

The Mysteries of  
**GOD**



# The Mysteries of GOD

by  
Maurice Roberts



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*The Mysteries of God*

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*Affectionately dedicated*  
*to our daughter,*  
**Mary,**  
*her husband,*  
**John,**  
*and their children,*  
**Jonathan and Joanna**



## What Is a New Testament Mystery?

*But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery.*

—1 CORINTHIANS 2:7

The word *mystery*, when used in the New Testament, is a technical term. It refers to an important truth that God has revealed to us in the Bible and that could not be known by the unaided mind of man. To be sure, there are some points of truth that man is able to deduce from the general revelation contained in the universe all around us. From looking at the heavens and the earth man can and ought to conclude that the world is created and designed by a great and powerful being—God.

Not all of our knowledge comes into the category of mystery. Some things we know by natural instinct and by our God-given conscience. Because we all have a conscience that provides an awareness of good and evil, it is our duty to differentiate between right and wrong. When we do what is wrong our conscience tells us that we are guilty and ought to be afraid of God. Even heathen societies with no

access to the Bible have an understanding—although very defective and inadequate—of our need to have penalties for breaking the law.

However, there are many vital truths given to us in the Bible which, because it is God’s revelation, give us a vastly greater understanding of God—His laws, His purposes, and His love—than the most intelligent heathen without a Bible could ever come to know. Such truths we refer to as mysteries, not because man has invented this term, but because it is the precise word that God Himself has chosen to inform us of His own wonderful way of salvation.

The apostle Paul explains the Bible’s mysteries in this way: “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Cor. 2:9). This is why the apostles were inspired by God to write their epistles in the New Testament. It was to tell us what the intelligent men of this world, unaided by God’s Spirit, could never tell us. Paul makes this point strongly: “We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew” (1 Cor. 2:7–8). Indeed, the entire Bible reveals God’s mysteries.

What Paul writes here shows how important it is that we be thoroughly informed about these mysteries. They are matters of the utmost importance and relevance to all persons and to all nations. These mysteries comprise aspects and elements of God’s

secret purposes of salvation which God “ordained before the world.” These purposes of grace were drawn up by God for our highest good. As Paul puts it, they are “unto our glory.”

The mysteries of God, therefore, are entirely different from the so-called “mysteries” of pagan religion or philosophy, which are nothing better than human guesswork painted over with a veneer of impressive superstition. God’s mysteries, on the other hand, are His own eternal purposes by which He has given Christ as a Savior to mankind, and also the articles of faith which, if we believe, will give us eternal life with God in the glory of heaven.



## The Mystery of God

*The mystery of God.*

—COLOSSIANS 2:2

God is the ultimate and most sublime mystery in all existence.<sup>1</sup> No being has ever equaled Him in majesty and sovereignty, and no being ever will. God's greatness is not relative or proportional but infinitely and transcendently great. What we know of God in this life from a study of the Bible is accurate and true but is vastly less than what remains to be known of Him when we are with Him in heaven. In this life "we see through a glass darkly" (1 Cor. 13:12). The knowledge of God that awaits His people in the life to come is vastly greater than what the most learned scholars have attained to here below. In heaven God's children will see Him "face to face" and will enjoy Him to the uttermost forever.

All our knowledge of God in this life must be

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1. The author gratefully acknowledges the guidance and help of his friend the Reverend Sherman Isbell in the writing of this chapter.

drawn principally from the Bible. There is a knowledge of God that is available from the created universe. This knowledge is sufficient to render all persons guilty who seek to suppress it in their minds.

However, the knowledge of God to be obtained from a study of the natural world is not sufficient to bring us as sinners to know and love Him as we ought to do. Therefore, our knowledge of God must be learned principally from what God tells us in the Bible. It is what we learn from Scripture, either explicitly or by good and necessary inference, that must be allowed to shape and control our formulation of the doctrine of God. What is drawn from other sources will tend to mislead and so cloud our understanding with a measure of idolatry.

### **The Holy Trinity**

In the text quoted above from Paul's epistle to the Colossians we gather that God's being, as the sacred Trinity, is rightly looked on as a mystery. Paul's words are, "The mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ" (Col. 2:2). From other passages of Scripture we learn that this mystery of the Trinity concerns the Holy Spirit also. So these three holy persons of God are to be looked on with wonder and worship. There is profound mystery in this revealed truth: God is one, yet in three persons. Let us attempt, following the teaching of Scripture, to state the doctrine of God more fully.



### **Defining the Doctrine of God**

The three persons of the Holy Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—equally share one essence, or substance. Each of these three persons is God, but there are not three Gods. There is only one God. The names of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit belong to the persons necessarily and are not the result of God's plan of redemption. In saying this we mean that whereas the existence and history of the universe are the result of God's purpose, will, and decree, God Himself is self-existent. He did not by a decree give being or form to Himself or to His own blessed persons.

God may be thought of in two ways. We may think of God as He is in Himself, and we may think of Him as He is related to the world which He has created. It is customary to refer to God in the first sense as the ontological Trinity, and in the second as the economic Trinity.

Within the ontological Trinity there are the following properties special to each person: the Father eternally begets the Son; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and from the Son. These properties belong to the eternal and necessary existence of God. They have no beginning, and they will have no end.

