

# THOUGHTS ON THE NATURE OF GOD

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Modesty dictates the limitations of this book to "thoughts" on the nature of God. To go beyond such an attempt on a subject so vast and controversial would be both audacious and self-contradictory since a detailed explanation of the nature of God is beyond the vocabulary of man. Someone has rightly said that the greatest and most lofty thoughts, which the human mind can contemplate, are those about God. God is described as infinite, eternal immutable, omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient. According to Paul, "His love passeth knowledge." No measure can plumb the depths of infinity. No calendar can span eternity. We can experience the love of God but we cannot comprehend it. But God is not a Divine computer or a globe circling satellite. God is a Person and God is Spirit.

Suppose a man is imprisoned in a dungeon where there is only one very narrow window. The victim of this dungeon gazes on the outside world. He sees the sun, the moon, the grass and the birds. He describes what the world is to him. Everything he relates may be true, but at the same time very limited. A man's view is enlarged if he is free to walk about outdoors, but it is limited by the horizon some ten or twelve miles distant. A mountain top view or a look through a powerful telescope would push the frontier of vision out accordingly, but withal, it would nevertheless be a small fraction of the total world that could be comprehended even though that fraction would be real and the description accurately portrayed. Our comprehension of God is similar. We can know much that is true about God even if we do not and cannot know all there is to know about Him.

When we seek to define the nature of God we are told that nature means, "The essential character of a thing, qualities that make something what it is, essence, inborn character, innate disposition, inherent tendencies, the sum total of all things in

time and space; the power, force or principle that seems to regulate this--often Personified." Webster.

Let us consider some of the terms used popularly to depict God. He is respectfully referred to as Providence, that is some sort of impersonal benefactor of circumstances. He is currently often referred to as the weatherman or the man upstairs, a sort of blind impersonal something beyond the power of man but making no demands on man. Although some of the most lofty music in the world is inspired by religion, still others reduce it to the jingle of "musical noise," while others see nothing more than a gate attraction in Jesus Christ, Super Star. Such familiarity ill behooves those coping with deity. God is not a super policeman, nor is He a buddy somewhat akin to a benevolent grandfather or Santa. Christian Scientists relegate God to Infinite Mind. Pantheism, envelopes the universe as a whole being God. When we turn to history and the heathen world, its greatest religions debased God and worshipped Him through lust, vice, cruelty, degradation and despair. Even with all of man's vaunted knowledge and scientific enlightenment, his quest for God is reflected in permissiveness, addictions, mental and social breakdowns and general hopelessness. In the light of such formidable failures, can the nature of God be effectively resolved?

We shall seek to approach this subject reverently through two Scriptural methods, namely by what God IS and secondly by what God DOES. Both the subjective and the objective views of God are distinctly unfolded in the Word of God. We shall avoid, as much as possible, the temptation to appear academic or theological. We shall not seek logic or reason for arguments about the existence of God so much as experience and practice. Paul told us in 1 Cor. 1:21, "For after that in the wisdom of God the world BY WISDOM knew not God...." Learning and knowledge do not necessarily imply wisdom. We do not comprehend God so much with the mind as with the heart, "For with the hear man believeth unto righteousness..." Rom. 10:10a. The approach to God is never contrary to reason,

but our mental faculties alone are inadequate without experience--we experience God.

A common complaint of many people is that, "I just can't understand God. There are so many churches--which is right? How do you know what to believe? Very true but not very consistent. The study of physiology is very complex and interesting. We ingest wholesome food, which is reduced to white and red corpuscles giving energy and health. The various functions of the liver, the kidneys and intestines are important. The heart and the lungs and the glands are all important to life and health. Yet the knowledge of physiology is not essential to a hungry person enjoying a good meal or having good health. In similar fashion there are many believers who experience genuine peace with God, who walk daily in obedience to God, and yet have a very hazy knowledge of theology. We are not saved by theology or by a certain doctrine. We are saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ alone. This is within the mental capacity of anyone who "wills" to submit to God.

## THE NAMES OF GOD

The names given to God in the Bible are important because they are not just titles to be identified with God, but they denote characteristics applied to God. The fact of God's Being is not asserted in the Bible. No attempt is made to prove His Being. It is simply assumed. "In the beginning GOD created the heavens and the earth." Gen. 1:1. But this assumption is not casual or ambiguous. Any doubt about the existence of God is swept aside in such manner as: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Psa. 14:1.

The names of god indicate a progressive revelation of God. The first recorded Hebrew name for God is El. We see the Hebrew manner of incorporating this name in Daniel, Ezekiel, Elijah, Elisha, Phaniel and countless others. It is introduced in Genesis 1:1 as Elohim, which is the plural for of God and immediately suggests the Trinity. It also implies diversity--God

over all, as well as uniqueness in the sense of being the one and only Supreme Being. The Arabs have a similar idea contained in Allah. The Hebrews were first to conceive the idea of one Deity--God.

