

The Christian God is Not a God

M. M. Oboh, PhD

Baptist College of Theology, P. O. Box 2380, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria

B. I. Oboh

College of Education, Ekiadolor now Toyo Akpata University of Education,
Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria

Abstract

This is a study based on God's revelation of His name to Moses in Exodus 3:13-15. It is termed in this paper as Nomenclatorial Revelation. The essence is to make a correction of the inappropriate ascription of an indefinite article 'a' to God instead of the definite article 'the' that correctly expresses His Name and what Christianity believes about Him. Different methods of analysis, philosophical, historical, sociological, and theological were employed in the treatment of materials relating to grammatical, religious, biblical, linguistic sources and so on. Evidences abound and agree on the uniqueness of God. It was shown that expression of an indefinite article such as 'a' to God is a misrepresentation which equates Him with the idols, principalities and powers. Moreover, the research further shows that in reality, God warns against such by declaring that He should be known and addressed throughout all generations as " 'I AM WHO I AM,' ... 'The LORD, ...'" (Ex.3:14-15) Therefore, Christians are asked to truly and consistently portray God in His Nomenclatorial Revelation in speech and theoretically as it befits His Lordship in every form and expressions such as the Saviour and not a Saviour. They should also allow it have a positive impact on their conduct to one another and to other people as well as to make it serve to improve on their service, reverence, and commitment to God.

Keywords

Crowell's Dictionary of English Grammar and Handbook of American Usage (1928: 1) defines "a" as an indefinite article, which by this nature may mean any, every, or each of an item in a class. Similarly, Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2012) posits that "a" by its function of an indefinite article refers to an unspecified element of a variety. Thus, it indicates any, a particular type or instance, one as an example or first among others.

Besides, the Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language (1938: 1) Second Edition is of the same view that alphabet "a" denotes anyone or anything. However, it is used arbitrarily or conveniently to designate an object especially being the first in order of a group or category. This is the form in which it is conventionally applied as an adjective.

Webster Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged also states that article "the" being definite in character is used as "foundation word to indicate that a following noun or noun equivalent refers to someone or something that is unique or is thought of as unique or exist as only one at a time..." Moreover, in line with this view, Crowell's Dictionary says that as a distinguishing factor from the indefinite article "a", "the" serves "to point out an individual person or thing." Likewise, The Oxford English Dictionary explains that, definite article "the" shows "the name of a unique object or one so considered or of which there is only one at a time..."

For the purpose of emphasis, it stresses further that "the" is used "in the sense of the preeminent, the typical or the only ... worth mentioning." This is a clear understanding as to the sense or usage of "the" and "a" as definite and indefinite articles respectively in this paper. Thus, "the" as a definite article holds the basis on which this discussion goes for God and His attributes against every other thing, person or idea.

In terms of the analytical process using philosophical approach, K. Wiredu (1980:82) declares that philosophy examines "the intellectual foundation of life, using the best available modes of knowledge and reflection for human well-being." On the basis of this assertion, J. K. Ayantayo (2015:174) opines that by the reason of this understanding, there are four ways with which philosophy is applied in the process of analysis, "namely epistemology, ethics, logic and metaphysics." However, these levels are interconnected.

In the context of this paper, tapping on the above, this research relies more on logic and ethics for its philosophical analysis of data. Logic concerns a scientific study base on careful reasoning. It is a logical advancement on an argument. By this, it implies that a discussion in this regard should follow a reasonable and sensible presentation. Consequently, logic as an art, applies the skill of rational and coherent argumentation (Ayantayo, 177).

On the other hand, ethics in its task of religious analysis involves a "careful evaluation of moral values, goals, purpose, moral claims and aspirations underlying religious activities, beliefs and practices" (Ayantayo, 183). Hence, it assesses people's conformity and their defiance against established morality (Ayantayo).

History endeavors to search the past with the purpose of understanding the present and to make plans or

predict future situations. As a result of this, historical analysis is an attempt to obtain information from past events or materials with regards to the trend of the subject being treated (Ayantayo, 196).

Michael S. Nortbcott (1999:193) posits that sociology as an approach to data analysis or in religious study relates to the interaction that goes on between religion and society. It structures the society on the bases of human experience, culture, and religion. Therefore, it determines the nature by which things such as “Objects, knowledge, practices and institutions in the social world are viewed...” (Nortbcott). According to Frank Whaling (1999:227) theological approach is centered on the concepts of the study of God or gods. It also relates to the knowledge based on them.

1. Introduction

Words are vital instruments of communication. The understanding and application of a spoken and unspoken expression depends largely on the ability to decode its contents. The effectiveness of the contents further goes along with the validity of the constitution of a letter or words in a given statement. Therefore, an idea wrongly conveyed irrespective of the basis of the wrongness of it, that is, whether it is intentional, knowingly or not destroys the essence of its contents. In the same vein, it affects the hearer’s ability to follow with the meaning, belief, or to accept, and to make do with its requirement. This is the position with the erroneous or otherwise expression of the Christian GOD as a God.

Many a time, we hear and read the usage of the phrase “a God,” “a Saviour,” when referring to The Almighty God particularly in Christian circles or folks. It happens in formal and informal occasions and communications as stated above and in their expressions with the world outside the Church. Moreover, it occurs among the Christian elites in leadership and education as well as in worship and songs. But in a deep contrast, God has not at any time revealed Himself as a God. The manner and ways He has shown and declares Himself has always been unique in Scriptures and manifestations. In addition, He makes Himself known with emphases in words and deeds as to whom He is and how He should be regarded (Ex. 3:13-15, 6:1-6; 9:13-16).

Consequently, this paper seeks to give reasons why God cannot be equated with anything, a being or abstract concept in the name of “a God” and to further use this to correct the prevailing impression of ascribing an indefinite article ‘a’ to Him. To this end, it treats the Nature and Personality of God, His revelation general and special as well as presentation of His revelation in Name coined in this paper as Nomenclatorial Revelation of God.

2. Nature and Personality of God

The treatment of the nature and personality of God are intended to provide an awareness of His Being and Essence vital to the treatment of the subject of this paper. A being is understood from its characteristics, attributes, or qualities that determine its nature. In the same vein, God as the Being possesses qualities that show His Personality. By implication, it means from the onset, we are strongly of the opinion that God is not an abstract concept. He exists in Person within and outside the realm of humanity. He is life and the source of being. Hence, He is the creator of the universe. He has no beginning neither does He have an end. Therefore, He exists by Himself. He makes Himself known to man and relates with him as He pleases (Ex. 6:1-7). These are elements of His attributes as God with whom there is no other or equal. For this reason, He is different from the “God of the philosophers” (Gijsbert van den Brink and Marcel Sarot, 1999: 28).

2.1 *The Person of God*

According to Gijsbert van de Brink and Marcel Sarot (1999: 28), some of the philosophers’ concepts about God are that of “... an impersonal supreme idea (Plato) ... the final cause of the whole of our reality (Aristotle’s unmoved mover)... a fluid permeating the whole cosmos (Stoicism).” Having thus debunked the philosophers’ erroneous perception of what God is and should be, Brink and Sarot argue further that the personal reality of God is definite.

Consequently, God is Agent. He lives and acts. The Bible affirms this truth. Nevertheless, this idea is not taken as an ordinary or naïve identification of God as a person. He is not a person in the simplistic usage of the term. He is neither a person to be regarded as a giant. This will be a denial of His transcendence which will render Him as a man. Christianity presents Him “as uniquely suprapersonal, simultaneously including and transcending personal features” (28). To this end, the Trinitarian doctrine which expresses God as one substance, but three persons, is enough ground to understand His greatness and the reason why He cannot just be “...equated with a person” (28).

2.2 *God as Love*

Going further into the nature of God, Vincent Brummer (1999: 33) opines that Christians ascribe different qualities to God such as power, authority, justice and wisdom, knowledge, goodness as well as steadfastness, compassion presence and so on. In spite of these, love appears to be the backdrop or central point to the

understanding of the nature of God. Thus, I John 4:7-9 portrays Him as Love. This is the manner in which all other of His characteristics are to be understood. Nevertheless, every of His shared or similar attributes with man as enumerated above are not to be taken precisely in the way they are used for human individuals. They are conceptual models for visualizing some of God's activities and do not carry all the implications they have when used for human. Thus, for the purpose of drawing a clear cut difference between God and man some of His specific attributes that do not in any way apply to man are expressed as transcendence (surpassing or above all things and human knowledge – incomprehensible), necessity (unchangeable, steadfastness); simplicity (oneness), aseity (absolute self-sufficient, independent and autonomous) and so on. To this end, the following is based on some of these special attributes of God.

2.3 *God as Immutable*

Antonie Vos (1999: 53) views God as immutable. Thus, he opines that it is wrong and misleading to believe or think that He changes. To hold this opinion is to deny His identity. This is clearly understandable from scriptures. Examples are "His Names and expressions of His Divine majesty. As the Creator, He "stands over against His creation, God stands over against the world... God is not identical with this world, nor is God like His world. He is completely different and this difference is qualitatively infinite."

