

Deal Pentecostal Church Training School

Reference Material

Study 2 The Nature of God

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Deal Pentecostal Church 69 Mill Hill, Deal, Kent. CT14 9EW

Tel: 01304 380131 - www.dealpentecostal.co.uk

Email: church@dealpentecostal.co.uk

The Nature of God

Petts, D., *You'd Better Believe It*, Mattersey, Mattersey Hall, 1999. (*Ch.2 The Nature of God pp 10-16*)

Although the leaders of the various world religions have attempted in their own way to show their followers what God is like, their efforts have, of necessity, failed. It is quite impossible for any human being to understand the nature of God, apart from what God in his mercy has chosen to reveal to us. As Christians we believe that God reveals himself to us in a variety of ways. We know something about him from the beauty of the world around us, which leaves us with no excuse for doubting his existence (Romans 1:19-21). But it is in the person of his Son and through the revelation of his word that we discover what God is truly like, and as we examine the word of God we find that although there is only *one* true God, he is, nevertheless, revealed in *three* persons.

It is, of course, extremely difficult for our minds to understand how God can be 'one being in three persons', but we do well to remember that our limited, human minds can never expect to understand the infinite. We should content ourselves to see that this is what he has revealed himself to be in holy scripture, and remember that a god who is capable of being fully understood by our little minds could hardly be God at all! What then does the Bible teach us about God?

God is One

Both Old and New Testaments emphatically declare that there is only one God:

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one (Deut.6:4).

See now that I am he. There is no god besides me (Deut.32:39).

You alone are God (Psalm 86:10).

I am the first and I am the last. Apart from me there is no god (Is.44:6).

I am the Lord and there is no other; apart from me there is no god (Is.45:5-6). There is no God but one... There is but one God, the father from whom all things come (1 Corinthians 8:4, 6).

It is important to realise, however, that the main emphasis of *all* these verses is to contrast the God of Israel with the idol gods of the nations. What is being taught is not so much that the Lord is one person, as the fact that he is the *only* true God. He is the *one* true and living God (as distinct from the *many* false and lifeless idols). However, as the New Testament makes clear, the one true and living God has revealed himself to us in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

God is Three

Those who have not fully understood what Christians believe in this respect have claimed that we believe in three gods. (This was in fact one of Mohammed's main criticisms of Christianity, though he mistakenly believed that Christians taught that the virgin Mary was one of the Trinity!) The Bible, however, does not teach that there are three gods, but that there is *one* God revealed in *three* persons.

There are many verses in the New Testament that show us that there are three distinct persons each of whom is God:

*He saw the **Spirit of God** (the Holy Spirit) descending like a dove, and lighting upon **him** (Jesus, God the Son), and a **voice from heaven** (God the Father's) said, *This is my Son* (Matt.3:16-17).*

*I (God the Son) will ask the **Father** (God the Father) and he will give you **another counsellor** (God the Holy Spirit) (John 14:16). Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the **Father** and of the **Son**, and of the **Holy Spirit** (Matthew 28:19).*

*Exalted to the right hand of God, **he** (Jesus, God the Son) has received from **the Father** the promised **Holy Spirit** (Acts 2:33).*

God (the Father) *anointed* **Jesus of Nazareth** (God the Son) *with the Holy Spirit* (Acts 10:38).

Christ (God the Son), *who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God* (the Father) (Hebrews 9:14).

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ (God the Son), *and the love of God* (the Father), *and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all* (2 Corinthians 13:14).

We see from these verses that the Son and the Spirit are *distinct from* and yet mentioned *along with* the Father. They are clearly all separate persons, but are they all God? Before we can answer this adequately, we must answer the question, *What is God like?*

What is God like?

The Bible tells us a great deal about God and it is clear that there are certain attributes (or qualities) which are given to God alone. No one else possesses these qualities. If God did not have them, he would not be God. For anyone else to have them would mean that they too were God! The qualities are sometimes referred to as *attributes of deity*, and although there are others, for the purpose of our discussion we shall mention just five.

The Bible shows us that God is:

Creator	Genesis 1:1
Omnipotent	Matthew 19:26, Job 42:2
Omnipresent	Jeremiah 23:24
Omniscient	1 John 3:20
Eternal	Psalms 90:2

In other words, God made everything, can do anything, is everywhere, knows everything, always has been and always will be!

As we have already said, *anyone* who possesses these attributes must be God, for God alone possesses them. But

what we must now ask ourselves is, *Does Jesus possess these attributes? Is **he** God? Does the Holy Spirit possess these attributes? Is **he** God?* And if the Bible answers *yes* to these questions, we will have shown that, although there is only one God, he is nevertheless revealed in three persons — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There are of course those who deny this doctrine. The 'Jehovah's Witnesses' for example tell us that Jesus is not God and that the Holy Spirit, although divine, is not a person. In the remainder of this chapter we shall seek to answer these objections and to demonstrate that the Holy Spirit is a divine person and that Jesus is not only *the Son of God* but also *God the Son*.

Is the Holy Spirit a person?

Nowhere in the Bible do we find the words, *The Holy Spirit is a person*. But neither does the Bible tell us that *Jesus is a person* in so many words. Yet no intelligent person can possibly read the Bible and doubt the personality of the Lord Jesus Christ, because although the Bible does not actually say so, it is obvious from what we read about him that he was (and is) a person!

And the same is true of the Holy Spirit. The Bible makes it quite clear that he possesses personal attributes and engages in personal activities. The Holy Spirit has a mind (Romans 8:27) and a will (1 Corinthians 12:11). He may be grieved (Ephesians 4:30, Isaiah 63:10). He teaches, testifies, reproves, guides, speaks, hears and shows (John 14:26, 15:26, 16:13).

These verses show conclusively that the Holy Spirit is not a mere impersonal force, for only a person can hear or speak etc. Other verses which might be quoted are Acts 9:31, 13:2, 16:6, Romans 8:16, 26, 15:16, and 1 Corinthians 2:10.

The Holy Spirit, then, **is a person**. But is he God?

Is the Holy Spirit God?

As we have already seen, there are certain attributes or qualities that are possessed by God alone. God is creator, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, eternal. If we can show that the Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit possesses these attributes, we will have shown that the Holy Spirit is God.

The second verse of the Bible shows us the work of the Holy Spirit in creation and Job 33:4 plainly states *The Spirit of the Lord has made me*. His omnipotence is shown in Luke 1:35-37 where we read, *The Holy Spirit will come upon you... for nothing shall be impossible with God*. The Psalmist asks *Where can I go from your Spirit* (Psalm 139:7), revealing the omnipresence of the Spirit. His omniscience is seen in such passages as 1 Corinthians 2:10 and Acts 5:3-4: *How is it that you have lied to the Holy Spirit? ... You have not lied to men but to God*. And Hebrews 9:14 describes him as the *eternal Spirit*. The Holy Spirit, therefore, is the eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent creator. He is God.

Is Jesus God?

And what is true of the Holy Spirit is also true of our Lord Jesus Christ; for the Bible clearly shows us that Jesus possesses all the divine attributes. Jesus is creator, for John 1:3 declares that all things were made by him. Similarly Paul tells us that:

By him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him (Colossians 1:16).

As creator, Jesus is omnipotent. He is *the mighty God* (Is.9:6) and all power is given to him (Matt.28:18). He is omnipresent, for *where two or three come together in his name, there he is with them* (Matt.18:20). He is omniscient because he knows all things (John 21:17).

He is eternal, for he is *the same yesterday, today and forever* (Hebrews 13:8). He is the *everlasting father* (Isaiah 9:6). He is with us always (Matthew 28:20). His *goings forth have been from the days of eternity* (Micah 5:2 footnote). He is the word who was in the beginning (John 1:1). He existed before Abraham was (John 8:58). He is *the Alpha and Omega, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty* (Revelation 1:8), *the first and the last... alive forever and ever* (Revelation 1:17-18).

