

ATTEMPTING TO
SQUARE THE CIRCLE



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Exodus 3: 1-15

Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said, 'I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.' When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.' Then he said, 'Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.' He said further, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Then the Lord said, 'I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.' But Moses said to God, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?' He said, 'I will be with you;

and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.'

*But Moses said to God, 'If I come to the Israelites and say to them, "The God of your ancestors has sent me to you", and they ask me, "What is his name?" what shall I say to them?' God said to Moses, '**I AM WHO I AM.**' He said further, 'Thus you shall say to the Israelites, "I am has sent me to you." 'God also said to Moses, 'Thus you shall say to the Israelites, "The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you":*

This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations.

This quote from Exodus 3 sounds like a very normal and reasonable conversation between two human beings. "Jewish and Christian tradition viewed Moses as the author of Exodus and the entire Pentateuch, but by the end of the 19th century the increasing awareness of discrepancies, inconsistencies, repetitions and other features of the Pentateuch had led scholars to abandon this idea. In approximate round dates, the process which produced Exodus and the Pentateuch probably began around 600 BCE when existing oral and written traditions were brought together to form books recognizable as those we know, reaching their final form as unchangeable sacred texts around 400 BCE. It is clear that the main outlines of the narrative were certainly known long before the seventh century BCE, in the allusions to the Exodus and the wandering in the wilderness contained in the oracles of the prophets Amos and Hosea a full century before." (Wikipedia)

"The story of the exodus is the founding myth of Israel, telling how the Israelites were delivered from slavery by Yahweh and

therefore belong to him through the Mosaic covenant. The Book of Exodus is not a historical narrative in any modern sense: *modern history writing requires the critical evaluation of sources, and does not accept God as a cause of events*, but in Exodus, everything is presented as the work of God, who appears frequently in person, and the historical setting is only very hazily sketched. The purpose of the book is not to record what really happened, but to reflect the historical experience of the exile community in Babylon and later Jerusalem, facing foreign captivity and the need to come to terms with the understanding of God.”

“Although mythical elements are not so prominent in Exodus as in Genesis, ancient legends have an influence on the book's content: for example, the story of the infant Moses's salvation from the Nile is based on an earlier legend of king Sargon of Akkad, while the story of the parting of the Red Sea trades on Mesopotamian creation mythology. Similarly, the Covenant Code (the law code in Exodus 20:22–23:33) has some similarities in both content and structure with the Laws of Hammurabi. These influences serve to reinforce the conclusion that the Book of Exodus originated in the exiled Jewish community of 6th-century BCE Babylon, but not all the sources are Mesopotamian: the story of Moses's flight to Midian following the murder of the Egyptian overseer may draw on the Egyptian Story of Sinuhe.” (Wikipedia)

Needless to say, Wikipedia is not expected to frame the gipped quotes above as “sacred texts,” nor as accurate, historic documents. When biblical texts are evaluated, in our opinion, they should be evaluated from a mythological, philosophical and theological perspective; if not, they will be, or seem to be only foolish, fantasies— scientifically speaking. Anyone who has ever had a subscription to *Biblical Archeology* has been

apprised of the many scientific facts that almost perfectly fit the narrative of the biblical texts, fantastic as that may seem. The bible although it is chronological is an accumulation of many books produced over time dealing with salvation history. Briefly, the term “salvation history” is the story of God’s dealing with the human race. Even if you don’t believe in God early biblical history is not pure fiction, it is mythology. Myths are the stories people tell to explain nature, history and customs. Myths have been a feature of every culture we have known.

Scientifically (Archeologically) looking back to the time of the earliest human beings we have documented evidence of early humanity’s consciousness of spirituality everywhere “man” has existed on the planet. In this respect, analogically searching for our origins was and still is an integral part of human nature recorded in the mythology of its time. Archeology in many ways does serve to validate much of ancient mythology in factual terms.

Good and Evil

The comfort of being drawn “towards the good” is a human proclivity, although, with our absolute freedom to act, a rejection of the good is always an option since we are a coincidence of opposing inclinations. This tends to put into perspective the idea of “original sin” from a biblical point of view. Remember, man was not created evil, but “fell” by disobeying the rules pertinent to his freedom, he and she had the option, according to Genesis. I think we can all agree that freedom must always be accompanied by responsibility. Being irresponsible is out-of-order, it shows that one can purposely be unaccountable or unreliable regarding his or her own activities.

It's not at all unusual to believe that behind all accountability is always an authorizing power, a force for a proper outcome; a rightness or appropriateness; a conditioned purpose for a living action. It exists as "the good." Now, since it is believed that the living spirit many of us call God, the Creator, is *all* good and did not create evil, then where did evil come from as far as we're concerned?

"God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good." (Genesis 1:31)

Let me suggest that evil may simply be too much of a good thing *in freedom*. In other words if *the good* is presumed to be totally and only at the discretion of man, believed to be a creature of God and a coincidence of opposites, he or she may choose to misuse the *good* for purposes other than that for which it was originally intended. The perversion of what is intrinsically *good* in this respect can be considered in itself *evil*. Last time I checked, evil did not exist before humans arrived on the scene. This appears to confirm our scientific timeline, mythologically put by the writer of Genesis. The first couple had obviously misused their freedom. You might say they went against their conscience (the inherent knowledge of good and not good, enlightened by reason and will) acquired when humanity came of age. We may place that specific couple or couples where ever we like in the dubious history of mankind. Perhaps they're the so called "missing link." Genesis says:

"The Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being."

