

THE FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

By Paul Penno Jr.

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Psalm 130:1-4¹

Washington *Post* Staff Writer Wednesday, September 10, 2008. When Joseph, 20, who has Down syndrome, fell into a septic tank Monday in his back yard, Thomas S. Vander Woude jumped in after him. He saved him. And he died where he spent so much time living: at his son's side.

Vander Woude, 66, had gone to church and then worked in the yard with Joseph, the youngest of his seven sons, affectionately known as Josie. Joseph apparently fell through a piece of metal that covered a 2-by-2-foot opening in the septic tank, according to family members.

At some point, Vander Woude jumped in the tank, submerging himself in sewage so he could push his son up from below and keep his head above the muck, while Joseph's mom and the workman pulled from above.

When rescue workers arrived, they pulled the two out. Vander Woude, who had been in the tank for 15 to 20 minutes, was unconscious. Efforts to revive him were unsuccessful, and he was taken to a hospital, where he was pronounced dead. That father was a hero.

The Bible is clear that God is the Father, God is the Son, and God is the Holy Spirit, and the three are One. Jesus taught us to pray to "our Father

which art in heaven," in Jesus' name; and He promised He would send the Holy Spirit to abide with us forever (Mt. 7:9; Jn. 14:16-18). The Godhead is a truth beyond human ability to understand, although sincere Christian people have been baffled by the "mystery" for hundreds of years. Has Christ always been the "Son of God," or did He become so only at His birth in Bethlehem. A prominent Evangelical pastor, John McArthur, maintains that the Sonship began at Christ's incarnation. But the Bible is clear—the Son of God has *always* been the Son of God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (that's the correct translation of Jn. 1:1).

A little understood truth may help us to understand how to proclaim the Godhead to Muslims and Jews: "God is *agape*" (1 Jn. 4:8). Note the present tense; God has always from eternity been "*agape*." And *agape* must have an object to love, even from eternity; therefore the Son had to be there to be loved even from eternity. The literal translation of Colossians 1:13 says that the Father "has translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His *agape*." But we are not to try to understand the word "Son" in the light of our human father/son relationships, but vice versa. For God to have a Son does not mean that the Father is "older" than the Son; it means that they are of the same essence. And if God is *agape*, then the Son is *agape*; and that is why He voluntarily made Himself subordinate to the Father although they are equal in nature. One cannot understand John 3:16 except that Christ has

¹ "O Worship the King" 83, "Marvelous Grace" 109.

been the Son of God from all eternity; and thus the love of the Father is revealed in its grandeur: He sacrificed His only Son, even to the second death, for us—yes, for you. Great, grand, mind-boggling truths that we cannot fathom, but we can choose to “believe.”

The “Godhead” is a Good News Bible teaching (“His eternal power and Godhead” Rom. 1:20; “For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” Col. 2:9). The gospel focuses our attention upon the one nature of the three persons of the Godhead as *agape* (1 John 4:8). The knowledge that we have of God is by His initiative of revelation. *Agape* is the source of faith which is given to every man (Gal. 5:6). So we have the capacity to know with the mind and believe with the heart there is one God composed of three beings (John 10:38).

If we trace God’s *agape*-love back before time and creation, before God’s desire to make humans in His image, there existed love within the family of the Godhead. The Father has always had a Son to love from eternity, and the Son has always expressed His love of the Father by choosing to subordinate Himself to the Father. The Holy Spirit loves the Father and the Son and likewise does the Father and the Son love the Holy Spirit.

We are to understand the divine family not from our understanding of family relationships where a son is generated by a father and mother and thus subordinate to the parents. Rather we are to understand the relationship of the three divine persons as revealed in Scripture. Three beings are equal in that they are co-eternal and each of them

individually is the fullness of the Godhead (John 1:1-3).² But they are one God by virtue of their *agape*, which is expressed in a mutual subordination to one another. There is no independence or domination of one member over another, for such assertion of individuality over the others is not in Their nature.

Jesus taught His disciples the correct way to pray, “Our Father which art in heaven” (Matt. 6:9). Our heavenly Father is infinite; at first thought, this truth may tempt us to wonder if the comfort He can give us is real and effective; how can it be if the Father is an infinite being?

Don’t forget that He was also the “our Father which art in heaven” to Jesus during His 33 ½ years of sojourn with us in this human life. Whatever the Father was to Jesus, He is the same to us. His being infinite does not in the least lessen the personal attention He gives to us each one.