Much more could be written about the significance of Elohim, but we shall pass over the names rapidly to give a panoramic view rather than a detailed treatment. The name El Shaddai, or El Shadday is first mentioned in Gen. 17:1, "I am the Almighty God." This was a monumental revelation of God to man, literally meaning "The God that is ENOUGH." That is to say, God is represented as equal to any emergency or circumstance. He is the mighty Sustainer of cosmos. It has been interpreted as meaning "the mountain," a term suggesting majesty, stability and a pillar that remains unmoved even in troublous times. This was the major name for God during the patriarchal times.

Perhaps it is not necessary to include all the names of God in detail. He is called "The Rock," meaning a fortress and shield. He is referred to as "The Righteous one, The Holy One, The Lord of Hosts, and The Mighty One." While all of these names suggest a gradual unfolding of the nature of God and of man's enlightenment in understanding God, we hasten on to the further disclosure of God's Being as revealed under the terms of Jehovah, Theos and father.

The most sacred name for God is the one revealed to Moses at the burning bush. Moses asked God for some identifying authority to convey his mission to Pharoah and to the Israelites in Egypt. So he asked for God's name -- "What shall I say unto them?" It was at this time that God told Moses, "I AM THAT I AM." Tell the people, "I AM hath sent me unto you." Ex. 3:13, 14. This is where the word Jehovah, or Yahweh originated. It signified the unfolding of the Redemptive plan --deliverance. It also signified a Covenant relationship. This covenant relationship is uniquely Hebrew. It is contained in no other religion in the world. All other religions sacrifice to their Deity to placate him and turn back wrath, plagues or disasters, or to seek his favor in battle. The character of the worshipper remains isolated from

the act of worship. Jehovah introduced the idea of favor with God depending on a covenant relationship, "If you obey, then will I bless." This is the essential difference between revealed religion and all others. Revealed religion has a bearing upon the character of the worshipper in a manner that is absent from all heathen forms of worship.

While the word Jehovah conveyed the idea of the "Self-existent One," or the One Who provides for the needs of His people, it was held in such reverence that it was spelled YHWH, and was not pronounced in public. The reader would pause and silently pass the name in worshipful silence. The name Adonai, or Lord was the common ascription to God used in public. But the name Jehovah was associated with other combinations, such as Jehovah-Jireh, meaning the Lord sees, or provides. It has a redemptive connotation for Abraham was about to offer up his son, Isaac as a sacrifice when God stayed his hand and provided a substitute in Isaac's stead. Thus, does Christ take our place in the Atonement on Calvary.

Further is the incident in the wilderness where the Israelites encounter bitter water. This water was unfit for drinking, and apparently contaminated in some poisonous way. Moses was directed to place a certain tree in the waters whereupon the waters "were made sweet," evidently they were miraculously rendered wholesome and life giving. It was on this occasion the Moses applied the name of Jehovah-Rophi to God, meaning, "I am the Lord that healeth thee." God is a healing God, both for body and soul, as His name implies. One of the loveliest allusions to Christ is that He is the Great Physician. Christ sweetens life with His presence and power.

One of the episodes related by Moses was his battle with the Amalekites during which Moses lifted up his hands in prayer for God's intervention. The victorious outcome induced Moses to call the place, Jehovah-Nissi, "The Lord my Banner." The banner is the flag, the symbol of dominion and conquest. Victory in God's service can only be attained under His Banner. Our enemy is not the Amalekites, but it is the world, the flesh

and the devil, and mastery can only be achieved through Christ and under His Banner.

A lovely name ascribed to God is Jehovah-Shalom, "The Lord is Peace." It came to Gideon in a time of deep distress and foreboding. While Gideon's encounter with peace led to physical victory, the peace of God is portrayed in Christ, "For He is our peace." This world cannot give peace. It may temporarily grant tranquility but only God can give abiding peace. As Christ said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace give I unto you; not as the world giveth..." John 14:27. See also Judges 6:21-24.

The name, Jehovah-Shammah is found in Ezekial 48:35. It means, "The Lord is there." This name was originally applied to the temple where God dwelt. In the New Testament, we are told that God dwelleth not in temples made with hands, but in the sanctified believer. Paul says, "That your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you." 1 Cor. 6:19. Paul likens the body to a tabernacle in the Old Testament as the center of worship and conveyed the idea that god was in the midst of His people, so the New Testament concept of God's abiding presence on His throne in the human heart indwells each believer bearing witness to His nearness -- God is there.

