Who is the Lord that I should obey Him?

Exodus 5:2

Studies in the Character of God
Barry E. Horner
WHO IS THE LORD?
Exodus 5:2

A STUDY
OF
THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

By
Barry E. Horner
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

When a student of the Word of God is guided along a pathway that leads to his more solid establishment in the most basic of revealed truths, and even further to the spiritual enrichment of his soul, then it frequently weighs upon him that grateful acknowledgment ought to be given to his guides.

While attending Western Conservative Baptist Seminary in Portland, Oregon, during 1970-73, I received encouragement from the faculty to seriously consider the nature and attributes of the God of the Bible. The emphasis was not simply one of attaining a well honed and precise concept of Christian theism, that is the building of a tidy theological edifice. Rather, a vital foundation was laid which was seen to establish the root and base for biblical preaching, prayer, evangelism, music, church and personal spiritual maturity.

Subsequent years of pastoral ministry, as well as observation of the drift of contemporary evangelical Christianity, have only confirmed the opinion that there must be a return to a definitive appreciation of the revealed character of the only true and living God. This is the bottom line inherent in, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might," (Deut 6:5, cf. Matt. 22:34-40). In this regard, contemporary liberal, existentialist and subjective influences of the times have reaped havoc in countless local churches resulting in man-centered idolatry.

Christians ought to become reverently excited, that is exultantly overawed and enthused in their souls concerning the full orb'd character of the God of the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, and supremely the Lord Jesus Christ. I am deeply grateful for the godly members of the faculty at Western who encouraged me to pursue the most important of all spheres of knowledge, namely the knowledge of the Holy One of Israel.

Another debt has recently come to the fore with regard to a professor at Western who recommended the reading of Whittaker Chambers' monumental autobiography Witness. A more recent edition has come to hand with a preface by Robert Novak who points out that Chambers forces us to face "the most revolutionary question in history: God or man?" in the context of choosing between freedom represented by Western society or Communism.\(^1\) However subsequent events in the 21st century have now led us to conclude that at best Novak's call deals with the penultimate issue while the ultimate matter is concerned with the question as to which God is to be yielded to, the definitive Jehovah of Judeo-Christianity or Allah of Mohammedanism, or God in the abstract of modern deism. This biblical study is concerned with this ultimate question in terms of the incomparable character of the definitive, unique God of Abraham as revealed in the Old Testament and the New Testament of the Bible.

Barry E. Horner

\(^1\) Whittaker Chambers, Witness, pp. viii, 4.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preface</strong></td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I. Introduction to the Attributes of God</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God cannot be known apart from His self-revelation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God cannot be known apart from His attributes</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What exactly do we mean by the “attributes” of God?</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What we do not mean by the “attributes” of God</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why should we study the attributes of God?</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are the attributes of God to be classified?</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>II. The Holiness of God</strong></td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What essentially is the holiness of God?</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The holiness of God evident in Himself</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The holiness of God evident in the believer</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>III. The Righteousness of God</strong></td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God’s righteousness – His moral being or positive holiness</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God’s justice – His moral equity of fairness</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God’s veracity – His moral integrity or truthfulness</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God’s faithfulness – His moral consistency or dependability</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IV. The Goodness of God</strong></td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The goodness of God defined</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The goodness of God according to Jesus Christ – Mark 10:17-18</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The goodness of God to the believer – Isaiah 63:7-9</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The goodness of God in the believer – II Thessalonians 1:11-12</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>V. The Benevolence of God</strong></td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The benevolence of God toward His creatures</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The benevolence of God evident in His human creatures</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VI. The Grace of God</strong></td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The distinctive nature of God’s gracious character</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The grace of God as an aspect of His love</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The major categories of God’s grace</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common grace</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preceding grace</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saving grace</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The grace of God evident in the believer</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VII. The Longsuffering of God</strong></td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nature of God’s longsuffering</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The longsuffering of God toward His people</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The longsuffering of God evident in the believer</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VIII. THE MERCY OF GOD
161
The mercy of God directed toward man in distress
162
The psalmist’s delight in the mercy of God
164
The mercy of God evident in the life of the believer
168

