

OF THE NAMES OF GOD.

BEING about to treat of God, and of the things of God, it may be proper to begin with his names. The names of persons and things are usually the first that are known of them; and if these are not known, it cannot be thought that much, if any thing, is known of them; and where the name of God is not known, he himself cannot be known; and the rather the consideration of his name, or names, is worthy of regard, because they serve to lead into some knowledge of his nature and perfections, and therefore a proper introduction into such a subject. Indeed, properly speaking, since God is incomprehensible, he is not nominable; and being but one, he has no need of a name to distinguish him; and therefore Plato¹ says, he has no name; and hence he commonly calls him, *το ον*, *ens*, The Being. So when Moses asked the Lord, what he should say to the children of Israel, should they ask the name of him that sent him to them, he bid him say, *I am that I am*; that is, The eternal Being, the Being of beings; which his name Jehovah is expressive of; nevertheless, there are names of God in the Scriptures taken from one or other of his attributes, which are worthy of consideration.

The names of God, as Zanchy² observes, some of them respect him as the subject, as Jehovah, Lord, God; others are predicates, what are spoken of him, or attributed to him, as holy, just, good, &c. Some respect the relation the divine persons in the Godhead stand to each other, as Father, Son, and Spirit; others the relation of God to the creatures, and which are properly said of him, and not them, as Creator, Preserver, Governor, &c.; some are common to the three divine Persons, as Jehovah, God, Father, Spirit; and some peculiar to each, as the epithets of unbegotten, begotten, proceeding from the Father and the Son; some are figurative and metaphorical, taken from creatures, to whom God is compared; and others are proper names, by which he either calls himself, or is called by the prophets and apostles, in the books of the Old and New Testament, which are what will be particularly considered.

I. Elohim is the first name of God we meet with in Scripture, and is translated God, Gen. i. 1, and is most frequently used throughout the whole Old Testament; sometimes, indeed, improperly of creatures, angels, and men, and of false deities, Psalm viii. 5, and lxxxii. i. 6, Jer. x. 11, but properly only of God.

Some derive this word from a root, which signifies to curse and swear; but as to the reasons why this name is given to the divine Being on that account, it is not agreed; some,³ of late, have given this as a reason, because the three divine Persons, as they in a shocking manner express it, bound themselves with an oath, under a curse, to redeem mankind; which, to say no worse of, is indecent and unworthy of the dignity and majesty of God, “who is blessed for evermore;” for to bind himself with an oath, and that under a conditional curse, which is no other

¹*Ὁ οὐδ' ἀρα ὄνομα ἐστὶν αὐτοῦ*, in Parmenide, p. 1120, ed. Ficin. So Trismegistus apud Lactant. Institut. 1. 1, c. 6.

²De Natura Dei, 1. 1, c. 4.

³Called Hutchinsonians; see Catcott's Sermon, called, The Supreme and Inferior Elohim p. 8.

than to imprecate a curse upon himself, if his oath and covenant are not fulfilled; is so harsh, if not something worse, as is not to be endured; and though Christ agreed to redeem men, and to be made a curse for them, that they might receive the blessing, yet he was not accursed through any failure of his oath and covenant, but on another account, being the Surety of his people; nor is he ever called Eloah on that account, and still less the other two persons: besides, there are other and better reasons to be given for this name of the Divine Being, supposing it to be taken from the word signifying as above; as, because he adjures and causes others to swear, and binds them with an oath to himself, in which sense the word is used of men, 1 Sam. xiv. 24, 1 Kings viii. 31, and is the business of Judges, by which oath men are bound to God,⁴ and not he to them; and so, according to the Jewish writers,⁵ the word is expressive of God as a Judge; in which they are followed by some learned men:⁶ or because he pronounces a man accursed who breaks his law, and neglects and despises the sacrifice and righteousness of Christ; so Cocceius:⁷ or, because he is the object men must swear by, whenever they swear at all; see Deut. vi. 13, Isa. lxxv. 16. Though this word Elohim cannot be derived from the word so signifying, because it has the immoveable and immutable ך, as appears from the point mappick, in its singular Eloah, and from the construction of it, which that word has not; and besides, that is never used of God when he is said to swear, but always another.

