

TRANSCENDENTAL AND ANTHROPOMORPHIC TENDENCIES IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

The understanding of God distinctive to the Hebrew Bible and hence to Jewish tradition is an amalgamation of anthropomorphic and transcendental tendencies. God, in the ancient biblical period, is presented in manifest anthropomorphic terms, qualities and attributes. Henotheism could be the best term to denote patriarchal understanding of God. Monolatry or Mono-Yahwism replaces henotheism with the arrival of Moses who at the same time seems to be sowing the seeds of biblical monotheism although not in the strict sense of the term. His Yahweh is jealous though his universe is not free from the existence of other gods. Moreover, his Yahweh is not free from anthropomorphic attributes, qualities and seems to be boldly presented in anthropomorphic as well as physical terms. Anthropomorphic tendency is quite visible even in the later Prophets who champion strict monotheism and offer vehement opposition to idolatry and graven images. Their God is not presented in crude material terms, but is still visibly corporeal and anthropomorphic i.e., a reflection of the idea that God created man in His own image. The history of God in the Hebrew Bible seems to be progressive and anthropomorphic tendencies are reflected throughout this progressive process. The Hebrew Bible itself is the best witness to this claim, so we turn to it for the proof.

THE BIBLE; AN INTRODUCTION:

The Holy Bible is perhaps the most read, distributed and discussed book in the world. It has been a force, molding, shaping and reshaping millions of human lives and thoughts into its own thought patterns. It has been read for nearly two thousand years or more. Some of its readers have taken it literally and others figuratively or symbolically. Some of them have related themselves to it, and revered it as the fountainhead of their faith and tradition. Others read it as the mighty power which has created or helped create a number of great civilizations and cultures while still others read it to criticize it; therefore, it has been a part and parcel of various human religious, educational, political and social institutions in different capacities since its compilation or canonization centuries ago. So vast is the work connected with it, says Geddes MacGregor, that "even if an international commission were set up with unlimited funds to investigate the work, a complete inventory of it would be impossible."¹ This situation is likely to continue for

the centuries because it is the "Holy Scripture" of millions of human beings who believe that in it, "the voice of God bursts through every cadence and his finger writes between every line."² They contend that "there is much reason to prognosticate that its influence is likely to wane only to the extent that humanity declines into an era of mass slavery and unreflecting barbarism."³

The word "Bible" is derived from the Greek "Biblia" which itself is a "translation of the Hebrew Sepharim ("books")-the oldest term for biblical literature."⁴ As a general term it can be used for any book venerated as "Sacred" by its followers but as a specific term "the Bible" it denotes the books which are acknowledged as canonical by the Christian Church.

The Bible consists of two main portions: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament of the Christian Bible is the Holy Scripture of the Jews who call it the "Hebrew Bible" or just the Bible rather than Old Testament "since that implies a "new" testament"⁵ based on events the Jews believe never happened. H. Greenstein observes, that "The basic sacred text of Judaism is not the "Old Testament". The proper word is simply the Bible, or the Hebrew Bible. The term "Old Testament" is appropriate only for those who believe that the Bible includes a "New Testament" and choose such a distinction to contrast the two major divisions of their sacred text. Since Judaism does not believe in a "New Testament", there is nothing "old" about its only testament. That is why it is fitting to call it simply the Bible."⁶ On the other hand, the Hebrew Bible is "traditionally accepted by Jews and Christians alike as having been divinely inspired and as such, authoritative in shaping their respective faiths and practices."⁷

The Hebrew Bible or the Jewish Bible differs from the Old Testament of the Catholic Bible in the number, order of the books and most importantly in excluding the twelve books of Apocrypha which are accepted by the Catholics as canonical and are part of their Bible, however, many Protestants do not treat the Apocryphal works as canonical so in their case the difference from the Hebrew Bible is in the order and number of books.

The Jews divide their Bible into three main categories comprising a total of 39 books: the Law or *Torah*, the Prophets or *Neve'im* and the Writings or *ketuvim*. All these three sections are known collectively as *TaNak*, which is an acronym derived from a combination of the first letters of each section in their Hebrew terminology (*Torah, Neve'im, and Ketuvim*). The Law or *Torah* comprises the *Chumash* (five) or the *Pentateuch*, the five "Books of Moses": Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

The "Prophets" fall into two further subdivisions: the "Former Prophets" (four historical books) comprising Joshua, Judges, Samuel (I & II) and Kings (I & II) and the "Latter Prophets" comprising Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and "The Books of the Twelve Prophets": Hosea, Nahum, Joel, Habakkuk, Amos, Zephaniah, Obadiah, Haggai, Jonah, Zechariah, Micah, Malachi.

The third section "Writing" or "*Hagiographa*" contains the rest of the books: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles (I & II) Daniel, Ruth and Esther.⁸

This threefold division of the Hebrew Bible is "simply a matter of historical development and does not, in essence, represent a classification of books according to topical or stylistic categories."⁹ It is frequently believed to correspond to the three historical stages during which these books received canonical recognition.¹⁰ Although all three parts of the Scriptures were believed to be inspired and, as observes G. Foot Moore, "had the verity and authorship of the word of God",¹¹ their significance and authority was determined by their respective positions in this tripartite division. Since the Pentateuch with its author Moses was thought to be the fountainhead of the rest of books, then "the prophets are transmitters of a continuous tradition beginning with Moses; the Prophets and the Hagiographa explain the Pentateuch. Thus all the rest of books, with no detraction from their divine inspiration and authority, are an authority of the second rank; they repeat, reinforce, amplify, and explain the Law, but are never independent of it."¹² In view of this conspicuous position of the Torah it is pertinent to discuss the status and authority of the "Law" or "Pentateuch" in Jewish tradition.

THE "LAW" OR THE "TORAH", SIGNIFICANCE AND AUTHORITY:

The term "Torah" separates the Pentateuch from the other two sections of the Hebrew Bible. It means "teaching", "doctrine", or "instruction"¹³ and is often used to refer to all the body of laws. The term in a wider sense is also "applied to Scriptures as a whole and to biblical legislation in contradiction to rabbinical enactments."¹⁴

The Torah is the most important and authoritative book in Jewish faith. It received this recognition from Numbers 8:1 " And the Lord spake unto Moses " and also from Deuteronomy 31:9 " And Moses wrote this law ". (see also Ex. 20:1, 32:16, Lev. 1:1, 4:1, Num. 1:1, 2:1, etc.) In view of its divine origin and Mosaic authorship,¹⁵ the Torah has been held in great esteem throughout Jewish history. The Rabbinical tradition declared it to exist even prior to its revelation to Moses. The Torah, the Rabbis said, "existed in heaven not only before God revealed it to Moses, but even before the world was created."¹⁶ It was one of those six or seven things that were created before the creation of any thing in the world and it even " preceded the throne of glory."¹⁷ The "Torah which God had kept by him in heaven for nine hundred and seventy-four generations was a hidden treasure."¹⁸ God consulted the Torah in regard to the creation of the world: "I was the instrument of the Holy One, praised be He." "It is the way of the world that when a mortal king builds a palace, he builds it not from his own plans but with the advice of an architect. And the architect in turn has blueprints and charts to guide him how to construct the rooms and chambers. So, too, the Holy One, praised be He, was guided by the Torah in creating the world."¹⁹

It is evident from these quotations that Rabbinic Judaism had a strong belief in the Torah being the preexistent "Word of God" given to Moses in a mode of direct revelation. They also had no doubt whatsoever about the physical Mosaic authorship of the Torah, "And who wrote them? Moses wrote his own book (The Torah) and the sections concerning Balaam and Job."²⁰ Otto Eissfeldt summarizes the point in the following words: "Moses was from an early date regarded as the compiler, or more correctly as the mediator, of the laws of the Pentateuch which issued from God himself. The name used in the New Testament clearly with reference to the whole Pentateuch-*the Book of Moses*-is certainly to be understood as meaning that Moses was the compiler of the Pentateuch. Explicit references to this conception may be found in Philo..., in Josephus,

and in the Talmud (bab. Baba Batra 14b), where it is said that Moses wrote the five books named after him. Philo and Josephus explicitly attribute to Moses also the conclusion which relates his death.(Deut. xxxiv, 5-12), whereas the Talmud regards this as having been written by Joshua. The Jewish tradition concerning the compilation of the Pentateuch was taken over by the Christian church."²¹ In addition to that, the Rabbinic sources contended that God's whole revelation was not comprised in the written Torah but also in the Oral Torah, the Talmud, which Moses received side by side with the Written Torah on Sinai and which was orally carried and conveyed through subsequent generations."²²

The medieval Jewish scholars maintained the same position *vis-a-vis* the divine provenance of the Torah and the resulting authoritative and binding nature of the Bible in general and the Dual Torah in particular. There is a popular saying about Moses Maimonides (1135-1204) that "from Moses to Moses there was none like Moses".²³ This medieval philosopher argued in his introduction to "Mishna Torah" that, "All the precepts which Moses received on Sinai were given together with their interpretation, as it is said, "And I will give to you the table of stone, and the law, and the commandment "(Ex. 24:12) "The Law" refers to the Written Law: "the commandments" to its interpretation... This commandment refers to that which is called the Oral Law. The whole of the Law was written by Moses, our Teacher, before his death in his own hand."²⁴ In his letter to Joseph Ibn Gabir, he declared that "the Torah in it's totality has been given to us by the Lord Through Moses."²⁵ This greatest of Jewish scholars of the Middle Ages formulated "Thirteen Principles" which a Jew must believe in order to be a Jew. The Eighth Fundamental Principle is comprised of the following words: "that the Torah came from God. We are to believe that the whole Torah was given us through Moses, our Teacher, entirely from God. When we call the Torah "God's Word" we speak metaphorically. We do not know exactly how it reached us, but only that it came to us through Moses who acted like a secretary taking dictation. He wrote down the events of the time and the commandments, for which reason he is called "Lawgiver."²⁶ To Maimonides, the entire Hebrew Bible was the inerrant Word of God. He argued: "There is no distinction between a verse of Scripture like "The sons of Ham were Cush and Mizraim" (Gen. 10:6), or "His Wife's name was Mehatable and his concubine was Timna" (Gen. 36:39, 12) and one like "I am the Lord your God" (Ex. 20:2) or "Hear, O Israel" (Deut. 6:4). All came from God, and all are the Torah of God, perfect, pure, holy, and true. Any one who says Moses wrote some passages on his own is regarded by our sages as an atheist or worst kind of heretic, because he tries to distinguish essence from accident in Torah. Such a heretic claims that some historical passages or stories are trivial inventions of Moses and not Divine Revelation."²⁷

These words are so clear and forceful as to speak for themselves. Jews in the Middle Ages had a strong belief in the divine origin and Mosaic authorship of the entire Torah and in it's infallibility, immutability, and eternity. This "Law would neither be abolished nor changed or substituted for some thing other than it,"²⁸ was their axiom. Their belief in its infallibility, supernatural origin and permanent credibility was so deep in the hearts of medieval Jewish scholars that they closed all the doors and denied all the possibilities of progressive revelation. They held with Maimonides that "it will neither be abrogated nor superseded, neither supplemented nor abridged. Never shall it be supplanted by another divine revelation containing positive and negative duties."²⁹ They also maintained, as Maimonides observed, that "To the Torah, Oral and Written, nothing must be added nor any thing taken from it." ³⁰

This view was maintained by the Jews till the "beginning of our era"³¹ Even in the present day world of scientific naturalism and cosmic pessimism, this is what a reformed Jew says about the significance of the Torah, "The teachings of the Torah are the most sacred legacy and inspiration of the Jewish people. They are so fundamental that they are recited in public reading every week of every year. The five books are divided into segments or portions, one of which is to be read on each successive Sabbath. Usually, the first words of each portion are chosen as the title, so that every week of the Jewish year can be identified by its Torah portion....since no object in Jewish life is more precious than a Torah."³² He further informs that "A Torah can never be deliberately destroyed. If it becomes too brittle or too fragile to use, it is buried in the earth just like a deceased person."³³

Though voices against such a literal view of the Torah have included Christian scholars like Clementine Homilies, St. Jerome and Theodore of Mopsuestia (d. c. 428)³⁴ and some Jewish scholars like Isaac ibn Yashush, Rashi, David Kimhi and Abraham ibn Ezra (d. 1167) in the twelfth century,³⁵ continuing with Carlstadt, Andreas Masius (1574) in the sixteenth and Isaac de la Payrere (1655) and Richard Simon, Thomas Hobbes and then Spinoza in the seventeenth century, it was only in the age of "Reason" in the eighteenth century "with Kant's divorce of the "phenomenal" and "noumenal" worlds, that the stage was set for that loss of the authority of an inspired Scripture and of a sense of the transcendent in general, which dominated most of the succeeding centuries."³⁶

Finally it was in the nineteenth and early twentieth century that biblical scholars like Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918) were able to analyze, oppose and finally shatter the idea of divine and supernatural origin of the Torah and Mosaic authorship of it.³⁷ At present, claims R. E. Friedman, "there is hardly a biblical scholar in the world actively working on the problem who would claim that the Five Books of Moses were written by Moses-or by any one person."³⁸

CONTEMPORARY JEWS AND THE AUTHORITY OF TORAH:

Though significant results were achieved by the above mentioned scholars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries yet no body attempted to differentiate clearly between various component parts of the Pentateuch. It started with H. B. Witter whose "*Jura Israelitarum in Palastinam*" appeared in 1711. He pointed out usage of different divine names in the Book of Genesis. Jean Astruc (born in 1684) identified these sources as the one which used the divine name "Elohim" and the other which used the divine name "Jehovah". Eichhorn by his "*Einleitung in das Alte Testament*" (first edition 1780-3) proved that there existed two main strands and hence two sources for the ancient writings. English scholar Alexander Geddes and German scholar J. S. Vater developed "*the fragment hypothesis*" picturing the Pentateuch as a collection of fragments. Hupfeld in his book "*Die Quellen der Genesis und die Art ihrer Zusammensetzung*" inaugurated a new phase in the history of Pentateuchal criticism. He identified three narrative strands in the Pentateuch.

As a result of biblical scholar Wilhelm Vatke's "*Die Religion des Alten Testament I* (1835) and Karl H. Graf's "*Die geschichtlichen Bucher des Alten Testaments* (1866), two independent research works, an historical or documentary hypothesis about the different sources of the Penta-

teuch came into the limelight. Vatke sought to trace from the biblical narration the historical development of the ancient Hebrew religion while Graf worked on the text itself as to find which of the texts must have preceded or followed others. They identified four different source documents; J (the document associated with the divine name Yahweh or Jehovah), E (the one associated with Elohim, the Hebrew word for God), P (the passages emphasizing the legal aspects and the functions of priests), D (the source responsible for composing the book of Deuteronomy). J. Wellhausen combined the research of his predecessors and propounded the "Documentary Hypothesis," which brought a revolution in the field of biblical research in general and in Pentateuch studies in particular.³⁹ Since then most critics of the Pentateuch argue that it is a composite work produced at different intervals, with contradictions, inconsistencies and different literary styles, hence it cannot be the work of one individual (Moses) as had been claimed for centuries. Opposition to the critical study or examination of the Bible comes from the Church as well as the Jews, but the new scholarship had its impact on followers of both religions resulting in schism with respect to the authority of the Torah. At present there are three main groups among the Jews, each having a different view about the authority of the Torah.

REFORMED OR PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM:

Reformed Judaism, which appeared in the nineteenth century Germany, recognizes the validity of the critical study of the Bible and accepts the picture of the Torah or Pentateuch which has emerged as a result of modern historical and critical research and investigations. The movement of Reformed Judaism can be further divided into two main categories: the "Classical" and the "Radical". The Classical Reform movement does not dispense with the traditional concept of the Torah altogether. These reformers attempt to reinterpret and adapt it to new requirements, " The emphasize at the outset was on adaptability, not on total rejection. The early Reformers understood very well that Jewish law was central to Jewish life. They acknowledged the need to discontinue the observance of antiquated commandments, but they staunchly defended the necessity of the legal process in determining Jewish belief and practice."⁴⁰

The Classical Reform ended in 1881 when the radical trends in the movement got a chance to dominate it. The outcome, the Radical Reform Judaism, observes Kaplan, "practically dispenses with the concept of "Torah".⁴¹ They have lost faith in the divine origin of the Torah. In the words of M. M. Kaplan, one of the pioneers of modern Jewish thought, "with critical and historical research proving that the Pentateuch is a composite document which began to function as a single code not earlier than in the days of Ezra, the laws and institutions contained in the Pentateuch are deprived at one blow of the infallibility and permanent validity which traditional Judaism was wont to ascribe to them."⁴²

Contrary to the traditional view, Radical Reformers give more importance to Jewish history, the Jewish people, Jewish civilization, and see Judaism as a "constantly evolving organism"⁴³ rather than some thing revealed and static. Judaism, observes J. Neusner, "has a history, that history is single and unitary; and it has always been leading to its present outcome: Reformed Judaism."⁴⁴ This means that "the origin of the reliable definition of Judaism lies not in revealed records of God's will but in human accounts of humanity's works."⁴⁵

For Radical Reformed Judaism the source of religious authority, as observes Danzger, is "the ethical and universalistic teachings of the prophets. Because conscience is a reflection of the Godhead for Reform, the ultimate authority is man's own conscience, guided by the moral and ethical teachings of the Bible."⁴⁶ That is perhaps the reason that the Reformers are more concerned with philosophy than the Torah. Even the term "Torah" is missing from their vocabulary. This is evident from the language used in the historic Pittsburgh platform which declares: "We recognize in the Mosaic legislation a system of training the Jewish people for its mission during its national life in Palestine, and today we accept as binding only its moral laws and maintain only such ceremonies as elevate and sanctify our lives, but reject all such as are not adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization... We hold that all such Mosaic and rabbinical laws as regular diet, priestly purity, and dress... Their observance in our days is apt rather to obstruct than to further modern spiritual elevation."⁴⁷ One can not imagine a more forthright declaration to the age to refute or transform the authority of Written as well Oral Torah.

Commenting on this revolution, Greenstein observes that , "the principle of earlier Reform had been a commitment to evolution in Jewish law, not revolution. Classical Reform tried to adapt Jewish law to new conditions while still retaining the principle. The Pittsburgh Platform abandoned that effort altogether. Halakah, the Hebrew word for "Jewish law," disappeared from Reform vocabulary."⁴⁸ This trend continued in Reform circles till early 1930s. In 1930 the Columbus Platform replaced the Pittsburgh Platform. It emphasized the evolution and not revolution in the Jewish law and life. It renewed the approach of Classical Reformers *vis-a-vis* the Torah and continues to be popular among Reformed Jews today.

ORTHODOX OR TRADITIONAL JUDAISM:

Orthodox Judaism, contrary to a popular impression about it, is not a monolithic movement. Orthodoxy spans a range of complexity in regards to beliefs, customs, practices and political views; however, there is one thing common among them. The Orthodox do not see Judaism as a constantly changing organism or as human. They believe that the Torah was revealed on Sinai and is supernatural and eternal. It is in no way man made and subject to change. Jacob Neusner, defines orthodoxy as "all Jews who believe that God revealed the dual Torah at Sinai, and that Jews must carry out the requirements of Jewish law contained in the Torah as interpreted by the sages through time."⁴⁹ Therefore, Orthodox or traditionalists are in line with the position held by the generality of Jewry at large for centuries. They maintain that the Torah is the word of God and by definition truth itself. They further maintain that the Torah "being given by God, must carry meaning in every word and not even one letter can be superfluous. One may not understand everything, but that is human shortcoming. If modern scientific knowledge appears to contradict the biblical word, then either our present-day science will prove to be in error or we do not understand the Bible properly."⁵⁰ So to them the Torah constitutes facts that are divinely oriented and above all doubt. As the facts of nature leave no room for any kind of doubt, so does the Torah. This view of the essential facticity, observes Neusner, or "the absolute givenness of Torah led to the further conviction that human beings may not deny the Torah's teachings even when they do not grasp its meaning. Wisdom is contained within the Torah: God's will is to be found there."⁵¹ In short the religious authority in orthodoxy is the Written as well as Oral Torah (Talmud) along with the subsequent rabbinic traditions and not (as in Reformed Judaism) the history of the Jewish people. Greenstein observes that "in more recent times, this appeal to authenticity through

traditional sources has persuaded portions of Orthodox community to define its theological stance as "Torah-true" Judaism. They perceive themselves as guardians of the Torah and its commandments with the duty to preserve them and follow them regardless of changing times or circumstances."⁵²

CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM:

Conservative Judaism⁵³ is a "counter-Reform" movement and is a mixture of both the above discussed views. Conservative Jews maintain their belief in revealed nature of the Dual Torah, but do not seal the door of revelation with the rabbinical period. They believe in a continuity of revelation in Jewish tradition. This middle position espouses both the previous views as it holds that God revealed the written Torah, which was supplemented by "the ongoing revelation manifesting itself throughout history in the spirit of the Jewish people."⁵⁴

To the Conservatives, the Jewish tradition- its culture, customs, the practices, and value schemes of Jewish people are quite significant. They believe that "Judaism is a tradition that includes not only the Torah., the Talmud, and the Codes, but also the practices of Jews, the traditions of "catholic Israel," the entire "civilization of Judaism."⁵⁵ Robert Gordis summarizes the fundamental postulates of Conservative Judaism in the following words: "The maintenance of the twin principles of authority and development in Jewish law... together with the emphasis upon the worldwide peoplehood of Israel-these are the basic postulates of Conservative Judaism."⁵⁶ This emphasis upon the catholic Israel does not imply lack of faith in the Torah. The Torah to the Conservatives is the word of God and divinely inspired. Such a strong faith in the validity of the Torah is clear from the words of Isaac Leeser, 'the founder of Conservatism' in the United States. He wrote in the preface to his English version of the Bible, "the translator believes in the Scriptures as they have been handed down to us, as also in the truth and authenticity of prophecies and their literal fulfillment."⁵⁷ Conservatives would allow application of biblical criticism to the Hebrew Bible with the exception of the Pentateuch. Morris Raphall, for instance, "differentiated between the Five Books of Moses and the rest of the Scriptures. It was not possible, he believed, to apply the same measure of analysis to both. Whoever undertook the criticism of the Pentateuch, would touch the basis of Judaism."⁵⁸