2.4 *God as Omnipresence*

Luco J. van den Brom (1999: 77) while focusing on the omnipresence of God asserts that, man's experience of God is a practical knowledge "... of the hiddenness of the ever-present One." This notion is explicit from Biblical monotheism that results from the Jewish historical experience of God both at home and in diaspora. By the reason of this, they came to the conclusion that he is not limited to any point (omnipresence). In addition, to the historical awareness of the presence of God, the scripture in Psalm 139:4-5 depicts the knowledge of God's all presence in worship thus:

Even before I speak,
You already know what I will say
You are all around me on every side,
You protect me with your power (TGI).

Indeed, God is everywhere at the same time. The omnipresence of God stretches from eternity and has no end.

2.5 *God as Unique*

In his treatise on "The One and Only", F. Gerrit Immink (1999: 99-100) stresses that Christianity believes in God as the central point of existence. Moreover, He is unique; because of His majesty, it is not possible to equate Him with the world. As a result of this, "God exists in Himself and by Himself" (99). Like other major attributes of God, the concept of the uniqueness and self-existence (aseity) of God is firmly expressed in Christian worship. Yet, no man can attain to the full measure of His greatness. There is no one and nothing comes before Him in existence. Thus, He depends on no one. He is also not subject to any principality or power to sustain the world. He is indivisible and fully complete in any way conceived. He does not perish or change. So, God remains the same all the time: in the past, present and future, yesterday, today and forever. As He is, so are His attributes. They do not change nor do they diminish in strength or value. This is why He is all the time worthy of our trust, worship, and praise.

2.6 *God as Unmoved and Moved Mover*

Marcel Sarot (1999: 119) stresses on the impassibility (unmovable) and passibility (suffering) nature of God. Thus, he declares that God alone is unmoved. Yet, in His love, he attracts the world to Himself. He is the object of all that the world is striving to reach. That God is impassible, cannot be moved or suffered does not imply that he is indifferent.

Therefore, God is not passive of His own emotions and our human actions. He moves, acts and takes initiative and helps control even when He chooses to have feelings and be affected. To this end, God is moved and moves. But He is not irrational in His feelings even His anger is all the time in accordance with His justice and wisdom. Consequently, all the feelings and emotions of God are always in perfect harmony with His "...goodness, justice, wisdom and other attributes" (134, 133).

On the other hand, that God is moved by the positive and negative actions of men does not alter or change His self-dependent. The world depends on God from creation to its sustenance. But He does not depend on the world for anything in that sense of creation and survival. This is the way to safeguard against the doctrine of His unconditionedness or independence in the discus of His impassibility: Unmoved Mover or Moved Mover (Sarot, 134).

Another issue raised by the treatise of impassibility of God is the idea of suffering (passibility). This is the

concept that claims that if God is seen to be moved by human sins or actions then, He suffers. But the passibility of God is not to say that he is afflicted in a human sense of dejectedness, despair, frustration, and sadness. When there are several reasons or sources of happiness, a person who though is subject to suffering does not feel unhappy. The sources of joy for God are inexhaustible. For instance, Jesus Himself says that “there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who don’t need repentance” (Lk. 15:7 CSB). Therefore, creation gives joy and grief as well (Sarot, 135-136).

God chooses to suffer for the sake of man due to His love and not by compulsion. He allows creation to hurt Him “with a view to a greater good, and this greater good apparently compensates for God’s suffering.” Therefore, God’s knowledge of this good, which is connected with the welfare of God’s creatures, is a source of happiness for God as well” (Sarot, 136). The main source of God’s happiness is God Himself. He is inherent in love for God is love (1 Jn. 4:8). This is the nature of His Trinitarian existence as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Sarot, 136).

2.7 God as Omnipotence

In continuation of the treatment of the Nature and Personality of God, we present another view at this juncture by Giljbert van den Brink (1999: 139). The subject of his discussion centres on The Omnipotence of God. Accordingly, he considers some terminologies that are used for God in the Bible relating to His power and greatness. He opines that nouns such as ‘almighty’ and The Almighty are rear in the Bible. He cited that ten of such words are contained in the New Testament with nine of them being in Revelation and the other in 2 Corinthians 6:18. In all of them, the Greek word that is used is transliterated as *pantokrator* meaning the ruler over everything.

However, in most translations whether in classical or contemporary versions of the Old Testament, what is used is a term with reference to God’s Omnipotence in a more regular form particularly in the King James Version. It is used in not fewer than fifty times. Thirty of them are found in the Book of Job alone. The Hebrew words being referred in the context are *shaddai* and *sebaoth*. In most cases, they are preceded with God’s name or phrase (Brink, 139).

Irrespective of the argument, the Bible does ascribe the concept of omnipotence to God. This according to Brink is evident from His “unparalleled deeds in creation and redemption, the miracles related in the Bible, not least the resurrection of Christ, the way in which He is acclaimed as King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tim. 6:15)...” (141).

Consequently, the biblical idea of the omnipotence of God includes His reign over humanity as well as the universe. It also concerns “His unlimited capacity for action” (Brink, 141). This view is expressed in several parts of the Scriptures such as Genesis 18:14, Jeremiah 32:17, Job 42:2, and Matthew 19:26; Mark 14:36, Luke 1:37, Philippians 3:21 and so on. Nonetheless, there is nothing great that God cannot do irrespectively compared with what He has done and what He is yet to do. To this end, we reject Emil Brunner’s presupposition that the omnipotence of God in original biblical setting is limited to His actually exercised reign (141; Brunner, 1949: 248, 250).

Therefore, the Bible affirms in no less a time the all-powerfulness of God as ruler over everything and His unlimited capacity for every action He intends to take. Moreover, Judeo-Christian traditional system further emphasizes and becomes more understanding on the work of God by the nature of His omnipotence. Thus, it is clear at this point that classical interpretation of Biblical texts’ belief of God as ‘all-powerful’ is without error whatsoever. It is on a historical ambit as experienced all through the Scriptures and not an abstract concept. Instances of this are like the cases of Abraham and Sarah’s conception of Isaac, Job’s knowledge of God’s power in creation and the disciples when they were astonished by the miracles of Jesus. It also includes the Israelites deliverance from bondage in Egypt and many more. Thus, the omnipotence of God is about His power with contents and purpose of no limitation (Brink, 142).

2.8 God as Omniscience

Similar to the omnipotence of God, Dekker Eef (1999:161) maintains that “Omniscience is a biblical notion.” However, he recognizes the idea that along with this Old Testament concept of this nature of God there were ancient religions that shared a similar viewpoint about their own objects of worship. Among the gods to whom such belief was ascribed are Varana, Zeus, Mithra, Schamasch and Ra. Consequently, he opines that the duty of his work is mainly to determine whether the idea is correctly being applied to God, and if it is true at all (161-162).

Thus, he points out the fact that there are numerous sayings and songs expressive of the omniscience of God. For instance, in Psalm 139, The LORD is portrayed as The One who knows all the thoughts and deeds of everybody:

O Lord, you have searched me and know me.

You know when I sit down and when I rise up, you discern my thoughts from far away. You

search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely. You hear me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me... Your eyes beheld my informed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, When none of them as yet existed (Ps. 139:1-5, 16; NRSV).

One of the things to be noted above is the understanding that God has the knowledge of a person's course even before it happens (v. 16). This opinion is also found elsewhere in the Bible. Isaiah has texts that contain the futuristic knowledge of God as different from the gods (Is. 41:21-23; 42:9; 44:8). In the same vein, He knows the deepest secrets of the universe (Job 38:41). This is evidenced by the Psalmist rhetorical question in 94:4 as follows: "He who planted the ear, does he not hear? He who formed the eyes does he not see? (Eef, 162-163).

Another important aspect that attention needs to be drawn is God's knowledge of future events that are conditional. In this regard, a situation arose in which David sought to know from God if the people of Keilah, the place he was would hand him over to Saul, if he comes there looking for him in order to protect their city. God's response to the question was simply 'yes.' Thus, David left the area (1 Sam. 23:11-12). In this way, he escaped from Saul. This is a fact of "conditional future – nevertheless known to God" (Eef, 163). Jesus expresses the same knowledge in Matthew 11:21 when He says, "How terrible it will be for you, Chorazin! How terrible it will be for you, Bethsaida! Because if the miracles that happened in you had taken place in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." Having thus set the stage for his discussion, Eef concludes on a logical, classical, theological, and biblical basis that there is no iota of error in ascribing omniscience to God (163-178). To this end, this paper justifies the action of the personality and nature of God as reasons why He cannot be equated with principalities and powers, gods and goddesses or any idea in the realm of "Gods". Next is a consideration of the absolute nature of God from the perspective of His revelation.

3. Revelation of God

Revelation is the practice of communicating a divine truth. It is the process by which God shows, discloses, manifests or makes Himself known to man. It is also the name given to something at which God has been revealed. In the same vein, it means a thing that has been disclosed by God. In a general sense, revelation is the act of making what hitherto had been hidden to others known to them (Webster's Third new International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged). At this juncture, we proceed to examine God's revelation in its general and special form.

