

THE LIVING GOD
The Attributes of God
Banska Bystrica, 28th February 2016

וַיְהִי אֱלֹהִים אֱמֶת הוּא־אֱלֹהִים תָּיִם וּמְלִךְ עוֹלָם מְקַצֵּפוֹ תְרַעַשׁ הָאָרֶץ וְלֹא־יִכְלֹוּ גוֹיִם וְעַמּוֹת
 כִּדְבַר תְּאֻמְרוּן לְהוֹם אֱלֹהֵיָא דִּי־שְׁמַיָא וְאַרְקָא לֹא עֲבָדוּ יִאֲבָדוּ מֵאַרְעָא וּמִן־תְּחִילַת שְׁמַיָא אֱלֹהֵיָא
 עָשָׂה אֶרֶץ בְּכַחַם מְכִין תְּבַל בְּחִקְמָתוֹ וּבְתַבּוּנָתוֹ נִטָּה שְׁמַיִם

Jer 10:10-12 ¹⁰ But the LORD is the true God; he is the **living God** and the everlasting King. At his wrath the earth quakes, and the nations cannot endure his indignation. ¹¹[Aramaic] Thus shall you say to them: “The gods who did not make the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under the heavens.” ¹²It is he who made the earth by his power, who established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens.

Acts 17:27-28 οὐ μακρὰν ἀπὸ ἐνδὸς ἐκάστου ἡμῶν ὑπάρχοντα. ²⁸ ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ ζῶμεν καὶ κινούμεθα καὶ ἐσμέν, ὡς καὶ τινες τῶν καθ’ ὑμᾶς ποιητῶν εἰρήκασιν· τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν.

Acts 17:27-28 Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, ²⁸ for “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.

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0. INTRODUCTION:

[CHAMBERS] The “aleness” of God is a doctrine continually stated in the Bible. The Bible does not say that Nature is God, nor does it state anywhere that all will be absorbed into God. The Bible view of God is not being accepted to-day; we do not think of God as the Being presented in the Bible, our actions prove we do not; the things we are haunted by prove we do not; the way we don’t trust Him proves we do not. To have the conception clearly in our souls that God is a transcendent God must be wrought in us by the Holy Ghost. God created everything and upholds all things by the word of His power, and His nature is discerned by His handiwork, but that is a different thing from saying God is all. God breathes into us the Holy Spirit Who energises our spirit, and we become eternally never God, but God’s lovers (see Rom 5:5).¹

¹ CHAMBERS, O. *Notes on Jeremiah*. In: Complete Works, p. 1409-10.

0.1. THE TEXT

- “The Targum prefaces v 11 with these words: 'This is the copy of the letter which the Prophet Jeremiah sent to the leaders of the exile in Babylon: "If the Chaldeans say to you, worship our idols, then answer them as follows.'" This suggests that v 11 was a shortened version of a letter sent by Jeremiah to Jehoiachin and the other exiles in Babylon [where Aramaic was spoken] between 598 and 587 B.C.”²

The following comparison shows how completely unlike idols and God are.³

IDOLS	GOD
fashioned by man (v. 3)	unique (vv. 6-7)
created (v. 3)	Creator (vv. 12, 16)
helpless (v. 5)	mighty in power (v. 6)
speechless (v. 5)	wise (v. 12)
contemptible, impotent (v.5)	worthy of reverence (v. 7)
inanimate (v. 5)	living (v. 10)
ineffective (v. 5)	powerful (vv. 10-11)
perishable (v. 5)	enduring
wooden, emptiness (v. 8)	King, Lord Almighty (vv. 7, 10, 16)
fear is inappropriate (v. 5)	fear is quite appropriate (v. 7)

0.2. LIFE

- He is "the living God." Not a mere impersonal all-pervading Force; not a self-evolving Law; but a Being. And because He lives, He has life in Himself, underived, and is Himself the Fount of Life, dispensing vitality to humanity.⁴

1. GOD IS LIVING

- **Heb 10:31** It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the **living God** (θεοῦ ζῶντος).

