

**“What made God?”**  
**January 16, 2011**  
**Grove Presbyterian Church**

An article of faith posits we cannot know God. That is an. And, given my pea brain, God cannot be verified. I cannot comprehend God no more than a bug can understand the sun and moon.

We believe God can only be revealed to us. It is the Christ who in our existence reveals to us the divine essence of the Godhead. Listen:

**He is  
the image of the invisible God,  
the firstborn of all creation;  
for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and  
invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been  
created through him and for him.  
He himself is before all things,  
and in him all things hold together.  
He is the head of the body, the church;  
he is the beginning,  
the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything.**

**For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,  
and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on  
earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.**

Today’s Question is?

**What made God?**

Well, I’m so glad you Confirmands came up with so many easy questions. How come you couldn’t ask things like, “What was Jesus’ first name?” But no, you have to go right toward the deepest, thorniest, most philosophical and theological questions there are.

Okay, now: what made God?

Why do I feel as if I’m about to go into an Abbot and Costello sketch and end up confusing both you and myself in the process.

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Abbott: Well, let's see, we have on the bags, Who's on first, What's on second, I Don't Know is on third...

*Costello: That's what I want to find out.*

Abbott: I say Who's on first, What's on second, I Don't Know's on third.

*Costello: Are you the manager?*

Abbott: Yes.

*Costello: You gonna be the coach too?*

Abbott: Yes.

*Costello: And you don't know the fellows' names.*

Abbott: Well I should.

*Costello: Well then who's on first?*

Abbott: Yes.

*Costello: I mean the fellow's name.*

Abbott: Who.

*Costello: The guy on first.*

Abbott: Who.

*Costello: The first baseman.*

Abbott: Who.

*Costello: The guy playing...*

Abbott: Who is on first!

*Costello: I'm asking you who's on first.*

Abbott: That's the man's name.

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Theology may not be as funny, but it's equally discombobulating.

What made God?

We look at some items around here. They were made.

I spy with my little eyes, a rubber ducky. Good for bathtubs. Made by Sesame Street. Rubby Ducky, you're the one, you make bathtime so much fun....

I spy with my little eyes, a shell. A conch shell to be precise. The result of some tasty mollusk secreting whatever it is mollusks secret.

I spy with my little eyes, a copy of a Mayan statue. Made to sell to tourists.

I spy with my little eyes, a bunch of people. Each one made by two.

### **Do all things have a cause?**

Yes, they must.

This is how the church thinker Thomas Aquinas back in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century tried to answer our confirmation question. Confirmands back then asked the same question.

If I'm standing on the shoreline of a pond and I see waves of concentric rings in a pond, I conclude something splashed in the water. If there is an effect, something caused it. A fact. The effect cannot create the cause.

So if we look around at the universe and realize it as an effect, then something must have caused it. Some will say all this was caused by the big bang. But again, the big bang itself is an effect. What caused it? And so we push back to the First Cause of all things.

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Of course, answers are easy. What's always difficult is coming up with the right questions. "*Answers are easy*" – ask any administrator – "*it's asking the right questions which is hard.*" So saith Dr. Who. Frame it before you rush to conclusions.

So, let me ask a few more questions to help nudge us toward some more ideas, even if we never really get an answer because theologians will argue how we can never really talk about God. Which makes some sense if you consider the person you most love. Try some time to talk about them. Tell about them. Describe them. Can you do it completely? Can you fully explain, completely describe their history, their moods, their thoughts, their feelings? Good luck with that.

So if even the person we are closest to remains to us a mystery, how on earth are we going to explain this thing called God?

Of course then, I just goofed. I just called God a thing. An object. Whoops. I just turned God into an idol. We turn things into idols all the time. Behind this is the suggestion that God never is an object. God alone and always is the Subject.

If we turn God into the object of our lives, like the object of a sentence, it means we are the subject. We are the doer. If God is God, God always is the Subject and we the object. God is the doer.

And who's on first?

What faith is isn't talking about God. Faith is about talking with God.

I Don't Know's on third.

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Okay, back to a few questions.

If I'm correct, what you really want to know is that if God created all things, who created God? Or maybe really, what you hinting at is: can I really believe this whole thing, is this God stuff really reliable and really, really true?

Fair enough.

As Dr Who again said, "One good solid hope's worth a cartload of certainties."