We reach out now to Jer. 23:5, 6, where the name Jehovah-Tsidkenu is mentioned. This means "The Lord our Righteousness." It, too, is a redemptive name. Man is depicted in the Bible as clothed in rags in his natural appearance before God. Only as we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ by faith, are we fit to be presented to the King of Kings, the Holy God. But this provision is freely bestowed by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Two things should be observed before we leave these subjective insights into the nature of God. One is that each of the Jehovah titles correspond to the deepest needs in the heart of man. We find only in God the peace our soul craves. In God we discover a means to satisfactory righteousness. Only God can grant victory over our faulty failures. Only God can provide for all our heartfelt needs. Thus to solve our greatest

yearnings in life, we turn to God and find the all-sufficient answer. God is there. This is not a vacant, hollow, inscrutable universe. It is the dwelling place of God and He is as near to each one of us as our breathing. It is like the mariner who, along with his crew was dying of thirst. He espied a passing vessel and cried, "Water!" The skipper on the other ship said, "Let down your buckets!" Unknown to the captain of the stricken vessel, they had sailed into the estuary of the Amazon River whose fresh water flows far out to sea. Although dying of thirst, they were actually sailing on fresh drinking water without knowing it. Paul said, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Grace is within the reach and the grasp of every son of Adam.

The other point to observe is that Christ applied to Himself each of these Jehovah titles during His ministry. He too, met man on the basis of his need when He said, "I AM the door, I AM the water of life, I AM the way and IAM one with the Father." In Christ we conceive of God, not as Jehovah in majesty and aloof in holiness, but as the intimate Father to whom we are related as children. We think of heaven as home. Love does not destroy law but it replaces law as the motivating element in service to God. Condemnation gives way to regeneration. Death yields to life, the more abundant life. All the names of God, some three hundred or more, are applied to Christ. He is the total revelation of God -- "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Col. 2:9. "And ye are complete in Him..." v.10a.

## FURTHER REVELATIONS OF GOD

Although the names of God are both interesting and instructive, they do not provide a sufficient knowledge of the Nature of God. But where do we turn? Science does not have the answer in its test tubes, its microscopes or its speculative theories based on astute hypotheses of the origin of things. Philosophy analyzes what we already know but provides little

insight beyond. Even religion leaves much to be desired with its dreary tomes on theology, its ornate places of worship and its slavery to rites and customs under the name of orthodoxy. Where is the LIFE Christ heralded and demonstrated? Like Saul, the incumbent king of Israel, it seems to be "hidden among the stuff."

Let us suppose a group of people visited one of the largest observatories in the world. They were tremendously impressed with its sheer magnitude. They extolled the workmanship on the instruments. They were amazed at the balance of such weight of the main glass poised with infinite precision to follow any star under scrutiny. They came away duly impressed with what they had seen. They had looked AT the world's largest telescope. But suppose one man went up to the head engineer and asked for permission to look THROUGH the telescope. He would see galaxies, nebulae, planets, uncharted universes, and worlds of wonders without end. The difference in what you see is determined by whether you look AT a thing or whether you look THROUGH IT. God gave us many things that reveal the nature of God if we would look THROUGH His Providences and wonders, rather than at them.

## HOW GOD IS REVEALED IN THE NAURAL UNIVERSE

This is a wonderful world and it is a world of wonder. It is also a world subject to law. Every seed and every creature brings forth after its kind. To look AT nature is full of interest, but there is no evidence that it has led to a true revelation of the nature of God. Heathens worshipped the sun, the moon and the stars. They had gods to represent the sea, the weather, the wars, and sadly, every debased inclination conceivable to man. Even many enlightened scientists dismiss the supernatural and imprison God within the limitations of their reason.

It is not until we look THROUGH nature that we discover God. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork." Psa. 19:1 "I will lift up mine eyes unto

the hills from whence cometh my help -- my help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." Psa. 121:1, 2. "Consider the lilies of the field..." Matt. 6:28. When we look at nature we see mud, but when we look THROUGH nature we see God. We see Him magnified, beyond description. Nature becomes vocal -- "There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard." Psa. 19:3. The infinite designs of the snowflakes, the mighty oceans, the waterfalls, the beauty of the mountains and the fragrance of the flowers, everything comes alive to chant the praise of the Creator. Nature is a window through which to view God. Nature is not the product of an artist whose masterpiece is displayed for us to gaze at and criticize. Rather it is an instrument THROUGH which God is magnified and brought closer to our range of understanding.

## GOD REVEALED IN HIS WORD

A great deal of controversy rages around the Bible. In recent years a continual flow of new translations has besieged the public, each claiming to be better than its predecessors. Some confusion has arisen due to the fact that certain biases have crept into some translations reflecting different meanings. Some versions leave doubts about the Virgin birth, the Deity of Christ, the significance of the Blood and various ultimates. This is to be deplored and should be resisted. But the end results are attributed to one cause. People are looking AT the Bible instead of looking THROUGH it. Jesus said, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye THINK ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me." John 5:39. Many today are committing the same error. They are putting their faith in the Bible instead of in the Christ, which the Bible seeks to reveal. The Bible does not save anyone but it points to Christ -- "neither is there salvation in any other...." Acts 4:12a. Scholars line up with microscopes to criticize texts, words and interpretations of various parts or books of the Bible. Computers grind out new concordances to facilitate the use of new versions. Various cults and (helpful) people seek to propagate their beliefs by

inserting their interpretations as footnotes on pages of the Bible. But this is all based on one great error, namely looking AT the Bible.

