

GOD

The Father

**Discovering The God
Beyond The Definitions
Of Our Dictionary**

DICKSON

God The Father

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GOD THE FATHER

All religious people believe in a higher power. Either their concept of this higher power is based on the revelation of God through the Bible, or it is based on their own imagination. In order for humanity to be religiously united, there must be a consensus of who God is and how He has and continues to work among men. In order to discover this God, we must consult His the revelation of His word. And in order to establish a common definition of God, we must all agree upon a common “dictionary” of words. Through the creation of the material world God has revealed His existence. Through direct revelation to chosen men of history, He has revealed His presence. Through revelation of written word, He has revealed His attributes and character. Through Jesus, He revealed that His true nature is love and grace by which He seeks to bring believers into His eternal presence. Because we seek to live forever, we thus begin our search for the one true and living God.

The skeptic Voltaire was at least right on one point when he said of religion and mankind, “If God has created us in his image, we have more than returned the compliment.” And truly, we live in a world that has created every imaginable god after the image of man.

We live in a world that has conceived a variety of “higher powers.” The Muslim, or some non-Christian religionist, will often say that they believe in the same God as the Christian. We would differ with this assertion. The Hindu will simply add the Christian God to the catalogue of gods in which he already believes. With this we would also differ. God cannot be the invention of a culture that has a hidden agenda. God cannot be manufactured from the minds of those who are set on destroying their fellow man through violent atrocities. God cannot be broken into theological pieces in order to cater to the changing whims of adherents who

seek to pacify their own consciences. Our concept of God must in no way be determined by our human inclinations and desires.

The fact is that we have this insatiable desire to create gods after our own desires. This is why Emil Brunner wrote, “For every civilization or every period in history it is true today: Show me what kind of God you have and I will tell you what kind of humanity you possess” (*Man in Revolt*, 1939).

Man has a hard time learning the truth that God must not be molded to fit man; man must be transformed into the spiritual image of God. A god that is determined and defined by the culture of those who bow down to it, is a god who has been created after the behavior of men. Gods that portray the culture of man are simply the imagination of those who have manufactured a higher power after their own behavior and beliefs.

Since the Christian bases his definition of God on the Bible, we could correctly assume that his understanding of God is different from any religion that does not use the Bible as the final resource to discover and define God. For this reason, the Christian does not believe in the god of those created religions that have rejected the Bible as the final authority in matters of faith.

Men have too often reversed the process of discovering God. They have created religious beliefs after their own desires, and then, searched for a god who would conform to their religion. This humanistic approach to discovering the one true God will never work. This projection of thought will always leave one with a god that is subservient to the mental capacity and desires of those who have manufactured their own religion. Any true search for the true God must begin with God Himself. If there is a God, then certainly this God would reveal Himself. It is our task, therefore, to find and investigate this revelation from God. We must set aside our own inclinations about who we think God should be and simply accept the revelation of who God says He is. God does not believe in the gods we create.

Christians believe in a loving and merciful God who is just, and thus, deals with man without respect of persons. He is a God whose primary means to encourage man to do right is His character and expression of love. For this reason, the apostle John wrote, *“God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him”* (1 Jn 4:16). John was

more definitive concerning our understanding of God when he wrote, *“He who does not love does not know God, for God is love”* (1 Jn 4:8). **Any religion that is based on anything other than the principle of love cannot be true.** Neither can such religions give us a correct understanding of God. A loving God does not reveal an unloving faith.

The fact that the nature of God is love helps us in our search through the catalogue of religions in the world today in order to discover the one true God. World religions and denominations of churches that do not focus on that by which God works to move man—love—cannot be the faith that is revealed by God. Religions, therefore, that justify what is unloving simply cannot be founded on the revelation of a God of love.

We must study through those scriptures in the Bible that give literary definitions of the character of God. However, unless we are prepared to portray in our lives the loving nature of God, our intellectual knowledge of the Scriptures will only take us so far in understanding who this God of love really is. **Unloving interpreters will never come to a knowledge of the God of love in the Bible.**

God will allow us to use the Bible alone in our efforts to discover who He is. In other words, the God of the Bible will settle for no other supposed written revelation in order to define who He is. One cannot use the Quran or the Bhagavad-Gita or any other religious literature in order to discover the true God of the Bible. Other religious authorities

other than the Bible can only be man's definitions of who he thinks his God is. If we are to discover the God of the Bible, then certainly we must limit ourselves to the Bible of this God. When it comes to discovering the God of the Bible, the Bible restricts our studies to it alone, for through it God has defined who He is.

In Romans 1:20 Paul wrote, "*For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead*" One might refer to God's revelation of Himself through that which is created as natural revelation. Through natural revelation, God has assumed that we have enough sense to understand that the environment in which we live did not spontaneously generate. It was created, and thus, it has the marks of a Creator and Designer who has the power to create.

However, we must get past the physical environment in which we live in order to discover the true nature of the God of nature. If we do not, our understanding of God will be limited to the empirical feedback that we receive from the physical world. A host of religions today are thus limited to rocks and trees, which things God intended to simply ignite our wonder in order to search for His direct revelation. But many have tripped over the created rocks, and thus found it impossible to discover the Rock of Ages.

Though God has revealed Himself through the created world, we must not terminate our search for God at the created world in order to discover His existence beyond that which He created. Nature is only an empirical launching pad from which we must be lifted into the special revelation of the God who created the launching pad. Therefore, unless one arrives at the Bible in his or her investigations of who God is, he or she will never discover the one true God.

Does this mean that because the Christian has the Bible that he understands all that God is? Not at all. It does mean, however, that he has an advantage over those who grope after God through the maze of their theologies and traditions. But at the end of the day, the Christian must confess his inability to fully comprehend the incomprehensible. In *De Veritute*, Thomas Aquinas was right. "The highest knowledge we can have of God in this life is to know that He is above all we can think concerning Him."

We must allow ourselves to be challenged concerning who we think God is. We must first break down some misconceptions of God in order to reconstruct a biblical understanding of the nature of God. Therefore, as we take this mental journey through some theological and philosophical conceptions of God, we must be prepared to allow the Bible to be the only dictionary of our definition of God.

Chapter 1

THE GOD BEYOND OUR DICTIONARY

In his book, *Human Destiny*, Lecomte du Nouy wrote, “If we could really conceive God we could no longer believe in Him because our representation, being human, would inspire us with doubts.”

If we created a God we could comprehend, then we would certainly create in our minds doubts about His being. If we are to believe in a God, then this God must exceed our understanding. It is easy for an atheist to be such since he has created a god after his own imagination. He first creates the god, then he denies such because he knows that his god is no greater than his mind. At least the atheist is honest with himself. He says he does not believe in a god who is limited to his own thinking.

The true God is beyond our thinking. He is beyond our full understanding simply because He is God. We are men. What if we attempted to relate to you the experience of a desert? You have probably never been there. We have. So what would we say? How would we verbally involve you in our desert experience? We would struggle to convey to you through the inadequacies of words our personal desert experience. In using words for which you have little “desert definitions,” we would have to resort to metaphors. We must take those words you have defined by your own experiences and wrap them around our personal experience in a desert in order to help you to under-

stand something that is beyond your experience.

The desert is as dry as a summer heat wave. It is hot as drought. Envision the disappearance of all trees, plants, houses, cars and life from where you are. This is the desert. It thirsts for the moisture of the heavens. It yearns for the color green or anything that would be the resemblance of vegetation. The winds cast its sands from dune to dune. Throughout time, the mighty forces of weather move the great sand mountains from one location to another. The desert is a place where the sun is not quenched and heat is not shielded.

We could go on. However, we cannot fully explain that which is beyond your experience. We could use the greatest of metaphorical expressions and yet fail to fully take you with conceptual thought to the reality of a full desert experience. There are no words to take you there.

In like manner we struggle to understand God, the supernatural, and even a place to which we all yearn to go— heaven. The inspired writers combed through human dictionaries in order to select through the guidance of the Holy Spirit the most precise words possible to give us a glimpse of that which was beyond human definition. The Holy Spirit, however, was handicapped. He too was limited to the confines of an earthly dictionary that contained the earthly definitions of our earthly experiences.

How would God explain to us, by use of humanly defined words, a place that is beyond the limitations of our dictionary. Herein lies the challenge of Deity. Herein is the imagination of humanity expanded by the beauty of metaphor in divine revelation.

We can somewhat bring to your imagination the concept of “desert” by resorting only to those experiences you have stored away in memory by your personal experiences. However, as soon as we use a word or a phrase that goes beyond your personal experience, we lose you. You cannot understand. Therefore, we must test your imagination. We must tease your thinking with the richest of metaphors in order to open a door of imagination concerning our desert experience. No matter how hard we try, however, we will fail. We cannot through human communication take you to that which you have never experienced. Your understanding will always be inadequate. It will always be limited to your vocabulary that has been defined by your own personal experiences.

Our failure to adequately communicate, and your lack of a desert experience, however, does not distract from the existence of the desert. Our failure only signifies that there are no words with your definitions that will fully explain our personal experience. You must understand this, lest you doubt our experiences and the existence of the desert that we have personally experienced.

You also must play along. You must not “literalize” our metaphors. You must use your imagination and allow us to el-

evate your thoughts beyond your personal experiences. In this way, we are using your dictionary in order to take you on a mental trip beyond your environment, beyond your presence to a far away land.