But the testimony to the deity of Christ is stronger still. He is equal with God (Philippians 2:6). Anyone who has seen him has seen the Father (John 14:9). He is *God with us* (Matthew 1:23). He is our great God and Saviour (Titus 2:13). No wonder we read that people worshipped him! (Matthew 14:33, 28:9, 17, Luke 24:52, John 9:38). God demands that Jesus be worshipped: *Let all the angels worship him* (Hebrews 1:6). Indeed, God himself declares Jesus to be God:

To the Son he says, Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever (Hebrews 1:8).

No wonder that with Thomas (John 20:28) we exclaim, *My Lord and my God!*

What is God like? We see him in Jesus.

David Petts

5 Proofs For The Existence of God

Corbett A., *5 Proofs For The Existence of God*,

Is there an intellectual basis for believing in God? Or is being religious just a matter of faith? Christianity invites scrutiny into its claims and its reasons for having faith and these deserve examination...

In December 2004 it was announced that long time British Professor and Philosopher, Anthony Flew, regarded by many as "the world's most acclaimed

atheist", had renounced his atheism in favour of theism...

This dramatic conversion has been likened by Astro-Physicist and now one of the world's leading Cosmologists, [Dr Hugh Ross](#), as having the same impact on the academic world as an announcement that Billy Graham had renounced Christianity would have on the Church!

One of the reasons cited by Prof. Flew was "the evidence." He admitted that for a long time the growing problem of Evolution's inability to explain how life began, or for that matter, how anything began, led him to the inevitable conclusion that it was an inadequate answer in the face of the evidence. Then when the DNA Genome code was unravelled the evidence for Design became "undeniable". These two pieces of evidence (1. the existence of life demanding a Life-Source, and 2. the scientific evidence of an extremely complex code in the make-up of that life- DNA) were enough for Prof. Flew to renounce atheism.

Can We Prove God?

Some people feel that acceptance of God is entirely a matter of faith. But the Scriptures actually claim that it is the *truth* which is the basis for this faith (Rom. 10:17). Truth is only truth if it is *objective* truth, that is, it is true for everyone regardless of time or circumstances. Thus, God is either true (and there can be objective proofs to support this), or He is not true and only subjective 'truth' can be offered for 'proof'. Some ancient Philosophers have argued that the fact mankind can imagine there being a God is a proof that there must be one. While this argument does have some merit, it plainly has limitations. Taken to its natural application this means that if *anything* can be imagined it must exist. Based on the

nightmares I had as a three and four year old boy- I really hope this theory isn't true or I'm not going to sleep well tonight! On the other hand, 'beliefs' and 'truth' are sometimes not entirely related. Tertullian once bragged that the main reason he so readily accepted Christianity was that it was fundamentally absurd. Perhaps he was alluding to 1 Corinthians 1-2 which talks about human wisdom and divine wisdom being incompatible. Some people are so committed to their beliefs that despite the evidence of truth they refuse to change their beliefs. In this way we observe that what some atheists claim is their scientific basis for unbelief is nothing more than *belief* in opinions rather than evidence. Thus despite the mass of evidence to the contrary, many atheists refuse to accept that origin of life is best explained by what appears to be obvious - a Designer/Creator. We have to applaud Prof. Flew for having the courage to consider and then accept the evidence.

"Proof" though is measured and determined according to the type of claim. The type of proof needed to substantiate a claim involving chemistry is different to the type of proof needed to substantiate a claim made about history. Proof in physiology is different to the type of proof needed for psychology. Proof in philosophy is different to the proof required for philology. Proof required for biology is different to the type of proof required for theology. To demand that "hard" science (physics, biology, chemistry, astronomy) proof tests be the only acceptable means for testing a "soft" science (psychology, history, philosophy, literature) claim is unreasonable. Thus, imposing natural proof tests on supernatural claims is an unreasonable measure and totally inadequate. But where supernatural claims are made which have natural implications, such as "an invisible God created

all that we see" (Romans 1:20) "proof" takes on the garb of "supporting evidence" when looking at the natural evidence to support this supernatural claim.

The Evidence

There have been a rash of very articulate and passionate atheists such as Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, Daniel Dennett, who have attacked theism (the belief in God) by attacking Religious Fundamentalism (the poor behaviour of those claiming to believe in God and their abuse of Religious rules to oppress people). The type of God these Religious Fundamentalists promote is not the God I am arguing for. But to some it is going to sound like it.

CS Lewis artfully makes the point in the "Magician's Nephew" that there can be several people confronted with the evidence for God yet they can interpret that evidence quite differently. Lewis describes Uncle Andrew's direct encounter with Aslan where he vehemently denied what he was seeing and hearing as making himself look stupid. And Lewis, the former atheist himself, continues, "*Now the trouble about trying to make yourself stupider than you really are is that you very often succeed. Uncle Andrew did.*" When it comes to proof for God, the evidence is *cumulative* and therefore acceptable *proof*. This evidence, or *proofs*, for the existence of God invites those atheists to consider it- especially for those who claim that there is none. At the very least it should be reasonably concluded that *atheism* (the absolute claim that there is no God after considering all possible knowledge) is a highly irrational position.

The following is reasonable evidence for accepting that there is indeed a Personal Omnipotent God as described in the Christian Bible-

Proofs For The Existence Of God

1 *Cause*

Everything has a cause...

It is illogical to suggest that something had no cause. This is where the theory of evolution becomes inadequate. It can not explain how *anything* began, let alone *life*. When we consider the evidence (that there are things which exist) it logically demands that either something or someone caused it. We can then rule out "something" as the solution since we would be returning to the original problem (what made the something?). This demands that there must be someone who has always existed (eternal) and is in themselves therefore uncreated. We don't have to understand this in order for it to be so. At this point some say we should not even try to understand these things because our minds just get in the way. But I suspect the opposite is the case. That is, it is perfectly legitimate to ponder these things and rather than our minds being too big an obstacle, our minds are actually too inadequate to comprehend them. Therefore, faith and thinking are not incompatible, its just that we have to realise that they both require discipline and exercise.

2 *Design*

There is evidence for design...

The unravelling of the Human Genome Code was announced to the world as *the discovery of the language of the Creator* by then President, Bill Clinton. What scientists discovered was an extremely sophisticated genetic language necessary for even the simplest life forms to exist. To believe that this level of apparent design happened either randomly or by chance is a mathematical equation of probability with more zeros than I care to type (plus I don't know what the word is for numbers which are thousands of trillions!).

The universe displays an amazingly complex level of interdependency which logically leads to the conclusion that it was designed that way. There are just too many coincidences of such "just rightness" for it to be a random haphazard coincidence. The earth is "just the right" distance from the Sun; it contains "just the right" mixture of chemicals and gases to sustain life; humans have "just the right" ability to breathe these gases; the human body has "just the right" synergy of internal organs in order to function, and so on. It's important to note that the Bible does not give a date for the commencement of creation of the universe, or the date for the creation of mankind. The universe may well be 10,000,000,000 years old, and mankind's origins may well be as recent as 50,000 - 30,000 years ago. These numbers are in no way counter to the Biblical record, and extremely compatible with the evidence.

3 Morality

There is intrinsic morality which needs a point of reference...

How do we know what "evil" is? How do we know what "good" is? These concepts demand either the existence of a standard to make such evaluations, or an understanding what these concepts mean. Each of us are born with an innate sense of morality. We each fundamentally know what is right and wrong. It is incredible to consider that no matter time, culture, geographic location, or people, the Moral Law has been universally acknowledged.

