is *the chief*

end of man (Westminster Shorter Catechism, question 1). To joyfully gaze upon the beauty of God is our ultimate purpose, as creatures made in his image. Whatever else we look forward to in the eternal rest of the new heavens and the new earth, this enjoyment of God will be central to our everlasting experience.

Thus, these brief meditations do not concern matters peripheral to the Christian life. They are kindling for the fire of worship, which is at the *heart* of the Christian life. Without sacrificing depth, the authors of this series condense their wisdom for the everyday Christian who may not have previous familiarity with technical theological language. In the spirit of C. S. Lewis, that great popularizer of profound truths, these essays seek to be both informative and enjoyable. Every book in the *Contemplating God* series is a reflection on God that invites the reader to gaze on the beauty of our Lord. Each book is also an invitation to listen to the profundity of the Great Tradition—apostolic teaching handed down by the historic church through her confession and worship of the triune God. The chronological snobbery Lewis so detested is not welcomed here. We are not the first to climb this mountain, nor do we dare to do so alone. For the faith we confess is one that has been delivered *to the saints*. In that spirit, I pray God will use these books to bless the church with an eyeful of his glory.

Matthew Barrett

TRINITY ANGLICAN SEMINARY

More Eternal

CHILDREN OFTEN ASK the best philosophical questions. The reason is hinted at by the etymology of the word *philosophy*. Philosophy is the love of wisdom. And children—unaccustomed to the tyranny of the urgent that often comes with adulthood and its wonder-thieving stodginess—are usually aware of no other reason to ask a question than to sincerely *know the answer*. It does not occur to them to ask useful questions, or practical questions, or intelligent questions. Rather, they ask the questions—and *only* the questions—to which they want answers.

Among the many virtues our Lord was commending when he urged us to become like little children (Matt. 18:3), surely this must have been one of them: a genuine delight in asking questions to be answered. Another insight we learn from children's questions is that the best philosophical

questions are also irreducibly theological in nature. For good reason, Solomon—that great philosopher-theologian-poet-king—declared that “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov. 9:10). Children know this. As soon as they become conscious of God, they intuitively direct all manner of questions to *him*, including those questions that grown-ups are too embarrassed to ask—like Why did God make us need to go to the bathroom? Or Why did God make sugar bad for us if it tastes so good? Or Why did God make boogers?

I was reminded of this childlike virtue—of asking a question for no other reason than the desire to have it answered—when my eight-year-old son offered a question of the highest philosophical and theological caliber. The two of us were on a couch, slouched and unhurried. We were talking about nothing memorable or noteworthy. Whatever preceded his question in our conversation is dialogue that has been lost to the annals of history—another example of the seemingly infinite, forgettable plot points God delights to providentially write into his story of human history. Without any indication that he was changing the conversation from the mundane to the profound, he asked, “Dad, if God is eternal, and if being eternal for him means that he had no beginning or end, and if Jesus gives *us* eternal life, but we *do* have a beginning, does that mean that he is *more* eternal than us?” This, dear reader, is philosophy at its best. This is theology at its most mysterious. Don’t let the simplicity of his question fool you into missing

its profundity. Maybe we can see how deeply profound it is by putting it into the form of a syllogism:

Premise 1: God is eternal.

Premise 2: God's eternity means that he has no beginning or end.

Premise 3: Jesus grants us eternal life.

Premise 4: Even though our life (like God's) has no end, it had a beginning (unlike God's).

Possible conclusion: God is *more* eternal than the eternal life he gives us.

Now, of course, my son did not need to formalize his line of inquiry in such a way because his question was not an artificial thought experiment. It was relevant for him right there on the surface of his daily thought life. His was a question tapping into the nature of reality itself. I suspect that this is why it did not feel jarring for him to shift suddenly from whatever we were talking about to a question of God's eternity in relation to the eternal life he grants us in Christ. My son has a better sense of what's going on than most of us in the sense that he intuitively knows what we grown-ups need to remind ourselves of: None of our questions, conversations, or experiences are *ever* really disconnected from the reality of God and his eternity. In truth, my son took no sharp turn when he shifted from talking about his favorite food (or what he was looking forward to doing that afternoon, or what he had learned in

school earlier, or whatever we were talking about) to asking about eternal life in Christ and God's eternity. He went from talking about reality to talking about *ultimate* reality, which only feels like a sharp turn for those of us who have forgotten that all the best questions—that is, the ones we ask because we want to know the answers—all have very natural pathways to questions about God, for “in him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

Well, I didn't have a chance to answer this question before my son complexified it further with an additional, contingent question: “And if God is *more* eternal than us,” he continued to think aloud, “what does it even mean that our life is eternal?” In other words, my son had intuited that the possible answer to his question—his provisional thesis that God is *more* eternal than us—was in danger of equivocation. What does “eternal” even mean if you can have *more* or *less* of it? What good is it to use the same word to describe both us and God if “eternity” means one thing for us and something altogether different for him? Are we forced to secretly toggle between definitions of the word “eternal” just to avoid a direct self-contradiction? These are deep realities here!