² Ellen White’s statement is clear as sunlight: “The Father is all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, ... invisible to mortal sight. The Son is all the fullness of the Godhead manifested. ... ‘the express image of His person.’ ... The Comforter ... is the Spirit in all the fullness of the Godhead, making manifest the power of divine grace to all who receive and believe in Christ as a personal Saviour. There are three living persons of the heavenly trio; in the name of these three great powers—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—those who receive Christ by living faith are baptized, and these powers will co-operate with the obedient subjects of heaven in their efforts to live the new life in Christ” (*Special Testimonies*, Series B, No. 7, pp. 62, 63 (1905); *Evangelism*, pp. 614, 615).

Take for example, the way that the Father in heaven manifested Himself to Jesus (as a teenager?) when He awakened Him from sleep early in the mornings.

The story is in Isaiah 50:4, 5: “The Lord God hath given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as the learned.”

As a Teenager or as a Youth (Jesus was a Youth all His life among us here!), He may have loved to sleep in each morning; teens are proverbially difficult to awaken in the morning!

But the heavenly Father (the same as your Heavenly Father!) persisted in waking Jesus up to start each new day.

Jesus had to go to school! He had to learn how to “speak a word in season” to the weary crowds, or to the solitary inquirer like Nicodemus who “came to Jesus by night” long after office doors should be closed! (John 3:2, 3). Those early morning awakenings and “schoolings” taught Jesus the wisdom He needed so desperately, which is why He said, “I can of Mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: . . . because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me” (5:30).

That same “our Father which art in heaven” will awaken us and teach us, day by day!

To whom did Jesus preach His Sermon on the Mount—to His disciples or to the multitude? Some say that God is *not* the Father of “all humanity” but only of those who are converted. All the rest are

children of the devil. But Matthew 5:1 says that when Jesus saw “the multitudes, He went up into a mountain . . . and preached, . . . “ about “your Father which is in heaven,” and “after this manner pray ye, Our Father which art in heaven,” etc. (chs. 6, 7).

The Muslim is told that he must make himself pure before he can come to Allah. But Jesus says, Come, and I will make you pure. He became one of us so that He might invite us to regard His Father as our Father. True, there are many who are unconverted; but why . . .? Is it because they have finally, irrevocably, determinedly rejected Christ, or for many is it because they have never understood the gospel? Are they wolves, or could they be lost sheep who haven’t been “found” yet?

We know that Jesus said, “Other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd” (Jn. 10:16). In those words He describes the soul-winning work of that fourth angel who “comes down from heaven having great power and the earth [is] lightened with his glory” (Rev. 18:1-4). That “voice” will call to those “lost sheep,” “Come out of [Babylon], My people, that ye receive not of her plagues.” A wise writer says that when Jesus was baptized and a voice was heard from heaven declaring, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” that Voice embraced humanity (Mt. 3:17, *The Desire of Ages* 113). If you have felt like you are an orphan outside the “family,” please accept the Good News: The Father has “adopted” you “in Christ” (Eph. 1:5, 6),

and He invites you to pray, “Our Father . . .” You are as precious as that discouraged five-times-loser at Jacob’s well when Jesus told her, “True worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him” (Jn. 4:23). Yes, He is seeking *you*! Come.

Satan is becoming more astute with his propaganda campaign of besmirching the character of God. He has targeted Jesus’ favorite word “father” which He used to reveal the divine family.

It’s true that some fathers deserve the licking they are getting for having abandoned their wives and children to fend for themselves. This leaves lasting scars for life.

Further, the Catholic Church has appropriated the term “father” for their celibate clergy. There are not a few priests who have abused their positions of power behind the altar or in the convent.

Then the feminist movement has done enough men-bashing to de-construct the patriarchal society. It has come to the point where even within the church prayers are heard to the “Mother” God. Mothers are viewed as the nurturing, loving ones. Fathers are thought of as distant, un-emotional, and unapproachable.

Sometimes we humans have had earthly fathers who left us confused and bewildered at the word “father.” But Jesus came on a mission to this earth specifically to reveal to us the family of the Godhead. “All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and He to whomsoever the Son will reveal

Him” (Matt. 11:27). Here is marvelous instruction in self-denial, which is the highest wisdom. Everything is delivered into the hands of Christ, and He uses the power only to reveal the Father to men, while He Himself remains unknown. We speak of knowing Christ, but in knowing Him we learn only the character of God. In seeing Him, we see God. Jesus said to Philip, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9).

He “emptied Himself” that the Father might appear. In all the universe no one knows the Son, except the Father. That was and is the sacrifice of Christ. Looking down upon fallen humanity, His heart was filled with love and pity, and He said to the Father, “I will declare Thy name unto My brethren” (Heb. 2:12). So He was content to be despised and unknown, to be misunderstood and rejected, without any complaint, knowing that the Father understood Him.

