

OUR GOD (*ELOHIM=THEOS*)

I. SEVEN HOLY (OT) NAMES FOR GOD

- A. El: “The Strong,” Powerful
- B. Elohim: He Who Possesses the Fullness of Power
- C. Adonai: The Lord, Commander, Judge
- D. Shaddai: The Mighty One
- E. Eljon: The Highest
- F. Kadosch: The Holy One
- G. Yahweh: The Proper Name, His Essential Name: He Who Is

II. IMMUTABLE (Ps 102:25-27; Mal 3:16) –unchanging

- A. Herman Bavinck: “The doctrine of God’s immutability is the highest significance for religion. The

contrast between being and becoming marks the difference between the Creator and the creature. Every creature is continually becoming. It is changeable, constantly striving, seeks rest and satisfaction, and finds this rest in God, in him alone, for only he is pure being and no becoming. Hence, in Scripture, God is often called the Rock. . . .”

- B. As *He Who IS*, necessarily unchanging—always same (cf. Parmenides’ insight), even while interacted with changing creation
 1. James 1:17—“the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”
 2. I John 1:5—“God is light and in him is no darkness at all”
 3. N.B.: $e=mc^2$ holds light to be the sole constant (speed & essence) in the universe; analogically God, like light, ever-the-same
- C. As *He Who IS*, necessarily unchanging, (Louis Berkhof says) in His:
 1. Being: thus cannot be non-God—no suicide, no evil, no non-Godlike
 2. Perfections: i.e. Transcendentals: Goodness, Truth, Beauty
 3. Purposes: i.e. Creation for manifestation of His Being, Communion with creation
 4. Promises: i.e. Redemption, eternal life
- D. Current threat: *God Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents God*
 1. Constructivists: Liberals (Schleiermacher, Tillich, Harnack); Feminists (Daly, Johnson, Reuther); Pluralists (Hick); Postmodernists
 2. Developmentalists: Hegelians; Process Theologians (Whitehead, Hartshorne; Ogden; Cobb); Open Theists (Pinnock, Sanders)
 3. Current influences: feminist’s “S/he Who Is” alterations; “LOVE is God;” Self-Love & positive thinking; “emergent church”

III. INFINITE—only God truly *infinite*

- A. Incorporeal: non-physical, non-material, non-spatial—pure Spirit; transcendent (Wholly Other); consider, analogously, the similar characteristics of a “point” in geometry
- B. Immense: greatest possible
 1. Immeasurable (Ps 138:7; Ps 145:13; Job 38:18) and thus boundless, spatially unlimited—**(Omnipresent)**
 2. Interminable: non-temporal, timeless, everlasting—**Eternal** (Ps 89:2); Boethius: “Eternity is the simultaneously whole and perfect possession of interminable life.”
 3. Unlimited
 - a. Power (**Omnipotent**)—Mt 19:26
 - b. Knowledge (**Omniscient**)—Ps 146:5

IV. ALIVE—pure ACT (existing BEING) (I Jn 1:2; John 5:26; Gn 1:11, 20, 24, 26)

- A. Unlike idols, abstractions, ideologies
- B. Answers enduring mystery: *what* empowers living beings

ELOHIM

Elohim is the common name for God. It is a plural form, but “The usage of the language gives no support to the supposition that we have in the plural form *Elohim*, applied to the God of Israel, the remains of an early polytheism, or at least a combination with the higher spiritual beings” (Kautzsch).

Etymology

Elohim has been explained as a plural form of *Eloah* or as plural derivative of *El*.

The ancient Jewish and the early ecclesiastical writers agree with many modern scholars in deriving *Elohim* from *El*, but there is a great difference of opinion as to the method of derivation.

The use of the word

The Hebrews had three common names of God, *El*, *Elohim*, and *Eloah*; besides, they had the proper name *Yahweh*. Nestle is authority for the statement that *Yahweh* occurs about six thousand times in the Old Testament, while all the common names of God taken together do not occur half as often.

Its great age may be shown from its general occurrence among all the Semitic races, and this in its turn may be illustrated by its presence in the proper names found in Genesis 4:18; 25:13; 36:43.

Meaning of the word

If *Elohim* be regarded as derived from *El*, its original meaning would be “the strong one;” “the foremost one;” “to be in front of;” “the mighty one;” “He after whom one strives;” “Who is the goal of all human aspiration and endeavor;” “to whom one attaches oneself closely”

Moreover, the name *El* is prior to *Elohim* (op. cit., p. 77 sq.) and *El* is both a proper and a common name of God. Originally it was either a proper name and has become a common name, or it was a common name has become a proper name. In either case, *El*, and, therefore, also its derivative form *Elohim*, must have denoted the one true God.

--ELOHIM, in *Catholic Encyclopedia*

God Under Fire: Modern Scholarship reinvents God,
eds, Douglas Huffman & Eric Johnson

“This newer version is a kinder, gentler God—less threatening, more congenial, and more affirming. No longer the almighty, all-glorious center of the universe, this God seems to be more centered on us, less interested in obedience, and more concerned with our happiness” (#147 in Kindle).

“Upon close inspection, it becomes obvious that this new, improved deity is not the same God as was vanquished earlier in the twentieth century. This God is an imposter” (#154).

“These alternative Christian theologies can be broadly grouped into two different (but no necessarily mutually exclusive) camps, which we will call “Constructivist” and “Developmentalist” models” (#172).

“Constructivism regards the theological enterprise as intrinsically compromised by humanity’s inability to grasp things as they are in themselves, particularly things that lie beyond the empirical universe, which the natural sciences can describe” (#178).