3.1 General Revelation of God

From Biblical perspective, E. McChenny (1924: 934-935) infers that revelation is from a Greek word transliterated as *apokalopsis* meaning to uncover or unveil. Thus, it expresses the fact that, the truths and realities which men could not discover for them have been revealed by God. However, revelation is classified into two namely: general and special revelation.

General revelation is the type God has given to all men. It is the contents of what is known through nature, history and from man himself. These are authentically expressed in Scriptures such as in Psalm 19:1; Isaiah 40:26; Romans 1:19, 20; Exodus 9:16, Acts 14:15-17; 17:15; Romans 2:14, 15; and Matthew 6:22-34. But as distinct enough as they are that is pertaining to things which are subject to human senses: touch, feeling, smell, taste and sight, why does God have to add special revelation to the general? On this question, McChenny opines that, though general revelation is powerful enough to communicate God's intention to man, sin has either nullify or completely reduce its purpose (Ac. 17:22-29). In spite of the consequences of sin, the enormous gain of revelation which is totally beyond the scope of human ability referred by McChenny as "the economy of redemption" (934), necessitates the making known of truths which man could not decipher and apply through general revelation. To this end, the Scripture at no time relents in its affirmation of the truths proclaimed in nature, history and man himself. Besides, it gives credence to the salvation which God alone provides for man through Jesus Christ (McChenny, 930).

Consequently, it is pertinent at this juncture to state that revelation is not synonymous with inspiration. Revelation has to do with the truths or facts that God has made known to man. But inspiration simply depicts the process or channel through which it comes.

3.2 Special Revelation of God

Special revelation has two instruments of determining the validity and reality of its contents. These are evidences provided by internal and external elements. Miracles and prophecies are its external proof. But its internal reality is determined by the contents. Going further from the truths of this assertion, McChenny (934) stresses that,

The greatness of the truths, their adaptation to the necessities of human life, their practical effects when accepted, and above all the personal character of Jesus Christ, who is the center of the whole revelation and the supreme medium thereof, form sufficient proof that the

revelation of Scriptures has come from God. Thus, the revelation is to be recognized as the sun is known, by its own shining.

While accepting this premise, the researcher also wishes to use it to establish the fact as affirmed by Paul while responding to the Athenians (Ac. 17:22-29) that general revelation has with it, the purpose of revealing God to man. But what could not be ascertained by the instrument of it is made explicit in Jesus Christ. Therefore, He is the ultimate of God's self-revelation to mankind.

In the light of this belief, G. J. Macgillivray (1930: 16) opines that the purpose why we are created is to be united with God through love. However, it is not possible for us to love Him if we do not know Him. Consequently, the knowledge that is basically and strictly necessary in this world is the "knowledge of the truths of faith... the more we can learn about God the better. The more we know of Him the more we shall love Him, and the more fervently we shall seek to attain Him." Hence, this is the only wisdom in the fullest sense of it. Anything outside of this, in whatever realm of study, practice or knowledge is partial and not full.

Therefore, he presents two ways by which God can be known. The first, he claims is through the use of reason while the second is by revelation. Notwithstanding, reason to this end, is based on the understanding or perception of the knowledge of God from the created world (Macgillivray, 17-18). In his own words, "Apart from revelation, the only means we have in this world of loving God is by reasoning from created things." If that is the case, it is not different from what we have depicted and digested above by way of general revelation to which Apostle Paul makes credence in acts 17:22-30:

So Paul stood up in front of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I see that you are very religious in every way. For as I was walking around and looking closely at the objects you worship, I even found an altar with this written on it: "To an unknown god." So I am telling you about the unknown object you worship. The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth. He doesn't live in shrines made by human hands, and he isn't served by people as if he needed anything. He Himself gives everyone life, breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of humanity to live all over the earth, fixing the seasons of the year and the national boundaries within which they live, so that they might look for God, somehow reach for him, and find him. Of course, he is never far from any one of us. For we live, move and exist because of him, as some of your own poets have said: '.....since we are his children, too.' So if we are God's children, we shouldn't think that the divine being is like gold, silver, or stone or is an image carved by humans using their own imagination and skill (ISV).

Thus, the trust of Paul's message to the Athenians was that they made as gods created objects with which God has chosen to make Himself known to man in general. By implication, Paul affirms that by the application of common sense or reason man ought to have discern the existence of God, believe, serve and worship Him instead of the things in themselves. Is it not true that from the mysteries of the universe, the least creature to the highest, living and non-living, we see the majesty and awesomeness of God? Yes, indeed, we do. Consider the sun and moon, flowers, plants, trees, animals of all species, even ourselves, the cloud, the sea, ocean, nonetheless, aesthetic splendor of a butterfly to mention but a few speak volume of the existence of God for those who care.

Similarly, science and technology no matter how high, reveals the presence and majesty of God who gave man the wisdom to arrive at those things made through them. But because some people like the Athens turn some of those things into object of worship instead of the creator and also lure others into making knowledge their god or still more into atheism, should we deny and not speak or be afraid to say the truth? No, we should not at all. However, Macgillivray (19) notes that there are those who held outrightly to the view no matter how eminent they are in learning or otherwise that reason is inimical to the practice of faith.

For example, the researcher had a personal experience with a pastor who in his teaching of a Bible Study told his congregation that because reason can sometimes fail it should be rejected in the pursuit of Christianity. It is ridiculous that because some people just want to be on the opposing side, they do not mind how what they say affects their views and hearers. In the process, they run themselves and others into problems. Thus, they are not different from the crowd to which Jesus declares: "Wisdom is vindicated by all her children" (Lk. 7:35, ISV). In this trend, Paul in his above address to the Ephesians says in verse 23, "to be renewed in your mental attitude." The implications of these statements are that wisdom is the right application of reason and God expects that we should be wise. A man or person that has no wisdom is foolish. Why then should people, Christians in particular be asked to refuse to be wise and reasonable? This is wrong as faith is not lived in a vacuum.

So, we see here that Jesus never taught Christians should reject to be reasonable. Rather, emphasis should be on its method of application and limitations. Paul on the other hand did not deny the usefulness of reason in a Christian life. The truth of the matter is that according to him, above all, as a result of the sinfulness of man, God has finally made Himself known in Christ. For this reason, man has no excuse for his or her failure not to believe in Him. (Ac. 17:30-31) The irony of it is that, the truth we fail to show is also being used to deceive people away from the Christian faith. Therefore, the matter does not rest with reason as a substitute for faith. Rather, it is just

an affirmation, a channel of the truth in creation to the glory of God.

Thus, Macgillivray concludes here that reason tells us of the existence and nature of God. It does show that God is the first cause or self-existent Being. Moreover, that God “must be one, eternal, immutable, infinite in power, wisdom, love, justice and so forth” (20).

On the other hand, like McChenny, he argues that revelation is another way with which God is known. There is so much He has given as facts about Himself to man through natural phenomenon. This has enabled man to learn a lot about Him. Strictly speaking, revelation is God’s conveyance of some basic truths to man. It is the process by which He speaks to human. It does not necessarily imply that the one with whom He communicates must hear audible words. There are several ways God speaks such as visions, dreams, and the word (Scriptures). However, the important thing here is that He sends specific information through the instrumentality of human agents (Macgillivray, 20-21).

Moving from the premise of the nature and purpose of revelation, Macgillivray went back to raise two vital questions on God’s revelation through reason. First is the question as to “why should God have revealed what it is possible for us to know by reason?” (21). Before his answer on this, let us digress a little by noting that a similar opinion had earlier been alluded by E. McChenny in the discussion of his position on the relationship between general and special revelation. Coming back to Macgillivray’s answer on this, he points in agreement with St. Thomas that though the truths would have been found out by reason, not many people would have been able to do that because it requires much study. Natural limitations would also have been of so much limitation to a lot of people. In the same vein, they would have been hindered by laziness and preoccupation with the pursuit of temporal wants. Nevertheless, those who would have had the capacity to do so would hardly have had the time before their old age. In spite of this, as a result of the weakness of human intellectual ability, the truth so acquired would have been frosted with errors. Consequently, God in His mercy was pleased to further reveal those things which could have been obtained by reason so that everybody will easily be able to participate in His knowledge without doubt or error (21).

In the second question, he asked: “Why has God revealed to us those further truths that reason could never attain? (21). To answer this question, he claims that,

God has ordered man to a supernatural end, to the attainment of which he has to direct his intention and actions. But no one can aim at an end which he does not know. That, however, which is strictly supernatural cannot be known by the natural reason, for it is the very meaning of supernatural that it is beyond the reach of all natural powers. Therefore, for the attainment of this end, a revelation is strictly necessary (22).

To buttress his response, he made an addition from the treatise of St. Thomas saying that a true knowledge of God can only be attained from God’s own revelation of His mysteries. In the revelation of the mysteries of God, we come to know that God by His nature is above everything that man can ever conceive. By the same token, we are saved from presumption, the mother of all errors (22).