When God the Father was confronted with a world [that is, in Adam] that had sinned and rebelled against Him; did He drop a bomb on them? No; He did what the unfallen universe thought was unthinkable: He frankly forgave them and granted the sinners a judicial verdict of acquittal.

Now the Father was free to treat sinners as though they had never sinned. The name for this action is GRACE.

Romans 5 describes what happened: “God’s act of grace is out of all proportion to Adam’s wrongdoing. For if the wrongdoing of that one man brought death upon so many, its effect is vastly exceeded by the grace of God and the GIFT that came to so

many by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ” (vs. 15, NEB).

This marvelous gift of grace does not belittle the seriousness of the sin that we have committed; the true dimension of the guilt of our sin is the murder of the Son of God.

What kind of sacrifice can balance that account of our guilt? Someone holy and innocent must take our place and “pay the price of guilt.”

This is a legal or judicial “verdict of acquittal” that Christ accomplished for us and gave us as a GIFT. The Father so loved us that He gave us His only Son to die our second death. All He asks from us is to “believe” what He has done. And that word “believe” means to express a heart-felt appreciation for what it cost Him to save us. And that heart-appreciation melts the stony heart, and changes us—that is, converts us. The Bible invites us to “think of God.”

And when we do, it is not to think of Him as some merely infinite electronic-like intelligence that pervades the universe, but we are to think of Him as Someone infinitely close and personal—“Our Father which art in heaven. . .” (Matt. 6:9).

A clever, intelligent enemy has arisen within the universe who has challenged Him. The following are among the charges and insinuations of accusation implicit in Lucifer’s rebellion; the charges are echoed from the sinful heart of man.

1. God is basically selfish. Ps. 50:21.

[Satan] “had accused God of seeking merely the exaltation of Himself in requiring submission and obedience from his creatures, and had declared

that while the Creator exacted self-denial from all others, He Himself practiced no self-denial and made no sacrifice. GC 502; RH, Feb. 18, 1890.

2. God’s law is unjust because it requires an obedience impossible to yield. 5BC 1129, 1131; Rom. 8:7.

3. The divine government is responsible for the rebellion. GC 670, 499; Rom. 9:20.

4. Self-denial is impossible and therefore not essential for the human family. MS 50, 1900; Rom. 7:19.

5. Angels (and man) need only do what they think is right, without the restraint of law.

“He [the rebel] reiterated his claim that angels needed no control, but should be left to follow their own will, which would ever guide them right. He denounced the divine statutes as a restriction of their liberty, and declared that it was his purpose to secure the abolition of law; that, freed from this restraint, the hosts of heaven might enter upon a more exalted, more glorious state of existence. . .”

Satan has continued with men the same policy which he pursued with the angels. GC 499, 500.

6. God’s unjust restrictions led to man’s fall in Eden. Gen. 3:5.

“By the same misrepresentation of the character of God as he had practiced in heaven, Satan induced man to sin. And having succeeded thus far, he declared that God’s unjust restrictions had led to man’s fall, as they had led to his own rebellion.” GC 500.

7. The Father and the Son were the enemies of the angels, and of man, and Lucifer was their friend.

3T 328.

8. The Father is angry with sinners. His wrath would wipe them out. Jesus offered Himself up for the target of God's wrath on the cross in order to appease Him. The atonement is viewed as an intramural legal matter between Jesus and the Father whereby He turns away God's wrath from sinners.

The sacrifices of the heathen were always to placate the wrath of the angered gods. Quite common among the pagans in the Middle East as well as North, Central and South America were human sacrifices to appease the gods. Note their pyramids and altars.

"Christ died to reconcile the Father unto us?" . . . It is the pagan idea of sacrifice applied to Christianity. God, they think, was angry; he must pour forth His wrath upon someone. If upon man, it would eternally damn him, as he deserved; but this would interfere with God's plan and purpose in creating the worlds, so this must not be. And yet God must not be cheated out of His vengeance; for this reason He pours it forth upon Christ, that man may go free. So when Christ died, He was slain really by the wrath and anger of the Father. This is paganism. The true idea of the atonement makes God and Christ equal in their love, and one in their purpose of saving humanity . . . The life of Christ was not the price paid *to the Father* for our pardon; but that life was the price which the Father paid to so manifest His loving power as to bring us to that repentant attitude of mind where he could *pardon us freely* (George Fifiield, *The Love of God*, pp. 33,

34.)

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the *propitiation* for our sins" (1 John 4:10). "He loved us and sent His Son as a sacrifice to atone for our sins" (REB).

"Whom God hath set forth to be a *propitiation* through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God" (Romans 3:25). "Whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by His blood" (NRSV).

