

# God with Us

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# God with Us

KNOWING THE MYSTERY  
OF WHO JESUS IS

*Second Edition*

Daniel R. Hyde



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*God with Us*

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## Preface to the Second Edition

Greatly satisfied that the first printing of this book was so well received and after several years of its being out of print, I have updated it for a second edition at the publisher's request. We are all products of a lifetime of experiences. This is no truer than when we read Scripture, meditate on it, and seek to write down some of its ideas on paper. Thankfully, the expertise and experiences of others teach us how to step outside our finite view of things in order to gather additional information from various points of view. Several readers and reviewers have given me invaluable feedback on how to make the book better in the years since its original publication. Of note were the reviews at *Reformation21* and in *Clarion*, the *Covenanter Review*, and the *Puritan Reformed Journal*. I thank those reviewers.

I desire to thank all those who have taken my membership classes at the Oceanside United Reformed Church over the past twenty years. These classes always include my feeble attempts to explain the profound mysteries of Jesus Christ contained in this book. Whether you are a dear old saint or a baby Christian, your insightful and timely questions have given me the building blocks of what I have written here. I

especially wish to thank my long-time friend and theological sharpening stone, Dr. David VanDrunen, for originally encouraging me to seek a publisher for this material. As always, I am indebted to my wife, Karajean—my best friend, the mother of my children, my conversation partner, and my most honest (harshest!) critic. Apart from you, I could not make it through this earthly pilgrimage. Finally, my sons Cyprian James, Caiden Daniel, and Daxton Jeremiah and my daughter, Sadie Jean, teach me every day something of the wonder Mary must have experienced in raising her child—yet hers was also the Lord. I’ve prayed every day for you that you’d never know a day outside the love of Jesus!

*Venite adoremus Dominum.*



## INTRODUCTION

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# Why You Need to Know Who Jesus Is

Imagine you're a sophomore at a Christian college. You came to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ only three years earlier. You're in a chapel service. The guest speaker is explaining the marvelous event we Christians call the incarnation—the conception and birth of the eternal Son of God in human flesh. “It goes a little something like this,” he says. “God came to earth and took on a human body.” While speaking, he illustrates what that process of taking on a human body must have involved by picking up his coat, which lay over a choir pew behind him, and putting it on.

Shifting scenes: you're now in a Southern California beach city on a summer Saturday morning. Thousands of evangelical Christians have gathered for the “March for Jesus” celebration to walk through the city with praise music blaring from loudspeakers attached to the tops of vans and trucks. There are Christian T-shirts aplenty proudly worn; there's a sense of evangelistic purpose and zeal. In the midst of the crowd, you see a group of men holding up an enormous sign on poles: “JESUS: ALL GOD IN A BOD.”

These examples from my early Christian life illustrate that every one of us, from theologian to novice, have some

way of explaining what the Bible says about Jesus being both God and man, about the Son of God becoming a man. The explanations above are imprecise, unhelpful, and even incorrect ways of expressing this biblical truth. The Son didn't wrap His eternal divinity in temporal humanity like a coat. He didn't park His divinity in a "bod" like a car in a garage.

### **Constrained by Culture**

These examples are symbolic of a much larger problem within contemporary American Christianity. Just as a fish is constrained by water without knowing it, we've become constrained so much by our broader culture and Christian subculture that we don't even know it.<sup>1</sup> The problem is that the foundational doctrines of Scripture, as understood in the history of the Christian church, are rarely taught or preached in so much of American evangelicalism.<sup>2</sup> When they are, they're often presented without precision. This is the result of generations of preaching in many churches with the intent of simply making converts rather than disciples. Instead of emphasizing discipleship, pastors and their churches have been in a rush to convert as many people as possible before

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1. For an entry into modern Western culture, see Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989); and *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007).

2. On the somewhat amorphous term "evangelical/evangelicalism," see Mark Noll, "Defining Evangelicalism," in *Global Evangelicalism: Theology, History and Culture in Regional Perspective*, ed. Donald M. Lewis and Richard V. Pierard (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 17–37; Thomas S. Kidd, *Who Is an Evangelical? The History of a Movement in Crisis* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2019).

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Jesus returns. The gospel message has been turned into a watered-down, feel-good “Christianity.” The method used by many pastors is evangelism by accommodation, giving converts “relevant,” practical sermons about how to live day by day with purpose.