Adjusting this mythological text to today's understanding (archeologically speaking) we could say that that the "breath of

life,” the breath of God, symbolically, was the life of God instantiated in the creature as he was conformed to “the likeness of God,” and not necessarily brought to life from non-life. This view is cognitively dissonant for most scientists but not for too many evangelicals who treasure the biblical texts as pure fact.

In another scenario, if man was created by *chance* out of “chemistry” and human nature “emerged” from a single celled creature over time, the idea of good and evil would be pointless. Chance, an abstraction, has no author, it is only possibility. The result is the evasion of contingency and the consciousness of human finitude. What could be bad? Nevertheless, from what we have seen over the centuries the good appears to have been reasonably favored by humanity with respect to life, love, beauty, truth, mercy, justice, etc., over the tendency to misuse those gifts altering their original purpose and final cause. That is not to say that chemistry per se is bad, it is simply a branch of science that deals with the identification of the substances which matter is composed of, once matter and energy had been created. It is the investigation of properties and their interaction, the way they combine and change, and the use of these processes forming new substances. Many say that chemistry produced life, there is no empirical proof to substantiate that claim except the vagaries of the term “emergence”. “Building blocks” do not make life. Bricks do not make a cathedral. This scenario is cognitively dissonant to most believers, but not for most scientists.

“No one, when tempted, should say, ‘I am being tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one.” (James 1: 13)

For us, the above quote should be one of the better expressions of human dignity. We have been created in freedom. In my view we have not reasoned ourselves to be free human beings by cause and effect. The transition from brain to mind was a very specific point in creation's sequence. "*We are a people set apart to sing the praises of God who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light.*" (Peter 2: 9) What is this "wonderful light" but our reason and *free* will and inevitably to know God as a person in Christ? What we do with that freedom— *we will do*. The grace of our participation in the life of God is revealed to us in thousands of ways by the very order of creation itself, and confirmed at "the fullness of time," by the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. Only through the grace of God is this story cognitively consonant with most christians and may be called faith.

"When grace is described as "participation in the life of God," both our human reason and our human will has to have been surrendered to an exterior or interior *experience* of a veritable reality of the living God in whom and with whom we willingly share our lives. Our existence is inexorably connected in a substantial way to the life of God our Father, through Jesus, in the Spirit." (see *Is Anybody Out There Normal*, F. Arundell) The Trinity is the key to understanding how Jesus could say: "*If you know me you will know my Father also*"; and: "*When He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.*"

It is the Spirit who provides the grace to persist in the love of God and each other; with the conviction of following Christ, trusting in the scriptures and tradition, empowering the whole Christian Church to say with humility: "We believe!"

“I am the way the truth and the life.” (Jn 14:6)

“Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me is doing his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else, believe because of the works themselves.”
(Jn 14: 9-11)

Aquinas and His Summa: Among Other Things

In our opinion few writings are more accessible and well ordered than the Summa Theologiae of St. Thomas Aquinas, especially as delivered online by *New Advent*, a blog by Kevin Knight. In Part One (Prima Pars) under Sacred Doctrine, St. Thomas gives us his theological views about The One God.

ESSENCE:

“We cannot know *what* God is, but only what He is not. So to study Him, we study what He *has* not -- such as composition and motion. His simplicity (3) or lack of composition. His perfection: and because everything in so far as it is perfect is called good, we shall speak of His goodness (6) -- and goodness in general (5) -- as well as His perfection (4). His infinity (7) and omnipresence (8). His immutability (9), and His eternity (10) following on His immutability. His unity (11). How God is known by us (12). The names of God (13).”

I like to think that every human being that ever lived is curious about the unseen power motivating what exists. One of our most famous theoretical physicists/cosmologists is Stephen Hawking, an atheist. His goal in life is simple: A complete understanding of the universe, why it is as it is and why it exists at all. “Look up at the stars” he says, “and not down at your feet. Try to make sense of what you see, and wonder about what makes the universe exist. Be curious.” What is curious for me at least, is that Dr. Hawking has spent his whole life looking up, when the road up and the road down is the same road. This is the mistake Aristotle made when he called Plato’s forms foolishness. Perhaps just one transcendent thought of what it is that’s “up” looking down, or what is hidden behind the silence he calls wonder, might have suggested a powerful intelligence greater than his own called God.

Stephen Hawking says in his latest book *The Grand Design*: “Because there is a law such as gravity, the universe can and will create itself from *nothing*.” In theoretical physics though, “A graviton is a hypothetical elementary particle that mediates the force of gravitation in the framework of quantum field theory. If it exists, the graviton is expected to be massless and must be a spin-2 boson.”(NASA) I’m sure Hawking knows that. If that is the case, the “graviton” surly would be *something* rather than nothing. We shall see.

Not too long ago “a team of scientists heard and recorded the sound of two black holes colliding a billion light-years away, a fleeting chirp that fulfilled the last prediction of Einstein’s general theory of relativity. That faint rising tone, physicists say, is the first direct evidence of gravitational waves, the ripples in the fabric of space-time that Einstein predicted a century ago. It completes his vision of a universe in which space and time are interwoven and dynamic, able to stretch,

shrink and jiggle. And it is a ringing confirmation of the nature of black holes, the bottomless gravitational pits from which not even light can escape, which were the most foreboding (and unwelcome) part of his theory.”(NASA) How things go from wave to particles and particles to waves is still on the front burner for science.