"But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5:8-10).

Mrs. White supported the view that man was reconciled to God by the death of Christ, not God reconciled to man. The Father loved us:

"But this great sacrifice was not made in order to create in the Father's heart a love for man, not to make Him willing to save. No, no! . . . The Father loves us, not because of the great propitiation, but He provided the propitiation because He loves us." (SC 15.)

Here's what John 3:16 means to say to us—"God so loved the world [that is, every individual, personal sinner in it] that He gave His only ["begotten"] Son for us [which means that He loved us more than He loved Him], who chooses to believe in Him should not go on perishing within

himself, but should have eternal life [not an extension of our present worldly and often painful existence], but the kind of life that Jesus has in His resurrection life.”

We’ve all heard how sly, cunning, and evil Satan is. Have you known how he has tried to suck the life out of the greatest verse in the Bible? John 3:16 has enough dynamite truth in it to save any sinner, but if its meaning is devalued, its effect on the human heart is weakened.

What kind of a sacrifice did the Father make when He “so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son”? There is a time-honored doctrine often labeled as “orthodox” that denies that God ever had a Son before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, that He became a “Father” only at that time. The idea is that God simply agreed for a Twin, or a fellow Committee Member, to come to earth and be sacrificed. Gracious, yes, generous even; but . . . a sacrifice?

When it comes to thinking about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the “Godhead” is so great that my brain is like a little pea in trying to understand it. But God is trying to say something to me. According to John 3:16, Christ was always the Son of God, even from all eternity: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. . . . And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father” (John 1:1, 2, 14).

There was never a “time” in eternity when the Son

of God was not! The Muslims say we teach that God had a “wife” of some sorts; No. God has tried to tell us something beyond words: Christ was not “begotten” as we beget children—the word in the Bible does not mean that. It means only beloved One. The Father’s love for His Son was the infinite Antitype of our human love for a child, and God has permitted us unworthy humans to have the experience of parenthood in order that we might understand just a trifle the heart-rending agony in the infinite Father’s heart when it came time to “give His only begotten Son.” The sacrifice was made in eternity, and it was and is infinite. John 3:16 does make sense; and a pea-size brain and heart like mine can at least begin to appreciate it.

Literal meaning seems to be “only one,” “solitary one.” Psalm 25:16 presents a use of it that has no reference to an only child: “Turn Thee unto me. . . for I am *yachid* and afflicted.” Here the meaning must be “solitary”, “lonely”.

Its use in Gen 22:2 and 16 is most interesting. “And he said, Take now thy son, thine *only* son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.” “I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine *only* son.” The Father’s love for the world is illustrated in Abraham’s love for his *yachid*, who represents the “only begotten Son”, given for the world. Here is a moving prophecy of Jn. 3:16.

John doubtless saw in Gen. 22 the term he needed to apply to Christ. However, *yachid* has no

connotation of being “begotten.” By implication its use in Gen. 22 could mean “only begotten” (not counting Ishmael as lawful “seed”); and this may be the reason why the LXX translators used *monogenes* in this passage (the term is so used in Heb 11:17). John used *monogenes* of Christ because of the figure of Isaac in Gen. 22; but certainly not with any idea of Christ being brought into existence at any time as a child is begotten of its father. As Isaac was an “only darling” in the eyes of his father, so was Christ to His Father. Thus John seeks to emphasize the Father’s love for a sinful world. John 1:14 presents *monogenes* without an article: “we beheld His glory, the glory of an only begotten from a father,” i.e., the “image” of a father, the “glory” being His character of perfect love.

A child cannot “create” his father; but the way the Bible is speaking, the child [that is, you and I] can formulate a vision of what “father” should mean; that is included in the command to “believe.” The Holy Spirit is personally present with every individual to make this a thrilling experience that you share with the Father in private.

Your personal memories of your earthly father may be deficient, but the heavenly Father is not limited by your personal, individual deficiencies; He has a road or route direct to your individual human heart and He invites you to “believe” in Him in His fullness of love (*agape*).

You may say, “Impossible! I’ve gone too far.” You cannot have gone too far because the Lord Jesus Christ is your Savior waiting to be recognized up until you draw your last breath; and if illness has

caused weaknesses in your thinking ability, it is not too late for you to “cry unto [Him] out of the depths,” for there “is forgiveness with Him that He might be [reverenced]” (see Psa. 130:1-4).

So, here is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, opening the gates of the New Jerusalem so that “all who would might enter, and no one is denied.” Thank Him! Humble your heart [you can’t respond with a proud heart!], and say “Amen!” and enter in, leaving all your pride behind.