God would do the same with us. He comes to man with a concept of heaven that is so far beyond our experiences that we awe and gasp at its possibility; we grasp after its reality; we yearn for its presence. However, because it is so far beyond our understanding, some would even doubt its existence. Their inability, or unwillingness to conceive of that which is beyond this world leads them to be skeptical. They doubt because they are too earthly confined. They are in the bondage of their own vocabulary. They refuse to dream beyond that which is of this material world.

God’s being, existence and character must be beyond that which He originated. The Creator must be greater than that which is created. But our dictionary contains definitions of the creation. How can we escape the confines of our earthly defined words in order to grasp that which is beyond earth’s dictionary?

The Holy Spirit comes to us with a book of human words, the Bible. We must first understand that He did not bring a heavenly dictionary. Paul learned this when he was caught up to Paradise and heard “inexpressible words,” words that were not lawful to be uttered (2 Co 12:1-4). They were not lawful to be spoken simply because we do not have the heavenly dictionary that has definitions of a realm that is beyond this world of our only experience. If he had by chance been

given just a few heavenly words to utter on our behalf, we would in no way have been able to understand them. Even if he had brought from Paradise a dictionary, we still would not have understood simply because the definitions of the words of the dictionary would have been beyond our earthly experiences.

It was the Spirit's task through revelation to challenge our imagination, to take us beyond our personal experiences, beyond the words of our world in order to understand that which is beyond human experience. So God comes to us in the Bible with metaphors. His inspired Book is loaded with metaphors as "the face of God," "streets of gold," and "fire and brimstone." What is God communicating? Should we understand these metaphors after the literal, earthly origins from which they were taken? Should we make earthly a revelation of that which is beyond this earth? Or, should we understand that the metaphors point us to something greater than the metaphors, something that is greater than earthly definitions?

In our frustration to understand God, our first inclination is to create a God after our own image. We see God as ourselves. We want to create Him after our physical existence. We conclude, therefore, that God has a real arm. He has a literal face, eyes, ears and vocal cords. In our childish hermeneutics we have brought God down to where we can now understand Him. He has now gone from God to god. We have created a god we can understand. We have created a god to whom we can relate in a literal way.

This is the spirit of idolatry. Our next stage of digression is to form this god in a piece of wood or carve him in a rock. You laugh. But this is how man has unceasingly behaved throughout the annals of history.

We might affirm that we are too educated to carve the image or engrave the stone. But our conception and perception of the god we worship possibly justifies the acts of our rebellious life. Whether carved or conceived, man's gods always seem to submit to the vile cravings of man himself. Somehow, god always ends up being a "force" out there somewhere with which one can deal and around which one can conceal wickedness.

What good is a god that can be defined by an earthly dictionary? Who wants a god that cannot act beyond the verbs of a compound sentence? If our god cannot work beyond the confines of our grammar, then any god we linguistically construct will do. Let us simply conceive and construct one that will allow us to eat, drink and be merry. But at the end of the day, who wants a god who is simply created after our fears and subject to our own lusts?

There is something in us that says we know better than being idolaters. We cannot explain it. It is just there. It is innate; it is a yearning to be beyond ourselves. It is a longing of a hope that says this is not all there is. This yearning, this longing has compelled us to search the universe in order to discover this God who is bigger than words, bigger than our understanding of things of this world. This

God is bigger than our dictionary of words. He is even bigger than the Bible that contains the Spirit's assortment of human words to take us metaphorically beyond humanly defined concepts. We therefore understand that the Spirit seeks to challenge our imagination with the majesty of metaphor in order for us to see the majesty of our Maker.

Moses struggled to take a divine ID card back to Egypt from Mount Sinai. There was no way that God could fully explain to Moses or Israel who He was. The Eternal Spirit simply told Moses to tell Israel that "I AM" sent you. We are sure that this "name" confused Moses as it does us. But what better statement could possibly explain the mystery of our God.

Israel had spent four hundred years in the seat of idolatrous polytheism in Egypt. The Egyptians were riddled with the created gods of old through whom they sought blessings from above in every aspect of life. There was the god of the river, the god of the sun, the god of the harvest. When it came to creating gods, no society had a better god factory than Egypt.

So Moses stood before an Israelite society that had been infected with the virus of polytheism and simply stated, "I AM, sent me." We cannot help but think that the ignorant of Egypt scoffed. However, those who had seen the futility of creating a god after one's own desires, knew that there was something right about what Moses' proclaimed. They knew that God had to be beyond carved stones and created images.

Man's gods are always handicapped. They can never function beyond the ability of their creator's mentality. They are crippled by a mindset that desires a deity who submits to the inadequacies of humanity. For this reason, idolatrous gods are always dysfunctional. The righteous of Israel knew this. If there were created gods of hate, then it was simply reasonable that any true god would not inspire hate for one's fellow human being. Imagined gods will always promote human self-destruction, but the one true and living God will always inspire love for that which God created. We are atheists in reference to any god who would motivate us to hate our fellow human being.

The Israelites, therefore, followed Moses out of captivity and into a desert experience because he proclaimed a God who was beyond the dysfunctional gods of Egypt. However, the venom of created gods had not left them. When Moses delayed on the mountain before the "Great I Am," the people clamored that Aaron "make them gods that will go before us." Only when the true God opened the earth in order to consume the imagined gods of Israel, did they fully understand that there is only one God. This is not a hand-sculptured god. He is a God beyond gold, beyond man's base desires. He is not simply, but majestically "I AM."

When the apostle Paul walked into Athens and down the streets lined with idols, he came upon an altar that read, "To the unknown God" (At 17:23). This one inscription explains centuries of ignorance of the one true and living God. Greece was an intellectual center of man-

kind. Here lived Plato, Socrates and a host of other thinkers of history who knew that there was something beyond the material world. They also lived in the midst of idol gods that had been created after the imagination of men. Nevertheless, the philosophers of ancient Greece knew that if these imagined gods were no greater than their imagination, then they were gods who were tainted with humanity. These gods could be tricked by clever men. Every idol was constructed to appease the Greek gods. However, the philosophers knew that there had to be a God out there who was

beyond the cleverness of men, a God who could not be conceived by the imagination of the wisest man. Therefore, just in case this God was there, they built an altar to Him in order to appease Him. This was the God about whom Paul said, "... *for in Him we live and move and have our being ...*" (At 17:28). This is the God the Spirit seeks to communicate to us through revelation. This is the God about whom we read in the Bible. And this is the God that every man misses if he does not come to the word of God in order to discover His marvelous greatness.

Chapter 2

THE "I AM" GOD

Come along with us on a short journey to an imaginary land that might help us discover God. Walk with us along a narrow path into a quiet jungle that meanders beside a remote and forgotten African village. Our ethnocentrism makes us reason to be superior to the resident villagers who are clad in clothes that might not be suitable for urban dwellers. Surely we would be greater than they; we would be somewhat in the eyes of a god whom we have created after our own image. But to our surprise, this journey will take us to a realization that we are not as much as we think we are. We are all clothed in spiritual rags wherein we thirst for the grace of a God who is far greater than our comprehension. Our journey will bring us to the realization that we are possible not living the gospel as we should.

As we speed by the village in a mod-

ern-day car, our fellow man becomes a passing blur in our peripheral vision. We still retain our egocentric personality, proudly passing ourselves off as those around whom the universe must surely evolve. We are important; people to be noted, recognized, considered by a god whom we conceive to be culturally identified with us alone.

We now pass over our fellow man in an airplane at five thousand feet. We recognize houses and cars. However, what was once the passing blur of a fellow man outside a car window has now disappeared from view. We are alone. What seemed so significant on earth has now dwindled to nonrecognition from a distance by our finite eyes. We can no longer see the human bodies on earth. It is too small, too insignificant in a world that is far bigger than we are as individuals.

We are now at forty thousand feet in a jet that whizzes over the circle of the earth. We see no houses, no cars, but especially, no human beings. Earth now becomes increasingly small as it whispers below in gradual movement. Even the small planet on which we reside now starts to become small, insignificant in a galaxy of other worlds.

We now become intensely aware of something. We begin to struggle, to look through the mind of a God who must be infinitely greater than anything that we could invent on earth. The man who felt so great in the African village now contemplates his own insignificance from the viewpoint of a God who can whiz by galaxies beyond light speed. It is a humbling experience. It is humbling to realize that our world is so small. And if our world is so small, then we are smaller. We are insignificant existences of space. Who do we think we are?

Aboard a space ship blasting to the outer fringes of the universe, we begin to ponder. We look back over our shoulders and see a faint glimmer of a small blue marble clothed in silk white clouds. Would the God we now conceive consider such a finite speck as us from the vastness of space? Would we be so arrogant to believe that He would even identify our existence?

Who is this God, that by a few words of revelation from Him, He has excited our imagination? Can He be so great that He can consider something so finite as ourselves? So small? So useless and insignificant? Human reason and rationality frustrate us. But faith excites our think-

ing to believe that such a great God can consider such a small particle of existence. Our faith drives our minds to dimensions beyond our empirical limitations to conceive a God beyond our imagination.

We so reason that certainly His creation is not larger or more mighty than His existence? He is the Creator and creation can never surpass the greatness of the Creator. The universe is so gigantic, so awesome, so beyond the reach of our largest telescopes. Who is this God who can be so immense and yet so individual? Would we dare locate Him somewhere among the galaxies of His creation? We dare not.

If we say He is "here" or "there," then we are wanting to locate Him in a position among the galaxies. We humanly struggle to place Him somewhere in order to identify His presence. If we place Him here, we want to mentally dislocate Him from there. If He is the God who is there, then can He be here also? Our human postulations frustrate us as we struggle to conceive of a God who can be here and there at the same time.