With this provision, we think it is clearer as earlier informed that Macgillivray never intends that reason itself is revelation. But, that it is a process, channel or medium through which man can have a glimpse of God in nature. Thus, it functions in revelation through created things as inspiration does in prophecy. Indeed, we cannot deny no matter how elementary that we are not able to fathom that there is one whose power is behind the mysteries, decency and orderliness of the created world we live in. Even kids do sometimes point to the sky and ask their parents, who lives up there? Who gives rain, this or that? With this, you know that they are already beginning to have awareness, a feeling of the presence or existence of God. How much more of adults who have seen things in countless measures of experiences in life? Therefore, though reason cannot give a full or accurate understanding of God or it can sometimes fail depending on what that may be, does not mean that it has no place in the practice of faith.

As it concerns us in this paper, the next arena to which Macgillivray directs his attention was to move among other things already discussed under the Nature and Personality of God, to the revelation of God “as a Trinity of Persons – Father, Son and Holy Ghost” (24). By the scope of his work, he did not go beyond this reference to a discussion of it. But for this paper, we now turn to a dialogue of how God is revealed in the Trinity.

4. Trinitarian Concept of God

Trinity is not a term found in the Bible. It came out of a biblical understanding through the work of Tertullian who first used the word in the 2nd century. There are three claims of the historical doctrine of the concept of Trinity. One, it affirms the oneness of God. Two, it teaches the full and eternal existence of God as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Thus, it believes in the distinctive personality of God as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The doctrine is based on the “biblical witness to God in the light of the ministry, death and resurrection – exaltation of Jesus the ‘Christ event’” (McKay, 1976: 1209).

4.1 Jesus as God

In the light of the trinity, Eugene and Comfort (2000:290) state that Jesus is the only person that deserves to be called God. The New Testament clearly asserts His deity. Several of them are found in the writings of John. He opens and closes his introduction with the assertion that Jesus as the Word has been with God from eternity and has been God also from eternity (Jn. 1:1, 18). Jesus declares by Himself in the Gospel that He has been ever before Abraham came into existence (Jn. 8:58). He and the Father are one (Jn. 10:30). The leaders of the Jews at that time believe in this as a claim to being the God (Jn. 10:31-33). When Thomas became clearly aware of the presence of Jesus, he believed and proclaimed Him as “My Lord and my God” (Jn. 20:28). Moreover, at the conclusion of John’s first letter he addresses Jesus as the one who came in order to give a clearer revelation of God for Him to be truly known. Thus, He “is the true God and eternal life” (1 Jn. 5:20).

Paul and Peter also believe in Jesus Christ as God. For this, He was praised by Paul (Rom. 9:5). In the same vein, Paul stresses that Jesus was the exact form and substance of God. In Him dwells the fullness of God in a bodily form (Phil. 2:6; Col. 1:19, 2:9). Besides, Paul and Peter still identify Jesus as both God and Saviour (Tit. 2:13; 2 Pet. 1:1) and Peter says of Him, He is our God and Lord (2 Pet. 1:2; Eugene and Comfort, 290).

4.2 God as the Father

Jesus declared His total trust upon God. He worshiped and called Him Father (Mt. 5:16, 45, 48, 6:1, 4, 6, 9, 14, 15, 18 etc; Mk. 11:22). Similarly, Jesus is the Father, our Father by His absolute revelation of God (Mt. 11:27, 16:27, 18:19, Mk. 8:38). As a result of His constant reference to God as His Father, and the Father of the believers, also that whoever sees Him has also seen the Father, Philip became anxious, and asked Him to show them the Father because with this they will be ok (Jn. 14:6-8). But Jesus in His response to him says:

“The person who has seen me has seen the Father, so how can you say, ‘show us the Father’? You believe, don’t you, that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I don’t speak on my own. It is the Father who dwells in me. Otherwise, believe me because of what He has been doing” (Jn. 14:9-11, ISV).

The revelation of God through Jesus Christ is further evident in the angelic declaration of His name as Emmanuel, “God with us” (Mt. 1:23). Eugene and Comfort (310) explain that Emmanuel is a description of Jesus Christ. It is found only in three places of the Bible: twice in the Old Testament and once in the New Testament (Is. 7:14, 8:8; Mt. 1:23). There in the New Testament, Matthew 1:23, it is transliterated into Greek as Emmanuel. But its Hebrew connotation is Immanuel.

In the Old Testament, it expresses the expectation of God’s deliverance of the Israelites from their enemies by His presence in their midst. It was given as a name to children born at the time of King Ahaz. Therefore, it was a sign encouraging the king that God would free Judah from the attack of the Syrians. Moreover, it was a prophecy pointing to the birth of Jesus the Messiah as the incarnate of God with illustration in Matthew’s Gospel (Mt. 1:23). This prophecy was fulfilled after seven hundred years of Isaiah’s declaration of it (Is. 9:14; Mt. 1:23; Eugene and Comfort, 310).

4.3 God as the Son

“Only begotten” is not used in the Bible in the English connotation of it in which it conveys the idea of birth as in human. In contrast, it is a Greek term expressing a “one and only son” (*monogenes*). Thus, it is not intended to be seen as in a birth. The concept appears nine times in the New Testament. Five of these appearances are with reference to Jesus. The remaining three refers either to only son or daughter (Lk. 7:12; 8:42; 9:38; Eugene and Comfort, 349).

The term (*monogenes*, “only begotten”) is used with peculiar reference to a favoured or precious child not necessarily in the idea of a single son or daughter born to a parent or family. Consequently, it is used to refer to Isaac as Abraham’s favoured, special, unique son in spite of having other children in Hebrew 11:17. The understanding here, is that He was the fulfilled promised child of God to Abraham. With this background knowledge of the usage of the concept of the “only begotten,” it should be understood with reference to Jesus in the contest of a fulfilled promise and uniqueness (Jn. 3:16, 18; 1 Jn. 4:9). This is the same expression in the synoptic gospels transfiguration during the baptism of Jesus as “This is my beloved son.” In addition, John 1:14, 12, 17 give the clarification that Jesus as the fulfilled promise and unique Son of God is the incarnate word from the Father. Thus, through Him, all believers become God’s children, sons and daughters (Eugene and Comfort, 349).

Therefore, His role, uniqueness, and title as “Son” are from eternity. In this condition, He has special glory and honour that has no equal. The misunderstood idea of His being begotten as in a human birth led to a confusion that was finally settled and documented in the council of NICEA (A.D. 325). Thus, it was recorded in the Creed that Jesus as the Son of God is not made but begotten (fulfilled promise, unique and special). Moreover, He is of the same (one) substance with God as the Father of all believers. The Creed completely denounced the heretical idea of Jesus being the first creature. To this end, it unambiguously proclaimed that

Jesus ... (is) fully God and fully man – the only One who can invite us in God’s kingdom to live with Him forever” (Eugene and Comfort, 349).

Nevertheless, one of the unique titles for Jesus is “One and only God” (monogenes Theos) which is found in John 1:18. It is rendered in the King James Version as “only begotten Son.” But it has been discovered in the two ancient manuscripts (p66 and p75) with the reading as monogenes Theos, “one and only God” as against “only begotten Son.” This discovery was also supported by other early manuscripts: Codices Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, Ephraemi Rescriptus as well as Coptic and Syriac. The same view was held by some of the early church fathers such as Irenaus, Clement, Origen, Eusebius and Didymus (Eugene and Comfort, 350).

Another evidence supporting the rendering as “one and only God,” is that it is the most difficult to translate of the two renditions. This is the reason why some scribes will easily want to go with the other. In any case, the above evidences clearly authenticate the view that Jesus is thus, expressed as “God” and the “One and only.” It corresponds adequately with John’s prologue where he called the Word as God also describing the Son as being of closed relationship with the Father. To this end, John in 1:18 declares Him as One whom has come to reveal God to us though no man can ever see God which is “to know God as God” (Eugene and Comfort, 350). Thus, Jesus is the One who has come to disclose Him to us both in words and in His very Person. On the basis of this, Jesus indeed explains God,

...because He is (1) the one and only Son, (2) God, and (3) the One in the bosom of the Father. As the one and only Son, He alone has a unique position with God the Father. He alone can communicate the Father’s message to mankind. And, since Jesus is also God, he is the very expression of God’s manifest in the flesh. Furthermore, His intimate relationship with the Father enables Him to share the heart of God and the love of God with all of humanity (Eugene and Comfort, 350).

4.4 God as the Holy Spirit

Spirit is generally expressed in Greek as *pneo*. It is a very expressive of breath. Therefore, *pneuma* means “the wind” or “life” (Jn. 3:8; Rv. 13:15). Sometimes, it can be used with reference to angels, demons as well as human spirit (Hb. 1:14; Lk. 4:33, 7, 59). Similarly, *pneuma* refers to God’s Spirit (1 Co. 2:11). This is “The Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, the One who lives inside believers” (Mt. 28:19; Js. 4:5; 1 Jn. 4:13; Eugene and Comfort, 399).

The early church was firmly convinced that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus after His resurrection. By His Spirit, He made Himself known and real to the believers in a spiritual form. It was on this basis, that the New Testament writers honoured the “Spirit” by designating Him as *nomen sacrum* meaning the Holy Spirit (Eugene and Comfort, 399).

Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:45, describes Jesus after the resurrection as the Spirit that gives life. He did not imply that Jesus was changed into the Spirit after His death, as if the Spirit has not been in existence before. But that His moral existence and form metamorphosed into the form of a spiritual existence. Therefore, the Personality of Jesus did not change through the resurrection. It was only His form that changed. He has with Him His essential state of being which He had emptied Himself with in order to become a man. He was in the form of God before His incarnation. He is the same God who is also the Spirit (Ph. 2:6). So, in His resurrection as explained through the metamorphosed process, he became united with the Spirit who is the third Person of the Trinity. This does not remove Him from His position as a distinct Person of the Godhead (Eugene and Comfort, 399).

Consequently, the threefold relationship is affirmed by the scriptures. Several verses are of the opinion that Jesus and the Spirit are one. For example, 2 Corinthians 3:17 states, “The Lord is the Spirit.” Again in verse 18, it says, “The Lord who is Spirit.” In similar vein, Romans 8:9, expresses, “The spirit of Christ”, and Philippians 1:19 and Galatians 4:6 as “The spirit of Jesus Christ”, and “the Spirit of His Son” respectively. Likewise, other Scriptures hold the view that the Son and the Spirit are distinct from each other. John 15:26 makes the declaration that “I (that is the Son) will send you another Comforter, the Spirit of truth.” In the same trend, Acts 2:33 stresses, “having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he (that is Jesus) has pour forth this.” Ephesians also records that, “For through him (that is the Son) we both have our access in one spirit to the Father.” Therefore, Christians believe that God is one but three Persons as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This description or representation is like a tripod which though is one but has three projections while still remaining one (Eugene and Comfort, 399).

So far, we have treated the major areas in which God has revealed Himself to man via general and special revelation. However, references were made to inspiration and reason being channels of communication and understanding such as in prophecy and revelation. Next to be considered is an aspect of special biblical revelation of God bordering on His Name as was revealed to Moses (Gen. 3:13-15). It is coined in this paper as Nomenclatorial Revelation of God. But, before this is done, some considerations bordering on the significance of naming are first presented.

5. Justification of the Significance of Naming

In a previous research, the author in his description of names states that,

...names are important instruments to man. They are means of identification. They convey purpose, value and essence. A name is a reflection of character, nature, or attribute whether good or bad. So it is used to show the significance one attaches to a thing or person or the reputation one has made for him or herself (M. M. Oboh, 2018:102).

Consequently, names contain meaning. They are not vague or abstract in contents. Evan Lenow (2018) also expresses this view in a sermon with the title: "The Value in a Name" presented at the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Forth Worth, Texas, USA. He opines that name has value. It is enshrined in the character of a person who bears the name and not what the name is ordinarily. Besides, the content of a character is in the behaviour of a person which in turn depicts the value of the name. Therefore, there is indeed a connection between the character, behaviour, reputation and personality of a name and the owner. Furthermore, the significance of a name is also strengthened by the observation that, "names are designed to distinguish objects, and originally express the distinct impressions which objects made upon, or the special relations in which they stood to the person" ("Names" The Peoples Bible Encyclopedia... 1913: 775).

W. C. Kaiser, Jr. (2000:402,403,406) opines that names whether to persons or places have significance attached to them. The Jews were fully aware of this phenomenon. It is shown by the meanings of names given by them. The trend is similar in both the Old and New Testaments. Thus, names that are giving in the NT are reflections of those in the OT.

G. F. Hawthorne (1986:480,481) expresses the same opinion that name in the Bible is the means by which a person, place or thing is distinguished and marked out from another. This is the reason why "it would be quite incorrect to say that in the OT a name was just an identity tag and no more." Therefore, a person's name is closely tied or connected to what he is known to be.

D. Stuart (1986:483) in agreement with others says that in the OT, "Names provided a means of indicating specific identity, and as such are essential to efficient communication about times and circumstances involving individual people and places." Consequently, for example, at the earliest time, names are giving to places with the combination of *beth* to mean a "place of", "location of" or "house of."

Likewise, J. A. Motyer (1996:799) stresses that, the Bible fully recognizes the importance and standard that is attached to a name. Consequently, all through the scripture names have dynamic expressions that are different from the Western worldview. Thus, he gives seven different categories by which names are dynamically used in the Scriptures:

5.1 Status Naming

An instance of status naming is seen in Adam's naming of Eve as a woman, that is equal (Gn. 2:23). This explains the man's opinion of the woman as the one with whom he "shares the God-given dominion of the world" (Motyer, 800).

5.2 Occasion Naming

This is found in Eve's naming of her first child as Cain (Gn. 4:1). The name is derived from a Hebrew verb *gana*, "gained possession." The occasion of the birth of the child signifies the fulfilled promise of God to provide her with him, whom she has actually taken possession of hence the name "Cain", *gayin* (Motyer, 800).

5.3 Event Naming

Names in the Scripture are sometimes used to describe a complete situation. An example of this is Babel (Gn. 11:9) or *peley* (Gn. 10:25). The naming is similar in context. Babel (confusion) a world that describes God's action against men for their discernment and intention not to dispersed (Gn. 11:9). Having passed judgement against them for their plan to be their own saviour (Gn. 11:4), by the confusion that ensued, God separated (*peley*) them (Gn. 10:25) as against their will (Motyer, 800).

5.4 Circumstance Naming

There are several instances in which the Bible gives evidence to show in a name that some happenings were symbolically connected and not by accident. For example, Isaac was a reflection of the laughter of his parents (Gn. 17:17; 18:12; 25:3-7). Similarly, Samuel denotes his mother's prayers to God for a child (1 Sm. 1:20). Likewise, Moses means that his princess-mother had him from the water (Ex. 2:10). Moreover, the dynamism continues also to affect the life experience of the bearer such as Moses and Samuel. Thus, Moses being fetched from water, also became the one with whom God wrought victory for the Israelites at the Red Sea. Samuel came by way of an answered prayer and he was a man who believed and acted through the efficacy of prayers (Motyer, 800).

D. Stuart (487) corroborates this idea. According to him, a condition or situation that prevails or comes to

mind at the time a child is born greatly influences personal names. This is the nature of names such as Solomon, “peaceable” (2 Sa. 12:25), Baruch, “blessed” (Jr. 32:12), Kareah, “bald” (Jr. 40:8), including Japhia, “gleaming” (Sa. 5:15).

5.5 Transformational Naming

The Bible also contains names that show something new has occurred or changed in the life of a person. In this regard, while Eve (Gn. 2:23) indicates that woman was taken from the rib of a man, it also portrays her as the mother of all humans (Gn. 3:20). Here we see that a name can be used to convey several meanings. So, in addition to the idea of transformation as shown here, Eve means for Adam a co-equal by status including complementarily of relationship by function, that is, wife as well as what he saw in her that gave him joy. By way transformation, Abram was changed to Abraham making him into a new man with new powers and from childlessness to becoming a great father; thus, *Benoni* becomes Benjamin (Gn. 35:18) from pain and loss to the position of a “right hand man” that is of honour and indispensability, Saul to Paul (Ac. 13:9) and so on (Motyer, 800).

5.6 Predictive Naming

Typical example of names in the predictive context are the ones Isaiah gave to his two sons because of the firm belief he attached to God’s word through him: *Shearjashub*, symbolic of the return of a remnant (Isa. 7:3), *Mahershalalhashbaz*, prophetic of the impending plundering of Damascus and Samaria by the King Assyria (Is. 8:1-4, 18). James and John were called *Boanerges* by Jesus as a warning against their fire like zeal (Mk. 3:17; Lk. 9:54). The names proved itself in them as God’s effective word (Motyer, 800). While Motyer calls this type of naming predictive, D. Stuart (487) regards it as prophetic. Thus, sitting Isaiah’s example as shown above, he claims that names with a conscious prophetic importance attached to them were severally given.

5.7 Theophoric and Precative Naming

This occurs when a name is given in reflection or expression of an idea or nature of God or as a prayer to Him. This is what names like Nabal, a fool (1 Sm. 25:25) denotes. However, in this context, it could be used to express “do not allow him to become a fool” (Motyer, 800). In the same vein, Ezekiel implies “May God strengthens!” and Isaiah, “May Yahweh save!” (Motyer).

From the theophoric perspective, John D. Davis (1924:550) submits that Hebrew often use a name to show a known character and essence. An instance of this is in its usage to indicate a situation whereby God has to swear “by his great name to carry out his purpose” (Jr. 44:26). The main issue here is that He does this in order to attest of His power to realize his word. The excellence of His name as portray in all the earth (Ps 3:1). This explains His majestic existence that is seen in creation and salvation. His name as the God of Jacob that exalts a king depicts the manifestation of His power as the God of Israel (Ps. 20:1).

5.8 Volitive Naming

According to D. Stuart (487), a name becomes volitive when it is given as a wish or hope generally or specified on behalf of the bearer, someone or something else. Examples of such names are *Jeberechiah*, “may Yahweh bless” (Is. 8:2), *Iphedeiah*, “may Yahweh redeem” (1 Ch. 8:25). Other examples in this class are *Ishmaiah*, “may Yahweh hear” (1 Ch. 27:19) and Ephraim, “double fruitfulness” (Gn. 41:52) as well as *Adonijah*, “may Yahweh be my Lord.”