IX. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD
171
God is sovereign over all that comes to pass (ordination)
180
God is sovereign over creation (origination)
186
God is sovereign over providence (preservation)
187
God is sovereign over redemption (salvation)
192
God communicates His sovereignty (dominion)
213

X. THE INFINITY OF GOD
217
God is perfect – infinite in morality
221
God is omnipotent – infinite in power
223
God is eternal – infinite in time
231
God is omniscient – infinite in knowledge
237
God is omnisapient – infinite in wisdom
250
God is omnipresent – infinite within space
257
God is immense – infinity beyond space
266
God is immanent – infinite within creation
268
God is transcendent – infinite beyond creation
270

XI. THE PERSONAL BEING OF GOD
273
God is self-existent
274
God is spiritual
277
God is living
285
God is immutable
291
God is unitary in His essence
305
God is a triunity of persons
316

XII. THE PERSONALITY OF GOD
339
The personality of God communicated
342
The image of God in the constitution of man
342
The emotions of God directed towards man
351
The personality of God designated
362
The primary names of God in the Old Testament
364
The primary names of God in the New Testament
370
The practical significance of the names of God
379
The personality of God radiated
382
The essential glory of God
384
The reflected glory of God
388
The communicated glory of God
392
The attributed glory of God
396
XIII. CONCLUSION

   Introduction 409
   The attributes of God and biblical preaching 421
   The attributes of God and prayer 429
   The attributes of God and authentic evangelism 457
   The attributes of God and justification by faith 469
   The attributes of God and Christian music 477
   The attributes of God and local church maturity 490
   The attributes of God and individual Christian maturity 497

BIBLIOGRAPHY 503
Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
    In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
    Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
    Nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;
Thy justice like mountains high soaring above,
    Thy clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all life Thou givest—to both great and small;
    In all life Thou livest, the true life of all;
We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,
    And wither and perish—but nought changeth Thee.

Great Father of Glory, pure Father of Light,
    Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;
All laud we would render; O help us to see:
    ‘Tis only the splendor of light hideth Thee.

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
    In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
    Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.

Walter Chalmers Smith
THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

PREFACE

If God be the God of the Bible, then there is absolutely nothing more important than His person being confessed objectively, subjectively, satisfactorily and reverently.

First, God must be confessed, objectively, propositionally, that is as real, and there, outside of ourselves. In other words, He exists whether I exist and contemplate Him or not; He exists apart from my denial of Him; He exists as a concrete rather than an abstract reality. This is the vital starting point, believing that as the “I AM God” (Exod. 3:13-15; cf. John 8:24, 28, 58), therefore faith commences with the truth that “He is.” “Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him” (Heb. 11:6).

Second, God must be known subjectively, that is according to my consciousness of His concrete reality; He exists personally, through inward encounter and spiritual conviction; He exists according to individual, spiritual, sensual comprehension.

Third, God must be known satisfactorily, acceptably, according to His established grounds of acceptance through Self-revelation. I may know that God exists as objectively righteous; I may also be sensitive subjectively to His righteousness, albeit unhappily so due to conviction of my unrighteousness. Hence, my comprehension of God must also incorporate being rightly, satisfactorily, acceptably related to Him.

When Pharaoh addressed Moses and Aaron: “Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD” (Ex. 5:3), he soon learned of this LORD both objectively (Ex. 8:8) and subjectively (Ex. 9:27; 10:16-17), but not satisfactorily as did Moses and Aaron. It is this complete knowledge of God that we are concerned about, which the Psalmist describes: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Ps. 9:10). However, many contemporary problems face us that restrict such a blessed comprehension.

Fourth, God must be known reverently, that is with acknowledgment that is suitable to His holy character. Objective, subjective and satisfactory comprehension of God must result in that response of veneration which He declares to be appropriate.

