

# L1: COMPLEXITY

(Known also as 'Diversity')

## L1.1 Prelude

*Three reasons explain why God's nature is difficult to understand,  
Two come from us but one from the Lord!  
Firstly, we are too sinful to have any complete apprehension of the Divine,  
Secondly, our limited minds are too weak to survey the unlimited depths of the Lord  
But thirdly, there are things which the Lord Himself has chosen to hide*

## L1.2 Definition

The largely shared attribute of 'complexity' refers to God's ability to possess many apparently diverse attributes, with no conflict or inner tension.

Divine elaborateness is implied by the name **Echad** – meaning 'complex' or 'compound oneness.' An example of this name being used in scripture occurs in Deuteronomy 6:4, which reads, "Hear O Israel; the Lord God is one (Echad) Lord." It demonstrates that God can exist as a Trinity of three persons.

## L1.3 Bible Exposition

Two further Bible passages demonstrating the existence of this attribute are Psalm 22:1 and Romans 9:18.

### **Psalm 22:1**

*"My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me and the words of my roaring?"*

This cry of desolation confirms that even the godliest of people knows what it is to be puzzled by this attribute. Indeed, this was the passage that Jesus Himself quoted when dying upon the cross, (Matthew 27:46). Here He was confronted by the seemingly irreconcilable paradox between divine love and the apparent indifference of God to what was a truly terrible degree of suffering. Far from being an all-powerful deliverer, the Lord appeared to be totally distant and uncaring. When divine intervention seemed of absolute necessity it did not happen – at least not in the way that was expected. The natural response to this situation was the kind of unbelief expressed in the harsh mockery recorded in Matthew 27:39-44. In reality, that unbelief only demonstrated that the people concerned had an over simplified view of God. They expected instant miracles and when they were not forthcoming they turned away in scornful unbelief. Real faith is shown by a continued trust in God even when His complexity is a source of bewilderment. This was a point that Christ amply demonstrated upon the cross. Through His continued trust He opened the way for us to receive salvation.

### **Romans 9:18**

*"Therefore He has mercy on whom He will have mercy and whom He will He hardens."*

Theological conundrums such as the relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility also display the complexity of God. Rather like the experience of suffering, such puzzles may provoke those weak in faith to find fault with the Almighty, (Romans 9:19-20). However, this problem is reduced when it's realized that, in this world we will never understand everything about God. The Supreme Being is too great for human comprehension; indeed, if we understood everything about God then God would fail to be God, for by definition He is someone beyond the grasp of the greatest of human minds. Theological difficulties are simply the inevitable outcome of this situation. Sometimes, the best response to an insurmountable theological difficulty is to get on with praising God until the time comes when He chooses to ease that difficulty or to give the strength to accept that, in this world, some questions will never be resolved. The policy of praising God amidst a theological difficulty was one followed by Paul in Romans 11:32f.

When viewed alongside Deuteronomy 6:4, these two passages show that: -

- 1) The complexity of God is more keenly felt during times of suffering and theological perplexity
- 2) God may appear indifferent to our plight simply because He is working beyond our limited comprehension
- 3) The paradoxical nature of God may serve to provoke a hearty form of worship

### **L1.4 Application**

In response to God's '*diversity*' believers would be wise to: -

- 1) Accept that there are things about God that are just not possible to know in this life
- 2) Ask God to provide the faith to continue to believe in Him during times of darkness and perplexity
- 3) Avoid finding fault with the Lord just because we do not understand His ways

At the close of this study, it is reasonable to conclude that God is a Being who can work in ways which transcend (go above) human comprehension

### **L1.5 Conclusion**

- 1) Divine '*complexity*' shows that God may react to the sin of apostasy in ways which may perplex those who have turned against Him
- 2) At His death, Jesus demonstrated this attribute by accomplishing an unlimited number of things – only a few of which can be known in this life

For further study please refer to the words '*suffering*', '*elect*' or '*election*' in any Bible Concordance or Dictionary

### **L1.6 Epilogue**

*Heavenly Father, grant me the grace  
To understand those biblical teachings that I should understand  
Whilst accepting those that I can't.  
Help me also to know exactly  
What teachings I am being called upon to understand  
At this present time,  
In the name of your divine son, Jesus Christ  
Please hear my prayer, Amen.<sup>1</sup>*

### **L1.7 Questions**

- 1) **What is the best way to react to a particular biblical teaching which may be difficult to understand or accept?**
- 2) **Why do God's ways of working in people's lives seem impossible to understand?**
- 3) **How may it be possible to comfort someone who is tempted to find fault with God because they've suffered a series of tragedies – none of which were of their own making?**

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<sup>1</sup> This prayer was first made on Tuesday, 16 November 1999. It expresses the need to humbly depend upon God in order to understand those biblical teachings which promote spiritual growth.