Jesus’s command in the Great Commission is to “make disciples”—followers and students of Christ. Jesus then explains what He means by using the words “go,” “baptizing,” and “teaching” (Matt. 28:19–20). “After all,” the reasoning goes, “it’s not important to understand *how* Jesus Christ is both God and man; it’s vital only that we live our lives for Him. It’s not important to know things about Him—just to know Him.” But who is He? Many Christians have been deceived into thinking that what they and the world need is a “practical” Christianity, not a “doctrinal” faith. Sadly, this attitude among self-professed, Bible-believing, evangelical Christians shows how far adrift Protestant evangelicalism has gone.

### **Delighting in Doctrine**

What do I mean by this critique of Protestant evangelicals? The attitudes of “conservative” evangelicals today were precisely the ideas that Protestant *liberals* had in the early 1920s, which the Presbyterian minister and professor J. Gresham Machen (1881–1937) wrote so vigorously against.<sup>3</sup> Those who promote the strange union of liberalism and evangelicalism believe that doctrine is for only the academic community to

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3. For an explanation and refutation of this type of thinking in the early 1920s, see J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 17–53.

debate and has no relevance for the daily life of the ordinary believer. “Doctrine divides,” we’re told, “but love for the Lord unites.” As church-growth guru Rick Warren said in response to the question, “What is your dream?”: “I’m looking for a second reformation. The first reformation of the church 500 years ago was about beliefs. This one is going to be about behavior. The first one was about creeds. This one is going to be about deeds. It is not going to be about what does the church believe, but about what is the church doing.”<sup>4</sup> It’s not surprising, then, that the best evangelicalism can do is produce a “Christian” culture of bumper stickers, sound-bite theology, and “witness wear” T-shirts and wristbands. Is it any wonder, then, that the esteemed J. I. Packer (1926–2020) once wrote that American evangelical Christianity is “3,000 miles wide and half an inch deep”?<sup>5</sup>

Truth be told, understanding doctrine isn’t a man-made exercise for the elite but results from obeying God’s commands to study and meditate on what He’s revealed of Himself in His Word. For example, in the Pastoral Epistles, the apostle Paul wrote to two young pastors, Timothy and Titus, exhorting them that to teach and defend creeds was to promote deeds. He emphasized the importance of doctrine, calling it:

Good doctrine (1 Tim. 4:6)

Sound doctrine (1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:3; Titus 2:1)

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4. David Kuo, “Rick Warren’s Second Reformation,” Beliefnet, accessed January 8, 2021, <http://www.beliefnet.com/faiths/Christianity/2005/10/Rick-Warrens-Second-Reformation.aspx?p=1>.

5. J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1990), 22.

- That good thing which was committed to you  
(2 Tim. 1:14)
- The doctrine which accords with godliness (1 Tim. 6:3)
- The truth which accords with godliness (Titus 1:1)
- The faithful word (Titus 1:9)
- The pattern of sound words (2 Tim. 1:13)
- The mystery of the faith (1 Tim. 3:9)
- The words of faith (1 Tim. 4:6)
- Wholesome words (1 Tim. 6:3)

Doctrine, then, is simply biblical teaching that's food for the soul like good food for the body. Because of the New Testament's insistence on doctrine as set forth in the Pastoral Epistles, Machen said, "The Christian movement at its inception was not just a way of life in the modern sense, but a way of life founded upon a message."<sup>6</sup> The earliest Christian church's life of love and fellowship—in which believers had "all things in common," "sold their possessions and goods," and shared "among all, as anyone had need" (Acts 2:44–45)—was founded on their dedication to "the apostles' *doctrine*" (v. 42). John warned his audience not to welcome certain people into their homes based on their doctrine: "Whosoever transgresses and does not abide in the *doctrine of Christ* does not have God. He who abides in the *doctrine of Christ* has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring *this doctrine*, do not receive him into your house nor greet him" (2 John 9–10).