THE PRESENT PROBLEM OF PRESUMPTION

The greatest presumption today in the Christian church, and the Western world in general as well, must surely be concerning the nature and character of God. According to Gallup, in 2007 86% of Americans believed in God, as distinct from a universal spirit, while in 2001 it was 90%. However if you were to ask the survey respondents to expound with more specificity upon the attributes of the deity they acknowledge, then the conflicting subjective opinions would undoubtedly be legion. Many would undoubtedly confess that they believe in the God of Judaeo-Christian revelation, the Bible. But upon asking for a description of the character of this God of Scripture, in a more definitive sense, surely a variety of abstract, obscure and even weird opinions would come forth. Sad to say, even within conservative evangelicalism, a survey of the qualities of God would more often prove sentimental rather than true to the Bible.

________________________________________

There may be much God-talk in the United States by professing multitudes, especially on Sundays, that is yet starved of a vital knowledge of the gracious holiness and transcendent sovereign glory of God. They manifest a variety of religious lifestyles that are manifestly impoverished and even ungodly. But how could they know about godliness, that is “God-likeness,” except the self-revelation of the only true and living God should become known to them? At best, they hold to “a form of godliness, although they have denied its power” (II Tim. 3:5). At worst, they have defiled and dishonored God by means of their vain religion (Ezek. 43:8; Mal. 1:6-8).

Nevertheless, such commonly glib, even blasphemous God-talk is usually void of biblical substance and specificity. Let us be bold then to assert that a reverent, humble and truth-founded appreciation of the attributes of the living God of the Bible is the need of the hour. The present common void in the hearts of contemporary Christians is like that of a shallow well that offers little to draw upon at a time when demanding life experiences reveal that such souls are in reality parched. Arthur Pink describes the priority of necessary recovered depth, in the knowledge of God, as follows:

“Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee” (Job 22:21). . . . A spiritual and saving knowledge of God is the greatest need of every human creature. The foundation of all true knowledge of God must be a clear mental apprehension of His perfections as revealed in Holy Scripture. An unknown God can neither be trusted, served, nor worshiped.³

³ Arthur W. Pink, The Attributes of God, p. 7. Drawing upon Charnock, Gurnall, Haldane, Manton, Spurgeon, etc., this insightful author gives an exalted view of the character of God that ought to humbly drive us to our knees in confession and adoration.

The prevalence today of diminished appreciation concerning the profound glory of the only almighty Jehovah cannot be over exaggerated, nor can the debilitating effects of such a fundamental doctrinal weakness within evangelical Christendom be too strongly lamented. Weakness in our understanding of God is invariably related to our lack of spiritual nourishment through ingestion of right spiritual nutrients that are necessary for growth in the knowledge of God. Perhaps worse than this condition of spiritual debilitation is the conclusion, born of ignorance, that our understanding of the nature of God is, for all practical purposes, satisfactory or at least adequate. But how tragic is this delusion! Not only do multitudes of Christians embrace shriveled views of God, but also they blindly pontificate according to such sparse knowledge. When visiting a large Christian hospital in Kentucky several years ago, a poster was noticed in a recreational room that read: “God is like Winnie-the-Pooh. He’s big and cuddly”! This is nothing less than tragic sentimental nonsense, indeed blasphemy! Even worse is the fact that those so deluded, who promote this demeaning of God, are in fact guilty of gross slander, and that through ignorance.

On several occasions this writer has heard professing Christians express their belief that the reason why God created man was because He was lonely! Implicit was the idea that God lacked fulfillment! However, when it was suggested to one of these persons that the “glory of God” might be a higher and less subjective goal, there was trite and unen-
thusiastic agreement. Then, having quickly brushed aside this loftiest of all purposes, we were yet returned to a more animated crusade for the thought that God does need man. Yet nowhere in the Bible is God declared to be incomplete without man. A study of God’s attributes in Scripture, particularly His self-existence, as well as a consideration of the eternal blessedness of the members of the Triunity of God, makes this abundantly clear.