In light of the above discussion, it may be asserted that although modern biblical criticism has left its traces in and imprint on the modern Jewish thought and has caused some of the Jews to revise their faith in the supernatural origin and binding nature of the Torah, many Jews maintain a strong belief in the divine origin and nature of the Torah. They believe in its essential facticity and venerate it as the true "word of God". In case of the Orthodox, the Torah is the inerrant and infallible Word of God in its literal sense. None of the Jewish groups, even Reformism in its radical form, has rejected its validity altogether. The phrase, all Scripture (Written + Oral), only Five Books of Moses, not five books of Moses in its entirety, but just the beliefs along with the ethical and moral teachings, will, perhaps, be fitting to convey the position regarding Torah of the traditionalists, conservatives and reformists consecutively. Therefore, if a student intends to learn about and compare the authentic Jewish concept of God, or the transcendence or anthropomorphism with their counterparts in other traditions, he would have no choice but to go to the Hebrew Bible in general and the Five books of Moses in particular because the Torah, whatso-

ever may be the claims and findings of the modern research, enjoys authoritative and authentic status among Jewry at large. This assertion may be substantiated by the words of one of the best known Conservative Jewish scholars, Kohut, who observes, "to us the Pentateuch is *noli me tangere!* Hands off! We disclaim all honour of handling the sharp knife which cuts the Bible into a thousand pieces."⁵⁹

OLD TESTAMENT AND CHRISTIANITY:

The Christian Scriptures consist in two Testaments, Old and New. The Old Testament has been an intrinsic part of Christianity since the very beginning of this faith. J. Pelikan observes that "the Christian movement was born with a Bible in its hand: the Hebrew Scripture that constituted the Bible of Judaism."⁶⁰ Brunner argues that "from the beginning the Christian Church possessed a Sacred Scripture which had absolute canonical authority: the Old Testament."⁶¹ The Holy book, then, for Jesus as well as for the early founders of the Christian faith was not the New Testament but "the Holy Scripture for Jesus and the early Christians was the Hebrew Bible of the Jewish community."⁶² Though perhaps we should qualify this by noting that New Testament and Early Church quotations from the Old Testament seem to have been almost always made from the Greek Septuagint and therefore the Bible for the first Christians also included the apocrypha which was almost invariably in all Christian Bibles until the Protestant Reformation. Since the New Testament books, observes Grant, "which reflect the life of early Christians are written exclusively in Greek, it is not surprising that most of the Old Testament quotations in them are derived from the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint; but some times, for example in the Gospel of Matthew, some of the quotations seem to be based on different renderings of the Hebrew text. Recent archaeological discoveries have shown that the Septuagint was in circulation even in Palestine, and that its text was somewhat different from that found in the major, later manuscripts. Undoubtedly the Palestinian Greek manuscripts underwent a good deal of correction on the ground of comparison with Hebrew texts, and it may be that New Testament passages which seem to be closer to the Hebrew than to the Septuagint are based on corrected Septuagint texts."⁶³

We can conclude with Clarke who observes: "We are so accustomed to the New Testament as a book of unique authority in the Church that it is difficult to realize that there was a time when the Scriptures meant to Christians our Old Testament."⁶⁴ The Old Testament derived its authority also from the notion that "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."⁶⁵ Jesus is reported by John to have said: "Search the scriptures... and they are they which testify of me."⁶⁶

The Old Testament enjoyed this authoritative status even when the need was felt to add to it the Christian Gospels which, Pelikan claims, "were the first Christian books to be added to the canon of Hebrew Scripture as supplementary Scripture."⁶⁷ The rest of the books of the New Testament followed but, as observes Brunner, "until the fourth century the range of the New Testament Canon was not always and every where the same."⁶⁸ We will have the opportunity to address the issue of The New Testament canon at length in the next chapter. It suffices to note here that for all these long centuries of the formative period of the Christian faith it was the Hebrew Bible and not the New Testament which was fully in the Canon. Some of the New Testament books got

their place in the canon gradually while the Old Testament books were accepted canonical from the beginning.

Therefore, it is beyond doubt that the Hebrew Scripture was the original Sacred Book of the Christian faith. It, for the first four centuries, remained the only canonical Scripture (before the complete canonization of the New Testament), and has been in the Christian Bible since the Church's canon was first formulated. The question arises about the relationship of the Hebrew Bible with the Christian doctrines and faith. Is the Hebrew Bible in conformity with the Christian doctrines, and is it accepted by all the Christians as authoritative and binding? Could it be that the findings of a student from the text of the Old Testament are equally applicable to the Christian faith as they are to the Jewish one? The answer to these important questions is extremely difficult. It needs a thorough discussion of Christian responses to the Old Testament. An impression of what some of the Christians feel about this complex situation can be construed from John Bright: "The Old Testament... is different. It was not in the first instance a document of the Christian faith at all, but of the faith of Israel. It contains much that is strange to Christian belief and that has never been practiced by Christians, together with not a little that may even be offensive to Christian sentiments. How is this ancient book, which presents a religion by no means identical with the Christian religion, to be appealed to by the church as normative over Christian belief and Christian conduct?"⁶⁹ Bright further points out what could be offensive to the Christians when he argues that "there is much in the Old Testament-and it ought frankly to be admitted - that offends the Christian's conscience. Its heroes are not always heroes, and are almost never saints. They lust, they brawl, and commit the grossest immorality; they plot, they kill, or seek to kill. And often enough their conduct receives no whisper of rebuke: it is just recorded. How are the stories of such things in any way a guide for the faith and conduct of the Christian? How shall he learn from them the nature of his God and of the duty that his God requires of him? Many a sincere Christian has, explicitly or tacitly, asked that question. Scarcely a part of the Old Testament is exempt from it. Not even the prophets!"⁷⁰ Giving example of the well known story of David and Bethsheba, Bright further argues that "it is an altogether sordid tale of lust, adultery, treachery, and murder, and many a reader has been shocked by it. How can such a story possibly be said to speak any authoritative word to the Christian with regard to his faith, or in any way furnish guidance for his conduct? Certainly it provides him with no example to follow- unless it be an example of what he ought under no circumstances to do."⁷¹

In view of such a complex situation one is absolutely justified in asking the question, in what sense is the Old Testament authoritative for Christians in matters of faith and practice? Do Christians differentiate between the two Testaments and assign the Old Testament a position second in rank to the position and authority of the New? And if what the Old Testament comprises was not and is not identical to the Christian faith and cannot work as the fountainhead of its doctrines, why was it and why is it a part of the Bible accepted by the Church as the legitimate authority in the matters of faith and practice?⁷² Why are the pastors and evangelists of modern times reading and quoting the Old Testament in their sermons and services?

The Christian response to these significant questions can be classified in three main categories.

THE MARCIONIST RESPONSE:

'Get rid of the Old Testament' was the solution typified by Marcion (around 140). Marcion (100-160), the son of a Christian bishop in *Pontus*,⁷³ found the Old Testament absolutely different from the Christian faith; therefore he completely separated the two Testaments in his canon. Marcion, observes Grant, "believed that the earliest apostles had distorted the original tradition in order to make it relevant to their earliest hearers."⁷⁴ His canon consisted of the *Gospel* (Luke, without interpolations) and *Apostle* (Paul, without interpolations and without the Pastoral Epistles). He is classified by some as "a Gnostic and an extreme dualist",⁷⁵ while others, disputing the degree to which he was influenced by Gnosticism, do accept that his systematic effort to justify the devaluation of Hebrew Scripture was an outcome of Gnostic teachings that swept over the ancient world.⁷⁶

Marcion "assumed the existence of two gods-one the God of the Old Testament, the Creator, whom he called the Just God, Who is angry and jealous and punishes; the other, the kind God, who took pity on mankind and sent his Son to succour them. The Just God being jealous caused the crucifixion. But Jesus, being delivered by the good God, demanded satisfaction from the Just God, and in payment was given the souls of all who should believe on Him."⁷⁷ Christ, then, was sent by the true God to redeem humanity from the cruel and vindictive God of the Old Testament. Carmichael observes that the "redemption in Christ was to him in no way to be understood in terms of Judaism or the Scriptures of Judaism, in which he found much to offend him. The God of the Old Testament is another and inferior being, the Demiurge-creator, the vindictive God of the law, wholly opposed to the Gracious God revealed in the Gospel."⁷⁸ Marcion redemption meant redemption from the Law (the Old Testament).⁷⁹ He had no reservation in declaring that as the book of a different and hostile god the Old Testament "is no part of the Christian revelation and has no place in the Christian Canon."⁸⁰

Marcion further maintained that both Jesus and Paul had the same views about the Old Testament, but their teachings had been corrupted by the apostles.⁸¹ Marcion's radical views were well accepted among his followers. The Church, on the other hand, rejected his views and declared him a heretic because, in the words of Irenaeus, "he persuaded his disciples that he was more trustworthy than the apostles who transmitted the gospel."⁸²

Though the Christian Church roundly rejected this solution and persecuted Marcion's followers, his teachings, observes Clarke, "maintained their corporate existence until the fifth century."⁸³ In our modern times, a Marcion-like attitude re-emerged in the Liberal period of the late nineteenth century. Goethe, Schelling, Feuerbach and Schleiermacher are just some examples of Christians Marcionite tendencies. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1786-1834), who was accepted as the father of modern Protestant theology (during the nineteenth and about half the twentieth century),⁸⁴ made a systematic effort to draw a line and pinpoint the gulf which lies between Old Testament theology and that of the New Testament by placing Old Testament theology on a par with heathenism. He contended that "The relations of Christianity to Judaism and Heathenism are the same, inasmuch as the transition from either of these to Christianity is a transition to another religion."⁸⁵ Though he did not object to the Old Testament being printed in the Bible, he did feel that it should be added to the New Testament as a sort of appendix and not as something of equal

rank and authority; "The Old Testament Scriptures do not ... share the normative dignity or the inspiration of the New."⁸⁶

S. Sandmel observes that, "This was a Marcion-like attitude, though it appeared in the nineteenth century. It rested on the premise-at which the Church Fathers would have been aghast-that there was no bond of continuity between Judaism and Christianity. This unsound "scholarship" contrasted , for example, an alleged God of awe and terror in the Tanak, with a kindly and loving God in the New Testament."⁸⁷

The Marcionist strain has survived in Christianity down to the present days.⁸⁸ Although people like Friedrich Delitzsch,⁸⁹ are accused of Nazism, anti-Semitism, and their views about the Old Testament are often discarded as biased and sick, the views of scholars like A. Harnack, one of the great historians of dogma, are not given the same treatment. Harnack like Marcion "concluded that the Old Testament should be removed from the Christian canon."⁹⁰

THE OFFICIAL RESPONSE:

The Church from the very beginning accepted the Old Testament as the "Holy Scripture", the word of God and hence authoritative and canonical. This does not mean that the early Church Fathers were unaware of the problem of incongruity and strangeness inherent in the texts of the two Testaments.⁹¹ For if someone, observes Origen," points out to us the stories of Lot's daughters and their apparently unlawful intercourse with their father, or of Abraham's two wives, or of two sisters who married Jacob, or the two maidservants who increased the number of his sons, what else can we answer than that these are certain mysteries and types of spiritual matters, but that we do not know of what sort they are?"⁹² Men like Celsus, Porphyry and others did point out such immoralities and anthropomorphism of the Old Testament.⁹³ They pinpointed several such passages to argue about the human aspect of the Hebrew Bible. Chadwick hears in Celsus' "onslaught the echoes of Marcion's attack upon the Old Testament, and in fact there is direct evidence that Celsus must have been familiar with some of the arguments used in the debate between Marcion and the Church."⁹⁴ The Fathers, on the other hand, could not declare the Old Testament as man made and un-authoritative because they believed, as Origen observed, that "the sacred Scriptures were not composed by any human words but were written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and were also delivered and entrusted to us by the will of God the Father through His Only Begotten Son Jesus Christ."⁹⁵ So it was the normative Scripture which, as they viewed, Jesus followed and urged others to look as the key to understanding his person. To discard the Old Testament was tantamount to discarding the person of Jesus, an act which would have risked the entire faith; therefore, the Church Fathers retained normativeness of the Old Scriptures by appealing to "allegory" and "typology".⁹⁶

The school of Alexandria in the figures of two of its theologians and philosophers, Clement⁹⁷ (155-215 A.D) and Origen (185-254 A.D.), advocated this allegorical recourse which, later on, was adopted by other Fathers like Ambrose and Augustine. Origen saw many difficulties with the literal textual sense of the Scriptures.⁹⁸ He observed: "Now the reason those we have just mentioned have a false understanding of these matters is quite simply that they understand Scripture not according to their spiritual meaning but according to the sound of the letter."⁹⁹ According to

R. E. Brown "Many of the Church Fathers, e.g., Origen, thought that the literal sense was what the words said independently of the author's intent. Thus were Christ spoken of as "the lion of Judah," the literal sense for these Fathers would be that he was an animal. That is why some of them rejected the literal sense of Scripture."¹⁰⁰ Origen argued that "the law has twofold interpretation, one literal and the other spiritual... It is consistent with this when Paul [2 Cor. 3:6] also says that 'the letter kills,' which is the equivalent of literal interpretation; whereas 'the spirit gives life' which means the same as the spiritual interpretation."¹⁰¹ Charles J. Scalise observes that "Though Origen takes Paul's contrast between "the letter and the spirit" and Paul's use of allegory as scriptural points of departure, his view of "the letter and the spirit" dramatically alters the Pauline perspective. For Paul, the "historical pattern" of the Old Testament story is explicitly preserved, even in the few places where an allegorical approach is explicitly used (e.g., the story of Sarah and Hagar in Gal. 4:22-26). For Origen, however, though much of the Scripture is viewed as historical, the historicity of Scripture is itself unimportant; what matters is the spiritual meaning of Scripture developed by the method of allegory."¹⁰² Hanson observes that to Origen "History... is meaningless unless a parable is derived from it, unless it is made into an allegory."¹⁰³ Origen, following Neo-Platonistic tendencies and using a word pattern from Paul (1 Thess. 5:23), introduced his famous¹⁰⁴ threefold distinctive meanings of the Scripture corresponding to the supposed trichotomy of man's nature: body, soul and spirit. First among these, he contended, was "the *somatic*" literal or philological meaning of the text which every body can understand. Second was "the *psychic*" moral or tropological meaning, the existential application of the biblical text to one's own situation, and the third "the *pneumatic*" spiritual or mystical meaning which could be grasped only by those who were mystically perfect.¹⁰⁵ He argued that "all [Scripture] has a spiritual meaning but not all a bodily meaning."¹⁰⁶ He observed that certain passages do not make sense at all if not understood allegorically. "Now what man of intelligence will believe that the first, second, and third day, and evening and the morning existed without the sun, moon, and stars?"¹⁰⁷ Therefore, Origen interpreted them thoroughly and allegorically.¹⁰⁸ Bigg, Wolfson,¹⁰⁹ and J. Danielou argue that Origen derived this method of interpretation from Philo. Bigg observes that "his rules of procedure, his playing with words and numbers and proper names, his boundless extravagance are learned, not from the New Testament, but through Philo from the puerile Rabbinical schools."¹¹⁰ Grant, on the other hand, argues that it was not "Philonic, but derived from Origen's studies of Greek grammar and rhetoric."¹¹¹

Origen went so far in his allegorism that all Scripture became, as observes Bigg, "transparent beneath his touch; the 'crannies in the wall' multiply and widen, till the wall itself disappears."¹¹² By this "exegetical suicide",¹¹³ as Hanson characterizes it, the Alexandrians, argues Bigg, "found symbols where there was no symbol; they treated symbols not as indications, as harbingers, but as proofs. Thus they undertook to demonstrate Christian doctrine by passages which in the belief of the Jew were not Messianic at all, or, if Messianic, had not been fulfilled. They neglected the difference between before and after."¹¹⁴ In short they "found in the Old Testament what they already possessed, what they could not have found unless they had possessed it. But at any rate they found nothing more."¹¹⁵ Through this "dangerous" and "delusive" method, as Bigg characterizes it,¹¹⁶ they abandoned too quickly the grammatical and historical sense of the text and the text, argues Scalise, lost "its capacity to exercise hermeneutical control over interpretation through its literal sense."¹¹⁷

Origen's and others above discussed allegorism that has been criticized often in the past is being recognized as an achievement by some recent scholars. Blackman,¹¹⁸ R. Grant,¹¹⁹ James Wood,¹²⁰ Bernard Ramm,¹²¹ Jean Danielou¹²² and Mickelsen are just a few examples. Mickelsen, for instance, recognizes it as an "achievement in textual criticism, complete study of the whole scripture, apologetics, and human language in general..."¹²³

The school of Antioch represented by Theophilus of Antioch (115-188 A.D.), Diodorus of Tarsus (d. 393 A.D.), Theodor of Mopsuestia (350-428) Chrysostom (354-407) and Theodoret (386-458) was soberer in the use of Scriptures than its rival school of Alexandria.¹²⁴ These Antiochian interpreters, observes Mickelsen, "all emphasized historical interpretation; yet this stress was no wooden literalism, for they made full use of typology. The school of Alexandria felt that the literal meaning of the text did not include its metaphorical meaning, but the school of Antioch insisted that the literal meaning cannot exclude metaphor."¹²⁵

These early fathers tried to solve problems raised by Marcion and others by typology and allegory. D. B. Stevick observes that "Insofar as the Fathers recognized problems and discrepancies in the text of Holy Scripture (as many of them did), they seem able to accept some ingenious reconciling explanation or to shift to allegorical exegesis. That is, they would observe the problem passage and then say that the apparent difficulty concealed a mystery: This number stood for one thing; this river was a symbol of something else; and this person was a type of still another thing. Put them together as an allegory, and the problem passage becomes a revelation of great truth."¹²⁶

Other fathers like Jerome (347-419 A.D.) and Augustine (354-430 A.D.) followed Origen in allegorism. Though Jerome in his later life tried to get away from allegory, but did not fully succeed. Farrar observes that "He flatters himself that he succeeded himself in steering safely between the Scylla of allegory and the Charybdis of literalism, whereas in reality his 'multiple sense' and 'whole forests of spiritual meanings' are not worth one verse of the original."¹²⁷ Augustine, in the name of having sound principles for interpretation, himself allegorized extensively.¹²⁸ From 600 to 1200 A.D. allegory, observes Mickelsen, "had a real hold upon the minds of medieval theologians."¹²⁹ Brunner observes that "the rank growth of the allegorical method of Biblical exposition made it impossible to maintain the Bible text as normative, as compared with the ecclesiastical development of doctrine." By means of allegorical exposition the Scholastics, says Brunner, "prove", with the help of Scripture, all that they wish to prove."¹³⁰ The outcome was, as John Bright puts it, "a wholesale and uncontrolled allegorizing of Scripture, specifically the Old Testament. This did not confine itself to difficult or morally offensive passages, or to passages that tell of something that seems unnatural or improbable, or to places where Scripture contradicts, or seem to contradict, other Scripture; it extended itself almost everywhere. Scarcely a text but yielded hidden and unsuspected riches to the interpreter's ingenuity."¹³¹ By means of this wholesale allegorizing, the Church was able to save the Old Testament as the Sacred Scripture which, according to them, propounded Christian meanings in each of its texts.¹³² The Roman Catholic Church, the heir of this tendency, has traditionally been and still is more inclined and hospitable to the allegorical "mystical" meanings of the text than most Protestants churches.¹³³

Many Protestants, following the pattern of Reformers like Luther and Calvin, reject allegory in principle. Luther scolded those who used the allegorical method of interpretation and rejected it

altogether.¹³⁴ In his "Preface to the Old Testament" he said, " There are some who have little regard for the Old Testament... They think they have enough in the New Testament and assert that only a spiritual sense is to be sought in the Old Testament. Origen, Jerome, and many other distinguished people have held this view. But Christ says in John 5(:39)," "search the Scriptures, for it is they that bear witness to me."¹³⁵ He further argues that "The Holy Spirit is the simplest writer and advisor in heaven and on earth. That is why his words could have no more than the one simplest meaning which we call written one, or the literal meaning of the tongue... But one should not therefore say that Scripture of God's Word has more than one meaning."¹³⁶ Calvin called allegorical interpretations as an invention of the Devil, some thing "puerile" and "far-fetched" meant to undermine the authority of Scripture.¹³⁷ By emphasizing the plain historical-philological sense of the text Luther and Calvin emphasized the authority of the Scripture and dispensed with "Tradition" with its accepted mystical meanings. The meanings to which John Bright refers to as "the exotic jungle of fanciful interpretation."¹³⁸ Luther gave profoundly Christological interpretations to the Hebrew Bible and urged the Christians to search "Christ and the gospel in the Old Testament."¹³⁹

Since the Reformation period the trend to find Christological as well as typological meanings in the Old Testament has been quite pervasive in influential Protestant circles and is still popular among a number of scholars specially on the continent of Europe and in Great Britain. Karl Barth, Wilhelm Vischer, O. Procksch, A. B. Davidson, R. V. G. Tasker¹⁴⁰ are some of the examples. Vischer, for instance, argues that "the Bible is the Holy Scripture only insofar as it speaks of Christ Jesus."¹⁴¹ It is the only "dogma which for the Christian binds the testament together; the Old Testament telling us what the Christ is and the New Testament telling us who He is."¹⁴² Procksch maintains this view by contending that "the figure of Jesus Christ has the Old Testament as its background. He is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies: without him the Old Testament is a torso."¹⁴³ Bright argues that "The normative element in the Old Testament, and its abiding authority as the Word of God, rests not in its laws and customs, its institutions and ancient patterns of thinking..., but in that structure of theology which undergirds each of its texts and which is caught up in the New Testament and announced as fulfilled in Jesus Christ."¹⁴⁴

This approach, though rejecting the allegorical sense and advocating a plain literal or grammatico-historical meanings of the text seems to do a similar injustice. All these methods supply the Old Testament with meanings and results in advance. The result is that writers merely quote the Old Testament to prove what they think should be proven by it. Somewhat like their Catholic friends, Protestants in the name of finding christological meanings come to the Old Testament with already set ideas and hard and fast assumptions and superimpose these assumptions on the text of the Old Testament, may be consciously disregarding its plain meanings. The practical outcome is the same, a disguised sort of allegory. It is appropriate to mention here that the Protestant approach to the Scriptures has probably caused more confusions and diversity of interpretations than that of the Roman Catholics. In Catholicism the Church is the final authority to determine the validity of the interpretation. No interpretation can be given to or no meaning can be gotten from the Scriptures that contravenes the Church's dogmas and teachings. In Protestantism, on the other hand, there is individualism. The Protestants shrink from official church-dictated meanings and give every individual Bible reader right to find meanings for himself. This

has resulted in such a diversity of biblical interpretations that often it seems like a heap of confusions. The biblical text means simply what it means to the individual interpreter.