What we call doctrine, or theology, offers the only solid foundation on which a believer in Jesus Christ can reliably

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6. Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*, 21.

live the Christian life and face temptations and trials in their lives. The pattern of the New Testament Epistles evidences that Christian doctrine was first proclaimed and then applied to Christian living. This is clearly the structure of the book of Romans. Paul proclaims both the doctrine of people's sin and the doctrine of God's salvation in chapters 1:18–11:33, and then he applies those doctrines to life in the church and in the world in chapters 12:1–15:33. Doctrine and life are inseparably united. B. B. Warfield (1851–1921), the great Princeton theologian, lamented that in his day, not unlike our own, many so-called Christian theologians were rejecting the historic Christian doctrine of the two natures of Christ. This is a doctrine that I'll explain in this book which teaches that our Lord Jesus Christ is both God and man. Instead of this teaching, liberal Christian churches in Warfield's day were calling for a more "relevant" Christianity. To this Warfield said, "The doctrine of the Two Natures is only another way of stating the doctrine of the Incarnation; and the doctrine of the Incarnation is the hinge on which the Christian system turns. No Two Natures, no Incarnation; no Incarnation, no Christianity in any distinctive sense."<sup>7</sup>

### **Renewing Your Mind**

The spirit of this age is to feel rather than to think.<sup>8</sup> As Christians, we're called by God to be "transformed by the renewing

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7. B. B. Warfield, "The 'Two Natures' and Recent Christological Speculation," in *Christology and Criticism, The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield* (1932; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2000), 3:259.

8. See, for example, William Davies, *Nervous States: Democracy and the Decline of Reason* (2018; repr., New York: W. W. Norton, 2020).

of your mind” instead of being “conformed to this world”—that is, the spirit of the age in which we live (Rom. 12:2). In the words of the African American pastor Charles Octavius Boothe (1845–1924), “Before the charge ‘know thyself’ [exemplified in this spirit of our age] ought to come the far greater charge, ‘know thy God.’”<sup>9</sup> One of the ways in which the church has been conformed to this age is adopting pragmatism in the form of a relevant, user-friendly religion. The apostle Paul characterized us before our life in Christ as having a futile mind; a darkened understanding; an ignorant, blind, unfeeling (callous; ESV) heart; and an impure life (Eph. 4:17–19). Now, however, our behavior is transformed, and we’re “light in the Lord” (5:8). Enlightened by the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit, we undergo a metamorphosis, as Paul described in Romans 12:2. Jesus commands us to love God not just with our hearts but also with our minds (Matt. 22:37). This is a part of the lifetime work of putting off the old self of sin while putting on the new self, “renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him” (Col. 3:10).

### Knowing to Know

What does this mean for the topic of this book? It means we must come to realize that without understanding who Jesus Christ is as God and man (what we call His *person*), we’ll be left puzzled about what He has done for us (what we call His *work*).<sup>10</sup> Simply put, how can we know Jesus as Savior and

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9. Charles Octavius Boothe, *Plain Theology for Plain People* (1890; repr., Bellingham, Wash.: Lexham, 2017), 4.

10. G. C. Berkouwer, *The Person of Christ*, Studies in Dogmatics, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 105.

Lord unless we know something about Him? In our Western culture, people do not select spouses before they know the personality, strengths, and weaknesses of the other person. In a similar manner, we must know God. The first question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism (1647) states that our chief end and purpose in life is to “enjoy [God] forever.”<sup>11</sup> The first question of the Heidelberg Catechism (1563) states that our only comfort is the assurance that we belong to Jesus Christ, “body and soul, both in life and in death.”<sup>12</sup> Most assuredly, our only way to recognize what God has done for us is to come to a firm understanding of who He is.

When we understand who Jesus is, we conclude that He’s absolutely essential. Knowledge of who Jesus is leads those who already have a relationship with Him to know Him more deeply. If you’ve not placed your trust, hope, and love in the Lord, it’s necessary to come to know Him this way in the first place before your relationship with Him can grow. The big point of this book is that we must clearly understand that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. If Jesus Christ is not God, then He can’t be the Savior, for only God saves. Furthermore, if He’s not God, then He can’t hear our prayers. On the other hand, if Jesus isn’t human, then He can’t be our Savior because only a human can pay for the sins that humans committed before God in Paradise (Genesis 3). In addition, if He’s not human, then He can’t sympathize with us in our weaknesses. Finally, if the divine and human natures in Jesus Christ aren’t united in one person, He can’t be our

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11. Philip Schaff, ed., *The Creeds of Christendom*, rev. David S. Schaff (1931; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 3:676.

12. Schaff, *Creeds*, 3:307.



Savior because He's neither God nor man, but a third entity. He wouldn't be completely God or completely man.