Here then we have a clear indication of the fact that the details of our faith and perspective on life are conditioned by our comprehension of God. Concerning the instances just related, an inadequate appreciation of God results in a subtly dangerous, inflated distortion of man’s sense of importance in which he “satisfies God,” while at the same time God is deflated to sentimental, utilitarian proportions. God is declared to be a means to an end, namely human enhancement, rather than a glorious end in Himself.

From another aspect of this enlarged view of man and corresponding diminished appreciation of God, there is the prevalent contemporary opinion that God can be known through subjective comprehension rather than the disclosure of objective special revelation. In other words, with effort that is a given characteristic of human autonomy, God can be found. It is commonplace today for people to declare, “I think God is . . . ,” rather than, “God is revealed in the Bible to be . . . .” However, when man so contemplates by means of a mind warped with corruption (Jer. 17:9), it should not surprise us that he both concocts a dependent God who is beholden to man and distorts the only true and living God (Rom. 1:22-23). In other words, what man declares he has found turns out to be not in fact God, but an idolatrous entity shaped according to his desires and expectations, even a reflection of himself.

Hence, it is of the highest importance that both the believer and unbeliever have a right understanding of the God of the Bible. If evangelism is ever to regain its proper scriptural role in our society, it will start with declaring to sinful mankind the truth concerning God’s perfections. Then men will begin to be disturbed in their souls rather than continue to amble along nonchalantly in life. Similarly for the Christian, Scripture emphatically teaches that according to a man’s right understanding of God, so in direct proportion will genuine Christian character be evidenced in his life. We can only be conformed to the image of God, that is be godly or “God-like,” through spiritual osmosis, when we progress in our vital knowledge of and union with God.

When Paul writes in Ephesians 5:1, “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children,” he assumes two things. First, that those who he is addressing are authentic, regenerate children of God. Second, that these believers have a true and substantial knowledge of the God of the Bible, the only God of Israel, even as the preceding context has taught. We can best imitate that which we know well. In I Peter 1:16, Christians are exhorted: “You shall be holy, for I [the Holy One, the Father] am holy.” But how can we attain to that which we know little about?

Yet today we cannot so easily make such an assumption regarding an accurate knowledge of God as do Paul and Peter. The subjective, secular and utilitarian age in which we live has led unsuspecting believers to conceive of alien characteristics which they append to God; others virtually devise their own God, and respond in accord with that which has become a mental idol.
However, in this study we are endeavoring to impart truth and understanding concerning the only true God, the God of the Bible, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is hoped that resultant change, through the authentic perception of the glory of God in the soul, will also result in the reflection of that change, that is the glorification of that same God of the Bible in the lives of radiant Christians.

The Present Problem of Knowability

Some would certainly agree that our understanding of God is sadly lacking, yet remain resigned to the despiring view that since God is spirit, infinite, and transcendent, and man is carnal, finite, and earth-bound, therefore He is not satisfactorily comprehensible, as great and sincere as our aspirations might be. So why should we attempt to know the unknowable? There is a hint of philosophic arrogance lurking behind this question. In response we would point out that the infinite God has in fact revealed Himself to finite humanity, especially in creation and Scripture; in so doing He is declaring that He is knowable, that is to the extent that He determines.

Further, God declares that finite man can satisfactorily know Him since in making Himself known, at the same time He has appended the guarantee that such “understanding” is supremely soul satisfying, being knowledge of “the true God and eternal life” (I John 5:20). The problem arises here when man assertively thinks in terms of discovering God, that is of the finite creature being in pursuit of the infinite God. Of course such a quest is futile since “the world through its wisdom did not come to know God” (I Cor. 1:21). However when God reveals Himself and the Infinite reaches down with self-revelation, then God is satisfactorily knowable. Such knowledge does not result in frustration when accompanied with submission and humility, but abiding joy, peace, and fulfillment. Peter considers the knowledge of God to be productive of “grace and peace” (II Pet. 1:2). Paul delights “to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge” (Eph. 3:19), that is to know with delight that which transcends full human knowledge. Of course, if man insists on invading heaven, so to speak, desiring to know God on a par with His Maker, if he arrogantly desires to know as God knows, more than he desires to know about God as a creature, then he shall be forever frustrated and condemned through his yielding to the original temptation, to “be like God” (Gen. 3:1-5; Is. 14:13-14).

