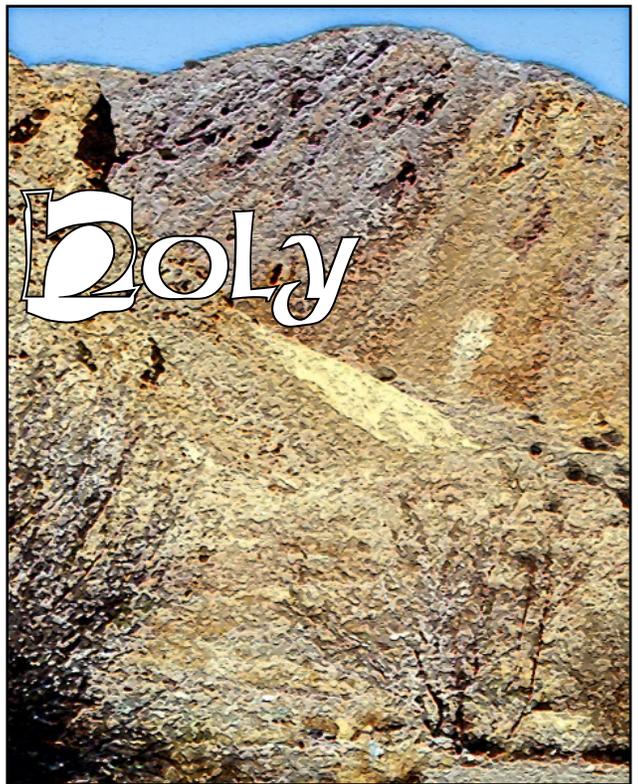


Knowledge of the Holy

Far too many of us don't know what we don't know. And most of the rest that do know what they don't know, don't care that they don't.



MANY OF US CLAIM TO KNOW GOD, or claim to know His Son, Christ Jesus. But do we? Do we really? The word “know” has been just as dumbed-down as so many other parts of our language. Like its cousins, “love,” “understand,” and “best friend,” it has been diminished to a mere shadow of what it is supposed to represent. In this chromium and plastic world in which we live, the word “know” is tossed around with abandon, salted into diaphanous, paper-thin relationships until it now means very little at all. The truth is, you don't really know someone until you've lived with them for a while. You don't really know someone until you have invested much of yourself in their lives.

Back in the waning days of 1970, when I was anticipating the approaching marriage to my betrothed, there were quality traits of Miss Linda Nott I could have guessed at with a reasonable degree of

accuracy. She possessed a high scholastic aptitude, so I knew she could balance a checkbook. She participated in synchronized swimming in high school, so I knew I would probably never be called upon to rescue her from the deep end of a pool (good thing). She was an excellent cook, so I knew I would be battling my waistline for a good many years to come. And she was pretty, so I knew I had to be the most fortunate guy around to have convinced her to be my wife.

There were a good many things I learned about Miss Nott over the course of our dating and corresponding in scribbled missives between Vietnam and Marshalltown, Iowa. But I never really *knew* her until she became Linda Lampel and I had lived with her for a while.

After forty-two years together, I now realize that back in the early seventies I didn't really know her at all. I just thought I did. Now I know her inside and out. I know her because I have lived with her day in and day out, learned from

her, accepted as a gift some of her better qualities and added them to my own few.

I know my wife because we have become—not on our wedding night, but over time—one. We are joined at the hip; we have grown up together. Our language is peppered more with “we” than “I,” because each of us has become subsumed in what we have become together.

I trust Linda. I do not trust her because someone told me that I should. I do not trust her because it is fashionable, or because it is in my nature to be trusting of others. I trust her because she is *deserving* of my trust—and I know this because I have lived with her and invested my life into hers.

Living, for most people, is an essentially physical process consisting of eating, sleeping, working, playing, carrying on a conversation with another physical being, playing softball on a Saturday morning, getting heartburn after too

many burritos and a longer belt after the Thanksgiving feast.

Living is part of being human. It is looking into the eyes of a loved one, feeling the touch of a friend, and the loud anger of an enemy. It is rising in the morning to go to work, and returning home at the end of the day to mow the lawn or prepare dinner. It is physical, it is doing. Living is something one can see and touch, hear and smell. It is something played out before all our senses. It is tangible.

The Spirit-life in God, on the other hand, represents for most people an intangible process. Spiritual things are mysterious and puzzling, associated with inexplicable dreams and queasy feelings of dread. They fall into the area of prayers and meditation, angel whispers, and small hairs rising on the back of the neck.

Even Christians may prefer to segregate their “spiritual life” from all the rest. For them, spirituality is something exercised at specific points on the calendar—say, every Sunday morning and every Wednesday night. The *really* religious, the fanatics in our midst, may even get spiritual more often than that—adding Sunday evening, or an occasional retreat or seminar, or Thursday morning Men’s breakfast.

However it is organized, many Christians have drawn an imaginary, yet distinct line between what is spiritual and what is their daily living—which leaves us with a problem: How do we reconcile these two seemingly incompatible realms? How does one “live by the Spirit”? And given that, how does one “walk by the Spirit”?

We begin with the admission that there should be no line of demarcation between our Spirit-life and our tempo-

ral life. For the Christian they are one and the same: Every breath we take is infused with the holy Breath; every step we take is accompanied by our Brother and Advocate; and every word we speak emanates from a heart that has been purchased by the Father with the blood of His Son.

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

After that admission we can become better acquainted with the God we claim to “know”—in all His fullness: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Admittedly, we can never—in this corporeal state, at least—learn everything there is to know about the Godhead. But we can learn far more than we think we know now. We can take the time to learn of His ways, His mannerisms, the qualities, similarities and differences between the three Personalities of His being. We can learn more about God through what He declares is truth: His written word. We can become acquainted with Him in a personal way, since He is not at all (as some mistakenly refer to the Holy Spirit) an “it,” but a real, living being.

*For me, O Lord, the world is all too small,
For I have seen Thy face,
Where Thine eternal love irradiates all
Within Thy secret place.
And therefore from all others, from all else,
Draw Thou my soul to Thee...
Yea—Thou hast broken the enchanter’s spells,
And I am free.*

Gerhard Tersteegen

(continued...)

It is true that the things of God are things not of this world; that is their advantage. As such, however, they can by definition be strange to people of the soil. But within each believer there resides the Spirit, whose responsibility it is to make the supernatural things of God more manageable for natural beings.

Perhaps, then, a consideration of the Holy Spirit should be our first consideration. Who better to “know” than this constant and comfortable traveling companion whose very presence is in each step we take, every thought we entertain, every word we speak. For He is more than just a partner within reach: He is already a part of us.

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Philippians 3:7-11 niv