When we look THROUGH the Bible as a telescope with which to explore the revelation of God, its wonders exceed all imagination. Its symmetry, its blazing light of revelation, its recital of the acts of Christ and people inspired as His followers leap at us with life giving power. In a word, we see God magnified, active, alive, realized and dependable and we fall on our knees to worship HIM. We are grateful for the Bible, but we do not worship it. We worship HIM whom it portrays. The picture of Him may be better in some versions than in others, and we would be well advised to discard the shabby or doubtful ones, but we should ever remember that the purpose is not to glorify or adore the Bible itself, but the Christ it reveals as we reverently seek Him. Let us look THROUGH the Bible to find God, not just AT it.

## HOW DOES ISRAEL FURTHER OUR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD?

Much of the Bible is about Israel and the Hebrew nation or people. We should never disparage the contribution of these singular and resourceful people. Paul gave full credit to the part they played in the unfolding drama of man's search for God. Basically our religion, Christianity, has its origin with Abraham, the father of the FAITHFUL. We will forever be in debt to men like Moses and the prophets of Israel. But this very acknowledgement is fraught with danger and peril lest we ascribe more virtue and blessing the people of Israel than to the God of Israel. God is a jealous God. He insists that the ultimate glory and praise be given to Him.

We should beware of the danger of just looking AT Israel. Sure, there was Moses, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, the Red Sea, David, the land of Palestine and many historic greats. But in every instance there is a prefix, namely the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God

wrought the miracle of deliverance at the Red Sea. God supplied the water in the wilderness, and the manna. God raised-up Joseph and advanced Moses. God chose David and led him to victory.

When we look AT Israel we seek to plot their future as a nation. We plummet into politics, wars and carnal victories. God is not interested in dispensing real estate to anyone. In Luke 12:13 the question came up about an inheritance and Christ was sought to settle the dispute. But He answered, "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" He went on to add, "Beware of covetousness..." God is not interested in politics. Christ did not advocate a change of the political system, needful as it was. He did not attack the monetary system or economics or trade. He did not even espouse the revolutionary solution of injustices to minorities or rampant slavery. His one consuming passion was to save men. Saved men would save the world. He concentrated on character and obedience to God. Christ did not look AT Israel and seek to restore it as a nation. Christ looked THROUGH Israel as a means of fulfilling its redemptive role in the plan of God.

When we look THROUGH Israel everything falls into place. It was part of God's redemptive plan to save the world. Abraham stands in the forefront to whom God revealed justification by faith. Thus he rightly received the title, "The father of the faithful." Moses rises tall with undimmed luster, his flinty character chiseled into the granite of the ages heralding the immortal truth that God is a Covenant God. Just as God has a law that is obeyed by the universe, so He has a law for mankind. God's moral law reveals God's love and points the way to life. The miraculous deliverance from Egypt, and the institution of a system of worship designed to picture the forthcoming promised Deliverer, all prefigure the Redemptive plan through Israel. Prophets hailed His coming from afar. Psalmists put the heart's longing to music. When Jesus was born at Bethlehem, the world had a new beginning as indicated on our calendars. Jesus is the HOPE of the world. He is the watershed of time and of history. If we only look AT Israel, we

are frustrated with innumerable inconsistencies and the limitations of history. But when we look THROUGH Israel we discover the unfolding plan of universal redemption, God at work in this world restoring man to his rightful inheritance in the Kingdom of God.

## HOW CHRIST REVEALS GOD

Perhaps no person ever lived who is the subject of so much controversy as the Lord Jesus Christ. Every shred of evidence has been subjected to minute scrutiny and every word uttered and deed done by Christ has had many explanations. Some are hateful of Him with a diabolical determination to exterminate His memory. Others love Him and will labor unselfishly under appalling conditions to make Him known; some will even lay down their lives gladly rather than deny faith in Him. Many go to Bethlehem with microscopes to see whether they can discover any flaws in the Bible account of His miraculous birth. The so-called Holy land, and Holy city are far from holy at the present time judged by His standards of righteousness. People who only look AT Christ, will usually find fodder for their unbelief. It is when we look THROUGH Christ that God is glorified.

