

# THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

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## The Lord Is God In Deed

We sometimes ask about someone: *What is he?* - not because we want to rob him of his dignity as a human being (*who*) but because we want to include what a person *does* in our picture of his being. This thought illuminates the way we talk about God. We ask interlocking questions, and make equally complicated judgments in answering them. *Is there a God?* Well, it very much depends on what you mean by *God*. Is the next question *Who is God?* Or is it *What is God?* Do you want to know what he does? Are you interested in what he is? Or do you want to know God in a personal sense? Is that even possible?

### God is Personal

In getting to know another human being, I've never started by consulting a textbook on biology. I start, usually, with *an encounter*; I meet someone. It may be preceded by an introduction, by someone saying: *I want you to meet...* But that won't always lead on to anything positive. What does the trick is my personal moment of meeting, where my interest is aroused, and I start to ask more about this new person. I begin to think about them afterwards, when they're not there; I decide there are things I want to ask, to understand. I try to predict their likes and dislikes, their opinions. They may gratify me by agreeing, or puzzle me by not agreeing, with my reading of them. Little by little I watch and listen, absorbing the person who has entered my awareness. The possibility - or impossibility - of our being friends begins to become clear. The process is one of shared time and space, in which we offer our sensitivity to each other. God too is to be met. It may not be in quite the same way, and the differences are there because they are necessary. God isn't human, and if he limited himself to human scale and shape, I would be the loser in our meeting; I will not meet God at all if I limit myself to human facts. If God becomes man in Jesus, it is so that we may become divine.

### The Deeds of God

I think there's still a reality in law called an Act of God. It always seems to be something awful, resulting in gratuitous damage which no-one except the sufferer is obliged to pay for. A God whose deeds are like that appears like some monstrous,

irresponsible child who is extremely dangerous, and it seems difficult to ask people to worship him. In the Bible we can detect some traces of such a God, but usually the Biblical hurler of thunderbolts is taking clear aim, ridding the world of what opposes goodness and holiness. But has either of these two deities ever encountered us? What experience *do* we have of God? Some people would say they have felt the sudden transparency of their world, felt it shot through with the divine; many have found themselves asking questions into the darkness, rather than bursting with praise because of the light. What I find deeply challenging and at the same time comforting, is the feeling that I can't guess what God is going to do next. I do identify "acts of God" in my life, and if I find many of them unbelievably loving, I also find some of them violently disturbing. I can only conclude that God has something in mind for me that will deserve my utmost attention. I could not live with that reckless child at the controls of the universe. I must, therefore, believe that God, in asking us to draw near to him and trust him, is doing what is *demanding* if we are to share his life. This is what Jesus did, as he went by the way of the Cross. If, in being led into this mystery, I sense a divine presence that directs and encourages me to go forwards with Christ, then I am learning to experience the love of the Trinity.

Fr  
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