The Present Problem of Practicality

Quite apart from the foregoing difficulties concerning the knowledge of God, both human and philosophic, we move to that tragic attitude on the part of many Christians who profess to know God with their lips, yet consider a study of His attributes to be of minimal worth. How reminiscent this is of the indictment of the Son of God toward the Jewish leaders of His day, “This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me” (Matt. 15:8). The anomaly of this situation is heightened when we hear the cry for “practical Christian teaching,” and yet discover that the very people who make such a plea show little interest in the glory and delights of God’s person.

Concerning the man influenced by the pragmatic ways of this world, a study of God’s attributes may conjure up in his mind a fear that its content will be strictly academic, essentially philosophic, and as a
consequence as dry as proverbial dust. Perhaps he will feel that, apart from some basic affirmations about God, this subject should be left undisturbed with other speculative doctrinal discussions of a past era since it is of little relevance to practical living for today. Possibly he will even join company with the objection of the nature lover and environmentalist who claim that they have learned more about God through the contemplation of creation on a beautiful day, or a starry night, or even in the midst of a terrifying storm, than in a host of such scholarly and abstract discussions. Probably they will join hands in echoing that popular twentieth century composition:

    Oh the place where I worship is the wide open spaces,
    Filled by the hand of the Lord,
    Where the trees of the forest are like pipes of an organ
    And the breeze plays an amen choir.

    All the stars are the candles and they light up the mountains,
    Mountains are altars of God,
    Oh the place where I worship is the wide open spaces
    Where the sun warms the peaceful sod.4

    Of course we should hasten to explain that a study such as this ought in no way to be presented in a coldly intellectual and sterile form. But neither ought it to be devoid of solid doctrinal content and propositional statements, such as those of a more existential mind-set might demand. Rather, we would propose that transforming knowledge of God which Daniel speaks about: “[B]ut the people who know their God will display strength and take action” (Dan. 11:32). A. W. Tozer perceptively writes at this juncture:

    I believe there is scarcely an error in doctrine or a failure in applying Christian ethics that cannot be traced finally to imperfect and ignoble thoughts about God. It is my opinion that the Christian conception of God current in these middle years of the twentieth century is so decadent as to be utterly beneath the dignity of the Most High God and actually to constitute for professed believers something amounting to a calamity.5

Especially note the emphasis here on Christian ethics, that is that practical element concerning godly behavior for which many superficially cry out. Yet Tozer is adamant; right holy behavior only comes from the right beholding of a holy God. Therefore the apathetic times in which we live should not be allowed to corrupt profound and profitable thinking about God. There should be no heeding of the deceptive, siren-like call to primarily yield to God in simplistic and sentimental terms as distinct from knowing Him in any deep, intimate sense.

The true knowledge of God is of fundamental importance for the biblical Christian, and the sooner he learns more about Him, then the sooner will be his spiritual growth. Hence the contemporary problem requires,

---

4 These lyrics were composed by American country music singer Red Foley, and were first published in 1952. Psalm 19:1-6 is also frequently quoted to support this naturalistic contention that general revelation is what matters most. However, such a scanty opinion usually ignores the surpassing importance of special revelation, specifically the soul-restoring Word of God, variously described in vs. 7-14 of this same Psalm.

5 A. W. Tozer, The Knowledge of the Holy, p. 10. This is an excellent introductory volume to a study of the attributes of God. Tozer bemoans the shallow concept of God that is current within church life. It is for this reason that Christian ethics are faulty and the gospel is weakened.
not capitulation but, to use a word distasteful to many, indoctrination, that is the intake within the soul, via the mind, of the knowledge of God! The doctrine of God must be given a place of supreme and lively prominence, and yes, even before the desperate need of faithful evangelistic ministry. Evangelism that gives little place to the unbeliever becoming acquainted with the awful character of God, in the best sense of that term of respect, is not worthy of being called faithful gospel proclamation.