This tends to confirm that all of creation bears the fingerprints of a Creator who is fundamentally good and right. That is, we each share a knowledge of what is right and wrong not just because we are taught or conditioned to accept these values, but because we are born with them.

4 Resurrection

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ...

Sceptics may dispute this historical claim that Jesus Christ rose again from the dead but they do so perilously. This is because there is enough evidence to validate it and it is the point at which all of the history of Christ and Christianity rests. This means that if anything of Christ and Christianity is true then the Physical Resurrection of Christ is also true. The opposite is also true. If Christ did not literally rise from the dead then none of his history or teachings have any credence. But if the resurrection of Christ can be seen as a reasonable historic fact (based on over 500 eye-witnesses, the preparedness of all of those witnesses to defend their testimonies even at the point of losing their lives, the resultant baptism in the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues- still available today) then this is perhaps the most overwhelming piece of proof for the existence of God.

5 Experience

The claims of Christ can be experienced...

Jesus Christ made some seemingly outrageous claims about the benefits of following Him. He offered "rest" for the weary, "nourishment" for the hungry, "water" for the thirsty, "resurrection" for the dead, "direction" for aimless, "liberty" for the oppressed, "protection" for the vulnerable, "healing" for the hurting, and "salvation" for the lost.

I was 15 years of age when I accepted Christ. Never have I ever regretted it. It has been a journey for me that has seen me grow and change. I have felt the Lord guiding me. I can honestly say that I have heard Him speak to me (even though it hasn't been audibly). He has answered my prayers so often that I now almost take it for granted that my prayers will be

answered. He has given my life direction and purpose that I otherwise would never have had.

Today He extends to you the invitation to experience for yourself the claims which He has made.

The evidence for the existence of God is available. For honest enquirers there are honest answers. For those who acknowledge that there is at least reasonable evidence (even if not all 5 points of evidence are accepted) then they can no longer claim to be "atheist". Like Professor Flew they can bravely embrace the title "theist" (*God believer*) without adopting any particular religious framework. Once this position can be reached then the next phase of the journey is to answer the question, "*Is religion necessary or even helpful in discovering God?*"

Is The Christian God The Creator?

But how do we know that the God of Christians is the Creator that the evidence points to? The scientific method has become synonymous with *methodological naturalism*. This is the idea that the only way knowledge can be apprehended is if it can be *observed*. But this is a fairly recent hijacking of what the scientific method means. If we could allow the scientific method to lead to certain deductions, whether they be physical or metaphysical, we may be removing the restrictions which might hold us back from the truth - especially if we employ the scientific method in examining any theories involving metaphysical claims.

Since there is sufficient evidence to show that the universe began and therefore must have had a beginning, we must also include the dimensions of time and space as part of that beginning. Therefore the "Beginning Cause" must have been outside of time and space. This is one of the central claims of the Bible about God: *He is eternal and dwells 'above the heavens'*

(Heb. 7:26) - that is, *God is outside of time and space*. At this point, we could apply these deductions using the scientific method to dismiss the claims of certain religions which present their "God" as being a part of time and space (pantheism). This includes Buddhism and Hinduism. Within time and space there is moral-evil, corruption, and decay. Since the Creator is outside of this He must be holy, immutable, and impeccable. This then excludes the concepts of "God" put forward by Islam and Mormonism. But it fits perfectly with the concept of God as portrayed in the Christian Bible.

Perhaps the simplest test for discovering the identity of the Creator-God is to employ the scientific method to Psalm 34:8 and Matt.7:7.

Dr. Andrew Corbett

Is The Trinity Truth Or A Just A False Tradition?

Corbett A., *Is The Trinity Truth Or A Just A False Tradition*, www.andrewcorbett.com.

*Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:
He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit,
seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations,
believed on in the world, taken up in glory. 1Timothy 3:16*

There is no greater mystery than God. And perhaps there is no greater quest than to answer the question *who is God?* as truthfully as possible. When the identity of God is discussed there are a wide range of ideas put forward. Some have gained acceptance and formed the basis for the world's religions. For those who have realised that God must have an identity they conclude that He must be a person. This is called theism- or more precisely, *monotheism*. Judaism, Islam, and Christianity are three great monotheistic religions of the world. But

Christianity is further distinguished from these other monotheistic religions by identifying God as *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*.

The reason for this is the clear presentation in Scripture of God's identity by these three terms. For example-

The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him." Acts 5:30-32 ESV

For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. 1John 5:7 NKJV

But the mystery of the Scripture's presentation of God as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is that it in no way diminishes the emphatic declaration of "one God"-

For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. 1Cor. 8:5-6 ESV

We refer to the Scripture's presentation of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as the "Trinity". Some have argued that this is a false conclusion about the identity of God. Some of these opponents of the Trinitarian concept of God claim that God is a singular Person. This is called "Unitarianism". One of the main reasons for rejecting Unitarianism is that it presents us with a major contradiction about the Supreme Being. Since God is Supreme He cannot change- either in nature or character (since this would bring into question whether He has improved- *then He was never 'supreme'*- or diminished- *maybe He is no longer supreme?*). The unchangeable nature of God is called *immutability*.

“For I the LORD do not change...” Malachi 3:6a ESV

Since God is eternal (always been) and immutable (unchanging) it is just not possible for Him to be the "Eternal Father" if there was ever a time when He was not a Father. Likewise it is not possible for God to have been indifferent then to have become loving. This is the logical equation of saying that God was a singular being who originally dwelt alone. Genuine love is only possible when there is an object of love. To argue that God has always loved even though He had no-one to love is to either suggest that He was self-obsessed, or that He *needed* to create an object of love due to His desperate loneliness. Both of these proposals are obnoxious and impugn the nature and character of God. When we refer to God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we use the term "Trinity" which identifies them as three co-equal, co-eternal, immutable persons, who are one.

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one." Deut. 6:4 ESV

We do not claim that God is Three Gods. That is not the Trinity. We worship One God. The Hebrew word in Deuteronomy 6:4 for "one" is *echad*. It can mean first, a unit, or most commonly *united*. It is different to the more common Hebrew word for a singular unit *iysb*. Deuteronomy 6:4 declares that God is *echad* - "united" - and that is exactly where the Biblical revelation of the Trinity begins: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are *one* God, not three. This is monotheism. There are clues to understanding this one-ness of God when the Scriptures give us 'shadows' of God, such as marriage, where a husband and his wife are referred to as being "one". We refer to this as a "shadow" because it is not the exact likeness of what it illustrates (in much the same way as a shadow is similar to, but not exactly like, the object it shadows).

We also get another picture of "one" from Christ's statement in Jn.17-

[I pray] that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, John 17:21-22

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are eternal. Again, we have no parallel, or even a shadow to compare this concept to. The closest we can get to defining 'eternal' is to say that something had no beginning and will have no end. But even this definition still attempts to describe 'eternal' in terms of time. And that's what makes the *no beginning and no end* definition so inadequate- since the very point of 'eternal' is that it is *not* subject to any form of time lapse (making such expressions as *beginning* and *end* not only irrelevant terms but absolutely foreign concepts).

The Biblical concepts for eternity include God's statement to Moses that He was the "I AM" and that He alone dwells in "today" or "now". Not one of us live in the "now". We are either *going* to do something (future), or we have done something (past). Even if we ask someone what they are doing "now" they can never tell us because the moment they tell us what they are currently doing it is already in the past! Only God is constantly in a state of "now" because only He is eternal.

The Creed

When Constantine converted to Christianity he declared himself the Pontifex Maximus of the Church. He called for a Council of Bishops to come to Nicea to resolve the divisive doctrine invented by Arius that Christ was a created being and therefore the Trinity was not a Biblical concept. It was Athanasius who swayed the debate in favour of accepting

Christ's claims of divinity and the Biblical presentation of the Triune God. He argued that if it could be shown that God the Father was eternal, then He *must* have an eternal Son.

