



**Job,
Songs in the Night,
&
The Fear of the Lord**



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Job, Songs in the Night, & The Fear of the Lord

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Preface

I was feeling quite downcast. Pain and suffering with various types of disabilities make the affairs of my everyday life very challenging. I was thinking that much – not all, but much – of my life is “miserable”.

That same day, I was corresponding with one of the students in our online biblical studies course.¹ He, his wife, and 7 children live in a refugee camp in Africa. He used the same word in reference to his life – “miserable”.

It occurred to me that, like Job, I should pray for my friend. As I prayed, the discourse of God’s response to Job (near the end of the book) came to mind. The Lord also spoke to my heart by bringing songs to mind. I will try to communicate what the Holy Spirit communicated to me as I prayed.

¹ [At Christ’s Table School \(ACTS\)](#)

The Fear of the Lord

The “miserableness” I speak of is in reference to my physical life, and occasionally, my emotional life as well. My spiritual life is anything but “miserable”. By that I mean, I was regenerated by the Holy Spirit more than 50 years ago, and as time has gone on, my spiritual relationship and life in the Lord has matured, deepened, and has become only more and more precious.

To that I must add that in the past 5 years or so, my concept of who God is and my experiential knowledge of Him has clearly entered into another dimension, which possibly can best be described by the phrase “**the fear of the Lord**”. It is that phrase which is the foundational, overarching, and unifying theme of what I have to share in this article.

That phrase, “**the fear of the Lord**”, is, indeed, rich in meaning. The Hebrew word translated “fear” is *yirah*², which means both *reverential awe* and *exceedingly dreadful fearfulness*.

It is the same with the Greek word, *phobos*³, which is translated as “fear”. It too means both *reverence and respect* but also *fear and terror*. It’s root meaning

² Strong’s # H3374. Lexical Summary, BibleHub,
<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/3374.htm>

³ Strong’s # G5401

provides valuable insight: The root meaning is *to withdraw – fleeing because of feeling inadequate*. The following Greek word commentary explains:

5401 *phóbos* (from *phobomai*, "to flee, withdraw") – *fear* (from Homer about 900 bc on) **5401** (*phóbos*) meant *withdrawal*, fleeing because feeling inadequate (without sufficient *resources*, *Abbott-Smith*). Fear (**5401** /*phóbos*) is commonly used in Scripture – sometimes positively (in relation to God) but more often negatively of *withdrawing from* the Lord (His will). [Fundamentally, **5401** /*phóbos* ("fear") means *withdraw (separate from)*, i.e. flee (remove oneself) and hence to *avoid* because of *dread (fright)*.]⁴

My impression is that, generally speaking for the last 50 years in Evangelical circles, the meaning of “the fear of the Lord” has leaned more towards “reverential awe”, “reverence” and “respect”. Whereas generations prior to that, the meaning leaned more toward “exceedingly dreadful fearfulness”, “withdrawing”, “feeling because of feeling inadequate”.

It seems to me that when speaking specifically about the Lord, authentic *reverential awe* would certainly include *exceedingly dreadful fearfulness*.

⁴ Gary Hill and Archer L. Gleason, *Emphatic Language Pointer System* (Synonym Glossary, Discovery Bible, NASB New Testament) Moody Press (1987)

It is the latter which has come more into focus in my experience of the Lord. I think the reasons for this is firstly because seeing God, as He truly is, warrants this perspective. Secondly, various experiences have made my perception of God “much bigger” – more awesome, and consequently more fearsome – than my earlier years of life in Christ. Hopefully, as this article progresses, what I mean will become more clear.



“A Worm”

I believe the “miserableness” of my physical and emotional life has been the “vehicle” to this “expanded” perception of who God is – and what I am. During these times it becomes clear to me that I am so very small and lowly in the shadow of The Most High Ancient of Days⁵. “Small and lowly” don’t sufficiently communicate the insignificance I feel, just as “The Most High Ancient of Days” doesn’t sufficiently communicate the magnificence of God. I truly don’t have words to describe God, and I truly cannot fully comprehend “Him with whom I have to do”⁶.

But in the past 5 years I have often likened humanity to an ant colony before the Lord’s eyes. In addition, these

⁵ Cf. Daniel 7

⁶ Hebrews 4:13 *KJV*

various experiences have always brought me to reflecting on the experience of Job. And on this day which I referred to earlier, the word “worm” came to mind.

“How much less man, that maggot, and a son of man, that **worm!**” Job 25:6

These are the words which Bildad, Job’s friend, used to describe humanity, emphasizing **humanity’s insignificance in comparison to God**. Of course, ultimately, this is not God’s opinion of His creation. However, speaking through the prophet Isaiah, God did use the term “**worm**” in reference to His people as a **metaphor of their lowliness, weakness, and mortality**.⁷ David, as well said of himself, “**I am a worm, and not a person.**”⁸ This is emotive language attempting to describe how a human being *should feel* in the shadow of The Most High Ancient of Days. The “should feel” aspect is “**the fear of the Lord**”.

⁷ Isaiah 41:14. In terms of the New Covenant: “If Christ is in you, though **the body is dead because of sin**, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.” Romans 8:10.

⁸ Psalm 22:6

“What is an angel more than a worm? A worm is a creature, and an angel is no more; he hath made the one to creep in the earth—made also the other to dwell in heaven. There is still a proportion between these, they agree in something; but what are all the nothings of the world to the God infinitely blessed for evermore?”

John Owen

“Words Without Knowledge”

I realized that as I spoke to God of my assessment of my life, I was voicing a value judgment on *that which He has chosen to allow* (by the hand of Satan⁹). I instinctively knew it to be unwise to question God’s wisdom, or God’s ways, or God’s permissive will. And I remembered God’s responses to Job:

“¹Then the Lord answered Job from the whirlwind and said, ²Who is this who darkens the divine plan by **words without knowledge**? ³Now tighten the belt on your waist like a man, and I shall ask you, and you inform Me!”¹⁰ Job 38:1-3

The Lord then embarked on a discourse challenging Job as to whether he knew and understood the power and wisdom which God employed in His creation – challenging Job as to whether his power and wisdom should even be compared to the God’s power and wisdom.¹¹

“¹Then the Lord said to Job, ²Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who rebukes God give an answer.” Job 40:1-2

This was Job’s first response to the Lord:

⁹ Cf. Job 1:12, 2:6

¹⁰ Job 38:1-3

¹¹ Job 38-39

³Then Job answered the Lord and said, **“Behold, I am insignificant. What can I say in response to You? I put my hand on my mouth. ⁵I have spoken once, and I will not reply; or twice, and I will add nothing more.”** Job 40:3-5

The Lord continued challenging Job as to whether his power and wisdom should even be compared to the God’s power and wisdom.¹² And this was Job’s second response to the Lord:

¹Then Job answered the Lord and said, ²“I know that You can do all things, and that no plan is impossible for You....
^{3b} Therefore **I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I do not know....** ⁵I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear. But now my eye sees You. ⁶Therefore **I retract, and I repent, sitting on dust and ashes.”** Job 42:1-6

I think that last phrase has significance: “Sitting on dust and ashes” was an ancient mourning rite.¹³ It was a public demonstration of guilt, repentance, and **an unworthiness before God.** “Dust and ashes” spoke of **humiliation, human frailty, and mortality.**¹⁴ God’s explanation of reality did not bring joy to Job. **Job still felt miserable.**

¹² Job 40-41

¹³ Cf. Job 2:13; Joshua 7:6; Esther 4:1, 3; Lamentations 2:10; Daniel 9:3; Jonah 3:6

¹⁴ *BibleHub*, Topical Encyclopedia

https://biblehub.com/topical/naves/m/mourning--dust_on_the_head.htm

Another thing of significance: **God did not explain “why” Job was subjected to such a miserable experience at the hand of Satan.** Surely God had a purpose, and it was accomplished. But He did not feel obligated to explain “why” to Job.¹⁵

The Lord said, “Who has been first to give to Me, that I should repay him? Whatever is under the entire heaven is Mine.” Job 41:11

God owes nothing to any of His creatures.¹⁶

“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, so that we may follow all the words of this law.”

Deuteronomy 29:29

Surely in all that He does, and in all that He allows, God has His reasons and purposes, and they are perfectly accomplished. But He is in no way obligated to explain “why” to us. I understand this to be the “referential awe” aspect of **“the fear of the Lord”**.

¹⁵ “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You.” Job 42:5. This is the closest we come to as an answer to the question, “Why?”. It may be that God’s purpose in Job’s trial was that, in the end, Job would experientially know and understand more of the reality of who God is.

¹⁶ Suggested Reading on The Aseity of God: [“The Aseity of God”](#), Got Questions, and [“Where Does the Bible Teach that God is Completely Independent?”](#), [“4 Reasons to Love God’s Aseity”](#), [“The Forgotten Yet Foundational Doctrine of Aseity”](#), by Samuel Parkison.

Mankind's insistence on thinking we have a "right" to understand "why" - demanding that God owes us an answer for His ways, and assuming we are able to understand these things, is all rooted in the Fall – back in the Garden.

The Original Lie

Jesus identified Satan as the Father of lies.¹⁷ And in the Garden we see Satan speaking the original lie:

⁴The serpent said to the woman, 'You certainly will not die!
⁵For God knows that on the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and **you will become like God, knowing good and evil.**' ⁶When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was **desirable to make one wise**, she took some of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband with her, and he ate." Genesis 3:4-6

This is when and how humanity lost "the fear of the Lord". While it is true that we are created in God's image and likeness, we cannot want to be "like God" and "fear the Lord" at the same time. When we who have been born of the Spirit¹⁸ are fully set free from the original lie and are fully reconciled to the fact that God is an altogether "Other" than us – a Unique Order of

¹⁷ John 8:44

¹⁸ John 3:3; Cf. Romans 8:9-11

Being, hopefully in time, any trace of that feeling “miserable” as a “mere creature” will cease.

SONGS IN THE NIGHT

“Yet they don’t ask, ‘Where is God my Creator, the One who gives **songs in the night?**’”¹⁹ Job 35:10

Often, I work on my writing late at night, after my wife, Frances, has gone to bed. As I was praying that night about the “miserableness” of my friend and I, the Shaker hymn, “Simple Gifts”, came to mind. I knew that the Lord wanted to communicate something to me through the lyrics, so I saved them to my computer to reflect on later.

Then, as I continued writing this article, Frances awoke and came into my office saying she had just had a dream about the song, “His Eye is on the Sparrow”! It

¹⁹ Spoken to Job by his friend Elihu.

was quite clear to me the Holy Spirit had instruction for me in the lyrics of both of these songs.

We see in Scripture God and His servants speaking to one another through songs. I have had these experiences of intimate communing with the Lord during the night hours. As the Sons of Korah said: “The Lord will send His goodness in the daytime, and **His song will be with me in the night, a prayer to the God of my life.**” Psalm 42:8

The psalmist, Asaph, gives us a compelling picture: “¹My voice rises to God, and I will cry aloud. My voice rises to God, and He will listen to me. ²In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord. **In the night** my hand was stretched out and did not grow weary. My soul refused to be comforted. ³When I remember God, then I am restless. When I sigh, then my spirit feels weak. ~ Selah ~ ⁴You have held my eyelids open. I am so troubled that I cannot speak. ⁵I have considered the days of old, the years of long ago. ⁶I will remember **my song in the night. I will meditate with my heart, and my spirit ponders.**”
Psalm 77:1-6

These psalms speak of songs which *we give to God* in worship. But the verse cited in Job says, “God my Creator, **the One who gives songs in the night**” – that is, songs which **the Lord gives to us**. As I said, it was quite clear to me the Holy Spirit had instruction for me in the lyrics of these songs.

