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## AN OFT-MISUNDERSTOD VERSE

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“... it was impossible for God to lie ...” (Hebrews 6:18)

Some verses are misunderstood because their historical background is unknown. Until new archaeological discoveries are made, the exact significance remains unclear. Other verses are misunderstood because of grammatical construction: the phrase “the love of God” may be construed to mean that God loves us, or it may mean that we love God. And many, many verses are misunderstood because we do not take the time to compare them with other verses on the same subject in different parts of the Bible.

But none of these causes quite explains the misunderstanding that sometimes arises with the sentence, It was impossible for God to lie. The words themselves are clear, and everyone understand quite clearly that God does not say what is false. The difficulty comes when this verse is thought to conflict with other verses that teach us that God can do anything. God is Omnipotent; and if so, couldn't He lie? Or, if He cannot lie, does it not follow that God cannot do anything?

The explanation that satisfies me may take a minute to grasp, but it seems to solve the problem. Suppose someone asked, Can God brill the slithy toves and jabberwork the borogroves? The answer obviously is that the question makes no sense. Either yes or no is out of place because the words do not indicate a real problem. These are nonsense syllables. Suppose next that someone should ask, Can God create a stone so heavy that He could not lift it? Or, Can God construct a plane square with three lines? These words sound more meaningful than the jabberwocky, but in fact they are just as meaningless. They make no sense because they contain a self-contradiction. A Euclidean three-sided plane square is only a collection of words that means nothing. It is not *anything* that God can do.

Similarly when it is said that God cannot lie, it does not follow that we must deny His Omnipotence. Suppose God should say, Water freezes at forty degrees. Would this be a lie? Not at all. It would be a reconstitution of the laws of nature so that the freezing point of water would henceforth be different from what it has so far been. God simply cannot lie – because as soon as He says something is the truth. Truth is defined in terms of God's pronouncements. He makes things true by saying them. Therefore God can do all things, and he cannot lie.