Jesus’ Name does not belong to any of the above categories. Except in its relation to those of the Old Testament prophesies such as Matthew 1:23, Isaiah 7:14, Luke 1:31, and Isaiah 9:6f. However, it can be in the class of a status naming. In this case, God is declared as the recipient of the Name, who was born by a virgin according to the promise based on David’s lineage. The Name is fulfilled as the rounding up of God’s purpose. Moreover, the Name on its own is predictive because it looks forward to what Himself will do. On the other hand, He is the fulfillment of what is declared in His Name (Motyer, 800-801).

The above is given as a justification of the fact that names are special and play significant roles in the Scriptures. In addition, they are still relevant in contemporary usage. Generally, names are important to man. This background prepares reasonable awareness for us to now discuss the main issue of the revelation of God’s Name as follows.

6. Nomenclatorial Revelation of God – Ex. 3:13-15, 6:1-2; 9:13-16

Moses has been faulted for not jumping to seize the offer provided him by God to be used to deliver the Israelites out of bondage at the instance of the instruction. So, Warren W. Wiersbe (2007:150) writes that,

Moses should have rejoiced because God was at last answering prayers, and he should have submitted to God’s will saying, “Here I am! Send me!” But instead, he argued with the Lord and tried to escape the divine call to rescue Israel from slavery. In Egypt forty years before,

Moses had acted like the impetuous horse and rushed ahead of God, but now he is acting like the stubborn mule and resisting God (Ps. 32:9).

Thus, Wiersbe states in a five point reason why Moses could not have at the instance go straight to do God's bidding. (1) He declares himself as a nobody (Ex. 3:11-12). (2) He does not know the Name of God (Ex. 3:13-22). (3) Others will not believe him (Ex. 4:1-9). (4) He is not fluent in speech (Ex. 4:10-12), and (5) someone else should do it (Ex. 4:13-17; 150-151).

It is interesting to know that as against the purpose of these accusations, they are actually the basis of the necessity of the revelation of God's Name to Moses. Thus, first, if Moses had not acted the way he did, we might not have had the revelation that is very important to our understanding of God. Second, Moses was raised in a background that has nothing to do with the belief, knowledge, and worship of God in Pharaoh's palace. It was an ardent household of idolatry. Third, Moses understood quite well that by his action in the killing of an Egyptian in favour of an Israelite, he has become a disgusting personality, an enemy to the Egyptians. This is why he was being sought to pay for the consequences with his life. To this end, attempts were already being made to execute him. Coupled with this is that, he was also an enemy to his own people he thought of defending. Moreover, he become a national foe (Ex. 2:11-22).

The fifth point is that Moses was just an individual not a king or a military commander with an army to resist, fight, and defends himself. Yet, he knew this and much more about Pharaoh's military capability, cruelty, and so on. Nevertheless, he was just coming up with the knowledge of God after the experience of the burning bush like a new convert waiting to be groomed (Ex. 3:1-10).

Therefore, he was at the beginning in the learning process of walking with God and of becoming what He wanted him to be. The Lord knew this about him. So, He did not condemn him for it. Rather, He patiently went through with him at every point with encouragement, clarification, and hope. On the basis of this, we are not right to draw a wrong conclusion about him as Wiersbe has done when we compared him with us giving the level of faith or maturity, and of the knowledge we have of God today which was not the case with him. Even still with all the knowledge available to us, biblical, and Christian experiences combined very few will do what Moses is being accused of today.

Nonetheless, Wiersbe draws on the statement of Prophet Isaiah 6:8, "here I am! Send me", as against Moses' initial reluctance. But Isaiah also had encouragement from the Lord when suddenly he realized the enormous labour involved in the assignment and yet, the hardheartedness of the people to the extent that he quickly asked the Lord, "For how long Lord?" (Is. 6:11, ISV). For a detail part of the conversation Isaiah 6:8-11 expresses,

Then I heard the voice of the LORD as he was asking, "Whom will I send? Who will go for us?" "Here I am!" I replied. "Send me." "Go!" he responded. "Tell this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' Dull the mind of this people, deafen their ears, and blind their eyes. By doing so, they won't see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their minds, turn back, and be healed." Then I asked, "For how long, LORD?" He replied: "Until cities lie waste, without inhabitants, and houses without people; and the land becomes utterly desolate. (ISV).

Consequently, everyone needs God's encouragement in his or her life. But the time at which someone else needs it most may not be the same with another. However, one thing is sure all needs God's support. This was what Moses sought and had from Him.

Nevertheless, in preparation, God took him through an intent dialogue. Along the line, Moses asked Him, "Look! When I go to the Israelis and tell them, "The God of your ancestors sent me to you," they'll say to me, 'what is his name?' what should I say to them?" God replied to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM," and then said, "Tell the Israelis, I AM sent me to you" (Ex. 3:13-14, ISV). Going back to the five reasons given by Moses why he was not capable of the task, in point one he indeed presumed the inadequacy of himself. He spoke from a human perspective which was what he knew, and he was right. No man has in him the ability to do what God alone has the power to do. A person can only operate within the limit of the power He gives to him or her. Thus, God's power begins where human strength fails. This is obvious from God's response to Paul who unlike Moses recognizes his inability but immediately sought for more strength from Him and in response, He told him, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Co. 12:9, WEB, 2018).

As for the point in which he asked God for His Name (Ex. 3:13), it cannot be disputed that God's Name as Jehovah had not been known among the Jews centuries before Moses' encounter with Him. Also, it was familiar to the patriarchs as rightly claimed by Wiersbe and other authors. However, one outstanding issue that should not be forgotten here is that, Moses request to know His Name may not mean that he was not aware of the Name Jehovah as was already prevalent among the Jews. Therefore, what he wanted to know could not have been the Name as such but the meaning of it (Wiersbe, 150).

Notwithstanding, it does not rule out the possibility that Moses could not have actually known the Name as it was to the patriarchs. Scriptures and other records showed that Moses had not spent so much time with the

parents or grown to maturity with them to ascertain that he knew about the Name before he was taken into Pharaoh's home. Moreover, the training educationally and religiously he got from the palace was not of the Jewish system as further stressed by Wiersbe. Nonetheless, Moses was groomed in Egyptian education and language for service in the government (Ac. 7:23). Thus, he spent his first forty years working in Egyptian bureaucracy. There is a speculation that he was also being prepared as heir to Pharaoh (Wiersbe, 149). This underscores how remote he could have been removed from Jewish culture, religion and worldview. Yet, it was while in this home and condition, he had a case that caused him to flee into the wilderness (Ex. 2:11-15; Hb. 11:24-27).

From the wilderness he moved into the home of a Midianite priest, Jethro who later became his father-in-law. There is neither record nor evidence of Moses' involvement in religious practices or training with him. Moreover, there is no clue if Jethro was practicing Judaism to conclude that he might have had the knowledge of the Name from him. What is clear between him and his in-law, Jethro or Ruel was that he married his daughter and pastured his flocks. He worshiped God when on a visit to Moses and advised him administratively (Ex. 2:15-23; 18:1ff).

6.1 *Early Nature of God's Name as YAWH to the Jews*

There is an idea that states that because of the importance and the reverence that the Jews attached to God's Name (YAWH) it was not being pronounced by them for fear of incorrect pronunciation ("Ex. 32:12-16, "God" CSB, 2017:103; "What did God's Name mean to the Israelites?" Ex. 3:13, Quest Study Bible, 2005:82). Thus, it was not being explained (Motyer, 1996:801). In view of this, we cannot deny that Moses could have been sincerely asking for an explanation of the Name if at all he knew it before then. Yet, we now have enough reasons to believe that Moses could not have known the Name of God at all as his request obviously shows: "If I go to the Israelites and say to them 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you' and they ask me, 'what is his name' what should I tell them?" (Ex. 3:13, CSB 2017).

We should also know that at this time in question, the Israelites had lived in Egypt for a period of four hundred and twenty-nine years. That is from the time Jacob went to settle in Egypt up to the time Moses had his call. Several generations had passed. So far, the Name for its reverent sake was not being mentioned or explained. Moreover, Moses spent all his adult and teenage years away from his parents and people. Therefore, to assume that he knew the Name cannot be right. The crust of this argument is completely removed considering God's own statement that though He made Himself known to the patriarchs, but He never showed them His Name. In the words of the Lord, "I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them" (Ex. 6:3). God does not lie. In addition, this statement was directed to Moses (Ex. 6:20). Thus, what was known by the patriarchs "God Almighty" was not the name: "**I AM WHO I AM**" revealed to Moses. As a result, this paper is evidently of the opinion that Moses never knew God's Name before his question to know it. We also reject the view that, "The phrase I AM WHO I AM" (is a wordplay on the name of God..." ("What did God's name mean to the Israelites? Ex. 3:14, Quest Study Bible, 2005:82). This opinion denies the importance of this Name to the Jews and of its significance to us today as we have all along tried to prove. Nevertheless, the labour and value of the Quest Study Bible is deeply appreciated.