The word Elohim may be better derived from a word in the Arabic language, which signifies to worship, as is thought by many learned men;⁸ and so is a fit name for God, who is the sole object of religious worship and adoration; not idols of gold, silver, &c., nor living men, nor persons deified after death, nor angels; but the Lord God only, Matt. iv. 10. It is a word of the plural number, and though it has a singular, which is sometimes used, yet it is most frequently in this form; and being joined with a verb singular, as in Gen. i. 1, it is thought⁹ to denote a plurality of persons in the unity of the divine essence; and certain it is, that three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, appeared, and were concerned in the creation of all things, Gen. i. 1–3, Psalm xxxiii. 6.

II. Another name of God is El; and which may be observed in the word Beth-el, which signifies, *The house of God*, Gen. xii. 7, 8. Both the singular and plural, El Elim, the God of gods, are used in Dan. xi. 36, and the word is left untranslated in Matt. xxvii. 46, *Eli, Eli; my God, my God*. It is commonly rendered, by Junius and Tremellius, the strong or mighty God; an epithet that well agrees with the divine Being, Job ix. 4, 19, Psalm lxxxix. 8, 13, and is one of the names of the Messiah, Isai. ix. 6. Hillerus¹⁰ takes this to be a part of the word Eloah, the singular of Elohim; which, according to him, signifies the first in essence; being the first and the last, the beginning and the end, Isa. xlv. 6, Rev. i. 8, it is expressive of the power of God.

III. The next name of God we meet with is Elion, the Most High, Gen. xiv. 18–22. So Christ is called *The Son of the Highest*, and the Spirit, *the power of the Highest*, Luke i. 32, 35; and which name God has either from his habitation, the highest heavens; which is his palace, where he keeps his court, and which is his throne; in which high and holy place he, the high and lofty One dwells, Isa. lvii. 15, and lxvi. 1; or from his superiority, power, and dominion over all creatures, over the highest personages on earth, and the highest angels in heaven, Psalm lxxxiii.

⁴Marckii Compend. Theolog. e. 4, s. 5; Mastrict. Theolog. 1. 2, c. 4, s. p; Leigh's Critica Sacra in voce אלה.

⁵T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 87, 1; Sepher Cosri, par. 4. fol. 197, 2; Maimon. Moreh Nevochim. par. 2, c. 6.

⁶Lud. Capellus et alii.

⁷Lexic. col. 35.

⁸Stockii Clavis S. Ling. p. 61; Hottingeri Smegma Oriental. 1 1, c. 8, p.123; Schultens in Job i. 1; Noldius, No. 1093; Altting. Dissert. 4; de plural. Elohim, p. 177.

⁹Schindler. Lexic. Pentaglott. col. 78.

¹⁰Onomastic. Sacr. p. 254, 256.

18 and xcvi. 9, see also Eccl. v. 8; or from the sublimity of his nature and essence, which is out of the reach of finite minds, and is incomprehensible, Job xi. 7, 8: this name was known among the Phœnicians, and is given to one of their deities, called Elioun, the most high;¹¹ it is expressive of the supremacy of God.