THE LIBERAL'S RESPONSE:

This solution was advocated by liberal theologians during the nineteenth century. They, accepting the validity of Wellhausen's theory of an evolutionary development in the Old Testament, looked at the Bible as a historically conditioned book.¹⁴⁵ They recognized the human aspect of the Bible as a whole. This aspect had largely been ignored by the orthodoxy over the centuries. The liberal writers observed that the Old Testament had evolved from primitive to more developed forms and went through a fundamental change during this developmental process. They accepted the person of Jesus along with his teachings as their point of orientation and looked into the Old Testament from that perspective.¹⁴⁶ As the New Testament is the only record of Jesus and his teachings; therefore, they based their value judgment on the principles of the New Testament. They, by imposing these principles on the Old Testament, separated passages of a normative nature from those of primitive, immoral, outgrown, and non-Christian one's in the Old Testament without denying its authority.¹⁴⁷ A. B. Davidson, for example, argued that "we must neither deny all authority to the Old Testament in favor of the New nor place the Old Testament on the same level as the New ", but study the Old Testament "in view of its climax in the New Testament."¹⁴⁸ E. Sellin maintained that "the Old Testament Canon is significant for the Old Testament theologian only in so far as it was accepted by Jesus and his apostles. That is to say, Old Testament theology is only interested in the line which was fulfilled in the Gospel."¹⁴⁹ F. W. Farrar observed: "Is it not enough that, to us, the test of God's word is the teaching of Him who is the Word of God? Is it not an absolutely plain and simple rule that anything in the Bible which teaches or seems to teach anything which is not in accordance with the love, the gentleness, the truthfulness, the purity of Christ's Gospel, is not God's word to us, however clearly it stands on the Bible page?"¹⁵⁰

This liberal approach to the Old Testament was unique in the sense that it neither fully followed Marcionism nor the official, traditional solutions. They assimilated thoughts from both the above mentioned tendencies without following any of the tendencies in toto. Their position was and still is quite complicated. They feel like prizing the Old Testament with historical and religious importance while cutting it into thousand pieces, treating some pieces as binding yet the others as insignificant. Such an approach is tantamount to imposing their own authority upon the Old Testament text and determining which of the texts should be religiously significant and which should be ignored as irrelevant. By such an approach, the liberals brought to the modern Christianity "at least the camel's nose of Marcionism".¹⁵¹ (As mentioned earlier A. Harnack and H. Gunkel are good examples.)¹⁵² Large parts of the Old Testament lost their importance as well as practical authority and the effective liberal canon became a rather small one "the life and teachings of Jesus and such other passages as might be held, from a moral and spiritual point of view, to stand on a level with them, or approximately so."¹⁵³

One is justified to ask, is the Old Testament divinely inspired? If the answer be affirmative, then, it follows logically that it cannot be taken in parts. Either the Old Testament is fully inspired and authoritative in its entirety, or not authoritative at all. Jesus' person and his teachings cannot be taken as the measuring rod to determine the authoritative passages from the non-binding one's in

the Old Testament due to historical reasons. The Old Testament existed historically before the person of Jesus. He followed it as the Scripture (as is commonly held) and did not change it or cut it into pieces. On the other hand, the true facts about the historical life and teachings of Jesus are themselves problems of great magnitude as we will see in the next chapter. Therefore, the liberals solution faced problems and limitations very similar to those of the Marcionism and the Orthodoxy. The interpreter's understanding again were to play a vital role in interpreting the accepted passages of the Old Testament. It ultimately lead to individualism and very often to confusions.

It is clear from the above discussion that mainstream Christianity has preserved the Old Testament as sacred, canonical and as an intrinsic and inseparable part of its Holy Scripture. On the other hand, the Christian view of the Old Testament is sharply different from that of the Jews. Christianity regards the Old Testament as "superseded but sacred, while Judaism regards it as sacred and unsuperseded."¹⁵⁴ Theoretically the Old Testament is authoritative and a part of the Holy Scripture of the Christians but practically it is the New Testament which enjoys unitary, undisputed and unsuperseded authority. Christians read, understand, evaluate and explain the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament and as a result accept its validity only to the degree its teachings accord with those of the New. In doing so the modern Christianity does toe the line of early Church Fathers like Irenaeus, Tertullian and Origen. These Fathers clearly subordinated the Old Testament to the New Testament since the early part of the second century.¹⁵⁵ One can see similar mixed and confused views about the real significance and authority of the Old Testament in the very early Christian Church. Harnack summarizes the situation then in the following words, "The fact of the New Testament being placed on a level with the Old proved the most effective means of preserving to the latter its canonical authority, which had been so often assailed in the second century....The immediate result of this investigation was not only a theological exposition of the Old Testament, but also a theory which ceased to view the two Testaments as of equal authority and *subordinated* the Old to the New. This result, which can be plainly seen in Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Origen, led to exceedingly important consequences. It gave some degree of insight into statements, hitherto completely unintelligible, in certain New Testament writings, and it caused the Church to reflect upon a question that had as yet been raised only by heretics, viz., what are the marks which distinguished Christianity from the Old Testament religion?"¹⁵⁶ The Early Church, like most Christians of the modern times, could not reject it or accept it completely. They also harbored contradictory views about the old Testament as Harnack observes, "An historical examination imperceptibly arose; but the old notion of the inspiration of the Old Testament confined it to the narrowest limits, and in fact always continued to forbid it; for, as before, appeal was constantly made to the Old Testament as a Christian book which contained all the truths of religion in perfect form. Nevertheless the conception of the Old Testament was here and there full of contradiction." ¹⁵⁷

AUTHORITY IN CHRISTIANITY:

In the light of above discussion, it can be observed that a student looking into anthropomorphic and transcendental tendencies in the Bible as a whole may not be doing justice to his Christian readers. The validity of his findings from the Old Testament may not be accepted by a great many Christians as not all of them take the whole Bible as binding. He has to search the New Testament to explore the Christian views concerning anthropomorphism and transcendence because the New Testament alone is the claimed primary authority for most Christians. Would they accept the text of the New Testament as binding then?

1. The Catholic Church maintains that the Scripture does not only contain the Word of God, but is the Word of God and hence final authority. It also maintains that alongside the Scripture, the Church's ongoing tradition,¹⁵⁸ the rule of faith, is also authoritative. The Scripture and the Tradition are "with equal piety and reverence accepted."¹⁵⁹

The "Tradition" in the past was nothing but the Church or the decisions of the Vatican. No one was allowed to oppose or reject these decisions. It was stated in the Council of Trent in 1546, "No one... shall presume to interpret Sacred Scripture contrary to the sense which Holy Mother Church-to whom it belongs to judge the true sense and interpretation of Holy Scripture-both held and continues to hold..."¹⁶⁰ This belief found its climax in the dogma of "Papal Infallibility", when the Pope speaks *ex cathedra*, reached at the Vatican Council of 1870 "when the Pope speaks *ex cathedra*; that is, when in his character of "pastor and doctor of all Christians," he "defines a doctrine regarding faith and morals," he is possessed of infallibility."¹⁶¹ This doctrine was applied in 1950 to the bodily assumption of the Virgin Mary.¹⁶² "When the dogma of Mary's assumption was declared in 1950 ", observes G. C. Berkouwer, "the absence of any reference to it in Scripture was acknowledged. But, it was added, "The Catholic church teaches that there are two sources of revelation from which we can derive divine truth, the written Word of God and unwritten tradition. We know Mary's ascension into heaven through tradition."¹⁶³ In modern Catholic theory, the Scripture, the "Tradition" or the Church in the figure of the Pope, all are authorities, but practically it means the Pope or the Church as says Loofs, a responsible theologian of the Vatican, "Neither the Holy Scripture nor the Divine tradition, but the teaching Church, which infallibly expounds both sources of truth ... is for us the first rule of faith."¹⁶⁴

In recent times, specially after the Second Vatican Council of 1959, this view has been slightly modified to give "a new and strong accent"¹⁶⁵ to the scriptures. As the outcome of this unexpected Council, which according to Berkouwer, "has created unmistakable tensions within the Roman Catholic Church of the twentieth century,"¹⁶⁶ the two sources of authority previously held independent were closely interconnected. "Alike in Scripture and in the "sacred tradition," flowing like a stream from the work and teaching of the first commissioned envoys of Christ, we come face to face with Christ himself. And these two, sacred tradition and the Holy Writ of the Old and New Testament, are, "like a mirror in which the pilgrim Church on earth looks at God...until she is brought to see Him as He is, face to face."¹⁶⁷ The 'tradition' is the authentic interpreter of Scripture which is "sufficient for *all* truth."¹⁶⁸ But this "tradition which comes from the apostles develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit."¹⁶⁹ To fully understand the Scripture, "Christian scholars must be ever mindful of the findings which the Spirit-guided Church has already achieved, above all, those which the magisterium has guaranteed. This perfect accord with the insights of the Church's living tradition is the best guide that any one can

have in studying God's word."¹⁷⁰ In short the final guarantee of correctness and truth lies with the Church as 'The Constitution on Divine Revelation' itself says, "the final guarantee that the development will remain on the foundation of the Scriptures is only the assistance of the Holy Spirit which is promised to the Church and via the Church to its teaching office."¹⁷¹ The gist of this new theological standpoint is that though the Scripture is all authority but its true interpretation can be done by the tradition and with the help of the Holy Spirit only. And Rome is quite sure it has both of them.

Some observers have rightly observed that though the recent shift is significant it "does not make much difference because a tradition that interprets can very subtly become a tradition that creates truth."¹⁷² It can easily be noticed that although the Scriptures are acknowledged as the final authority in matters of doctrine; in practice it seems just a lip service to the Scriptures. The authority of the Scriptures is closely linked with the 'tradition' of which the church is the sole repository. Therefore, the end product is the same; the Church's certain authority over the Scriptures (or at least in effect it seems so). This authority is manifested through the Church's sole right to declare an interpretation of the Scriptures as traditional. The Church's official stamp guarantees the validity of the interpretation and finally assumes binding and authoritative status.¹⁷³

2: One dominant trend in Protestantism, as exemplified for instance in classical Lutheranism, neither gives the Church nor Tradition equal authority with the Scripture. These Protestants do not accept the Church as infallible but following Luther, they subordinate the Church to Scripture in matters of faith. Protestantism, observes John Bright, "has never been willing to accord the church the degree of authority in matters of doctrine that the Roman Catholic Church has. This is probably, indeed, the point which more than any other separates the Protestant from his Roman Catholic brother."¹⁷⁴ The Church, argued Luther, "cannot create articles of faith; she can only recognize and confess them as a slave does the seal of his lord."¹⁷⁵ Calvin, debating the Romanists, argued: "For if the Christian Church has been from the beginning founded on the writings of the prophets and the preaching of the apostles, wherever the doctrine is found, the approbation of it has preceded the formation of Church, since without it the Church itself had never existed."¹⁷⁶ Therefore, "Those persons betray great folly who wish it to be demonstrated to infidels that the Scripture is the Word of God, which can not be known without faith."¹⁷⁷ He concluded: "Let it be considered, then, as an undeniable truth, that they who have been inwardly taught by the Spirit feel an entire acquiescence in the Scripture, and that it is self-authenticated, carrying with it its own evidence, and ought not to be made the subject of demonstration and arguments from reason; but it obtains the credit which it deserves with us by the testimony of the Spirit."¹⁷⁸ To many Protestants of today the Word of God alone in its "Grammatical, historical meaning" or the "meaning of the tongue or of language" in which it is understood by every one, and not the doctrine of the Church, has the ultimate authority.¹⁷⁹ This is what is claimed. In reality, as has already been seen, the authority ends up being in the individual interpreting the Scripture.

Luther himself, in spite of his principle of Verbal Inspiration, made distinctions between different passages of the Scripture, accepting some of them binding and others non-binding. For instance he rejected the Apocryphal books of the Old Testament and described James as a "right straw Epistle." To him "it is not the Bible that counts but Christ therein contained."¹⁸⁰ Other Reformers

like Calvin, on the other hand, seemed to maintain the traditional and authoritative view of the Scripture.

Scholars like C. A. Briggs argue that "the theory of a literal inspiration and inerrancy was not held by the Reformers".¹⁸¹ On the other hand, Warfield, Brunner, Harris and many others maintain that the Reformers did have the above mentioned literal view about the inerrancy of the Scriptures. Harris remarks that "Most students of the Reformation will be astonished at the suggestion that Calvin believed anything else."¹⁸² Brunner observes: "Calvin is already moving away from Luther toward the doctrine of verbal inspiration. His doctrine of the Bible is entirely the traditional, formally authoritative, view. From the end of the sixteenth century onwards there was no other "principle of Scripture" than this formal authoritarian one. Whatever development took place after this culminated in the most strict and most carefully formulated doctrine of Verbal Inspiration ..."¹⁸³

Presently, the situation, specially in academic circles, is quite different. The "Historical and Literary Criticism" or the "Lower", and "Higher" biblical criticism, as briefly mentioned earlier, has brought about substantial changes in great many biblical scholars attitude towards the scriptures. Starting with Jean Astruc's (1753) discovery of the variation of the divine names in *Genesis*, the hypothesis or the documentary theory was developed and modified by German scholars like Eichorn (1823) and Hupfeld (1853). The higher criticism was given its classical form by Karl H. Graf (1866) and Julius Wellhausen (1876 and 1878). In England this approach found expression through the edited work of Benjamin Jowett "Essays and Reviews" published in February of 1860.¹⁸⁴ In his long essay "On the Interpretation of Scripture" Jowett set his own principles of scriptural interpretation. "Most people", observes Livingston, "considered them outrageous at the time. They were and are open to serious criticism but stand, nevertheless, as a kind of charter for critical biblical scholarship even today."¹⁸⁵

Jowett's guiding principle was "*Interpret the Scripture like any other book.*" The real meanings of the Scripture were the meanings intended by the author and by the text itself. Jowett argued: "The book itself remains as at the first unchanged amid the changing interpretations of it. The office of the interpreter is not to add another, but to recover the original one: the meaning, that is, of the words as they struck on the ears or flashed before the eyes of those who first heard and read them. He has to transfer himself to another age to imagine that he is a disciple of Christ or Paul; to disengage himself from all that follows. The history of Christendom is nothing to him....All the after thoughts of theology are nothing to him....The greater part of his learning is knowledge of the text itself; he has no delight in voluminous literature which has overgrown it."¹⁸⁶ He further observed that "we have no reason to attribute to the Prophet or Evangelist any second or hidden sense different from that which appears on the surface."¹⁸⁷ He denied infallibility to biblical writers and believed in "*progressive revelation.*" This, to him, was the solution to rectify biblical immoralities. "For what is progressive is necessarily imperfect in its earlier stages, and even erring to those who come after....Scripture itself points the way to answer the moral objections to Scripture."¹⁸⁸ He further argued that "In the child there is an anticipation of truth; his reason is latent in the form of feeling....he is led by temporal promises, believing that it is good to be happy always....he imagines God to be like a human father only greater and more powerful....As he grows older he mixes more with others....At length the world opens upon him;.. And as he arrives

at manhood he reflects on his former years....and he now understands that all this was but a preparation for another state of being. And...looking back on the entire past, which he reads anew, perceiving "that the events of life had a purpose or result which was not seen all the time."¹⁸⁹ Although the Church spared no effort to condemn this line of approach, yet it became gradually popular among academic circles.¹⁹⁰ Since then this approach has been the dominant trend in almost all the universities of the Western world though not without resistance.

In the nineteenth century William Robertson Smith, the editor of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, advocated the principles of historical criticism of the Bible and published articles by Wellhausen there as well. He was put on trial and expelled from his chair. In the same century, John Colenso, a South African Anglican bishop, was condemned as "the wicked bishop" and his works drew three hundred responses within twenty years of time. In the twentieth century, however, the situation is quite different. Even the Catholic Church, the aged long opponent of such investigations into biblical data, have joined the majority of biblical scholarship. The Pope Pius XII with his encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* in 1943 opened the door for such investigation in the Catholic circles. It has been called "a Magna Carta for biblical progress." The Pope concluded writing: "Let the interpreter then, with all care and without neglecting any light derived from recent research endeavor to determine the peculiar character and circumstances of the sacred writer, the age in which he lived, the sources written or oral to which he had recourse and the forms of expression he employed."¹⁹¹ Since then the approach has been adopted universally in most academic institutions.

This approach, as we have seen, presupposes that in all books of the Bible there is only one meaning that matters and that is the meaning intended by the original human author. One needs to explore to the best of his ability the original historical and cultural setting of the individual author of each book or passage and look into his thought world to discern what it was that he believed and wanted to say.¹⁹² Theologians like Kahler, Schlatter, v. Oettingen, Ritschl, Harnack, Bultmann, Joseph Stevens Buckminster, Moses Stuart, Andrews Norton, Morton Smith are just a few examples to be mentioned in this connection.¹⁹³

CONCLUSION:

As we have seen, the Hebrew Bible is comprised of different books, approaches, trends, styles, focuses and directions. More importantly, it does not easily yield to a systematic theological treatment specifically *vis-a-vis* anthropomorphism and transcendence. Its original text is non-existent. In addition to that, in case of the Old Testament one is lost in the ocean of allegorical interpretations, occult and mystical meanings ascribed to its text by countless followers, specially the Christians, over centuries. What is one to accept of them and what to reject? What is the criterion to be used to prove the authenticity or invalidity of any given meaning or interpretation? The Jewish interpretations are not accepted by the Christians and vice versa. The Catholic interpretations are different from the Protestants and a very wide diversity of interpretations exist within Protestantism itself. The diversity of the interpretations about the same text is fascinating. In this process of interpretation and allegorization, the text, the assumed original revelation, seems to be completely wrapped, fully covered and often suffers violence and injustice. The text does not seem to provide meanings by itself, but is provided with meanings by the interpreters.

Instead of being the authority by itself, the Bible seems to render to the authority and mercy of interpreters. History is a witness how strange and often absurd garbs had been placed on the text of the Bible. Due to diversity of the interpreters and their backgrounds, meanings of and understanding about the biblical texts have alarmingly diversified. This diversity and lack of unity necessitates return to the text of the Bible itself.

To avoid the above-sketched intricacies and confusions I propose, for the purpose of this treatise, to treat the Bible as the Word of God and authoritative. The claims about the Bible's divine origin and inspiration should be tantamount to the claims about its full authority, a view held for centuries by the majority of its followers. The Bible should be the primary source used to study the beliefs of its followers and to compare such beliefs with other faith traditions. Moreover, I suggest that the revelation or the Word of God, if it is so, in itself should be quite competent to convey its message and spirit without any need for external human help. God, the author and source of that Word, is the Wise, the Knowledge, and the Power. He has all the means and powers to communicate His message in clear, intelligible, and logical terms to the recipients of His revelation. I believe He does not need from the finite beings of very limited knowledge, wisdom, and resources to hijack the word of God in the name of a very subjective agency i.e., the Holy Spirit. People should not be allowed to say or prove from the biblical text whatever they want to say or prove with the excuse of biblical language being metaphorical in nature. I am not casting doubts about the intention, sincerity or piety of the interpreters. What I am trying to say is simply to respect the Word of God if one believes that such is the case with the Bible. The Word of God is the text of the Scriptures and all the rest, the word of man, whatever position or status he or she may enjoy in the tradition. Let the Word of God speak for itself objectively, should be the criterion of any comparison.