Furthermore, our opinion on this issue also finds support with the Women's Evangelical Commentary of the Old Testament (2011:128) when it says,

Moses' second question is understandable. Egypt's syncretic religion boasted a plethora of gods with various names, many of which had morphed and multiplied with the currents of political history. Having given up in the center of Egyptian cultures and under the roof of Pharaoh, believed to be the son of the chief god Amon-Re, and having married into the house of a foreign Midianite priest, Moses' claim to be sent by the God of their fathers would surely be suspect. The question set the stage of the momentous revelation of God's personal name.

In ancient Near Eastern cultures, one's name was synonymous with and inseparable from character. The patriarchs had known God primarily as EL SHADDAY (Hb, "God Almighty").

6.2 *Meaning of God's Name as I AM WHO I AM - Ex. 3:13-15*

Moses was honest in seeking to know God's Name. So, it was not an attempt to refuse to go on a message or mission for Him. He needed it as part of his own equipment for the task and to strengthen his relationship with God as well as to have a meaning and convincing ground for the Jewish elders whose curiosity and hardness he knows very well about. Thus, he asked, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they asked me, 'what is his name?' What shall I say to them? (Ex. 3:13, TGI, 2013).

God did not hesitate to answer Moses. In progression of the dialogue, He replied, "I AM WHO I AM" ... 'say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you'" (Ex. 3:14, TGI, 2012). Thus, by his request to know God's Name, what hitherto had not been know was disclosed with a fresh understanding, explanation, and

purpose from God. He revealed it not as a title but a Personal Name for Him. This Divine Name Yahweh has a Hebrew indicative of the verb 'to be.' Therefore, it means He is alive, present, and active. It also connotes His ability to bring into existence or being. By this expression, "I AM WHO I AM" can thus be rendered as 'I reveal myself by my action when I wish to' or 'I bring to pass what I'm pleased to do' (Motyer, 801).

Consequently, Moses became fully aware that God reveals Himself, and things to man. He is the God who is active in the affairs of the world, saves, and removes those who opposed His will. Additionally, the name also shows that God is not ignorant of his own nature. This is a connotation of His sovereignty. He speaks to man what He chooses to tell him (Gn. 32:29; Jg. 13:17; Motyer, 801).

All the same, I AM WHO I AM explains God's Name Jehovah. In detail, it means he exist by Himself. He was not created but created all things. He has no beginning neither does He have an end. He does not depend on anyone or anything. He is self-sufficient, the source of being and bliss, eternal, and unchangeable. No man can on his own find Him out except the one to whom He chooses to reveal Himself (Matthew Henry, 1960:75).

Walter C. Kaiser (1994:60) says that, Moses' concern was not about telling the Israelites a particular name but the people's desire to want to know the significance, character, and quality as well as the interpretation of it in the situation wherein they were confronted. Consequently, in addition to the first answer (v. 14) 'I AM WHO I AM,' 'I AM has sent me to you'" (TGI, 2013), God gave another answer (v. 15), "The LORD the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever throughout all generations" (TGI, 2013). By this disclosure, it was revealed that He was the same God who had earlier made Himself known to the patriarchs (Gn. 15:7; 17) but not then by this name (Kaiser, 69).

6.3 Significance of God's Name as I AM WHO I AM

Women's Evangelical Commentary on the Old Testament (2011:128-129) declares that, the name with which God replied to Moses was mysterious: "I AM WHO I AM." It is transliterated in Hebrews as *ehyeh asher ehyeh*. In English translation, it reads as "I am that I am, I will be who I will be." This is denoted from the verb *hayah* meaning "to be" or "I Am." It is presented as a proper name in a tetragramaton (Gk. tetra i.e "four," gramata, "letter") as *YHWH* or Yahweh. In Hebrew, it can be translated as "He is, Existing One, He Who Brings into Being." Its Hebrew original pronunciation has been lost due to the avoidance of its usage when it was considered too holy to be mentioned by sinful humans. Consequently, in the verb or open reading of the Scriptures, the name was replaced with "*Adonay*" in Hebrew "Lord."

European translators worked with the combined form Yahweh and coined it as YeHoWah and later into JeHoVah. This was how the name became widely used as Jehovah ("LORD"). In the same way, the Greek translation of the Old Testament (Septuagint) used *kyrios* ("LORD") which its Hebrew text uses "Lord" to express as "*Adonay*" (Women's Evangelical Commentary on the Old Testament, 129).

Moreover, name was given in order to indicate possession or control. On the other hand, to reveal one's name to someone else was a way of initiating a deliberate relationship with that person. This explains the significance of God naming Himself and disclosing that name to Moses. Thus, I AM as God's Name, speaks of Him as being self-existence, eternal, continuing in history, and not subject to time. In His relationship to the world, He creates everything and everyone. He cannot be known except He shows up Himself. How He is known depends on the extent to which He reveals Himself. He is the opposite of the gods (Women's Evangelical Commentary on the Old Testament, 129).

Similarly, Merrill F. Unger (1981:108) lends support to the above view that God reveals His Name to Moses when he sought for it. He provided him with the Name "I AM" that showed that He is the eternal creator, and consummator of salvation. It was ascertained from the Hebrew verb *haya* which means "to be." It presents God as "He Who was, and is, and shall be." By implication, it means God is the One who is: "I was who I was," "I am who I am," and "I shall be who I shall be." These are all translations that are possible from the original to describe His Being as "Who is, and Who was, and who is to come, the Almighty" (Rev. 1:8).

John N. Oswalt (1992:204) gives an idea that tally with Women's Commentary on the Old Testament's view of a call to a relationship when one discloses his or her name to another. To this end, Oswalt asserts that, the purpose of God for the Israelites in delivering them from bondage in Egypt was more than setting them free from suffering. It "was to make them his people in worship" (Ex. 3:18).

In the same context, speaking from an African point of view, Abel Ndjerareou (2010:91) stresses that Moses' request for a name was based on his knowledge of the fact that without a name of the one who has sent him, the Israelites will not believe in him. On his part, he had no doubt about God as the God of the Jews. But his people were in a land, and the midst of a people who believed, and served several gods. So, they would desire to clearly understand the God they were being called to follow. Therefore, names to the Hebrews are not just for mere identification. Rather, they both identify and project the character of those to whom they are attached (1 Sm. 25:25).

Robert P. Gordon (1979:158) backups the idea of the importance of the Name to Moses as it has to do with the character of God. Thus, its explanation was given to precede its form in the phrase, "I AM" 'WHO' 'I AM"

in three words as originally expressed. Some meanings are revealed and concealed in it. It establishes a connection between God's Name and the Hebrew verb "to be" pronounced as "hayah" or "hawah." The concept of an aspect of the Name being "I will be what I will be," among other meanings it denotes that His character as God could be disclosed as events unfold.

At this juncture, we begin to sum up this section with additional facts provided by Eugene E. Carpenter and Philip W. Comfort (2000:118) that also threw more light on the issue at stake. They opine that the Hebrew Name for God consists of a four letter word as "HVHY" but translated in English as "YHWH." It is rendered in capital in several Bibles as "LORD" such as in NIV, KJV and NLT (New International Version, King James Version, and New Language Translation). This is done to differentiate it from "Adona" and other Names for God in Hebrew ("LORD"). The HVHY form is the Hebrew personal and covenant name for God in the Old Testament. This name and *Elohim* another expression of God's Name, are found together. They both mean the same one God. He is the creator of the universe, *Elohim*, the Supreme God (Gn. 2:4).

HVHY has a usage of three hundred and forty-eight in the book of Exodus. It is used more in six thousand, eight hundred times in the entire Old Testament. The Name was used in Genesis but finds its meaning in Exodus when it was revealed to Moses (Ex. 3:14, 15). Among other of its importance, it signifies that God is always there for His people according to the promise He made to Moses in Exodus 3:12, "Certainly I will be with them" (KJV) but as "I will be with you in NLT (Carpenter and Comfort, 118).

Jesus used the Greek equivalent of it "*EgoEim*" in the same manner it occurred in the Old Testament to apply it ("LORD") to Himself (Jn. 8:58-59). This explains that He is God. Thus, as he delivered the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt so He has come to deliver humanity out of the bondage of sin (Mt. 28:29; 118). In addition to the application of the Name "I AM" to Himself, Jesus also declares that He was ever before Abraham. This declaration links Him with the revealing of Himself to Moses in Exodus 3:6, 14. Consequently, He is the God who exist forever, and by Himself. "No other religious figure in all of history has made such claims to deity" (Carpenter and Comfort, 306).

Carpenter and Comfort (306) further add that Jesus made several other claims of "I AM" that are significant of His Personality as "The Bread of Life or the Living Bread (John 6:35, 48, 51), the light of the world (John 8:12, 7:5), the gate (James 10:7, 9) the Good Shepherd (John 10:11, 14), the resurrection and the life (John 11:25), the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6), and the vine" (John 15:5).