IV. Another name of God is, Shaddai: under this name God appeared to Abraham, Gen. xvii. 1, and to which reference is had, Exod. vi. 3; we translate it Almighty in both places, and in all others, particularly in the book of Job, where it is often mentioned, and it well agrees with him whose power is infinite and uncontrollable, and appears in the works of his hands, creation and providence. Some choose to render it sufficient, or all-sufficient¹² God; having a sufficiency in and of himself, and for himself, to make himself completely and infinitely happy; nor does he need, nor can he receive any thing from his creatures to add to his happiness; and he has a sufficiency for them; he can, and does, supply all the wants of his people, temporal and spiritual: “his grace is sufficient for them.” Others render it Nourisher,¹³ deriving it from a word which signifies a breast; that being what creatures nourish their young with, and is made mention of when this name of God is spoken of, Gen. xlix. 25. God not only fills men’s hearts with food and gladness, but “he opens his hand and satisfies the desire of all creatures, and gives them their meat in due season,” Acts xiv. 17, Psal. cxlv 15, 16. Hillerus¹⁴ derives it from a word which signifies to pour out, or shed; and it well agrees with God, who pours forth, or sheds his blessings, in great plenty, on his creatures, and which flow from him as from a fountain; to which he is often compared; though others give a very different etymology of it, deriving it from a word¹⁵ which signifies to destroy; to which there seems to be a beautiful allusion in Isa. xiii. 6. “Destruction from Shaddai, the destroyer,” who destroyed the old world, Sodom and Gomorrah, the first-born of the Egyptians, and Pharaoh and his host; though God is so called, previous to most of these instances; indeed he is “the lawgiver, that is able to save and to destroy,” even to destroy body and soul in hell, with an everlasting destruction. And some render the word, the Darter, or Thunderer,¹⁶ whose darts are his thunderbolts, Job vi. 4, Psalm xviii. 13, 14. The heathens called their chief god, *Jupiter tonans*, the thunderer; and, perhaps, from another etymology of this word before given, from שׂר a breast. Some of their deities are represented as full of breasts; so Ceres, Isis, and Diana. This name seems to be expressive of the all-sufficiency of God, and of the supply of his creatures from it.

V. Another of the names of God is, the Lord, or God of hosts; it is first mentioned in 1 Sam. i. 3, 11, but frequently afterwards, and is left untranslated in James v. 4, where the Lord is called, *the Lord of Sabaoth*, not *Sabbath*, as it is sometimes wrongly understood, and as if it was the same with *Lord of Sabbath*, Matt. xii. 8, for though the words are somewhat alike in sound, they are very different in sense, for Sabbath signifies rest, and Sabaoth means hosts or armies; the Lord is the God of armies on earth, a man of war, expert in it; that teacheth men’s hands to war, and their fingers to fight, and is the Generalissimo of them, as he was particularly of the armies of Israel, as they are called, Exod. vii. 4, which he brought out of Egypt, and went at the head of them, and fought their battles for them; see Exod. xiv. 14, and xv. 3, and who gives success and victory on what side soever he takes: and he is the Lord of the hosts of the starry hea-

¹¹Sanchoniatho apud Euseb. Evangel. Præpar. 1. 1, c. 10, p. 36.

¹²So Cocceius in Lex. col. 859; Jarchi in Gen. xvii. 1; Maimon. Moreh Nevochim, par. 1, c. 63.

¹³Paschii Dissert. de Selah, p. 2, s. 6.

¹⁴Onomast. Sacr. p. 260, 261.

¹⁵שׂר vastavit Buxtorf.

¹⁶So Schmidt in Job vi. 4.

vens; the sun, moon, and stars, called the host of heaven, Gen. ii. 1; 2 Kings xxi. 3, and xxii 5; and by this military term, because under the Lord they sometimes fight, as the stars did against Sisera, Judg. v. 20, and also of the airy heavens; and the locusts that fly there are his army, Joel ii. 7, 11, and the meteors, thunder and lightning, snow and hail, which are laid up by him against the day of battle and war, are the artillery he sometimes brings forth against the enemies of his people; as he did against the Egyptians and Canaanites, Job xxxviii. 22, 23, Exod. ix. 23–25; Josh. x. 11; the angels also are the militia of heaven, and are called the heavenly host, Luke ii. 13, see 1 Kings xxii. 19; the place where the angels of God met Jacob, was called from thence Mahanaim, Gen. xxxii. 11, 12; two hosts or armies, one going before him, and the other behind him; or the one on one side him and the other on the other, to guard him; hence they are said to encamp about them that fear the Lord, Psalm xxxiv. 7. These are the creatures of God by whom he is adored and served; they are at his command, and sometimes employed in a military way, to destroy his and his people's enemies; see Kings xix. 35. This name is expressive of God's dominion over all his creatures, and the several armies of them.