THE HEBREW BIBLE AND THE TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD:

Almighty God is the hero of the Hebrew Bible. At the same time the Hebrew Bible's understanding, representation and concept of God appears to be complex and often confusing. God, in the text of the Hebrew bible, is presented as the transcendent reality and at the same time He is often described in concrete anthropomorphic terms. These two polar tendencies or strands go side by side in the entire Hebrew Bible. Though visible efforts are made by the classical prophets to reduce the usage of anthropomorphic expressions and to lay more and more emphasis on the transcendental elements in the deity, there is hardly a page in the Old Testament where anthropomorphism or its vestiges can not be found. That is why even the Jewish biblical scholars, like S. T. Katz, feel no hesitation to admit that "Anthropomorphisms abound in the Bible."¹⁹⁴ P. van In-schoot, a contemporary biblical scholar observes that "There are many anthropomorphisms in all the Old Testament books. They abound in the narratives attributed to the Yahwist and in the works of most of the prophets, who have nevertheless, a very high idea of God."¹⁹⁵

Considering the diversity of the biblical writer's backgrounds and confusions about the Hebrew Bible's interpretations, it is interesting to note that, as a whole, the biblical God is more transcendent than anthropomorphic and more homogeneous than contradictory or heterogeneous as compared to the deities of neighboring cultures and nations of that time. This tendency becomes more interesting when it is looked in light of the historical fact that the Bible is not the revelation to

nor the product of a single writer, but a collection of different books and volumes compiled in various places over a period of more than a millennium. There is a manifest progressive element in the theistic notions of the Hebrew Bible. Various kinds of concepts can be located in regard to the deity in various parts of the Old Testament. Animism, polytheism, henotheism, monolatry, national monotheism and universal and ethical monotheism, all these 'isms' are reported to have been practiced by Israelites during various stages and periods of their early history and overlooked in most cases if not sanctioned by the biblical writers. That is why it has been observed that "one could not speak of Old Testament theology (in the singular), for the Old Testament exhibits not one theology but many."¹⁹⁶ Perhaps this is one of the leading factors that "In recent discussion of the beginnings of Israel's religion no subject has received more attention than belief in God."¹⁹⁷

THE UNITY OF GOD:

The unity of God or monotheism "is the belief in one unique god to the exclusion of any other divinity. Its absolute and exclusive character distinguishes it [monotheism] from monolatry which is the belief of a group of men in god, recognized as the only legitimate god of the group, but who concede the existence of other divinities adored by other peoples."¹⁹⁸ The Hebrew Bible in its present set up contains many passages that can be interpreted as explicitly or tacitly advocating unity of God. The first verse of the Bible declares that only One God and no one else created the universe. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." (Gen.1:1) Commenting on the first chapter of the Bible, P. van Imshcoot observes: "According to the first chapters of Genesis the one God manifested Himself from the beginning of mankind. The first account (1:1-2:4) describes the creation of the world and of man as the work of God (Elohim) who created heaven and earth and all that is in it in six days by His all-powerful word, and rested on the seventh day, thereby instituting the Sabbath. For the author of this account Elohim is evidently the one God on whom the whole universe depends....In this account Yahweh appears, in spite of anthropomorphisms, as the creator and absolute master of man's life and destiny and is obviously represented as the only God."¹⁹⁹ The Hebrews, from the very beginning, took the existence of God for granted as observes A. B. Davidson, "One such point of difference is this, that it never occurred to any prophet or writer of the Old Testament to prove the existence of God. To do so might well have seemed an absurdity. For all the Old Testament prophets and writers move among ideas that presuppose God's existence."²⁰⁰ S. Schechter observes that the Hebrew Bible "presumes such a belief in every one to whom those laws are dictated..."²⁰¹ A contemporary Jewish scholar confirms this view: "The basic assumption that God is the source of all being is declared throughout the Bible. The very first verse of Genesis, for example, opens with a resounding affirmation: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The statement is not an inquiry about the existence of God. It is a proclamation, an affirmation."²⁰²

Then Moses, the stalwart of the Hebrew Bible, is taught by God the Ten Commandments so that he can convey them to the Hebrews. Additionally he is required to make sure that the Israelites put them into practice. The first and the foremost Commandment is "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children..." (Deut. 6:4-7) Nothing, says Abraham J. Heschel, "in Jewish life is more hallowed than the saying of the Shema: Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God,

the Lord is One." He further argues that this monotheism was "not attained by means of numerical reduction, by bringing down the multitude of deities to the smallest possible number. One means *unique*. The minimum of knowledge is the knowledge of God's uniqueness. His being unique is an aspect of His being ineffable."²⁰³ Hermann Cohen argues that "It is God's uniqueness, rather than his oneness, that we posit as the essential content of monotheism. Oneness signifies only opposition to the plurality of gods... For in polytheism the point in question is not only the gods and their plurality but also their relation to the cosmos and its vast natural powers, in all of which a god first appeared. Therefore, if monotheism opposed polytheism, it also had to change God's relation to the universe in accordance with its new idea of God. From the point of view of the new notion of God, therefore, one cannot rest satisfied with the distinction between one God and many gods; rather, the oneness of God has also to be extended over nature, which manifests itself in many forces and phenomena... The uniqueness of God is therefore in opposition to the universe."²⁰⁴ He further argues that "In the "Hear, O Israel" this uniqueness is designated by the word *Ehad*... throughout the development of religion unity was realized as uniqueness, and this significance of the unity of God as uniqueness brought about the recognition of the uniqueness of God's being, in comparison with which all other beings vanish and become nothing. Only God is being... This, to be sure, makes anthropomorphism unavoidable, and the decline of Jewish thought into myth would have been unavoidable if the *fight against anthropomorphism* had not proved from the very beginning of the oral teaching to be the very soul of Jewish religious education. It is perhaps possible to say that this fight already played a role in the compilation of the canon of Scripture... God is not that which is, nor is he only the one, but the Unique One that is."²⁰⁵

W. G. Plaut, on the other hand, translates this verse of *Shema* as follows: "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone." This translation is identical with that of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. In this translation, Plaut observes that, "two affirmations are made: that the Divinity is Israel's God, and two, that it is He alone and no one else. Other translations render "The Lord our God, the Lord is One" (stressing the unity of God) or "The Lord our God is one Lord" (that is, neither divisible nor to be coupled with other deities, like Zeus with Jupiter)."²⁰⁶

In "Exodus" God is reported to have given the commandments to Moses in the following words: "And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." (Ex. 20:1-5) The jealousy of God is very often mentioned in the Hebrew Bible. "Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of people who are round about you; (For the Lord thy God is a Jealous God among you) lest the anger of the Lord thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth." (Deut. 6:14-15) This theme is so pervasive in the entire Hebrew Bible (Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15, Ex. 20:4-5; Jos. 24:19 etc.) that Imschoot argues that "jealousy is a trait completely characteristic of Yahweh, since in the Old Testament it most frequently expresses the exclusive character of the God of Israel."²⁰⁷

The Midrash translates the first part of this commandment as follows: "You shall have none of those (whom others call) gods before Me."²⁰⁸ Plaut observes, that "The prohibition of the sculptured images for purpose of adoration stresses the incorporeality of God. "You saw no shape when the Lord your God spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire", Deuteronomy 5:15 reminds the people. The worship of images is proscribed in the most urgent and vivid terms: nothing, but absolutely nothing, is permitted that might lead to idolatry....This meant, however, that, in ages when the arts served primarily the goals of religion, sculpture and painting found no fertile soil amongst the Jewish people. Instead, Judaism directed its creative powers towards the inner life, the vision of souls rather than the eye, the invisible rather than the visible, the intangible rather than the sensual."²⁰⁹ In view of the great significance of this commandment, Ibn Ezra, the great Jewish mediaeval scholar, used to say that this commandment must not be transgressed even in one's thought.

Contrary to the above mentioned explanations, some modern scholars do not see in the First Commandment the above mentioned affirmation of God's unity, uniqueness and transcendence. They, following methods of biblical criticism, date this commandment far later than Moses' times.²¹⁰ They also argue that it may prove monolatry or mono-Yahwism rather than strict monotheism. Robin Lane Fox, for instance, argues that "Before we find early monotheism in the first commandment, we have to date it (it might be as late as the seventh or sixth century) and also be sure that we can translate it. Its dating is extremely difficult, although Hosea might seem to presuppose it too: chapter 8 of his book appears to connect idolatry and foreign worship with a blindness to God's law (8:1, 8:12). However, this law seems to be something more general than our First Commandment, and Hosea himself does not deny that other gods exist."²¹¹ Regarding the translation he observes: "As for the First Commandment, the translation of its Hebrew is also not certain. Perhaps originally it meant 'Thou shalt have no other gods before my face' (no idols in Yahweh's temple), or 'before me', in preference to me, but on any view, 'the claim for Yahweh's exclusiveness, that Yahweh alone has existence, is not contained in the First Commandment'. The text need only have been saying that Yahweh is Israel's Number One among other lesser divinities. Monotheism, the much stronger belief that only one god exists anywhere, was not revealed on Sinai's peaks."²¹²

T. J. Meek argues: "There is no certainty of course that this command originated with Moses or that it was known in his day...However, the most we can claim for Moses in it is monolatry. Neither here nor anywhere else does he deny the existence of gods other than Yahweh, nor does he assert the sole existence of Yahweh, and not having done that, he cannot be called a monotheist. Even O. E. James, who is an anthropologist as well as an Old Testament scholar, with decided leaning towards the theory of primitive monotheism, has to acknowledge that the command asserts nothing more than monolatry and not pure monotheism, and so conservative a churchman as late Bishop Gore has to concede that it neither proves nor disproves either monolatry or monotheism." Meek further argues, that "The Lutheran Church is one of our more conservative denominations and yet one of its theological professor, Harold L. Creager, writes concerning the First Commandment in its official organ, *The Lutheran Church Quarterly*: "In neither case [of two possible translations, "in addition to" and "in preference to"], of course, is any teaching here of monotheism, but only of henotheism. The possibility of worshipping other gods, either along

with Jehovah or as entirely displacing him, is directly conceived." Identical are the views of other leading conservative scholars."²¹³ G. Von Rad observes that "The problem of monotheism in ancient Israel is admittedly connected with the first commandment, in so far as Israel's monotheism was to some extent a realization which was not granted to her without the long discipline of the first commandment. Still, it is necessary to keep the two question as far as possible distinct, for the first commandment has initially nothing to do with monotheism: on the contrary, as the way it is formulated shows, it is only comprehensible in the light of a background which the historian of religion designates as polytheism. Even the way in which Jahweh introduces himself, "I am Jahweh, your God," presupposes a situation of polytheism. For many a generation there existed in Israel a worship of Jahweh which, from the point of view of the first commandment, must undoubtedly be taken as legitimate, though it was not monotheistic. It is therefore called henotheism or monolatry."²¹⁴ K. Armstrong writes: "When they recite the *Shema* today, Jews give it a monotheistic interpretation: Yahweh our God is One and unique. The Deuteronomist had not yet reached this perspective. "Yahweh *ehad*" did not mean God is One, but that Yahweh was the only deity whom it was permitted to worship. Other gods were still a threat: their cults were attractive and could lure Israelites from Yahweh, who was a jealous God."²¹⁵ She further observes that "The Israelites did not believe that Yahweh, the God of Sinai, was the *only* God, but promised, in their covenant, that they will ignore all other deities and worship him alone. It is very difficult to find a single monotheistic statement in the whole of the Pentateuch. Even the Ten Commandments delivered on Mount Sinai take the existence of other gods for granted: " There shall be no strange gods for you before my face."²¹⁶

Such an interpretation of the First Commandment seems more in line with the biblical data (as we will see later in this chapter). The strong emphasis upon Yahweh's jealousy implies belief in monolatry. One cannot be jealous of people being devoted to a non-existent entity. Jealousy implies a rival for one's affections and goes well with the idea that Israel ought to be loyal to Yahweh and not to the gods of other nations.

Historically speaking, the Jews, from antiquity to the modern times, have held the First Commandment as emphasizing the unity of Yahweh. Traditional Jews had always argued that the Hebrew religion had been monotheistic from the very beginning. Such an understanding had been the theme of the entire corpus of the Rabbinic/Midrashic literature. Even ancient Jewish philosophers and historians, like Philo, Jubilees and Josephus, had maintained similar views about the ancient Hebraic religion. Almost all of them contended that Abraham believed in monotheism and following him, the patriarchs were monotheists. Though the philosophers disagreed with the rabbinical traditions in maintaining that Abraham was a convert to monotheism; nevertheless; like the Rabbinic Judaism, they saw in Abraham the origin of Hebrew monotheism. In the words of Jubilees "He was thus the first to boldly declare that, God, creator of the universe, is one, in that, if any other being contributed aught to man's welfare, each did so by His command and not in virtue of its own inherent power."²¹⁷ (Philo and Josephus held similar views). Biblical texts like Exodus 3:6, 16 and 4:5 were frequently quoted to substantiate the claim that the God of Moses was also the God of Abraham and other patriarchs. The Bible reports that God said to Moses "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God." (Ex.3:6) God ordered Moses "Go,

and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt." (Ex. 3:16 see also Gn. 26:24, 28:13, 32:10, 43:23, 49:24-25)

In modern times A. Alt, while drawing attention to Palmyrene and Nabataean inscriptions, argues that three such gods who were not bound to any locality and were worshipped in patriarchal times (the God or Shield of Abraham, the Fear of Isaac (Gn. 31:42), the Mighty One of Jacob (Gn. 49:24)), were fused to make the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and identified with Yahweh.²¹⁸ Following Alt's theory Spieser, J. P. Hyatt, R. de Vaux and C. A. Simpson contend that Patriarchs (specially Abraham) were monotheists.²¹⁹ Simpson, for instance, argues that, "Momentary monotheism was a characteristic of primitive Jahvism from the first, necessary because of the very nature of the religion."²²⁰ Roland de Vaux observes that "Genesis tells the history of the ancestors of Israel, the line of Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, from whom were born the Twelve Tribes. They acknowledge the same God, who will become the God of Israel."²²¹ A. B. Davidson, discussing about the peculiarity of the patriarchal religion, observes that "this peculiarity, if it cannot be called Monotheism, forms at least a high vantage ground from which a march towards Monotheism may commence. And it is probable that we see in the patriarchal names just referred to, particularly in *El Shaddai*, the advance in the family of Abraham towards both the unity and the spirituality of God. He who called God *El Shaddai*, and worshipped Him as the 'Almighty,' might not have the abstract and general conception in his mind that He was the only powerful Being existing. But, at least to him He was the supreme power in heaven and in earth, and He had given him His fellowship, and was condescending to guide his life. And when one named the Being whom he served *as eternal God*, or the *living God*, though he might not have present before his mind the general conception of what we call the *spirituality* of God, yet practically the effect must have been much the same. For He who existed from eternity and had life in Himself could not be part of the material world everywhere subject to change, nor could He exist in flesh which decayed."²²² He concludes arguing that there may be a difference of emphasize "But the doctrines were the same from the beginning."²²³

Davidson seems to be speculating more than substantiating his claims from the data of the Hebrew Bible itself. The above mentioned names (like *El Shaddai*) do not prove that the patriarchs believed in monotheism or the spirituality of the Deity as Davidson contends. K. Armstrong, after a good discussion of biblical narration, argues that it is wrong to "assume that the three patriarchs of Israel- Abraham, his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob- were monotheists, that they believed in only one God. This does not seem to have been the case. Indeed, it is probably more accurate to call these early Hebrews pagans who shared many of the religious beliefs of their neighbors in Canaan. They would certainly have believed in the existence of such deities as Mar-duk, Baal and Anat. They may not all have worshipped the same deity: It is possible that the God of Abraham, the "Fear" or "Kinsman" of Isaac and the "Mighty One" of Jacob were three separate gods. We can go further. It is highly likely that Abraham's God was El, the High God of Canaan. The deity introduces himself to Abraham as *El Shaddai* (El of the Mountain), which was one of El's traditional titles. Elsewhere he is called *El Elyon* (The Most High God) or *El of Bethel*." ²²⁴

Ignatius Hunt explains that "The accounts in Gn 12-50 were written up in their final form many centuries after the events narrated had taken place. In the meantime the Hebrew religion had greatly developed, and great advances had been made, at least by those who served as Israel's spokesmen. Many crudities, and other defects of the ancient traditions were corrected and at times omitted, recast, or transformed in keeping with a more refined outlook. This is common in religious development."²²⁵ After posing a number of questions regarding these biblical narrations, Hunt concludes, that "With the advent of archaeology and the discovery of sources of texts, the religious milieu of the patriarchs is now seen as completely polytheistic."²²⁶ A. Lo's conclusions are very much the same.²²⁷

Hans Kung views patriarchal religion as henotheism. "Thus nowadays there is agreement among the critical exegetes that neither the exalted ethic of Bible nor strict monotheism will have prevailed as early as the time of patriarchs. From a historical perspective, Abraham was certainly a henotheist, someone who presupposed the existence of a number of gods but who accepted only the one God, his God, as the supreme and binding authority."²²⁸

In the light of the available biblical data, polytheism, or in extreme case henotheism, rather than monotheism seems to be a better alternative with regard to the patriarch's understanding of God. Biblical text portrays patriarchs as worshipping other gods besides Yahweh. "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Long ago your ancestors-Terah and his sons Abraham and Nahor-lived beyond the Euphrates and served other gods." (Jos. 24:3) It also says "Now therefore revere the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. Now if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." (Jos. 24:15-15) Moreover, we are told that God made Himself known to the patriarchs with the old name of "El Shaddi" and to Moses with the name of Yahweh. "I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as El Shaddy but by my name Yahweh I did not make myself known to them." (Ex. 6:2-3) *El Shaddi* means the God of Mountain, or The Rock, or the Mighty One etc. and has occurred in the Pentateuch several times. (Gn. 17:1, 28:3, 35:11, 43:14, 48:3). The Bible also uses different other personal names like *El-Elyon* (God most high), *El Roi* (God of vision) or *El Olam* (The Eternal God). The patriarchs are reported to be addressing God with these names and also with the word "*Elohim*", the word most often used in the Hebrew Bible to designate God (about 2,000 times)."²²⁹ *Elohim* is a plural word and in many early passages is used straightforwardly in the plural sense.²³⁰ For Example "Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods (*elohim*)..." (Ex. 18:11, also see 12:12, 34:15, Dt. 10:17, Jgs. 9:9-13) In view of these facts, it may certainly be concluded that *elohim*, the plural word, was later used as if it were singular while retaining its original format. The frequent usage of these names also suggest that the original god of Israel was El as Mark S. Smith contends. This reconstruction, he argues, "may be inferred from two pieces of information. First the name of Israel is not a Yahwistic name with the divine element of Yahweh, but an El name, with the element *el*. This fact would suggest that El was the original chief god of the group named Israel. Second, Genesis 49:24-25 presents a series of El epithets separate from the mention of Yahweh in verse 18... Similarly, Deuteronomy 32:8-9 casts Yahweh in the role of one of the sons of El, here called *elyon*: " When the Most High (*elyon*) gave to the nations their inheritance, when he separated humanity, he fixed the

boundaries of the people according to the number of divine beings. For Yahweh's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage."²³¹ ²³²Further more, the variety and diversity of these names also suggest that originally there was a belief in many "Els". Many of the personal names, observes Rowley, "which we find in Israel testify to the polytheistic background out of which they emerged. Alt has argued that each of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had their own special God. Moreover, while in the Old Testament Shaddi, El, Elyon, and Yahweh are all equated and identified, it is hardly to be denied that they were once regarded as separate deities."²³³ The claims about the patriarchal monotheism therefore seem to be less of a reality than polytheism or henotheism.

Contrary to that, D. Nielsen argues that the word "*elohim*" originally is not a plural word. It is the noun '*elah*' with mimation (with the addition of an m).²³⁴ Davidson contends that though the word is plural but "a plural of that sort called the plural of *majesty* or *eminence*, more accurately the plural of *fullness* or *greatness*. It is common in the East to use the plural to express the idea of the singular in an intensified form."²³⁵ It, to Davidson, does not imply polytheistic tone or background. "Some have regarded the plural form *Elohim* as a remnant of polytheism. But to speak of 'the gods' is not natural in a primitive age, and this can scarcely be the origin of the plural."²³⁶ Hermann Cohen argues that "the intention of this word in the plural form could not be plurality, but, as its connection with the singular form proves, singularity."²³⁷ Moreover, Davidson sees its origin in prehistoric animism or spiritism from where, as he contends, the ancient Israelites developed their practical monotheism. On the other hand, Davidson himself confesses that the word in itself does not imply monotheism neither do the other related names, "Such names as *El-Elyon*, *El-Shaddai*, do not of themselves imply Monotheism, inasmuch as one God Most High, or Almighty, might exist though there were minor gods..."²³⁸ In light of the above mentioned passages where it has straightforwardly been used as plural (see also Deut. 10:17, Jgs. 9:9-13, 11:24, 3 Kings 11:5), and other passages where it has a weakened meaning and is used for beings though belonging to the divine sphere have lesser importance or intensity (Jb. 1:6, 2:1), its plurality rather than singularity becomes more evident. Therefore, it is more convincing to agree with R. Smend, E. Meyer, Otto Eissfeldt, W. Eichrodt, and many others that the word *elohim* "is a vestige of the polytheism of the ancient Hebrews: gradually they fused the many local divinities which they adored into one single god and came to use the plural as singular to designate the unique God."²³⁹

Monotheism also asserts that "God transcends nature, and is not identical with or part of it."²⁴⁰ The transcendence of God is one of the crucial traits of monotheism. Hence Yahweh is told to be the Most High God (Gen. 14:18-20) who is "The Lord God of heaven" (Gn. 24:7) who dwells in celestial heights (Gen. 19:24; 21:17;24:7). Abraham is reported to have said to the King of Sodom "I have lift up mine hand unto the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth." (Gen. 14:22) In Genesis 14 alone, the phrase "Most High God" has been used four times. (verses 18,19, 20, 22 also see Num. 24:16; Deut. 32:8) In Psalm 7:17 it says "I will praise the Lord according to his righteousness: and will sing praise to the name of the Lord most high." He is exalted in the earth "Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth." (Ps. 46:10) He is exalted because he dwells on high. (Isa. 2: 11,17, 33:5) God rides in his eminence through the skies "There is none like unto the God of Jesh-u-run, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy ref-

uge..." (Deut. 33:26,27) From passages like these Davidson argues that to the Hebrews "God and the world were always distinct. God was not involved in the process of nature. These processes were caused by God, but were quite distinct from God."²⁴¹

He is also "The Holy" *qados*. "There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none besides thee: neither is there any rock like our God." (1 Sam. 2:2 also see 2 Sam. 7:22; Isa. 1:4; 10:17; 40:25; 30:11-12; Jos. 24:19; Hb. 3:3; Jb. 6:10) The governing principle or the motto of the so called "Holiness Code" is "You shall be holy, for the Lord your God am holy." (Lev. 19:2) Robert C. Dentan observes that "the word "holy" has become almost epitome of the whole character of the God of Israel. On the one hand, in its original metaphysical sense, it speaks of its inexpressible remoteness from everything created, his absolute otherness to everything that is, and of his inflexible power, manifest in the violent forces of nature, that summons all the nature to kneel before him in reverent awe. But, on the other hand, it speaks with equal clarity of the moral purity of his being, which excludes the ugly, the cruel, the irresponsible and the arbitrary, and makes him of "purer eyes than to behold evil" (Hab. 1:13). When the several "Isaiahs" who produced the Book of Isaiah speak so regularly of Yahweh as the "Holy One" (Isa. 57:15)-"the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 1:4; 41:14)...it is in both these senses, the metaphysical and the moral, that they use the term, but the major stress has come to be on the latter."²⁴² To Imschoot, "Holiness" of Yahweh presented by the biblical text does not lay as much stress upon the moral perfection of God as it does upon the transcendence and otherness of God. He observes: "Although the God of Israel has always been a moral God, as many old accounts and ancient theophoric names attest, the holiness which characterizes Him does not denote, in all the texts, Yahweh's moral perfection. Several- and this is largely true of the oldest ones- denote only the "numinous" aspect... The "numinous" embraces several elements: it is "the wholly other", that is to say, that which is totally different from and above all being, that which is powerful and majestic, mysterious and terrifying, but at the same time fascinating."²⁴³ Baab also observes that the name "Holy" stresses the apartness and otherness of God.²⁴⁴ Davidson believes that 'holiness' of God means his otherness²⁴⁵ and also implies his moral perfection. He adds a third meaning to them by arguing that "He is not regarded so much in the character of a righteous ruler as in that of a sensitive being which reacts against sin. In this view Jehovah is called holy, and atonement is removal from men of all uncleanness disturbing to Jahovah's nature."²⁴⁶

Eichrodt contends that "The consciousness of standing in the presence of the Holy One had nothing primarily to do with ethical motives; it remained a purely religious phenomenon; though by bringing man close to divine Lord it afforded an impulse to personal decision, even when God's acts of power did not allow of being understood in ethical terms."²⁴⁷ After discussing Deutero-Isaiah and Hosea's usage of the term, he concludes "Nevertheless, in the end it is the incomprehensible creative power of love which marks out Yahweh as the wholly 'other'." ²⁴⁸

It is evident from the above discussion that a great many Old Testament theologians interpret holiness of the Hebrew's God as His transcendence over and otherness from the world.²⁴⁹ They seem to argue that a developed concept of the divine transcendence is implied in the Hebrew Bible's usage of the term "Holy" for God. Katz, for instance, argues that "the God of the Bible transcends the world of nature which is His creation. It is He who has brought the world into being, established its laws and given it its order. Likewise He has His being outside of time and space,

which are also His creations. Everything which has been created must perish, but He alone who preceded the universe and brought everything also into being will remain after it has disappeared. In the world of flux he alone does not change; he is the immutable foundation of all existence."²⁵⁰ Hermann Cohen argues, that "the uniqueness of God consists in *incomparability*."²⁵¹ It may be mentioned, however, that all these intellectual and philosophical interpretations of the title "Holy" are probably reflections of interpreters' backgrounds and on key points do not find substantial support from the biblical data. Such lofty claims of God's incomparability, immutability, and otherness cannot be proved from the material attributed either to Moses or to many other biblical writers, as we will have the opportunity to see later in this chapter.