Similarly, if Christ is eternal, then He must be the eternal God. This is what they conferred-

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, light from light, True God from true God, Begotten, not made, Of one Being with the Father; Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation He came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;

He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father [and the Son], Who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

Amen.

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are equal. This does not mean that that they are a triumvirate (the rule of three), but God is instead, a Trinity (the rule of one). The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit equally deserved to be honoured and worshiped. This is what Christ taught-

that all may honour the Son, just as they honour the Father. Whoever does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent him. Jn.5:23

but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin”— Mark 3:29

While each member of the Trinity or the Biblical word: *Godhead* (Romans 1:20; Col. 2:9) [note Strong's Concordance #2305, Greek: *theiotes*; divinity — "Godhead"] are equal, there is still order within that equality. This is something that we often struggle to understand. How can there be rank and order among persons who are equal? The Scriptures present God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as equal yet in that order. We have such a paltry concept of "order" that we find such concepts of submission and hetero-authority among equals as inconceivable. That's why we need to understand that "equal" does not mean "the same" in all respects (especially in role and authority). The Biblical presentation of equality is that a husband and wife are equal, while not being the same. In one respect a cup of sugar is equal to a cup of flour, but in another respect they are different. Because Christ submits to His Father does not mean that He is less than, or inferior to, His Father.

For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. John 6:38

And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Phil. 2:8

He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Phil. 2:6-7 TM

The Trinity is sometimes presented as the One divine Person who has either simultaneously or progressively revealed Himself as Father, then the Son and then the Holy Spirit. This is variously referred to as "One-ness", "Unitarianism", or "Modalism". In essence it says that the one God has

manifested Himself in three ways- or that God is *as three*. But the Bible presents God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit who are eternally in communion with each other which is revealed by their simultaneous appearances and conversations. For example, in the act of forming the earth it says that God [the Father] created the Heavens and the Earth in the beginning (Gen. 1:1) and that the Spirit of God [the Holy Spirit] was hovering over the surface of the waters (Gen. 1:3). In Genesis 1:4 it says that God spoke "Let there be light." The New Testament reveals that this was Christ.

Christ is the one through whom God created everything in heaven and earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see—kings, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities. Everything has been created through him and for him. Colossians 1:16 NLT

Therefore, we see the simultaneous involvement of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in Creation. We also read of the members of the Godhead in Isaiah 48:16-

Draw near to Me [Christ], hear this: from the beginning I have not spoken in secret, from the time it came to be I have been there." And now the Lord GOD [the Father] has sent me, and his Spirit [the Holy Spirit]. Isa. 48:16 ESV

Some say that while all this may be interesting, it cannot be true because God cannot die. Since the doctrine of the Trinity states that Christ is the co-equal, co-eternal God, how could He die? After all, wouldn't that immediately disqualify Him from being God? This type of reasoning is grounded in a faulty understanding of death. For many, "death" means ceasing to exist. But Biblically it refers to "separation" between a body and its life-source.

For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead. James 2:26

While the eternal Son of God is in eternal communion with His Father when He entered into this dimension of time by incarnation He also became subject to all of the limitations associated with His humanity (for example, He could "thirst", "grow older", "get weary", and "hunger"). When Christ died on the Cross He did not cease to exist. He was simply separated from His body. In this death He became the object of the wrath of God in our place-

He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised from the dead to make us right with God. Rom. 4:25

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2Cor. 5:21 ESV

Because of Christ's death on the Cross and His resurrection from the dead (reunion with His body) we now know that the highest possible price for our redemption has been paid. Therefore the death of Christ on the Cross is not an argument against the Trinity but an argument for it.

We see several pictures of the Trinity within Scripture. For example,

* At the baptism of Christ the Father spoke from Heaven and the Holy Spirit descended upon Christ.

* In Revelation 5 we are given a brief glimpse of the centre of Heaven where we see the Glorious Father on the Throne, the Majestic Holy Spirit portrayed as the Seven Flaming Spirits of God and the Son of God portrayed as the Seven Eyed and Horned Lamb.

The Implications Of Grasping The Trinity...

When we appreciate that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit who are each co-equal and co-eternal, we will realise that God has always lived in community. Since we are created in the image of God this explains why we are generally drawn toward community as well. It should also help us to

appreciate that God wants us to be in community and not to attempt life as an independent venture. At the very least we need to live in communion with God.

The doctrine of the Trinity is the only satisfactory theological reason for explaining why Creation reflects both diversity and unity. It is in essence reflecting the nature of its Creator. If God was monolithic (one Person) rather than the (monotheistic) Trinity then creation would more likely reflect a monotone than the actual harmony which we see.

But the ultimate implication of understanding the Trinity involves our worship. We are called to worship God in Spirit and in *Truth*. We are able to worship the True God accurately because we are more accurately able to identify Him. Worship is really the ultimate response and purpose of mankind toward God. This response is diminished if we don't truly know who we are worshiping. We acknowledge that the Father is God, Jesus Christ is God and the Holy is God, yet they are One God.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. 2Corinthians 13:14

Dr. Andrew Corbett

Canty's "I Was Just Thinking".

Not the God of the Philosophers

Canty, G., www.canty.org.uk (*IWT 14, Not the God of Philosophers*).

Empty souls philosophise. The French mathematician Blaise Pascal had an extraordinary experience of the fire of God and recorded it, saying it was "not the God of the philosophers". The philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, a crazy atheist, hated Pascal. He suggested God has swallowed him. Well – why

not? A lunatic asylum 'swallowed' Nietzsche for the last 11 years of his life. He died in 1900.

Samuel Butler said "all philosophies are nonsense". That is true, particularly when they deal with God. I am writing this because the great thinkers' ideas of God have confused believers down to this day, without clarity from the Word. Generally, people have their own ideas of what the Almighty should be like. When things don't happen as hoped they are quite offended with him.

There are interpretations of God's changelessness that get in the way of faith. If His will is perfect, rigid and all-wise, can prayer change anything at all? Knowing the end from the beginning, the future is fixed. What value then are our petitions? We can only pray to bend our will to the inevitable. God's changelessness should be understood in Bible terms, not by human conclusions. God is seen as a mountain and prayers mean less than snowflakes. It is a fudged picture.

I want to clear the mists from the mountain. My God is the Bible God and the God of millions. He responds to our call and does move. We ask, He acts. He comes to our aid. Prayer impacts Him. He changes things. He works when we pray and does not work when we don't pray. "*You have not because you ask not.*" We trust Him and He guides and cares. If God's will is inflexible, why did Jesus say "*Whatever things YE ask in my name we will do*". In graciousness to us He wills what we will. He bends to our estate.

My testimony is that my faith rests in the God of the Bible, no longer the God of reason. In my early ministry I aimed to prove faith and the Bible by reason, I defended the ways of God to men, like a lawyer in court – as if He was on trial. God is the judge and the world is on trial. After some years, a

powerful spiritual experience turned my life around to the way of faith. The jigsaw of questions came together in a single instant. I abandoned futile - I was going to say 'infantile'- attempts to think out the Divine mysteries. My eyes opened to God by faith. It seemed at that moment that Jesus stepped out of the Bible as from the tomb and met me like He met the doubting disciples.

I took college lectures to show that independent thought without the Word and the Spirit, produced only modernist stairs of sand. To work out what God was like was ridiculous. Irenaeus the early church father said "How can we know about Him unless He tells us?" "*He shall lead you into all truth*". The Gospel is knowing, not talking; finding, not seeking; arriving, not travelling. Paul said that God was never found by reason. We read the same thinkers' works that Paul read, and can see how right he was.