J. I. Packer explains:

We must not be afraid to start with the basic facts about God the Creator. Revealed truth has a structure, and this is its foundation. When Paul preached to the pagan Athenians, he laid his foundation before going further. He had to, or else the point of his witness to our Lord would not have been grasped. For knowledge of sin and salvation presupposes some knowledge of the Creator; nobody can see what sin is till he has learned what God is. That is why [Richard] Baxter directed the seeking soul to fix his mind first and foremost on the nature and majesty of God. In the pagan West today, we need to lay the same foundation as Paul laid at Athens. We complain that our ‘gospel preaching’ (in the modern sense) does not register with those who hear it. May not this be in the first instance because they know nothing about God with whom they have to do? Have we not taken pains to teach them who God is? The irony of our situation is that if we spend time preaching to modern pagans about the character of God we shall be told that we are not preaching the gospel. But the Puritans would not tell us that; nor would Paul.6

Nevertheless, as a word of encouragement, let it be further added that in this foundational area of Bible study, there is some evidence of the beginning of an awakening taking place. Over the last forty years a number of volumes have been published concerning the character of God that have gained wide circulation.7 Some Christians are gaining a far more glorious vision of the Almighty God with resulting reverence and awe that has been so conspicuous by its absence. Though the hoped for consequence of more reverential worship in local church life does not appear to have eventuated in any widespread degree.

**THE PRESENT PROBLEM OF PRIORITY**

Not surprisingly, many have come to realize that much of the noise, activity, relational game playing, and man-centered navel-gazing in multitudes of churches has not satisfied the thirsty soul. Rather it has been discovered that nothing compares with a humble, simple encounter with the grandeur and grace of God, the contemplation and trembling adoration of He who needs no embellishment due to the demands of contemporary relevance.

The glitzy church cisterns, full of performance and sensual appeal, designed by creative worship specialists, are being found to be full of fractures and thus unable to provide sustaining spiritual nourishment. It

---

6 J. I. Packer, *A Quest For Godliness*, p. 169. This study of the Puritan vision of the Christian life practically illustrates that for this spiritually illustrious group, experiential union with God was pursued as being of supreme importance.

7 Such authors would include Packer, Pink, Piper, Schaeffer, Smail, Sproul, Storms.
is slowly being understood that an imbalance in our understanding of God leads to an imbalance in our daily living.

Furthermore, it is also being realized that a neglect of our understanding of God leads not only to impotent living, but also to a proportionate tendency to become mancentered. This latter point is especially important these days, witness the overwhelming stress on God as useful, a religious utility who is beside us for the purpose of enabling personal self-fulfillment, self-gratification, self-aggrandizement, etc. He is not worshipped as God being sovereign over all, as the glorious Object before Whom all of creation must ultimately bow with unqualified submission.

Even so it it is not an overstatement to claim that this topic is the most basic that any Christian will ever consider. J. I. Packer puts it this way:

What were we made for? To know God. What aim should we set ourselves in life? To know God. What is the “eternal life” that Jesus gives? Knowledge of God. “This is eternal life, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). What is the best thing in life, bringing more joy, delight, and contentment, than anything else? Knowledge of God. “Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me” (Jer. 9:23f). What, of all states God ever sees man in, gives Him most pleasure? Knowledge of Himself. “I desire . . . the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings,” says God (Hos. 6:6).8

Hear also of the priority which Stephen Charnock, that profoundly insightful Puritan, places on a true knowledge of God.

Who would willingly live in a stormy world void of God? If we waiver in this principle, to whom should we make our complaints in our afflictions? Where should we meet with supports? How could we satisfy ourselves with the hopes of a future happiness? There is a sweetness in the meditation of his existence, and that he is a creator (Ps. 104:24). Thoughts of other things have a bitterness mixed with them: houses, lands, children now are, shortly they will not be; but God is, that made the world; his faithfulness as he is a creator, is a ground to deposit our souls and concerns in our innocent sufferings (I Pet. 4:19). So far as we are weak in the acknowledgment of God, we deprive ourselves of our content in the view of his infinite perfections.9

This study is based wholly on the principle that God is to be preeminent known through His revelation of Himself in His Spirit inspired, truthful, inerrant, inscripturated Word, and this includes the incarnate revelation of Himself through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, God is who the

difficult for the reader to avoid their intensely practical importance.