VI. Another name of God is Adonai, or Adon, Gen. xv. 2, and is commonly rendered Lord. Hence the Spanish word *don* for lord. God is so called, because he is the Lord of the whole earth, Zech. iv. 14. Some¹⁷ derive it from a word which signifies the basis, prop, or support of any thing.¹⁸ So a king in the Greek language is called βασιλευς, because he is the basis and support of his people: and so God is the support of all his creatures; “he upholds all things by the word of his power;” he bears up the pillars of the earth; all men move and have their being in him; and “he upholds his saints with the right hand of his righteousness;” and even his Son, as man and mediator, Isa. xli. 10 and xlii. 1. Some think it has the signification of a judge;¹⁹ “God is the judge of all the earth;” and is a righteous one, protects and defends good men, and takes vengeance on the wicked; and will judge the world in righteousness at the last day. Though, perhaps, Hillerus²⁰ is rightest in rendering it the cause, from which, and for which, all things are; as all things are made by the Lord, and for his will, pleasure, and glory, see Rom. xi. 36, Heb. ii. 10, Rev. iv. 11. Adon is used in the plural number of God, Mal. i. 6, and so Adonai is used of the Son, as well as of the Father, Psalm cxi. 1; and of the Holy Spirit, Isai. vi. 8, compared with Acts xxviii. 25. Hence Adonis, with the heathens, the same with the sun, their chief deity, according to Macrobius,²¹ by whom Bacchus is called²² Ebon, or rather Edon; who, he says, is also the same with the sun.

VII. The famous name of God is Jehovah; this is a name he takes to himself, and claims it, Exod. vi. 3, Isa. xlii. 8, and is peculiar to him; his name alone is Jehovah, and incommunicable to another, Psalm lxxxiii. 18, because this name is predicated of God, as a necessary and self-existent being, as a learned Jew²³ observes, which no other is; for though it is sometimes spoken of another, yet not singly and properly, but with relation to him. So the church is called Jehovah-shammah, because of his presence with her, Ezek. xlvi. 35. The Jews, from a superstitious abuse of it, assert it to be ineffable, and not to be pronounced, and even not to be read and written, and therefore they substitute other names instead of it, as Adonai, and Elohim. This might

¹⁷Paschius in Dissert. de Selah, ut supra; Alsted. Lexic. Theolog. p. 82.

¹⁸אֲדֹנָי foundations, bases, Job xxxviii. 6, often rendered sockets in Exodus.

¹⁹A דִּין judicavit.

²⁰Onomastic. Sacr. p. 258.

²¹Saturnal. 1. 1, c. 21.

²²Saturnal. 1. 1, c. 18.

²³R. Joseph Albo in Sepher Ikkarim, 1. 2, c. 28.

arise, originally, from their very great awe and reverence of this name, according to Deut. xxviii. 58, but every name of God is reverend, and not to be taken in vain, nor used in common, nor with any degree of levity, Psalm cxi. 9: It is written with four letters only; hence the Jews call it *tetragrammaton*, and is very probably the τετρακτυς of the Pythagoreans, by which they swore; and it is remarkable, that the word for God is so written in almost all languages; denoting, it may be, that he is the God of the whole world; and ought to be served and worshipped, and his name to be great and had in reverence in the four quarters of it; it takes in all tenses, past, present, and to come:²⁴ the words of the evangelist John are a proper periphrasis of it; *which is, and which was, and which is to come*, Rev. i. 4, or, *shall be*, as in chap. xvi. 5: it comes from the root יהיה or הוה which signify, to be, and is expressive of the essence of God; of his necessary and self-existence, for God naturally and necessarily exists; which cannot be said of any other: creatures owe their being to the arbitrary will of God; and so might be, and might not be as he pleased; but God exists in and of himself, he is a self-existent and independent Being, as he must needs be, since he is before all creatures, and therefore cannot have his being from them; and he is the cause of theirs, and therefore must be independent of them; and yet, when we say he is self-existent, it must not be understood as if he made himself; for though he exists, he is not made. He is the Being of beings; all creatures have their beings from him and in him, “the heavens, earth, and sea, and all that is in them;” he is the former and maker of all things; he is eminently the Being, and all in comparison of him are mere non-entities; *all nations* and the inhabitants of them *are as nothing before him; yea, less than nothing, and vanity*, Isa. xl. 17.