I cannot pursue all of Hawking’s possibilities, I neither have the knowledge nor the ego to get involved in the current concepts of quantum gravity, especially with a master. Maybe we could just say our models of physics and metaphysics differ.

“According to model-dependent realism, it is pointless to ask whether a model is real, only whether it agrees with observation.” (Stephen Hawking, *The Grand Design*. Random House. Kindle Edition.)

My problem with most of the scientific community is that they are trying to destroy God whom no one has seen (except the Son who is God) while *we* do not try to disprove theoretic, scientific possibilities. Most of them know as much about theology as we know about theoretical physics. Still, I’m in favor of standard-model physics and certainly, cosmological progress; while most scientists dismiss “spirituality” out-of-hand. One wonders who is curious and who is not. The non-believing scientist will not, nor cannot, in fact, accept any spiritually oriented model of reality, yet the work of most theoretical physicists remains purely speculative. The question is: Can there be any kind of an exchange at all when “nothing” is really real as Dr. Hawking has suggested?

Yehweh, The God of the Jews

“We cannot know what God is, but only what He is not.”

These words of St. Thomas would tend to upset many people who claim to know *what* God is. Christians have always been quite comfortable with the words: *“We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.”* These are the words from the First Council of Constantinople in the year 381, as amended from Nicaea, 325. From the earliest times God has been no secret. Humans knew of the existence of God or the gods while unable to see him; so to accommodate themselves they mentally transferred the power that they knew existed into things they could see, into their world: rocks, rills, sea, sky, the sun, the moon, animals, statuary, rain; in whatever they felt the need to idolize in local reality that would concretize their inclination.

Most scholars agree it was Abraham who reduced the many gods to the one God of the Hebrews. “This was Yahweh, the God of the Israelites, whose name was revealed to Moses as four Hebrew consonants (YHWH) called the tetragrammaton. After the Babylonian Exile (6th century BCE), and especially from the 3rd century BCE on, Jews ceased to use the name Yahweh for two reasons. As Judaism became a universal rather than merely local religion, the more common noun Elohim, meaning “God,” tended to replace Yahweh to demonstrate the universal sovereignty of Israel’s God over all others. At the same time, the divine name was increasingly regarded as too sacred to be uttered; it was thus replaced vocally in the synagogue ritual by the Hebrew word Adonai (“My Lord”), which was translated as Kyrios (“Lord”) in the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures.”(Wikipedia)

“The Masoretes, who from about the 6th to the 10th century worked to reproduce the original text of the Hebrew Bible, replaced the vowels of the name YHWH with the vowel signs of the Hebrew words Adonai or Elohim. Latin-speaking Christian scholars substituted the Y (which does not exist in Latin) with an I or a J (the latter of which exists in Latin as a variant form of I). Thus, the tetragrammaton became the artificial Latinized name Jehovah (JeHoWaH). As the use of the name spread throughout medieval Europe, the initial letter J was pronounced according to the local vernacular language rather than Latin. Although Christian scholars after the Renaissance and Reformation periods used the term Jehovah for YHWH, in the 19th and 20th centuries biblical scholars again began to use the form Yahweh.”(Wikipedia)

“Early Christian writers, such as St. Clement of Alexandria in the 2nd century, had used a form like Yahweh, and this pronunciation of the tetragrammaton was never really lost. Many Greek transcriptions also indicated that YHWH should be pronounced Yahweh. The meaning of the personal name of the Israelite God has been variously interpreted. Many scholars believe that the most proper meaning may be ‘He Brings into Existence Whatever Exists’ (Yahweh-Asher-Yahweh). In I Samuel, God is known by the name Yahweh Teva-‘ot, or ‘He Brings the Hosts into Existence,’ the hosts possibly referring to the heavenly court or to Israel. The personal name of God probably was known long before the time of Moses. The name of Moses’ mother was Jochebed (Yokheved), a word based on the name Yahweh. Thus, the tribe of Levi, to which Moses belonged, probably knew the name Yahweh, which originally may have been (in its short form Yo, Yah, or Yahu) a religious invocation of no precise meaning evoked by the mysterious and

awesome splendor of the manifestation of the holy.”(Britannica)

God the Father: One With Jesus

“In the New Testament, the Christian concept of God the Father may be seen as a continuation of the Jewish concept, but with specific additions and changes, which over time made the Christian concept become even more distinct by the start of the Middle Ages. The conformity to the Old Testament concepts is shown in (Matthew 4:10) and (Luke 4:8) where in response to temptation Jesus quotes (Deuteronomy 6:13) and states: “It is written, you shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.” (1 Corinthians 8:6) shows the distinct Christian teaching about the agency of Christ by first stating: “there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto him” and immediately continuing with “and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through him.” This passage clearly acknowledges the Jewish teachings on the uniqueness of God, yet also states the role of Jesus as an agent in creation. Over time, the Christian doctrine began to fully diverge from Judaism through the teachings of the Church Fathers in the second century and by the fourth century belief in the Trinity was formalized. (It was Jesus, through the scriptures, who clarified the understanding of the Father) According to Mary Rose D'Angelo and James Barr, the Aramaic term Abba was in the early times of the New Testament neither markedly a term of endearment, nor a formal word; but the word normally used by sons and daughters, throughout their lives, in the family context.” (Wikipedia) It was Jesus who called the Father Abba.