8 J. I. Packer, Knowing God, p. 29. This is a soul thrilling and by far the most stimulatig of more recent writings on this subject, at least at a popular level. The major attributes of God are expounded in such a way that it is exceedingly

9 Stephen Charnock, The Existence and Attributes of God, I, p. 180. This puritan classic provides what is still the most searching study of God’s attributes. Herman Bavinck may excel in the field of historical theology in his The Doctrine of God, but Charnock is supreme in his penetration of biblical truth. Few modern writers come close to his ability to apply Scripture concerning God’s being to the soul of man. This work may at first seem heavy going on account of its antiquated seventeenth century style, but persistence that endeavors to overcome our present day spiritual illiteracy, as well as growing familiarity with the outlined structure, will result in the discovery of incomparable spiritual treasure.
Bible in its totality reveals Himself to be. No consideration will be given to liberal and neo-orthodox speculations that do not accept this standard of judgment.\textsuperscript{10}

Occasional reference will be made to evangelical works such as have already been mentioned, as well as two more recent, comprehensive volumes,\textit{The Doctrine of God} by John Frame and \textit{No One Like Him} by John Feinberg. Even so these latter mentioned writings are considerably apologetic and philosophic rather than primarily being exegetical. As an example, Frame deals with \textit{The Euthyphro Problem}, which title originates from Plato. It concerns the difficulty of alleged necessary circular reasoning arising from God being the ultimate moral standard who therefore cannot be subject to a higher standard.\textsuperscript{11} However, in all of Frame’s reasonings, along with references to a number of moral philosophers, there is not so much as reference to one passage of Scripture. In particular there is no mention of the vital passage in Hebrews where the author declares that, “when God made the [covenant] promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself” (Heb. 6:13).

Of course this is not to say that reference to uninspired human thought in these matters is to be wholly excluded. However we are affirming that, concerning the knowledge of God, His self-revelation is the one and only source for such knowledge. This being the case, such revelation will be our chief and therefore dominant consideration. Scholastic detouring from this priority, in which the finite endeavors to plumb the depths of the infinite, is not difficult to find.

We would also add that, as with Scripture, we will avoid cool dispassionate responses to the light that shines when new glimpses of the glory of God break through. Scholasticism will not restrain us at this point. It is hoped then, that the reader of this study will be led to more enthusiastically, yes even passionately cry out in his heart with praise for God’s attributes as did Moses: “For I proclaim the name of the LORD; ascribe greatness to our God! The Rock! His work is perfect, for all His ways are just; a God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He” (Deut. 32:3-4).

\textsuperscript{10} The barrenness of these deviant considerations of revealed truth is well illustrated by a recent \textit{Systematic Theology} project being published by Oxford University Press, with Volume I being titled \textit{The Triune God}. The author, Robert W. Jensen, readily admits that this is an ecumenical project designed to provide a synthesis of Roman Catholic and Protestant theology. “The present work is deliberately done in such anticipation of the one church,” p. vii. The liberal/existential/neo-orthodox bias is over-whelming and one finds it easy to conclude that for this author, the opinions of avant-garde theologians and philosophers are the point of final authority; they certainly dominate over Scripture references. Jenson typically comments, “There is an omission to be noted. Readers will find in this system no separate doctrine of God’s ‘attributes.’ This is not accidental. Fundamentally, the predicats we rightly attribute to God are simply all those that speaking the gospel may from time to time require,” p. 223. Of course this simply avoids the truth that the gospel is “God’s gospel” (Rom. 1:1; 15:16); so we enquire as to the character of this God who originates the gospel.

\textsuperscript{11} John Frame, \textit{The Doctrine of God}, pp. 405-409.