Our only recourse is to revelation, to a simple explanation on a small mountain in Sinai whereupon this God proclaimed, "I Am, that I Am." This humanly precise, yet inadequate statement leaves us wondering. Therefore, we must again walk by faith. We will never fully understand this GREAT I AM.

As our space ship returns to earth, the enlarging blue marble becomes more significant. Amidst the background of a billion planets and stars and suns, this God

who is greater than all has chosen to visit this one planet alone. Could He be so considerate, so specific in His work as to count men one by one in a universe so innumerable with heavenly bodies? This is the God who is so great that He can consider that which is so small.

Our aerial flight brings us home. We alight from our car. We meander again down a trail, through that village of those over whom we once so foolishly exalted ourselves. If the God of the universe would be so individual with us, what right do we vainly assume to place ourselves above the most humble of His creation? Would we dare stand before Him and cry that we are somewhat? Would we plead for special consideration? Would we then be so arrogant as to pass ourselves off for special judgment?

The God who is so great, but can consider that which is so small, certainly must be the one God worth believing. If not, then we are hopelessly lost in a galaxy that is so immense that we are reduced to dust specks of existence.

The God who is so complex, but can

be so individual, must certainly be of such presence that He is infinitely beyond our understanding. Nevertheless, we trust He is great, and yet, so individually considerate, for in Him we would live and move and have our very being. He is the God who can count the hairs on our heads just as He can count the galaxies of space.

The only God who is worth having is the one we cannot fully comprehend. If we wonder why He can consider just one human speck in a universe composed of galaxies, then we prove that He is a God greater than our minds. It is this God in whom we must walk by faith. It is this God we must wholly trust. It is this God before whom we dare not show the slightest pretense above our fellow man. Because He is the great "I Am," we are lowly individuals in all His creation. Because of who He is, we are individuals He has chosen to love and save and consider for eternal dwelling with Himself. Oh, how majestic and wonderful our God is. He is far beyond our greatest imagination. Our defining words fail in His presence.

Chapter 3

THE FOREKNOWING GOD

God is foreknowing. He knows what is going to happen in the future. He foreknows the happening of all events before they happen. But does God individually predestine events to happen because He knows that they will happen? At least, we suppose that He does not **because we would have no free will if He did**. Since He foreknows the happening of

events in the future, however, does not mean that He predestines what will happen. His foreknowledge does not preclude predestination.

Our human thinking struggles with the reality of the foreknowledge of God. How can there be any theological or philosophical harmony between the concepts of free-moral agency and God's fore-

knowledge? It is difficult from a human perspective to consider something as this from the viewpoint of God. What kind of God is this that can foreknow without individually predestining? How can He foreknow without predestining, and thus, violate our free will?

We must go back a few years in order to understand God's foreknowledge of the years to come. God was a billion earth years ago in eternity with foreknowledge of our obedience to a gospel that had not yet become a historical event at the time He foreknew we would obey. Foreknowledge would assume that He knew everyone who would obey the gospel. He saw the cross of Jesus because it was in His eternal plan to bring into eternity through the cross those whom He would create after His own image. In the midst of eternity, He planned that He would interrupt existence with the creation of the world. Time would become a part of eternity by the creation of that which would produce history. In other words, time did not exist until this world was created.

In creation, God whispered into existence the best of all possible environments that would be the dwelling place for free-moral agents. This set the stage for the gospel of Jesus' incarnational death on the cross for our sins and His resurrection for our hope. The occasion was then presented to us for a response to the gospel of Jesus' death and resurrection.

So here we are, only specks in eternity and the universe, confined to a history-making world that is destined to re-

turn to that out of which it was created—nothing. God knew that by the time our individual specks of existence streaked across the history of this world, the cross and empty tomb would have already blinked into history with eternal consequences. Though a brief earthly happening in an eternal plan, the impact of the cross on the obedient believer would have eternal consequences. We have obeyed. God knew we would. But did He predestine that we should respond to the cross through obedience to the gospel? And if He supposedly predestined us to obey the gospel, then are we truly free-moral agents? Or, are we simply cosmic robots created by a playful deity who is engaged in some diabolical chess game with His created puppets? It is difficult from our human perspective to understand how God can know that one will obey the gospel, and yet, not predestine that individual to obey.

Jesus was crucified before the creation of the world (Rv 13:8). God had orchestrated His own plan of redemption before the existence of history and time and us. He planned before the existence of the world that we would be destined as members of the body of Christ for eternal existence with Him. His action was foreknown and predestined because He foreplanned the happening of the cross and the existence of the body of Christ. It all happened according to plan.

But how could God in His omniscience foreknow our response to the plan without predestining our response? We presume He knew that we would obey the gospel. After all, does not om-

niscience mean all-knowing? But now postulations confound us. The purpose of the plan was to lift us from the confines of a temporary historical event to an eternal cohabitation with Deity. The only real purpose for our brief earthly existence was to mold us into that which is suitable for cohabitation with God in eternity.

If we believe that our obedience to the gospel was foreknown, then we wonder why God made all the plans for our salvation? Why all the pain and suffering in an environment that seems to always go wrong? Now we are thinking as humans. We have identified ourselves as the finite beings we are because we do not always understand the workings of God.

Nevertheless, we wonder why God would create an environment that would involve pain on our part when all He wanted in the first place was eternal cohabitants in heaven. Could He not simply have created us the way we should be, and then go on with eternal heaven without all the pain and suffering of this world? This is a question every Christian must answer. In answering it, we can better understand the purpose for our existence in this world. We can better understand the purpose for evil and suffering in our existence here on earth.

God knew that the obedient were destined to eternal cohabitation with Him. Since this was known even before the creation of our environment (the world), then does this not connect the prefix “pre” to our individual destiny, and thus, we are individually **predestined**. If this is true,

then our free-moral agency is canceled. If we are predestined, then where is our choice? If God determined before the creation of the world that we would obey the gospel, then certainly we would have no choice in making a decision concerning the cross of Jesus. Somehow, it is difficult for a mind that is confined to time to understand the consistency between concepts as foreknowledge, predestination and free-moral agency.

So we wonder for a moment. For God to be truly omniscient, then our eternity in heaven, that is based on our obedience to the gospel event, was in His knowledge before any word of creation was spoken. But how could He know such without destroying our freedom to choose? After all, there will be another reality for those who have not fallen at the foot of the cross—hell. Could the one who refused to respond lift up his head in the destruction of hell and accuse God of being unjust, unfair, fiendish? After all, if God foreknew our eternal glory, He also foreknew the destruction of the ones who would not respond to the cross. Therefore, does God’s foreknowledge of the condemned preclude that He destined them to be lost?

God’s justice is affirmed by our free-moral agency. Because we can make choices, God can stand just in the condemnation of the disobedient to hell. He can remain a just God because it was on the basis of choice that the condemned chose not to obey. But how can God foreknow the destiny of every individual without having predestined the destiny of either the saved or the lost? If He fore-

knows destinies, then what is the use of making any effort to obey? Can freedom of choice have any part in the eternal omniscience of a Being who is not confined to time and history?

We must reason together for a moment. In order for God to be a just God, we must be truly free-moral agents who live in an environment wherein choices can be made. This presupposes that an environment must be created that is the perfect dwelling place for choice making. Free-moral agency also presupposes that we have the mental capacity and ability to choose. There can be no pre-programming. There can be no fixing of the tapes or virus in the program. We must be totally responsible for our behavior and accountable for our reactions to divine law. **True free-moral agency in an environment that allows choices to be made reaffirms the justice of God in the condemnation of the disobedient.**

If our interaction with one another or God during our brief period of testing in time is negative, none of us can lift up our head in destruction and accuse God for our condemnation. Because of our free-moral agency, we are responsible for our own destiny. But does this not contradict the predestination of God? Why does the responsibility shift from God to us in this humanly supposed contradiction between the existence of God's foreknowledge and our own free-moral choice? Or, is there a contradiction?

Here is the solution to this supposed contradiction. Before the foundation of the world, God planned, and thus fore-

knew, the community of believers He would deliver from mortality into immortality. His plan was that His people be those who respond to the predestined cross. This community of believers would be/are predestined to eternal cohabitation with God in eternity. However, **individuals must make a free-moral decision to become a part of the predestined group, the church.** Since the group (the church) was predestined before the creation of the world to be accepted into eternal dwelling, then those who free-morally chose to become a part of the group are thus destined to heaven. However, one must make a free-moral decision to become a part of the group before he can be destined with the group. But does this mean that one is predestined to become a part of the church? Where does free-moral agency fit into this predestination? Where is choice? Can we really make free-moral choices to become a part of the church if God foreknows that we will obey the gospel?

The answer is not as complicated as one might first have supposed. We are given a choice concerning the cross. We have the freedom to choose concerning our new birth into the community of the predestined. If our response to the gospel is positive, then we become a member of a predestined body that has been purchased by the sacrificial blood of the incarnate Son of God. Our positive choice to His gift of redemption places us in the company of all those who are headed for heaven. We are thus predestined as a part of the body because the body is predestined. We are not predestined to be-

come a part of the body, though God foreknew that we would become a part of the body through our free-moral choice.

But you still question how God can do this. Did He not know that our responses to the gospel would be positive? Did His foreknowledge of our obedience, therefore, not preclude predestination of obedience? Have we not simply moved predestination back from final judgment to initial obedience? If one is predestined to heaven as a part of the church, then why cannot one be individually predestined to become a part of the predestined church?