People in Scripture built everything on belief in a living God. He walked with them. Those who take Him at His word rank with Abraham, Elijah and David, the mother Mary and Mary Magdalene and add their names to Hebrews chapter eleven. The Bible God answers by fire, the Pentecostal God, and by His wonderful grace my God. In countless healing services I have dared to declare the Word of God that the Lord heals, throwing myself in trust upon God. I believe that if I do what He said, He will do what He said. What joy it has brought! The Bible God is touched by the feelings of our infirmities. He doesn't just sit being sorry for us. He walks in the fire with us and we are not burned and through the valley with us and we are not harmed.

The Bible tells us the Lord reversed His intentions, 'repented', changed His mind and changed his action when prayer was made. He said He is not a man to repent but that means He

has no fault, no sin of which to repent. But when men of God stretched out pleading hands, again and again He swerved from His expressed purposes. God hears all prayer, diverges and does what He would not have done. Seek His blessing and He lifts the curse.

Prayers touch God. They are not reflexive, affecting only our own selves. Praying is not a subjective exercise to do good to ourselves, to calm and focus our spirit, like eastern meditation. Hundreds of millions today testify that prayer reaches God and it is His peace and His love that comes back to us.

The Old Testament has been neglected. It is there that we have the ABC of God's essential being, His nature, disposition and character. The New Testament imposes the picture of Christ on the picture of the God of Israel. It fits perfectly. It is the same Person, in living colour, not just black and white. The Old Testament speaks of God and Jesus said it speaks of Him. They are one and the same. Christ Jesus is "the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being." Heb. 1:3. He always did God's will, and when circumstances changed His direction, it showed the Father varying His ways also.

Genesis 6:6 gives us an early lesson. "*It repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart*". The LORD God not only '*repented*' or '*regretted*' making man, but it '*grieved him in his heart*'. The word in Hebrew could not be stronger, '*bitter indignation*'. It is used several times for very disturbed people, such as David when Absalom was killed. He wept brokenly "*Oh Absalom my son, Absalom my son! Would God I had died for thee.*" God used the same word about His own feelings over us, David did not die for Absalom but Christ did

die for us. It was no mere way of talking, God WAS grieved, *'in his heart'*.

The same word is used in Psalm 78:40 "*Often they rebelled against him and grieved him.*" The Psalm speaks of God's patience and how Israel pushes the Lord too far. "*When God heard them he was very angry; he rejected Israel completely*". God had angry regrets, changed His mind and demonstrated it. Isaiah 63:10 "*They rebelled and grieved (made bitterly indignant) his Holy Spirit so he turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them*".

This IWT could be filled with such Bible teaching. God does respond and is affected by what we say and do, His action is in chain to our action. Prayer is not just piety, soaking in a cosy religious meeting, like a gently simmering Welsh stew. It is a power link.

If God knew everything beforehand, the future would be fixed, but He chooses not to. Our Lord told us to pray "*Thy will be done*", because it isn't done and what happens is not fixed by His will. Job asked what God had to do with him or his sin. This is one question in Job that was answered. Job learned sin does affect God. That is the crucial centre of Christianity. Christ bore our sins on the Cross. It contains all the theology we ever need to know. It is frightening that my wickedness impacts God. David realised it and shuddered: "*Against thee, and thee only have I sinned*". His murder against Uriah was even more against the Lord.

My aim is to encourage faith in a God who is sensitive to each one of us. He is not oblivious of anybody on earth. It is not hard to contact Him. We make it difficult for Him to contact us, but we are important to Him, not nameless things. He is as aware of us as a mother is aware of the babe in her womb.

God showed His intense sensitivity in His cry through Hosea, "*My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together*". He used that sort of language because He meant what He said. It is not talk reduced to human categories. It was the same Voice heard in Galilee, weeping over shepherd-less people or rejoicing in spirit over His disciples. If God has a disposition then by definition He can weep with those that weep and rejoice with those that rejoice. We saw that supremely in the fields of Galilee and on the hill of Calvary.

The idea of a Gospel and a God of reason originated with great historical minds. Two names are specially notable. Augustine of Hippo, born 354 AD, and Thomas Aquinas, born 1225 AD. They wanted to show to pagans that Christianity was reasonable and so they shaped it to pagan thinkers. Augustine read Plato in the works of Plotinus and Porphyry (who wrote against Christianity!) and Aquinas resorted to Aristotle. He could not read Greek but used translations and interpreted the Bible by what Aristotle thought. To my mind it was a staggering betrayal, however well intended.

Jesus is not related to Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Locke or Hume. He is the God that loves me and sacrificed everything for me. Love is beyond all philosophy. We can't love and not feel it. Neither can God. Loving is dangerous. It risks heartbreak. God risked it and His heart broke. His compassions are real. The changeless God changed, the greatest change ever known. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

God is love. He never changes in Himself. His name stands for His essential Being and is eternal. I like the modern French of Psalm 111:3: '*Il est pour toujours fidele a lui-meme*'. '*He is always faithful to Himself.*' His heart beats for us. Our Jesus

today remains the Jesus of the Gospels, the same yesterday, today and forever. His ear is ever open to our cry. Prayer moves the Hand that moves the world - no matter what anybody 'thinks'.

George Canty

Did God allow the tsunami – and etc?

Canty, G., (*IWT 15, Did God allow the Tsunami?*)

"Is God in control?" I believe He is, but eight scholars ask the question in a new book. Another recent publication by a leading world religious philosopher deals with 'the problem of evil and the problem of God'. Is God a problem then? The book's problem is the various misconceptions of Him (a gripping subject which I have mentioned before and will again).

One prominent Muslim cleric said that Allah had actually sent the tsunami as a punishment against Muslims who did not apply the Shariah law. I hope his explanation cheers everybody up! It is a vivid example of the difference between Allah and the Lord; Allah the God of vengeance and the Lord the God of love.

Evolutionist Professor Dawkins declared that the tsunami challenged the Christian teaching of a God of love. If the press reported it correctly, this was a vacuous remark useless to everybody and on the level of comments typically made in pubs 'when men have well drunk' rather than that of a professor! The newspapers gave him a platform and loud hailer but switched off all Christian response. They left the public with a counsel of despair.

With this awful loss of life, the thought that anyone with an ounce of sensitivity could presume to mock Christians about the God of love is appalling. While people are mourning the loss of Christian family members, to attack Christian hope at

such a time merely to score a point is despicable. **Far from the disaster being a challenge to Christian faith, it reveals it as the only faith that gives courage and comfort.** Dawkins' and Darwin's evolutionary theory is pitiless, throwing no arm around anybody's shoulder. I suppose thousands, perhaps millions have asked why God 'allowed' the tsunami disaster. But is that the question? Did He 'allow' it? I wrote once on "Why does God allow sickness?" and answered that we may as well ask why the Minister for Transport allows road crashes. Perhaps we should just keep his rules. *Touché!* Obviously none of us 'allowed' the disaster, as we could not prevent it – perhaps. But popularly God is supposed to be able to do anything and 'Almighty' is what the word 'God' means. It is certainly not safe to assume God did nothing about it. Only God knows what He did. He does not text our mobiles about what He does. The issue is complicated. We are hearing accounts of providential and even angelic deliverances, alongside news of many Christians dying in the tsunami. My first comment concerns what I would do if I knew for sure that God had allowed this disaster. What could I do? Take the Omnipotence to task? If God is God I can do only one thing – trust Him. I had better! Any other option would be extremely odd, like falling out with the universe. He alone knows the business of being God. We would have to be God to understand His business.

The world was enormously strange, frightening and threatening to people in the days of the Psalmists. One wrote Psalm 46 which fits the tsunami occasion. "*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the*

mountains shake with the swelling thereof". It sounds like an anticipation of the tsunami disaster.

On the other hand if this calamity happened outside His control, it did not leave God helpless. His purposes will absorb it. He collects every circumstance as the material for His eternal purposes, working all things according to the good counsel of His will.