SIMPLE
the shaker song
GIFTS



The lyrics to the Shaker hymn, “Simple Gifts” are given in simple language so that the general meaning is easily discerned:

'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free,
'tis the gift to come down where we ought to be;
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
'twill be in the valley of love and delight.

When true simplicity is gained,
to bow and to bend we shan't be ashamed;
to turn, turn will be our delight,
till by turning, turning we come round right.

by Joseph Brackett (1848)

We can see where the overall “tenor” of this lyric suits the posture of “the fear of the Lord”. Specific phrases speak of qualities which are included in the first virtue of wisdom²⁰.

*To “be simple”
and to “come down where we ought to be”*

This simplicity speaks of **lowliness and humility** – virtues which accompany “the fear of the Lord”. This meekness and poverty of spirit²¹ is recognized by the Lord and attracts His response:

“For this is what the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, says: ‘I dwell in a high and holy place, and also with **the contrite and lowly of spirit**. In order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.’” Isaiah 57:15

²⁰ “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” Proverbs 9:10

²¹ Matthew 5:3-5

*To “bow”, and “bend”, and “turn”
“we come round right” and
“find ourselves in the place just right”*

“Lord, my heart is not proud, nor my eyes arrogant.
Nor do I involve myself in great matters, or in things too difficult for me. I have certainly soothed and quieted my soul. Like a weaned child resting against his mother, **my** soul within me is like a weaned child.” Psalm 131:1-2

My ministry gift is that of a teacher. I am naturally and supernaturally motivated to research and study the Scripture with diligence, seeking the Holy Spirit for understanding of His words. But it has become clear to me that there will be occasions when I will encounter **“great matters”** and **“things too difficult for me”**. I’m learning that the posture of “the fear of the Lord” in these instances is to “quiet my soul” and “rest”. By God’s grace, I will continue to “come down where we ought to be” - to “bow”, and “bend”, and “turn” ‘til I come round right” and “find myself in the place just right”



Why should I feel discouraged,
why should the shadows come,
why should my heart be lonely,
and long for heav'n and home,
when Jesus is my portion?

My constant Friend is He.

His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.

REFRAIN:

I sing because I'm happy,
I sing because I'm free,
**For His eye is on the sparrow,
and I know He watches me.**

“Let not your heart be troubled,”
His tender word I hear,
and resting on His goodness,
I lose my doubts and fears.
Though by the path He leadeth,
but one step I may see.
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.

Whenever I am tempted,
whenever clouds arise,
when songs give place to sighing,
when hope within me dies,
I draw the closer to Him.
From care He sets me free.
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me;
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.

By Civilla D. Martin (1905)

The lyrics of this hymn are based on words which Jesus spoke to us:

“²⁹Are two sparrows not sold for an assarion²²? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰But even the hairs of your head are all counted. ³¹So do not fear. You are more valuable than a great number of sparrows.” Matthew 10:29-31

²² An assarion was a small Roman copper coin worth 1/16 of a denarius (A denarius equaled a day’s wage for a laborer.) In the New Testament, an assarion was used to represent how little monetary value something had.

This is how it appears in Luke's gospel:

“⁶Are five sparrows not sold for two assaria? And yet not one of them has gone unnoticed in the sight of God. ⁷But even the hairs of your head are all counted. Do not fear. You are more valuable than a great number of sparrows.”

Luke 12:6-7

The sparrow is considered insignificant. And notice that the sparrow does, in fact, “fall to the ground”. And that God is fully aware. Yet our Heavenly Father considers us valuable and cares for us.

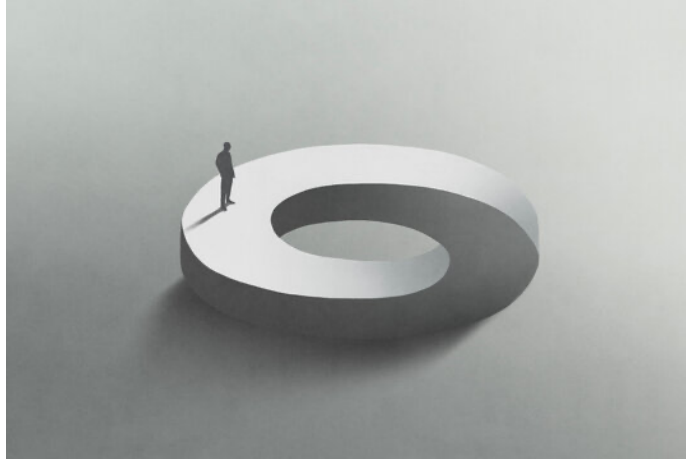
When Frances told me about the hymn “His Eye is on the Sparrow”, I immediately knew the Holy Spirit was wanting me to add something to what I am writing about in this article. And that is to make clear that the particular topic of this article finds its place in a larger context. To be more specific: **The theme of “the fear of the Lord” as *reverential awe and exceedingly dreadful fearfulness* must be understood in the larger context of God's love and care for us.** Any feelings of “miserableness” – that is, *any feelings* of insignificance, lowliness, weakness, and mortality – in no way negate **the reality of God's love and care for His creatures.** In fact – and this may be difficult to understand – *any reality* of our insignificance, lowliness, weakness, and mortality also does not negate the fact that God loves and cares for us. An essential aspect of “the fear of the Lord” is to truly embrace the fact that:

“My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,’ declares the Lord. ‘For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.” Isaiah 55:8-9

This is to say that we may struggle to feel God’s love and care for us in the midst of our *feelings* of insignificance only because we cannot always understand His thoughts and ways – they are not like our thoughts and ways – they are “higher”.²³

Essentially, this is what the writer of the hymn is saying: ***“Even if I don’t always understand His thoughts and ways, why should I feel ‘troubled’, ‘discouraged’, ‘lonely’, ‘tempted’ with ‘doubts’ and ‘fears’, and without hope? I know ‘my constant Friend’ – ‘For His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me’.***

²³ Again, for further thoughts on this perspective, see my articles, [“Mercy?”](#), [“Joy?”](#), and [“Hope?”](#).



A Paradox is a situation or statement that seems impossible or is difficult to understand because it contains two opposite facts or characteristics.²⁴

A Paradoxical God

Just and Justifier

There are things about God that are paradoxical. One of those things is His mercy. I have written more fully about the apparent paradox involved with God's mercy in my article entitled "[Mercy?](#)". But here, let's just look at the foundational scripture passage regarding the mercy of God:

"You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits wide. ¹⁸ You shall make **two cherubim** of gold, make them of hammered work **at the two ends of the mercy seat**. ¹⁹ Make one cherub at one end and one cherub at the other end; you shall make **the**

²⁴ *The Cambridge Dictionary*

cherubim of one piece with the mercy seat at its two ends.
²⁰ The cherubim shall have their wings spread upward, covering the mercy seat with their wings and **facing one another; the faces of the cherubim are to be turned toward the mercy seat.** ²¹ You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark, you shall put the testimony which I will give to you. ²² **There I will meet with you;** and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, **I will speak to you** about all that I will **give you in commandment** for the sons of Israel.”
Exodus 25:17-22

The Mercy Seat was placed on top of the Ark.²⁵ **Mercy** is a major aspect of the Divine Nature.²⁶ Because God has chosen to meet with us only in this prescribed place of Mercy²⁷, **it is absolutely necessary to have a revelation of His mercy in order to carry on a relationship with Him.**

The two Cherubim speak of two aspects of God’s nature: He is **holy**, and **merciful** – namely, **The Holy Judge** and **“The Father of Mercies”**.²⁸ Those who do not yet have a revelation of and relationship with Christ see these two characteristics as contradictory.

Psalm 85 is a prayer for God’s mercy. It is about sin and salvation – acknowledging sin and receiving mercy

²⁵ Exodus 25:17-22

²⁶ Exodus 34:5-7

²⁷ Exodus 25:22

²⁸ 2 Corinthians 1:3

from God. It is also a Messianic Psalm of Christ within whom **these two seemingly contradictory aspects of God's nature dwell together in unity and harmony** in the person and the work of Jesus. Verse 10 of the Psalm reads: **"Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."** Regarding the two cherubim which are described as being "one piece with the mercy seat at its two ends", we could say that their names are "Mercy" and "Truth" or "Righteousness" and "Peace". They are not contradictory. They are in unity and harmony, as it were, specifically because they are "made of one piece with the Mercy Seat".²⁹ They are "facing one another", and they see "eye to eye", as they look upon and agree upon the blood of the Lamb of God sprinkled on the Mercy Seat for the forgiveness of sin³⁰.

We could say that the names of these two cherubim are **"Just"** and **"Justifier"**. "Just" – "The Holy Judge" - and "Justifier" – "The Father of Mercies".

"God is a righteous judge, and a God who shows indignation every day." Psalm 7:11

This "One to whom we are accountable" "is a righteous Judge".

²⁹ Exodus 25:19

³⁰ Exodus 25:20

“²¹But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²²but it is the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction, ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption, which is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in God’s merciful restraint He let the sins previously committed go unpunished. ²⁶For the demonstration, that is, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be **just** and the **justifier** of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

Romans 3:21-26

This “righteous Judge” – this ““One to whom we are accountable” - has demonstrated His righteousness in such a way that He is both **Just** and the One who is the **Justifier** by the “gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” – paradoxically wonderful, indeed!

There are other passages in Scripture where we find apparent paradoxes concerning the nature and character of God:

The Lion is a Lamb

“¹³I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a son of man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before

Him. ¹⁴And to Him was given dominion, honor, and a kingdom, so that all the peoples, nations, and populations of all languages might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away. And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.” Daniel 7:13-14

According to Daniel’s vision, the people of God expected the Messiah to fit the description above. Along with “the Son of Man”, He was also called “**the Lion of Judah**”.

“⁵And one of the elders said to me, ‘Stop weeping; behold, **the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah**, the Root of David, has overcome so as to be able to open the scroll and its seven seals.’ ⁶And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders **a Lamb standing, as if slaughtered**, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷And He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. ⁸When He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are You to take the scroll and to break its seals. For You were slaughtered, and You purchased people for God with Your blood from every tribe, language, people, and nation.’” Revelation 5:5-9

In John’s vision, the Messiah was introduced as “**the Lion** that is from the tribe of Judah”. But when John

turned and looked, he saw “**a Lamb** standing, as if slaughtered”. The Lion of Judah is “the Lamb of God”³¹.

³¹ John 1:29



“The One to Whom We are Accountable”

“Nothing in all creation is hidden from God.
Everything is naked and exposed before His eyes,
and He is **the One to whom we are accountable.**”

Hebrews 4:13³²

The meaning here is that each one of us will have to give an account to God on the Day of Judgment.³³ But who is this “One”. What is our perception of Him? In recent generations, has the Church given us a proper view of this “One to whom we are accountable”?

³² *New Living Translation*. Cf. Hebrews 4:13 *International Standard Version*, NASB 1977 and 1995, and KJV.