The critic may have a point in this matter. However, his point is from a human perspective. After all—we speak as men—if God foreknew our obedience to the gospel, then was not our obedience predestined? And if predestined, then we have exercised no free-moral choice. God will still be responsible for our demise in eternal destruction if such be our destiny. He will be responsible because He created us while knowing that we would be destined for eternal destruction.

What we continue to wonder and postulate is if there is any consistency between foreknowledge and free will without God having individually predestined us to either heaven or hell. Can foreknowledge and free will exist without logical contradiction? Can God foreknow our obedience or disobedience without having predestined either? If He thus foreknows our individual obedience, then is there room for free will?

Admittedly, these contemplations confuse those who are limited to time and

history. And we all are so limited. If we understood all, then we would be God. Therefore, on this subject we must allow God to be God. Must we understand all that He is or all that He understands in order to affirm that His existence is not a logical contradiction? Certainly not. If we presumed we should know everything about God before we believe in God, then we are seeking to elevate ourselves to be as God. What we are actually doing is bringing God down to god, and again, creating a god after our own imaginations, or better, our own finite ability to understand. We are wanting a god we can comprehend, one we can figure out, and thus, compute His workings. You can have such a god. As for us, however, we will take the One we have difficulty trying to calculate with a finite mentality. We will take this God because we understand that we will never be able to figure out the one true God who is higher than our greatest thoughts.

Therefore, we will settle for our own understandings of what the Infinite has revealed to us through His word of revelation. He planned before the creation of the world that His community, the church, would dwell with Him in eternity. Thus, the church is predestined to eternal glory. All those who individually choose to become a part of this predestined group are thus predestined to eternal glory as a member of the body. In this way God can foreknow our destiny. His justice will stand in relationship to those He has foreknown will obey the gospel because they made individual choices to become a part of the predestined

tinued church.

Think of it from God's perspective in eternity before the creation of this environment. God foreknew our choice before we existed in order to choose. From our human perspective this may sound like preprogramming. But remember, we are not God. He can foreknow without preprogramming. Simply because we do not understand this, does not mean that it is not true from God's perspective.

Some have simply ignored the issue by saying that God chose not to foreknow. It is believed by some that in order to spare us of our frustrations concerning this humanly determined logical contradiction, God simply said to us that He never knew in the first place. If the condemned in eternity so accuse Him, He can respond by saying to them, "I never knew."

But this seems to be a convenient theology of gymnastics to escape from our frustrations to understand the omniscience of God. So we ask the question, Would not God have to foreknow first that which He would decide not to know? If so, then we are back to where we started.

Simply because we cannot sort

through our finite thinking and understanding of God's foreknowledge without presupposing individual predestination, we must not frustrate ourselves, and thus accuse God of "willful ignorance." After all, if He has chosen to willingly not know our destiny, then He is not omniscient. So why would God choose not to know simply because we cannot understand His knowledge? Are we again trying to create a god we can understand, one that chooses ignorance in order to accommodate our inability to comprehend that which pertains to Deity?

So we have not figured it all out. The fact that we are writing on the subject with a host of others who have written on the same subject is evidence that there are no final answers, and no declarative statements of revelation to bring answers to all the questions. But this is again proof that we are on the right road. We believe in a God whose ways are beyond our finding out. We believe in a God whose ways continually challenge us to wonder and postulate; One that makes us continually realize that we are still human.

Chapter 4

THE GOD AMONG US

We are trapped here on earth in a physical environment of struggle. We seek to comprehend that which is beyond our senses. When our faith has questions or inquires, we strive for concrete answers from an empirical world that we perceive through our senses. The limita-

tions of our inquiry give us little hope beyond our world. A young Christian in a classroom once asked, "How can I know that there is a God out there or here?" How would we answer that question, for the answer involves something, or Someone who is beyond our empirical world?

We seek to know, to touch, to be confirmed in our faith. We often feel that the believer has been relegated to a world of guesses, to a faith that is based on a book called the Bible which is interpreted with human intuition. Has God left us to ourselves in a physical world of cosmic chance? Has He laid the foundation for doubt by hiding behind some distant planet? Our questions often push us on to a faith that seeks to walk by sight.

“Walk by faith” seems to call for too much. Some have at one time or another prayed for the appearance of an angel, a miracle, or just a small flicker of a candle flame in the privacy of their own room. If God would just indicate His presence by the minutest revelation, we believe that our faith would be confirmed; we could joyfully go on our way—by sight.

Entire religious systems are built upon such yearnings that are fulfilled by humanly claimed experiences. To some, an angel has supposedly appeared, the Spirit has spoken, the flame flickered. There is an assortment of religious people who “believe” because they claim to have put their hand into the spear-wounded side of Jesus and touched the nail-pierced hands. But are these “Thomas disciples” more blessed because they have supposedly seen and touched? We think not.

The existence of experiential religiosity only manifests the desires of those who seek to walk by sight and not by faith.

There are those religious groups today who have claimed to have experienced some wonder as the blind being healed, the dead raised, or some cancer

cured. We do not doubt that God works behind the scenes of our empirical cocoon to accomplish great things. However, we do question those who affirmed that the empirically perceived miracles of Jesus and the apostles occur today. God seeks to lead us today by faith, not by sight.

We do not want God to steal away our blessedness by an empirically perceived miracle. We seek to walk by the strength of faith. Could it be that faith is stronger than sight? We think so. After all, for three years Thomas experienced the feeding of the multitudes, the walking on water, the raising of the dead, and a host of other empirical confirmations of Jesus as the Son of God. And yet, he still wanted to touch a nail-pierced hand before he would believe in the resurrection. If sight is so powerful, then why did Israel seek to swim back across a sea through which they had walked on dry land to escape the Egyptians? Why did they, at the foot of Mount Sinai, build idols on which they could lay their hands?

So we want to empirically know the “comings” and “goings” of the Spirit. We want to know His “doings.” Our questions betray our humanity. They manifest our frustrations with the limitations that confine us to a material world. Can we ask for the Spirit of God to behave after the definitions of our words? We must confess that our questions are confined to the words of our dictionary. Therefore, for God to answer the questions, He must answer with the same humanly defined words. There is a problem in this. If we understand His answer,

then we are understanding only because we understand our own words that He has used. We thus place His explanation of His work within the confines of our own vocabulary. We have thus imprisoned God to a verbal cell into which we can comprehend how He works. We have limited Him to that which is experiential to man himself. Is this the God about which the Bible speaks?

If God could adequately answer our questions about His work, then He would not work beyond the realm of our understanding. But who wants to believe in a god who is limited to the confines of human understanding? Is the Spirit of God limited to our deductions, to our ability to comprehend what He is doing? Since the Spirit is God, we must affirm that He is not limited. His work is beyond our discovery by sight. We must understand by faith that He is doing what He has said He will do.

We ask about His “comings” and “goings.” To ask such is to assume that His presence can be located. As earthly beings, we “come” and “go.” God is. It is not that the Spirit is either here or there. He is. We argue over the “presence” of the Spirit. Such argument only reveals our understandings as childish in comparison to God’s omnipresence. We do not believe in a God of location. We believe in a God who is everywhere at all times. He is neither here nor there. When we say that He is here, my friend on the other side of the world can also say the same thing at the exact same moment. “God is here” in China and America at the same time. Does this sound like a God who

can be located somewhere? Certainly not! Any “definition” of God that we would draw from the Scriptures must not confine Him to a specific location.

The Spirit reveals through inspired words that He is **in** us; God is **in** us; Jesus is **in** us. We thus debate about the literalness of the metaphor and miss the point of the Spirit’s revelation. We are **in** a house; water is **in** a glass; fish are **in** the sea. Would we apply the literalness of **in** to that which is beyond the physical world? Can anything of the physical world possibly contain that which is not of this world? Only through incarnation was God the Son able to locate. Do we not seek to locate the Spirit of God because we yearn for an empirical presence of God? The fact is that the Spirit is in us, but He is also “in” other places than us. His presence is not limited to the location of human bodies. His presence in the world is not limited to being in Christians. The presence of the Spirit is much greater than the church in the world.

Allow us to digress to humanity. Would the Spirit work less in my life if He “dwelt” on the planet Pluto instead of literally **in** us on earth? If we confine the Spirit’s work to His “presence,” then we have located Him to where He works. If we presume that His presence is only in the life of the believers, then we might assume that His work is confined to the presence of the believers and His work limited to the believers. But how can we confine Deity in this way? We cannot. His being “in” or “with” us makes little difference when it comes to His work.

We believe in an omnipresent Deity that can whisper a work in our life from ten galaxies away. Our God is that big and powerful. His Spirit is not limited, not confined. Neither is He distant. Only through our earthly dictionary would we make Him “near” or “distant.” But we must continually remind ourselves not to confine Deity to the definitions of our dictionary.

We find the debate over the “location” of the Spirit a manifestation of our inability to transcend the literalism of earthly defined words. Did the Spirit actually seek to locate Himself by use of the word “in”? Do we believe in a Spirit whose work is confined by a so-called location of His presence? Can He not work beyond the sphere of “personal indwelling,” beyond the confines of the community of God? Or, is the debate simply over our efforts to literalize and localize the God we have created after our own understanding, and thus confined to our own locations. After all, if we can completely calculate the workings of this God, then certainly He cannot work beyond our thinking, or beyond our presence.

We believe in a Spirit who is bigger than the body of believers. We believe in a Spirit whose work is not confined to the realm of the personal presence of the believers. After all, the Spirit was working before there were any Christians. Is not the Spirit omnipresent? Could He not be opening doors for evangelism in areas apart from the physical presence of the saints?

