

JAHWEH/JEHOVAH- by Rev. Professor- Emeritus Dr. Francis Nigel Lee

In Exodus 3:14 God says: "**I am Whom I am**"; and in 6:1-3 He calls Himself "**Jehovah**." There, even the vocalization "**Jahweh**" seems to mean: "He is"; or "He causes to exist."

So too in Genesis 2:4f, In John 8:58, Jesus says: "Before Abram was, **I am**." And in Revelation 4:8 (*cf.* 1:4 & 1:8), the Lord God Almighty is called the One "Who **was** and **is** and **shall be**." Indeed, from Genesis to Revelation - God's name always has this same meaning.

Professor Dr. John Calvin comments¹ on Exodus 3:14 & 6:2: "The verb in the Hebrew is in the future tense, '**I will be** what **I will be**'.... It would be tedious to recount the various opinions as to the name 'Jehovah.' It is certainly a foul superstition of the [Post-Malachic Judaistic] Jews that they dare not speak or write it, but substitute the name 'Adonai'....

"**Without controversy**, it [the word 'Jehovah' or 'Jahweh'] is derived from the word *havah*.... He is called Jehovah, because He has **existence from Himself**.... Nor do I agree with th[os]e grammarians who will not have it pronounced.... Because its etymology, of which all confess that God is the Author, is more to me than an hundred rules."

Also Pfeiffer rightly observes in his own *Dubia Vexata* (on this passage Exodus 6:2): "**The name Jehovah was not, strictly and literally, unknown to the fathers before Moses**. "Now every difficulty will be removed, by reading it interrogatively - 'And by My name Jehovah, **was I not known to them?**' This rhetorical interrogative presupposes the answer: '**Of course!**' For "this is both agreeable to the Hebrew idiom and to...the context."

The learned Lutheran Professor Hengstenberg, in his excellent *Dissertation on the Names of God in the Pentateuch*, can be consulted too. He there points out that long before Moses - also the Patriarchs Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are represented as using the name *Jehovah* (Genesis 9:26 & 15:2,7 & 22:14 & 27:7 & 28:20f) - and that God Himself, in speaking to them, also makes use of it.

Hengstenberg deduces the name *Jahweh* or *Jehovah* from the future tense of the verb *haavaah* (-*yaah*), meaning '**to be**.' He regards² this derivation of the name *Jehovah* as confirmed "by all the passages of Scripture in which a derivation of the name is either expressly given or simply hinted.... Every thing created, remains not like itself - but is continually changing under circumstances. God only, because He is **the Being**, is always the same. And, because He is always the same, is '**the Being**' - '**the Being**,' **the existing One**, or **absolute Being**....

"God is He Who is; that is, always the same; the unchangeable. He is also **the Being**, or **the absolute Being**.... He is also the unchangeable - as it is inferred (Malachi 3:6) from 'I am Jehovah; I change not.' Every creature remains not like itself, but is continually changing under circumstances. God only, because He is **The Being**, is always the same; and because He is always the same, is **The Being**."

Similarly, also the founders of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Thus the famous Rev. Dr. Donald McDonald: writes:³ "The origin of the name 'Jehovah' ...is almost universally acknowledged to be found in the root *haavaah*, an old form of *haayaah*, equivalent to the Greek

phunai - to be.... *Jehovah* is thus the regularly-formed future, in Kal. This etymology is placed beyond dispute by the passages of Scripture in which a derivation of the name is expressed or implied, particularly Exodus 3:14 [cf. John 8:58]. There Moses, having made inquiry after God's name, received the answer, "I am that I am" - *'ehyeh 'a:sher 'ehyeh* (God speaking of Himself in the first person). And He said, 'Thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel, "I am" (*'ehyeh*) hath sent me to you.' In the next verse, this is changed into 'Say to the children of Israel, **Jehovah God** of your fathers...hath sent me to you'....

"Taking this for the true etymology of the name Jehovah, it is necessary to inquire into the precise idea thus conveyed.... Baumgarten [*Theological Commentary on the Pentateuch*] and Delitzsch [the great Hebrew-Christian Scholar in his *Biblico-Prophetic Theology*] lay more stress on the future form of the word, and consider it as denoting not so much **the Being** as [the] One **becoming**..., referring this not to the Divine Nature or Essence but to the **revelation** of it: in short, that it designates the Divine Being as the God of historical revelation - He Who in times past appeared to Patriarchs and Prophets and was known as Jehovah God of the Israelitish Fathers (Exodus 3:15), but Who should 'in the fulness of time' be more gloriously manifested.

"This view is not a little countenance by the fact that in the New Testament, the name Jehovah or its equivalent occurs only in the Apocalypse, a book which still points to the future of Christ's Kingdom. There, indeed, the name undoubtedly appears in the circumlocution 'Who is and was and comes' (Revelation 1:4 & 1:8 & 4:8). But even there, in and after chapter 11:17, according to the best manuscripts, the predicate *Ho Erchomenos*, 'Who comes' - is dropped after the 'was' and 'is.' Because 'The future of God's Kingdom had become present; "The Coming" had come' [Hengstenberg's *Commentary on Revelation*]."