1.1. THE PROBLEM OF IDOLATRY

- “In Jeremiah's time as in our own, *the critical faith issue* is not atheism, but idolatry.”⁵
- **1Cor 8:5-6** there may be so-called gods (λεγόμενοι θεοί) in heaven or on earth – as indeed there are many "gods" and **many "lords"** – ⁶ yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist (ἀλλ' ἡμῖν εἷς θεὸς ὁ πατὴρ ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν), and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

1.2. THE LIVING RESPONSE TO THE LIVING GOD

- **Ps 42:2** My soul thirsts for God, for the **living God** (לֵאֱלֹהִים לְחַיִּים). When shall I come and appear before God?
- **Ps 84:2** ...my heart and flesh sing for joy to the **living God** (אֵל־חַיִּים)

[CHARNOCK] God is a Spirit infinitely active, and therefore frozen and benumbed frames are unsuitable to him; he 'rides upon a cherub' and flies; he comes upon the 'wings of the wind;' he 'rides upon a swift cloud' and therefore demands of us not a dull reason, but an active spirit. **God is a living God, and therefore must have a lively service.**⁶

² CONSTABLE, T. L. *Notes on Jeremiah 2016*, (Published by Sonic Light: <http://www.soniclight.com/>)

³ MARTENS, E. A. *Jeremiah*, Scottdale : Herald Press, 1986, p. 86.

⁴ JELLIE, W. H. *The Preacher's Commentary on the Book of Jeremiah*, London : Richard D. Dickinson, 1888, p. 219.

⁵ BRUEGGEMANN, W. *To Pluck Up, To Tear Down*, Grand Rapids : Eerdmann, 1988, p. 97.

⁶ CHARNOCKE, S. *The Existence and Attributes of God*, London : Henry G. Bohn, 1849, p. 140

2. GOD IS SELF-EXISTENT

- **Ex 3:14** God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM" (אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה [LXX ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν]) And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (אֲהַיְיָ שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֵיכֶם)"

2.1. ASEITAS

- *aseitas* → existing "a se" (*of himself*) "He hath life by his essence, not by participation." (CHARNOCK)
- **John 5:26** For as the **Father** has **life** in himself (ὁ πατήρ ἔχει ζωὴν ἐν ἑαυτῷ), so he has granted the Son also to have **life** in himself.

2.2. ABSOLUTELY FREE

- possible meanings: I shall be Who I am; I am Who I shall be; I shall be Who I shall be...
- "to exist" as "to be"(?):
 - "*Existo*, I stand out, stand forth, appear, rise into being. For *exsisto*."⁷ → ἐξέρχομαι...
 - "*Exist* – ex(s)istere to stand out, be perceptible, hence to exist, f. ex- out + sistere reduplicated form of stā- to stand. (The late appearance of the word is remarkable: it is not in Cooper's Lat.-Eng. Dict. 1565)"⁸
 - "*exsisto* (existo). stiti, (mostly with the additional idea of coming into existence: v. to arise, appear)"⁹
 - "*ex(s)isto* – To come into view or sim., appear. b to rise from the dead; – To come forward, present oneself (in some capacity). b to show oneself, prove to be (of a given character); (also of things). – (of activities, conditions) To come into being, emerge, arise."¹⁰
- **Ps 115:2** Why should the nations say, "Where is their God?"³ Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases (לְמָה יֹאמְרוּ הַגּוֹיִם אֵי-הוּא אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וְיֹאדְהֵינוּ בְּשָׁמַיִם כָּל אֲשֶׁר-הַפֶּסֶךְ עָשָׂה)

2.3. IMMORTAL

- **1Tim 6:15-16** ...the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords,¹⁶ who alone has **immortality** (ἀθανασία), who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see.
 - He in whom immortality essentially exists, and who enjoys it neither derivatively nor by participation¹¹

3. GOD IS THE GIVER OF LIFE

- **Ps 36:9** For with you is the fountain of life (מְקוֹר חַיִּים); in your light do we see light
- **John 1:4** In him was life, and the life was the light of men (ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων)

3.1. THE CREATOR OF LIFE

- **Ps 33:6** By the word of the LORD (בְּדְבַר יְהוָה שָׁמַיִם נַעֲשָׂו) the heavens were made, And by the breath of His mouth all their host.
- **Ps 102:25** Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. (לְפָנִים הָאָרֶץ יִסְדַּתָּ וּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדִידָךְ שָׁמַיִם)

⁷ VALPY, F. E. J. *Etymological Dictionary of the Latin Language*, London : Valpy, 1828.