The Father of Jesus Christ and the God of Israel is one and the same God. In 2001, Fr. Richard Neuhaus, in an article in First Things Magazine wrote: “The second Person of the Holy Trinity, true God and true man, is Jewish flesh. As is the eucharistic body we receive, as is the Body of Christ into which we are incorporated by Baptism.” To the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s Well, in the city of Sychar, Jesus is reported to have said: *“You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.”* (John 4:22) The God that the early humans *knew* but could not see; the God of Israel who the Jews *knew* but could not see, who was the instrument of their exodus from Egypt became known and seen as God incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth as salvation history reached its zenith approximately in the Hebrew year of 3758 or 4 BCE, culminating in his crucifixion and resurrection about 33years later.

There is a vast array of modern written material treating God and the gods and humanity’s belief and disbelief in them. The authors display a full range of opinion from fanatics to ardent believers; from secularists and agnostics to atheists of all kinds. One particular piece I found interesting and informative was titled *How Did God Get Started?* Published in Arion, a Journal of the Humanities and Classics from the College of Arts and Sciences of Boston University, written by the late Colin Wells. It is very well done and generally treats the subject from a secularist perspective. In my opinion it is well worth saving and reading when it’s convenient. It is good history by a good historian.

Can Spirit be Known?

When St.Thomas says: “We cannot know what God is, but only

what he is not,” the ultimate question becomes; can we know spirit?

It was Jesus who told us *what* God is; “***God is spirit***” he said, ‘*and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*’”(John 4:24) and: “*I and the Father are one.*”(John 10:30)

There was a time when the greek paideia and bible were thought to be “scientifically” correct, a time when the earth was thought to be the center of the universe, or the sun stood still. Most of the argumentation between believers and non-believers hinged on the acceptance or rejection of the unseen Deity, the God who was directing the course of Israel, before Jesus came on the scene.

If we cannot *know* “spirit,” Christianity, if not all religion and common assumptions of a spiritual nature falls on its face. Humanity would have to concede that only first-hand, or empirically proven knowledge would be acceptable as to what is truly real. Many of the great scientists of our day cannot accede even to the possibility of the presence of the Holy Spirit who is God for the believer. “The offense against the Holy Spirit that stands out is the one Our Lord calls an unforgivable sin. The Catechism in No. 1864 says, ‘*Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.*’ [Matthew 12:31; cf. Mark 3:29; Luke 12:10]. There are no limits to the mercy of God, but anyone who deliberately refuses to accept his mercy by repenting, rejects the forgiveness of his sins and the salvation offered by the Holy Spirit. Such hardness of heart can lead to final impenitence and eternal loss.”

Aside from the fact that there are certain verified historical notations in those days mentioning Christus, we must conclude that either Jesus knew what he was saying about “God the Father,” himself, The Son, and the Holy Spirit or he was a fraud. There is no information available other than the gospels and tradition to prove his veracity. As Hawking says: “According to model-dependent realism, it is pointless to ask whether a model is real, only whether it agrees with observation.” Since the verifying information pertaining to Jesus’s statements and activity in Judea and Galilee of the First Century is only found in the Scriptures and the tradition of the Church he founded, “proof” can only be affirmed by those with faith in the truth of that information. It has gotten to be colloquially known as The Gospel Truth.

Jesus said: “*Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.*”(John 20:29)

“No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.”(1 John 4:12)

Evidence of Absence

“At face value, the so-called presumption of atheism is the claim that in the absence of evidence for God, we should presume that God does not exist. So understood, such an alleged presumption seems to conflate atheism with agnosticism. When one looks more closely at how protagonists of the presumption of atheism use the term “atheist,” however, one discovers that they are sometimes redefining the word to indicate merely the absence of belief in God. Such a redefinition trivializes the claim of the presumption of atheism, for on this definition atheism ceases to be a view, and even

infants count as atheists. One would still require justification in order to know that God does not exist.”

“Other advocates of the presumption of atheism use the word in the standard way but insist that it is precisely the absence of evidence for theism that justifies their claim that God does not exist. The problem with such a position is captured neatly by the aphorism, beloved of forensic scientists, that “*absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.*” The absence of evidence is evidence of absence only in cases in which, were the postulated entity to exist, we should expect to have more evidence of its existence than we do. With respect to God’s existence, it is incumbent on the atheist to prove that if God existed, he would provide more evidence of his existence than what we have. This is an enormously heavy burden of proof for the atheist to bear, for two reasons: (1) On at least Christian theism the primary way in which we come to know God is not through evidence but through the inner work of his Holy Spirit, which is effectual in bringing persons into relation with God wholly apart from evidence. (2) On Christian theism God has provided the stupendous miracles of the creation of the universe from nothing and the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, for which events there is good scientific and historical evidence — not to mention all the other arguments of natural theology. In this light, the presumption of atheism is what it is, presumptuous.”