Also Keil and Delitzsch comment⁴ at Genesis 2:4 that "God therefore 'is Who He is' - inasmuch as in His being, as historically manifested, He is the Self-determining One. The name **Jehovah**... 'includes both the absolute independence of God in His historical movements' and 'the absolute constancy of God.... In both words and deeds, He is essentially in harmony with Himself, remaining always consistent' (*Oehler*).

"The 'I am Whom am' therefore is the absolute **I**, the absolute personality, moving with unlimited freedom.... He is the personal God in His historical manifestation, in which the fullness of the Divine Being unfolds itself to the world.... To show this, Moses has introduced the name *Jehovah* into the history in the present chapter [Genesis two], and has indicated the identity of *Jehovah* with *Elohim* not only by the constant association of the two names but also by the fact that in the heading (verse 4b) he speaks of the creation described in chapter one as the work of **Jehovah Elohim**."

Dr. John Calvin states that Each Person of the Triune *Elohim*, is Himself *Jehovah*. Thus he tells⁵ us: that "power and energy are comprehended under the name Jehovah"; that "Jehovah is said to have appeared in the form of an Angel (Judges 6,7,13)"; that "He was truly Jehovah"; that "the name of Christ is invoked for salvation"; "that He is Jehovah"; and that "the eternity of the Father is also the eternity of the Son and Spirit, since God [the Father] never could be without His Own Wisdom [*viz.* His Son] and Energy [*viz.* His Spirit]."

Calvin further tells us: that "the Apostles uniformly substitute the word *Kurios* [or 'Lord']

for *Jehovah*"; that "the Spirit is called God absolutely, by Christ Himself"; that "He is the entire spiritual Essence of God in which are comprehended Father, Son and Spirit"; and that "the name of *Jehovah* is everywhere applied to Christ." Consequently, "it follows that...He is *Jehovah*"; that as regards Christ, "the Holy Spirit...calls Him *Jehovah*"; that "Christ should be worshipped" because "He is the God Who in the Law forbade worship to be offered to any but Himself"; and that also "Paul...declares that He was equal with God, before He humbled Himself." Indeed, "how could such equality exist - if He were not that God Whose name is *Jah* and *Jehovah*, Who rides upon the cherubim, is King of all the earth, and King of ages?"

Let us then sum up. As the greatest Protestant Christian Commentator Rev. Professor Dr. John Calvin observed on Ephesians 2:20, "The beginning of **our** religion must be sought from the creation of the World.... [Islamic] Turks are...**degenerate** offspring."

The Arian deology of the so-called "Jehovah's witnesses" (*sic*) is different to but ultimately just as false and unitarian as is the deology of Islam and Judaism. Yet "Jehovah's witnesses" agree with Trinitarians, Islam and Judaism - that God cannot change (*cf.* Malachi 3:6). But unlike Islam, these "Jehovah's witnesses" would agree with Trinitarians in at least one respect. Namely - that there is indeed a fully-divine Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, pre-incarnationally, even from Genesis 1:1 onward (John 17:5 & 17:24).

However, in that case (against the views of both Jehovah's witnesses and Muslims), the pre-incarnate Christ or rather 'the Word of God' must have had an unchanging Father from all eternity - Who never ever changed from a Non-Father into a Father. Yet, to be such an Eternal Father, also that Father must Himself necessarily have had a Son from all eternity (*cf.* Proverbs 8:12-31 and John 1:1-18). Indeed, They Two - that eternal Father and His then co-eternal Son - must in that case also necessarily have loved One Another in a co-eternal and a Spirit-ual way from all eternity (John 17:1-5 & 17:24 and Hebrews 9:14). Too, without acknowledging also a Co-Pretemporal Divine Son, even the Judaistic concept of God as "Father" is inconsistent.

Yet unlike Muslims and Judaists, "Jehovah's witnesses" are **bi-theists**. For they honour their allegedly unipersonal 'Jehovah' as their great Father-God, as well as (albeit to a lesser extent) their lesser god whom they regard as 'the Word.' This latter is to them the first creature - whom they say was Jehovah's agent (or mechanic) in manufacturing our Earth - the (to them) created Word, who would thereafter become the yet-later (to them) non-divine created man Christ Jesus. And their having both a God and a god - makes them incipient polytheists.

Totally different, however, is the Trinitarian view. God is the triune *Jahweh* or *Jehovah*. And *Jehovah-Jehoshua* in indeed centrally *Jahweh-Iesoos* or **Jehovah-Jesus!**

- 1) J. Calvin: *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses arranged in the Form of a Harmony*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, n.d., I:73f & 127; and also its footnote 1 on I:127f.
- 2) See in J. Calvin's *Commentaries on Genesis*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1948 ed., I:108-110 and esp. its footnotes 1 & 1 there.
- 3) D. McDonald: *The Biblical Doctrine of Creation*, Klock & Klock, Minneapolis, [1856] 1984 rep, pp. 31f.
- 4) C.F. Keil & F. Delitzsch: *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament. Vol. I. The Pentateuch*, ET. T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1885, I:pp. 75f.
- 5) J. Calvin: *Inst.* I:10:2 & I:13:10,13,18,20,23,24.