So we ask too many questions and give so few answers. But is it wrong to

believe in a God about whom more questions can be asked than answered? If we had all the answers about the “comings” and “goings” of God—if indeed God “comes” and “goes”—then He would no longer be God, but a god. He would no longer be the Spirit, but a spirit. And then, what’s the use? One god is just as good as another; one spirit is as good as the next. If we could figure out the Spirit, then He is not worth figuring out. If we could answer all the questions, then the questions are not worth asking in the first place. Every concept of the spirit world would only be an exercise of our humanly generated imagination. At the end of the day, we would be religious according to the accusations of the atheist. We would be religious and have beliefs that are simply excited thoughts that are of human origin.

The Spirit said that God is able to work exceedingly, abundantly beyond what we can think or imagine. If this is true, then we can ask all the questions we want. But we expect fewer answers. We would be cautious with those who have all the answers. They believe only in a god that cannot work beyond their answers. They believe in a god they can figure out.

The fact that we cannot answer all the questions is evidence that we are on the right road. Every other road leads to a walk by sight, to a god created after the imaginations of those who do not want a mysterious God who can work beyond our thinking. To be satisfied with only a few answers about a God who works exceedingly above what our minds can

imagine, is to discover the strength of faith. Therefore, we will continue to seek for answers. However, we will not frustrate ourselves when we venture into those areas that are beyond our imagina-

tion. We will content ourselves with the few answers given, and believe that the others are yet to be revealed in another existence beyond this world.

Chapter 5

THE ONE TRUE GOD

There is only one God. The brotherhood of humanity can exist only in the fact that there is one God who created all of us. The division of the religions of the world is only evidence that men have created gods after their own agendas. They have created an assortment of gods to conform to their own religious desires or cultural experiences. It is belief in these many gods that manifests the division that exists among the religions of the world, and subsequently, divisions in humanity. However, the search for, and belief in the one God of the Bible, will always promote unity among men, not division.

The problem that has developed since the beginning of time is what Paul stated in Romans 1. Men give up the true knowledge of God: *“Professing to be wise, they became fools, and **changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man**”* (Rm 1:22,23). Because men gave up a knowledge of God, they *“**exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator ...**”* (Rm 1:25). What Paul explains here has happened throughout history. Mankind is thus left with a legacy of world religionists who have in turn created an assortment of imaginations con-

cerning who God really is.

The diversity of the religions of the world has led to a diversity of gods. Men first create religious behavior that conforms to their own carnal desires. They then create gods who would agree with their behavior. However, we must reverse this process of thinking and behavior. We must assume that there is only one God. We must affirm that our lives must conform to the wishes of this God. This is the God who existed long before men started manufacturing religions and gods according to their own desires and traditions. This is the one God the Bible reveals.

A Bible school teacher once asked a class, “Why is there but one God?” A student replied, “Because God fills every place, and there’s no room for another one.” Because He fills every place, it is in Him that we live and move and have our existence. There is no room for another god.

Though God is one, however, He manifests Himself to man in three works in reference to creation and the eternal salvation of man. Some would say that He manifests Himself to man in three personalities. The word “personalities” would be correct as long as we assume

that there is no difference in the personalities. However, we commonly use the term “personality” to refer to the different characteristics people have which make them different from one another. But in reference to God, there is only one personality. God as one personality reveals Himself through three ministries or manifestations. God works as one through the manifestation of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in order to carry out His ministry to mold man into a being one who is suitable for eternal dwelling. When we use the word “personality” in reference to God, therefore, we must not define God to be different in the way we are different in our individual personalities.

In the very first verse of the Bible, the “united plurality” of God is manifested. *“In the beginning God [Elohim] created the heavens and earth”* (Gn 1:1). The word *Elohim* in Hebrew is plural. This plurality is brought out in pronoun form in Genesis 1:26. *“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man’”* In the pronoun “Us” all that God is was manifested to participate in creation.

The fact that God is one, yet plural, is one of those concepts that will never be fully understood by our finite minds of this world. Biblical interpreters have used a number of illustrations in their efforts to convey the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit who manifest the one true and living God. Some have stated that the oneness and plurality of God is as an egg. The egg is one, but the one egg is composed of a shell, a yolk and the egg white. It is one egg, but three. The problem with

the illustration is that each of the parts of the egg is different. Their difference separates them from one another. Such is not the case with God. Some say God is as H₂O (water). H₂O can be liquid, steam or ice. This illustration is surely inadequate for H₂O cannot be liquid, steam and ice at the same time. But God can. God is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit at all times. God does not become the Father, then the Son, and then the Holy Spirit. He is simultaneously the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Regardless of the catalogue of illustrations that we might use to explain the existence and being of God, there is no metaphorical illustration of this world that will put us in touch with the reality of the oneness of the person of God. Does this disturb us? Absolutely not! If our illustrations bring us to a full understanding of that which is not of our world, then that which is illustrated has been brought down to the level of this world. If we create a god after our own understandings, then certainly this god is not worth believing. John Wesley said, “Bring me a worm that can comprehend a man, and then I will show you a man that can comprehend the triune God.”

So how can we understand the plurality of the one God? We cannot. This is one of those biblical truths that must be accepted by faith as simply a “matter of fact” as it is stated in the Scriptures. And since it must be accepted as such, then it must be accepted as a matter of faith. One can take it or leave it. It is our choice. However, if we accept the Bible as the revelation of God, then we must

accept the fact that God is one, but manifests Himself as three. We must accept this fact simply because the Bible tells us so.

A. **There is one God:**

The fact that there is one God is a central teaching of the Bible. This is not an optional belief. It is fundamental to our beliefs as Christians. Though we do not understand all Bible statements concerning the one true God, we must accept the Bible when it states that God is one. Moses proclaimed to Israel, "*Here O Israel: the Lord our God, **the Lord is one***" (Dt 6:4). "*There is none other besides Him*" (Dt 4:35). Isaiah recorded the words of God, "*Before Me there was no God formed, nor will there be after Me*" (Is 43:10,11). "*Is there a God besides Me? Indeed there is no other Rock*" (Is 44:8). "*I, the Lord, am the first; and with the last I am He*" (Is 41:4; see 46:9-11). "*I am the Lord, and there is no other; there is no God besides Me*" (Is 45:5). The accusation that the Bible teaches that there are three Gods is simply not true. The Bible clearly teaches that there is only one God. The problems comes when we try in human words to explain the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to be one God.

The Bible teaches that God has manifested Himself as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three in ministry, but one in essence, nature, character and goal. They are thus one. No three people can be one as this, and thus, it is beyond our ex-

perience to form a definition of the unity of God as one. This gives some theologians of the religious world some difficulty. Nevertheless, if we accept the Bible as the revelation of God, then we must accept as "matter of fact" this revelation of God as to who He is. It is also true that we must accept the fact that we cannot fully understand God, regardless of what the Bible teaches concerning who God is. There can never be a complete revelation of the nature, essence and existence of God by using human words.

The reason God revealed His oneness through Isaiah was because Israel had carried out in their theology the very thing God commanded them not to do. When God gave the ten commandment law on Mount Sinai, He stated, "*I am the Lord your God **You will have no other gods before Me***" (Ex 20:2,3). In this commandment, God was identifying the inclination of man to create gods after his own image. At least, God knew that man would seek to create gods they could understand.

Israel accepted the created gods (imaginings) of the surrounding nations, and thus, followed after her own fleshly desires to give service to those imaginings. Isaiah stood as God's prophet in the midst of such imaginings. It was his work to turn Israel again unto the one true God. In other words, it was his work to turn Israel from following after her own imaginings of producing religious inventions (gods) that condoned her worldly behavior.

The point is that there are no other

gods. However, when one forms in his mind a concept of a higher power that is contrary to the God revealed in the Bible, then he has created another god. However, this god exists only in the mind of the one who created it. It is for this reason that we must allow the Bible to define who God is. Though the Bible cannot fully explain the totality of God in the words of man, we must allow the Bible alone to define the nature and character of God. If we do not do this, we will create a god after our own image who conforms to our own desires.

This does not mean that we must understand all that God is before we can deny a false god. The imagination of any god who would contradict what we clearly understand God to be according to the definitions of the Bible, is a false god.

Israel's case with created gods is a definition of idolatry. But the apostate Israelites were not alone in the god creation business. Their history only explains what is the common inclination of man to do in reference to creating religions and gods. Man first desires to fulfill the lusts of the flesh, pride of life, and lusts of the eyes. He first idolizes himself, and then, passes his idol off as a god to be worshiped.

The problem is that man has a religious conscience. When men combine the uncontrollable fulfillment of their lusts with their religious desires, a religion and god is born that will condone their immoral behavior. This explains the practice of fornication that was so common among the religions of the ancients. If one wanted

to fulfill the lusts of the flesh, he simply created a god that said it was fine to do so.

Idol gods are the result of men who are wanting to do their own will, but at the same time, feel conscientiously good about their behavior by creating a god that agrees with their desires. History is filled with those gods that have been manufactured after the vile desires of those who either sought fleshly satisfaction or national superiority over other nations.

B. The plurality of God was manifested as the three of God:

Though God is one, He expresses or manifests Himself to man in three ministries or works according to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Since God is omnipresent, it should not surprise us to see the manifestation of Himself in three ways. The following points affirm the omnipresence of God. However, keep in mind that such omnipresence does not teach that there are three Gods. When we see the manifestation of God in three ministries, we understand that it is the one true God who is accomplishing in this world that for which we were created.

