



Plugging Into the Divine

The nature of God has always intrigued humans. For that matter, the nature of humans baffles animals. It doesn't matter how much time I might spend talking with a cow or a dog; they won't have any idea of what it means to be a human. They won't understand human faith, hopes, dreams and aspirations—nor will they comprehend human fears, worries and frustrations.

When I try to wrap my mind around God, is that something like a dog sitting in a classroom attempting to learn English literature or Algebra? Perhaps in some way, but there is a critical difference: God tells us, in his written, special revelation, that he has created us in his image. God created us with a desire, and a limited capacity, to plug into his divine nature. God created us with the capability to be in relationship with him. God has revealed some of what it means to be God to us so that we might come to know him.

Three Critical Ways God Reveals Himself

God has revealed himself to all humans, generally, in the majesty and wonder of his creation. Every human being is presented with the overwhelming evidence of the power and presence of a supreme being. God's creation is the evidence of his *general revelation* to all humans.

Secondly, in his *special revelation*, the Bible, God presents us with a written revelation. In this literary revelation God stoops down to our level, accommodating us, using the limitations and rules of human language to help us understand his nature. In his special revelation God condescends to our level, he comes down to us, using the divine equivalent of “baby-talk” so that we might be given a glimpse of his divine nature.

Beyond general and special revelation, God has revealed himself to us in one more way—the crowning achievement of his plan—the masterpiece of his self-revelation. In the person of Jesus, he came out of eternity, descending into our world. He became one of

us, taking on humanity—he came down to our level. It's called the *Incarnation*—in Jesus, the divine Son took on a human body.

He became human to make himself known to us. He became one of us to offer us the choice of living in our physical reality alone, relying on and trusting in those things we can do and produce, or (while obviously remaining human) existing in another dimension—living in him, and he in us (Galatians 2:20). If we choose to come to know God, if we choose to accept the Son, Jesus, whom John calls the “One and Only,” the Spirit of Christ occupies our spirit (Romans 8:9, 16) in spiritual regeneration. If we choose to come to know God, we live in a new union, a communion with God, so that he lives in us and we in him.

No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known (John 1:18).

John is saying that no human, on the basis of existing in the human dimension alone, has ever seen the essence of God. Human sight (or any other sensory or cognitive capacity) cannot grasp God's nature. We don't see God, but then we don't see the wind either, which John speaks of in explaining our new spiritual birth by God the Holy Spirit (John 3:8). We don't see much of the unseen world (the light spectrum, atomic particles, electricity), but it is a real world.

The Progressive Revelation of the Divine Dimension

God's nature is understood spiritually. Those who, by God's grace, spiritually “plug into” Jesus can come to know God, because God's nature is only comprehended spiritually. If we choose to come to know God, we live in a new dimension, a spiritual reality. This new reality is given to us by God's grace, it's a new birth which imparts a divine union to us, a new life we live in communion with God.

Throughout the old covenant (contained and explained in the Old Testament of the

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We have
a “burden”
we want
to “share”
with you
“just now.”



ILLUSTRATION BY MONTE WOLVERTON

We have an article that’s been “laid on our hearts,” and we’re “coming up alongside” our readers to ask if they might be a help to us in our “hour of need.” And we truly hope that this will be a “blessing to your hearts.”

The subject of this upcoming article (as you may have already guessed) will be Christian clichés. What do you think of them? Do you avoid them—or do you find that your language is liberally sprinkled with them? Do you find yourself using them around “believers” (oops—there’s another one!) and avoiding them around “unbelievers” (and another!)—or do you find yourself using them around Christians and non-Christians alike?

Some say that Christian clichés and Christianese makes non-Christians (and some Christians) uncomfortable—or that it “hurts your witness.” Others believe that using special in-house words and phrases creates a bond between believers—kind of like a secret handshake. Do you agree? Let us know.

Most importantly, we’re looking for your favorite Christian cliché—and your least favorite Christian cliché.

We’ll summarize and share your responses in a future *Plain Truth* article. You can email us at managing.editor@ptm.org (put “Christian clichés” in the subject line), or send us a letter addressed to:

Christian clichés
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commentary

Bible, God’s special revelation), God revealed himself solely as one God, and insisted that he is one—not a family, plurality or pantheon of gods, but one (Deuteronomy 6:4). But God’s revelation of himself did not end with the old covenant. His progressive revelation of his essential nature continued when he came to us in the person of Jesus.

In coming to be one of us in Jesus, God revealed to us that he is one—yet two (John 10:30). He is Father and he is Son. Jesus not only revealed the Father, but he taught about the coming of the Holy Spirit, revealing a third member of the divine Trinity (John 14:16-17; 20:21-22).

Following Jesus’ death and the resurrection, God’s progressive revelation of his nature continued, as he revealed to his early church (and to us by extension) that he is one—yet three. He is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Humans have no innate physical ability to know God. We cannot “see” God’s essence. God may only be known by those to whom he reveals himself, by those who accept his grace, by those who choose to spiritually “plug into” him, and thus come to know him.

When we come to know the essence of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we discover that the best one-word definition of the divine essence is love. The apostle John again informs us, this time in his first epistle, *If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him* (1 John 4:15-16, emphasis mine).

Love Is Who and What He Is

Love is not merely an attribute of God. Love is not just something God *has*—love is what God *is*. God is the ultimate term of endearment.

The nature of God can become a complex subject, and the best human attempt to co-relate all of the biblical statements about God’s nature is called the Trinity. The

Trinity is a human formulation of biblical revelation about God. The Trinity explains the human mystery that God is one divine being who exists eternally as three divine persons. Critics of the biblical revelation of God (as summarized in the Trinity) say that those who accept and believe in a triune God just can’t count. They’re right! We can’t humanly “count” God any more than we can humanly “see” God. If you can humanly “count” the god you worship—if you are humanly able to “see” the god you worship—then the god you worship is not the God of the Bible.

While its formulations vary, the Trinity summarizes the biblical revelation of God as this: *One God, who exists eternally, co-essentially and co-equally as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*

God is love. I don’t believe he is arbitrary. He doesn’t wait until we pass a doctrinal test until he begins a relationship with us. God is not fully defined by a Greek word. He is not a theological proposition. Theological propositions may help or hinder our relationship with God—but they are not the bottom line. *God is love.*

I absolutely know, via the school of hard knocks, that many human attempts to know God fall short of his self-revelation, and thus lead directly into negative, toxic and even cultic teachings and practices. If humans misunderstand or misperceive God, they can often be led to worship another god—and many other dysfunctional, unhealthy and pathetic religious practices follow.

By God’s grace, I have come to know God apart from dictates, institutions, ecclesiastical structures, Greek words and human authorities. I have come to know God by his grace, and the God I know is love.

God is love, and in Christ he frees us from fear-based religion that does its best to enslave us. I did my time in bondage to religiously induced shame. I now know God as love. I know him, because of his grace, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit—who exists eternally, co-essentially and co-equally. □

—Greg Albrecht