In his request for a revelation of the Father by Philip, Jesus replied, "He that has seen Me, hath seen the Father." John 14:9b. When we look AT Christ we are puzzled over many theological problems beyond our comprehension such as how Christ could be totally human and at the same time completely Divine; how He could be one with the Father, and at what time from babyhood to manhood did He become aware of His unique Son-ship. All these things dissolve immediately when we gaze at His complete dominion over nature in stilling Galilee's raging tempest; His subjection of sickness and death is demonstrated by numerous healings, and the rising of Lazarus from the tomb; sin no longer held sway over those who were delivered from its clutches like Mary Magdalene; the devil was a vanquished foe; the verdict of His enemies was, "Never man

spake like this man." John 7:46. His executioner trembling said, "Truly this was a son of God," as he watched Him die. Matt. 27:52b. His utterances differed from the philosophies of men not only in degree, but in kind. Jesus did not come to establish a new religion, but to give a new life to men. As we gaze at God through Christ we find life, light and hope. Our arguments seem so futile that like Thomas, we are impelled to fall down and worship Him, exclaiming, "My Lord and my God." When we look AT Christ we are like the sightseers in the observatory. We are impressed with His example; we marvel at His teachings and we are grateful for His cardinal virtues and moral excellence. But the moment we look THROUGH Christ we see God, something transcending human behavior, above beyond, superior to anything human, and in harmony with everything Divine. He magnifies God in such a manner that when we look at God through Christ, we call Him Father.

## DOES THE CHURCH REVEAL GOD?

This is put in the form of a question because, as everyone knows, there are many flaws in the church from a practical standpoint. Perhaps we can reverently ask the same question often asked at weddings, "I wonder what He sees in her?" Again we ask your indulgence by suggesting that the bride of Christ leaves much to be desired if we only look AT the church. We see the feeble attempts of many professed believers to follow the example of Christ. We have to admit that much that is displayed as religion is mere 'churchianity' rather than Christianity. Powerful interests have USED the church to gain selfish and sometimes political ends. Too often we have seen the church cast in a role of persecuting so-called heretics. Religious intolerance has spilled rivers of innocent blood.

Before we become too hasty in our condemnation let us define what we mean by the "CHURCH." There is a difference between mere religion and Christianity. There is also a difference between so-called churches, or Denominations, and

His Church of which Jesus said, "I will build MY church." Matt. 16:18. If we just look AT the church in general, we have to admit there are many deplorable shortcomings. But has this world provided anything better?

Now look THROUGH the church. You see the apostle Paul whose missionary journeys have meant more than the march of Caesar's legions. We see the giant Coliseum in Rome, now a tourist attraction. Once, its sinister lion pits and senseless gladiatorial combats were staged to amuse cruel spectators whose applause reflected their glee to see innocent men die. For centuries this arena once wet with the blood of martyrs has stood silent as mute evidence of the victory of those "who loved not their lives unto death." Christians were acquainted with the stocks and the stake, with stinking dungeons and the cruel lash; their property was expropriated. They were tied to the wheel, and subjected to every barbarity and torture the human mind could devise. Christianity has survived while proud empires have crumbled, cruel despots have been vanquished and pagan customs have ceased. Christianity has survived wars, persecutions, inquisitions, and every foul venomous, detestable, diabolical outrage to which it has periodically been subjected. Kings and thrones have toppled but the Church lives on. The church has been in the forefront of the abolition of slavery, provision of hospitals, care of children and the aged, the rights of the minorities and countless benefits we now enjoy.

The church has led the way in establishing missions around the world. It is the one strong voice raised against tyranny. Jesus Christ placed the supreme value on the man. Paganism in all its forms, places the supreme value on the state. The life and the rights of the individuals are cheap in a godless society. When we look THROUGH the church, we see God at work in His world. The church is described as the "body of Christ." It is the people who do His work in this world. Christ is the Divine Head and the redeemed ones are His members. The labors of Paul, Augustine, Calvin, Luther, the Wesleys and of Moody as well as a host of others have blessed this world, and have inspired more people to aspire to lofty aims than any other influence this

world has ever had, and more than all the secular contributing forces combined. It is the family of God, the redeemed, the ones Christ is pleased to call His bride. We were never meant to look AT the church to see God. We are to look THROUGH it and then, God is magnified in our vision.

## APPLICATION OF THE NATURE OF GOD

Thus far we have endeavored to submit evidence that God has revealed Himself in numerous ways. His Names describe His characteristics. His world provides windows through which to learn about God. His works form a practical laboratory through which His operations may be tested. But we are still in a quandary when we try to sort out the many interpretations of theology, doctrines, churches, religions, and often confusing and contradictory claims about what constitutes acceptable worship of this Supreme Being. What does it mean to be "saved," to be "right with God," to live a holy life, or live in the spirit? What does it mean to "Rightly divide the word of Truth?"

