
BECOMING A PERSON WHO KNOWS THE TRIUNE GOD

by Ron Kangas

Knowing the Triune God as He is revealed in the Word of God requires a dynamic interaction among the Word of God, the Triune God, and the person of those who earnestly desire to know God. This triangular interaction takes place in a unique context—the Body of Christ. In the previous issue we covered various matters related to the Bible and the Triune God. Now we will go on to consider matters related to our person and to the necessity of knowing and experiencing the Triune God in the Body of Christ.

“My thoughts are not your thoughts, / Neither are your ways My ways,’ declares 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). These verses indicate, among other things, that apart from divine revelation we cannot know the thoughts and ways, much less the being, of God. We need revelation through the Word, and to receive this revelation we need to be proper in our person. On the one hand, the receiving of revelation concerning the Triune God is absolutely a matter of God’s sovereign mercy. On the other hand, receiving revelation and entering into the spiritual reality it unveils requires that we become in Christ the kind of person who is able to know the Triune God in an experiential way. Such a person exhibits a balance of mind and spirit; loves the God of truth and the

truth of God; pays the price to gain the truth and to obey it; is genuinely spiritual, having experienced the breaking of the self to become poor in spirit; is pure in heart and renewed in mind, having all strongholds of rebellion overthrown; becomes a person who values life and light; searches for God, hungering and thirsting for Him and longing to know Him by dwelling in Him; is being led by

the Spirit into the divine reality and is growing in the divine life unto maturity; possesses an inward knowledge of God as the God who hides Himself and as the God of resurrection; and lives in the reality of the Body of Christ. In ourselves and by our natural life we cannot be such a person, but by the Lord’s grace and training in life we can become in Christ what we could never be in ourselves.

A Balance of Mind and Spirit

The spiritual inheritance which we have received from God includes the visible Holy Bible and the invisible Holy Spirit.

We now have the Holy Spirit subjectively and the Holy Bible objectively. If we would know God, there must be in our life and practice a balance of the Word of God outwardly and the Spirit of God inwardly. If we care only for the Spirit but not for the Word, we may be living and active, but we will easily make mistakes and may even fall into serious error. If we care only for the Word but neglect the Spirit, we will have nothing

**If we care only for the Spirit
but not for the Word,
we may be living and active,
but we will easily make
mistakes and may even fall
into serious error.**

**If we care only for the Word
but neglect the Spirit, we will
have nothing more than dead
doctrine and we ourselves
will become spiritually dead.**

more than dead doctrine and we ourselves will become spiritually dead. If we are filled with the Holy Spirit and if we engage in careful study of the Holy Bible, we will be able to know God, who is both the Spirit and the Word.

In knowing God we need not only the balance of the Spirit and the Word but also the balance of an exercised spirit and a trained, disciplined mind. Paul exemplifies this balance in 1 Corinthians 14:15: “I will pray with the *spirit*, and I will pray also with the *mind*; I will sing with the *spirit*, and I will sing also with the *mind*” (emphasis added). Our spirit should be exercised to contact God, but this does not mean that our mind should ever be idle or unfruitful (v. 14). Not only in praying and in singing but especially in reading and studying the Word, we need to exercise our regenerated spirit and our renewed mind, always setting our mind on the spirit (Rom. 8:6) and using our spirit in coordination with a clear, sober, and understanding mind (2 Tim. 1:7).

Loving God, Loving and Buying the Truth, and Doing the Will of God

The one absolutely indispensable requirement for knowing God is loving Him. As we all know, the Lord Jesus commands us to love the Lord our God with our whole being—from our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30). To love God is to set our being on Him, to delight in Him and enjoy Him, to be one with Him, to be blended with Him, and even to be lost in Him. To love Him is to know Him. “He who does not love has not known God, because God is love” (1 John 4:8).

“God is love.” What a tremendous assertion! God Himself is love. Love is the inner substance of God, the nature of God’s essence. The fact that the Triune God is a God of love is clearly and emphatically revealed in the New Testament, which speaks of the love of God (Rom. 8:39; 2 Cor. 13:14), the love of Christ (Rom. 8:35; 2 Cor. 5:14; Eph. 3:19), and the love of the Spirit (Rom. 15:30). Love is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), and we love in the Spirit (Col. 1:8). To know the Triune God is to know Him as love and to love Him. However, the love with which we love Him is not our own natural love. “We love because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). God first loved us in that He infused His love—actually Himself as love—into us, pouring His love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5), and in so doing He generated within us the love with

*In knowing God
we need the balance
of an exercised spirit
and a trained,
disciplined mind.
Our spirit should be
exercised to contact
God, but this does not
mean that our mind
should ever be idle or
unfruitful.*

which we love Him. This means that God’s love for us and in us now becomes our love for Him. First, we experience and enjoy the love of God, and then this love produces within us a reciprocal love for God. As Madame Guyon well knew, we love Him with His love that is dispensed into us: “I love my Lord, but with no love of mine, / For I have none to give; / I love Thee, Lord, but all the love is Thine, / For by Thy love I live. / I am as nothing, and rejoice to be / Emptied, and lost, and swallow’d up in Thee.”

Some may seek to know the truth of God, but their seeking is for themselves, not for God. If we truly love God, we will care for His interests and for His good pleasure, the desire of His heart.