³³ Matthew 12:36, Romans 14:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Cf. 18:23; Luke 16:2

God created us “in His image and likeness”.³⁴ The aspects we have received of God’s nature and character are spirituality, rationality, morality, and volition. We have been created to be relational beings, as well - capable of entering into covenant. And we are appointed to represent on this earth the rule and reign of our Creator. As we know, our fall into the state of sin and death has tarnished the reflection of God’s image and likeness in human beings, yet these aspects of God remain in fallen humanity, and hopefully more so in those who “put on the new man, which in *the likeness of God* has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”³⁵

In a manner of speaking, God goes far beyond these aspects of His “image and likeness”. As Creator, He is **the Uncreated One** and is therefore a **Unique Order of Being**. It seems to me that in modern Christianity, there has been an emphasis on our being created “in His image and likeness”. **However, the reality is that as the Uncreated One, God is completely distinct from and altogether “Other” than humanity.** In his writings, T. Austin-Sparks would refer to God’s “otherness”, meaning that God is of a **Different Order of Being altogether**, not merely greater than human beings along the same scale.³⁶ We are “created in His image and

³⁴ Genesis 1:26-28

³⁵ Ephesians 4:24

³⁶ “God’s Ways are Different from Our Ways”, <https://bibleportal.com/sermon/T-Austin-Sparks/god-s-ways-are-different-from-our-ways>

likeness”, yet God is distinctly and uniquely different from us. **For the human mind, this, indeed, is a paradox.**

Unlike Isaiah³⁷, the few human beings who have had a “face to face” encounter with God cannot communicate what they saw.³⁸ However, even after seeing the Lord, Isaiah said “His understanding is unsearchable”³⁹ - His thoughts and ways are higher than ours.⁴⁰ We find this same assessment in the Book of Job:

“Who does great and unsearchable things, wonders without number.” Job 5:9

“⁷Can you discover the depths of God? Can you discover the limits of the Almighty? ⁸They are as high as the heavens; what can you do? Deeper than Sheol; what can you know? ⁹Its measurement is longer than the earth and broader than the sea.” Job 11:7-9

“Behold, God is exalted, and we do not know Him. The number of His years is unsearchable.” Job 36:26

The apostle, Paul, echoes this assessment in the New Testament:

“Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments

³⁷ Isaiah 6:1-5

³⁸ For further reading on this phenomenon, I suggest my eBook, [“Encountering God”](#).

³⁹ Isaiah 40:28

⁴⁰ Isaiah 55:8-9

and unfathomable His ways! Romans 11:33

The psalmist makes the case that God knows more about ourselves than we do, concluding, “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is too high; I cannot comprehend it.”:

“¹Lord, You have searched me and known me. ²You know when I sit down and when I get up. You understand my thought from far away. ³You scrutinize my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. ⁴Even before there is a word on my tongue, behold, Lord, You know it all. ⁵You have encircled me behind and in front and placed Your hand upon me. ⁶Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is too high; I cannot comprehend it.”

Psalm 139:1-6

God knows each of us so very thoroughly. **But how much do we know about this “One to whom we are accountable”?**

God is Spirit

There are aspects of God which make Him so very different from ourselves. As human beings, we have been created with a spirit within our fleshly bodies. Those of us who have been regenerated have received the Holy Spirit into our fleshly bodies as well. The Man, Jesus of Nazareth, was God incarnate – God in a fleshly

body. But as Jesus Himself said, “God is Spirit”⁴¹ – no fleshly body, just Spirit.

There are a multitude of scripture passages stating how God loves the fleshly bodies He created. And He made provision for the life of the flesh: “Then God said, ‘Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you.’”⁴² He even sent His Son in a fleshly body to be crucified, buried, and resurrected, so that by faith in that work of Christ, our fleshly bodies could be raised to eternal life – not as disembodied spirits, but as glorified bodies.⁴³

Yet we must look objectively at how God paradoxically allows fleshly bodies to suffer and eventually die. Back in the Garden, God declared to humanity, “... until you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” This is a sober reminder of the innate weakness and mortality of our fleshly bodies. In my words: Because of Christ’s provision of resurrected, glorified, eternal bodies, human flesh seems to be somewhat “disposable” to God. I know that sounds incongruous. But God considered it permissible to provide for us the sacrificial death of “the Lamb of God” – specifically, the

⁴¹ John 4:24

⁴² Genesis 1:29

⁴³ See Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 15:35-54.

death of the body of Jesus of Nazareth - before its glorious resurrection.

Another example we must consider objectively is what God allowed Satan to do⁴⁴ in the life of Job. There was the suffering inflicted on Job's flesh.⁴⁵ But there was also the destruction of Job's various servants, as well as Job's first set of children⁴⁶ - seven sons and three daughters.⁴⁷

Why God allows such suffering and death of human flesh may warrant extended theological discussion. But I believe the apostle Paul gave us the "bottom line": "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable."⁴⁸ By faith, we believe that to be true. Nevertheless, the suffering and death of the fleshly body is something antithetical to the human perspective.

God is Eternal

"Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible,
the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."

1 Timothy 1:17

⁴⁴ Job 1:12, 2:6

⁴⁵ Job 2:7

⁴⁶ Cf. Job 42:13-17

⁴⁷ Job 1:13-21

⁴⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:50

We who “have the Son have the life”⁴⁹. That is eternal life – “knowing the one true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent”.⁵⁰ And we have spirits which have been made alive to God, but we are still in a body of flesh which “is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness”.⁵¹ Because of this, “now **we see in a mirror dimly**, but then face to face; now I **know in part**, but then I will know fully, just as I also have been fully known.”⁵²

“He has made everything beautiful *and* appropriate in its time. He has also planted **eternity** [a sense of divine purpose] in the human heart [a mysterious longing which nothing under the sun can satisfy, except God] – **yet man cannot find out (comprehend, grasp) what God has done** (His overall plan) from the beginning to the end.”

Ecclesiastes 3:11 AMP

The word we want to focus on is “**eternity**”. The Hebrew word is *haolam*.⁵³ As the Amplified Bible points out, the word means “[a sense of divine purpose] - [a mysterious longing which nothing under the sun can satisfy, except God]”. That is what God set in human hearts. It is something of Himself, in that He Himself is “eternal”. (Deuteronomy 33:27) However, although “man has eternity set in his heart”, the verse states that **man is**

⁴⁹ 1 John 5:12

⁵⁰ John 17:3

⁵¹ Romans 8:12

⁵² 1 Corinthians 13:12

⁵³ Strong’s # H5769

incapable of fully understanding that particular aspect of God Himself, His works, and His ways.

For example, how much are we capable of understanding about His “administration of the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth in Him.”?⁵⁴

Again, how much do we know about this “One to whom we are accountable”?

Yet isn't it wonderful to have a God who is beyond our understanding? Our God is so much more than the gods of the Greek Pantheon with their human traits, weaknesses, and frailties. Our God is so much more than the mythical “deities” of pagan religions and impersonal “forces” of pagan philosophies. The “paradoxical” aspects of our God are actually wonderful in the literal sense of the word – that is, **full of wonder and awe.**

“Things Too Wonderful for Me”

There is much about God which we do not see. Human beings who have had “face to face” encounters with God cannot communicate what they have seen.

⁵⁴ Ephesians 1:10 *Legacy Standard Bible*

Job

As was mentioned earlier, one of Job's responses to the Lord was:

"Therefore, I have declared that which I did not understand, **things too wonderful for me, which I do not know.**"⁵⁵

Furthermore, we learn that when Job "heard of God by the hearing of the ear", he (and his three friends) thought they knew all about God Himself, His works, and His ways. But when Job's "eye saw God", he came to the realization that God Himself, His works, and His ways were "**things too wonderful for me**" – "**things which I do not know**" – "**things I do not understand**". Allow me to add to this: **Job doesn't try to explain what it is he saw. He had a "face to face" encounter with God, and "saw" God in some sense, but he could not communicate what he saw.**

Paul

"¹... I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. ²I know a man in Christ, who fourteen years ago — whether in the body **I do not know**, or out of the body **I do not know**, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven. ³And I know how such a man - whether in the body or apart from the body **I do not know**, God knows — ⁴was caught up into Paradise and **heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.**"

2 Corinthians 12:1-4

⁵⁵ Job 42:3

Here, Paul is relating an encounter he had with God “in the third heaven” – “Paradise” – the place where God dwells.⁵⁶ In relating the experience, he repeats three times **“I do not know.”** He did not understand exactly what he was experiencing. And he concludes by saying he **“heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak”**. He could not know and understand, nor communicate what he saw and heard in this encounter with God.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ “The word *heavens* can be used to refer to different realms. *Heavens* can refer to the sky and the earth’s atmosphere, making it the “first heaven” (Deuteronomy 11:11; Psalm 104:12; Isaiah 55:10). It can also refer to outer space, where the stars and planets are—the “second heaven” (Psalm 8:3; Isaiah 13:10). And it can refer to God’s dwelling place, which is beyond the other “heavens,” a place known as the “third heaven” (Psalm 33:13–14; Isaiah 66:1; Matthew 6:9; Hebrews 7:26; Revelation 11:19). When Paul says that he went to the third heaven, he means that he went to the place where God dwells.” Got Questions.

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Paul-third-heaven.html>

⁵⁷ Thomas Aquinas: The following is contained in *Anatomy of Transcendence: Mental Excess and Rapture in the Thought and Life of Thomas Aquinas*, chapter entitled: “*Iconographic Incompleteness and Golden Straw*”, written by Peter A. Kwasniewski (Emmaus Academic, 2025): According to a letter sent to his friend, Brother Reginald of Piperno (c.1230–c.1290), a few months before his death in 1273, Thomas Aquinas made the decision to give up writing his *Summa Theologica*. He also intimated in the letter that he had discarded all of his writing tools, as he would no longer be writing. When Piperno twice asked Aquinas why, twice his response was, “*I cannot do any more. Everything I have written seems to me as straw in comparison with what I have seen*”. Aquinas was referring to a mystical experience he had in the chapel of Saint Nicholas at the Dominican convent in Naples. All the details of this “resignation” by Thomas Aquinas can be found here: Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, Volume 1: The Person and His Work, Translated by Dr. Robert Royal, Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996, p. 289. Albeit Thomas Aquinas is not a biblical character like Job, nor an apostle like Paul writing canonized scripture, he nevertheless had the same inability to communicate his experience of his encounter with God.

It is significant that an aspect common to the experiences of both Job and Paul these three men was that **they were not able to communicate in human language what they saw in the spirit.** Job is the oldest book in the Bible. In it, Job and his three friends do much talking about God. And near the end of the book God Himself reveals much about Himself. But when Job saw God in the spirit, he offered no explanation of what he saw. The apostle Paul wrote most of the epistles contained in the New Testament. But when he “returned from the third heaven” (“Paradise”), he could not communicate what he saw there. These men had much to say about God. Yet, **they could say nothing by way of explanation in human language about their mystical encounters with God.** It seems that human thoughts and words are inadequate to describe what they saw in the spiritual realm.

Embracing the facts that God is Spirit and Eternal, and that there are things about Him that are “too wonderful” for us to know and understand, belongs to the very nature of **“the fear of the Lord”**.

