

# Elohim

Excerpt from

## DOES EVERYONE BELIEVE IN THE TRINITY?

by Anthony Buzzard

### Does the Word *elohim* (God) Imply That There Is More than One Person in the Godhead?

"The fanciful idea that *Elohim* referred to the Trinity of persons in the Godhead hardly finds now a supporter among scholars. It is either what the grammarians call the plural of majesty, or it denotes the fullness of divine strength, the sum of the powers displayed by God" (William Smith, *A Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Peloubet, MacDonald Pub. Co., 1948, p. 220).

"*Elohim* must rather be explained as an intensive plural, denoting greatness and majesty" (*The American Journal of Semitic Language and Literature*, 1905, Vol. XXI, p. 208).

"Early dogmaticians were of the opinion that so essential a doctrine as that of the Trinity could not have been unknown to the men of the Old Testament...No modern theologian...can longer maintain such a view. Only an inaccurate exegesis which overlooks the more immediate grounds of interpretation can see references to the Trinity in the plural form of the divine name *Elohim*, the use of the plural in Genesis 1:26 or such liturgical phrases as three members of the Aaronic blessing of Numbers 6:24-26 and the Trisagion of Isaiah 6:3" (*The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Vol. 12, p. 18).

"The plural form of the name of God, *elohim*, in the Hebrew Scriptures has often been adduced as proof of the plurality of persons in the Godhead...Such use of Scripture will not be likely to advance the interests of truth, or be profitable for doctrine...The plural of *elohim* may just as well designate a multiplicity of divine potentialities in the deity as three personal distinctions, or it may be explained as the plural of majesty and excellency. Such forms of expression are susceptible of too many explanations to be used as valid proof texts of the Trinity" (Milton Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, p. 587).

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