My business being Bible exposition, I am asked what I myself think about this gigantic convulsion of the Indian Ocean.

Firstly, the Bible is not a compendium of explanations.

Nobody really knows enough to elucidate God's role in everything that goes on, which is obviously complicated. Our confidence is in Him - and all things, evil and good, are in His hands.

Before we even ask the question, our knowledge of nature and the planet is inadequate. Did human activity help create the tsunami? Environmental factors and human meddling cannot be dismissed. That fatal wave resulted from an enormous underwater landslide and the subterranean movement of the tectonic plates on which the continents rest. These plates move constantly as part of the structure of the planet. Could human agencies have triggered off the convulsion? We can't say they did not. But in any case, what should God do anyway? Re-create the world?

Then I cannot ignore the fact that great as the tsunami horror was, it is still only part of the troubles that afflict mankind, and death comes to all sooner or later. On average 1676 individuals died every day in the UK in 2003, about 7 times the number of Britons swept away by the tsunami. Death and bereavement are our human lot. Death is the mist hanging over every dawn. We are "*subject to death all our lives*" scripture says. As for God, He gives our lives and has the right to take them away, but multitudes are killed by human action. Even then

God is not baffled. Scripture says: "*He makes the wrath of man to praise Him*". Even the crucifixion of His own beloved Son - the most appalling wickedness perpetrated on earth and an apparent supreme triumph of evil - God foresaw and wove into the glory of His will. In the words of the Messianic Psalm 22, Christ called to His Father: "*Why are you so far from my roaring?*" But from that tree planted on the hill of Calvary, the whole world has received fruit, a new spirit of sacrifice, love and hope, not to mention its God-ward objectivity of reconciliation and redemption.

Scripture shows God working within limits. Like Christ said of Jerusalem "I would, you would not". If we stray from under His wings how can He guarantee our safety? Jesus heard of a wall falling and killing some men. He had no philosophic comfort, but said "*Except you repent you will all likewise perish*". At the beginning as a young pastor I was told I must 'defend the ways of God to man'. I tried, but God does not need me to defend Him.

Far from understanding God we don't understand one another. I knew my wife pretty well, but she had an instant and acute shrewdness beyond my plodding reason. What man ever had perfect penetration of a wife's esoteric thought processes? That's just a woman, never mind God! But my obtuse male inability to follow my wife's logic never caused my faith in her to falter or in her judgment, nor in God's. The Bible shows God all the way through exercising limitless power but within limits imposed upon Himself by His love and mercy. "*He delivered his strength into captivity*". He is the only God I acknowledge, though often quiet when men clamoured for His action. "*Awake O Lord!*" the Palmist cried.

God asked "*Is anything too hard for the Lord?*" The answer is, read His Word and learn His ways. That is what the Bible is

for. It is not a code book of secret passwords to acquire money or success. '*Follow on to know the Lord*' and then we can anticipate His action. Having power does not oblige God to use it. We all have things that we can do but choose not to. His wisdom governs His exercise of power. To know God is to trust Him. "*Though he slay me, yet will I trust him!*" said Job. We do wrong, but God cannot deny us our right to be human beings by stepping in every time we chose to do wrong. We would cease to be what we are. The Scripture principle is: "*The wrath of men shall praise Him*". He does not stop wickedness, but it never baffles His purposes. The world is what it must be to function as a living world, and we must accept the world as it is. To demand a different, accident-free world is ridiculous arrogance. It is up to us to keep ourselves safe. Prayer releases God's help in this world. He gives us dominion and authority to inhabit this world and He can intervene in it. He is on-call for when we need Him. We are here for Him and He is here for us.

George Canty

The Use Of The Name And Title For God In Genesis

Wiseman, P.J., *New Discoveries In Babylonia About Genesis*, London, Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1946. pp 113-118 (*The Use Of The Name And Title For God In Genesis*).

The chief imputation made against Genesis by critics is that different names for the Almighty are used in various parts of the Book. Each different writer, they allege, had only one name for God. On this assumption they endeavour to account for the use of different names, by asserting that each section or verse where a particular Divine name is mentioned, indicates that it was written by the writer who uses that name exclusively or predominantly. It was on the basis of this use

of the Divine name in Genesis that critics first elaborated their theories, until at length they represented the Book as a piece of literary patchwork, and extended its application to the remaining Books of the Old Testament. As the critical 'documentary theory' of the composition of Genesis originated in the supposed exclusive use by one writer of the name of Jehovah, this document theory and the use of the name Jehovah will be considered together in this chapter. It was Jean Astruc, a French physician, who invented the theory of separate documents based on these names. He found that in the first thirty-five verses of Genesis, i.e. chapters 1:1 to 2:4a, the word 'Elohim' (God) was used, and no other Divine name, while in chapters 2:4b to 3:24 the only designation given is 'Jehovah Elohim' (Lord God), except where Satan uses the word God. The passages must have been written by different writers, he said, for if Moses wrote the whole of it himself first-hand, then we would have to attribute to him this singular variation, in patches, of the Divine name. He then divided the Book up into little sections according to the Divine name used. Thus he alleged that a writer who used 'Elohim' was the author of the Elohist document, and the writer who used 'Jehovah', was called the 'Jehovist'. As this two-fold theory was found to fail as an explanation, seeing that some verses which were obviously written by the same person contained both names for God, another contrivance was devised in order to separate the verse into two parts. This was done by introducing an editor, who combined these two documents into one. Even this complication did not satisfy, for critics had to admit that the word Elohim (God) appeared in passages which they attributed to the writer who was supposed to use the name 'Jehovah' exclusively. A loophole out of this difficulty was

soon devised by alleging another redactor, who, it is asserted has altered the Divine names.

After a century of such conjectures the following elaborate tangle has been produced by the critics to explain the use of 'Jehovah' and 'Elohim' in Genesis. Two different writers, or rather schools of writers, sometime after the reign of Saul, produced two documents known as 'J' and 'E'. A redactor called 'RJE' combined these two documents into one. In the course of his editing he is supposed to have taken pieces from 'J' then 'E' sometimes altering, at other times adding a passage of his own. They assert that this editor has done his work so well that it is difficult to separate the original writings.

Another redactor revised and again altered this composition. Then they claim that a further document was written nearly a thousand years after Moses, called 'P', and a redactor called 'EP' added this document to 'JE', inserting details of his own authorship. In this way Genesis has been reduced to a series of confused fragments and authors, in order to account for the way the name of God is used in the Book. Sometimes the critics say that the Bible was written just like all other books, but no other book was ever written in this fashion. Some years ago a critical edition of Genesis was issued in which the parts written by these alleged authors and editors are represented in inks of various colours, it became known as the '*Rainbow Bible*'. Dr. Skinner's volume on '*The Divine Names in Genesis*' is an illustration of the tangle into which this subject has been tied. The critics have to admit that their literary expedients break not only the logical, but also the grammatical sequence of passages; it is confusion confounded. Wellhausen, one of the greatest of critics, acknowledged that the result was an 'agglomeration of fragments'.

But Astruc had found one important verse of Scripture to which he appealed in support of his theory, and all the succeeding critics have made this the foundation text of their arguments. In Exodus 6:3 we read, "I appeared unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty (El-Shaddai), but by My name Jehovah I was not known unto them". This, the critics maintain, is a clear and explicit statement, and a leading critic writes, "*unless the writer of Exodus 6:3 contradicts himself not one of these passages (in Genesis) can have issued from his hands*" (Carpenter, Oxford Hexateuch, Vol. I, p. 34).

