

Genesis 1-2

God's names

Evidently relying on *source criticism* again, a sixth reason brought forward in support of a *theistic evolutionary* or *evolutionary creationist* reading of Genesis 1 and 2 is that Genesis 1 employs *Elohim* while Genesis 2 uses *Yahweh Elohim* to refer to the creator. It is said that *Elohim* is “a generic and universal word for the divine” whereas *Yahweh* “is the personal name of Israel’s God, like other nations have their personal gods”; the same writer also says that this name is “the four letter name of the Hebrew God [my emphasis] YHWH”¹. This argument is explicitly connected with the proposition we have previously examined² that the different views of God presented in Genesis 1 and 2 show that “Genesis 1 is more universal in its scope and appeal, whereas Genesis 2 is more earthy” and the conclusion drawn that “The names of God used in these chapters further supports this distinction”³.

We will follow three lines of investigation in this essay:

- First, we will evaluate the integrity of the *theistic evolutionary* argument.
- Following that, we will consider the scriptural testimony for *Elohim* and *Yahweh* being *source critical* evidence of different and potentially disharmonious records.
- Finally, we will explore the passing hint in the *theistic evolutionary* argument that *Yahweh* is to be regarded as a parochial tribal name in some way equivalent to other nations having their own personal gods.

examining the argument

The way this argument is put together is prejudicially selective.

First, in concentrating on the use of God’s name in Genesis 2, it overlooks the fact that *Elohim* is carried over from Genesis 1 in the repeated expression *Yahweh Elohim*. This carry-over is, of itself, a harmonising component for Genesis 1 and 2 and to neglect its presence has no justification.

Second, the argument moves on to claim that “In the second creation story, Eve and the serpent (Genesis 3:1-5) refer to God as *Elohim* only, not *Yahweh Elohim*” suggesting that this pinpoints their “disconnection from Yahweh”⁴; this comment:

- Highlights the earlier neglect of the presence of *Elohim* in *Yahweh Elohim*.
- Cuts both ways since if, according to the *theistic evolution* argument, *Elohim* can be used in “the second creation story” consistently and harmoniously with the use of *Yahweh Elohim* in the first chapter of the same “creation story” then this undermines the evidence being presented for these expressions being tokens of Genesis 1 and 2 not being in harmony and therefore it being inappropriate that they are handled as literal records.
- Finally, nor should we overlook that this part of the argument repeats the special pleading we identified in the previous essay⁵.

scripture’s testimony

Are the uses of *Elohim* in Genesis 1 and *Yahweh* in Genesis 2 *source critical* evidence for different and potentially disharmonious records⁶? To assess this we will analyse seven

¹ For example, <http://biologos.org/blogs/archive/israels-two-creation-stories-part-3> [cited March 17, 2016].

² Peter Heavyside, *Genesis 1-2: different views of God*.

³ <http://biologos.org/blogs/archive/israels-two-creation-stories-part-3> [cited March 17, 2016].

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ Peter Heavyside, *Genesis 1-2: different views of God*.

⁶ Cf the *Documentary hypothesis*: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Documentary_hypothesis [referenced March 25, 2016]. But note that this essay does not attempt a comprehensive analysis of this hypothesis only the simple claim in the *theistic evolutionary* argument that the uses of *Elohim* and *Yahweh*

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separate psalms for which we have apostolic authority, including that of “the apostle and high priest of our confession” (He 3:1), that they were written by the prophet David.

In the following table I set out the apostolic authority for David being the psalmist, the holy spirit carrying him along, and analyse the range of expressions employed in each psalm to refer to God:

<u>Psalm</u>	<u>Apostolic authority</u>	<u>Expressions in the psalm referring to God</u>
2	Acts 4:25-26 citing Psalm 2:1-2	Yahweh: v2,7,11 Adonai: v4
16	Acts 2:25-28 citing Psalm 16:8-11	El: v1 Yahweh: v2,5,7,8 Adonai: v2
32	Romans 4:6-8 citing Psalm 32:1-2	Yahweh: v2,5,10,11
69	Acts 1:16,20 citing Psalm 69:25 Romans 11:9-10 citing Psalm 69:22-23	Elohim: v1,3,5,6,13,29,30,32,35 Adonai: v6 Yahweh: v6,13,16,31,33
95	Hebrews 3:7-11; 4:7 citing Psalm 95:7-11	Yahweh: v1,3,6 El: v3 Elohim: v7
109	Acts 1:16,20 citing Psalm 109:8	Elohim: v1,26 Yahweh: v14,15,20,21,26,27,30 Adonai: v21
110	Matthew 22:43-45; Mark 12:36-37; Luke 20:42-44 and Acts 2:34-35 citing Ps 110:1	Yahweh: v1,2,4

The distribution of expressions used to refer to God in these psalms, including both *Elohim* and *Yahweh* and all by a single writer, is quite contrary to the presence of these terms being *source critical* evidence for different and disharmonious scriptures. The same prophetic writer evidently employs both God's name, *Yahweh*, and titles such as *Adonai*, *El* and *Elohim* harmoniously and pertinent to his psalm's themes and purpose. Indeed, this psalmist frequently interleaves their use within a single written piece, within one psalm, showing that the presence of such terms is not evidence of distinct scriptures; that is, unless we wish to charge the Lord Jesus and his apostles with being mistaken and in error.