We will then realize that we are here on earth not for ourselves and our personal agenda but for God’s will and purpose. God has a will that He wants to accomplish, a desire that He longs to satisfy, a purpose that He wishes to fulfill, a goal that He plans to reach, a kingdom that He intends to establish on earth. We need to seek first God’s kingdom—to seek God, God’s will, and God’s glory for His satisfaction—and then what we need for our existence will be supplied (Matt. 6:33). A self-seeking person, one who expects God to cater to his whims and the object of whose Bible study and spiritual endeavors is the advancement of self-interest, cannot know God. To know God we must care for His interests and abandon our own.

If we would know the God of truth, we need to love the truth of God. In 2 Thessalonians 2:10 Paul refers to receiving “the love of the truth.” How can we know the truth if we are indifferent or lukewarm toward the truth? What is needed today is a love, an earnest desire, for the truth.

Some may love the truth but only in part. They may love the truth held forth by their sect or denomination; they may be enamored with the truth only as it is formulated in a particular theological system which they embrace and to which they are committed. Such a preferential love of the truth, or a love of selected or partial truths, is common, even rampant, among Christians today. Central to knowing the Triune God as the truth is an openness and a willingness to receive all His revealed truth. In Govett’s words, this is to accept the truth in its twofoldness. In the words of A. W. Tozer this is to see that truth, like a bird, has “two wings” and to confess that “many of the doctrinal divisions among the churches are the result of a blind and stubborn insistence

that truth has but one wing” (*Christian* 59). Elsewhere Tozer wisely observes:

The follower of Christ is called upon to embrace all truths and every truth. That is, he must open his heart to God’s truth, and having done so he must be prepared to accept all truths and reject none. Where one truth seems to contradict another the wise Christian will not make his choice between them but will believe both and wait for the day of Christ to resolve what appears to be their differences....We may believe all that God has revealed, however self-contradictory it may appear to be, because all truths meet and harmonize in the truth [Christ], and the truth makes free. (*God* 131, 134)

“Buy truth, and do not sell it” (Prov. 23:23). Whereas salvation is the free gift of God, coming to us by grace through faith, we should not expect to obtain the truth,

If we love the truth and are willing to buy the truth, we will be diligent in pursuing the truth. A lazy person, exercising neither the mind nor the spirit and relying on impulse rather than study and labor, cannot know the truth concerning the Triune God. To know Him all our faculties—our intellect, our heart, and our spirit—must be exercised in a lifelong pursuit of the truth through serious and consistent study of the Word of God and through an ardent pursuit of an experiential knowledge of the living God.

It is perhaps no exaggeration to say that man’s fundamental problem with God is that, having fallen and become one with Satan, man is in rebellion against God and His will. “God’s plan of salvation,” therefore, “is to rescue us from rebellion against the will of God and to bring us into conformity with His eternal purposes in Christ Jesus” (Law 22). Even believers in Christ, who

have been reconciled to God at least in part (Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:18-20), may conduct themselves according to the principle of rebellion and become “workers of lawlessness,” saying, “Lord, Lord,” but failing to do the will of the Father (Matt. 7:21, 23).

Those who rebel against God cannot know God. If we have no intention of obeying the Lord, we cannot know the truth. The word of the Lord Jesus in John 7:17 makes this em-

phatically clear: “If anyone resolves to do His will, he will know concerning the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.” If we are motivated by idle curiosity, wanting to add to our store of doctrinal knowledge but having no intention of practicing the truth, the Lord may leave us in our ignorance. However, if we are resolved not only to know the will of God but to do it, whatever it may be, we will know “the teaching.” If we would know God’s truth, we must be willing to do God’s will.

A lazy person, exercising neither the mind
nor the spirit and relying on impulse
rather than study and labor, cannot know the truth
concerning the Triune God.

All our faculties must be exercised in a lifelong
pursuit of the truth through serious and consistent
study of the Word of God and through an ardent
pursuit of an experiential knowledge of the living God.

especially the truth concerning the Triune God, cheaply or easily. We must pay the price exacted by the Lord Himself, who counsels us to buy from Him (Rev. 3:18). Watchman Nee understood this and testified regarding it:

Lies have no price upon them. They are cheap and they abound everywhere. But for the truth there is always a price to pay. First there is the price of humility, for it is to the meek that light is given from God. If we are not prepared to buy the truth at the cost of our own humbling we shall not receive it. Then there is the price of patience. Quick verdicts and impatient decisions have little to do with the divine light which is given to those who will wait upon God and wait for God. And supremely, there is the price of obedience. “If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know.” Unquestioning obedience is essential if we would know God’s will and God’s ways. Is our faith the cheap, easy kind that pays no price? Or are we prepared to have it founded on the truth of God, however great to us the cost of coming by that truth? (*A Table in the Wilderness*, selection for May 16)

A Spiritual Person with a Broken Self

“A soulish man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he is not able to know them because they are discerned spiritually” (1 Cor. 2:14). A genuine Christian, one regenerated by the Spirit of God in his human spirit, may nonetheless, in actual daily practice, be a soulish person—a natural person, whose soul dominates his entire being, who lives by the soul and not by the spirit, who does not exercise his spirit to contact God,

who cannot and does not know the things of the Spirit of God, and who may even regard them as foolishness and reject them. Commenting on Jude 19, which speaks of those who are “soulish, having no spirit,” Henry Alford remarks:

The psyche [soul] is the centre of the personal being, the “I” of each individual. It is in each man bound to the spirit, man’s higher part, and to the body, man’s lower part; drawn upwards by the one, downwards by the other. He who gives himself up to the lower appetites, is *fleshly*: he who by communion of his *spirit* with God’s Spirit is employed in the higher aims of his being, is *spiritual*. He who rests midway, thinking only of self and self’s interests, whether animal or intellectual, is the psychikos, the selfish man, the man in whom the spirit is sunk and degraded into subordination to the subordinate psyche [soul]....[They] have not indeed ceased to have a spirit, as a part of their own tripartite nature [1 Thes. 5:23]: but they have ceased to possess it in any worthy sense: it is degraded beneath and under the power of the psyche, the personal life, so as to have no real vitality of its own. (1776-1777)

Such persons do not care for their spirit, do not use their spirit to have fellowship with God the Spirit, and surely do not have a spirit exercised to be a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of the Triune God. Believers, including astute theologians and eloquent preachers, who remain soulish cannot know God. They may have the Triune God in doctrine, in theology, but not in reality.

God is Spirit (John 4:24), and knowing the Triune God requires that we become spiritual persons. “The spiritual man discerns all things” (1 Cor. 2:15). God created us with a spirit with which to worship Him and contact Him (Zech. 12:1; Job 32:8; Prov. 20:27; 1 Cor. 2:11). We who have been regenerated of God the Spirit have been reborn, born of God, in our spirit, and now we are one spirit with the Lord (1 Cor. 6:17), for the two spirits—the divine Spirit and the regenerated human spirit—have been mingled. A spiritual believer, as opposed to a soulish one, is one who lives and walks in and by this mingled spirit (Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:16, 25). His regenerated spirit, which is occupied and energized by the Spirit of God, has become his strongest part and dominates his entire being. Such a spiritual person, who has the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16), is able to know God, to discern the things of the Spirit of God, and to speak these things, “not in words taught by human

wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things with spiritual words” (v. 13).

Self, the fallen soul acting independently of God, is arguably the greatest obstacle to knowing God. To be strong in the self is to be weak and undeveloped in the knowledge of God. If we would know the Triune God, the self must be broken through our subjective experience of the cross of Christ. Mere theology avails nothing. A theologian may remain whole—perfect in the self—his entire life and, sadly, his pursuit of theological knowledge may actually serve to strengthen and build up the self in its independence from God and thus keep him from knowing the very One about whom he is studying. The experience of those who genuinely seek God Himself must be, and is, radically different. As the result of much divine discipline in the Lord’s sovereign mercy, their self, the barrier between them and God, is broken, and, like Job after his repentance, they begin to know Him.

If we would know the Triune God, the self must be broken through our subjective experience of the cross of Christ. Mere theology avails nothing. A theologian may remain whole his entire life and, sadly, his pursuit of theological knowledge may actually serve to strengthen and build up the self in its independence from God and thus keep him from knowing the very One about whom he is studying.

As a person of integrity and uprightness, Job knew about God. The Lord, while maintaining Job’s existence, allowed him to pass through a series of experiences which caused him to be broken and reduced to nothing. Eventually, God appeared to Job, and in the light of that manifestation Job declared: “I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; / But now my eye sees Thee; / Therefore I retract, / And I repent in dust and ashes” (42:5-6). One who had heard about God, who had a secondhand knowledge of God, now began to know God in reality. In principle, the story of Job will become the story of every child of God. If we would know God, the self must be broken.

We also need to be poor in spirit. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens” (Matt. 5:3). In this verse *spirit* refers to the human spirit, the organ created by God for us to contact Him, receive Him, and contain Him. To be poor in spirit is to be emptied in our spirit, in the depth of our being, in order to receive

something fresh of the Lord. Because our spirit is for God, it must be emptied of anything other than God which may be occupying it. Suppose a certain believer has accumulated a great deal of doctrinal knowledge about God. It would be a mistake to think that this knowledge remains only in his mind. Through his mind this doctrinal knowledge can actually exercise influence over his spirit and even occupy it. For such a person to be poor in spirit means that his spirit must be emptied of doctrinal knowledge and thus be made ready to contact God and available to receive Him. Many Christians today fail to grow in the knowledge of God because they are not poor in spirit.

Humility is related to being poor in spirit. Humility is a matter not only of lowliness and meekness but also of recognizing our utter dependence on God for everything. To be humble before God is to realize and acknowledge our absolute nothingness in relation to Him. Andrew Murray has spoken clearly regarding this:

As God is the ever-living, ever-present, ever-acting One, who upholdeth all things by the word of His power, and in whom all things exist, the relation of the creature to God could only be one of unceasing, absolute, universal dependence....The creature...owes everything to God....Humility, the place of entire dependence on God, is, from the very nature of things, the first duty and the highest virtue of the creature....[Humility] is simply *the sense of entire nothingness, which comes when we see how truly God is all, and in which we make way for God to be all*....The first and chief mark of the relation of the creature, the secret of his blessedness, is the humility and nothingness which leaves God free to be all. (*Humility* 12, 15-16)

Apart from the Triune God we are nothing, we have nothing, and we can do nothing. Apart from Him and His revelation of Himself in the Word, we can know nothing concerning Him. Furthermore, without Him and apart from Him we cannot rightly understand what He has revealed. How, then, can we dare to be self-confident, assured that we, with our meager intellect, can understand God? We are not "sufficient of ourselves to account anything as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God" (2 Cor. 3:5).