### **So, as lead off batter: how do we talk about God?**

We use different ways of referring to God, partly because this word 'God' itself has gotten a bit hackneyed, trite even, overused like a frayed shirt, worn out like a carpet in the hallway. Once used reverently and sacredly, the word has become as banal and common as any expression. O' darn. O' God.

Some new language might be interesting. Break familiar habits. Like trying to brush your teeth with your other hand. And such change might help us birth us away from what we do when we are young. When young, we anthropomorphize God. We tend to think of God as we think of ourselves. We turn God into a creature like us: the ancient man with white beard. An image we can hang onto. God as Santa. God as a being in the sky controlling all things. Well, that works if you are 8 years old or younger....

Some births are relatively gentle; some must be ripped, forceps required.

Different language can force new and necessary insights. Let us then name God as:

Most Pure Spirit  
Ground of Being

Being Itself  
Ultimate Concern  
Eternal Now  
Divine Energy  
That Which Is Is

All of these hint, by the way, that God has no substance, no materiality, but nonetheless is the very source of all things.

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Ordinarily, God is expressed by negation, by superlatives, or by analogy.

By negation? By what God is not. We turn to the Westminster Confession of Faith, a classic document detailing what we Presbyterians believe. It refers to God as in-finite (not finite), in-comprehensible (not comprehensible), in-visible (not visible), in-fallible (not able to err).

By superlatives? All mighty. Most holy. Most free. Most absolute. Most Pure. But if God is God, even these pale and come up short.

Which leaves us with analogies: Father in heaven. Living Spirit. Fountain of Life. Shield and Buckler. Like a mother Eagle. God is love. But love, we remind ourselves, is not God. God is freedom. But freedom is not God. God is truth. But truth is not God. And so on...

The peculiar thing is, even if we think we are talking about God with all this language. We aren't; we actually are sidewise talking with God, to God. If I say, "God is all powerful." I am doing so because I – weak one – am depending on this all powerful God and saying, "help me."

### **Does God need us?**

Not if God is all sufficient and all powerful. We must be a choice. God wants to.

### **Next up: Is God eternal?**

So we say. But does eternal mean to us endless time? Does eternal mean time after time?

Better is to grasp eternity as 'above time.' Free from time. "*Eternity is neither timelessness nor the endlessness of time* [Paul Tillich]." I prefer to lean toward the idea that eternal means unlimited, unbounded.

If God, then, isn't subject to time, God, then, is that which is eternally present.

What's on second.

**Do all things created end? Will everything that exists someday not exist?**

That does seem to be the price of being created. It kind of hit me the other day when I realized that in 12 Christmases I will be seventy. That's a wake up call. That's a real wake up call for this church. I just got kicked in the backside with a sense of urgency. I will end. We all will end. Our substance wastes away. Anything created will end. My rubber ducky will end. This conch shell will crumble to dust. Even our earth, our sun, our universe. All will end.

Time for us is linear. Beginnings and endings with lots of stuff in the middle. We mark it off. We check off the days. There goes another ten seconds now past and forever lost.

Sometimes we create for ourselves the false yet soft illusion that time goes in endless circle. We tease ourselves with the notion that spring is the renewal of life.

It isn't. The leaf that falls off my maple tree in November dies. It ends. It isn't renewed come April. That's a lie. It is replaced.

All things created end. And that must include time since time is part of creation.

So can God end? Well, if God is subject to creation and time, yes. Which then means necessarily that God was created. But God isn't a being, an it, a thing. God is Being itself. I Am That Which Is I Am. Am-ness. So God reveals to Moses.

God, not a being, is outside time.

God is outside the universe, alone and singularly free from the laws of finite creation.

This Godhead of Being Itself, the Ground of All Being, Essence of all Life, Pure Spirit, is outside creation.

Thus absolutely free to be the divine power of all that which is Absolute Good and Absolute Truth and Perfect Love active and moving within creation, free to exercise the divine Spirit through inner spirit.

If we affirm such God-ness cannot end, therefore then God never was created.

This is why we caution us from talking about God as a noun and recommend imagining God as verb.

God simply is. "God has neither future nor history." God is that which is is. Because God is, God simply cannot be isn't.

This God did not have to bother with me, with us. But God, because God is God, chooses to bother.

I find that a comfort. And my inspiration. Maybe I should bother also.

*Faith isn't belief without proofs, it is trust without reservations*  
*-- Elton Trueblood*