Monotheism also declares that God is different from human beings and is not comparable or similar to them.. His ways are not the ways of mortals. So the Bible says: "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" (Num. 23:19) "For who in the skies can be compared to the Lord? Who among the heavenly beings is like the Lord, a God feared in the council of the holy ones, great and awesome above all that are around him? O Lord God of hosts who is as mighty as you O Lord? Your faithfulness surrounds you. You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them...The heavens are yours, the earth also is yours; the world and all that is in it-you have founded them." (Ps. 89:6-11) All other gods are made of wood and stone, "the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell." (Deut. 4:28) But nobody can see Him and survive "And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live." (Ex. 33:20)

Most of the passages emphasizing God's incomparability are from later writings. The polemics against polytheism and idolatry and stress on the otherness and transcendence of God increases noticeably in the latter prophets like Isaiah, Hosea, Nahum and others. "All the nations are as nothing before him; they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness. To whom then you liken God, or what likeness compare with him? An Idol?- A work-man costs it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold, and casts for it silver chains...It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to live in; who brings princes to naught, and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing." (Isa.40:17-23) " Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god. Who is like me? Let them proclaim it..." (Second Isa. 44:6-7)

Here in these prophets the actual denial of other god's worship and existence is seen. Isaiah explains the absurdity of idol worship in the following strong words: "All who make idols are nothing, and the things they delight in do not profit; their witnesses neither see nor know. And so they will be put to shame. Who would fashion a god or cast an image that can do no good?...The iron-smith fashions it and works it over the coals, shaping it with hammer, and forging it with his strong arms; he becomes hungry and his strength fails, he drinks no water and is faint. The carpenter stretches a line, marks it out with a stylus, fashions it with planes, and marks it with a compass, he makes it in human form, with human beauty, to be set up in a shrine...Then he makes a god and worships it, makes it a carved image and bows down before it. Half of it he

burns in the fire...The rest of it he makes into a god, his idol, bows down to it and worships it; he prays to it and says, "Save me, for you are my god!" They do not know, nor they comprehend, for their eyes are shut, so they cannot see, and their minds as well, so that they cannot understand." (Second Isa.44:9-19; also see 44:6-8; 43:10-14; 45:12-13) He further ridicules the idol worshippers by saying: "To whom will you liken me and make me equal, and compare me, as though we were alike? Those who lavish gold from the purse, and weigh out silver in the scales—they hire a goldsmith, who makes it into a god; then they fall down and worship! They lift it to their shoulders, they carry it, they set it in its place, and it stands there; it cannot move from its place. If one cries out to it, it does not answer or save anyone from trouble...for I am God and there is no other; I am God and there is no one like me..." (Second Isa. 46:5-9; also 45:21-25; 55:7-19) God is not made of any material thing but is a spirit. "Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit." (Isa. 31:3)

Contrary to the above discussed transcendence and otherness of God, there are many passages in the Hebrew Bible that portray God as part of this world of nature. In spite of being the "Most High", according to Exodus 15:17, he had a sanctuary on the mountain that he built by his own hands, "You brought them in and planted them on the mountain of your own possession, the place, O Lord, that you made your abode, the sanctuary, O Lord, that your hands have established." Psalm 76:1-2 specifies his dwelling place, "In Judah God is known, his name is great in Israel. His abode has been established in Salem, his dwelling place in Zion." Zion is his eternal dwelling place "Rise up, O Lord, and go to your resting place...For the Lord has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his habitation: This is my resting place forever; here I will reside, for I have desired it." (Ps. 132:8-12-13) In addition to Zion, he dwells on holy mountains, on Sinai, Horeb, the heights of Seir (Jgs. 5:4). His epithet "*s'dy* or Shaddy" probably means "Mountain-dweller" as De Moor has shown.²⁵² Korpel has observed that "The idea of God dwelling on mountain [*hr*], or hill [*qb`h*] occurs throughout the Old Testament. In 2 Ki. 20:23, 28 it is expressly stated that YHWH is mountain god [*ihy hrym*] and *not* a god of plains [*mqym*]. Most theophanies also took place on a mountain."²⁵³ God also has his abodes in ancient sanctuaries, such as Bethel (Gn. 28:16-17, 31:13), Barsabee (Gn. 21:33) and later in the temple of Jerusalem (Jer. 7:4).

Archaeological investigations have proved that in ancient Israel there were numerous sanctuaries founded for Yahweh at various sites.²⁵⁴ Though Solomon is reported to have said "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you" (1 Kings, 8:27). In the same chapter it is said also: "And when the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord. Then Solomon said, "The Lord has said that he would dwell in thick darkness. I have built you an exalted house, a place for you to dwell in forever." (1 kg. 8:10-13) Before these sanctuaries were built, Yahweh lived only in a tent and a tabernacle, "I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, But I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle." (2 Sam. 7:6-7) Several verses show that Yahweh was believed to be enthroned on Cherubim (2 Sam. 6:2) and was present only at a place where his ark was located. "When the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel gave a mighty shout, so that the earth resounded. When the Philistines heard the noise of the shouting, they said, "What does this great shouting in the camp of the Hebrews mean? When they learned that the ark of the Lord had come to the camp, the Phi-lis-

tines were afraid, for they said, "Gods have come to the camp." (1 Sam. 4:5-6) The King James version translates the last verse as "for they said, God is come into the camp."

A. Lods has summarized four stages of development regarding the idea of Yahweh's dwelling. "In the early days of the settlement, the old idea persisted that Jahweh dwelt in the *desert of the south* (Judges v.4); but this soon disappeared, and only survived in the imaginative descriptions of the poets, by nature conservers of tradition...When the people had become firmly rooted in Palestine, a new concept grew up, namely, that Jahweh was the *God of the land of Canaan*. So close a bond was formed between Jahweh and this land that Palestine was often represented as being the only abode of Jahweh. The people who live on the frontiers of the chosen land are "nigh unto Jahweh" (Jer. xii. 14). To be banished is to be "driven out from the face of Jahweh." He cannot be worshipped in any other country: a foreign soil, belonging to other gods, permeated with their effluvia, is unclean in the eyes of the God of Israel. Hence in order to obtain the help of Jahweh in a foreign country, it is necessary either to make a vow to him, that is, to promise him a sacrifice, a vow which can only be paid on returning to Palestine, as Absalom did, or to have recourse to the more original method of Naaman, the Aramean general whom Elisha healed of his leprosy: he carried off into his own country two mules' load of earth from the land of Canaan, and set up an alter which was thus land of Jahweh (2 Kings v. 17).²⁵⁵

In the third stage, observes Lods, a distinct belief evolved that "Jahveh dwells in the *sanctuaries of the land of Canaan*. When the Israelite went on a pilgrimage to one of these holy places, he spoke, thought, felt and acted as if his God were really permanently and completely present within the limits of this one sacred enclosure...These beliefs persisted in spite of the most spiritual teaching of the great prophets, even among the prophets themselves. According to Ezekiel the destruction of the temple in 586 was only possible because Jahweh had previously abandoned his sanctuary (cc. viii.-xi). The whole priestly legislation is unintelligible unless it is recognized that the post-exilic Jews believed in a real though mysterious presence of the God of the heavens within the Holy of Holies of the second temple."²⁵⁶ It was only in the fourth stage that the belief appeared that Jahweh dwells in heaven. (Ex. 24:10; Ezek.1:26; 10:1; Ps.135:7; Deut. 28:12 etc.) This thought of Yahweh as dwelling in heaven, argues Lods, "did not necessarily involve the abandonment of terrestrial limits which popular belief imposed upon him. It is possible that the God of Israel was thought of as reigning only in that part of the heavens corresponding to the land of Canaan, in "the heaven of Jacob," as poet of that period expresses it (Deut. xxxiii. 28). However, such a representation would suggest a more superhuman, less material conception of the nature of Jahweh and one which would harmonize better with the increasing recognition of the wider extent of his kingdom."²⁵⁷

Surprisingly, Davidson derives altogether different conclusions from the above quoted passages i.e. the universality of Israel's God. "We cannot say that from the time of Israel's becoming a nation any belief in a local limitation of God can be traced. The sanctuaries scattered up and down the country were hardly places where, having manifested Himself, He was held to have authorized His worship. Such facts as that men, e.g. Gideon, Saul, etc. reared an alter anywhere, and that Absalom who in exile in Geshur outside of Palestine made a vow to Jehovah, show that they conceive of Jehovah as without local limitations."²⁵⁸

Davidson, after this fascinating interpretation, cannot deny the fact that Yahweh, according to these passages, seems closely bound to the soil itself. Such a bondage is not universality but a definite limitation. In light of the passages like Judg. 11:23 where Jephthah fights Moabites to contain them to the territory given to them by their God saying "Should you not possess what your god Chemosh gives you to possess?" and 1 Sam. 26:19, all claims of Yahweh's universality until the time of later prophets, i.e., in or after the eighth century B.C., lose ground from beneath it. They clearly connect Yahweh's divinity to the land of Palestine.

Moreover, the term 'holy' does imply transcendence of God,²⁵⁹ but its usage by ancient Hebrews may not be imbedded with our understanding of the term i.e. full fledge concept of transcendence of God. The popular belief with regard to the existence and power of other deities over other nations is extremely detrimental to the transcendence of God. In addition to that, manifestations of God in nature (theophanies) and in human form also indicate that the ancient Hebrew's concept of God was rather primitive. That God can "give visible evidence of his presence on earth is a conviction taken as much for granted by Israel as by other nations. Their sharing the common view on this point is shown by the fact that they regard it as perfectly possible for the deity to manifest himself both in the forces of Nature and in human form."²⁶⁰ From the earliest to the latest of the Old Testament writings, God is depicted to have appeared in natural phenomena like thunderstorm (Ex. 19:9ff; 20:18ff; Deut. 5:21;33:2; Judg. 5:4ff; Ps. 18:8ff; 68:8ff; 77:17ff; 97:2ff), riding upon the storm-clouds (Ps. 18:1; Isa. 19:1; 66:15; Hab. 3:8), causing his voice to resound in the thunder (Ex. 19:19; 20:18; 1 Sam. 7:10; Amos 1:2; Isa. 30:27; Job. 37:5), shooting fire from heavens as his burning breath or tongue or flame (Ps. 18:9; Isa. 30:27). The vivid description of Sinai theophany is a concrete example of such an attitude. "On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, as well as a thick cloud on the mountain, and a blast of a trumpet so loud that all the people who were in the camp trembled. Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God. They took their stand at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because the Lord had descended upon it in fire; the smoke went up like the smoke of a kiln, while the whole mountain shook violently. As the blast of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses would speak and God would answer him in thunder. When the Lord descended upon Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain, the Lord summoned Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up." (Ex.19:16-21) Also "When all the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, they were afraid and trembled and stood at distance, and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, or we will die." (Ex. 20: 18-20) Exodus 24:9 narrates that Moses and seventy of the elders of Israel "went up, and they saw the God of Israel. Under his feet there was something like a pavement of sapphire stone..."

Eichrodt observes that "It can, however, hardly be disputed that the original narrative is concerned with an actual vision of God."²⁶¹ He also warns against a common tendency of coloring the old traditions with higher concepts presented by the later narration. "It is not permissible to evade the force of such passages by playing off against them others according to which Israel indeed heard the voice of God at Horeb, but did not see any form. Such a procedure would be valid only on the historically untenable assumption that the total of statements in the Old Testament must provide a unified 'corpus of doctrine'. On the contrary one thing of which we can be sure is

that at different periods Israel produced differing statements about the nature of God's relationship with the world, and that there was therefore unquestionably an advance to a deeper knowledge of God."²⁶² The same warning should be repeated *vis a vis* anthropomorphic passages in the Hebrew Bible.

In monotheism, God is not subject to the variations and limitations of material and mortal life. Many verses of the Hebrew Bible describe Yahweh as "the living God, and an everlasting king. At his wrath the earth quakes, and the nations cannot endure his indignation." (Jer.10:10) Joshua said to the Israelites: "By this you shall know that among you is the living God who without fail will drive out from before you the Can`anites...the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is going to pass before you into the Jordan." (Jos.3:10-11) The writer of Psalms (42:2) finds consolation in the fact that God is living, "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God." "My heart and my flesh give a shout of joy for the living God." (Ps.84:2) David is confident to face Goliath because his God is the living God. (1 Sam. 17:26, 36) In view of passages like these Baab observes that "Perhaps the most typical word for identifying the God of the Old Testament is the word "living." The living God is the peculiar God of these writings. This signifies the God who acts in the history, who performs mighty deeds of deliverance, and who manifests his power among men."²⁶³ He further observes that "The living God is, of course, a creating and a creative God...Holiness in association with personal and spiritual traits denotes the transcendent power which enables God to act as God, and not as man, in creating both the world and human beings."²⁶⁴ Psalm 93 is full of praises of God's majesty: "The Lord is King, he is robed in majesty; the Lord is robed, he is girded with strength. He has established the world; it shall never be moved; your throne is established from of old; you are from everlasting...More majestic than the thunders of mighty waters, more majestic than the waves of the sea, majestic on high is the Lord. Your decrees are very sure; holiness befits your house, O Lord, forevermore." (Ps. 93:1-5) Unlike the mortals He neither slumbers nor sleeps. (Ps. 121:4) He does not grow weary: "The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary, his understanding is unsearchable." (Isa. 40:28) He does not repent as Mortals do. (1 Sam. 15:29, Nm. 23:19) He is Omnipotent so much so that His words are realities: "so shall my word be that goes out of my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it." (Isa.55:11) "I am God...there is no one who can deliver from my hand; I work and who can hinder it? (Isa. 43:13) He is the Most High, (Gen. 14:18-20-22) the omnipresent "The whole earth is full of His glory", the omniscient (Jer. 11:20 "O Lord of hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and the heart..."),²⁶⁵ the eternal, "I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god." (Isa.44:6 also 41:4), the immortal, the immutable "For I the Lord do not change." (Malachi, 3:6), the sublime, the spirit, the all forgiving (Isa. 55:7).

All the above sketched attributes and qualities are often related to Yahweh. They express the fact that he is not subject to the limitations of mortals. It is worthy to note here that not all the time are these attributes used in an absolute sense or terms. There are times when these terms, attributes, and notions about His absolute qualities are marked with explicit reservations or qualifications, as we shall see later in the chapter. It would suffice to mention here that the usage of these terms in their absolute terms most often occurs in the later prophets like Isaiah as we have already seen. In the early writings, reports about God's repentance (Ex. 32:10-14) and His wrestling

with Jacob (Gn. 32:24-30) pose serious threats to His Omnipotence. His advise that "The blood shall be sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt." (Ex. 12:13), puts his omniscience in jeopardy (also Gen. 18:21). His rest on the seventh day after work of creation (Ex. 20:11)²⁶⁶ and passages like Ps. 35:23 and 44:24 go against claims of Deutro-Isaiah that God does not weary. Such a claim is totally nullified in light of the creation passage where the word "*nwh* meaning rest" is specifically used for God. Korpel has observed that "It is noteworthy that the first verb is a general term which occurs frequently with human beings as the subject, but also with insects."²⁶⁷ (see Ex. 23:14; Deut. 15:14 'man'; Ex. 10:14 'locusts'). Moreover, in view of the passages where God is reported to have ordered destruction of everything (1 Sam. 15:3; 2 Sam. 7:6), his mercy and righteousness is restricted. Even the traditional Jews understand and recognize the difficulties caused by the presence in the Hebrew Bible of such daring passages. S. T. Katz, for instance, while discussing God's omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence, observes, "Another fundamental question about the biblical view of God is whether the Godhead is subject to restriction. Biblical teaching seems to imply that such a limitation exists..."²⁶⁸

In light of the above discussion, it becomes evident that there are different strands of narration regarding the Deity that go side by side in the Hebrew Bible. The existence of such polar strands have left biblical scholarship divided and confused. They have drawn most various and contradictory conclusions *vis-a-vis* the original Hebrew concept of God. Some biblical scholars, in view of many passages that delineate Yahweh God in relatively transcendental terms and categories, argue that the Israelites were originally a monotheistic nation and their monotheism was authentic and original. It was not some thing secondary but the fundamental expression of the Hebrew culture. Israelite religion, argues Y. Kaufmann, "was an original creation of the people of Israel. It was absolutely different from anything the pagan world ever knew; its monotheistic world view had no antecedents in paganism. Nor was it a theological doctrine conceived and nurtured in limited circles or schools: nor a concept that finds occasional expression in this or that passage or stratum of the Bible. It was the fundamental idea of a national culture, and informed every aspect of the culture from its very beginning."²⁶⁹ H. Cohen argues "Monotheism is not the thought of one man, but the whole Jewish national spirit..."²⁷⁰ Leo Baeck argues that "Only in Israel did an ethical monotheism exist, and wherever else it is found later, it has been derived directly or indirectly from Israel. The nature of this religion was conditioned by the existence of the people of Israel, and so it became one of the nations that have a mission to fulfill."²⁷¹

Hans Kung, on the other hand, rightly observes that "Yehezkel Kaufmann, who ignores the results of historical-critical research, does not answer one question. Was it like this from the beginning?"²⁷² We already had the opportunity to discuss at length the views regarding the patriarchal understanding of God. Therefore, we see W. F. Albright also disagreeing with Kaufmann and other Jewish thinkers in that the Hebrew monotheism was a fundamental idea of the Israelite's national culture. Albright, showing a great many borrowings and adaptations on the part of Israelites from the neighboring Canaanite culture,²⁷³ argues that though the picture of Hebrew religion is not simple, but "we can state definitely that it does not support the extreme position of late Yehezkel Kaufmann, who maintained in his great "History of the Faith of Israel" that Mosaic monotheism was a phenomenon entirely peculiar to Israel."²⁷⁴ But he agrees with Kaufmann in suggesting the Mosaic origin and age of monotheism. Kaufmann, for example, strongly advo-

cates that "With Moses the sin of idolatry particularly as a national sin - comes into existence. Before, idolatry was nowhere interdicted and punished. The stories depicting idolatry as a national sin presuppose the existence of a monotheistic people. Since such stories begin only with Moses, we infer that it was in his time that the great transformation took place. By making Israel enter a covenant with one God, he made it a monotheistic people that alone among men was punishable for the sin of idolatry."²⁷⁵

Similarly, Albright argues that "The only time in the history of ancient Near East when we find monotheism in the leading cultural centers, Egypt and Babylonia, is about the fourteenth century B.C.; it is also then that we find the closest approach to monotheism in Syria and Asia Minor. Since it is now an historical commonplace that we find similar ideas emerging simultaneously in different parts of a given cultural continuum, we should expect to find Israelite monotheism somehow emerging at the same time."²⁷⁶ He further argues that the God of Moses was a creator God unrelated to any deity, unbound to any geographical area or setting or any natural phenomenon. Though conceived anthropomorphically as "Fundamental to early Israelite religion and profoundly rooted in Mosaic tradition is the anthropomorphic conception of Yahweh", but nevertheless he was never represented in material or un-exalted forms "but there was in Him none of the human frailties that make the Olympian deities of Greece such charming poetic figures and such undefying examples. All the human characteristics of Israel's deity were exalted; they were projected against a cosmic screen and they served to interpret the cosmic process as the expression of God's creative word and eternally active will."²⁷⁷ He concludes observing that "It was indeed Moses who was the principal architect of Israelite monotheism."²⁷⁸ In "*Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*", emphasizing the historicity of Mosaic traditions, Albright observes: "The Mosaic tradition is so consistent, so well attested by different pentateuchal documents, and so congruent with our independent knowledge of the religious development of the Near East in the late second millennium B. C., that only hypercritical pseudo-rationalism can reject its essential historicity." He further observes: "We shall, accordingly, presuppose the historicity of Moses and of his role as founder of Yahwism."²⁷⁹

Albright has used the term "monotheism" in its very broad sense and not in its refined, modern and philosophically developed sense. He himself observed: "Was Moses a true monotheist? If by "monotheist" is meant a thinker with views specifically like those of Philo Judaeus or Rabbi Aqiba, of St. Paul...of Mordecai Kaplan or H. N. Wieman, Moses was not one. If, on the other hand, the term "monotheist" means one who teaches the existence of only one God, the creator of everything, the source of justice, who is equally powerful in Egypt, in the desert, and in Palestine, who has no sexuality and no mythology, who is human in form but cannot be seen by human eye and cannot be represented in any form-then the founder of Yahwism was certainly a monotheist."²⁸⁰

Meek criticizes such a usage of the term "monotheist". He observes that "Albright protests against giving a Unitarian definition to the word "monotheism," but the only acceptable use of the word is in its dictionary sense, and it is Albright and his kind, rather his opponents, as he affirms, who are "highly misleading" when they read into a word a meaning it cannot and should not bear."²⁸¹ H. W. Robinson also warns against such a broad usage of the term. "Yet the very term 'monotheism,' together with all other metaphysical attributes, such as omnipotence, omni-

presence, immanence, and eternity, can be misleading. Such terms suggest modern and intellectualistic categories. They conceal the gradual development of an intuition, and substitute for it a process of ratiocination never found in the Old Testament." ²⁸²