The relation of factual knowledge to relational knowledge is also essential for expressing our faith. If we profess to believe in Jesus Christ, then we must express this belief. As the great Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck (1854–1921) said, “If we believe that we have the Christ, that we have communion with Him, that we are His own, then such belief must be confessed with the mouth and be spoken in words, terms, expressions, and descriptions of some kind or other.”<sup>13</sup>

Our faith must have expression in words, yet we can only express this faith if we have certain knowledge about who our Lord is. In order to pray, to bless the Lord with all our hearts, and to tell the world about Him, we must have a foundational knowledge of who He is and what He has done for us.<sup>14</sup> This knowledge, then, is of a great mystery, a knowledge that pilgrims have in this life, and a knowledge that the catholic (universal) church in all times and in all places has expressed for millennia.

### **Holy Mystery**

Our knowledge of Jesus Christ is not merely an intellectual or theoretical exercise, though. The biblical words for “know” in both Hebrew (*yada*) and Greek (*ginosko*) denote also an

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13. Herman Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, trans. Henry Zylstra (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 322.

14. On the necessity of confessing our faith as members of the body of Christ in terms of the church's historic creeds and confessions, see Daniel R. Hyde, *The Good Confession: An Exploration of the Christian Faith* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 7–28.

intimate relationship—hence the traditional language of a man “knowing” his wife. Jesus spoke this way: “And this is eternal life, that they may *know* You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3). While a husband’s knowledge of his wife or a friend’s knowledge of a friend is comprehensible because it’s creature to creature, knowing God, by definition, is mysterious. So unlike a husband knowing his wife, the knowledge of God is just that—knowing *God*, the Creator of the universe. Such knowledge brings us to an experience of holy mystery. He’s God, we’re not; He’s Creator, we’re mere creatures. For example, when the apostle John entered into the presence of the ascended Christ, as recorded in the Revelation of Himself, John was humbled and awed in silence: “And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead” (Rev. 1:17). Throughout the Scriptures, we see this same effect on those who enter into the holy, mysterious presence of our mighty Savior, whether on Moses, who hid his face and was afraid to look up before the burning bush (Ex. 3:1–6); or on Isaiah, who cried out that he was unclean in the midst of the Lord in His heavenly temple (Isa. 6:1–7).

Amazingly, connecting with God is no different for us now than it was for Moses, Isaiah, and John when we open the Bible and seek to learn about the Lord Jesus through reading its pages. Through the medium of the Holy Scriptures, the Holy Spirit powerfully brings us into the very holy and mysterious presence of Jesus Christ Himself. The Scriptures speak of Christ (John 5:39; 1 Peter 1:10–12) and are used like a sword to pierce our inmost being (Heb. 4:12). When we study the sublime mysteries of the faith, such as the incarnation and two natures of Christ as revealed in the Scriptures, we approach

Christ Himself. When we do this, we subject ourselves to His living and active word, just like Moses, Isaiah, and John before the Lord in glory.

Because of this, it's of the utmost importance to study the subject of this book, Jesus Christ, and the mysteries of who He is with reverence and humility. One of the great leaders of the Protestant Reformation, John Calvin (1509–1564), advised his readers to have this attitude toward this subject: “It is very easy to see how beautifully they [Christ’s two natures—divine and human] accord with each other, provided they have a sober interpreter, one who examines these great mysteries with the reverence which is meet.”<sup>15</sup> Let’s turn to the Bible with reverence and with awe. Let’s turn to it with heartfelt prayer: “Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.”<sup>16</sup>

### **Pilgrim Theology**

Like Calvin, we must be sober and reverent when considering both the great, holy mystery of the incarnation and how the divine and human relate to each other in our Lord. As we study the Bible and seek to understand it, one of the ways

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15. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 2.14.4.

16. “The Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent,” *The Book of Common Prayer* (2004; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 49. This is the standard edition of 1662.

we can be sober and reverent is by realizing that we have a pilgrim theology. In classic Reformed theological categories, we speak of two kinds of theology: original (also called *archetypal*) and derived (also called *ectypal*). Original theology is theology as the Creator knows it, while derived theology is theology as creatures know it—whether the angels, the people of God in heaven who see our Lord face-to-face (1 Cor. 13:12; 1 John 3:2; Rev. 22:4), or the people of God here on earth who are pilgrims.<sup>17</sup>

Scripture speaks of this basic distinction between God's knowledge and our knowledge. When Moses preached to the Israelites, he said, "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deut. 29:29). God knows the secret things; we know only what He reveals. Later in the history of God's dealings with Israel, the LORD spoke through the prophet Isaiah in a similar way:

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17. This classic distinction can be found in older writers, especially Franciscus Junius, *A Treatise on True Theology: With the Life of Franciscus Junius*, trans. David C. Noe (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2014); as well as in more modern writers such as Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (1939; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 34–35. For more on this distinction, see Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 1:225–38; Willem van Asselt, "The Fundamental Meaning of Theology: Archetypal and Ectypal Theology in Seventeenth-Century Thought," *Westminster Theological Journal* 64 (2002): 319–35; R. Scott Clark, "Janus, the Well-Meant Offer of the Gospel and Westminster Theology," in *The Pattern of Sound Words: A Festschrift for Robert B. Strimple*, ed. David VanDrunen (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2004), 149–80; R. Scott Clark, *Recovering the Reformed Confession: Our Theology, Piety, and Practice* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2008), 142–50.

My thoughts are not your thoughts,  
Nor are your ways My ways....  
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)

This distinction is also evident in Paul's words to the Corinthians: "For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2:11).

This means we must confess that we don't know everything there is to know about God or our Lord Jesus Christ. Although the Holy Spirit has revealed much to us, "that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God" (1 Cor. 2:12)—things that "belong to us...forever" (Deut. 29:29)—He's still enshrouded in much mystery.

Therefore, we must confess that our study of the Bible and deriving theology from it is our attempt to come as close as possible to God's "thoughts," or His theology. Our language, vocabulary, and descriptions of how God works will stretch our imaginations and souls as far as humanly possible. Bavinck described this feature of theological language: "The Christian church from the very beginning...confessed the most intimate, the profoundest, and therefore the altogether unique, communion of God and man. Its representatives in the earliest period sometimes expressed themselves in an awkward way. They had to struggle, first to form a somewhat clear notion of the reality, and then to give expression to this idea in clear language."<sup>18</sup>

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18. Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 319–20.

The American Dutch Reformed theologian Louis Berkhof (1873–1957) described this mystery of the incarnation and Christ’s two natures in the dialogue of the early church: “The early Church did not claim to be able to penetrate to the depths of this great doctrine, and did not pretend to give a solution of the problem of the incarnation in the formula of Chalcedon. It merely sought to guard the truth against the errors of theorizers, and to give a formulation of it which would ward off various, palpably unscriptural, constructions of the truth.”<sup>19</sup>

The point of saying all this is that we remember we are merely pilgrims, living “east of Eden” (Gen. 4:16; see also 3:24) in the wilderness. By faith, we’re making our way toward the heavenly city, but we’ve not yet arrived. We must humbly confess that as pilgrims we rely on the Lord. As needy pilgrims, let us desire the heavenly manna of the Word, one crumb at a time, since “man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD” (Deut. 8:3). After Jesus’s disciples abandoned Him and Jesus asked if His hand-chosen disciples would leave too, this is what Peter confessed: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (John 6:68). As Boothe said, “Let us not be unmindful of the fact that we vile, short-sighted worms should approach the solemn task of studying God with feelings of humility and awe. God is found of the lowly, but hides himself from the proud and self-sufficient man. When Daniel

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19. Louis Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1937), 101–2.

fasted and prayed and made confession of sin, the secrets of the Lord were unfolded to his view.”<sup>20</sup>

The Word of God is the source of our derived theology. When we read that “the secret things belong to the LORD our God” (Deut. 29:29) and “My thoughts are not your thoughts” (Isa. 55:8), we might easily be led to question whether we can really know anything about God at all. This is true. We can’t know anything about God unless He reveals Himself to us. We find these revealed truths in “two books,” to use a concept from the Belgic Confession of Faith (1561).

The first book of the knowledge of God is “the creation, preservation, and government of the universe” (art. 2). Paul says that because of our sinfulness (Rom. 1:18–32), this book is limited in its power. It can’t lead a person to a saving knowledge of God, only to a sufficient knowledge that God exists: “All which things are sufficient to convince men and leave them without excuse” (art. 2).<sup>21</sup> The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) speaks of the limits of this general revelation of God in creation as well: “Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of his will, which is necessary unto salvation” (chap. 1.1).<sup>22</sup>

The second book is Scripture: “He makes Himself more clearly and fully known to us by His holy and divine Word, that is to say, as far as is necessary for us to know in this life,

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20. Boothe, *Plain Theology for Plain People*, 4.