⁸ *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford : OUP 2009.

⁹ SMITH, W. – HALL, T. D. *A Copious and Critical English-Latin Dictionary*, New York : American Book Company, 1871,

¹⁰ *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, Clarendon Press, 1968.

¹¹ ELLICOTT, C. J. *Pastoral Epistles*, London : John W. Parker, 1856, p. 96

3.2. THE SUSTAINER OF LIFE

[CALVIN] After having said that God has real and solid glory in himself, he adds another proof, taken from what is known to men, even that God is life; for though God is in himself incomprehensible, yet he not only sets before our eyes evidences of his glory, but he also renders himself in a manner the object of feeling, as Paul says in Acts 14:17. What he means is, that though men were blind, they could yet by feeling find out God. Though the blind have no sight, yet they can find their way by feeling; they go round a hall or a room, and by feeling find the door; and when they wish to enter into a room, they find the door by the same means.¹²

- **Is 40:28-31** Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. (אֱלֹהֵי עוֹלָם יְהוָה בּוֹרֵא קְצוֹת הָאָרֶץ) He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.²⁹ He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength.³⁰ Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted;³¹ but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.
- **Is 45:7** I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things. (יוֹצֵר אֹר וּבוֹרֵא חֹשֶׁךְ עֹשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם וּבוֹרֵא רָע אֲנִי יְהוָה עֹשֶׂה כָּל-אֵלֶּה)

3.3. THE TETRAGRAMMATON

the verb הָיָה → הָיָה

- Many recent scholars explain יְהוָה as Hiph. of הָיָה = הוּוה the one bringing into being, life-giver (cf. הָיָה Gn 3:20); *giver of existence, creator*. (The pronunciation *Jehovah* was unknown until 1520, when it was introduced by GALATINUS;¹³ but it was contested by Le Mercier, J. Drusius, and L. Capellus, as against grammatical and historical propriety.)¹⁴
- The name יהוה is accordingly derived from the root הוה (= הִיָּה), and is regarded as an imperfect. This passage is decisive for the pronunciation "Yahweh"; for the etymology was undoubtedly based on the known word.¹⁵
- BDB states, "Many recent scholars explain יְהוָה as Hiph. of הוה:¹⁶
 - The one bringing into being;
 - Life-giver;
 - Giver of existence, creator;
 - He who brings to pass;
 - Performer of his promises;
 - He who causes to fall (rain or lightning);
- But most take it as Qal of הוה:
 - The one who is;
 - The absolute and unchangeable one;
 - The existing, ever-living;
 - The one ever coming into manifestation
 - He will be;
 - He will approve himself (give evidence of being, assert his being)

¹² CALVIN, J. *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah II*, Edinburgh : Calvin Translation Society, 1851, p. 27

¹³ "Galatinus himself ("Areana cathol. veritatis", I, Bari, 1516, a, p. 77) represents the form as known and received in his time. Besides, Drusius (loc. cit., 351) discovered it in Porchetus, a theologian of the fourteenth century. Finally, the word is found even in the "Pugio fidei" of Raymund Martin, a work written about 1270 (ed. Paris, 1651, pt. III, dist. ii, cap. iii, p. 448, and Note, p. 745). Probably the introduction of the name Jehovah antedates even R. Martin." (*New Advent*, "Jehovah [Yahweh]")

¹⁴ Brown-Driver-Briggs

¹⁵ SINGER, I. *The Jewish Encyclopedia XII*, New York : Ktav Publishing House, 1901, p. 119.

¹⁶ <http://www.abarim-publications.com/Meaning/YHWH.html#.VtIMk0CArgw> (27/02/2016)

4. TO REMEMBER

- Make sure you worship the real – the *living* God. \Rightarrow Does he have the initiative in your life?
- Make sure your God is not explained by the laws of nature (His creation) – God is absolutely independent from all other existence.
- Be aware of your constant, continuous and absolute dependence on God's sustaining power.