On the other hand the defenders of Genesis, most unreasonably dislike the critics making their stand on this text of Scripture ("by my name Jehovah I was not known to them" Exod. 6:3). They maintain that the verse cannot mean precisely what it appears to mean, because the name of Jehovah is in fact used nearly two hundred times in Genesis. The usual explanation given of this by anti-critics is, "though the name was ancient, and known to the Patriarchs, its full meaning was not known to them, and so God was not manifested to them by it", or "the name Jehovah was known, but not known to be understood". These interpretations overlook, first the fact that God distinctly states the alternative way by which He appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and secondly there is no special explanation of the full meaning of the name, other than the simple yet profound declaration 'I AM THAT I AM'.

Further, in the endeavour to show that Exodus 6:3 cannot mean what it says, appeal is made to such passages as Genesis 4:26, "then began men to call upon the name of Jehovah". But it is found that the name occurs even before this, so for an instance, the editor of the Companion Bible who was an anti-critic, says of this verse: "*If this refers to Divine worship it is*

not true, for Abel and Cain both began, and their descendants doubtless followed their example. What was really begun, was the profanation of the name of Jehovah". This is just as much conjecture as that of the critics, for the verse does not contain a hint of such a thing, and had this been the case it would have said so. Such evasions are pathetically ridiculous attempts to get out of a difficulty. Many similar unreasonable and unwarrantable wriggles could be cited where commentators, in attempting to rid themselves of the perplexing passage, have abandoned the plain meaning of words.

A more elaborate, but even less convincing type of explanation is offered by that able Jewish scholar, H. M. Weiner, who writes:—

". . . suffice it to say that in the opinion of the writer the reading 'I made known' is clearly right. The meaning, which at first sight appears to be the same, is seen, in the light of comparative evidence as to primitive ideas, to be absolutely different. It appears that men in a certain state of civilization hold that names have an objective existence, and regard the utterance of a man's name by himself as giving his interlocutor a certain power over him. There is plenty of Old Testament evidence to show that the early Hebrews believed in the objective existence of names. It seems that here the utterance of the Name of God, not in any incidental or evasive fashion (as, for instance, in quotation, 'Thus saith the Lord', etc., in Exod. 3:15), but as a part of the direct formula 'I am the lord', would have an esoteric meaning for the ancient Hebrew. The true effect of the phrase was not to reveal a new name or give a fresh meaning to an old one, but to create a bond between Deity and people, and to give Moses and the Israelites a direct pledge that the whole power of Deity would be exerted on their behalf" (Origin of the Pentateuch, p. 38).

Numerous contradictory explanations have been given both by critics and defenders to account for the fact that in Exodus 6:3, we are told that God was not known to the Patriarchs by

the name of Jehovah, while on the other hand, Genesis frequently represents Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as using the name. I submit that all these contradictory explanations and evasions have been due to the fundamental mistake made by both sides in assuming that no part of Genesis had been written until the time of Moses. This fatal assumption has resulted in the desperate literary tangle of the critics, and the difficulties of the defenders. The critics find themselves in the hopeless position of employing numerous editors, who had before them the explicit statement of Exodus 6:3, when they are said to have edited Genesis. Are we supposed to assume that the final editor was unaware that he was contradicting himself? The critical 'explanations' only increase their difficulties. All these evasions are made because neither side in this great and prolonged debate has realised that the Book of Genesis is a record written by the persons whose names are stated in it, that the earlier writers used a primitive script, and the later tablets were written in the cuneiform script and language of the day. There cannot be the slightest doubt that the tablets which Abraham would take with him from Ur of the Chaldees, would be written in the cuneiform script prevalent in that city. When Moses came into possession of these tablets he would find on some of them the cuneiform equivalent for 'God'. An instance of this may be seen in the tablet of Creation, where 'God' is used thirty-four times, and no other Divine title or name appears. In others he would find in addition the cuneiform equivalent of 'El Shaddai' (God Almighty or All Sufficient), the name by which Exodus 6:3 plainly states He appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. There are some noteworthy facts regarding this word 'Shaddai' to which sufficient attention has not been given. In the first place, the full composite title 'El Shaddai' as stated in

Exodus 6:3, is not used elsewhere than in Genesis, and these uses are on important occasions (see 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 48:3). The next impressive fact is that the word 'Shaddai' alone is used forty-two times, and in almost every instance by persons writing or living outside Palestine, and in contact with Babylonian cuneiform modes of expression. Job uses it thirty-one times, Balaam who came from Mesopotamia uses it. Naomi, the Moabitess, and Ezekiel the prophet in Babylonia. This accounts for thirty-eight of the forty-two uses of the word, and is surely significant.

We have an account in Exodus 3 of God's revelation of Himself to Moses at Horeb, and of his commission to go down into Egypt to bring up the people out of slavery, "and Moses said unto God, Behold when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you, and they shall say to me, what is His name! What shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM; and He said, thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, Jehovah the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you, this is My name forever".

It is necessary at this juncture to note the difference between a name and a title. The word 'God' is not a name, it is a title. Jehovah was the name of God. This distinction may be seen in the second commandment: "Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain". The Jew did not mind writing and speaking of God (Elohim), but he so regarded this commandment that he did not utter the name Jehovah when reading the Scriptures, but substituted the word 'Adonai' for it. Moreover, the Hebrews spoke of the Elohim, the true

God, as contrasted with false gods, but never did they speak or write of the Jehovah, for there was only one Jehovah in heaven and earth. In Genesis we read of 'my God,' but never of 'my Jehovah'; they spoke of 'the God of Israel', but never of the 'Jehovah of Israel', for there was only one Jehovah. I do not stay to enter into the question of the exact pronunciation of the name. God says: "I am Jehovah, that is my name, and my glory I will not give to another, neither my praise to graven images".

When men began to make 'gods many and lords many', they called them 'gods'; but to distinguish them from each other, they gave each a name. So that the word 'god' ceased to be used, even in Scripture, exclusively of the Creator of the heavens and the earth. It is used of idols, for we find Laban calling his teraphim which Rachael had stolen, 'gods' (elohim), and Jacob does the same. In Exodus 12:12, we read of the 'gods (elohim) of Egypt'. Chemosh and Dagon are the names of 'gods' and are called 'elohim'. In early times Babylonia had dozens of 'gods' but each of them had a distinguishing name, as well as the title 'god'. The names of more than eighty Babylonian 'gods' who were worshipped in the time of Abraham, and whose names have been found in tablets with the determinative 'ilu' (god) may be seen in Dr. Herman Rankes' *Early Babylonian Personal Names of the Hammurabi Dynasty* (p. 197 ff.), published in series D of *Researches and Treatises of the University of Pennsylvania*. When we reach the time of Moses, matters in this respect were even worse, for there were over forty petty states in Egypt, each with its own chief god, worshipped in the temple at the principal city of its nome or state. All these gods had other gods associated with them, a wife goddess, or sons, called 'gods', and each in his own territory was regarded as a 'god almighty', as the

creator and preserver of all the world and mankind. The Egyptian seemed to see nothing illogical in these scores of gods, each being creator and ruler of the world. All of them were given names to distinguish them from each ' other. Besides this, each town and village possessed its own god. The Thebian Recension of the '*Book of the Dead*' gives the names of over 450 gods and the Pyramid texts contain references to over 200. Although the names of many of the Egyptian gods have been lost to us, those of over 2200 are known. Amidst all this polytheism, it became necessary when God was to reveal Himself, as He did in Exodus 6 in an especial manner both to the Hebrews and to the Egyptians, that He should use a name to distinguish Himself the only true God, from all the false gods around. That name was a most significant one, 'I AM'. When Moses, at a later date than the revelation of Exodus 6, was compiling the Book of Genesis, with his Patriarchal tablets before him, he would find the cuneiform equivalent of El Shaddai on many of them. Now that God has given Himself a new name, Jehovah (a personal pronoun, not a title), which word for God should he use in transcribing these ancient tablets? Every translator of the Bible has been confronted with the same problem. The title 'God' may be repeated, but how is the description or name—the cuneiform equivalent of El Shaddai,—to be transcribed where necessary, unless the new revealed name of God, i.e. Jehovah is used? To use any other name would be to create a misunderstanding in the minds of those for whom Genesis was being prepared. The translators of the Bible into Chinese had the same problem. Which of the Chinese names should be used? Tien-chu, meaning 'the Lord of heaven', or Shmtg-ti, the Confucian name for the 'Supreme Ruler' or Shin which may mean 'spirit'. If there had been a pure name or

description for 'God' in China, a name not debased by association with the religions of the country, there would have been no difficulty. In Arabic-speaking countries, the word 'Allah' is used for the one God in heaven, the singular of Elohim is 'Elah' in the Arabic it is 'ilah', and with the article 'al ilah' —the modern equivalent of 'Allah'. This is a good Arabic title for God, but if I speak of Allah to a Christian, or Jew, living in an Arabic-speaking country, I at once associate myself with Mohammedanism.