Meek further rejects Albright's arguments observing: "There was no great, onrushing movement toward monotheism in the Near East in the fourteenth century, such as Albright affirms. There is no evidence that Syria and Asia Minor were more monotheistic than at any other period." ²⁸³ Many modern scholars of the Bible toe the line of Albright and maintain the Mosaic origin of Hebrew monotheism. G. E. Wright, J. Bright, I. Engnell, E. Jacob are just some examples. ²⁸⁴ E. Jacob, for instance, argues that "One cannot speak of evolution within the faith of Israel towards monotheism, for from the movement when Israel becomes conscious of being the people chosen by *one* God it is in practice a monotheistic people; and so one can speak with Albright, to name only one of the most recent and illustrious historians, of the monotheism of Moses, on condition that by this term there is understood a conviction of faith and not a result of reflection." ²⁸⁵

The definition of Albright, on the other hand, is not acceptable to many contemporary scholars who see in it significant flaws and shortcomings. H. H. Rowley, for instance, argues that "Most of the elements of this definition are irrelevant to the question of monotheism, and of the one vital element there is no evidence. For no where in the Pentateuch is Moses credited with the formal denial that any other gods exist, such as we find in Deutero-Isaiah, save in passages such as Dt. 4:35, 39; 32:39, which quite certainly did not issue from Moses." ²⁸⁶ There is not any evidence that Moses worshipped many gods and was a polytheist like a number of his followers, yet according to the biblical narration, there exists no proof that he was a monotheist in the sense that he clearly denied the existence of more than one God. But there is every evidence that he worshipped only Yahweh and denied any association with him though without universalizing him. This fact has led scholars like T. J. Meek, S. R. Driver, and R. Kittle to conclude that Moses was a 'henotheist'. Meek observes that "It is hard to find any evidence that Moses either believed or taught that Yahweh was the only existing God, and that He was therefore not only the God of Israel but of all men. On the other hand, it does not seem sufficient to note that at Sinai it was affirmed that Yahweh was alone the legitimate object of Israelite worship, and that there was no denial of the existence of other gods." ²⁸⁷ He also observes that "The new thing that came with Moses was not the worship of Yahweh to the exclusion of all other gods, but the united allegiance of a number of tribes to Yahweh as their confederacy as a whole what the tribal god was to the tribe. This is monolatry and is quite like the monolatry that we noted in Babylonia, Assyria, Egypt, and elsewhere in the ancient world..." ²⁸⁸ S. R. Driver and Kittle conclude that Mosaic religion can be described as ethical henotheism. ²⁸⁹

A. Lods holds Moses religion as monolatry, ²⁹⁰ "for the god whom Moses sought to win over his people was not a universal god like that of Islam: he had a proper name, Jahweh, local centers of worship, and an essential national character, he was and chose to be the God of Israel." He further argues, that "the Israelites, when they emerge into the full light of history and up to the time of the great prophets, although Jahwist, were not monotheists. They only worshipped one national god, Jahweh; but they believed in the existence and power of other gods: they were monolaters. But monolatry is a form of polytheism." ²⁹¹

The charge of polytheism, henotheism and monolatry is too much for scholars like Rowley, Baab, Bright, F. James, Th. C. Vriezen and a good number of other contemporary scholars to accept *viz-a-viz* Moses. Baab argues: "We must reject the easy evolutionism which sorts out the records, arranges them in neat piles on the basis of decisions as to dates, and finds a convincing illustration of development from animism to absolute monotheism, with all the stages from polydaemonism to henotheism in between."²⁹² He further argues that "The concept of the oneness of God was not reached primarily through logical analysis by Hebrew thinkers; their approach was pragmatically religious and experience centered. The life and *social experience* of the community, with its inner tensions and its relations to other groups, made up the historical ground for the achievement of monotheism. The great doctrine of modern Judaism as of biblical Judaism, drawn from Deuteronomy-"Listen, O Israel; the Lord is our God, the Lord alone" (6:4)-was not formulated except as the result of prolonged and decisive acquaintance with this particular Deity. Undoubtedly the leadership of Moses, the work of the great prophets, and the faith of the many anonymous believers in ancient Israel helped to shape this doctrine."²⁹³ Bright strongly rejects the progressive theory too, "Certainly Israel's faith was no polytheism. Nor will henotheism or monolatry do, for though the existence of other gods was not expressly denied, neither was their status as gods tolerantly granted."²⁹⁴ F. James concludes that "The actual evidence regarding him (i.e. Moses) points more towards his having been a monotheists than a henotheist."²⁹⁵ G. Fohrer expresses the concept more carefully when he states that "Mosaic Yahwism therefore knew nothing of a theoretical monotheism that denies the existence of other gods. Neither is the oft-used term "henotheism" appropriate, since it refers to belief in several individual gods who alternately rank supreme. It would be more correct to speak of monoyahwism or practical monotheism."²⁹⁶ Th. C. Vriezen fully agrees with Fohrer in describing Mosaic religion as 'monoYahwism' rather than monolatry or henotheism.²⁹⁷

H. H. Rowley presents a relatively more elaborate and careful view about the Mosaic religion as it is portrayed in the Bible. He maintains that "if Moses was less than a monotheist he was more than a henotheist."²⁹⁸ He recognizes that Yahweh shared the name with Canaanite's deity, but had a unique character of his own. "I do not take the view that the works of Moses is to be resolved into the mere mediation to Israel of the religion of kenites. The divine name Yahweh was probably taken over, and the forms of the religion; but a new spirit was given to the religion and a new level to its demands. The sense of Yahweh's election of Israel, of His deliverance, of his claims upon her obedience, were all new, and through the truly prophetic personality of Moses it was established on a higher basis than Kenite's religion had reached."²⁹⁹ The gods worshipped by Israelites were identified with Yahweh and ceased to be counted against him. "This is not monotheism, and there is no reason to attribute universalism to Moses. Yet here we have surely seeds of both."³⁰⁰ Yahweh, according to Rowley, was not restricted to a single area or people. "He could be active in Egypt or in Palestine as freely as in His chosen seat. A God who could thus be active wherever He wished, and beside whom no other gods counted, was not tribal or national god, and certainly not merely one of a host of gods. His "onliness" might not be affirmed; but His uniqueness is manifest. If He is not the only God, He is certainly more than one example-even the most important example-of the categories of gods. Among all gods He alone mattered, and He could do with Israel or with any other people what He would." Rowley draws from here a conservative conclusion: "This is not monotheism, and it is unwise to exaggerate it into monotheism. Nevertheless, it was incipient monotheism and incipient universalism, so that when full monotheism

was achieved in Israel it came not by natural evolution out of something fundamentally different, but by the development of its own particular character."³⁰¹ Dentan's views are very similar to that of Rowley's. He observes, "The views of scholars today vary all the way from that which regards Moses, or even Abraham, as monotheists, to another that sees monotheism as emerging only with Second Isaiah, or, in less theoretical form, with Amos. The truth is probably to be found in mediating position that sees the germ of monotheism present in early times, with the full flower coming at the end of the Old Testament period."³⁰²

Such an interpretation of the Hebraic monotheism is neither new nor specific to Rowley or Dentan only. It has been held by a number of scholars like E. Konig, P. Volz, A. B. Davidson, B. Bascheit, N. K. Gottwald and G. W. Anderson.³⁰³ One has to give far-fetched interpretations and several twists to a variety of biblical passages, as cited above, to fully agree with this view about the Mosaic understanding of God. Rowley's view in substance is very close to the Albright school. He, like Albright and others, leans towards the traditional standpoint. For Albright and almost all of 'right-wing' scholars, "the significance of Moses' achievement for the religion of Israel is an established fact; and many of them still view him, if not as the man who taught monotheism, at any rate as the founder of Israel's religion."³⁰⁴ Even those scholars who deny monotheism to Moses recognize him as one of the leading factors towards this end. A. Lods for instance observes that "The principle laid down by Moses was that of 'monolatry': in everything that concerns the nation. Yahweh is the only Elohim to whom Israel has the right to appeal. Yahweh is a jealous God. This rigorous exclusivism was, however, one of the roots of the theoretic monotheism of the Jewish period."³⁰⁵

We may not disagree with the significant role played by Moses to put the Israelites on the track of monotheism, but we may disagree with labeling him as the hero of Hebraic monotheism as far as the biblical data is concerned. We are not concerned here with a comparison of Mosaic concept of the deity with that of the Kanaanite's or other primitive societies of that time. We are talking about monotheism as the term itself denotes. Moses, according to available biblical data, does not seem to deny the existence of other gods. His portrayals of God are corporeal and anthropomorphic through and through. Such a representation of God and lack of stand against other gods does not go well with the transcendent God of monotheism. In addition to that context, the above discussions about the historicity and translation of the First Commandment also leave a great many issues unresolved in terms of Moses being monotheist. Therefore, in light of the biblical data, Moses' monolatry is more evident than his leaning towards monotheism in the strict sense of the term. Monolatry, on the other hand, is detrimental to the Unity, Oneness and Transcendence of God as the terms are understood today.

ANTHROPOMORPHISM AND THE HEBREW BIBLE:

A great majority of biblical scholars, especially after the 19th century evolutionary approach to religion and Wellhausen's evolutionary presuppositions in the field of the history of religion, disagree with the theory of original biblical monotheism or transcendental deity. They see in the Hebrew Bible an evolution of the idea of God. They contend that the developmental process starts with animism, anthropomorphic and corporeal concepts of the Deity and gradually devel-

ops, as a result of the monarchy and finally after the exile, into a full fledged monotheism. M. Kaplan, A. Lods, I. G. Matthew, T.J.Meek, J. Barr, H.H. Rowley, W. Eichrodt, Morton Smith, and Mark S. Smith are just a few amongst those who represent this position. A. Lods, for instance, argues that "Israel only attained to monotheism in the eighth century and to a clear and conscious monotheism only in the sixth, and that by a slow process of internal development whose stages we can trace."³⁰⁶ Causse attributes the beginning of monotheism to Elijah while I. G. Matthew thinks that it was Amos who laid the foundations of ethical monotheism.³⁰⁷ Pfeiffer absolutely denies any real monotheism before Deutero-Isaiah. He observes that "We can only speak of monotheism in the Old Testament before Second Isaiah by using the word in some other sense than the belief that there is only one god."³⁰⁸

M. M. Kaplan observes that "The traditional belief that the Jewish religion has remained the same since it was promulgated at Sinai is quite untenable and is being superseded by the evolutionary conception of its origin and growth. According to that conception, the complex of ideas and practices centering about the belief in God underwent gradual but thorough-going changes."³⁰⁹ Following this evolutionary approach, Kaplan, a well-known modern Jewish thinker, concludes that Hebrews like other primitive people were originally polytheists worshipping multiple anthropomorphic and corporeal deities. In the second stage of the developmental process, they reached at the belief in a national God Yahweh, worthy of worship and all other acts of obedience, but still conceived in anthropomorphic terms. "They retained the survivals of animism."³¹⁰ He would "fight their battles and provide them with all they needed; and they in turn would obey his laws and be loyal to him."³¹¹ In this stage, there did not exist any thought of denial of other gods for other nations. In the third stage, especially with the victories of David, Yahweh's oneness was achieved. "By this time the God of Israel is no longer conceived merely as a god, or as the principal god, but as God, the creator of the world and of all that it contains, the one Being who is *sui generis*, whose power is manifest both in the ordinary and in the extraordinary manifestations of nature and whose will governs the life of every created being."³¹² Still, even at this later stage of the developmental process, it was not monotheism in the strict sense of the term. "The religion of canonical Prophets is not quite identical with what is commonly understood by the term "monotheism." That term usually designates the outcome of an intellectual development which could not possibly have been carried on in early Israel. God, as monotheism conceives him, is a metaphysical being whose traits and attributes have nothing in common with anything in human experience. When we say that God is all-knowing, or all-good, it is with the qualification that we are using terminology which in strictness is totally inapplicable to God. Why then do we use it? Simply because we have none better. No such sophistication could ever form part of the Prophet's Idea of the God of Israel."³¹³ In the final and fourth stage the real monotheism and transcendence was reached at by denying the ascription to Him of human corporeal and anthropomorphic terms and negation of those attributes and qualities which were thought as unworthy of His being. The Jewish religion passed through this stage "of its existence from about the beginning of the common era down to modern times."³¹⁴ Therefore, argues Kaplan, "To ascribe to traditional Jewish religion the urge to teach the nations the formal truth of monotheism is to convey an entirely wrong impression of what the Jews conceived to be their place in the world."³¹⁵ The concept of such a transcendent Deity was forced upon Jewish thought by the circumstances in which they found themselves. "Until Judaism was compelled to reckon with the challenge of Aristotelian philosophy, the philosophic difficulty of ascribing form to God

in no way disturbed rabbinic thought. Even the question of Gods' omnipresence did not trouble them greatly. Although they assumed that God was omnipresent, they nevertheless held the idea of God as moving from place to place, and of heaven as his principal abode. Certain as it was that God was a being perceptible not merely to the mind but also to the senses, traditional Jewish religion could, for practical purposes, afford to leave unsolved the question about the form and substance of the divine nature and its relationship to the visible world. Hence the vagueness and the contradictions which abound in the traditional conception of God with regard to his spatial relationship to the physical universe."³¹⁶ It was in the medieval Jewish theology "When the anthropomorphic conceptions of God in the Bible were found to clash with the more intellectualized conceptions of God developed in Greek philosophy, there arose the need for reinterpretation."³¹⁷ Such a development in the Jewish concept of God was a result of evolution; a product of Jewish civilization and culture; and not in any way or form a supernatural intrusion or event. Therefore "The Jewish quality of the religion of the Jews will not depend on claims to supernatural origin or claims to being more rational or more ethical than other religions. Its uniqueness will consist chiefly in the fact that it will be lived by Jews, and will be expressed by them through such cultural media as Jewish civilization will produce."³¹⁸

To Kaplan and other modern Jewish scholars like Rabbis Solomon Goldman and Herman Lissauer, "what a person understands about God or any other reality is the result of patient, persistent searching and not a miraculous intervention from a supernatural source."³¹⁹ This group of Jewish "clerical apostles", to use B. J. Heller's term, have eliminated the traditional vital God idea from their purview and program. Such an idea of God is a part of the ancient Jewish civilization and primitive in nature. As a result this belief can be dispelled and dispensed away with in the modern times. To the above mentioned Reformists "Judaism primarily is and was a culture and a civilization. God and religion played a part in it, but were not synonymous with the whole of it. Significant as it may have been to the Jewish scheme in the past, it is not essential to it in the present."³²⁰ They do not accept the long held doctrine that "*Israel's ideal life was Israel's Scripture*" and God; they believe Israel's ideal life was and is Israel itself. Rabbi Herman Lissauer frankly admits that: "I am not sure whether we may properly use the term God since our meaning of the term is so different from our fathers. We don't hold any belief in God as an 'externalized, individualized, personal being.' When we speak the word God, it is purely in poetical meaning, and as a symbol for the idea. I have defined God as 'the advancing totality of our highest ideals.'...We deal with man and not with God. Our great difficulty is to find in Jewish life and literature any expression of this view, and we are compelled to interpret even the 'Sh'ma Yisrael' in order to enable us to voice the one expression which every Jew uses as a watchword."³²¹ This account of God concept on the part of some leading modern Jewish thinkers echoes close resemblance with modern humanism and places emphasis upon man on account of God as discussed in the previous chapter. Such a phenomenon of divorcing God from His high position, traditionally apportioned to Him by the Hebrew Bible, may be connected to the diversity of ideas about God found in the Hebrew Bible and, most probably, with the bold, corporeal, and anthropomorphic depictions of Him in many of the biblical writings.

It becomes evident by now that the most repeated passages (like the First Commandment), arguments, and evidences, long quoted, to prove the original biblical monotheism and transcendence

of God are not fully accepted virtually by all the biblical scholars, not even by all the Jews. I feel no hesitation to attribute the above discussed multiple theories about the God concept or monotheism in the Hebrew Bible to the biblical text itself. A thorough and systematic treatment of the biblical passages, as they are recapitulated and expressed in the Hebrew Bible in its present shape, would reveal that the idea of monotheism and God's absolute transcendence was probably one of the most perplexing ideas the Israelites had to wrestle with throughout their ancient history. Monotheism penetrated the minds and souls of the Hebrews gradually and slowly. The five books attributed to Moses describe God in relatively transcendental and monotheistic terms, yet these same books give clear indications of the existence and presence of other gods of other nations, legitimize their worship in the lands of those nations, limit Yahweh's territory, power, and sovereignty to the land of Canaan, give detailed information about his sanctuaries and dwelling places, portray patriarchs as well as known Israelite figures as idolatrous, and depict God in naive anthropomorphic and corporeal terms.

Looking into the details of such aspects of the biblical text, a modern scholar can easily see an unusual tension existent in the biblical concept of the unity, unicity, and uniqueness of God. On the one hand, unity and uniqueness of Yahweh is emphasized and, on the other hand, according to the Bible, other gods not only exist but the God, recognizes their existence by appointing other nations to them while keeping Israel for himself. "When the Most High apportioned the nations, when he set up the divisions of mankind, He fixed the boundaries of the people according to the members of the sons of God. But Yahweh's own allotment is His people, Jacob His apportioned property." (Duet.32:9) A contemporary Jewish biblical scholar comments on this passage by observing that "Faith in YAHWEH's triumphant majesty facilitated acceptance of the principle that YAHWEH was the supreme deity, that he had appointed other gods to govern the non-Israelite peoples of the world but retained himself rulership of Israel and ultimate jurisdiction in the council of heavenly beings."³²² Yahweh, then, is not the universal God but a national God of Israel. One God among many other gods for other nations with the exception of being unique among them, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among other gods?" (Ex.15:11) Such texts, argues Marjo Christina Korpel, "prove that initially the Israelites did not deny the existence of other deities and they therefore cannot be termed pure monotheists."³²³

The belief in the existence, power, and rule of other gods is detrimental to the concept of the true unity, unicity, uniqueness, and transcendence of God; therefore, the above quoted passages and others like (I Sam. 26:19) and (Judg. 11: 23-24), that assert the existence of other gods, are in conflict with monotheistic and transcendental concept of God. Moreover the Hebrew Bible allows worship of these gods as A. Lods argues: "The worship of "strange gods," as they were called, was regarded as perfectly legitimate within the limits of their respective territories. The view which placed the true God in sharp opposition to the false gods, God over against the "non-gods", and the true religion in contrast with the worship of lies, was still unknown."³²⁴ So the Bible portrays patriarchs as serving other gods (without denouncing them as patriarchs due to such an act of ignorance) (Jos. 24:2-14-15; Jdt,5:7-9) Aaron, who was made the spokesman of Moses to the people and whom God promised to stand with his mouth (EX.3:15), is reported to make the golden calf and allow his people to worship it. (Ex.32:22-35) King Solomon is reported to go after other gods due to the influence of his foreign wives (I Kings 11:1-16). The Israelites are of-

ten depicted as engaged in the worship of other gods like Asherah and Baal.³²⁵ Morton Smith observes: "Solomon's worship of Yahweh was not exclusive; he built high places to Moabite, Sidonian, and Amonite gods and worshipped others, too. And there is no evidence that his subjectives were more Yahwist than the King. When the northern tribes broke away from Solomon's son, Rehoboam, about 925 B.C. and set up the separate kingdom of "Israel" in central and northern Palestine, as opposed to "Judah" in the south, the first king, of Israel, Jeroboam, showed his devotion to Yahweh by endowing the shrines of Bethel and Dan with golden images of the deity in the form of a bull calf."³²⁶

In view of these facts, it has already been suggested, that "Up to the eighth century, the Israelites believed firmly in the existence of many other deities beside their national God."³²⁷ Morton Smith argues that the fundamental change in the attitude towards Yahweh's worship took place in reign of King Asa (died about 875). "Evidently, from this period on there was a newly important element in the situation: the demand that Israel worship Yahweh and Yahweh alone."³²⁸ On the other hand, we know from the text of the Hebrew Bible that the worship of other gods was still prevalent in the Israelite as late as the time of Jeremiah in the seventh century. Jeremiah admonished his people saying: "Then the cities of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will go and cry out to the gods to whom they make offerings, but they will never save them in the time of their trouble. For your gods have become as many as your towns, O Judah; and as many as the streets of Jerusalem are the alters you have set to shame, alters to make offerings to baal." (Jer.11:12-13) Smith observes that "In spite of the Yahwist revolutions of the ninth century, the cult of the various Baals continued. It was evidently popular in the eighth century, when Hosea denounced it, and still popular at the end of the seventh century, when denounced by Zephaniah and Jeremiah. The prophets, Jeremiah said, prophesied by Baal and the people swore by him. Jerusalem had as many alters to him as it had street corners-perhaps an exaggeration. Sacrifices and incense were commonly offered to him. Nor were the baals Yahweh's only competitors. Judea had as many gods as it had cities. When another Yahwist reformation was put through in the time of King Josiah (621 B.C.) the priests throughout Judea had to be stopped from burning incense on the high places, not only to Baal, but also to the sun, the moon, the planets, and all the host of heaven; around Jerusalem the high places of "the Satyres" and of the gods Ashtoreth, Kemosh, and Milkom had to be destroyed; and the temple of Yahweh itself had to be purged of the vessels of Baal, Asherah, and the host of the heaven, the chariots of the sun, and the houses of the sacred "prostitutes" where the women wove coverings for the pillar which symbolized the goddess Asherah. Josiah's reforms seem to have had little success with the masses and to have died with him in 609, for the later prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel are full of denunciations of Judean worship of other gods than Yahweh. Such complaints are not to be dismissed as mere exaggeration; the evidence of archaeology supports them."³²⁹ He further argues that only "With the appearance of the beginnings of synagogue worship-a type of worship quite different from the sacrificial cult of the temples-the Yahweh alone party became in effect a new religion, and a new kind of religion."³³⁰

The emergence of Israelite monotheism involved perplexing and numerous factors, elements, features, and developed over various stages. Most probably, it was the Babylonian Exile that gave an impetus to the idea of a strict, universal, and ethical monotheism. W. Eichrodt, van Rad, D.M.G. Stalker, Fohrer, B. Lang, Halpern, Mark S. Smith are just a few of those scholars who

follow this line of approach. They emphasize the crucial role played by the exile experience in determining the nature of Israelite monotheism. Texts dating to the Exile, argues M. S. Smith, "are the first to attest to unambiguous expressions of Israelite monotheism. Second Isaiah (Isa. 45:5-7) gave voice to the monotheistic ideal that Yahweh was the only deity in the cosmos. Not only are the other deities powerless; these are nonexistent."³³¹