It is ironic that some claim to know God, but they act as if they do not need God in order to know Him. Instead they are assured that in themselves and by their natural intellectual

ability they are quite able to know Him. The humble are not so. Knowing that they are nothing, they depend on God for everything and are not ashamed to admit their need of Him, especially in the matter of knowing Him. Whereas the proud and the arrogant may esteem themselves as "wise and intelligent," these regard themselves as helpless infants, confessing that left to themselves they cannot know God, yet it is they, and not the former, who receive the Father's revelation. "I extol You, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for thus it has been well-pleasing in Your sight" (Matt. 11:25-26). Andrew Murray has helpful things to say about this:

The wise and prudent are the men who are conscious and confident of their power of mind and reason to aid them in their pursuit of Divine Knowledge. The babes are those whose chief work is not the mind and its power, but the heart and its disposition....With the wise and prudent head-knowledge is the first thing; from them God hides the spiritual meaning of THE VERY THING THEY THINK THEY UNDERSTAND. With the babes, not the head and its knowledge but the heart and FEELING, the sense of humility, love and trust, is the first thing, and to them God reveals, in their inner life and experience, THE VERY THING THEY KNOW THEY CANNOT UNDERSTAND....All Evangelical Christians believe in regeneration. How few believe that when a man is born of God, A BABE-LIKE DEPENDENCE ON GOD FOR ALL TEACHING AND STRENGTH OUGHT TO BE HIS CHIEF CHARACTERISTIC....

The first and chief mark of being a child of God, of being like Jesus Christ, is AN ABSOLUTE DEPENDENCE UPON GOD FOR EVERY BLESSING, AND SPECIALLY FOR ANY REAL KNOWLEDGE OF SPIRITUAL THINGS....The first condition of obtaining this knowledge, is to accept the fact that God Himself reveals it to us.

The first disposition needed for receiving that revelation

is a babe-like spirit....Live as a babe before God. As a new-born babe desire the milk of the Word. (*Inner Chamber* 77-81)

To be pure in heart means that our heart is single, seeking nothing other than the Lord Himself. In our spiritual seeking and in our endeavors to know the truth in the Word, our motives, intentions, desires, and purpose must issue from a pure heart.

Pure in Heart and Renewed in Mind

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). To be pure in heart means that our heart is single, seeking nothing other than the Lord Himself. In our spiritual seeking and in our endeavors to know the truth in

the Word, our motives, intentions, desires, and purpose must issue from a pure heart. If we are pure in heart in seeking the Triune God, having the single goal of doing God's will for God's glory, we will see God.

"This therefore I say and testify in the Lord, that you no longer walk as the Gentiles also walk in the vanity of their mind....Be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Eph. 4:17, 23). To be so renewed is to be "transformed by the renewing of the mind" (Rom. 12:2). According to Paul's understanding, one can be a real believer in Christ, a genuine child of God regenerated in the spirit, and yet, in a practical way, walk as unbelievers do, in the vanity of the fallen, natural mind. To avoid such a living, we need to be renewed in the spirit of our mind by allowing our regenerated spirit, which is mingled with the indwelling Spirit of God, to spread into our mind. This is the spirit becoming the spirit of our mind. If we remain in the vanity of the natural mind, we will not know the Triune God. Knowing God requires a renewed mind.

A renewed mind has no strongholds of rebellion against the knowledge of God. "The weapons of our warfare are not fleshly but powerful before God for the overthrowing of strongholds, as we overthrow reasonings and every high thing rising up against the knowledge of God, and take captive every thought unto the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:4-5; cf. Isa. 2:11-12; Obad. 3-4). Vincent suggests that in the word *strongholds* lies "a reminiscence of the rock-forts on the coast of Paul's native Cilicia, which were pulled down by the Romans" and that *high thing* refers to "high military works thrown up, or lofty natural fastnesses with their battlements of rock" (340). In these verses reasonings "are treated as forts or citadels to be conquered," for "Paul aims to pull down the topmost perch of audacity in the reasonings against the knowledge of God" (Robertson 253). W. E. Vine observes that *high thing* signifies "a high thing lifted up as a barrier or in antagonistic exaltation" (551).

Properly understood, the truth embodied in Paul's use of these metaphors exposes a most dreadful situation—the fact that in the minds of those who disobey God and disdain and disregard His revelation, there are strongholds of satanic reasonings and haughty things which rise up in defiance against the knowledge of God. All these must be overthrown before one can obtain the knowledge of the

Triune God. Through the waging of spiritual warfare (2 Cor. 10:4), the strongholds and exalted things in the mind are demolished so that every thought may be taken captive to the obedience of Christ, thus placing one's thoughts under the authority of God and His revealed truth. The real issue here is the rebellion of the natural human mind against God:

*Even after a person
becomes a genuine believer in
Christ, justified and regenerated
by God, a large portion
of his mind may remain the
stronghold of Satan,
and in his mind high things
may rise up against
the knowledge of God.*

this fortress, and then to recapture the thoughts. Therefore, it is impossible for man's thoughts to submit to God without knocking down reasons. All reasonings frustrate man from knowing God. (Nee, *Authority* 89)

One who truly knows the Triune God, not merely as a doctrine but as a living person, is one in whose mind the satanic strongholds and high things have been overthrown.