VIII. Jah is another name of God, which is mentioned in Psalm lxviii. 4, and cl. 6, Isa. xxvi. 4, though it may be only an abbreviation or contraction of the word Jehovah, and may signify the same; according to Cocceius,²⁵ it comes from יאה Jer. x. 7, and signifies decency, or what is meet and becoming.

IX. Ejuh is a name God given as a name of his to Moses, when he sent him to the children of Israel; and is translated *I AM that I AM*, Exod. iii. 13, 14, and may be rendered, *I shall be what I shall be*, and what I have been, so the Jews²⁶ interpret it; “I am he that was, I am he that is now, and I am he that is to come, or shall be.” It seems to be of the same signification with Jehovah, and to be derived from the same word, and is expressive of the same things; of the being and existence of God, of his eternity and immutability, and of his faithfulness in performing his promises: our Lord has a manifest respect unto it, when he says, *Before Abraham was I am*, John viii. 58. Hillerus²⁷ renders it *I remain*, that is, always the same.

X. The names of God in the New Testament are these two, Κυριος and Θεος, the one is usually rendered Lord and the other God. The first is derived either from κυρω, to be,²⁸ and signifies the same as Jehovah, to which it commonly answers, and denotes the essence or being of God; or from κυρος,²⁹ power and authority; and agrees with God, who has a sovereign power and authority over all creatures, having a property in them, by virtue of his creation of them; it is generally used of Christ, “who is Lord of all,” Acts x. 36, 1 Cor. viii. 6, Eph. iv. 6. The etymology of Θεος, God, is very different; as either from a word which signifies to run, or from one that signifies to heat, or from one that signifies to see; which seem to be calculated by the heathens

²⁴Buxtorf. de Nomin. Dei, Heb. s. 10.

²⁵Lexic. p. 283.

²⁶Shemot Rabba, s. 3, fol. 93, 3.

²⁷Onomast. Sacr. p. 248.

²⁸Κυρει, est, existit, Suidas; κυρω, sum, Scapula.

²⁹Κυρος, autoritas; κυριος, autoritatem habens, Scapula; so Philo, quis rer. divin. Hæres, p. 484.

for the sun, the object of their worship, applicable to it, for its constant course, being the fountain of light and heat, and seeing all things, as they affirm: though each of them may be applied to the true God, who runs to the assistance of his people in distress, 2 Chron. xvi. 9, Psalm xlvi. 1; is light itself, “the Father of lights, and a consuming fire,” 1 John i. 5, Jam. i. 17, Heb. xii. 29; and sees all men, their ways and works, and even their hearts, and the thoughts of them, Job xxxiv. 21, 22, 1 Sam. xvi. 7. Some derive it from a word which signifies to dispose; and which agrees with God, who disposes of and orders all things “in the armies of the heavens, and among the inhabitants of the earth, according to the council of his will,” and to answer the purposes of his own glory, and the good of his creatures. Though perhaps it may be best of all to derive it from a word which signifies fear,³⁰ and so describes God as the object of fear and reverence; who is not only to be stood in awe of by all the inhabitants of the earth, Psalm xxxiii. 8, but more especially is to be feared with a godly fear by his saints, Psalm lxxxvii. 7, Heb. xii. 28, and fear sometimes takes in the whole worship of God, both internal and external; and so the true God, in distinction from others, is called, the Fear, that is, the God of Isaac, Gen. xxxi. 53, and אלהים fear, is sometimes used in the Targum³¹ for the true God, as it sometimes is of idols.

From all these names of God we learn that God is, the eternal, immutable, and almighty Being, the Being of beings, self-existent, and self-sufficient, and the object of religious worship and adoration.³²

³⁰Απο του θεειν, currere; so Plato in Cratylo, p. 273. Clem Al. protrept. p. 15, vel αθειν adurere, accendere vel θεαθαι, cernere, vel a θω dispono; so Clem. Al. Stromat; in fine, Herodot. Eturpe, c. 52, vel a δεος timor, Philo ut supra; these several etymologies may be seen on Zanchy de Natura Dei, 1. 1, c. 16; Alsted. Lexic. Theolog. p. 8.

³¹Targum Hierosol. in Deut. xxxii. 15.

³²Transcription by Madison Grace.