What name then was Moses to write? God had revealed Himself to him by the name of Jehovah, and that name had been announced to the children of Israel in Egypt and was revered by them. Now that the ancient records of their race, preserved in purity and handed down by Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, were being edited and possibly translated by Moses; what name should he use, seeing that the ancient title 'El Shaddai', God Almighty or All Sufficient, had been corrupted by its use in connection with scores of other 'gods' each of whom were called 'god almighty' by their devotees? The most natural course was to use the name Jehovah. Thus then, is the presence of the word Jehovah in Genesis quite naturally explained. Not by assuming a complicated jumble of tangled documents written by unknown writers as the critics do, or by an evasion of the literal meaning of Exodus 6:3, but by the inspiration by which God led Moses in most instances to translate 'El Shaddai' by the word Jehovah,— His distinguishing name, which separated Him from the heathen gods around.

When it is understood that Genesis is composed of a series of tablets as indicated by the formula: "These are the origins of ..."; it will be seen that it aids in a most significant way, in explaining the remarkable use of the name and title given to

Jehovah God. In our survey of the first tablet we saw that the only Divine name on it was 'God,' also that the contents of this tablet were a personal revelation to Adam. At the dawn of history it was sufficient to use the name 'God', for at that time there were no other 'gods', so that a name in addition to a title was obviously unnecessary in the first tablet.

The second tablet (2:4b—4:26) written, as we noticed, before the beginning of the Flood, contains both the title 'God' and the name 'Jehovah'. In this tablet the name and title are always used together except by the tempter and Eve, and this exclusive combined use is peculiar to this tablet. Is not this due to the revelation, given during this period, of the cuneiform equivalent of the title El Shaddai, now translated Jehovah? It was of the days of Adam's grandson, Enosh, that we read, "then began men to call upon the name of Jehovah". Hence, in this tablet, we have both a name and a title for God, for the most probable reason, that at this time men began to worship other gods, so that then a distinguishing name became a necessity.

"Higher Criticism" originated on the basis of the changes in the use of the Divine name and title, but now the critical case falls to the ground on the new evidence produced. This evidence not only fully accounts for this variation, but explains its necessity, as it applies to Genesis. The late Dr. W. H. Green said in his *The Higher Criticism and the Pentateuch* (p.89), "*It may be observed, however, that so far as there is anything remarkable in the alternation of these names in the Pentateuch it is confined almost entirely to the Book of Genesis and chiefly to the earlier portion of that Book.*"

It will be noticed that the tablets of which Genesis is composed, sometimes correspond with the divisions which critics have formed on other grounds. The critics have

endeavoured to divide the Book up into documents, and to assert that they were written at a late date which would agree with their theory. On the other hand the writer of this essay came to Genesis simply to find its natural divisions, and discovered that by adhering to the proper use of the formula: "These are the origins of . . ."; that the book revealed its own original records, and thereafter the critical and other difficulties, especially those connected with the use of the name and title for God, vanished.

Air Commodore P. J. Wiseman C.B.E.

Yahweh Banned in Church

Howse, Christopher, *Sacred Mysteries*, Daily Telegraph, p33. 20/09/08
The Vatican has banned the use of the name Yahweh during church services. This has brought some interesting reactions. The ruling was a surprise to me, I must admit, though one might have seen it coming, since in 1992 the Catechism of the Catholic Church, published in 1992, noted: "Out of respect for the holiness of God, the people of Israel do not pronounce his name. In the reading of Sacred Scripture, the revealed name (YHWH) is replaced by the divine title Lord (in Hebrew Adonai, in Greek Kyrios)".

To English readers it is not quite clear whether Yahweh is a name or a description of God. Such a distinction is suggested by a conversation that the logician Charles Dodgson puts into the mouths of Alice and Humpty Dumpty, in *Through the Looking-Glass*:

"My name is Alice, but -"

"It's a stupid enough name!" Humpty Dumpty interrupted impatiently. "What does it mean?"

"Must a name mean something?" Alice asked doubtfully.

"Of course it must," Humpty Dumpty said with a short laugh: "My name means the shape I am - and a good handsome shape it is, too. With a name like yours, you might be any shape, almost."

We are unused in modern times to our names meaning much about us. The Old Testament is deeply interested in such matters. The Catechism notes that when God spoke to Moses from the burning bush (Exodus, 3:14), the name he gives "YHWH", ('I am He who is', 'I am who am' or 'I am who I am') is mysterious just as God is mystery. It is once a name revealed and something like the refusal of a name, and hence it better expresses God as what he is - infinitely above everything that we can understand or say." At one and the same time "his name is ineffable, and he is the God who makes himself close to men".

For Christian philosophers it did not take long to link "I am who am" to the notion of God being self-subsistent being, whose essence is identical to his act of being. For Christian non-philosophers, the four Hebrew letters YHWH (the so-called Tetragrammaton) remained numinous markers. One sometimes sees the four Hebrew letters written high up in churches, with representations of light darting from them. "Avoiding pronouncing the Tetragrammaton of the name of God on the part of the Church has therefore its own grounds," said a recent letter to bishops from the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. "Apart from a motive of a purely philological order, there is also that of remaining faithful to the Church's tradition, from the beginning, that the sacred Tetragrammaton was never pronounced in the Christian context nor translated into any of the languages into which the Bible was translated."

The trouble is that the translation known as the Jerusalem Bible (1966), the word is indeed rendered Yahweh. "It is in

the Psalms especially that the use of the divine name Yahweh may seem unacceptable” said the translators in the editorial foreword. “It is not without hesitation that this accurate form has been used, and no, doubt those who may care to use this translation of the Psalms can substitute the traditional ‘the Lord’. On the other hand, this would be to lose much of the flavour and meaning of the originals.”

Would it, though?

There is no doubt that many Jews find offensive the use by Christians of the word Yahweh all over the place. Thus it is that a bestselling hymnodist called Dan Schulte began to have second thoughts about it, even though he used "Yahweh" in one of his hits, *You Are Near*. He had relied on the Jerusalem Bible version of the Psalms in composing the hymn in 1970, but recently commented that out of consideration for Christian tradition and offence to "Jewish sisters and brothers" he had, after 1973, stopped using the word in his works. In earlier centuries, the name had, been differently supplied with vowels and was pronounced "Jehovah". Indeed, "Guide me O thou great Jehovah: is the first line of that favourite hymn Bread of Heaven in the version of 1771 translated by Peter Williams from his Welsh hymn Arglwydd arwain, written in 1745. It had to wait until 1905 to get its rousing tune Cwm Rhondda. In a hymn collection published in 1854, - "Great Redeemer" replaced "Jehovah" in the first line, and it is that version which is today familiar to rugby crowds.