“The contemporary debate has therefore moved beyond the facile presumption of atheism to the so-called hiddenness of God – in effect, a discussion of the probability or expectation that God, if he existed, would leave more evidence of his existence than what we have. Unsatisfied with the evidence we have, some atheists have argued that God, if he existed, would have prevented the world’s unbelief by making his existence

starkly apparent. But why should God want to do such a thing? On the Christian view it is actually a matter of relative indifference to God whether people believe that he exists or not. For what God is interested in is building a love relationship with us, not just getting us to believe that he exists. There is no reason at all to think that if God were to make his existence more manifest, more people would come into a saving relationship with him. In fact, we have no way of knowing that in a world of free persons in which God's existence is as obvious as the nose on one's face that more people would come to love him and know his salvation than in the actual world. But then the claim that if God existed, he would make his existence more evident, has little or no warrant. Worse, if God is endowed with middle knowledge, so that he knows how any free person would act under any circumstances in which God might place him, then God can have so providentially ordered the world as to provide just those evidences and gifts of the Holy Spirit which he knew would be adequate for bringing those with an open heart and mind to saving faith. Thus, the evidence is as adequate as needs be.”(The Cambridge Companion to Atheism, Cambridge University Press. Kindle Edition.)

What is Life?

God can be known! But, as St. Thomas suggested not as *what* he is, but what is manifest in *what is*. I AM, WHO I AM gave us the clue; not to know the “nature” of God, which is impossible, but to see him in what is comprehensible and reasonable by the observation of creation. It must occur to many of our modern men and women of science who look closely, considering *what is*, is much more than nature. It is my understanding that humanity's individual and collective

participation in the life of God, to love him and to love each other, is what gives life purpose; but perhaps not for all. The Incarnation, an event where God is believed to have extended himself in Christ as the Second Person of the Trinity; born through Mary by the Holy Spirit, the giver of life, is the inseparable link forged between God and man and by whom the work and goal of the Father is continuously made known through his church, the People of God.

Dr. Hawking is absolutely right, we should look up at the stars. For many of us, the wonder of *what is*, extends beyond them to God who is the ground of all being. Albert Einstein tells us that *his* god is Spinoza's god; a view that god is identical with nature. If Spinoza's god is creation itself, where is the Creator? It is totally understandable that a genius such as Einstein, immersed in creation as he was, would see the "beautiful, static universe" in all its wondrous physicality as god. Should we say the same thing of humanity? If God is *in* us and we are *in* God, where is the Creator? One answer can be found in Genesis. God made man in his "image and likeness,"— *as* himself. We can elaborate on that and say we were planned as the "children of God" from the beginning through a process of development in creation; the process of becoming; and organically through evolution as life appeared on earth with a trajectory towards humanity. What became natural-selection was not hap-hazard. To a believer it is essentially *what is*, has, and still is happening, a product of the will of God.

Any one of us is able to freely express our understandings with regard to God or the absence of God without being a churchman or having a string of degrees in Philosophy, Theology, Ecclesiology, Cosmology or Physics, etc., as long as we are not requiring people to believe what we believe. It would be egocentric to think we have *the* answer no one else

has ever thought about, particularly in terms of cosmological origins.

Many times I have had the mental image of a bedraggled stranger, visiting a bearded, crosslegged guru on a high mountaintop somewhere in Tibet asking: “Master, what is life?” The guru strokes his beard and replies, “My son, life is a bowl of cherries.” The stranger becomes very perplexed and says, “You mean I’ve come all this way, thousands of miles and climbed this damned mountain to find out that life is just a bowl of cherries?” The guru hesitates, his beady eyes widen and he says, “You mean... life is *not* a bowl of cherries?”

There are certain questions which after thousands of years of deliberation appear to have no answers. One of them for sure is “What is life?” I think we would all agree that there should be an answer to every question; but many problems remain so complex, or lack the proper input that even the most sophisticated computers are unable to supply answers. So far that hasn’t stopped curious men and women from asking, or from developing new tools to find answers to the great mysteries life and the world presents.

*“Now when Jesus came into the parts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, ‘Who do men say that the Son of man is?’ And they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ And Simon Peter answered and said, ‘**You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.**’ And Jesus answered and said unto him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood has not revealed it to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you, that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the*

keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”(Matthew 16:13-20)

There are many biblical texts both in the Old and the New Testaments claiming God as a “Living God.” What does that mean?

A Biblical Reference

St. John Paul II, Pope, made specific reference to this question in his beautiful: *Theology of the Body*. It was one of 129 catecheses delivered to a General Audience at the Vatican. The Pope’s answer went to the heart of the matter in a gospel story told by the three synoptic writers, Matthew, Mark and Luke. We will use (Mark 12:18-27) to refresh our memory:

“Some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him and asked him a question, saying, ‘Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies, leaving a wife but no child, the man shall marry the widow and raise up children for his brother. There were seven brothers; the first married and, when he died, left no children; and the second married her and died, leaving no children; and the third likewise; none of the seven left children. Last of all the woman herself died. In the resurrection whose wife will she be? For the seven had married her.’ Jesus said to them, ‘Is not this the reason you are wrong, that you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the story about the bush, how God said to him, “I am the God of*

Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?” He is God not of the dead, but of the living; you are quite wrong.”