Fundamentally we do not learn about God until we experience Him. Christianity is not taught as much as it is caught. Our doctrines do not change the nature of God. The best they can do, if correct, is to define His nature. In the last analysis, every doctrine must ultimately be in harmony with the nature of God to be true. We are not saved by doctrine but by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why many people who believe erroneous doctrines mentally, at the same time exercise saving faith and are genuinely accepted into God's family, because "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness..." Rom. 10:10. Getting right with God is an act of the will. The three thousand people who were saved on the Day of Pentecost knew very little of theology and doctrine, but they believed in Christ and were saved, nevertheless. Notwithstanding this fact we are told in 1 Pet. 3:1, "...Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a REASON of the hope that is in you..." Faith is not blind nor

ignorant. It is an experience so genuine that the reason accepts it, defends it and justifies it and seeks to propagate it through enlightened teachings. It is possible to know a lot ABOUT God and still not KNOW God.

The quest for God is the quest of man throughout the ages. Job sounds very modern when he voiced our longings, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him! That I might come before His seat! I would order my case before Him! I would fill my mouth with arguments!" Job23: 3, 4. He continues further by saying in answer to his own dilemma, "But He is one mind, and who can turn Him? And what His soul desireth, that He doeth." v. 13 idem. Job discovered that man's arguments do not alter God's laws. David expressed our folly when he said, "These things hast thou done and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself..." Psa. 50:21. Isaiah went further when he said, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." Isa. 55:8, 9. Infinity again! Man would like to reduce God to similarities with man, but the Bible emphasizes the contrasts.

We are told to pray and make our requests known unto God. Oftentimes this degenerates into a rote of asking God's blessings on our family, friends, church, our crops or business and a broad plea to be kept from accidents or misfortunes. Missing in the average prayer is adoration, praise, worship and thanksgiving. Worship is an Anglo-Saxon word originating from "worth-ship, " or that which we attach worth to. Worship expresses the precedence or priority God has in our lives, the worth we attach to God. Man is not doing God a favor by serving Him; he is simply doing what is right. Man is the sole beneficiary for he can add nothing to the completeness already enjoyed by God.

Man is a creature limited by time and space. God is Spirit and has no such limitations. God has no calendars or mileage charts. David said, "My life is SPENT with grief and my years with sighings..." Psa. 31:10. The years of man are SPENT years.

In contrast he says of God, "For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night..." Psa. 90:4. The timelessness of God is defined in Hebrews 1:11, 12 as follows: They shall perish but thou remainest; and they shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." It is well to remember too that Paul declared, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday today and forever." Heb. 13:8. God is changeless. Mal. 3:6. God is not limited by distance or velocity. He is there just as thought is there. The nearest star is some four light years from the earth, approximately 294,000,000,000 miles, but thought spans the space instantly. God is not imprisoned by miles or time. His Name is: "God is THERE." God is infinite, that is, "lacking limits or bounds, beyond measure or comprehension, endless, immeasurable; infinite as space or time; infinite Being.: Webster.

God is neither the "Unknowable" of the agnostic nor the "Denial" of the atheist. Paul says, "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." Rom. 1:10. God designed nature to be a window THROUGH which man could discover God, but man looked AT nature and "Worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator." Vs. 25. This result inevitably follows when the unredeemed and reprobate mind unaided by the Spirit of God turns the truth of God into a lie. The ensuing darkness leaves man groping in abysmal ignorance and diabolical depravity and spiritual despair. No wonder Christ is called THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. He is our HOPE.

The Bible is a book to reveal God to man. It is not, strictly speaking, a book of theology. Our interpretation of theology does not change God. We may embrace Calvinism, Catholicism, Dispensationalism, Armenianism or even the Moslem or Jewish faith, but our belief does not change God. Our ultimate goal is to interpret the nature of God and our

doctrines will have to harmonize with His nature. Jesus said, "If any man will do His will, he shall know the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." John 7:17. Doctrinal truth and the Sovereign will of God harmonize on the same wave length. God is not confined to the logic or conviction with which we interpret certain Bible tests, but by whether our interpretation is in harmony with His eternal nature for God invariably operates according to His own prescribed law. To explain, let us take the attribute of omnipotence, God can do anything. Yes God has power to do anything, but God CANNOT lie. Titus 1:2. Nor can God be tempted. James 1:13. God cannot do anything that is contrary to His nature. His operation is governed by, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights with Whom is no VARIABLENESS, NEITHER SHADOW OF TURNING." James 1: 17.

It would be well to meditate a long time on this profound expression of Divine certainty that James declared. We shall make a simple application. Jesus said, "Have faith in God." Mark 11:22. Let me ask, "How do you have faith in God?" Is it by trying, by begging, by praying, by endeavoring to force yourself to believe or by utter earnestness and resignation? Jesus was not whipping our efforts to bring faith down through God's attrition, but rather for us to commit ourselves to trust in God's faithfulness. God is faithful, we read in the Bible. The sun will set at a certain time tonight and rise at a specified second tomorrow. At a predetermined instant it will cross the equator or commence its long journey to the tropic of Capricorn or Cancer. Once in awhile there will be an eclipse of the sun or moon that astronomers will predict in advance with flawless accuracy. Christ is saying, that the God Who is so faithful in nature can be trusted with our request. He is faithful --so "Have faith in God." God is far easier to understand than man, for God operates according to His "invariable" law, and man is fickle about his decisions. Back of the law is the lawgiver Who upholds all things by the word of His power. God is reliable. Heb.1:3.