Paul's word in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5, written to Christian believers, indicates clearly that even after a person becomes a genuine believer in Christ, justified and regenerated by God, a large portion of his mind may remain the stronghold of Satan, and in his mind high things may rise up against the knowledge of God. This may be especially true of those believers who apply the natural, unrenewed mind to the study of systematic theology. By so doing they are actually, although unintentionally, fortifying the defensive strongholds and building up the audacious high things within them. The more they study about God in a theological way, the more they hinder themselves from knowing Him in an experiential way. Before anyone can know the Triune God revealed in the Word of God, the mental strongholds and high things must be overthrown. Only then can one's thoughts become absolutely obedient to the divine revelation in the Word, and only then can he know the Triune God through His written revelation concerning Himself.

A Person of Life and Light

God is life, and if we would know Him, we must know

the divine life, the life of God (Eph. 4:18). The Christ who is life (John 14:6) came that we might have life (10:10)—the divine, eternal life, the life that is “really life” (1 Tim. 6:19). In 1 John 5 this life is called *the* life: “God gave to us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life” (vv. 11b-12a). The apostle John goes on to say that his purpose in writing was to help us know that we have eternal life. Knowing that we have eternal life—the Triune God Himself as life—we need to know eternal life in a subjective, experiential way, and then in this life we, as persons of life, will know God.

We must search for
God Himself.
The object of our spiritual
quest must be God Himself,
not the mere knowledge about
God. Those who search for
Him will find Him; those
who seek Him will be
rewarded with God Himself.

In the being of God there is an intrinsic relationship among life, love, and light. Life is the content and outflow of God; love is the essence of God; and light is the expression of God. “God is light and in Him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). Whereas light, which is related to life, is the nature of God in His expression, darkness, which is related to death, is the expression of Satan in his evil works. By shining “in our hearts to illuminate the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” God has turned us from darkness to light, has called us out of darkness into light, and has “delivered us out of the authority of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,” where, qualified by the Father through redemption and regeneration, we enjoy “a share of the allotted portion of the saints in the light” (2 Cor. 4:6; Acts 26:18; 1 Pet. 2:9; Col. 1:12-14). Furthermore, by the grace of God we have believed “into the light” and thus we have been born of God to “become sons of light” (John 12:36). In Paul’s words, we “were once darkness but are now light in the Lord” (Eph. 5:8a). Paul hastens to charge us, saying, “Walk as children of light” (v. 8b). As God is light, so we, the children of God, are children of light. Only by walking in the light, by living, behaving, and having our being in the light, can we

know God, who is light. If “we walk in the light as He is in the light” (1 John 1:7), we will know Him.

Paul’s word in 2 Corinthians 3 indicates that as we are reading the Bible there may be a veil on our heart (v. 15). In fact, it is common for Christians to be covered by at least three layers of veils: the veil of natural concepts, the veil of human philosophies, and the veil of so-called fundamental theological teachings. Fundamental teachings may become a veil because, being elementary, partial, incomplete, and frequently one-sided, they may hinder us from seeing the fullness of the divine revelation in the Word of God. For example, the theological system known as Reformed theology contains a number of vital truths, but because this system is incomplete and unbalanced, especially in its stress on the judicial aspects of salvation to the exclusion of the organic aspects, it can easily become a thick veil hindering its adherents from seeing in the Word aspects of the truth not contained in that system. No matter what our religious background or theological predilections may be, we all need to behold the Lord “with unveiled face” (v. 18). The more we are unveiled, the more we know Him.

Seeking God, Hungering for God, and Being in God

“You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:13). “He who comes forward to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Heb. 11:6). These verses emphasize two matters related to the process of knowing God. First, we must search for God Himself. The object of our spiritual quest must be God Himself, not the mere knowledge about God. God says, “Search for Me”; the writer of Hebrews says, “Diligently seek Him.” Those who search for Him will find Him; those who seek Him will be rewarded with God Himself. Second, we must search for God with our whole heart, with our entire being, seeking Him diligently. A passive person cannot know God, for although he may be willing for God to appear, he does not search for Him. If we would know Him, we must seek Him out, seeking Him until we find Him. Although we need to seek the Lord, our capacity to search for Him originates not from ourselves but from the sovereign God who draws us to Himself (John 6:44a). If we realize this, we will abandon all confidence in our natural ability to seek God and will ask Him to give us a seeking spirit.