Here is the excerpt from St. John Paul’s catechesis:

Admitting the reality of life after death:

“Unquestionably, the Sadducees treated the question of resurrection as a type of theory or hypothesis which can be disproved. Jesus first shows them an error of method, that they do not know the Scriptures. Then he showed them an error of substance, that they do not accept what is revealed by the Scriptures—they do not know the power of God—they do not believe in him who revealed himself to Moses in the burning bush. It is a significant and very precise answer. Here Christ encounters men who consider themselves experts and competent interpreters of the Scriptures. To these men—that is to the Sadducees—Jesus replies that mere literal knowledge of Scripture is not sufficient. The Scriptures are above all a means to know the power of the living God who reveals himself in them, just as he revealed himself to Moses in the bush. In this revelation he called himself “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob” of those, therefore, who had been Moses’ ancestors in the faith that springs from the revelation of the living God. They had all been dead for a long time. However, Christ completed the reference to them with the statement that God “is not God of the dead, but of the living.” This statement, in which Christ interprets the words addressed to Moses from the burning bush, can be understood only if one admits the reality of a life which death did not end. Moses’ fathers in faith, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, are living persons for God (cf. Lk 20:38, “for all live for him”), although according to human criteria, they must be numbered among the dead. To reread the Scriptures correctly, and in particular the

aforementioned words of God, means to know and accept with faith the power of the Giver of life, who is not bound by the law of death which rules man's earthly history.”(EWTN)

One doesn't have to be an exegetical expert to be a believer. Every time we say the Apostles Creed we proclaim the life of God. After the resurrection the glorified Christ spent forty days among the Apostles, then, as the Creed says: *He ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.* The problem this line can generate is that it suggests the Father and Son sitting on earthly thrones waiting for an angel to bring them a cup of tea. Now, of course, we don't exactly know what heaven is like or even what it will be like for us, if we have been graced enough to get there because we trust in Jesus's promises. What is good about the line is that it does indicate a living God united with the Son in the Spirit; the One God of the Trinity. We need to remember St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians: “...*For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God. Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish. But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him'— these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God”*

(Isaiah 64: 4) (1 Corinthians :2-10)

God is Dead!

“As an atheist, Friedrich Nietzsche did not believe in God. Thus, he did not believe that God had once existed but was now “dead.”—Pretty obvious. What Nietzsche was referring to by “God is dead” is the general decline of Christianity that was taking place (and still is taking place, depending on who you ask) in the Western world. He explains ‘God is dead’ later on in *The Gay Science*: ‘the belief in the Christian God has become unbelievable.’—Again, pretty obvious to most people. But here’s where things get tricky. Nietzsche’s exasperation, expressed in the form of the madman, was directed at people’s ignorance at the loss of a ground of morality—indeed, as he says, the ‘collapse’ of ‘our entire European morality.’ With the ‘death’ of the Christian God, Nietzsche believed that the Western world’s foundation for morality had been destroyed. It’s just that the people in the West hadn’t realized it, yet. The madman who tried to make them realize it had ‘come too early.’” (Intellectual Takeout Blog)

The sad thing is that Nietzsche himself went insane. In my opinion he was more of a prophet than a philosopher and critic, with a correct understanding of his texts. The world got too much for him.

In this super-sensitive-scientific age we have often heard about secularist or agnostic parents who seriously believe that it’s perfectly okay to let their children choose their own religion when they come of age. Sort of like choosing a new car an apartment or a Chateaubriand, something that suits them. In the meantime, the right thing to do is simply live by a secular ethic

where there is no authority beyond the rule of law postulated by the state; hopefully, a state which has wisely separated itself from any codified religious understandings or conventions; although room is left for others to practice what ever “faith” they choose by law. After the end of World War II fatality statistics varied, but the estimates of total deaths ranged from 50 million to more than 80 million human beings, people were tired of political, ideological arguments no matter what form they took. The so called greatest generation was anxious for a better life for their kids than they had themselves. As the sixties rolled around the testing of authority of every kind became the norm. The drug culture was born and a once sacrosanct Constitution (not without its flaws) became the “malleable” document that it’s still becoming today. A liberal judiciary could freely read into certain constitutional amendments things that were never intended to be there. Power politics was the only power to be reckoned with. Religion in many parts of the world was in free-fall; swearing an oath became a weak promise, the institution of marriage was under threat and even gender was being assaulted asserting that there was no difference between men and women. The world was being reformed and the reformers, the “boomers,” were in the universities not teaching the attributes of religious faith but secular-science. It wasn’t cool to believe in God. An unseen Deity simply didn’t make sense.

There is not enough room in this essay to detail all the problems today’s world presents. Reasonable people see it for themselves every day. Unreasonable people have generally been the problem. The preconceived notion that citizens have the right to an earthly utopia, where physicalism and materialism replaces an exiled God, portends the future. “Leftists believe that the goods of this world are unjustly distributed, and that the fault lies not in human nature but in

usurpations practiced by a dominant class. They define themselves in opposition to established power, the champions of a new order that will rectify the ancient grievance of the oppressed.” (Roger Scruton, *What is Left*) What is peculiar about today’s left is that many of them are of the “monied” class. One would have to presume it is political power that is their primary objective.