21. Schaff, *Creeeds*, 3:384.

22. Schaff, *Creeeds*, 3:600.

to His glory and our salvation” (art. 2).<sup>23</sup> About this book the Belgic Confession further explains:

We confess that this Word of God was not sent nor delivered by the will of man, but that men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit, as the apostle Peter says; and that afterwards God, from a special care which He has for us and our salvation, commanded His servants, the prophets and apostles, to commit His revealed word to writing; and He Himself wrote with His own finger the two tables of the law. Therefore we call such writings holy and divine Scriptures. (art. 3)<sup>24</sup>

Because of His “special care...for us,” the Lord revealed His saving will and work through servants such as Moses in spoken and written forms. What the Belgic Confession calls God’s “special care,” the Westminster Confession elaborates further, saying, “Therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal himself, and to declare that his will unto his church; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing” (ch. 1.1).<sup>25</sup>

Moses thus spoke of this written word as “those things which are revealed,” those things that “belong to us and to

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23. Schaff, *Creeds*, 3:384. On Belgic Confession, art. 2, see Daniel R. Hyde, *With Heart and Mouth: An Exposition of the Belgic Confession* (Grandville, Mich.: Reformed Fellowship, 2008), 53–62.

24. Schaff, *Creeds*, 3:384–85. On Belgic Confession, art. 3, see Hyde, *With Heart and Mouth*, 63–71.

25. Schaff, *Creeds*, 3:600–601.



our children forever.” This truth brings us to a knowledge of salvation as God enters into a covenant relationship with us, but this truth also enables us to glorify the God who made and saved us, “that we may do all the words of this law” (Deut. 29:29).

### **Historic Catholicity**

As pilgrims seeking to know the mysteries about the Lord Jesus Christ as best we can this side of glory, we join that great congregation in the wilderness throughout the ages, the people of God. The mystery of the incarnation was the hope preached by the old covenant prophets when they proclaimed the coming of Immanuel, God with us (Isa. 7:14). They looked for the Lord Himself, the One who saved their fathers from Egypt, to come to earth to aid His suffering people—again. How this occurred in all its detail was manifest in the new covenant as the Holy One Himself was born and named Jesus, meaning “the LORD saves” (see Matt. 1:21).

As the early church spread out in the wilderness of this world, they confessed that *the* Son of God became a man, all the while existing as coequal with the Father. While the Scriptures use the language “son of God” for those who aren’t divine, such as Adam (Luke 3:38), Israel (Ex. 4:22; Jer. 31:9), and David (Ps. 89:20, 27), it reserves the language of *the* Son of God for God’s eternal Son to demonstrate His divinity.

As Protestants, whether Reformed or Lutheran, we join the historic church in speaking of the Son as God. We stand shoulder to shoulder with the church catholic, east and west, confessing the wonderful doctrine of the incarnation. The Son of God became man. By doing so He effected a hypostatic

union of His two natures: perfect God and perfect man. As Protestants, we're confessional Christians. We confess wholeheartedly the truths about the triune nature of God and the two natures of Jesus Christ as summarized in the great creeds of the ancient church—the Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed (325/381), Athanasian Creed, and Definition of Chalcedon (451).<sup>26</sup> These truths were reaffirmed in the confessions of the Protestant Reformation, whether in the Reformed confessions, such as the Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, Thirty-Nine Articles (1571), Westminster Confession of Faith and Larger and Shorter Catechisms; or Lutheran confessions, such as the Augsburg Confession (1530) and Luther's Small and Large Catechisms (1529). As churches, we need to continue being historic, mindful of true catholicity in order to keep us in line with the truth but also to satisfy the longing in all our hearts for transcendence.

In this book we'll delight in doctrine. We'll renew our minds. We'll stand in awe of holy mystery. We'll walk on the path of pilgrim theology. We'll confess historic catholicity. Doing this will give us knowledge of the deep mystery of who Jesus is. As we come to a better understanding of this mystery, we'll come to know Him better. Knowing Him is salvation. We'll also apply this mystery to our comfort and confidence in our sufferings as pilgrims in this life, to our witness to the world, and to our worship before the throne of God's heavenly grace. If you don't believe in Jesus Christ (yet!), but are simply seeking to learn about Him, I pray this book causes you to consider His amazing claims and the mysteries about

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26. See Appendix 1: The Ecumenical Creeds.

Him. In all this, our goal is to stand with that catholic cloud of witnesses (Heb. 12:1), the company which no man can number (Rev. 7:9) who have gone before us suffering even death for these doctrines, and confess “God with us.”