The Son of God and the Spirit are, like the Father, of themselves (the technical term which we use to express this truth is *autotheos*). The Son and the Spirit do not owe their origin or their being to

God the Father. Like the Father, they are eternal and uncreated.

The second person of the Holy Trinity is called the Son of God. In respect to His personal property of sonship, He is of the Father and in Scripture has the designation of the “only begotten Son” (John 3:16). In respect to His deity, He is of Himself God.

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. In that He is the Holy Spirit, He proceeds from the Father and the Son. In that He is God, He is of Himself God.

While our definitions of God must always conform to the evidence of Scripture, our terminology may legitimately include words that are not found in Scripture. These words, such as the term *Trinity*, are used as necessary technical terms to convey accurate scriptural teaching about the being of God. Such technical terms are not wrong in that they express concepts that are entirely biblical.

The persons of the Godhead eternally indwell one another. The Father indwells the Son and the Spirit. The Son indwells the Father and the Spirit. The Spirit indwells the Father and the Son. The technical term we use to designate this mutual indwelling of the persons of the Godhead is the term *circumincession*.

The three persons of the Holy Trinity love one another and delight in one another. Each person perfectly and fully knows the other two persons. In Scripture, when one person refers to another it is with the utmost honor, respect, and affection. For

example, the Father refers to Christ with these words: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17). Christ says, “My Father is greater than I” (John 14:28). Jesus says the Holy Spirit “shall not speak of himself.... He shall glorify me” (John 16:13–14). The Spirit does not speak of Himself but of Christ.

### **The Economic Trinity**

For the purposes of redemption these three blessed persons each have a work of their own. This refers to the economic Trinity. The Father’s work is to send the Son, to call the elect, and to adopt them as His own dear children. The Son’s work is to become incarnate of the Virgin Mary, to fulfill the moral law, to die for us on the cross, to rise from the dead, to ascend to heaven in order to intercede for us, and, at last, to come again to take believers home to glory. The Spirit’s work is to give to Christ all needed strength for His ministry on earth, to regenerate the elect, to sanctify them in this world and so prepare them for heaven where they will be with God in glory eternally.

The soul of each believer enters into glory at the moment of death. There is no delay between a believer’s death and his or her entrance into glory. We refer to this as the intermediate state.

The body and soul of each believer will enter into heaven together after the resurrection and the judgment. At the judgment each believer will receive praise and commendation from Christ, who will

welcome us into glory. Believers will then take their places in the eternal world of heaven. We refer to this as the eternal state of the believer. Christ's love for believers is a special love arising from the fact that they are His bride, whom He has loved with an everlasting love and for whom He has paid the extremely great price of His own blood and sufferings while on the cross.

### **Our Duty of Love and Service to God**

Believers make up Christ's church and are referred to in Scripture as His bride, bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. Those who have Christ as their Savior also have God as their Father and the Spirit as their Comforter. Believers usually pray to the Father, through the Son as Mediator, and in the Spirit. However, prayer may be made to all three persons of the Godhead.

Our first and supreme duty is to love the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. God is to be worshiped only in the ways which He has commanded in His Word; to worship God in any way not commanded by Him in the Bible is vain and idolatrous. We are to receive the Bible as the inspired Word of God and as the only rule of faith and life.

It is our happy and blessed duty to meditate on this Holy Trinity with affection and gratitude, especially when we reflect on the gospel of saving grace. We are to trust in God and to rely on Him to supply

all our needs, both temporal and eternal. We have the great honor of serving this holy God for the short time that we are on earth.

The ultimate joy we have as believers will be to see and to be with this blessed God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—in heaven forever. We refer to this glorious sight of God as the beatific vision. The beauty of God is infinite and surpasses all created beauty. The sight of God will ravish the hearts of believers forever in glory. The blessed vision of the triune God, together with a full enjoyment of His love to us in Christ, will be the chief source of our endless happiness as believers in the world to come.

### **Lessons to Learn from This Mystery of God**

We should make it our great aim in this life to walk in fellowship with these three holy persons and to pray without ceasing to God. For God is able to carry us safely through this short life and to sanctify our experiences here on earth so that they might be profitable to us and to others, especially in matters of salvation.

We are to obey the will of the Holy Trinity as it is revealed in Scripture, especially in that we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and keep carefully God's moral law in public and in private. It is also our duty to seek to make known the truth of God to as many persons as possible so that they also may share with us the blessings of the gospel of Christ. Then we should seek to foster fellowship with those

who share our precious faith, even though in this life we do not yet see eye to eye in all things. As Christians, we must promote love and joy among one another in this sad and fallen world.

Let us remember that the persons of the Holy Trinity cannot fail to bring to pass all that they have promised in Scripture and that as Christ, our great Head, is alive from the dead forevermore, so we who are believers will soon be with Him in glory. In this way, we can soften our own minds and those of our Christian brothers and sisters to that natural fear of death which tends to terrify us. This is possible when we remind ourselves that to be with Christ is far better than life in this present world. Let us then ever remember that as Christians we were once in a state of sin but are now redeemed by Christ; that we are now in a state of grace and are soon to be taken out of it at our death; and that after death we will pass from a state of grace to a state of glory, the most blessed state of all.