1. Three manifestations of God at Jesus' baptism: The three of God were manifested at the baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3:16,17. While the Son was in an incarnate state on earth, He was baptized by John on the occasion that is recorded in Matthew 3. At the same time, the Father, who was in heaven, pro-

claimed, *“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”* Immediately after the baptism, the Spirit of God metaphorically descended on Jesus as a dove. Thus, there was the Father in heaven, the Son on earth, and the Holy Spirit descending. The one God manifested Himself in three different “locations” and in three different ways.

2. *Three manifestations of God unto which a disciple is baptized:* Before His ascension, Jesus commissioned His disciples to preach the gospel to all nations. When disciples were made as a result of their preaching, they were to be baptized *“in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”* (Mt 28:19). Here again, the three of God is indicated in the sense that when one is baptized, he comes into a relationship with all that God is, and does in the life of man in reference to salvation.

3. *Three manifestations of God revealed through Paul:* In 1 Corinthians 11:3 Paul wrote, *“But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.”* Paul stated that the head of man is Christ, but the head of Christ is God. Revealed in this context is a distinction between the Father and Son. We know that in the context Paul is discussing a problem of insubordination on the part of some Corinthian sisters in their relationship with their husbands. Paul uses as an illustration of the submissive headship relationship that exists between God, the Father and God, the Son. He stated that the head of Christ is the totality of God.

It is difficult to understand the divine relationship mentioned by Paul through human minds. Nevertheless, there is something revealed in 1 Corinthians 11:3 concerning the submission of the Son that illustrates submission to headship. It was God who gave all authority to the Son (Mt 28:18). It was God who delivered all things into the hands of the Son (Jn 13:3; 17:2). However, this might not be difficult to understand if we understand that God, **the Father, Son and Holy Spirit work as a unit of authority in reference to the work of any one manifestation of God.** In other words, God (the Father, Son and Holy Spirit) is the head of any one manifestation of God. Each manifestation in His work for the salvation of man is in submission to the whole. Thus God (the Father, Son and Holy Spirit) is the head of Christ.

In 2 Corinthians 13:14 Paul again made a distinction between the three manifestations of work of the one God. *“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”* In this one passage a definition of the three is clearly stated by Paul. It was the grace, love and communion of God (the Father, Son and Holy Spirit) that was to be with the Corinthians.

In 1 Corinthians 8:6 Paul also wrote, *“... but to us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we in Him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and we through Him”* It is essential for Christians to believe, therefore, that though the Scriptures speak of the Fa-

ther, Son and Holy Spirit, there is only one God.

4. *Three manifestations of God revealed at the death of Stephen:* In Acts 7:55-59 we again see the three manifestations of God who made Himself known to man. Luke recorded in Acts 7 that on earth Stephen was filled with the Holy Spirit (At 7:55). At the moment of his death, he saw Jesus at the right hand of God (At 7:56). What he saw is not explained. What is explained is that there was in some way a manifestation to him from heaven of the existence of the Father and Son in heaven.

5. *Three manifestations of God in His work in the ministry of Jesus:* When Jesus grew up as a boy, He found favor in the eyes of God in heaven (see Mt 1:18-23; Lk 1:30-35; 2:52). He was doing His Father's business at the age of twelve (Lk 2:49). He was at the beginning of His ministry, "*filled with the Holy Spirit*" (Lk 4:1), and thus, went forth in the power of the Holy Spirit (Lk 4:14). All three of the one God were working together through the incarnate Jesus on earth in order to carry out the plan of redemption for the saving men.

Throughout the earthly and heavenly ministry of Jesus, the three manifestations of God are clearly seen. Jesus said that one could speak against Him, the Son of Man, but if he spoke against the Holy Spirit, there would be no forgiveness (Mt 12:31,32). During the resurrection of Lazarus, Jesus on earth lifted up His eyes and said, "*Father ...*" (Jn 11:41). While on earth, Jesus spoke of the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom He would send from

the Father (Jn 14:26; 16:13,14). He spoke of ascending to the Father (Jn 20:17). At the right hand of the Father, He would function as a mediator between God and man (1 Tm 2:5). It is a clear biblical teaching that God is three in manifestation of work. However, God is one in existence and one in purpose and goal of work.

It should not disturb us to be unable to understand the plurality of the one God. The triune God has revealed Himself in many different ways throughout the history of man. He has the prerogative to do this. The fact that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have revealed themselves as three in order to bring about the plan of redemption for man does not say that there are three Gods. It is our own inability to comprehend fully the nature of God that makes it difficult for us to understand that which is beyond our thinking, and certainly beyond the words of our human vocabulary. We must be careful not to make God less than He is in order that we might understand who He is.

We must be content to understand that we will never in this life fully understand the One who is exceedingly above our thoughts. This should not disturb us. If it does, then certainly we are seeking to create a God that we can fully comprehend. But the one true and living God is beyond the full comprehension of man. The fact that He is beyond our full comprehension is evidence that He is the only true and living God. All other gods are only the product of the imagination of those

who seek to be comfortable with a god they can name and understand. Idol gods are always understood by those who create them.

Chapter 6

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

Understanding the nature and character of the Father is to understand the nature and character of God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as the Godhead. Since the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one, then we must assume that they are one in every realm of definition we might conceive in our minds. If we define the nature and character of any one manifestation of God, then we have defined the nature and character of the whole. Though the work and manifestation of God may be different, we cannot use the word “different” when understanding the nature and character of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in any manner that would separate them from one another. Their different works do not divide them from one another as God.

We must guard ourselves against defining any one manifestation of God in any manner that leaves the impression that there is a variation between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. If such an impression is left, then certainly we have failed to understand a biblical definition of God. We cannot interpret the revelation of God in any manner that would divide God into three Gods.

Our exegesis of biblical texts will give us a literary comprehension of God. Statements are made in Scripture and concepts of God are conveyed. But there

is an inadequacy about a “book knowledge” of God that leaves us groping for more. The words of the Book are our words, and our words are inadequate when we seek to fully understand God. God knows this. He knew this during the “times of ignorance” before the manifestation of the Son (See At 17:30,31). For this reason, He sent forth the Son in order to give a visual definition of the nature and character of God. Therefore, we must always seek to define God through Jesus, for Jesus revealed the nature of God. John wrote, “*No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him*” (Jn 1:18). Jesus affirmed, “*He who has seen Me has seen the Father*” (Jn 14:9). Jesus “*is the image of the invisible God ...*” (Cl 1:15). And if anyone would know God, then he must investigate Him through the Son. Any world religion, therefore, that does not consider Jesus to be the Son of God, can never discover the one true and living God. Any religion that does not exalt Jesus above a prophet, cannot come to an understanding of who God is. Jesus must be the central figure in our definition of God.

Our investigation concerning who the Father is of the Godhead begins with the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets,

through whom God revealed Himself. Our study would thus be of those behavioral characteristics of how God dealt with Israel and worked through the Israelites throughout their history. When we come to the New Testament, our task is made more simple. We understand God the Father through the living illustration of Jesus. When we see the behavior of Jesus, we see the behavior of the Father. When we see the character of Jesus, we see the character of the Father.

A. The nature and character of God the Father:

To say that God is deity, or divine, is simply to say that He is not physical. God is spirit (Jn 4:24). God in the form of spirit has no physical attachment to this world, or physical identity. He can exist apart from the physical. He is not part spirit and part physical. Spirit is not physical or of this world. Spirit is not flesh and blood, but is beyond the confines of this world. The nature of God, therefore, must first be understood in the light of Him as spirit. We thus seek to understand the nature and character of God as spirit.

God as spirit works as our spiritual Father. The word “father,” as it is used by the Holy Spirit in revelation to refer to God, emphasizes relationship. The word “father” emphasizes a relationship of God between man and God, as well as, the relationship that existed between God the Father and God the Son while the Son was in a state of incarnation on earth. In reference to our relationship with God as

our Father, there are certain attributes of God that we must understand in order to appreciate what the Father seeks to do for as His sons.

1. *God the Father is self-existent:*

All that has been created depends upon God for existence. In fact, all that is now in existence depends on the power of the word of God for continuation in existence (Hb 1:3). This world would not stay together if God did not keep it together. If the world depends on the power of God to exist, then God must be able to exist apart from the existence of the physical world.

God’s existence does not depend on the existence of the created world. God would still exist even if the world did not exist. Such was the case before the creation of the world, and such will be the case after this world passes away. God is indigenous of all that is physical. This means that as spirit His existence does not depend on the existence of any material thing. Athanasius stated, “God is self-existent, enclosing all things and enclosed by none; within all according to His goodness and power, yet without all in His proper nature” (*De Decretis*, A.D. 296-373).

The self-existent nature of God to sustain the physical world also applies to life. God is the source of all life. He does not exist because life exists. Life exists because He is the great giver of life. Therefore, life that originates from the Father exists separate from the life that exists on the earth. Jesus said, “*For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in*

Himself” (Jn 5:26). While on earth, it was the Father who sustained the life of the Son, for it was the Father who gave life to the Son.

Those who would have life must find such in the original source of life. The Father is the source of all life, and thus, the only source from which man can gain eternal life is from the Father. The medium through which all men must pass in order to receive life is the Son. Jesus said, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me*” (Jn 14:6). No one reaches the source of eternal life except through Jesus. Jesus thus said, “*I am the light of the world. He who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but have the light of life*” (Jn 8:12). Jesus gives life to those who come to Him. “*For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He wills*” (Jn 5:21).