Now, the only thing that matches the intoxicating wonder of a child's philosophical or theological question is the correct answer. In this case, I'm uncertain whether my answer landed in my son's mind with as much force as his question landed in mine, but if it didn't, it wasn't due to any lack of wonderful intrigue in the answer itself (but probably due to my inability

to appropriately highlight its profundity). In truth, yes, we do mean different things when we describe God's eternal life and our eternal life. They are connected by way of analogy. We can come to share in the eternal life of God by gift—but we are still creatures experiencing something creaturely. Our eternal life in the life of God is *derived*—but his is not so. He *is* eternal life. The worshipful truth that answers my son's excellent question is that God the Trinity—the eternal fire of vitality, love, and radiance that ever burns as Father, Son, and Spirit—*is* eternal life. God is life *in himself*. And what he is by nature, he grants for us to share by grace. We will never be those who have eternal life in and of ourselves—our eternal life is always a begraced share in a vitality that never began and will never end.

This truth of God's eternal life has a theological name: *aseity*, which simply means that God's life is from himself (the word derives from Latin—the prefix *a* means “from,” and *se* means “self”). But of course, when I say, “which simply means,” I am not at all attempting to demystify the mystery. When we are dazzled by a doctrine, we must be sure to avoid robbing its luster or dimming its brilliance or dulling its penetrating sharpness by slapping a cheap technical term on it. That's not what theological terms are for. Rather, they are stand-ins for the mysteries of God. Far be it from me to explain away the depths of God in shallow fashion. Should we find ourselves awestruck, for example, by the eternal life that *is* God's vital existence, the word *aseity* should not function

to conveniently diminish that awe—as if to say, “Ah, I see. I thought this was deeply mysterious, but it turns out that there’s a word for this thing: *aseity*. Now the mystery is solved.” Rather, theological language preserves mystery for the sake of worship. Instead of diminishing feelings of humble awe, wonder, and worship, the word *aseity* should conjure up all these feelings! The word should make your skin tingle and stop your breath.

Over the course of this book, we shall give ourselves to contemplating God’s *aseity*, and our goal is to be moved by wonder at its mention. As we consider this divine attribute, I invite you to adopt the attitude of a child, asking a question for the sheer joy of getting its answer. You will find, I trust, that this doctrine will certainly encourage you in your Christian walk. It will, in other words, bear practical fruit in your life. But I urge you, dear reader, to resist the temptation of letting these practical effects be the motivation for learning about divine *aseity*. Resist the temptation to put a utilitarian requirement on this doctrine—as if the time spent meditating on it is only worth the use it will be for your practical life.

Let the meditation on this divine attribute be an end in itself. Let us become familiar with the sentiments of Jonathan Edwards when he read 1 Timothy 1:17 as a young man: “To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.” Recounting the experience of being moved by this passage, Edwards writes,

As I read the words, there came into my soul, and was as it were diffused through it, a sense of the glory of the Divine Being; a new sense, quite different from any thing I ever experienced before. Never any words of scripture seemed to me as these words did. I thought with myself, how excellent a Being that was, and how happy I should be, if I might enjoy that God, and be rapt up to him in heaven, and be as it were swallowed up in him.¹

In truth, there is nothing more practical than contemplating God, since this is the very thing we were created for as human beings. “Man’s *chief* end [or purpose],” says the Westminster Shorter Catechism, “is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.”² If this is true, then taking time to be dumbstruck by the majesty and wonder of God’s aseity is not a distraction from practical living but, rather, material to the very purpose God made you for! To contemplate God is not a break from the real world; it is an exercise in reality.

- 1 Jonathan Edwards, “Personal Narrative,” in *Letters and Personal Writings*, ed. George S. Claghorn, vol. 16 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (Yale University Press, 1998), 792.
- 2 “The Westminster Shorter Catechism,” in *Creeeds, Confessions, and Catechisms: A Reader’s Edition*, ed. Chad Van Dixhoorn (Crossway, 2022), 411.

