

WHO IS GOD?
Apologetics
Závadka, 10th January 2015

וְנִדְעָה נִדְבָּרָה לְדַעַת אֱתֵיְהוָה	Hos 6:3 Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD
דַּעַת אֱתֵיְהוָה	Jer 31:34 And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ' Know the LORD, ' for <u>they shall all know me</u> , from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will <u>forgive their iniquity</u> , and I will remember their sin no more."
Heb 8:11-12 καὶ οὐ μὴ διδάξωσιν ἕκαστος τὸν πολίτην αὐτοῦ καὶ ἕκαστος τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ λέγων· γινῶθι τὸν κύριον, ὅτι πάντες εἰδήσουσίν με ἀπὸ μικροῦ ἕως μεγάλου αὐτῶν, ¹² ὅτι ἴλεως ἔσομαι ταῖς ἀδικίαις αὐτῶν καὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν οὐ μὴ μνησθῶ ἔτι.	Heb 8:11-12 And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, ' Know the Lord, ' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. ¹² For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."

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0. INTRODUCTION: HOW CAN WE THINK ABOUT GOD?

0.1. THE CONTEXT

- “Who are you?” – the answer depends on the situation in which the question is asked. (→ name; → nationality; → profession; → duty; → character...)
- “Who is God?” – the greatest of all the topics to think about
 - ...among many? (**1Cor 8:5-6** For although there may be so-called gods (λεγόμενοι θεοί) in heaven or on earth - as indeed there are **many "gods"** and many "lords" (θεοὶ πολλοὶ καὶ κύριοι πολλοί) - ⁶ 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.)

- ...the One and only! (Dt 6:4 "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.¹)

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד

- The problem of faith: – how is the existence of God compatible with what we know about the world?...

[CHAMBERS] God is the only Being Who can afford to be misunderstood; He deliberately stands aside and lets Himself be slandered and misrepresented; He never vindicates Himself.²

- Contemporary context - (1) philosophical and (2) methodological atheism, (3) anthropocentrism, (4) scientism...

“Know then thyself, presume not God to scan:

The proper study of mankind is man.”

A. POPE. *Essay on Man*, Epistle ii. 1. 1.

[SPURGEON] It has been said by someone that “the proper study of mankind is man.” I will not oppose the idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God’s elect is God. The proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy which can ever engage the attention of a child of God is the name, the nature, the Person, the work, the doings and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father. There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity—so deep that our pride is drowned in its infinity.³

- WEISCHEDEL *Der Gott der Philosophen*

It’s possible to think about God as if He was distant and not intervening but we will never get to know Him if we take Him as an object. Only he who is willing to submit to God will hear from God – and without hearing from God there is no way of knowing Him. In order to know God one needs to acknowledge a total dependence on Him.

Everyone is born without desire to worship the one true God – need of repentance of idolatry.

Ask yourself: Am I worshipping the one true God? Who is He?

Hos 6:3 ...let us press on to acknowledge Him

God created me to seek Him: (see Acts 17 below)

0.2. THE POWER OF A PREMISE

- If God exists, it is impossible to think truthfully about God without God.
- “Hidden God” → **Is 45:15** Truly, you are a God who hides yourself (אֱתָה אֵל מְסֻתָּתָר), O God of Israel, the Savior.
- **Acts 17:26-27** And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, ²⁷ that they should seek God (^{BYZ} **17:27** ζητεῖν τὸν κύριον), in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us,

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0.3. THE MEANING OF NAMES IN HEBREW

- Hebrew names → characteristic attributes
 - **Pr 22:1** A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold.
- the names of God: (1) invocation (2) description

¹ **ESV Notes:** (1) Or (The LORD) Yahweh our God is one LORD; or The LO RD is our God, the LORD is one; or The LORD is our God, the LORD alone.

² CHAMBERS, O. *The love of God*.

³ SPURGEON, C. H. *Sermons (7th January 1855)*. “The Immutability of God”

- (Pr 18:10 The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.)

1. THE TRANSCENDENCE AND THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

- transcendence → God beyond knowledge
 - (unapproachable light: 1Tim 6:15-16 ...he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone has immortality, who dwells in **unapproachable** light (φῶς οὐκ ὄν ἀπρόσιτον), whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.)
- immanence → God present in his creation (known by what He did and is doing now)
 - Acts 17:28 "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we are indeed his offspring".⁴
 - Rom 1:20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature (ἡ τε ἀίδιος αὐτοῦ δύναμις καὶ θεϊότης), have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made (τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα καθοράται).