“For now, we see in a mirror dimly but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, just as I also have been fully known.” 1 Corinthians 13:12

“The End of the Matter...”

Two final thoughts on “the fear of the Lord”:

“In Him we live and move and have our being”,⁵⁸ but we will not be able to understand all that transpires in our life in the Lord. The “fear of the Lord” requires **meekness**⁵⁹ to accept that which comes from God during this life – even without fully understanding His ways. Puritan theologian, Richard Baxter, is quoted as saying: *“This life was not intended to be the place of our perfection, but the preparation for it.”*⁶⁰

And as Solomon summarized his writing of Ecclesiastes:

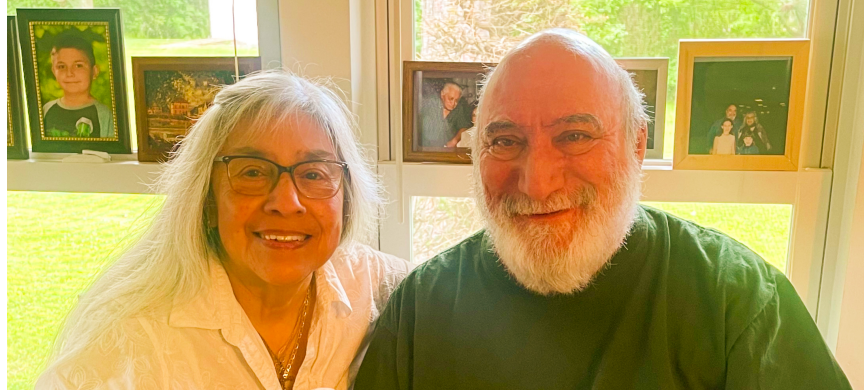
“¹³**The end of the matter**, all that has been heard: **fear God** and keep His commandments, because this is the end of the matter for all mankind. ¹⁴For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.” Ecclesiastes 12:13 (Legacy Bible)

⁵⁸ Acts 17:28 NKJV

⁵⁹ For further reading on “meekness”, see my articles [“Treasures of Darkness”](#) and [“The Weakness of God”](#).

⁶⁰ For further thoughts on this perspective, see my articles, [“Mercy?”](#), [“Joy?”](#), and [“Hope?”](#).

Bill & Frances Furioso
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Bill Furioso and his wife, Frances, have been married for more than 40 years, and have two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Bill and Frances served as missionaries in South Africa for thirteen years making disciples, establishing churches, and training church leaders. Over a span of 40 years, they also traveled extensively in an itinerant Bible teaching ministry which took them to hundreds of gatherings on four continents ministering in churches, conferences, spiritual formation seminars, and home gatherings. They have shepherded several churches, disciplined many to Christ, and mentored church leaders in the USA and abroad.