How can we know the Triune God if we are content with doctrine and do not hunger and thirst for God Himself? “All spiritual progress depends on man’s hunger...In order for a Christian to advance spiritually, he must be hungry inwardly and constantly seeking” (Nee, “Foremost Condition” 247). Hunger is the “first condition for spiritual growth,” and thus, in order to “have sustained

progress before the Lord, we need a sustained hunger” (247, 249). According to the Bible, God is not a doctrine to satisfy our theological curiosity; He is food and drink to satisfy our spiritual hunger and thirst. “As the deer pants for the water brooks, / So my soul pants for Thee, O God. / My soul thirsts for God, for the living God” (Psa. 42:1-2a). Blessed are those who thirst for God and come to Him and drink, for they shall be satisfied (John 7:37-39; 4:14). Blessed are those who come to Christ as the true bread—the bread of God, the bread of life, the living bread that came down out of heaven—and eat Him, for they shall by no means hunger (6:32-33, 35, 41, 48-51). The mere existence of water cannot quench our thirst. We must actually drink the water of life, receiving it and being filled with it. Doctrinal bread cannot satisfy our hunger. We must actually eat the bread of life, digesting it, assimilating it, and living by it. When we are thirsty enough to drink God and hungry enough to eat Him, we will know Him as the One who satisfies the cravings, the unfulfilled longings, of our spiritual being.

Furthermore, if we would know God, we must first pray to contact God and then to enter into God. Ritualistic or liturgical religious prayer is not likely to help us contact God. In order to contact God in our prayer, we need to pray in the Holy Spirit with the exercise of our regenerated human spirit, which is now one spirit with the Lord Spirit (Jude 20; 1 Cor. 14:15; 6:17; 2 Cor. 3:18). The more we contact God in prayer, the more we will enter into Him. We will pray ourselves into God and into fellowship with Him. Then, being in Him experientially as well as positionally, we will partake of Him and enjoy His unsearchable riches as He dispenses Himself into us. By such a prayerful contact with and entrance into the Triune God, we will explore the vast wealth of His being.

The crucial point here is that we know God by being in Him. The God whom we know is the God in whom we abide. “We are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life” (1 John 5:20). Because He is the One “who is true,” as an objective reality God is true in Himself and of Himself, apart from our experience of Him. No matter what opinions are held concerning Him, God is real in Himself. It is the desire of the true God that He become true to us, that is, become real and genuine to us in our experience and enjoyment of Him. Regarding God’s becoming real to us, the word this in the last part of 1 John 5:20 is very significant. It indicates that the God who is true to us is the God in whom we are through our organic union with Jesus Christ. According to the understanding of the apostle John, to say, “This is the true God,” is to include the fact that we are in Him. However, if we are not in God, God remains true in Himself, but He is not true to us, and hence we do not truly know Him. We know Him because we are in Him. By abiding in Him we grow in knowing Him.

Led by the Spirit into Reality and Growing in the Divine Life unto Maturity

We need to understand and interpret the Bible and to know God Himself according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. According to John 16:13-15:

When He, the Spirit of reality, comes, He will guide you into all the reality; for He will not speak from Himself, but what He hears He will speak; and He will declare to you the things that are coming. He will glorify Me, for He will receive of Mine and will declare it to you. All that the Father has is Mine; for this reason I have said that He receives of Mine and will declare it to you.

One aspect of the work of the Spirit is to guide us into the reality of the Triune God. All that the Father is, is

**Ritualistic or liturgical
religious prayer is not likely to
help us contact God.
In order to contact God
in our prayer, we need to pray
in the Holy Spirit with the
exercise of our regenerated
human spirit, which is now
one spirit with the Lord Spirit.**

embodied in the Son, and all that the Son is, is declared to us by the Spirit. In this way the Spirit guides us into “all the reality,” into the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—as the reality. But here certain questions confront us: Do we know the Spirit as the Spirit of reality? Are we willing to be guided by the Spirit? Do we have the faith to abandon ourselves to the Spirit’s leading, trusting that His guidance will always be in harmony with the divine revelation in the Word? In and of ourselves we cannot know God. For this, we desperately need the Spirit of reality to usher us into the reality of all that the Triune God is.

It would be an egregious error to suppose that we can advance in the knowledge of God beyond our degree of spiritual growth. Knowing God is proportional to our growth in the life of God. The basic principle here is simple: The more we grow, the more we know. This is proved by the word of the apostle John concerning children,

A God Who Hides Himself

I long that God's children might realize the hidden nature of His working. Do not think that only mighty influences, great visions, and tremendous revelations are of Him. God's surest work is done in the secret of our beings....This is God's mightiest mode of activity....The more we serve the Lord, and the more we abide in Him, the more we realize that God is a very quiet God, so quiet that His presence is often undetected....God has the kind of temperament that dislikes ostentation. He likes to work secretly rather than openly....God, in all His relations with us, is true to *His* disposition....a disposition that hides itself. He is very active and yet very hidden; He is truly present and yet so concealed that you can be totally unconscious of His presence....The God who hides Himself is at work within your life, but He has hidden Himself so effectively that you have been quite unconscious of His activity....Your responsibility is to cooperate with Him by responding to His voice within—that “still small voice,” that voice that seems so much a part of your own feelings that you scarcely recognize it as a voice at all. To that voice, registered in the deepest depths of your being, you must say, “Amen,” for there, secretly and ceaselessly, the God who hides Himself is working. (Lee, *A God Who Hides Himself* 4-5, 9, 11, 18)

young men, and fathers (1 John 2:12-14). To be mature spiritually is not a matter of accumulating doctrinal knowledge, nor of experiencing divine power, nor of exhibiting piety in one's daily living, nor of being zealous in serving God, nor of abounding in gifts, nor of improving one's character and behavior. To grow in the Lord means that the Triune God grows in us: that the element of God and the stature of Christ increase in us and that the ground of the Holy Spirit expands within us. Eventually, this growth, which ultimately is related to the building up of the Body of Christ, will reach maturity—the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13). Then we, having become spiritually mature in the life of God, will also be mature in spiritual understanding and in the knowledge of God.