All of God's laws are dependable and impersonal. The law of gravity is an example. It displays no variance, and permits no exceptions. It is fixed and reliable. Electricity also works according to its nature and abides by its laws. Its voltage can be a most useful servant or a lethal master. The elements of this world are a gift from God, and each element conforms to the nature inherent in it. Mixing one part of hydrogen and two parts of oxygen results in the formation of water. It never fails. Everything in Creation is subject to law. God, too, is subject to His own law, which in the last analysis is an expression of His nature.

The most perfect revelation of God is found in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The gospels pay no heed to His physical characteristics, how tall He was, what color His hair was, His features or the sound of His voice. Such things are omitted. We only guess at the day he was born while the first thirty years of His biography can be summed up in a very brief paragraph. The Bible concentrates on His character, and John especially emphasizes His Deity. He came to declare that, "the time is fulfilled. The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent ye, and believe the gospel." Mark 1:15. "The Kingdom of God is within you." Luke 17:21. Something new entered the world for the first time -- redemption. Jesus revealed the heart of God toward sinful man.

Jesus came to demonstrate how man, can live in harmony with God's law. He did not come to introduce a new religion but a new life. He was merciless with the religious customs, traditions and hypocrisies of His day and with the legalism by which such customs were enforced. He freely pardoned the woman taken in adultery about to be stoned by her accusers, and the sinful human derelict at the well. Jesus was not tolerant with sin, but He was sympathetic to the sinner. Jesus was interested in people, not customs. He tore the veneer off hypocrisy and the tyranny off legalism in order for men to find God. He showed anger in cleansing the temple because this sacred house of prayer had been prostituted into a vast swindle market where greedy exploiters of religion filled their coffers

with gold and left the earnest seekers devoid of any sense of God. This temple cleansing is typical of His attitude toward sin in the human heart, which must be purified to be a fit dwelling place for God now. ! Cor. 6:19.

Jesus did not seek to accommodate God to the level of man's weakness. Rather He changed men to enable them to conform to God's requirements. The gospel is a proclamation of deliverance. The issue does not depend on what we do in order to merit salvation and forgiveness, but on what Christ has DONE on Calvary to affect man's reconciliation with God. We are told to believe on Him. Redemption is established because it is the Nature of God to redeem. Atonement (at-one-ment) with God is restored. Peace with God is declared. Believe the good news. It is a proclamation of the King. The Kingdom of God has arrived.

The question was put to Christ on one occasion, "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread." Matt 15:2. Jesus replied, "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your traditions.... Thus ye have made the commandment of God of none effect by your traditions...but in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Matt. 15:3, 6, 9.

This may be one of the most important statements ever made by Christ in matters of worship. The issue under scrutiny is whether the traditions of the elders (doctrines of men) or the commandments of God constitute our expression of worship. The point to observe is that our doctrines do not change God's commandments, and unless they are in harmony with God's commands, they can render His commands of non-effect. Thus we have religion without Christianity, a form without the power, a dead, empty sterile pretence expressing inner vacuity devoid of reality. Thus some churches become the limbs of Christianity rather than rivers of life giving grace. Such institutions offer little more than a routine theological assembly line of religious data to be accepted in a perfunctory manner. In Christ's Church the ministry is a calling, not a mere profession or position. The Bible

emphasis is not on being members of a denomination, but on being members of Christ's body. The stress is not on giving our money but on giving ourselves, at least as a priority. We give our money to the church to further its influence in the community or in the world. We give ourselves to God. "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Matt. 7:21. It is not what we say that counts, but what we do and what we are. God sees and judges the heart of man. Matt. 15:8.

It is pertinent to observe still one more law which God has decreed. It is recorded in 1 Cor. 15:46, "Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual." A few illustrations will demonstrate the significance of this law of God. Paul calls attention to the first example in saying, "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven." V. 47. The first Adam was the natural, and in him all die. The second Adam is Christ the Giver of life, called "a quickening (that is a life giving) spirit." 1 Cor. 15:45.

This pattern obtains all through the Bible. Adam's first son was Cain who followed the way of the flesh. His descendants built cities, invented music, fashioned instruments of war through Tubal Cain, and became mighty in the earth. Seth was an inconspicuous shepherd and his son likewise. But the flood destroyed the Cainites of the natural seed, while it preserved the descendants of Seth through Noah and his sons. Abraham had two sons, Ishmael who was of the natural and Isaac who was the promised son to, propagate the spiritual seed. Isaac had two sons, Esau the first born who was of the natural, and Jacob who became Israel, a prince with God. There was first the natural Israel through which a long-suffering God worked out His eternal plan of redemption. This was followed with the Israel of God, the spiritual Israel described as the Kingdom of God in the New Testament. Even man himself is born of natural birth. To become a child of God requires a spiritual birth, being

born again, so beautifully explained in Nicodemus' encounter with Christ in the third chapter of John.