The Lord Jesus says to each one of us personally, “I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness I have drawn you” (Jer. 31:3). That is personal, individual, intimate love; not a cold electronic thing. It’s the love of a Father—our heavenly Father. As intimate, close, personal as any earthly father’s love can be. Only far more so.

Some dear people feel that they have never known an earthly father’s love; what can the dear Lord do for them? (I knew a boy in college like that—he was having a bitter time.) But truthfully, none of us have ever had a human father who could perfectly portray the love of our heavenly Father, for us.

So, let no one be the least discouraged if you have never known an earthly father’s love: kneel on your knees and make a choice to BELIEVE what you cannot SEE. He will respond to that prayer!

The dear heavenly Father will not forsake you or neglect your prayer; He has already loved you with “an everlasting love,” now ask Him to grant you the spiritual eyesight, the discernment, to recognize the gift He has already given you. If His love is

“everlasting,” that means that He loved you while you were still in your mother’s womb. He was working on you even then, with that love. If you can’t sleep tonight (or any night), pray The Lord’s Prayer:

(1) “My Father, which art in heaven . . .” No angel in heaven is permitted to address the great King of the universe, Master of the Milky Way, as “Father.” Every angel must stand aside and let you pass on your way to the throne of the Father. That is astounding, but solemnly true.

(2) It’s because of the Father’s love for this one “little lost sheep,” this one planet in rebellion; the Father has given His only Son, Jesus, to be the new Head of this human race; in so doing He has adopted as members of His own family every one whose heart cries out, “Father!”

(3) In a legal, judicial sense, the Father has already adopted every one of the human family; but some either have refused to be adopted or have not known they have been adopted; these await the coming of the “news,” which of course is “good news,” which the Bible calls “the gospel.”

(4) “Ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, “Abba, Father. The Spirit . . . beareth witness with our [personal] spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:15-17). When you can’t sleep, think about that.

(5) The Father has the Milky Way and all the universe around His neck (as it were), but He is infinite; that means He can care for you and about

you just the same as if you were the only “child” He has in this vast universe.

(6) That is taught by Hebrews 11:6 where we are told that anyone who is sincere in wanting to come to God must believe two things: (a) that God IS—this infinite King of the universe; and (b) that He listens to, and rewards anyone who is sincere in coming to Him (including sinners!).

(7) So, when you can’t sleep, pray to this infinite Father who sees and cares when a little sparrow falls to the forest floor (Matt. 10:29). Pray to Him . . . don’t stop, pray . . . If you don’t know what to say, pray, “Abba, Father . . .” until the realization comes over through the Holy Spirit that you are somebody important whom “the Father of spirits” cares about personally (Heb. 12:9).

(8) This will be the “reconciliation” that the Father is working to do: “God was [is] in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself” (2 Cor. 5:19).

(9) When you are reconciled to the Father, then you are also reconciled to His Holy Law. That will include all the works of righteousness including keeping holy the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, “the Lord’s [true] day” (cf. Rev. 1:10).

This is a true story, dates back to the British rule in India. The Pamban Bridge is situated in Tamil Nadu, India. At the entrance of the bridge you can see a picture of a weeping man holding some human body parts close to his chest.

This bridge was built during the British rule in India and it was constructed in such a way that the center portion of the bridge could be lifted with the help of huge wheels, so that ships could easily pass under

the bridge. On the bridge, roads and rail tracks are laid for trains and other vehicles to pass. A middle aged man was appointed to roll the wheels up and down when ships arrive. Once he saw a train slowly approaching, while he was pulling back the bridge after a ship quietly passed beneath. He had to pull back quickly or else there would be a fatal accident and thousands would have died.

At that time his 9 year old son came with lunch. When he saw his father struggling with the wheels, he kept the lunch box down and started helping him to roll the wheels to put the bridge back. Suddenly his son's finger got caught inside the wheel and he started crying out. At this time if the father tries to save his son, the bridge could not be put back on time. He had no other option but to ignore his son's cry. With all his strength he kept on rolling the wheels to down the bridge. As the wheels rolled on, his son slowly started slipping away into the huge machine.

Tears rolled down his father's cheeks, but he ignored his son's cry. If he tried to save him, the train will surely fall into the sea with the people in it. Slowly the boy's whole body fell into the machine and his father could hear his bones breaking one by one, until with a loud sound, his head cracked.

The train with thousands of passengers slowly rolled on the rails, without knowing what had happened there.

Though this man performed his duty honestly he lost his only loving son. With extreme lamentation, he pulled out his son's body parts from the machine and held it close to his chest and cried bitterly.

British Government honored him greatly and in memory of this incident they placed the picture at the entrance of the bridge.