Theologically speaking, one may be “mature” in the knowledge of doctrine while remaining an infant in the divine life, not having allowed the Triune God to grow in him. It is otherwise with the ones who are gaining a genuine experiential knowledge of the Triune God. Only those who are spiritually mature have a mature knowledge of God. In fact, one sign of spiritual growth is an increased desire to know the Triune God as a reality. The more we

grow in the divine life, growing in and with the Triune God Himself as life to us, the more we will desire to know, experience, and enjoy Him.

Gaining an Inward Knowledge of God

The more the Spirit of reality leads us into the divine reality and the more we grow in the divine life, the more we gain an inward knowledge of God. The Bible unveils that the three steps to knowing God are knowing God's acts, knowing God's ways, and knowing God Himself. The first two steps, or levels of knowledge, are found in Psalm 103:7: “He made known His ways to Moses, / His acts to the sons of Israel.” Like the children of Israel, we may know God's acts—what He does and performs—and like Moses we may know God's ways—the principles by which He does things. Many in today's charismatic renewal movement delight in what they regard as “signs and wonders” performed by the Spirit of God. Even if these signs, wonders, and miracles are genuine manifestations of the power of God, to know God only by knowing His acts is to know Him merely in an outward and superficial way. If we wish to advance in knowing God, we must seek to know Him in His ways, that is, the ways by which He does things, the principles according to which He works. However, if by the Lord's mercy and grace we hunger and thirst for Him and yearn to know Him by abiding in Him, we will not be content even with knowing God's ways but will long to progress to the deepest and fullest stage of knowing God—knowing God by knowing Him inwardly and intimately.

When our desire to know the Triune God reaches this degree, we begin to appreciate verses such as Hebrews 8:10 and 11 and 1 John 2:20 and 27. Hebrews 8:10 and 11 say:

This is the covenant which I will covenant with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will impart My laws into their mind, and on their hearts I will inscribe them; and I will be God to them, and they will be a people to Me. And they shall by no means each teach his fellow citizen and each his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all will know Me from the little one to the great one among them.

Here *laws* refers to the various aspects of the one law—the law of life (Jer. 31:33; Rom. 8:2)—which is imparted with the divine life into believers in Christ at the time of their regeneration. The law of the divine life is the spontaneous, automatic working of the divine life. Once the divine life with its law has been imparted into us, this law begins to spread into our mind, emotion, and will, becoming several laws. The more these laws are inscribed upon our inner being, the more we know God's nature. This is the inward knowing of God in the nature of God by the life of God. First John 2:20 says, “You have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know.” Verse 27 continues:

The anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things and is true and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, abide in Him.

The anointing is the moving of the Triune God as the Spirit within us, teaching us the things concerning the Triune God and even teaching us the Triune God Himself. The Triune God is actually teaching us Himself by anointing Himself into us. This is the inward knowing of God by the indwelling Spirit of God. “The law of life and the teaching of the anointing cause us to know from within the nature of God and God Himself. This is what we call here the inward knowledge” (Lee, *Knowledge* 148). It is by this inward way of knowing the Triune God that we gradually come to know Him as the God who hides Himself and as the God of resurrection.

“Truly, Thou art a God who hides Himself, / O God of Israel, Savior!” (Isa. 45:15). God is so successful at hiding Himself that it often appears, especially to those who refuse to believe, that He does not exist. God created the universe by calling “the things not being as being” (Rom. 4:17), yet for some reason the creating God hides Himself. “The invisible things of Him, both His eternal power and divine characteristics, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being perceived by the things made” (1:20), yet the God who made them, and us, takes delight in hiding Himself. God has revealed Himself in His written Word, but one book in the Bible—Esther—makes no explicit mention of God by name or title—a testimony that God cares for His people in a hidden way as the hiding God. God has revealed Himself in His living Word (Christ), but even though He manifested Himself in the flesh in the person of Christ, God hid Himself within the humanity of the God-man Jesus—a testimony that God comes to humanity in a hidden way as the hiding God. “Our personalities are diametrically opposed to God’s personality. He likes concealment, we like display.... This divine disposition constitutes a great trial and test to us” (Lee, *A God Who Hides* 2). We need to realize that when, under God’s sovereignty, we pass through such a trial and test, we have a wonderful opportunity to gain the inward knowledge of God as the God who hides Himself and to learn to enjoy a life “hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3), no longer caring for ostentatious display but praying to our “Father who sees in secret” (Matt. 6:4), living in a manner which corresponds to the mysterious, hidden nature of the divine life.