As far as the textual data is concerned, monotheism and God's transcendence were hardly features of Israel's earliest history. It emerged as a result of differentiation between Yahweh and other gods and convergence of their characteristics and attributes to the Israelite Deity. "Monotheism", argues M.S. Smith, "was hardly a feature of Israel's earliest history. By the sole token, convergence was an early development that anticipates the later emergence of monolatry and monotheism."³³² He further argues that "Three levels of development in early Israel bear on convergence. The first reflects Israel's Cananite heritage, features in this category include El, Baal, Asherah, and their imagery and titles, and the cultic practices of the Asherah, high places, and devotion to the dead. The second level involves features that Israel shared with its first millennium neighbors: the rise of the new national deity, the presence of a consort goddess, and the small number of attested deities compared with second-millennium West Semitic cultures. Third, there are characteristics specified to Israelite culture, such as the new god, Yahweh, the traditions of separate origin and southern sanctuary, the aniconic requirement, and decreased anthropomorphism. Any of the features in this third category might be invoked to help explain convergence."³³³ This long process of convergence, to Smith, was an evolution and a revolution at the same time. "It was an "evolution" in two respects. Monolatry grew out of an early, limited Israelite polytheism that was not strictly discontinuous with that of its Iron Age neighbors. Furthermore, adherence to one deity was a changing reality within the periods of the judges and the monarchy in Israel. While evolutionary in character, Israelite monolatry was also "revolutionary" in a number of respects. The process of differentiation and the eventual displacement of Baal from Israel's national cult distinguished Israel's religion from the religions of its neighbors...Israelite insistence on a single deity eventually distinguished Israel from the surrounding cultures, as far as textual data indicate."³³⁴

In the scheme of the above mentioned biblical scholars, the monarchy played a decisive role to unite Israelite upon Yahweh's worship alone. On the other hand, scholars like Albright, G. Mendenhall, J. Bright, and others, who believe in early pure Yahwism, argue that the monarchy had negative effect upon the religion of Israel. It was during monarchy that the pollution occurred in the land by worship of Baal and other deities.³³⁵ Mark Smith, criticizing this line of approach, argues that "The pure form of Yahwism that Mendenhall and Bright envision was perhaps an ideal achieved rarely, if ever, before the exile-if even then." He further argues that "the monarchy was not a villain of Israelite religion that Mendenhall and Bright make it out to be. Indeed, the monarchy made several religious contributions crucial to the development of monolatry. In short, Mendenhall and Bright stand much of Israel's religious development on its head."³³⁶

It is difficult to determine the authenticity of the narration attributed to Moses or other patriarchs, as Morton Smith and others have shown.³³⁷ The reason is very simple and straightforward. The present Hebrew Bible had to go through lengthy process of editing, party politics, correction and transmission.³³⁸ Therefore, it is extremely difficult to say with certainty what religious beliefs

these patriarchs originally had. As far as the biblical textual data is concerned, the view emphasizing the progressive revelation seems more probable. Virtually it has become a classic as observes Hans Kung. On the bases of most recent research "present-day scholars assume that polytheism was widespread in Israel down to the Babylonian exile. In other words...it was only after long controversies that strict biblical monotheism was able to establish itself. From our present perspective we have to begin from 'a chain of successive revolutions in the direction of monotheism following relatively rapidly after one another'."³³⁹ He summarizes this classic view by observing that the ninth century, the early monarchical period, witnessed the battle against Baal and the emphasize upon Yahweh instead of Baal. "The eighth century saw the beginning of the 'Yahweh alone movement,' which was first in a minority: only this one God is to be worshipped in Israel, no matter what gods other peoples worship. ..In the seventh century this sole worship of Yahweh became established. The existence of other gods outside Israel was not still denied, but in Israel, the exclusive people of the covenant, Yahweh was to be worshipped exclusively, in exclusive worship (and not Baal or later Zeus); there was a reform program under King Josiah with a purification and centralization of the cult and the declaration that the new cultic order was the law of the state. The sixth century, finally, saw the further development of the sole worship of Yahweh to the point of strict monotheism, which now denied the existence of other gods: the conquest of Jerusalem by the Babylonians was interpreted as punishment for going astray into polytheism, and a redaction of the old writings was undertaken in strictly monotheistic direction."³⁴⁰ This manifest progressive feature of the Hebrew Bible is a proof that it is a historically conditioned account of the efforts on the part of finite human beings to understand and perceive God. These efforts seem to be as limited as the limitations of the societies they first appeared in. God, as He is portrayed by many theistic traditions in their developed form, is formless, eternal, immutable, and everlasting. He does not have to portray Himself in categories inappropriate to His Majesty just because the ancient Hebrew's understanding was primitive. He does not have to sanction the worship or existence of other gods while the reality is that these gods are non-existent. These issues cannot be resolved if we take the Hebrew Bible in its present shape as the direct revelation of or Word of God to Hebrew Prophets. On the other hand, the difficulties can be grasped and mitigated if we recognize the decisive role played by human agency in the final outcome of these writings. The second alternative will free God of a number of accusations and blames that one has to face in case of taking the present Hebrew Bible as the direct Word of God verbatim.

In addition to the above mentioned flaws in the monotheism of the Hebrew Bible, there is additional evidence in the text of the Bible indicating that the ancient biblical concept of God was primitive in nature. There are, of course, passages in the Hebrew Bible that emphasize God's transcendence, incorporeality, and otherness, as discussed above (Isia 31:3; Jb.10:4; Os.11:9; ps.121:4; Is.40:28). But the passages portraying him in anthropomorphic and corporeal terms and categories outweigh the transcendental passages so much so and are so vivid that it has been argued that "All the evidence suggests that from the outset Yahweh was conceived in human form."³⁴¹ Korpel observes that early Israelite traditions attribute "a visible human form to God."³⁴² The majority of the mortal, human, physical and mental categories appear to be present in Hebrew God.³⁴³ God has a body.³⁴⁴ He, in the plains of Mam-re, appears to Abraham in a "mythico-anthropomorphic form,"³⁴⁵ Abraham bows down towards the ground, offers Him water, requests Him to let him wash His feet, fetches Him with a morsel of bread and God responds

to Abraham's request and does eat. (Gen. 18:1-9:) There are several interpretations given to this passage to avoid presence of God with Abraham. All three of them were angels, it is argued; but the text itself refutes such interpretations. Only two of the angels, Bible tells us, went to Sodom while Abraham was still standing with God. On the basis of this set of evidence, Friedman observes that "from the text it has been argued that the third visitor is God."³⁴⁶

Moses is allowed to see the back part of God (Ex.33:23) and speak face to face to Him "And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." (Ex.33:11) In addition to Moses, the elders of Israel also saw God "Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Na-dab, and A-bi-hu, and seventy of the alders of Israel: And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone ..." (Ex. 24:9-10) The philosopher Saadya and others' figurative interpretations that it was some form created by God that was seen by Moses or the elders of Israel, is not what the text says. It clearly says "they saw the God of Israel". The passage also depicts God as having feet, the theme which is presented in several other biblical passages also (Nah.1:3; Hab.3:5; Zech.14:4). He has a head (Isia.59:17; Ps. 110:7), the hair of his head is like a pure wool (Dan. 7:9). His face is mentioned about 236 times,³⁴⁷ most of the times allowing metaphorical meanings and some times fairly literal and anthropomorphic as we have seen in the case of Moses. He hides his face. The phrase has occurred over thirty times in the Hebrew Bible.³⁴⁸ "And I shall leave them, and I shall hide my face from them... and they will say in that day, "Is it not because our God is not among us that these evils have found us." (Deut. 31:17; also Deut. 32:20) Some of these passages are metaphorical in nature but a good number of them are anthropomorphic. Therefore it has been observed that "Originally, however, the Israelites did believe that God could reveal himself with a human face."³⁴⁹

About 200 times his eyes are mentioned. God has a nose (Gen. 8:21), there goes "a smoke out of his nostrils" (Ps. 18:8), he smells (Ex. 25:6; 29:18; I Sam. 2:18), he likes and is pleased with the sweet odor (Ezek. 20:41). In view of such daring passages, it has been observed that "According to the Old Testament, God also has a nose [P]. Gen. 8:21 and comparable texts state that he can smell and likes the pleasant odor of agreeable sacrifices. Therefore his people burns incense "under his nose" according to the archaic verse Deut. 33:10. It would seem that such an expression still presupposes a fairly literal, anthropomorphic image of God."³⁵⁰ This and other anthropomorphic expressions in Deuteronomy put a question mark to the theory of M. Weinfeld who held that Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic school was vigorously against conceiving God in anthropomorphic terms.³⁵¹

God's ear is mentioned frequently (Num.11:1; IISam.22:7; Ps. 86:1). God is said to have a mouth "With him will I speak mouth to mouth even apparently" (Num.12:8), he has lips, tongue and breath "his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire and his breath, as an overflowing stream" (Isia.30:27-28). He has teeth "he gnasheth upon me with his teeth" (Job. 16:9), he has back "I will shew them the back and not the face". (Jer. 18:17) God's hand is mentioned almost as frequently as his face and eyes. A good number of these expressions can be understood in allegorical and nonmythological sense.³⁵² But some of these passages are too anthropomorphic. They describe right and left hands to God "Thy Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand" (Ps. 110:1) "Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy" (Ex.15:6), "I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and

all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left "(I Kings 22:19). He has written the name of Zion on his palm "Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hand" (Isa. 49:16). He gives Moses, on Sinai, two tables of stone "written with the finger of God "(Ex. 31:18). God has arms (Isa. 30:30; Jer 27:5), he stretches his arm, he claps (Ezek. 21:17), Amos sees him with plumline in his hand "behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumline, with a plumline in his hand." (Am.7:7).

It becomes manifest from the above cited passages of the Hebrew Bible that the concept of God, at least as presented by different writers of the Hebrew Bible, is an anthropomorphic concept. The resemblance of God to the human body is so vivid and complete that almost all the major organs and parts of the human body are attributed to him with few exceptions like legs, buttocks, toes, sexual organs etc.³⁵³ There are certainly some passages that can be explained away metaphorically, but in the presence of such a vivid, graphic, and detailed picturesque depiction of the deity, it is almost impossible to believe that some writers of the Hebrew Bible did not have an anthropomorphic and corporeal deity in their mind. The Israelite, observes A. Lods, "went still further in this assimilation of God to man: they ascribed to Jahweh bodily organs which in man are the seat of organs of expression of feelings or thoughts: Jahweh had eyes, ears, a mouth, nostrils, hands, a heart, bowels, his breath was long or short (quiet or disturbed). These were not metaphors."³⁵⁴

Anthropomorphic expressions are so naive some times that it do not leave any room for metaphorical interpretations and even, as observes Katz, "if one explains these terms as being nothing but picturesque expressions, intended to awaken within man a sense of the real presence of God and His works, nonetheless they remain personifications."³⁵⁵ They prove that Yahweh was "conceived solely as having human form."³⁵⁶

In addition the anthropomorphic concept of God is as much abundant in the Torah, the so called five books of Moses, as they are in the latter classical prophets. Second Isaiah, the stalwart of universal monotheism, does not feel any hesitation to portray God in anthropomorphic and corporeal terms. He says, "In the year that king Uz-zi-ah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.... Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." (Isa.6:1-5)

Amos, the suggested originator of ethical and pure monotheism, claims to have seen the Lord standing on the wall with a plumline in his hand as we have seen earlier. (Am.7:7) It is a striking fact, observes Eichrodt, "that in prophetic visions too the human manifestation of Yahweh frequently recurs, even if, with greater reticence, it is rather suggested than described; and the same anthropomorphism persists in eschatological word pictures...It will be better to revert to an observation made earlier, namely that the immediate proximity and reality of God, which for us are all too easily obscured by spiritualizing concepts, are outstanding features of the Old Testament revelation, and compel men to clothe the divine presence in human form."³⁵⁷ A. Lods observes: "Another feature of the "theology" of ancient Judaism, which has often been noted, was what is

known as the "transcendence" which it attributed to God. The term cannot here be taken in its strictly philosophical sense, or it will give rise to false conclusions: the Jews of this period did not think that because God was a spirit he could have no relation to the world of matter, or that he was outside the visible universe. Ezekiel and the priestly historian tell of the appearances of God to man, and sometimes make use of distinctly anthropomorphic expressions to describe divine activity."³⁵⁸ It alludes to the fact that an anthropomorphic and corporeal concept of God was not thought to be a problem at all even by those classical prophets who roundly rejected idolatry, graven images, and material representation of God. Hence it has been suggested that "The anthropopathic and anthropomorphic conception of Jahweh was an advance on the naturalistic and theriomorphic representations: this explains why the great prophets, far from opposing this mode of conceiving of Jahweh, commonly made use of the metaphors which served to express it."³⁵⁹

Moreover, the anthropopathic descriptions of God are prevalent throughout the Hebrew Bible and substantiate the above theme of pervasive anthropomorphism. Some of these attributes and actions are inevitable for God's perception as living, personal, active, close, and loving God. Such attributes are congenial to His absolute majesty and perfection. While others are undoubtedly inappropriate to be possessed by the Most High, Omniscient, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, and absolutely Perfect God. These qualities are too human to be ascribed to the true God, the source of all perfection. It is natural for Him to have eternal life, ceaseless mercy, unparalleled, unmatched and surpassing love, infinite knowledge, unlimited and unprecedented power, unsurpassed authority and all other attributes of goodness and perfection in absolute terms. The terms which are essential to produce the profound and appropriate response on the part of human beings. But attribution of traits like weeping, sleeping, crying, roaring, repenting, doing evils, walking etc. are too anthropomorphic and terrestrial to be believed about or ascribed to any celestial being, let alone to God. They transmogrify the majesty, awesomeness and the mystery of God and transmute the resultant response.

These anthropopathic passages, when studied in light of the above cited pictorial passages, leave little room to doubt the fact that the majority of biblical writers and narrators had an anthropomorphic concept of deity and that very often they speak of God as of a man. The God who is told to have created man in his image seems often to be created in man's own image. Some of the characteristics and categories ascribed to him by several biblical writers are such that an honorable and dignified human being would not like them to be ascribed to him.

The following verses of the Hebrew Bible would substantiate the claim. God fears (Deu.32:27), He weeps, wails, laments, "For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the habitations of the wilderness a lamentation" (Jer.9:10), "Therefore will I howl for Moab, and I will cry out for Moab; mine heart shall mourn for the men of Kir-he-res. O vine of Sib-mah, I will weep for thee with the weeping of ja-zer." (Jer.48:31-32) He does evil. It happens not only as a reaction to the sins of man, but also as a non-causal action. Moreover, he repents his planned evil when Moses reminds him of his promises with the patriarch, "And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people...wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains...Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.... And the Lord re-

pent of the evil which he thought to do unto his people." (Ex.32: 11-14). Commenting on similar passages a contemporary American scholar observes that "The God of Moses was a God with hands, with feet, with the organs of speech. A God of passion, of hatred, of revenge, of affection, of repentance; a God who made mistakes:-in other words, an immense and powerful man."³⁶⁰ Though it is sometimes stated that God is not a man to repent "for he is not a man, that he should repent", (I Sam. 15:29) even in the same chapter he is made to repent, "and the Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel." (I Sam. 15:35) In fact throughout the Hebrew Bible God is made to repent very often, "And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at heart." (Gen. 6:6; and also Am.7:6)³⁶¹ This is not a perfection. It is not appropriate for the All-Wise, All-knowing God to repent of what He plans or does because His plans are eternally based on His absolute knowledge and He has all the power in the world to execute them accordingly. Friedman rightly observes: "This is a curious way to speak about God. The concept of God regretting something is strang enough. If God is all-knowing, how could He possibly regret any past action? Did He not know when He did it what the results would be?"³⁶²

Not only does God repents, but he also wrestles with Jacob and Jacob prevails: "for as a prince hast thou power with God and with man, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked *him*, and said, *Tell me*, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peni'-el: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." (Gen.32:28-30) Friedman observes: "After all, it is not just a story of a man having contact with divinity. It is a story of a man having a *fight* with divinity."³⁶³ He further argues "Adam disobeys God. Abraham questions God. Jacob fights God. Humans are confronting their creator, and they are increasing their participation in the arena of divine prerogatives."³⁶⁴ In addition to this powerlessness, God walks (Gen. 3:8), sleeps (Ps. 44:23), "in Old Testament God is supposed to take his rest at certain times."³⁶⁵ He awakes "Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine." (Ps.78:65)³⁶⁶ In short God makes man in his own image and in his likeness. (Gen.1:26) Ingersoll argues, that "No one can read the Pentateuch without coming to the conclusion that the author supposed that man was created in the physical likeness of Deity. God said "Go to, let us go down." "God smelled a sweet savor; "God repented him that he had made a man;" "and God said;" "walked;" and "talked;" and "rested." All these expressions are inconsistent with any other idea than that the person using them regarded God as having the form of man"³⁶⁷

ANTHROPOMORPHISM AND RABBINIC MIND:

In addition to the Written Torah, the Oral Torah or Talmud is also very important to the Jewish tradition.³⁶⁸ Lawrence Shiffman observes that Talmudic "material became the new scripture of Judaism, and the authority of the Bible was now defined in terms of how it was interpreted in the rabbinic tradition. Scripture had been displaced by Talmud."³⁶⁹ The rabbis, observes Friedman, with the help of this doctrine of the "Oral Torah" "placed their own traditions and rulings on a par with the Bible."³⁷⁰ The scholars differ over when and how this metamorphosis³⁷¹ took place but not many of them differ about the outcome. In a classic work on the Rabbinic Judaism, Ephraim Urbach has observed that the tradition of the fathers, the enactments, and the decrees became Torah alongside the Written Torah. The expositions of the Sages possessed decisive authority and deserved at least the same place in the scale of religious values as the Written Torah,

and in truth transcended it.³⁷² This doctrine, observes Neusner, became "the central myth of rabbinic civilization."³⁷³

Some efforts have been made by several rabbis to remove or mitigate the biblical anthropomorphism from Rabbinic literature. The particles like "as it were" or "as though it were possible" were placed before anthropomorphic expressions. Many actions, appearances, and attributes which were repugnant to the concept of a transcendent and absolute Deity were ascribed to intermediary beings and angels. In these circumstances, observes Jacob B. Agus, "their legal training came to the aid of the sages. Accustomed to weigh the full significance of each word in the Torah, they applied the same method to the Scriptural verses which imply the Lord's presence with men. The verb *shochon*, "to dwell," was thus turned into a noun, *shechinah*, "presence," implying that an emanation from the Supreme Being or a special effulgence of divine radiance was made to dwell in certain places..."³⁷⁴ Such interpretations had their own peculiar difficulties and problems. The terms, observes S. Schechter, "which were accepted in order to weaken or nullify anthropomorphic expressions were afterwards hypostatized and invested with a semi-independent existence, or personified as the creatures of God. This will explain the fact that, along with the allegorizing tendency, there is also a marked tendency in the opposite direction, insisting on the literal sense of the world of the Bible, and even exaggerating the corporeal terms."³⁷⁵ The Rabbinic mind had two choices i.e. personifications (hypostatization) or anthropomorphism and corporealism. They seem to have opted for the second option. As a result, the "God of rabbinic Judaism", observes R. M. Seltzer, "was as anthropomorphic as the God of the Bible, but in different ways. He studies Torah, he dresses in a prayer shawl; he prays- to himself... Qualified by "as it were," the human qualities that the rabbis identify as godly lead them to depict a fatherly deity, intimate and personal, loving without compromising his ethical rigor, a God who weeps when he must punish."³⁷⁶

A. E. Suffrin observes that "When we turn to the Rabbinic writings from about the 3rd cent. A.D. onwards, however, we meet with gross anthropomorphisms... It not only wrote human history as it ought or ought not to have happened, but explored the seven heavens and revealed the Deity."³⁷⁷ Suffrin quotes several Rabbinic writings to substantiate the claims. He observes that "Putting together the passages from the Talmud and Midrashim, we find in plain prose that on the highest heaven is the throne of Glory, on the back of which is engraved the image of Jacob... Metatron is close to the deity... Behind the throne stands Sandalphon, whose height is a distance of a walk of 500 years, and who binds chaplets for the Deity...God is occupied with studying 24 books of the Bible by day, and the six *sedarim* of the Mishna by night... There are schools in heaven after the Rabbinic model, where Rabbis in their order discuss the Halakha, and God studies with them... Every day He promulgates a new Halakha... He wears phylacteries... of which Moses saw the knot... At the Exodus from Egypt every servant girl saw God bodily and could point Him out with her finger. When God descended on Sinai, He was wrapped in the Rabbinic *tallith*... He has His own synagogue. He prays to Himself that His mercy should overcome His wrath... He weeps daily over Jerusalem... The last three hours of the day He sports with Leviathan..."³⁷⁸ That is perhaps the reason that Gedaliahu Stroumsa argues that the corporeal nature of the biblical expressions were widely recognized by the rabbinic thinkers and that in antiquity, God had not only "human feelings, but also a body of gigantic or cosmic dimensions."³⁷⁹

Arthur Marmorstein, on the other hand, does not consider anthropomorphism a problem at all. He argues that anthropomorphism is a higher level of religious understanding and "Paganism was far removed from anthropomorphism, it cherished the lower stage of theriomorphism... The religion of Israel was from the very beginning free from this false doctrine... Without anthropomorphism the ordinary man with his narrow vision and limited intelligence would not have been able to grasp the belief in God, in His omnipotence and eternity, His universal knowledge and presence."³⁸⁰ He further argues that "In this respect the teachers of the Haggadah stand not much below the prophets; they attain in many respects the height of the prophetic conception of God. The treatment of the anthropomorphism in the Bible had from of old been a subject of dispute between opposing schools. The history of this spiritual conflict goes back very far. If this is borne in mind the contradictions between the scholars in Haggadah become much more intelligible. One has only to think of the attitude of R. Akiba and of R. Ishmael to this problem. No harm is done to religion if one designates it as anthropomorphic. All higher religious systems are of this nature."³⁸¹

Marmorstein attempts to solve all the problems posed by Rabbinic anthropomorphism by his hypothesis that, since ancient times there were two schools among the Rabbis i.e. allegorists and literalists.³⁸² By qualifying anthropomorphisms by various qualifiers, the Rabbis, to Marmorstein, allegorized and hence overcame anthropomorphisms.³⁸³ On the other hand, the literalists took these anthropomorphisms literally and enlarged upon them and added to them.³⁸⁴ He then explained away some of the anthropomorphic passages as a reaction and endeavors to respond to the polemics directed against Israel in the Rabbinic period.³⁸⁵ Schechter argues the same.³⁸⁶

Max Kadushin strongly rejects any such hypothesis and argues that "The whole hypothesis, indeed, falls to the ground as soon as we examine its central thesis- the division into two schools. In the attempt to maintain this division, Marmorstein is forced, in a number of instances, to change around the proponents of opinion, often solely on the basis of his thesis."³⁸⁷ To the biblical writers and the rabbinic thinkers anthropomorphic description of the Deity were not problems. A great majority of them did not consider it wrong to ascribe to God characteristics and qualities altogether human and corporeal. Kadushin rightly argues that "To ascribe to the Rabbis any sort of stand on anthropomorphism is to do violence, therefore, to rabbinic thought. Indeed, this entire discussion only shows that when we employ the terms of classical philosophy even in an attempt to clarify rabbinic ideas, we are no longer within the rabbinic universe of discourse."³⁸⁸ He further argues that "Whatever the Rabbis do, they do not really qualify or mitigate either biblical anthropomorphisms or their own. The very problem of anthropomorphism did not exist for them."³⁸⁹ This is probably the reason that most Rabbinic writings seem not to worry much about the gross anthropomorphisms.