2. God the Father is the primal source of all. All that exists originated from God through the Son. Paul wrote, “*Yet for us there is only one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live*” (1 Co 8:6). Paul wants us to understand in this passage that there is only one manifestation of God as the Father and one manifestation as the Son. There are not several fathers as God and several sons as sons of God through whom all things were created. God is the origin of all, though all came into existence through the creative work of the Son. “*For by Him [Jesus] all*

things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible ... All things were created through Him and for Him” (Cl 1:16).

What Paul says in this statement is that in His state of existence before the incarnation, Jesus was the creator of all things. God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, spoke the command for creation, but it was the work of God the Son to do the work of creating.

3. God the Father is personal. Herein is a unique teaching of the Bible in reference to God as a higher power. This teaching is especially true in reference to what is revealed in the New Testament. God is personal in the sense that He has personally revealed Himself in order to relate to His creation. Through His revelation, He has thus laid the foundation upon which men can approach Him. Through the revelation of Jesus, He is identified with a personality by which we can identify Him.

This concept of God is different from the concepts of gods that are created after the imagination of men. The gods of men are usually pictured as impersonal, cold, harsh and intolerant. But the God of the Bible is portrayed as a loving father who seeks for His children to draw nigh unto Him.

God is thus personal in the sense that He is rational, compassionate and loving. Since the Father has personality, He has revealed through the Son a personality with which we can identify and with which we can relate. When John said that God is love, he revealed by inspiration a personality characteristic of God

with which we can identify (1 Jn 4:8). However, our capacity to love does not regulate or limit the love of God. The limits of our love do not define the limits of God's love. Neither are man's limits of love God's limits of love. The love, mercy, patience, etc. of man do not place maximums on God's ability to do such. After our patience runs out, God continues to have patience. After we stop loving, God continues to love. As a personal God, He has simply created us in a spiritual manner by which we can relate to His character by loving, having mercy, and having patience. He did not create us with a nature as His in order to manifest the limits of His nature. He simply created us after His image in order to give us the character tools by which to understand His personality. John stated, "*He who does not love does not know God ...*" (1 Jn 4:8). Therefore, the one who does not love cannot understand the personality of God.

4. God the Father is the father of all. Since God the Father is personal, He can relate in a personal way through the most personal relationships. He is thus a "Father" to those who have been created after His image. The word "father" is reserved for God the Father because of His relationship with humanity (See Mt 5:45; 6:4-9; 7:11; 10:20).

a. He is the Father of creation. God is our Father in the sense that He created us. "*Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us*" (Mt 2:10). As the Father, we were the clay that was made by the potter's

hand (Is 64:8). Our Creator was the "*Father of spirits*" in that He created the spirit that dwells within us (Nm 16:22; Hb 12:9). We are thus God's offspring, as Paul affirms, because all men have originated from the Father (At 17:28).

b. He is the Father of redemption. The Christian has a relationship with God because God has extended grace and mercy toward those who have chosen to submit to His gospel of grace in order to establish a covenant relationship with Him. Christians have thus been redeemed out of the bondage of sin in order to come into a covenant with God (Ep 1:7). In a redemptive sense, the Father deals with us as His sons in that we have been brought into a covenant relationship with Him (Hb 13:20). We are "*sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus*" (Gl 3:26). And because we are sons, "*God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!'*" (Gl 4:6; Rm 8:15). We have received the adoption, and thus, we are brought into a covenant relationship with God through His Son Jesus Christ (Rm 8:15; Gl 4:5). And if we are sons, then we are now joint heirs with Jesus (Rm 8:17; Gl 4:7).

The fatherhood of God the Father is limited to those who believe and obey the gospel, and thus, are in a covenant relationship with Him. God can have no fatherhood relationship with those who refuse to submit to their Father. If one refuses to humble himself under the mighty hand of God, he cannot enjoy any fatherhood relationship with the Father (See 1 Pt 5:5-7).

Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would be the “everlasting Father” (Is 9:6). This may be a difficult statement to understand in reference to our understanding that God the Father is our Father. But we must understand that Jesus is our “everlasting Father” in relation to His redemption of us through His blood. The fatherhood of Jesus is emphasized in no greater way than in the relationship between God and man in reference to salvation in Christ. The Jews, as well as the Gentiles, invented a legalistic system of justification before God in order to depend on themselves for salvation. In other words, salvation was based on the individual’s ability to perform law and do good works in order to justify oneself before God. The problem with this system of supposed justification was that no one can keep law perfectly, nor do enough good works in order to atone for sin or earn the reward of heaven. This is true simply because all have sinned, and we cannot atone for our sins (Rm 3:9,10,23). One is thus in bondage to his own sin if he seeks God after a legalistic system of justification. He is a slave to himself and a system of religion he has made to be a yoke of bondage. He thus needs a father to deliver him from his own bondage.

In Christ one is set free because of his adoption by the Father into sonship (Gl 5:1). In Christ, therefore, the son has the same nature as the Father, but the one who is a slave to his own self-imposed religion does not. In Christ, the son has a Father, but the slave has a master. In Christ, the son obeys out of love, but the slave out of fear. In Christ, the

son is the heir of all things the Father has to offer, but the slave has no inheritance. Therefore, in Christ the son has a future with a Father, but the slave has only apprehension concerning his own salvation.

5. *God the Father is eternal:* Eternal means to exist without end. We would expect this of God, though it is inconceivable by moral beings. He exists without beginning or ending. We would expect that His existence would not be determined by that which is passing away. “*The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms ...*” (Dt 33:27). The word “everlasting” (*olam*) could in this context be understood after the meaning of the Greek word *aionios* that is used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew word *olam*. By use of *aionios*, the writer wanted to emphasize the certainty of God’s protecting arms by which He delivers. In other words, God is here for us at all times. We can depend on Him because He is faithful. His faithfulness is in His eternity. In this sense, therefore, God’s arms of security are always there for us because He exists without end.

We can depend on God because He is without end. He “*inhabits eternity*” (Is 57:15). He is without beginning and ending. “Unendingness” is a concept that certainly is beyond the feeble speculations of our minds that are confined to clocks and calendars. But in order for God to be God, then certainly we must believe that His deity would presuppose eternity.

The very nature of God must be based on the fact that He is without beginning or ending. What good is a terminal god?

God's eternity, therefore, is not something to be argued from the Scriptures to be true. God does not have to prove that He is eternal. The fact that He is God is axiomatic of the fact. The eternity of God is inherent within the concept of God. For this reason, the Bible does not set forth a doctrinal presentation of God's eternity. Eternality is simply accepted in Scripture as an axiomatic truth, that is, a truth that does not need to be proved. If one believes in God, then he must believe that this God is eternal.

Because God is eternal, His word is eternal. On the basis of the eternity of God, Jesus said, "*Heaven and earth will pass away but My words will by no means pass away*" (Mt 24:35). Therefore, "*the word of the Lord endures forever*" because God endures forever (1 Pt 1:25).

6. *God the Father raised Jesus from the dead.* It was the choice of Jesus to lay down His life. Jesus said,

Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father (Jn 10:18).

Throughout His ministry, Jesus controlled His environment in order to take Himself to the cross. He would not allow a murderous mob to take His life. He did not allow Himself to be secretly killed by jealous religious leaders. He laid His life down and took it up again. The

source of Jesus' power to be resurrected was with the Father. For this reason, the resurrection of Jesus is attributed to the Father. It was the Father who raised Jesus from the dead, for He had given commandment to the Son to raise Himself from the dead (Jn 10:17,18). The Father raised Jesus "*from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places*" (Ep 1:20). It was the work of the Father in reference to the cross to resurrect the Son. We would conclude, therefore, that both the Father and Son worked together in the resurrection of the body of Jesus from the dead.

7. *God the Father is unchanging.* God is solid and unchanging as a rock (Dt 32:4). David wrote, "*The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in him I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold*" (Ps 18:2).

The Father and the Son are immutable. They are the same today as they were yesterday and will be tomorrow (See Hb 13:8). The counsel of the Lord thus stands forever and the plans of His heart throughout all generations (Ps 33:11). His word "*is settled in heaven.*" His "*faithfulness endures to all generations*" (Ps 119:89,90). Malachi wrote the words of God, "*For I am the Lord, I do not change ...*" (Ml 3:6). God is thus immutable, that is, unchangeable (Hb 6:17,18). With God, therefore, "*there is no variation or shadow of turning*" (Js 1:17).

Changeability is inherent in the minds and behavior of those whose choices are affected by the environment in which they live. Circumstances around us move us

to vacillate from one action to another. We thus “make up our minds” in relation to the environmental circumstances that occur.

God dwells in an unchanging environment, and thus, is not affected in His will by changing circumstances in our environment. He dwells in eternity that does not change. It is thus not in the nature of God to change His mind because of changing circumstances in our environment. The unchanging nature of His heavenly environment assumes that He is unchanging.

Man cannot know the future. When we step into future events by the passing of every moment of time, circumstances we encounter will affect our decisions. We thus change our minds and actions as new encounters affect us. We make changes in our desires because of new information we have learned by experience.

God knows the future. He does not encounter anything new that would affect a change in His desire and will. Therefore, there is nothing new that would cause Him to change from His pre-determined plans. In this sense, the omniscience of God is the foundation upon which the unchanging nature of God is based. There will never be any new information that will necessitate God changing from the direction of His eternal plans. Since His eternal plans were based on His knowledge of the future, any change of His eternal plans would label Him a frivolous God, a God that vacillates in order to play games with man. But such is not the nature of the Father. He is always there for us as He has always been there.