The God who hides Himself is the God of resurrection. As resurrection, God Himself is the life that passes through death, conquers death, and swallows up death in victory. Regrettably, many believers know God as the living God—that is, as the God who works for His people to gain something for Himself—but few know Him as

The God of Resurrection

With the incarnation a dispensation began in which God and man, man and God, were blended into one.... But the incarnation is only one half of the mystery. The other half is the resurrection. The incarnation is God coming into man; the resurrection is man coming into God. The incarnation brought divine content into human life; the resurrection brought human content into divine life.... While the living God can perform many acts on man’s behalf, the nature of the living God cannot blend with the nature of man. When, on the other hand, the God of resurrection works, His very nature is wrought into the nature of man.... The living God can work on behalf of man, but the nature of the living God cannot unite with the nature of man. On the other hand, when the God of resurrection works, He communicates Himself to man by that which He does for him.... God allows us to go through all sorts of distresses for this very reason, that we may know Him as the God of resurrection. He constantly leads us into death, because only in death can we experience resurrection life.... The first creation, though brought into being by God Himself, is by God Himself suffered to pass into death that it may emerge in resurrection as a creation of dual nature, i.e., combining the natures of God and man.... If you only know the living God, your knowledge will be too objective. God will be God; you will be you. You need to know the God of resurrection. (Lee, *The God of Resurrection* 4-6, 11-13)

the God of resurrection—that is, as the God who works in His children to bring them into Himself. The living God may rescue His people from trial, preserving them for Himself; the God of resurrection leads His children through trial, mingling them with Himself. The living God may deliver His people from death so that they may trust Him; the God of resurrection brings His children through death so that they may be one with Him. The living God maintains His people in the old creation so that they may live for Him; the God of resurrection constitutes His children a new creation so that they express Him. Ultimately, God’s goal—the building up of the corporate expression of the Triune God, initially as the Body of Christ and consummately as the New Jerusalem—will be achieved not mainly by the living God but primarily by the God of resurrection. The opinions of the “health and wealth” preachers notwithstanding, the children of God often encounter painful, even devastating, circumstances. We need to realize that when, under God’s sovereignty, we find ourselves in such circumstances, God will use this opportunity to work Himself into us

*The Triune God—the love of God the Father,
the grace of Christ the Son, and the fellowship of
God the Spirit—is with us all, but this enjoyment
of the divine dispensing is ours only in the Body.*

and to bring us into Himself for His glorious expression in and through the organic Body of Christ.

Living in the Reality of the Body of Christ

The process of knowing the Triune God through a triangular interaction involving the Bible, God, and our person takes place in a unique context—the reality of the Body of Christ. This means that, according to the New Testament, knowing the Triune God is a Body matter, a matter in and for the Body of Christ. Isolated individuals cannot know God adequately, because the revelation of the Triune God is given to the Body, and the experience of the Triune God is in the Body and for the building up of the Body.

Individualistic mysticism is foreign to the Scriptures. In the Old Testament the seers of the divine revelation were vital parts of and were integrated with God's people. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah—all maintained a proper standing with the children of Israel. What they saw of God was for the people of God. The principle is the same in the New Testament. The divine revelation was given to the apostles for the Body of Christ, not for their individualistic spirituality. Furthermore, only by being one with the Body of Christ in a practical way can the believers receive and appropriate the apostolic revelation.

The proper and genuine experience of the Triune God unfolded in His revelation takes place in the Body and is for the benefit of the Body. In one Spirit we all, Jews and Gentiles alike, have access in Christ to the Father, but we have this access in the Body (Eph. 2:18). The Father, through His Spirit, strengthens us with power into the inner man so that Christ may make His home in our hearts, but this experience is for the Body (3:16-19). We have the one Spirit, the one Lord, and the one God and Father of all, but this marvelous possession is a matter in the Body and is experienced only as we keep the oneness of the Body. The Triune God—the love of God the Father, the grace of Christ the Son, and the fellowship of God the Spirit—is with us all, but this enjoyment of the divine dispensing is ours only in the Body (2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Cor. 12:12-13, 27).

From all this we understand that if we would see the full

revelation of the Triune God, we must be in the Body, and if we would experience, enjoy, and know the Triune God who is revealed to us in the Body, we must live in the reality of the Body, preserve the oneness of the Body, and care for the growth and building up of the Body. In this present age, the proper and unique context for us to become a person who knows the Triune God embodied in Christ is "His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all" (Eph. 1:23). **LC**

Works Cited

- Alford, Henry. *The New Testament for English Readers*. Chicago: Moody Press.
- Law, William. *The Power of the Spirit*. Ed. Dave Hunt. Fort Washington: Christian Literature Crusade, 1971.
- Lee, Witness. *A God Who Hides Himself*. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1992.
- . *The God of Resurrection*. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1991.
- . *The Knowledge of Life*. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1973, 1988.
- Murray, Andrew. *Humility*. Fort Washington: Christian Literature Crusade, 1980.
- . *The Inner Chamber and the Inner Life*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958.
- Nee, Watchman. *A Table in the Wilderness*. Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1978.
- . *Authority and Submission*. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1988.
- . "The Foremost Condition for Spiritual Progress." Vol. 42 of *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*. 62 vols. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1993.
- Robertson, Archibald Thomas. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. 6 vols. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1930.
- Tozer, A. W. *God Tells the Man Who Cares*. Harrisburg: Christian Publications, 1970.
- . *That Incredible Christian*. Harrisburg: Christian Publications.
- Vincent, M. R. *Word Studies in the New Testament*, 2 vols. MacDill AFB: MacDonald Publishing Company.
- Vine, W. E. *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. Westwood: Fleming H. Revell, 1966.