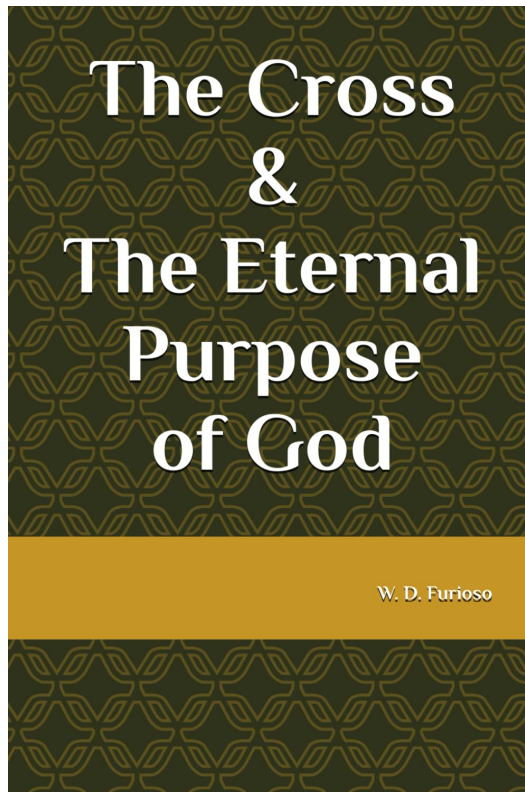
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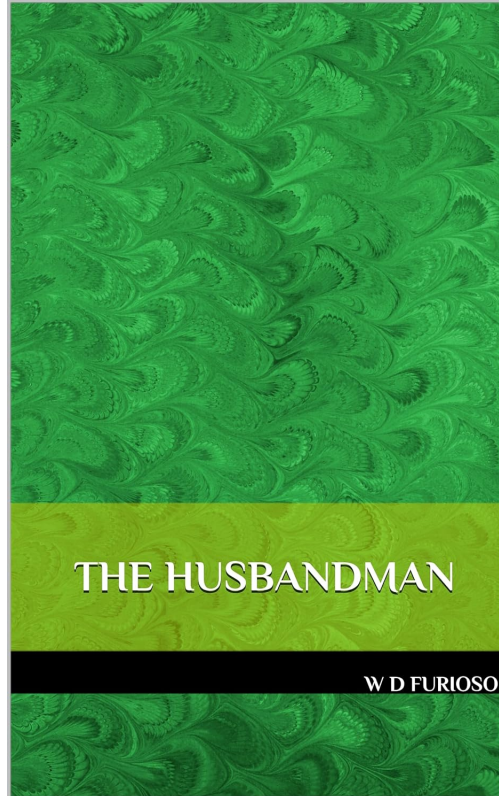
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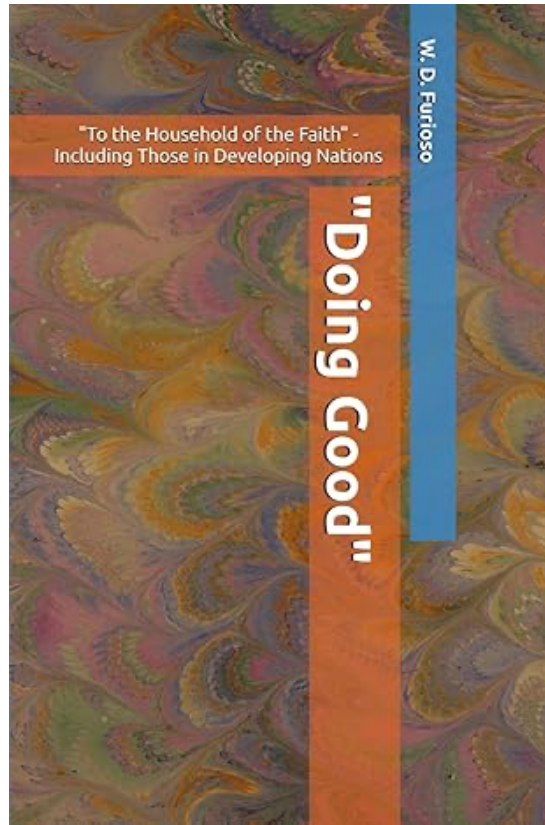
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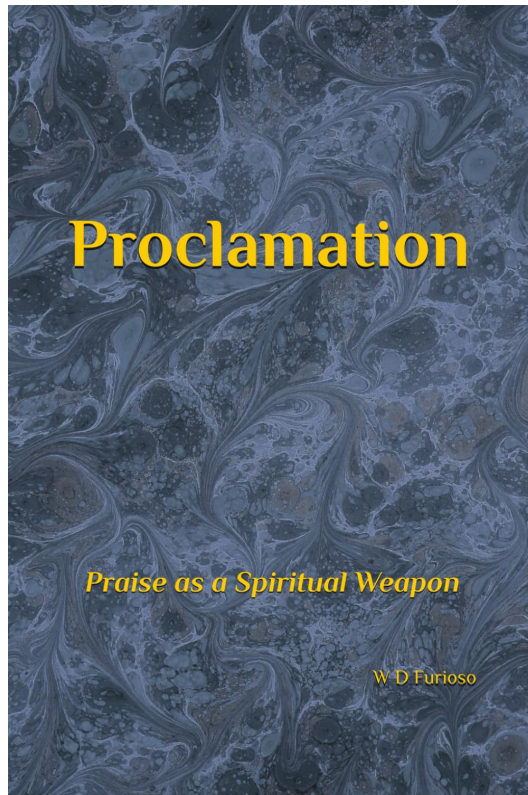
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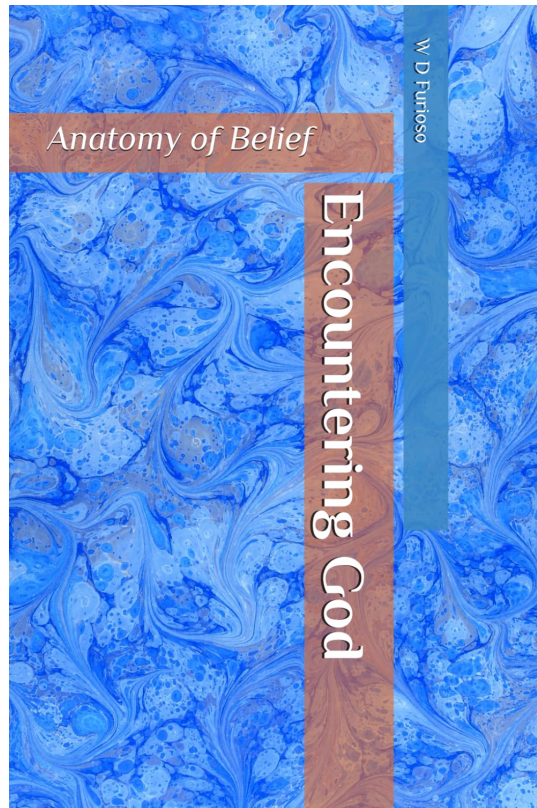
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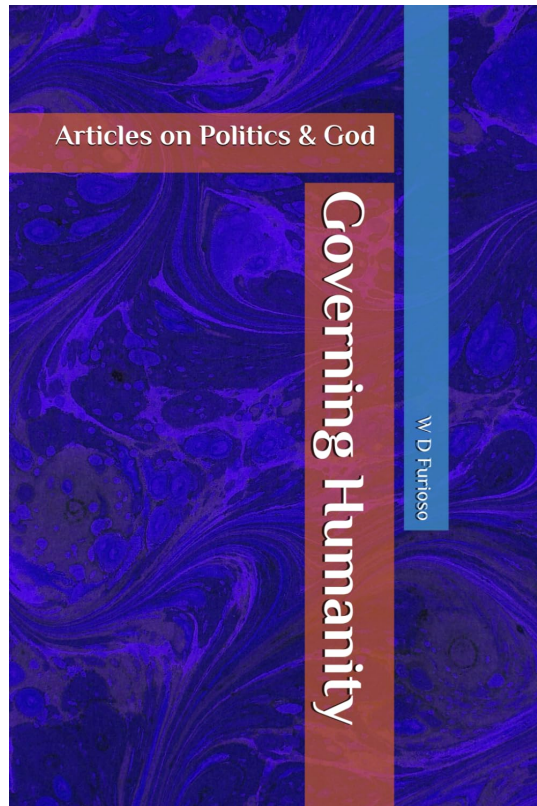
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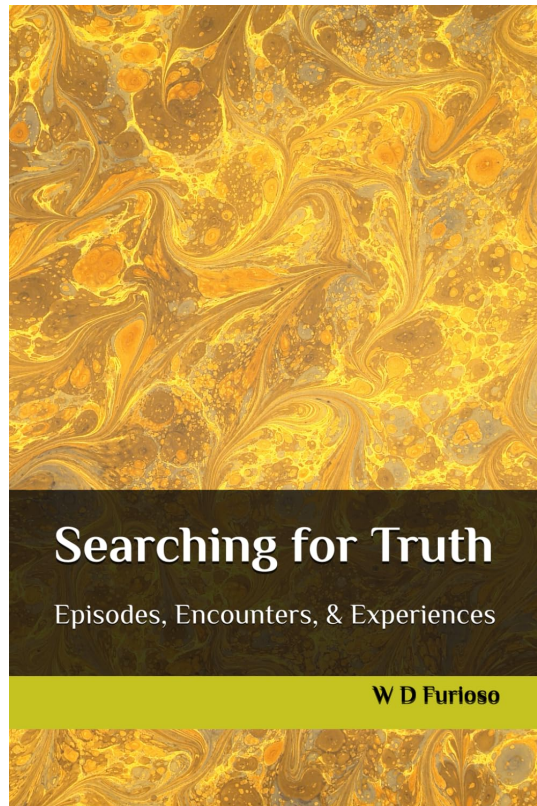
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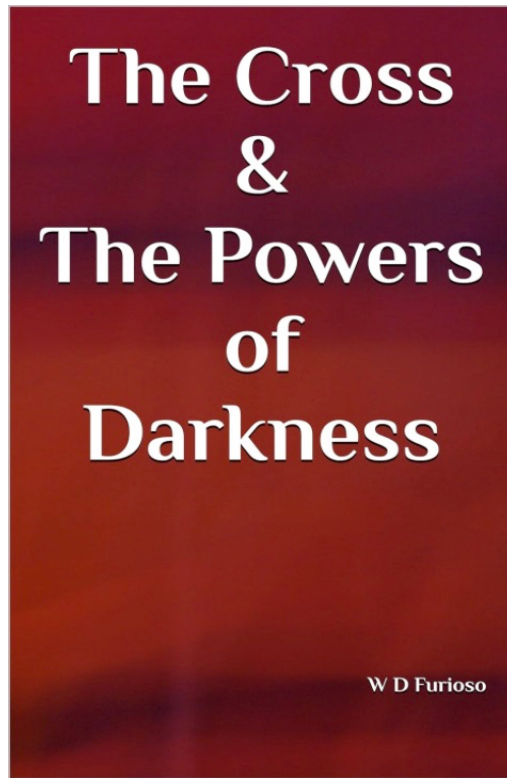
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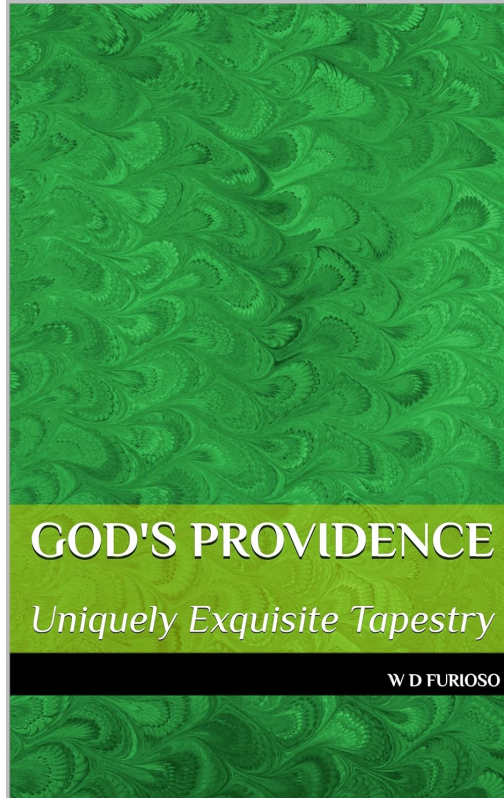
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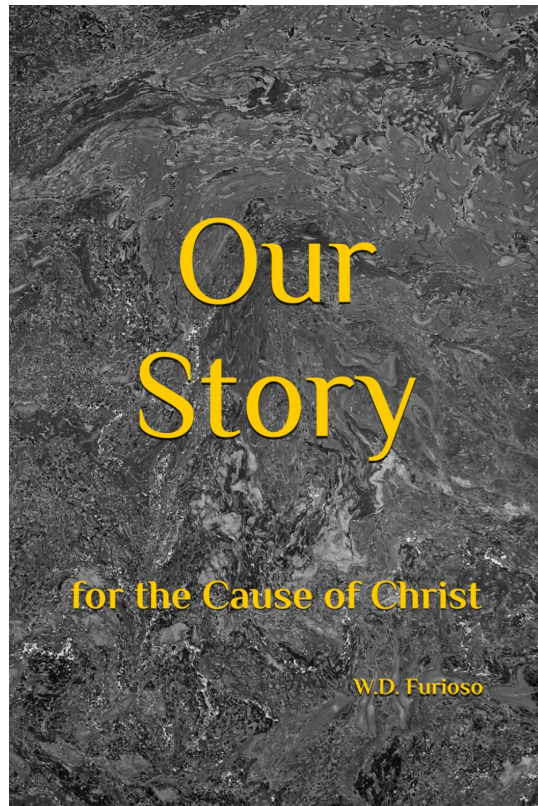