Yahweh

Is *Yahweh* a tribal name of Israel's God in some way equivalent to other nations having their own personal gods?

We have already had cause to reflect on scripture's purpose in introducing the use of *Yahweh* in Genesis 2: this chapter's teaching that God has a *generational* relationship to *man* clearly pertains to this historically first use of God's name, *Yahweh*, and to the detail that *man* is the centrepiece of God's purpose⁷. It is by reflecting further on our understanding of this purpose that any hint of *Yahweh* being a tribal name is finally destroyed⁸.

evidence separate and disharmonious records. Nevertheless, it should be recorded that the *Documentary hypothesis* commonly places the beginnings of the *Yahwist* source c. 950BCE in the southern kingdom, the *Elohists* source c. 850BCE in the northern kingdom, the *Deuteronomist* source c. 600BCE in Jerusalem and the *Priestly* source c. 500BCE in Babylonian exile. This being the case, David's psalms, according to scriptural chronology and supported by some archaeological finds (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David#Archaeology> [referenced March 25, 2016]), pre-date these sources and considerably undermine the *Documentary hypothesis* from a scriptural perspective.

⁷ Peter Heavyside, *Genesis 1-2: the duration of creation*.

⁸ This line of argument does not address another fundamental error in such reasoning: a misunderstanding of the establishment and fulfilment of God's promises through Israel such that all those in Christ, both Jew and gentile are “the Israel of God” (Ro 9:6-8; Gal 6:16; Ep 2:13,19).

But first, among many instances of *Yahweh* being employed by God about himself, the use in Isaiah 66:1 exemplifies a common theme associated with his self-reference. This reads: "Thus says the Lord [Yahweh]: 'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool'". Here, God speaks of himself in cosmological and universal terms and yet he refers to himself by his name *Yahweh* and not, as would be consistent with the *theistic evolutionary* handling of Genesis 1 and 2 referenced above, *Elohim*. Furthermore, it is clear that in this use, *Yahweh* is not a name for Israel's God like the other nations have personal names for their gods; it is a name God employs about himself when portraying himself with his cosmological and universal role.

This points to an aspect of God's exposition of his name in Exodus 3 that it is easy to overlook; this is the aspect of directionality. In Exodus 3 it is not that Israel names their personal God, as would be accurate of the other nations and their personal gods; rather, this chapter shows us God naming himself as *Yahweh*.

In naming himself this way in Exodus 3, the Lord also expounds the significance of the *generational* relationship to *man* which is reinforced by the historically first use of God's name in Genesis 2. Briefly, the Lord's explanation of his name by "I will be who I will be" (Ex 3:14)⁹ shows that his name is prophetic and promissory of his work with and in those whom he chooses; *Yahweh* shall be with man and he shall be seen in his redemptive work through man.

Fast forward to its fulfilment in Christ and the work of his apostles and we have James' predilection for insisting on gentile circumcision (cf Ac 15:1; Ga 2:12) overturned by the testimony of Peter, Paul and Barnabas and by James' own acknowledgement that their testimony agreed with "the words of the prophets" (Ac 15:15). Of particular note in this context is the way James describes God's purpose in *visiting gentiles*; this is that he might "take from them a people for his name" (Ac 15:14). And as God himself says of *Yahweh* in a variety of ways and on many occasions: "This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations" (Ex 3:15). Thus, *Yahweh* is not merely the personal name of the Hebrew God, it is the name in which he fulfils his redemptive purpose for peoples of all nations.

Yahweh Elohim

This sixth argument of *theistic evolutionists* can be seen to carry no scriptural substance at all. It is as vain as the vanities worshipped by the pagan nations surrounding Israel in David's day.

Genesis 2's introduction of *Yahweh Elohim* functions to portray the transcendent creator of Genesis 1 as one who bears a name which he gives to himself. This, of itself, draws the reader closer to the creator: he has a name by which we can know him. More than this, his name speaks of God's *generational* relationship with man so that we are promised he will be with us and that his redemptive work will be seen through us.

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⁹ For a substantive argument for this rendering see: A Perry, *The Translation of Exodus 3:14a* in *Christadelphian eJournal of Biblical Interpretation*, Vol 3, No. 4, Fourth quarter 2009, 39.