So far, the foregoing examines the nature, significance, and the meaning of God's Name, "I AM WHO I AM" as revealed to Moses (Ex. 3:13-15) in a process regarded in this paper as the Nomenclatorial Revelation of God. Numerous evidences were provided from different sources. Nevertheless, they all generally attest to the importance of it to the Hebrews across the ages to Christianity and humanity as a whole historically and spiritually. To arrive at this point, various levels of verifications, linguistic, scriptural, biblical, theological, philosophical, historical, religious, social and spiritual were involved in the materials provided. At this juncture, we proceed to make an overall assessment of the findings to justify the thesis that the Christian God is not a God.

7. The Christian God is the God

Several processes have indeed been involved in the course of justifying the thesis of this paper. It began with the sense of its grammatical construct to the analysis of the usage of the definite and indefinite article respectively. Thus, grammatical skills and dictionary meanings reveal the error in ascribing indefinite quality to God because He occupies a unique position on His own. This was followed by an assessment of His Nature and personality giving us the idea of His Being as Personal with outstanding incomparable, and incomprehensible attributes underline with love as opposed to the gods and goddesses.

Moreover, it was gathered from the evidence made available from general and special revelation that He is the cause of existence. He sustains the world. Because of His love for humanity, He takes interest in what affects them. He intervenes to redeem, protect, guide, and keep them safe. He feels their pains and takes delight in their comfort, and calls them into a relationship of love and care. All things depend on Him for survival but He depends on nothing else. He exists by Himself from eternity. He does not change but remains the same. Besides, he has no end. All of these and what follows will correspond to what H. Richard Niebuhr (2005:73) tries to convey in his discussion of the subject of God's revelation of Himself titled: "God Reveals Himself," under the main heading of a chapter "The Deity of God" as:

When we speak of revelation, we mean that something has happened to us in our history, which conditions all our thinking and that through this happening we are enabled to apprehend what we are, what we are suffering and doing and what our potentials are... we mean rather that something has happened which compels our faith and which requires us to seek rationality and unity in the whole of our history.

So in keeping His relationship with humanity, He makes Himself known in history. Thus, He shows Himself as *El-Shadday*, God Almighty, *Elohim*, The Supreme God, *Adonay*, Jehovah, The LORD. By virtue of His involvement in human affairs, He reveals Himself sacrificially in Jesus Christ. Moreover, He makes Himself

known in three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. By specification and distinction He revealed His Name in nomenclature as “I AM WHO AM,” the LORD. Besides, He cautions that in this way He should be called throughout generations: “I AM WHO AM” ... say this to the people of Israel... This is my name forever, and this how I am to be remembered throughout all generations (Ex. 3:14, 15; ISV).

Therefore, the message was not meant only for the Israelites but universal in scope and in timeless generation. Notwithstanding, a study of the significance of names, shows that names are important to the owner. They are dynamic. Thus, a name shows a connection between the bearer, his origin, status and relationships. This is the function of God’s Name to the Christians. Consequently, in view of the above evidences running through grammatical understanding, philosophical sources, and religious, theological, biblical, social, historical as well as physical and spiritual milieu, and on the basis of His request, we assert emphatically at this juncture, that indeed, The Christian God is not a God but The God. This is what He is in His Personality as Jesus Christ, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

8. Conclusion

By the reason of the proof of the Nomenclatorial Revelation of God, Christians should affirm His authority, distinction, and Personality so involved. They should be obedient and lovely, honest and sincere with the faith they confess to rightly address, know, and present Him as the God and not a God or god. In the same manner, this awareness should be reflected in everything about Him including His salvific role in Jesus Christ as the Saviour and not a Saviour. This application should also affect all of God’s appellations in writing, verbal, and other expressions. We do not have to wait for the unbelieving world to do this for us. It is our duty to give an understanding of the value of what we believe more so as it relates to the Lord.

Consequently, we should not allow arbitrary and convenient usage of words to prevent or take away from us the beauty, strength, and the core aspect of our faith. We should be conscious and bold enough to stick to the uniqueness and the particularity of Christianity as against other religions. Thus, we should stay put in the belief and accurate idea of what is meant by God. It is one of the ways we can at best worship, ascribe majesty, reverence, glory, and honour to Him. Through this, the world will be able to see some of the elements of the significance, understanding, and importance we attach to Him as well.

Therefore, the use of an indefinite article such as “a” for God is a misrepresentation of Him. It is an act of ignorance or disobedience because He has warned against it by giving us the way He should be made known in all generations. Otherwise, it destroys the essence of what we believe, and present to the world about Him. It equates God with idols, principalities, and powers which is not what we intend, teach, and communicate in Christianity. Thus, there is the need for us to strive to do our best not to sacrifice the truth about Him for the sake of our convenience whatever it may take from us. Words and their meanings, names, and their significances have universal appeal. This is another reason why Christians should be careful how they use them especially for God in reference to His Name and Personality.

To this end, God is not a God in a class of Gods. He exists by Himself, unique, and eternal. He is the Creator, Being, and Agent as well as the source of being. Any attempt to associate, connect or compare Him is contrary to what He is, and His Self identification. Moreover, the concept of trinity does not convey a combination of Gods. It describes God in His Personal manifestations, revelation, and relationship with humanity. The world outside the Church or Christianity may not have this understanding. It is the prime duty of Christians with His clearer knowledge to so present Him to it.

However, it is not enough to simply have the knowledge and to speak of the supremacy or incomparability of God, but to so believe and live with it. Therefore, the idea of the uniqueness of God must affect our human conduct in a positive way. Christians should in addition, not only speak about it, but to demonstrate it in their daily activities without limitations in every sphere of life, age, work, time, and place. This would go a long way to authenticate and affirm its genuineness and significance to the world. It would also aid in our obedience, commitment, and relationship with Him. In the same vein, it would strengthen our love, dealings, and goodwill toward one another and to other people as well as to build trust in ourselves and them about our confession and approach to it.

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Biography

M. M. Oboh was born at Ibore-Uneah, Irrua in Esan Central Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria, 31st March, 1967. He was brought up as a Muslim. Hence, the second of his initials stands for Musa, while the other

is Michael being the first name. He got converted to Christianity on 7th June, 1986.

He attended Omoaka Primary School, Agbede in Etsako Central Local Government Area of Edo State, but finished at Okotie – Eboh Primary School, Sapele, Ethiope Local Government Area, Delta State, Nigeria with a Primary School Leaving Certificate in 1978. From there he proceeded to Essi College, Warri, still in Delta State where he had his Secondary School Leaving Certificate in 1984.

Thereafter, having received the call into the Gospel Ministry, he was admitted into the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria in 1992 and graduated with a BA (Bachelor of Arts degree in affiliation to the University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria) in 1996, and B.Th (Bachelor of Theology in affiliation to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, USA) in 1996; M.Th (Master of Theology with Islamic Studies as major and minor in Systematic Theology also in affiliation to Southern, USA) in 2000; PhD in Theology and Christian Ethics as minor, NBTS, Ogbomoso, 2008 and PhD in World Religions from the University of Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria with affiliation to NBTS, Ogbomoso, 2008.

He was ordained into the full Gospel Ministry 29th September, 2002 and licensed to preach 1st June, 1996. He was a pastor to several churches, led at different ministerial positions, have several awards and honours. Moreover, he lectures at the Baptist College of Theology, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria since 2000 and he is currently the Rector of the College. He is a member of several academic societies and holds other positions at different ministerial and administrative responsibilities.

Blessing Imalukho Oboh (Nee Ehize) is the daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Robert E. Ehize of Igueben in Igueben Local Government Area of Edo State. She was born 5th August, 1975. She accepted Christ in 1986. She has teacher's Grade II Certificate from Esigie College, Abudu, Diploma in Theology AAU Ekpoma, B.Th.RE Baptist College of Theology, Benin City, B.A. Religious Studies AAU Ekpoma, M.A. Religious Studies AAU, Ekpoma. She is pursuing her Ph.D in Religious Studies with emphasis on Christian Theology from the same University.

She was a student pastor at Atteh Baptist Church, Atteh and Igarra Baptist Church, Igarra. She also served as children pastor, New Benin Baptist Church, Benin City and Oka Baptist Church on interim basis. She was licensed to preach in 2004, ordained into the full Gospel Ministry in 2016, served as Bible and Mission Study Chairman (WMU) Edo Baptist Conference. She also held various positions and served in various committees at the Church, Association and Conference levels. She has several awards and honours. Among them are Best student in Hebrew language, BCT, Benin City, 2004, Best Teacher of the Year in C.R.K. by the Ministry of Education, Benin City in 2007, courtesy of Professional Certificate in Christian Education, most Creative Teacher BHS, Benin City, 2008.

She has taught in various primary and secondary schools such as Wisdom Group of Schools, Igueben and Baptist High School, Benin City, where she taught for 11 years. She is a lecturer and currently the H.O.D., Religious Studies at the College of Education, Ekiadolor, Benin City. She is happily married to her caring, faithful and darling husband Rev. Dr. M. M. Oboh, the Rector, Baptist College of Theology, Benin City. The marriage is currently blessed with a lovely and dynamic son, Osemegbe Michael (Jnr.) Oboh. To God be the glory.