

1. The Triune God (1Q 2012—Glimpses of Our God)

Biblical material: Deut. 6:4; Phil. 2:6; Matt. 28:19; Gen. 1:26, 27; John 14–16, Jude 20, 21.

Quotes

- It were better to have no opinion of God at all than such an one as is unworthy of him; for the one is only unbelief—the other is contempt. *Plutarch*
- God is the tangential point between zero and infinity. *Alfred Jarry*
- How do you define God? Like this. A God I could understand, at least potentially, was infinitely more interesting and relevant than one that defied comprehension. *Robert J. Sawyer*
- What I believe about God is the most important thing about me. *A. W. Tozer*
- I don't know if God exists, but it would be better for His reputation if He didn't. *Jules Renard*
- Apart from God every activity is merely a passing whiff of insignificance. *Alfred North Whitehead*
- Question with boldness even the existence of God; because, if there be one, he must more approve of the homage of reason than that of blindfolded fear. *Thomas Jefferson*

Questions

If the Trinity is so important, why doesn't Scripture use the word? Why does the Old Testament stress monotheism? Why is it so important to believe in the divinity of Christ? How do our concepts of God impact our spiritual life? Why is it important to question widely-held views of God?

Bible summary

Deut. 6:4 NIV says "The LORD our God, the LORD is one." Interestingly the footnote says, "Or *The LORD our God is one LORD*; or *The LORD is our God, the LORD is one*; or *The LORD is our God, the LORD alone*." This is the "proof text" for monotheism. Interestingly the OT says nothing about the Trinity—possibly because of pagan polytheism. For if there were "three Gods" in the Hebrew pantheon, why would it matter if you as a Philistine had more?

Phil. 2:6 tells us that Jesus was "in very nature" God. The baptismal command in Matt. 28:19 contains the three Persons of the Trinity. Gen. 1:26, 27 uses the plural for God. John 14-16 has many references to Jesus, the Father, and the Spirit, especially Jesus' comment that if you have seen him you have seen the Father. Jude 20, 21 mentions God, Christ, and Holy Spirit.

Comment

Before jumping in to defend and or explain the Trinity, surely it's essential to examine the fundamental concept of God. For it is our ideas about God that define our theology, and greatly affect the way we live our lives.

So I for one would wish to begin with the question—not about the existence of God, but what kind of God he is! For our answers will very much affect everything else... The

Trinity is certainly significant, and particularly in terms of Jesus' claim that "if you have seen me you have seen the Father." If Jesus is not completely and fully divine, how can he say this? So let us not lay aside the Trinity concept.

But let us focus on the God who reveals who he is like, and begin there.

First, is he even there? According to some strident voices, the universe disproves the existence of God. Atheist Richard Dawkins makes the point bluntly—there is no purpose or design in the universe, and so by logical deduction, there is no God:

"In a universe of electrons and selfish genes, blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pitiless indifference."

This not a new argument. Even the Greek writer Euripides wondered, "Do we, holding that the gods exist, deceive ourselves with insubstantial dreams and lies, while random careless chance and change alone control the world?"

For me personally, the evidence speaks very definitely for God—and a God who is very interested in us as his creation! The truth is that the more we discover about the universe, the more we find it is *exactly* designed for life, and for us to exist. The universe is designed down to the last detail, and even very small changes in the physical laws would make us—and even the existence of matter—impossible.

Even atheist astronomer Fred Hoyle admits that the characteristics of the elements carbon and hydrogen (on which our bodies are based) suggest that they have been deliberately "fixed" that way, and as a result:

"A commonsense interpretation of the facts suggests that a superintellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature." The conclusion of Stephen Hawking, when looking at the way the universe is thought to have started, is that "It would be very difficult to explain why the Universe should have begun in just this way, except as the act of a God who intended to create beings like us."

A stunning admission that it is indeed scientific to accept the theory of a Creator God! And that's just the physical aspects of the universe.

Ellen White Comments

We need to have higher and more distinct views of the character of Christ, to lead us to copy his example... We are not to think of God only as a judge, and to forget him as our loving Father. Nothing can do our souls greater harm than this; for our whole spiritual life will be molded by our conceptions of God's character. We have lessons to learn of Jesus' love. {RH April 5, 1887}

The whole spiritual life is molded by our conceptions of God; and if we cherish erroneous views of His character, our souls will sustain injury. We should see in God one who yearns toward the children of men, longing to do them good. {RH January 14, 1890}

There are many who have but an imperfect understanding of the character of God. They think of Him as stern and arbitrary, and when the fact is presented that God is love, it is a difficult matter for these souls to lay aside their false conceptions of God. {RH June 21, 1892}

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