“Perhaps the greatest Constructivist of the twentieth century was Paul Tillich” (#185).

“Postmodernism has not radically altered Constructivism; it has just changed the locus of ultimate authority from the self and its reason to the community and its perspective. Neither modernists nor postmodernists, in undiluted form, believe they can make valid claims about God’s nature with much confidence” (#198).

“Developmentalists also wish to jettison the historic Christian understanding of God because, contrary to historic Christianity, they believe that God is undergoing constant development as he interacts with humans and reacts to human actions, creativity, and cultural progress” (#277).

“Descending from the thought of Hegel and bolstered by evolutionary theory, theological Developmentalists reject the historic understanding of God as absolutely independent of his creation and the bounds of time” (#277).

“Thus [to Whitehead], ‘it is as true to say that God creates the World, as that the World creates God,’ and ‘God and the world are mutually necessary.’ What all this means is that ultimately, the Whiteheadian God is dependent fully on the universe and cannot directly bring about emerging realities or effect changes without the cooperating activity of God’s creation’ (#307).

“Whitehead offered a temporal, developing, relational God, who persuades rather than coerces and therefore is better able, so he claimed, to relate to human beings than the alleged timeless, passionless, monarchical God of historical Christianity. In addition, this God, with no unilateral or final control over events in the universe, plays no role in the occurrence of sin and evil” (#314).

“Another, less radical Developmentalist model of God is that of ‘open theism,’ a relatively new approach to God, obviously influenced by process theism but defended by self-identified evangelicals” (#357).

COUNTING TO GOD

In *Counting to God: A Personal Journey Through Science to Belief* (Attitude Media, c. 2014), Douglas Ell sets forth the reasons he came to (and continues to) believe in the existence of God. Primarily it was to answer “the great question” regarding the cosmos. This “great question” endures as perhaps the most ancient and abiding questions ever posed. “Accident or design—that is the question. What do you think?” (Kindle #52). With an abiding interest in science—taking a double major in math and physics at MIT as an undergraduate, then adding a graduate degree in theoretical mathematics from the University of Maryland—Ell carefully considered (while busily practicing law for three decades) the evidence available. He slowly came to believe that mounting scientific evidence fits easily into faith in the God revealed in Scripture. Consequently he wants “to go right to the core of the new scientific evidence of design in the universe, and thus the existence of God. To me, it is the most exciting issue of our age” (#86).

In a chapter devoted to his “personal journey” Ell explains why science and mathematics have been so important to him and now form a solid part of his faith’s foundation. As a child he found numbers magical, intriguing, something of a key to Reality. So too he found all aspects of the universe simply fascinating. Unfortunately, he could not fit God into his understanding of what seemed so real and important to him. What he garnered from his childhood Sunday school classes (with their stories of Noah *et al.*) seemed impossible to accept, so he “began to doubt God and the Bible” (#266). Science appeared better grounded and more cogent to him than Bible stories.

Years later, prodded by his wife, he joined her in attending church services, where he was surprised above all by the inner peace enjoyed by many of the parishioners. Since his legal work required considerable time on airplanes he began seriously reading in an effort to reconcile science (but not the *Scientism* which restricts all reality to the natural realm) and religion (but not the *Fideism* which denigrates the importance of reason). “We believers,” he declares in ending his treatise, “need to wake up and see the world the way it is. The most magnificent battle of our generation, and for our children and our children’s children, is not Islam versus Christianity; it is Scientism versus Belief” (#3451).

Unfortunately, today’s Scientistic elites, ensconced in “most colleges and universities, newspapers, magazines, and television and movie producers—want you to believe that our universe is meaningless and pointless, a grand system where everything somehow arose by accident and with no purpose or design but somehow, miraculously, gives the appearance of design” (#763). Countering this are the advocates of Intelligent Design. Their pedigree includes some of the most illustrious scientists of all time—Copernicus, Kelvin, Newton *et al.* Carefully following the scientific method—demanding evidence with which to craft reasonable hypotheses—Intelligent Design thinkers then and now argue that the sheer ubiquity of “apparent” design virtually proves it’s real and points logically to a Designer. This is particularly evident when one considers the mathematical probabilities involved in bringing our world into being.

The natural world (our wondrous universe) clearly reveals the Creator. It is, to the author, in its own way a Gospel—good news to inquiring thinkers. At least seven “wonders” deserve our attention and celebration: 1) the universe began, abruptly, 14 billion years ago; 2) this universe is “fine tuned” for life as we know it; 3) life itself is an incredible miracle; 4) living things reveal an amazingly intricate technology, enabling them to function according to meticulous plans; 5) the origin of new species remains a mystery unexplained by Darwinians; 6) planet earth is uniquely suited for life; and 7) quantum physics enables us to transcend earlier ways of thinking about time and space and causality. Providing the book’s structure, “Each of these wonders is scientific support for the hypothesis of God” (#165). Discussing these points, Ell provides (in readable form for laymen) insight into the current state of knowledge regarding the cosmos. These seven wonders provide data for the “logic of belief” that connects the dots and provides the worldview Ell embraces.

For open-minded readers, for folks interested in finding God: “You have a choice. You can accept the dogma of Scientism as fact and believe the universe is an accident, without meaning and without purpose, and live your life that way. Or you can use the gift of reason to consider new evidence, evidence that just might lead you to believe in the designed universe of absolute wonder and evidence that just might let you live your life with meaning, with purpose, and with a sense of a greater reality, in awe of life’s mysteries and designs. Choose well; it’s your life” (#443).