In the 1840’s Feuerbach told us: “*Religion is the dream of the human mind. But even in dreams we do not find ourselves in emptiness or in heaven, but on earth, in the realm of reality; we only see real things in the entrancing splendor of imagination and caprice, instead of in the simple daylight of reality and necessity.*”(Famous Quotes)

There is no excuse for what men have done in God’s name or in the name of Religion either in the Middle Ages or in today’s Middle East. No one will argue with Feuerbach about man’s creation of religion. What Feuerbach proposed is that man created God in man’s image rather than the other way around. “Feuerbach (1804-1872) was a German philosopher and anthropologist best known for his book *The Essence of Christianity*, which provided a critique of Christianity which strongly influenced generations of later thinkers, including both Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. An associate of Left Hegelian circles, Feuerbach advocated liberalism, atheism, and materialism. Many of his philosophical writings offered a critical analysis of religion. His thought was influential in the development of historical materialism, where he often is recognized as a bridge between Hegel and Marx.” (Wikipedia)

Here is Feuerbach in his own words: “*God is man’s highest feeling of self, freed from all contrarities or disagreeables. God is the highest being; therefore, to feel God is the highest*

*feeling. But is not the highest feeling also the highest feeling of self? So long as I have not had the feeling of the highest, so long I have not exhausted my capacity of feeling, so long I do not yet fully know the nature of feeling. What, then, is an object to me in my feeling of the highest being? Nothing else than the highest nature of my power of feeling. So much as a man can feel, so much is (his) God.” (Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, Kindle edition.)*

One could say, as a believer, that Feuerbach constructed a perfect model of what is known as Original Sin along the lines suggested by Genesis. God, walking around in Eden, tests the first couples' loyalty to himself. He suggests that their power is not equal to his so their obedience is a necessity. For Feuerbach a “living God” cannot and does not exist. Why? Because nobody has seen him, therefore he is imaginary and exists only by human feelings. Feuerbach made the same mistake many others of his time had made, that of imagining God in human terms just as the writer of Genesis did. St. Thomas' iteration comes in handy here: “We cannot know *what* God is, but only what He is not.” Feuerbach was looking for oranges in the apple barrel.

“Ludwig Feuerbach, along with Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Marx, and Nietzsche, must be counted among those philosophical outsiders who rebelled against the academic philosophy of the 19th century and thought of themselves as reformers and prophets of a new culture. Although he began his career as an enthusiastic follower of Hegel, he emerged in the 1840s as a leader of a group of radicals called the Young Hegelians who, inspired by the revolutionary political spirit sweeping over Europe, employed the critical side of Hegel's philosophy to undermine the reactionary alliance of philosophy, State, and Christianity in Prussia. But confronted by

censorship, the police, and reprisals against them in the universities they turned against Hegel's philosophy altogether. Expelled from the faculties for which they were trained, many of them became pamphleteers, journalists, revolutionaries, and independent scholars.” (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

The Living God: The God of Life: The Life of God

1 *“Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”*

(John 17:25)

2 *“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.”* (John 20:30)

These two clips from John’s gospel, the gospel Feuerbach calls unhistorical, theatrical and illusory, we have placed here for the purpose of offering a bit of material-theology; surely not formal theology. We are no more equipped to do formal theology than we are to seriously comment on quantum physics on a professional level. Notwithstanding, we think it perfectly harmless to pass along a few thoughts about the above biblical texts and “the Living God” as long as they conform to personal conscientiousness honestly arrived at.

The first clip, chapter 17 of John’s gospel is the beautiful Prayer of Jesus to his Father. It has Jesus saying to him that the world does not know him. For a believer this is comprehensible, because he or she understands that the

“Kingdom of God,” or what we would call in a more modern vernacular, the Provenance of God is not *of* this world. Still, his kingdom (Gods kingdom) has come “on earth as it is in heaven” through Jesus *Christ*, the Messiah, the Son of the living God, and his Church. Peter and the others who had been with him for about three years, heard the word of God through him and witnessed the works of God through him as well. When Jesus answered Pilate’s question: “Are you the king of the Jews”? Jesus’s answer: “*My kingdom is not of this world.*” This made it quite clear that he and the Father have one and the same *nature* in the *person* of Christ, and through him we have a share in the “Life of God.”

At the Forth Ecumenical Council of CHALCEDON, from Oct. 8th to early Nov., 451, the early Fathers worked out the verbiage that remains in effect today. They didn’t invent it; it came only from them being able to wig out the meanings in the gospel texts with the help of the Holy Spirit; which, of course, no physicalist can believe. Here’s what the Fathers said:

“The distinction between the natures was never abolished by their union but rather the character proper to each of the two natures was preserved as they came together in one Person and hypostasis. He (Jesus) is not split or divided into two Persons, but he is one and the same only begotten Son, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as formerly the prophets and later Jesus Christ himself have taught us about him as had been handled down to us by the creed of the Fathers.”

“As these points have been determined by us with all possible precision and care, the holy ecumenical council has ordained that no one may propose, put into writing, devise, hold, or teach to others any other faith than this.” (Denzinger Texts, 43rd Edition)

The second clip above is the “First Conclusion” that ends John’s gospel. In his last moments on the cross Jesus committed his Mother to John’s care. (John 19:27) John was also distinguished by being known as the “disciple whom Jesus loved.” Peter, James and John were present at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-8). He and Peter were the first to receive the news from Mary Magdalene of the Resurrection, (John 20:2) and it was John who impetuously reached the tomb first. In the interval between the Resurrection and the Ascension, John and Peter were together on the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1), having returned to the business of fishing. When Jesus appeared in the dusk of morning on the shore, John was the first to recognize him. There can be no doubt that along with Peter, John was very important part of Jesus’s life among us. Fewer scriptural texts have the depth and poetic beauty of the prologue to his gospel probably written on Patmos.

In the beginning was the Word: the Word was with God and the Word was God.

He was with God in the beginning.