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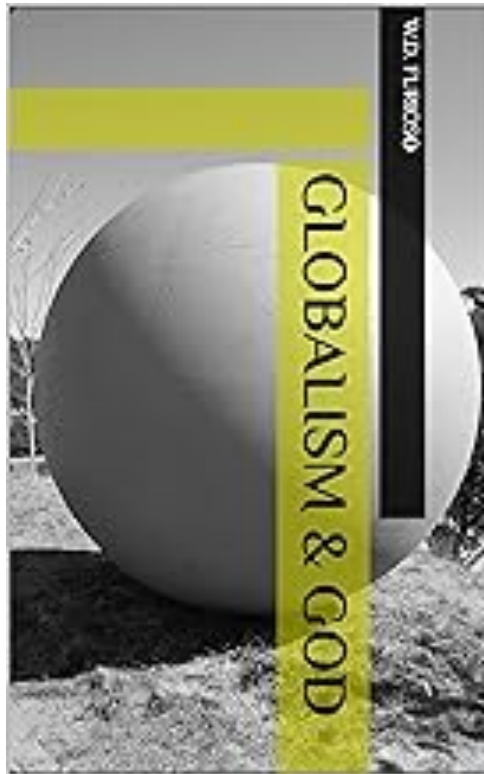
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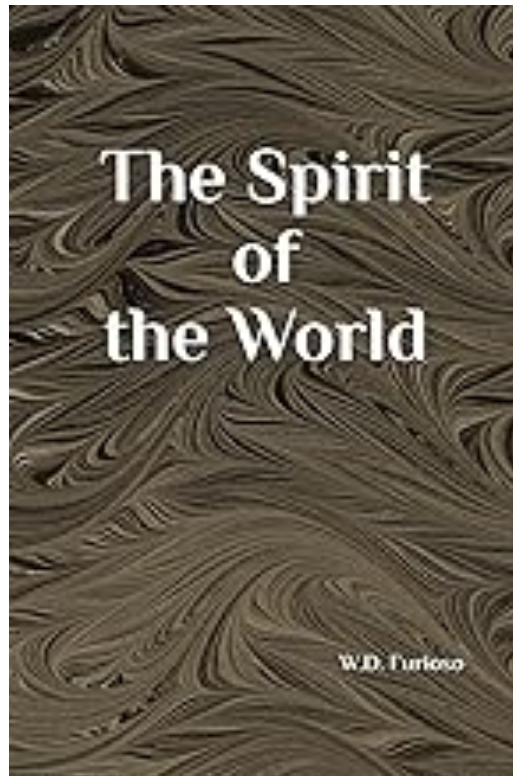
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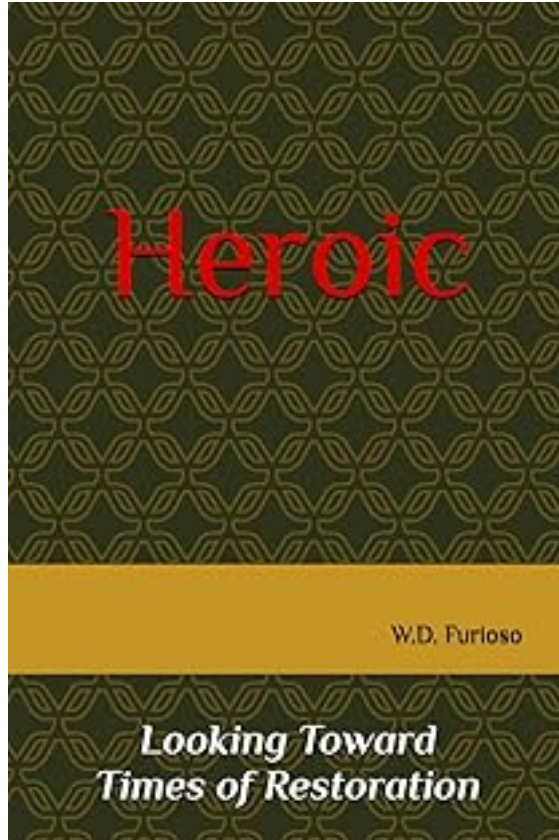
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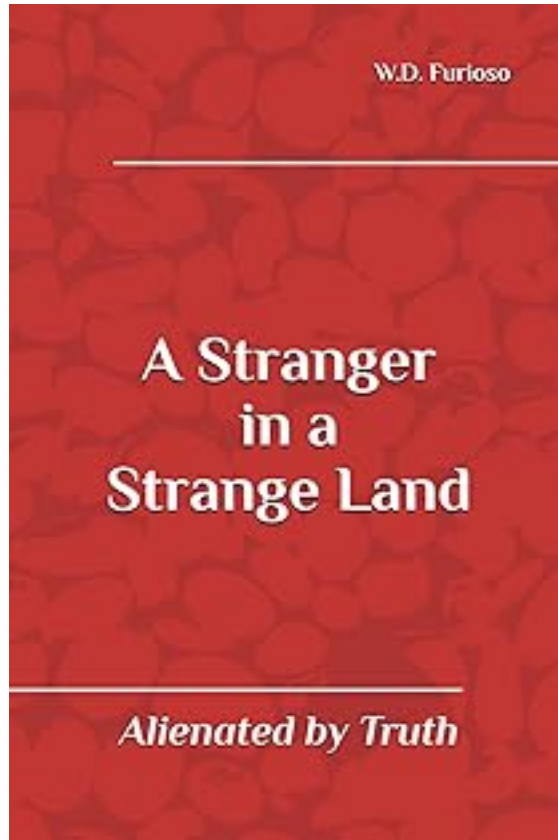
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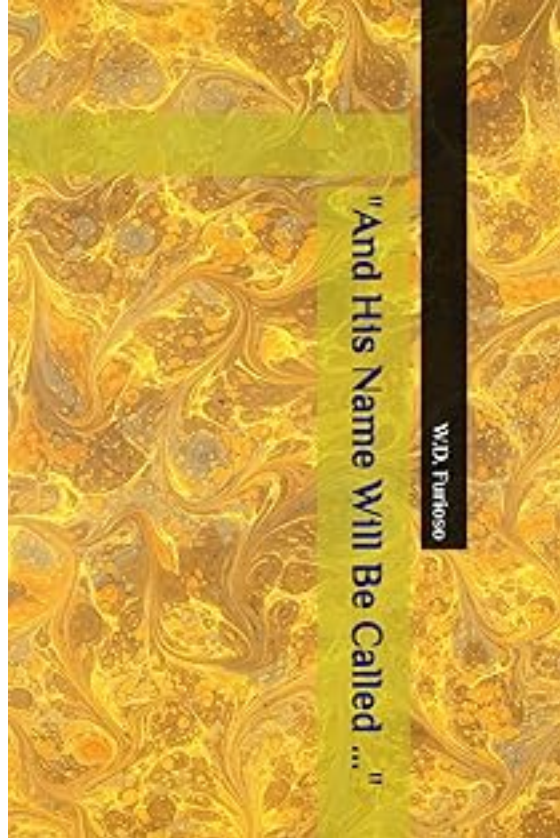
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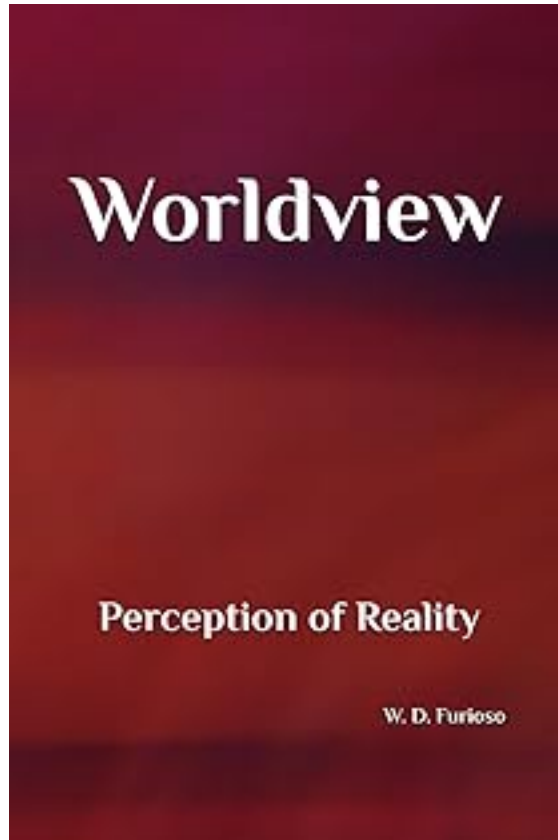
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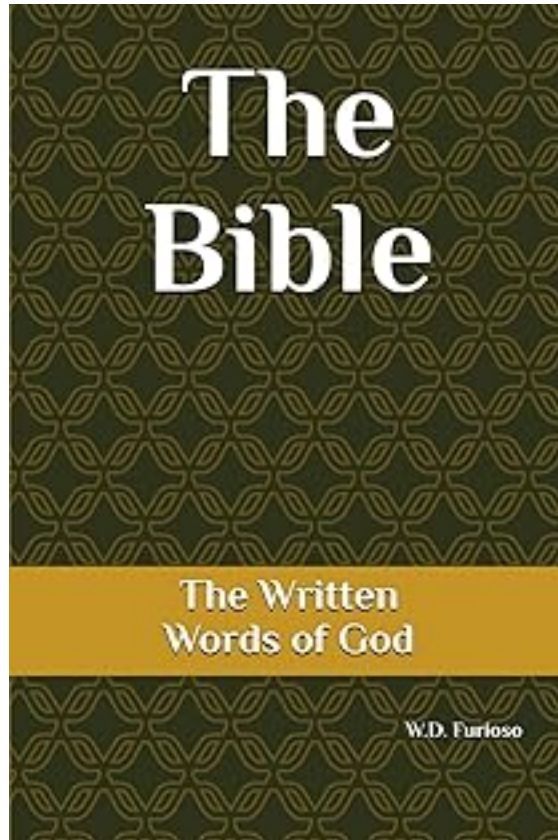
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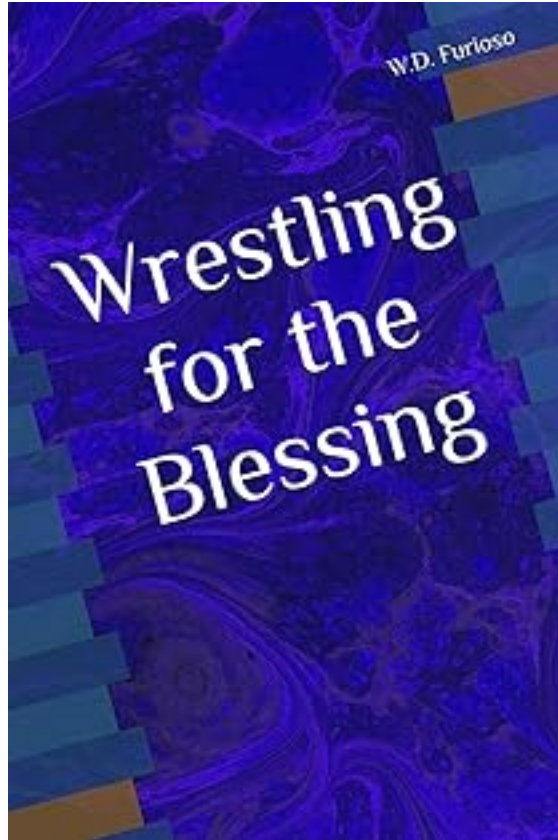
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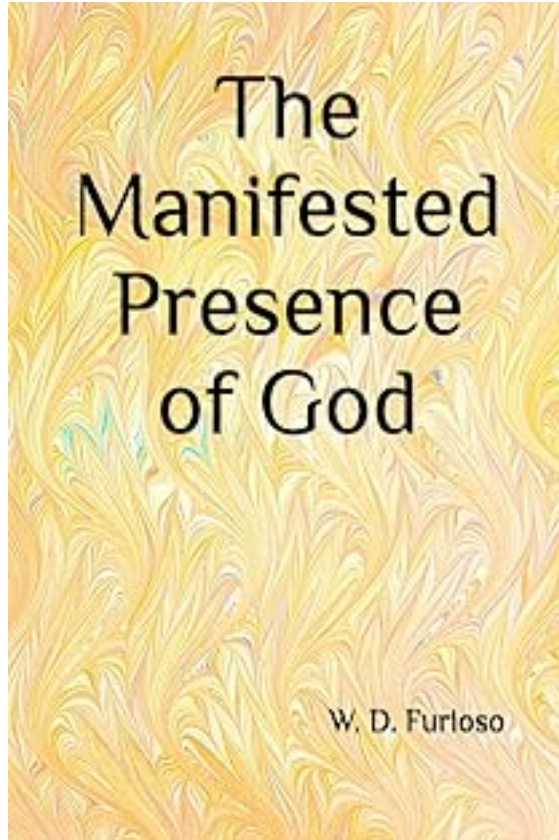