8. *God the Father is all-knowing.*

God is omniscient. He knows all that is of nature because He created all nature (Gn 15:5; Is 40:26; Cl 1:16). David proclaimed, “*He counts the number of the stars; He calls them by name. Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite*” (Ps 147:4,6). He knows all the work of man (Ps 119:168). He knows the innermost thoughts and motives of man. David wrote, “*You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways*” (Ps 139:2,3). God knows our past, present and future (Is 41:21-23; 45:1-4; 46:11). Isaiah wrote of God’s claim concerning prophecy of the future: “*Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them*” (Is 42:9). God has based His eternal plans on His eternal knowledge. Therefore, we can trust in His work because He is working as a result of His knowledge of all things.

9. *God the Father is all-powerful.*

All-powerful means that God is omnipotent. He can do all that can be done. He can do all that is logical. It is not that God can do the impossible. He cannot make round squares or straight lines that are bent. He can do what is logically possible.

The Lord said to Abraham and Sarah, “*Is anything too hard for the Lord*” (Gn 18:14). The answer is “No!” Job said of God, “*I know that You can do everything*” (Jb 42:2; see Is 26:4).

Therefore, “*with God all things are possible*” (Mt 19:26; see Lk 1:37; At 26:8). All that can logically be done God can do through His power.

Pharaoh of Egypt discovered that the Lord was able to deliver His people through great power (Ex 12:30-32). After Daniel was thrown into the Lion’s den, King Darius asked, “*Daniel, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?*” (Dn 6:20). The answer is “Yes!” God is “*able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think*” (Ep 3:20; see Ps 33:4-9; 107:23-32; Jb 1:10,12; 2:6: 42:2; Is 40:12-17; Dn 4:30-37; Mt 19:26). He is “*the Lord God Omnipotent*” who reigns (Rv 19:6).

The fact that God is all-powerful means that He is the only one who is all-powerful. There can never be two all-powerful beings. Satan could not also be omnipotent in view of the fact that God alone is omnipotent. The omnipotence of God, therefore, assumes that there is one God and that He alone has control of the supernatural world that is beyond this physical world. Satan can do nothing that is not allowed by God.

10. God the Father is everywhere present. When discussing the omnipresence of God, we are also limited in our understanding as in our discussions concerning the nature of God. God is beyond our full comprehension. We simply accept the biblical statements concerning the omnipresence of God, and thus, do not frustrate ourselves by our lack of understanding.

When the temple of the Old Testa-

ment was completed, Solomon stated, “*I have surely built You an exalted house, and a place for You to dwell forever*” (1 Kg 8:13). However, we must understand that Solomon did not believe for a moment that he had constructed a building in which to confine an omnipresent God. In the same speech before Israel, he stated, “*But will God dwell on earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built?*” (1 Kg 8:27; see 2 Ch 2:6).

God does not dwell in temples made by the hands of those He created. Stephen made this point to the Jews who had deceived themselves into believing that God’s presence was in the temple.

However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says: ‘Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. What house will you build for Me?’ says the Lord, ‘Or what is the place of My rest?’” (At 7:48,49; see Is 66:1,2; Ps 102:23; At 17:24).

It is in Him that “*we live and move and have our being*” (At 17:28; see Ps 139:3-10; Jr 23:23). How can we suppose that we can build a building in which God would live and move and have His being? That which is created cannot build a dwelling place for the Creator. Temples of men that are built to confine the presence of God are simply temples that confine the gods of those who believe that such gods can be confined to a specific location.

Paul said that it is in Him that we live,

move and have our being (At 17:28). Since it is in God that we dwell, then how is it that we think that we can construct something of this earth in which we expect God to dwell? Can we suppose that we could construct a “sanctuary” for the dwelling of God? Is it possible that our concept of God is so small that we can house Him in a house?

The preceding is the problem with the thinking of worshipers who feel that they “come into the presence of the Lord” when they enter the “sanctuary” of some man-made structure that was built for worship of God. How can one go out of the presence of a God in whom we live, move and have our being? The very thought assumes that one can leave the presence of God in a building and go out into a world where he has escaped from God’s presence. This thinking is the spirit of idolatry. The next step is to carve some stone or piece of wood in order to confine God even to a location within an idol in a building, or possibly, carry Him around on one’s neck dangling from a golden chain.

Countless religions of the world are filled with the fetish borne gods of those who have confined supernatural power to sticks and stones. The African witch doctor will confine his supernatural power to a fetish he can carry around with him. The religionist who scoffs at such will confine the supernatural power of His god to a building. What’s the difference?

The Bible speaks of a God who is everywhere. David realized this when he wrote, “*Where can I go from Your*

Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there” (Ps 139:7,8). One cannot flee from the presence of God for He says, “‘***Am I a God near at hand,***’ says the Lord, ‘***Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I will not see him?***’ says the Lord ‘*Do I not fill heaven and earth?*’ says the Lord” (Jr 23:23,24). How can one escape a God who fills heaven and earth? How can one confine such a God to temples and cathedrals?

When one considers the presence of God, he must be careful in using terms as “here” or “there.” Though the Bible uses the phrase “in heaven” in reference to God, we should be careful in how we would understand what is meant. Words as “here” and “there” convey human location. But if God is omnipresent, then He is neither “here” nor “there.” He is not “up” or “down.” He is here and there at the same time. He is up and down at the same time. He is in heaven, but it is in Him that we live, move and have our being, though we are not in heaven. God does not place Himself in a particular location wherein He is at the same time absent from another location. We must keep in mind that the Holy Spirit used human words to explain that which is beyond our understanding. We must keep in mind that God is not confined or limited to the definitions of our words. He is not a God who can be located in one place or another.

B. The work of the Father:

No part of God is idle at any one time in the history of man. The Christian is not a deist. He is not one who believes that God originally wound up the universe as a clock, and then, wandered off to a distant part of the universe, and subsequently, left man and earth on their own. God intervenes in His creation. In fact, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit intervene in the affairs of man in order to bring about the eternal plan of God to bring the obedient into an eternal dwelling.

Man and the physical world were created for an eternal purpose of God. God thus works in order to accomplish His eternal purpose to bring the obedient into an eternal dwelling with Him in a new heavens and earth. In the following ways, therefore, God is actively working in the affairs of man to bring about the purpose for which He created all things:

1. The Father is over all in order to maintain all (Ep 4:6).
2. The Father sent the Son into the world in order to redeem the obedient (Jn 4:23,36; 8:17,18).
3. The Father's will was done by the Son in order that the Son accomplish the plan of redemption (Jn 4:34).
4. The Father glorified the Son for the sake of the obedient (Jn 16:14; 17:5).
5. The Father loves the Son (Jn 3:35; 15:9; 17:24).
6. The Father works on behalf of the Son who works on behalf of the obedient (Jn 5:17).
7. The Father dwells in His people (Jn 14:10; 2Co 6:16).

8. The Father gives what is good to His people (Js 1:17).
9. The Father works all things together for good for His people (Rm 8:28).
10. The Father works to make a way of escape for those who love Him (1 Co 10:13).
11. The Father will raise the dead to eternal glory (Jn 5:21; Rm 8:18).

Since the purpose for which the world was created was to bring free-moral individuals into an eternal relationship with God, then all that God does in this world is to accomplish this purpose. The Christian must know, therefore, that God is working in His creation on behalf of the Christian. Paul concluded,

If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not with Him also freely give us all things? (Rm 8:31,32).

God is working for the Christian. He will not allow anything to interrupt His plans and purpose. Paul continued to write,

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 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 (Rm 8:38,39).

C. The relationship and work of the Father and Son:

Though God is three in manifestation and designation of work, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit work as one. The impossibility of any three people on earth to be perfectly united as one should not confuse us in our understanding of the unity and oneness of God in His work among men. The inability of two or more men to be one as God should never be used to define the limit by which God can be one. In the relationship between the Father and Son, perfect unity and work should not be interpreted through the minds of men who cannot so work in the unity by which the Father and Son work. The following are examples where the Father and Son work in unison in reference to the common goal of God to bring the obedient into eternal dwelling:

1. The Father and the Son work as one (Jn 10:30; 17:11,21-24).
2. The Father sent the Son into the world (Jn 5:23,36; 8:17,18).
3. The Father sent the Son to do His will (Jn 4:35; 6:38; Hb 5:8).
4. The Father was greater than the Son when the Son was on earth (Jn 14:28).
5. The Father gave the Son disciples (Jn 6:39; 10:29).
6. The Father bore witness to the Son (Jn 5:31-37).
7. The Father glorified the Son (Jn 8:54).
8. The Father was God to whom the Son ascended (Dn 7:13,14; Jn 20:17).
9. The Father and Son sent the Holy Spirit (Jn 16:13,14).

God has manifested Himself to man as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He has done such in order to transition the obedient into a habitation of eternal glory. The fact that God is three in work and manifestation does not make Christians polytheists. The Bible does not teach that there are three Gods. The accusation that Christians believe in three Gods is only evidence against those who make the accusations that they have created a god after their own imagination. They have thus concluded that since we cannot understand the oneness of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, then such a God does not exist. The denial of the God of the Bible is based on the fact that the accusers cannot conceive of a God who can be one, and yet, three in manifestation. But the accusers are arguing from the standpoint that since man cannot conceive or understand a God who is one but three in manifestation and work, then this God simply cannot exist.

The Christian simply takes the Bible for what it says in reference to the nature and being of God. He asks no questions beyond the answers of the Bible. He is not confused or brought into doubt concerning the Bible's declaration of the God of three who ministers on behalf of man in order to bring the obedient into an eternal dwelling with Him.