Moreover, the problem, as we have already seen in chapter one, does not consist in minor or mild anthropomorphisms. Minor anthropomorphisms (to use the term for convenience purposes) like seeing, watching, loving etc. are essential for the communication between God and man. The difficulty comes with concrete anthropomorphisms that go beyond the purpose of modality and depict God as a humanlike figure. In the *Genesis Rabbah*, ca. 400-450, it says: " Said R. Hoshaiah, "When the Holy One, blessed be he, came to create the first man, the ministering angels mistook him [for God, since man was in God's image,] and wanted to say before him, `Holy, [holy, holy is

the Lord of hosts].³⁹⁰ According to Said R. Hiyya the Elder, God had appeared to the Israelites through every manner of deed and every condition, "he appeared to them at the sea as a heroic soldier, carrying out battles in behalf of Israel... he had appeared to them at Sinai in the form of a teacher who was teaching Torah and standing in awe... he had appeared to them in the time of Daniel as an elder, teaching Torah, for it is appropriate for Torah to go forth from the mouth of sages... he had appeared to them in the time of Solomon as a youth, in accord with the practices of that generation..."³⁹¹ J. Nuesner observes that "Both passages constitute allusions to God's corporeality and refer to God's capacity to take on human traits of mind, an soul and spirit as well as of outward form."³⁹² Daniel J. Silver observes that "*Midrash* necessarily emphasized the immanence, even the humanness, of God... God is not an idea, but an intimate. *Midrash* often depicts God as one of the folk. God participates in the exile, cries over Israel's anguish, bends down to hear prayer, rejoices with a bride at her wedding, puts on *tefillin* and joins in public prayer. The *Midrash* innocently and happily speaks of God as father, friend, shepherd, lover, and avenger. One episode may picture God as guardian protecting Israel, another as sage teaching Torah, still another as shepherd shielding his flock..."³⁹³ Even the cautious Schechter who otherwise argues that "Eager, however, as the Rabbis were to establish this communication between God and the world, they were always on their guard not to permit him to be lost in the world, or to be confused with man. Hence the marked tendency, both in the Targumim and in the Agadah, to explain away or to mitigate certain expressions in the Bible, investing the deity with corporeal qualities."³⁹⁴ The same Schechter observes that God of Rabbis "acts as best man at the wedding of Adam and Eve; he mourns over the world like a father over the death of his son when the sins of ten generations make its destruction by the deluge imminent; he visits Abraham on his sick-bed; he condoles with Isaac after the death of Abraham; he "himself in his glory" is occupied in doing the last honors to Moses, who would otherwise have remained unburied, as no man knew his grave; he teaches Torah to Israel, and to this very day he keeps school in heaven for those who died in their infancy... Like man he also feels, so to speak, embarrassed in the presence of the conceited and overbearing, and says, I and the proud cannot dwell in the same place. Nay, it would seem that the Rabbis felt an actual delight in heaping human qualities upon God whenever opportunity is offered by Scripture."³⁹⁵ Nuesner observes that "God figures in the canon of the Judaism of the dual Torah as premise, presence, person, and, at the end, personality. God is represented not solely in abstract terms of attributes (e.g., merciful, loving) but in concrete terms of relationships with the world, humanity, and Israel. The theological discourse of the dual Torah may be classified in four parts: first comes discourse which presupposes God as premise; second is the recognition of God as a presence; third, God appears as a person; and fourth, God personally participates in the here and now of everyday discourse."³⁹⁶ He concludes that "out of the material of the final stage of the canon of the Judaism of the dual Torah, we can compose something very like a gospel of God incarnate on earth."³⁹⁷ This to Nuesner is "divinity in the form of humanity, however the relations between the one and the other are sorted out. And that is what, in a narrowly descriptive framework, incarnation, as a species of the genus anthropomorphism, means."³⁹⁸

On the other hand, the apologetics like Sliver, Schechter and Kaufmann try to explain away anthropomorphism and corporealism of Rabbis as efforts to maintain and stress upon the immanence of God. They contend that the problem of anthropomorphism and corporealism was foreign to indigenous Judaism.³⁹⁹ They forget to consider that God's immanence does not necessar-

ily require concrete anthropomorphisms and corporealism as we have seen. God does not have to weep or cry or to repent to emphasize His mercy and love. Immanence does not require him at all to have a fixed schedule of study, make sport, and be the "best man". Moreover, anthropomorphism and to some extent corporealism have been very much there in almost all stages of the ancient Jewish thought with a very few exceptions; therefore, it is perhaps the immanence in the strict sense of the term and not the anthropomorphism that seems to be foreign to indigenous Judaism. Kadushin observes that "the very idea of immanence is foreign to rabbinic thought."⁴⁰⁰ G. F. Moore argues that the Palestinian masters were innocent of an abstract, transcendent God. To him, imputation to the Rabbis of the concept of transcendence is an abuse of philosophical terminology.⁴⁰¹ Kadushin rightly observes that "The problem of anthropomorphism is indeed foreign to indigenous Judaism, but foreign in a far more radical manner than Kaufmann conceives it to be. Such problems are not in any sense within the rabbinic universe of discourse, not even by implication, and are not to be injected there even for the purpose of analysis."⁴⁰² Their interpretations and stories are, as argues Kadushin, "thoroughly and completely anthropomorphic, and they tell of actions done by God and emotions felt by Him in terms entirely human."⁴⁰³

The same trend continued in the later generations. Suffrin observes that "A more hideous form of anthropomorphism meets us in the period of the *Gaonim* (7th-10th cent.)... The most monstrous book of this period was the *Shi`ur Koma*, 'Estimation of the Height,' of which we possess only two fragments- a greater one in the book of *Raziel*, and a lesser in the Alphabet of R. `Akiba. In it the Deity is described as a huge being in human shape and out of all proportion. The measurement of each member, such as the neck, the beard, the right and left eyes, the upper and lower lips, the ankles, etc. is given in parasangs.

Only those parasangs are not like ours, for a heavenly parasang measures a million cubits, each cubit four spans, and each span reaches from one end of the world to the other.' `And,' says the book of *Raziel*, 'blessed is he who knows these measurements, for he has a share in the world to come.'⁴⁰⁴

The Karaites,⁴⁰⁵ Gaonim Saadya⁴⁰⁶ (889-942), Sherira (d. 1002), and Hai⁴⁰⁷ (d. 1032) vigorously opposed such anthropomorphisms and interpreted them figuratively.⁴⁰⁸ Most of the known Karaites and Saadya were contemporaries of al-Ash`ari, Mu`tazilites, and other well known Muslim theologians and apologetics, as will be seen in chapter 4, and most probably they were influenced by Islamic transcendental thought as many Western scholars have observed.⁴⁰⁹ Wolfson observes, "The need of explaining scriptural anthropomorphisms became all the greater to spokesmen of Judaism under Muslim rule during that period in view of the fact that in Muslim literature Jews were represented as anthropomorphists."⁴¹⁰ The Karaites denied the rabbinic/Talmudic authority partly due to their anthropomorphisms. Karaites like Salmon ben Yeruhim snapped at some of the daring anthropomorphic expressions found in post-scriptural rabbinic writings to show, as Wolfson observes, "that the rabbis had an anthropomorphic conception of God. Of post-Talmudic literature he explicitly mentions the mystical works *Sefer Shem ben Noah*, *Otiyyot de-Rabbi Akiba*, and *Shi`ur Komah*, and quotes from other works of the same type without mentioning them by title."⁴¹¹ The Karaites explained most of the biblical anthropomorphisms figuratively. God creating man in His own image (Gen. 1:26-7) was explained as "by way of conferring honor."⁴¹² They were very much influenced by the Greek rational thought and went very close to Muslim rationalists in regards to their conception of the Deity. The Karaites, ob-

serves Jacob B. Agus, "ventured into the field of philosophical speculations, in advance of their rabbinic brethren, identifying themselves completely with the Mutazilite school of thought among the Arabs. In common with the Moslem theologians, they elaborated a rationalistic theology, which emphasized the principles of God's unity, incorporeality, man's freedom and God's justice."⁴¹³ There was so much identification that, to I. Husik, the works of one group can be credited to the other.⁴¹⁴

Saadya opposed the Karaites' rejection of rabbinic/Talmudic authority and defended traditional rabbinic thought by emphasizing figurative nature of the expressions and hence figurative interpretations. In his translation of the Scripture to the Arabic language, all anthropomorphic expressions were eliminated by figurative method. For instance referring to Moses' plea (Ex. 33) that he beheld the glory of God and God responded that he could see the back of God and not his front, Saadya explained: "I wish to say in explanation of this entire passage that the Creator possesses an effulgence which He created and showed to the prophets in order that they might be convinced that the words they hear are indeed from the Creator. When one of them sees it, he declares, "I have seen the glory of God." Some, too, speaking figuratively, say, "I saw God"... But when they perceive this light, they cannot endure contemplating it, because of its tremendous potency and splendor..."⁴¹⁵ To him Daniel saw not the God but the same created form which the rabbis called *Shekinah*.⁴¹⁶ He further argued that "If we were to speak of Him in true language, we should have to forego and reject such assertions as the following- that He hears and sees, that He loves and wills, with the result that we should be left with nothing but His existence alone..."⁴¹⁷ In addition to that, he, like Mu`tazilites, the Muslim Antiattributists, established the internal unity of God in the sense of His simplicity.⁴¹⁸ There are great many similarities and borrowings from Islamic Rationalists specially the Mu`tazilites and figurative interpretations of scriptural anthropomorphisms, as Neusner and others have observed, were mostly due to them.⁴¹⁹ Wolfson observes that such a "conception of internal unity or absolute simplicity was not derived by the Arabic-speaking Jews directly from Scripture, for the unity of God in Scripture meant only numerical unity. It was the Mu`tazilite stressing of internal unity or absolute simplicity that led them to interpret scriptural unity in that sense."⁴²⁰ He was followed by many other rabbis like Bahya (1270-1340), Chasdai Crescas (1340-1410) and Joseph Albo (1380-1444).

It was the twelfth-century Jewish philosopher Moses b. Maimonides (1135-1204), "a proud son of *aljamah* of Muslim Spain", and then a physician of Muslim governor of Egypt Ayyub, in whom the Jewish rationalism received its classic formulation. He stressed upon transcendence, incomparability and absolute otherness of God and interpreted the biblical anthropomorphisms thoroughly and figuratively.⁴²¹ In this area, argues O'Leary, Maimonides "reproduces the substance of that already associated with al-Farabi and Ibn Sina put into a Jewish form."⁴²² He also observes that "The teaching of Maimonides shows a somewhat modified form of the system already developed by al-Farabi and Ibn Sina adapted to Jewish beliefs."⁴²³ Lawrence V. Berman declares Maimonides as "the Disciple of Alfarabi".⁴²⁴ Berman argues that "Doubtless, there were many intellectuals who accepted the Alfarabian view and tried to understand Islam and Christianity from its perspective, but no one else in a major work attempted to apply his theory in detail to a particular religious tradition."⁴²⁵

Maimonides in his "*Guide of the Perplexed*", according to Berman, "appears as a theologian in the Alfarabian sense and here the Alfarabian point of view is clearly felt."⁴²⁶ He in his *Guide* asserted in philosophical language the spirituality of God and mitigated the biblical anthropomorphisms⁴²⁷ by *via negative*, by stripping God of all positive attributes.⁴²⁸ He argued about complete "rejection of essential attributes in reference to God."⁴²⁹ After a detailed discussion of various attributes he concluded: "Consider all these and similar attributes, and you will find that they cannot be employed in reference to God. He is not a magnitude that any quality resulting from quantity as such could be possessed by Him; He is not affected by external influences, and therefore does not possess any quality resulting from emotion. He is not subject to physical conditions, and therefore does not possess strength or similar qualities... Hence it follows that no attribute coming under the head of quality in its widest sense, can be predicated of God... are clearly inadmissible in reference to God, for they imply composition, which... is out of question as regards the Creator...He is absolutely One."⁴³⁰ To him literalism was the source of error. "The adherence to the literal sense of the text of Holy Writ is the source of all this error..."⁴³¹ He further argued that "the negative attributes of God are the true attributes: they do not include any incorrect notions or any deficiency whatever in reference to God, while positive attributes imply polytheism, and are inadequate... we cannot describe the Creator by any means except by negative attributes."⁴³² So God is existing but not in existence, living but not in life, knowing but not in knowledge etc. "It is known that existence is an accident appertaining to all things, and therefore an element superadded to their essence. This must evidently be the case as regards everything the existence of which is due to some cause; its existence is an element superadded to its essence. But as regards a being whose existence is not due to any cause- God alone is that being, for His existence, as we have said, is absolute- existence and essence are perfectly identical; He is not a substance to which existence is joined as an accident, as an additional element. His existence is always absolute, and has never been a new element or an accident to Him. Consequently God exists without possessing the attribute of existence. Similarly He lives, without possessing the attribute of life; knows without possessing the attribute of knowledge..."⁴³³ He concluded observing that "every attribute predicated of God either denotes the quality of an action, or-when the attribute is intended to convey some idea of the Divine Being itself, and not of His actions- the negation of the opposite... All we understand is the fact that He exists, that He is a Being to whom none of His creatures is similar, who has nothing in common with them, who does not include plurality. .. Praised be He ! In the contemplation of His essence, our comprehension and knowledge prove insufficient... in the endeavor to extol Him in words, all our efforts in speech are mere weakness and failure!"⁴³⁴

Maimonide's transcendental Deity did not seem to be resembling the original biblical or the rabbinic Deity. It was in no way a development upon them. Its philosophical nature and foreign color was quite obvious; therefore, his *Guide*, observes Augs, "was severely criticized, occasionally banned, more frequently permitted only for those over thirty. It was not included in the curriculum of study in the great *yeshivoth*, but the adventurous souls who dared to think for themselves regarded the *Guide* as their Bible."⁴³⁵ His Creed of the thirteen essentials of faith, observes Suffrin, "has never been favorably accepted; and, although it is printed in some prayer-books, it is never recited publicly."⁴³⁶ His path, argues Guthrie, ended "in obscurity and never has been the mainstream of Jewish belief."⁴³⁷ A modern Jewish thinker Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929) observes, that the negative theology "dismembered and abolished the existing assertions about

God's "attributes,"... This path leads from an existing Aught to Nought; at its end atheism and mysticism can shake hands. We do not take this path, but rather the opposite one from Naught to Aught. Our goal is not a negative concept, but on the contrary a highly positive one."⁴³⁸ Kadushin argues that the whole "Medieval Jewish philosophy is neither a continuation of that development nor in line with it. Rabbinic thought alone has its roots firmly in the Bible, and it alone remains united with the Bible in a living bond."⁴³⁹ And the Rabbinic thought is undoubtedly anthropomorphic and in certain cases quite corporeal.

Biblical scholars and theologians, without denying the presence and crude forms of anthropomorphisms in the Bible, try to explain away some of the reasons why they feel it had to be so. The first and the most commonly cited cause is the assumption of the basic inability of the human mind to represent God as He is in Himself. The second reason is said to be the lack of philosophical spirit in the ancient people and perceiving of the Deity as living, active, personal and individual God. The third reason is said to be the practical nature of the Hebrew people, their boldness and the linguistic structure of their language.⁴⁴⁰ Therefore some theologians like Franz Rosenzweig do not see any problem with depicting God in anthropomorphic terms. To Rosenzweig authentic revelation is the vehicle of transcendence.⁴⁴¹ He views human experience of God as "incommunicable, and he who speaks of it makes himself ridiculous."⁴⁴² Still he argues that "Though man is not God and recognizes his limits, he can still address God in meaningful language, with the Divinity doing the same in relation to man." In a situation like that Rosenzweig does not see "why human language to and about God, even anthropomorphic, should be considered inauthentic or impermissible, given the revelatory situation which exists between God and humankind."⁴⁴³ Thus, he argues, "it is not human illusion if Scripture speaks of God's countenance and even of his separate bodily parts. There is no other way to express the Truth."⁴⁴⁴

It can be argued that if the Hebrew Bible is the true revelation or inspiration of God, the Word of God as is commonly held, then God the maker of human nature and revealer of His Will is quite capable of telling people in proper terms and categories what is He and how shall He be represented. He has given human beings the capacity and capability of recognizing the fundamental facts and truths and God is the Ultimate reality and the Truth as Rosenzweig himself observes: "Truth is not God. God is Truth."⁴⁴⁵ The Bible as traditionally believed is not the human representation of what God is or what He wills. It is God's inspiration and hence a portrayal of what He is and what He wills. The very assumption of the progressive or evolutionary revelation and crude anthropomorphic expressions as resulting from man's inability to know God or represent Him in non-anthropomorphic and appropriate terms stems from another assumption that these parts of the Bible are man's words and representations and not divine revelation. Human limitations and inability to grasp the essence of God does not require and should not be an excuse to depict God in concrete human forms and shapes, the forms and qualities, which all agree, are not there in Him. It is always possible to emphasize God's love, mercy and concern without making him weep or cry. Torah's significance can be pinpointed by many ways other than making God read its 24 books throughout the day and Mishna in the night. One is at a loss to understand the relationship between God's three hours daily sport with Leviathan and the excuses of human inability to understand Him. It is perhaps the other way around. Human beings seem to be understanding and knowing too many details about Him, even His very personal schedule to the min-

ute details. Proper communication and also the mystery of God perhaps does not need or allow that much familiarity. The transcendent God is far above such limitations.

In addition, the non-philosophical nature of a person or a nation does not require God to be represented in terms, categories, and characteristics that are altogether inappropriate and detrimental to the very definition and concept of God's transcendence and unicity. Moreover using the same Hebrew language, individuals from the same nation and culture have perceived and represented God in transcendental, non-corporeal, non-anthropomorphic terms as we have seen above. Had anthropomorphism been intrinsic to the nature of the language, or a demand of practicality or part of the boldness of the Hebrew nation, then it would had been an inclusively universal phenomenon. But it is not. The same scholars who give these explanations to make some sense out of these primitive expressions hold that patriarchs or Moses or at least the great prophets were monotheists in the strict sense of the term. If the nature or boldness of an ancient figure like Moses or other prophets, as argued by these scholars, does not stop them from having a high concept of God, it should not be and could not be a leading factor behind crude anthropomorphisms of the Bible narration. The same can be argued about the nature of primitive societies in regards to their concept of God.

Moreover, the Bible is not, as contended, the word of the primitive Hebrew people or nation. It is argued to be the very Word of God. The remoteness of societies, the limitations of language structures and constructions, or any other factor does not and cannot force God to misrepresent the facts or conceal the truths. Therefore, the above mentioned causes may not be cited as the only reasons for biblical anthropomorphisms. Room should be left to suggest some other reasons which may explain the presence and vividness of these biblical confusions, discrepancies, and anthropomorphisms. That is the role played by human agency (the human aspect) in compilation and transmission of the Hebrew Bible as is being widely recognized in our times.

In summary, it may easily be granted that the Hebrew Bible's understanding of God and the progressive or evolutionary nature of its God-concept may have been factors attributing to modern man's reckless and heedless attitude towards the transcendent God of traditional religion. The biblical data does not seem to disprove the projection theory in categorical terms. On the other hand, in several parts of the Bible, the human element is so dominant that it seems clear that human beings are imposing their own images, qualities, and categories upon God and conceiving Him like themselves, or in the words of Robin Lane Fox, "In scripture this God is not revealing himself: human authors are creating him, as he is supposed to have created them, 'after their own image'.⁴⁴⁶

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Philadelphia, 1983, 11, for more details on early Father's usage of two approaches see J. Danielou, *From Shadow to*

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examples of his allegorical interpretations in John Ferguson, *Clement of Alexandria*, Twayne Publishers, Inc, NY,

1974, 73ff⁹⁸R. E. Brown defines *sensus literalis* as "The sense which the human author directly intended and which his words convey." Raymond E. Brown, "The Literal Sense of Scripture," in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. by Brown, Joseph Fitzmeyer and Jerome Murphy, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1968, 606-99⁹⁹R. A. Greer, *Ibid*, 180¹⁰⁰Brown, *Ibid*, 607¹⁰¹H. Chadwick, trans., *Origen: Contra Celsum*, CUP, Cambridge, 1965, VII, 20, p. 411¹⁰²Charles Scalise, "Origen and the *Sensus Literalis*" in *Origen of Alexandria, His World and His Legacy*, ed. by Charles Kannengiesser and W. L. Petersn, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, 1988, 121-22;

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1973³¹¹ Ibid, 353³¹² Ibid, 362³¹³ Ibid, 357-8³¹⁴ Ibid, 368³¹⁵ Ibid, 372. Leo Baeck disagrees with such a claim and argue that "Only in Israel did an ethical monotheism exist, and wherever else it is found later, it has been derived directly or indirectly from Israel.", *The Essence of Judaism*, Schocken Books, NY, 1961, 61
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82³³⁶ Mark Smith, *Ibid*, 155 also see J.J.M. Roberts, "In Defense of the Monarchy: The Contribution of Israelite Kingship to Biblical Theology," in P.D. Miller, Jr., (ed.), *Ancient Israelite Religion*, 337,96

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