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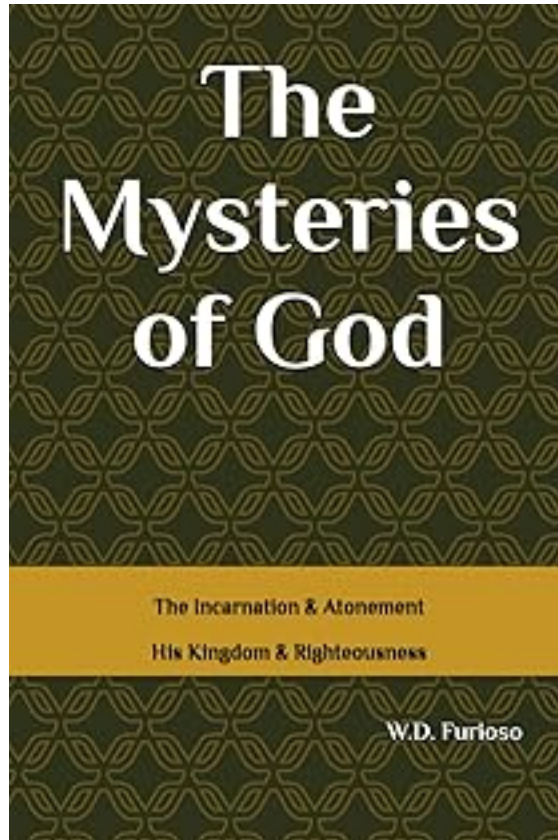
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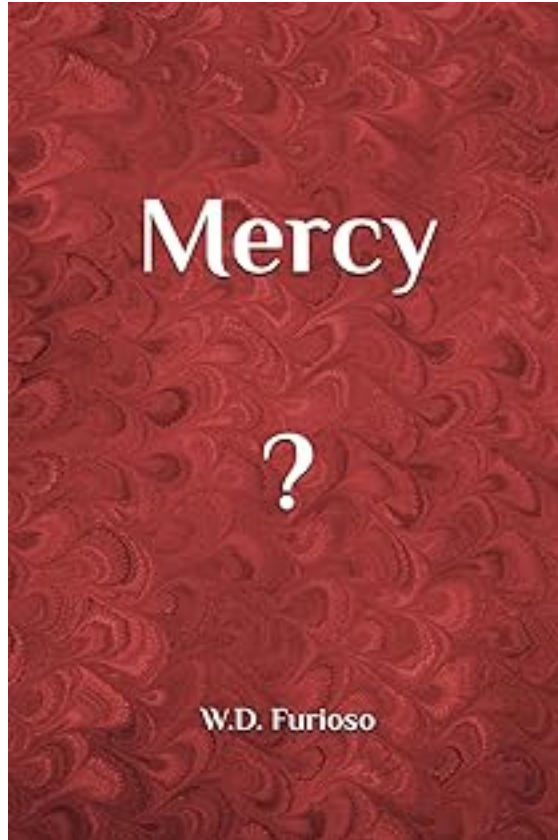
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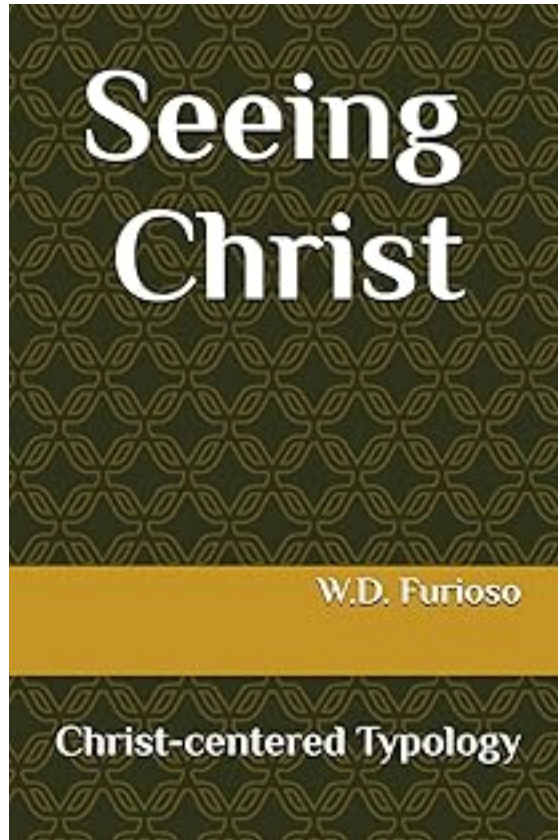
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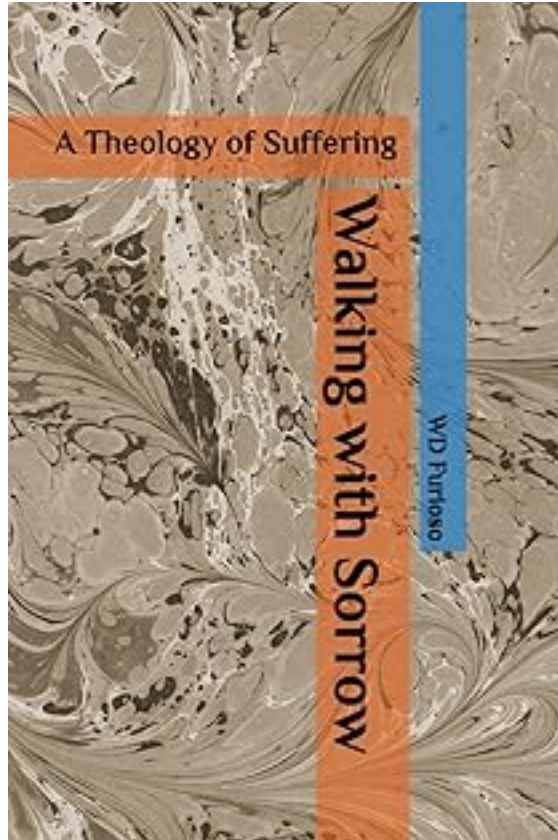
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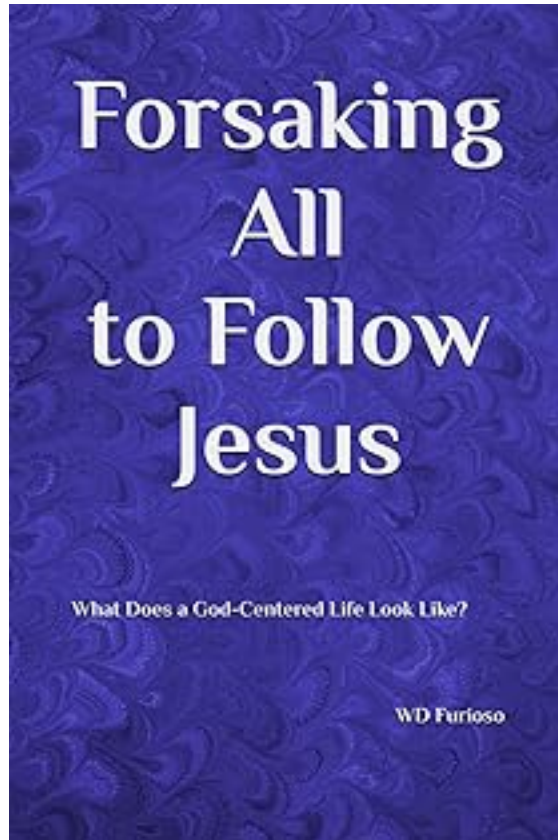
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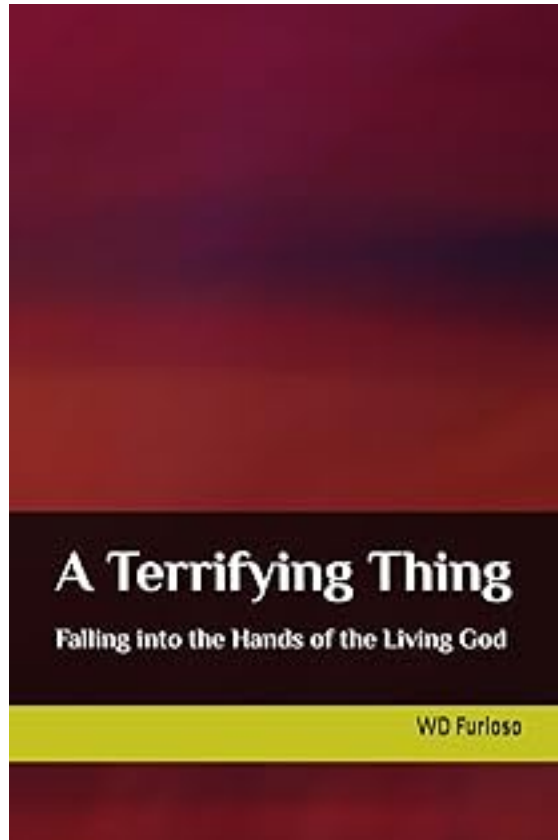
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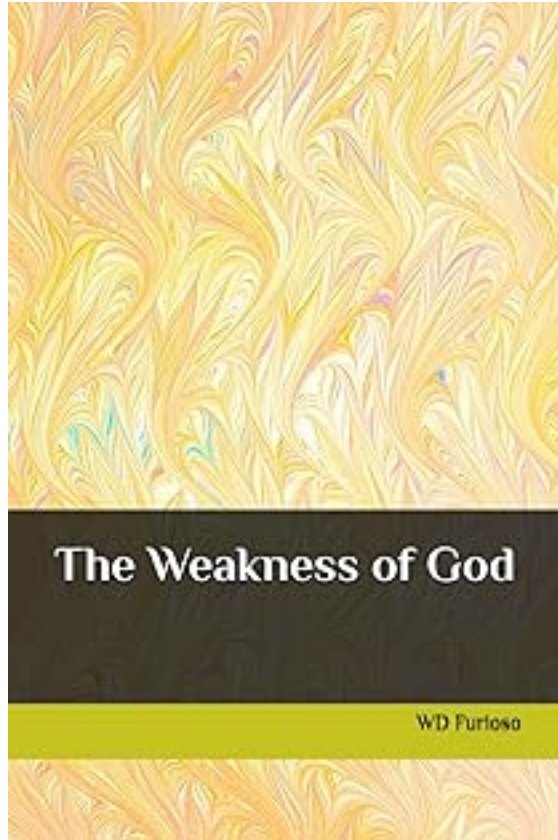
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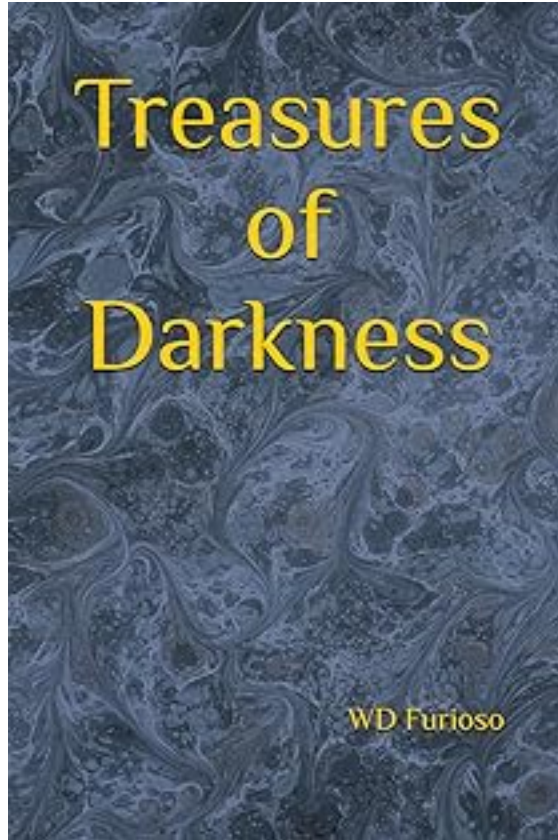
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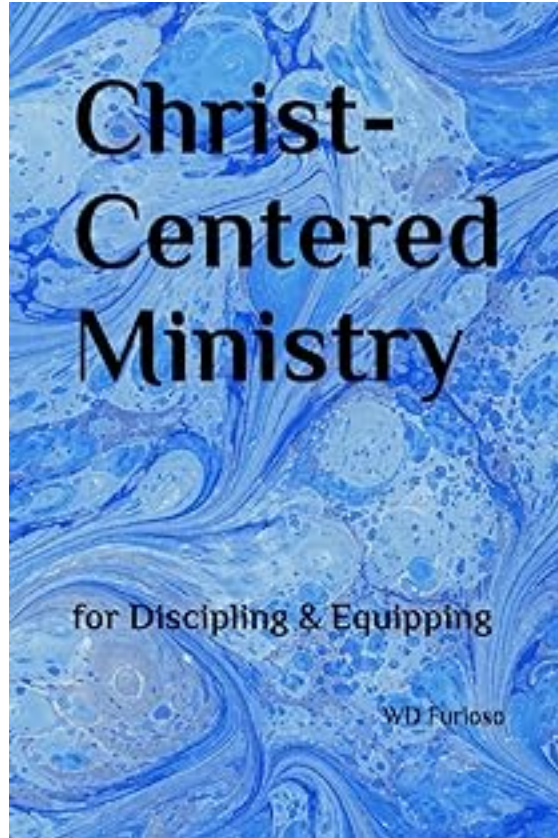