There is never an example where this law is revised or revoked or reversed. God will no more return to a natural Israel to fulfill His purposes than He would turn to the natural Adam to complete redemption. God is a God of progression not retrogression. He abides by His own law that when the natural has fulfilled its purpose, it is superseded by the spiritual. All creation moves in this direction, and according to this law.

We will now address ourselves to the most difficult task of all. How does a God who is ineffable, who is transcendent, eternal, immutable, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, infallible and infinite condescend to meet the personal need of an insignificant individual, who is one of some six billion other humans milling around on a mere speck in the universe? What attention can He pay to our prayers? How can He operate impersonally according to His own law and yet hear my plea amidst all the confused milieu of this globe. There is a note of plaintive appeal in the hymn, "Does Jesus care when my heart is sad." There is both humor and desperation in David's prayer for "God to get His hands out of His pockets." Psa. 74:11. (pluck it (the hand) out of thy bosom), it reads. The question is, Can God, be God and true to His nature, subject to His own law, invariable and impartial, and yet meet my personal need? How can that be?

The answer is a resounding Yes! God Can! First, because He IS God, and therefore, infinite in every attribute ascribed to Him. Secondly, because Jesus represented this kind of God to man, a Father who is touched by the feelings of our infirmities. Thirdly, because it is the nature of God to be filial. His Names reveal His character, to heal, to help, to redeem, to restore, to be present in time of need. The faithfulness of God guarantees these benefits. Fourthly, I believe in the personal attentiveness and ability of God to meet the individual need, because of His Covenant provisions. A testament is a will. God devised the New Testament for His heirs. They are the claimants or beneficiaries. "Paul said, "And if children, then heirs; heirs of

God and joint heirs with Christ..." Rom. 8:17. The heir does not beg for his inheritance. He merely establishes his identity as the one to whom the property rightly belongs. When we belong to God through Christ, we are heirs of God and all the promises of God become our just inheritance. None of these four reasons conflict with the nature of God. He is the reliable Supreme Sovereign God, but He is also "My Lord and My God."

Calvin majored in theology. He endeavored to establish the Sovereignty of a God Who justifiably DECREED the eternal destiny of every person either for heaven or hell. But we read in 2 Peter 3:9b that He is, "Not WILLING that ANY should perish, but that ALL should come to repentance." Obviously God will not DECREE something that is contrary to His WILL. All God's decrees are in harmony with His nature. What God decreed was a PLAN. The PLAN originated in the beginning even as "Christ was the lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Rev. 13:8 The PLAN is universal, for all equally, absolutely fair and impartial. Man's destiny is determined by choice, not chance. God's PLAN is in harmony with God's law. He offers LIFE. If we are lost, it will be because we neglected or rejected God's decreed PLAN of reconciliation through our Lord Jesus Christ. Man's eternal destiny is not decreed by God, but by man's acceptance or rejection of God's decreed plan. That plan is in harmony with His nature.

But while God is personal, He is not partial. James 3:17. God is no respecter of persons. Acts 10:34. The basis on which God metes out personal blessings is in accordance with His nature with "Whom there is no variableness, neither trace of turning. God does not administer His grace by dispensing it according to any whims of who should be saved or lost. Instead God administers His law and provides His grace for all men impartially to benefit there-from. Those who WILL to obey God, automatically come under the operation and influence of the law of redemption. Those who spurn God's mercy, and go their own way through life, will hear the verdict to just keep on going their own way on to eternal doom. No one will accuse God of being unfair or unjust for we are without excuse. "Now is the

accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation." 2 Cor. 6:2b.

God created man in His own image. That image gave man the power to choose. If we make the wrong choice there is no second chance. May we echo the words of Joshua who confronted a vacillating indecisive host with several alternatives. But regardless of their choice Joshua's decision rang loud and clear. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord," Joshua 24:15. Every man must face the same decision and face it alone with God.

Any attempt to explain the nature of God, must necessarily fall short and leave more things unanswered than it explains. But it is the hope of this writer, that this helps; that it opens some windows through which we can more readily discern God. But all the books and explanations in the world will not discover God for you. In the final analysis we experience God through simple personal faith in believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing less and nothing else will substitute for personal trust. It is a 'two way street' to God. "Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you." James 4:8. The moment you take your first step toward God, you will discover He is on His way to meet you. The best way to explain God is to get to know Him. The best way to find out what the nature of God is...is to be in harmony and at peace with God. It is within your reach. How about your grasp?

"Now the God of Peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the Blood of the Everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His Will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." Hebrews 13:20, 21.