1.1. EX 3:17 – “GOD IN HIMSELF”

- Ex 3:13-15 Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?"¹⁴ God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." (אֲנִי אֶהְיֶה אֲנִי אֶהְיֶה)⁵ And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM (אֶהְיֶה) has sent me to you.'" ¹⁵ God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'The LORD (יְהוָה), the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.

1.2. EX 20 – “GOD OVER CREATION”

- Ex 6:2-3 God spoke to Moses and said to him, "I am the LORD. (אֲנִי יְהוָה)³ I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty (בְּאֵל שַׁדַּי), but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them. (וְשֵׁם יְהוָה לֹא נִודַעְתִּי לָהֶם)
- Ex 20:7 You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain
לֹא תִשָּׂא אֶת־שֵׁם־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשׁוֹן

2. THE HOLINESS AND THE LOVE OF GOD

- Rom 11:22 Note then the kindness and the severity (ἵδε οὖν χρηστότητα καὶ ἀποτομίαν θεοῦ) of God...

- holiness → judgment (Is 5:16 the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness
הָאֵל הַקְדוֹשׁ נִקְדָּשׁ בַּצְדָקָה)
- love → salvation

2.1. IS 6 – HOLINESS AND JUDGMENT

- Is 6:3 "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"
- (1) ontological holiness, (2) ethical holiness

[OTTO, R.] Tremor is in itself merely the perfectly familiar and natural emotion of fear. But here the term is taken, aptly enough but still only by analogy, to denote a quite specific kind of emotional response, wholly distinct from that of being afraid, though it so far resembles it that the analogy of fear may be used to throw light upon its nature. There are in some languages special expressions which denote, either exclusively or in the first instance, this fear that is more than fear proper. The Hebrew *hqdsh* (hallow) is an example. To keep a thing holy in the heart means to mark it off by a feeling of peculiar dread, not to

⁴ **ESV Notes** (1) Probably from Epimenides of Crete (2) From Aratus's poem "Phainomena"

⁵ Or I AM WHAT I AM, or I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE

be mistaken for any ordinary dread, that is, to appraise it by the category of the numinous. But the Old Testament throughout is rich in parallel expressions for this feeling.⁶

- **Lev 19:2** You shall **be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy**
- **1Pt 1:16** You shall **be holy, for I am holy**

2.2. 1JOHN 4 – LOVE AND SALVATION

- **1Jn 4:8** Anyone who does not **love** does not know **God**, because **God is love**. ...**1Jn 4:16** So we have come to know and to believe the **love** that **God** has for us. **God is love**, and whoever abides in **love** abides in **God**, and **God** abides in him.
- → **Jn 3:16** For **God** so **loved the world**, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

3. THE SPIRITUALITY AND THE INCARNATION OF GOD

- dichotomies: physical↔mental; seen↔unseen; natural↔supernatural; spiritual↔carnal...
- most important: the spirit vs. flesh (**Is 31:3** The Egyptians **are** man, and **not** God, and their horses **are** flesh, and **not** spirit (סוּסֵיהֶם בָּשָׂר וְלֹא־רוּחַ)). When the LORD stretches out his hand, the helper will stumble, and he who is helped will fall, and **they** will all perish together.)

3.1. WHY DO WE WANT TO KNOW GOD?

- curiosity? “objective” knowledge? controversy?...
- The danger: **Eze 14:7-8** For any one of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn in Israel, who separates himself from me (יָנֹזֵר מֵאֵחָדִי), taking his idols into his heart and putting the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and yet comes to a prophet to consult me through him, I the LORD will answer him myself. ⁸ And I will set my face against that man; I will make him a sign and a byword and cut him off from the midst of my people, and you shall know that I am the LORD.

3.2. THE RIGHT WORSHIP POSSIBLE ONLY THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT

- **Jn 4:24** **God is spirit**, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.
- **Jn 3:5** ...unless one is born of water and the **Spirit**, he cannot enter the kingdom of God
- **Rom 8:15** you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “**Abba! Father!**”
- **Gal 4:6** And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “**Abba! Father!**”!
- **Lk 11:13** If you then, who are evil, know how **to** give good gifts **to** your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!

3.3. THE RIGHT WORSHIP POSSIBLE ONLY THROUGH JESUS

- **John 5:23** Anyone who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

4. TO REMEMBER

- Every thought of God, if it should be correct, has to be assisted by God.
- We must be careful not to concentrate only on those attributes of God that we like.
- To worship God is impossible without the Spirit of God and Jesus’ cross.

⁶ OTTO, R. *The Idea of the Holy*, p. 13-14