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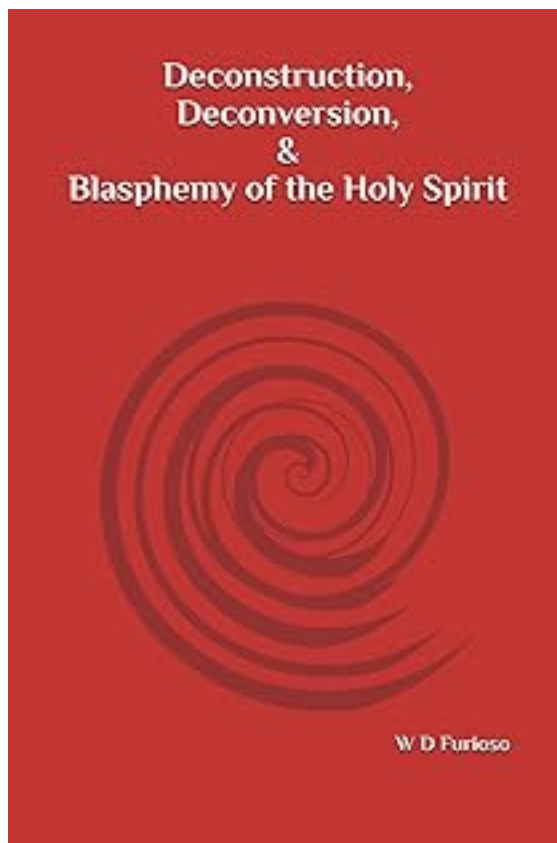
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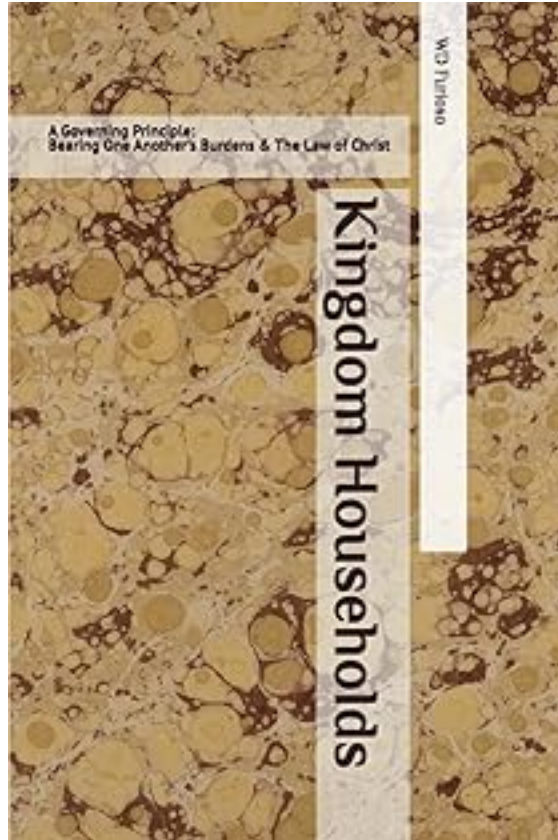
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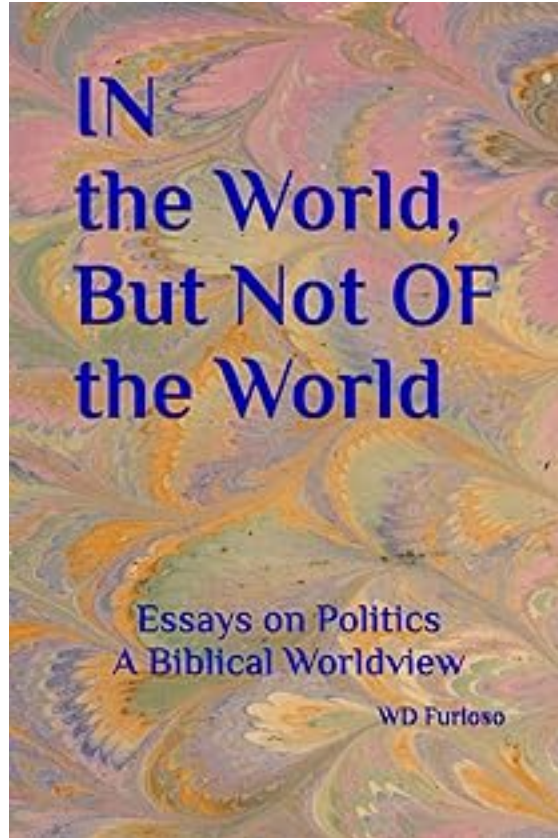
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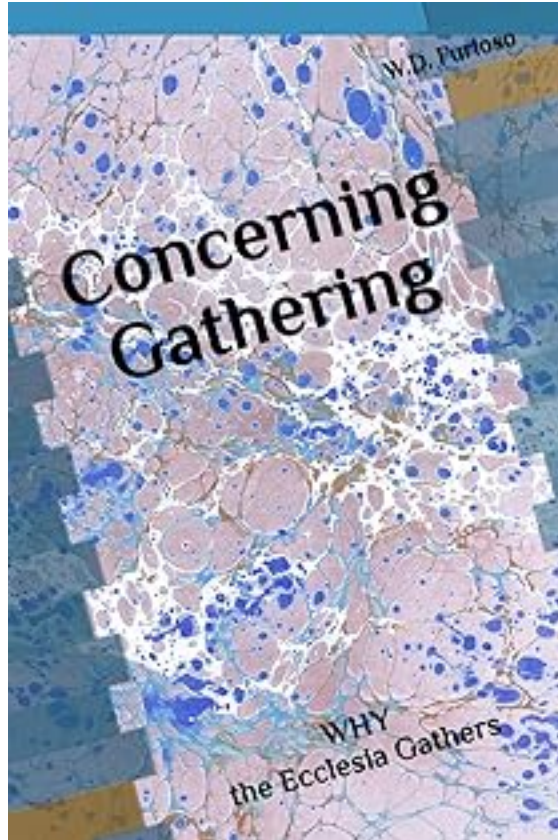
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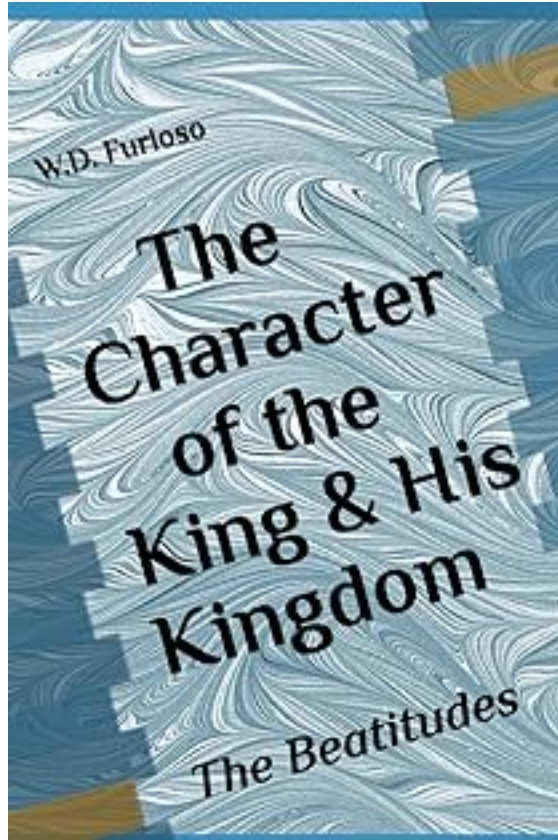
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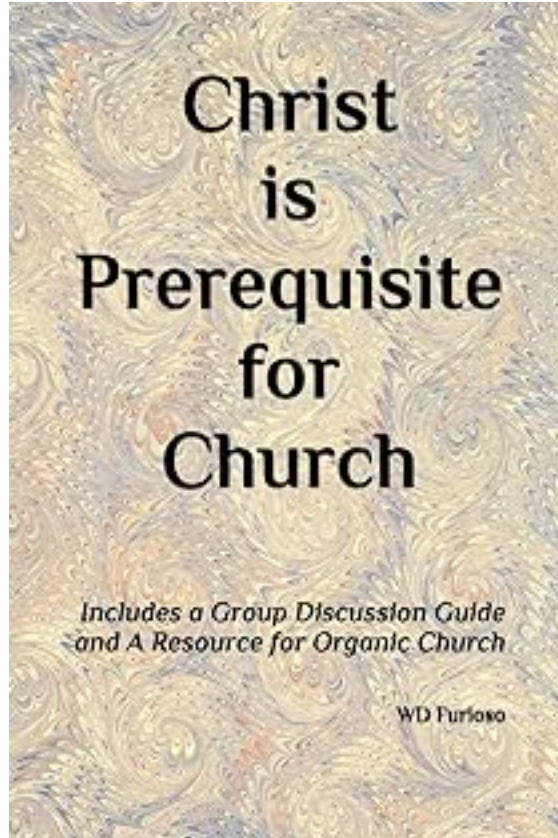
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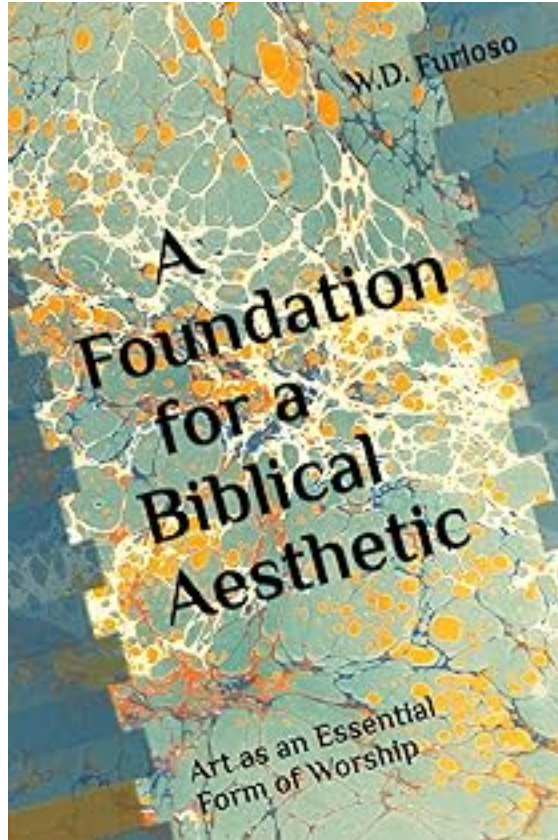
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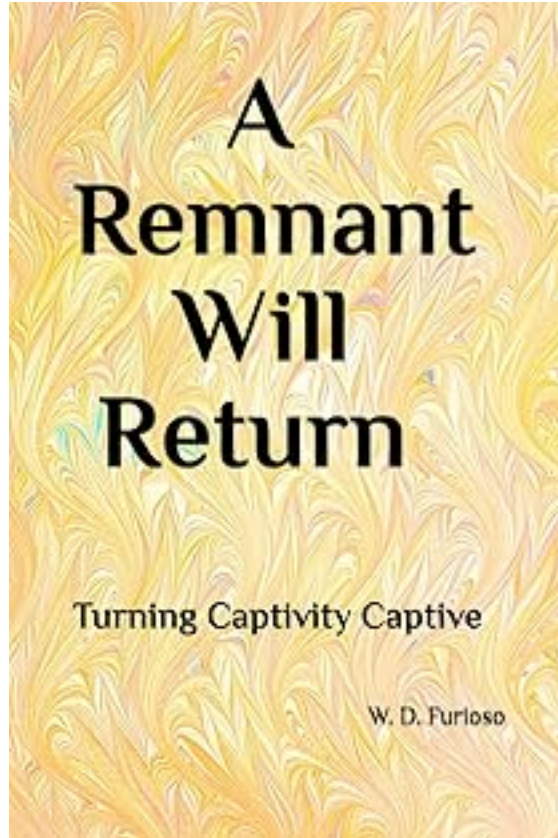
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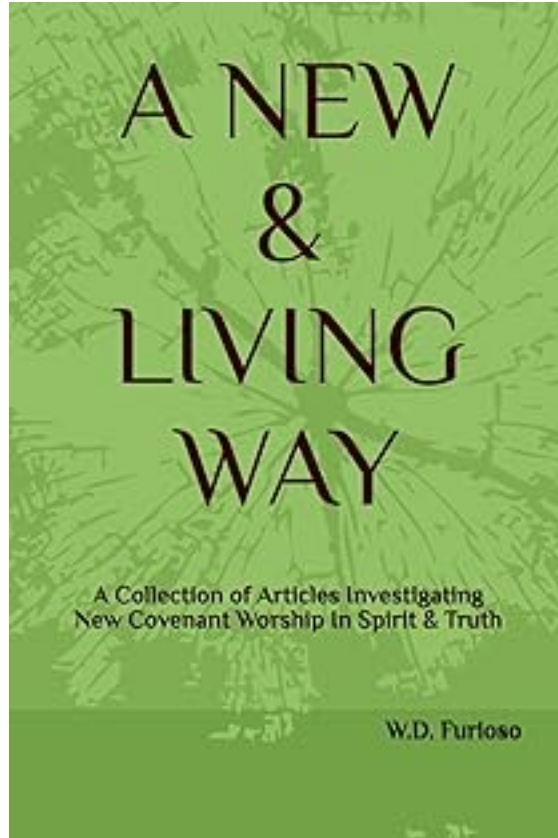
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