Through him all things came into being, not one thing came into being except through him.

What has come into being in him was life, life that was the light of men;

And light shines in darkness, and darkness could not overpower it.

A man came, sent by God. His name was John.

He came as a witness, to bear witness to the light, so that everyone might believe through him.

He was not the light, he was to bear witness to the light.

The Word was the real light that gives light to everyone; he was coming into the world.

He was in the world that had come into being through him, and the world did not recognize him.

He came to his own and his own people did not accept him.

But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believed in his name

Who were born not from human stock or human desire or human will but from God himself.

The Word became flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that he has from the Father as only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Nothing explains the connection between Creation the Incarnation and the Grace of God quite as well as these few sparse sentences. Silently meditating on these words tends to bring more clarity to the meaning in Jesus's words than much of today's scholarly theological discourse. Commenting on a book written by Cardinal Sarah, *The Power of Silence*, Benedict XVI emeritus wrote the following:

“Certainly, in order to interpret Jesus's words, historical knowledge is necessary, which teaches us to understand the time and the language at that time. But that alone is not enough if we are really to comprehend the Lord's message in depth. Anyone today who reads the ever-thicker commentaries on the Gospels remains disappointed in the end. He learns a lot that is useful about those days and a lot of hypotheses that ultimately contribute nothing at all to an understanding of the text. In the end you feel that in all the excess of words, something essential is lacking: entrance into Jesus's silence, from which his word is born. If we cannot enter into this silence, we will always hear the word only on its surface and thus not really understand it.”

Regarding to the second clip above and John's prologue, several lines call our attention to the "Living God" and the "life" to which John refers:

"Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name."

"What has come into being in him was life, life that was the light of men;"

There are literally hundreds of references to the coming of the Messiah, the Son of God, in the Hebrew scriptures which point directly to Jesus. John said: "through believing [in him] you may have *life* in his name." What is the "life" that belief in Christ brings? The gospels not only has Jesus claiming he was the Messiah, but also one with the Father.

"The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah is coming' (who is called Christ). 'When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.' Jesus said to her, 'I am he, the one who is speaking to you.'"(John 4:25)

"Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, 'Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?' But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. Again the high priest asked him, 'Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?' 'I am,' said Jesus. 'And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.'"

(Mark 14:60-62)

"Very truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, **I am!**"(John 8:58)

These direct *I am* quotes from Jesus informs us of his two natures as the early Fathers have carefully stated. For us it remains a mystery how this could be possible, but it is taken on faith as the result of “God’s grace”; yet, the words are as clear as a bell. To have *life* in the name of Jesus, in our opinion, may be considered in two ways. If Jesus is *one* with the Father/Creator as he claims, all physical life, including our own, has its source in this Creation, “In the beginning” as John put it. Who better than John the Apostle, the man who witnessed the Life of God in the Savior, could assure us of the truth he had seen first-hand. Secondly, to grasp an understanding of the light of sanctifying grace, as a new *life* leading to eternal *life* offered to all those who keep the commandments of love by Jesus, was shown and proven to us by his own resurrection and ascension. Not so easy to grasp, as the coincidence of opposites which we are. Jesus offers the way to the truth and the *life*: “*Seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened.*” Free resistance to those promises has been our own since the brain to mind transition. Our free will is how we are made in his image.

Conclusion

The theologians tell us that God is the “ground” of all being, the ultimate source of all that is. Some, in modern theological terms, say God is *being* itself.

Concerning contingency one must ask: is I AM WHO I AM inside or outside of time? If God is inside space/time as we know it in this particular universe, God would have been created and cannot be “The Creator.”

If God is considered outside of space/time, the scientists tell us God must be considered irrelevant by us “existent” beings, and the stuff of being is somehow infinite. We “emergent” beings

have determined that the ground of all being is some material eternal substance.

If this is the case it appears that we haven't come very far from the Aether of the Greeks. You may call it Quantum Fluctuations if you wish. In other words there was never *nothing*.

Once having stepped out of an animal creature state, if Darwin's theory is correct, human-nature believed, by personal experience in a controlling force he and she *knew* as being, or a being, greater than them.

Being, with a consciousness WHO IS beyond human comprehension, revealed an intelligence that later is seen by what rationally exists, and who is credited with *its* creation. This unitary most perfect being of consciousness (or life) existing infinitely, is for the believer, the God of all Creation from whence all good things come.

It would not be wrong to suggest that this is the "living God" in whom and with whom we have our being, our life; who IS, known to us through Jesus Christ as his Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit. This, through the grace of God is our participation in the *life* of God.

"Admittedly, in speaking about God like this, our language is using human modes of expression; nevertheless it really does attain to God himself, though unable to express him in his infinite simplicity. Likewise, we must recall "between Creator and creature no similitude can be expressed without implying an even greater dissimilitude"; and "concerning God, we cannot grasp what he is, but only what he is not, and how other beings stand in relation to him." (Catechism of the Catholic Church: IV # 43)

Saturday of the 6th week of Eastertide

Gospel

“My Father loves you because you have loved me and believed in me. Jesus said to his disciples: “Amen, amen, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give you. Until now you have not asked anything in my name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete.

“I have told you this in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures but I will tell you clearly about the Father. On that day you will ask in my name, and I do not tell you that I will ask the Father for you. For the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have come to believe that I came from God. I came from the Father and have come into the world. Now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father.”

