THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF BIBLICAL RELIGION

A Prolegomenon to Old Testament Theology

Simon J. De Vries

UNIVERSITY PRESS OF AMERICA

LANHAM . NEW YORK • LONDON

University Press of America,™ Inc.

4720 Boston Way
Lanham, MD 20706

3 **Henrietta Street**
London, WC2E 8LU England

ISBN (Perfect): o-8191-3141-5
ISBN (Cloth): O-8 19 l-3 140-7

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the generosity of the following copyright owners to make quotations from their publications, as follows:

Sections cited as from ANET and ANES, from James B. Pritchard, ed., Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament, 3rd edn. with Supplement. Copyright (c) 1969 by Princeton University Press. Selections reprinted by permission of Princeton University Press.

Sections of pp. 15-16 and 19-20 from H. and H. A. Frankfort, John A. Wilson, Thorkild Jacobsen, and William A. Irwin, The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man. Copyright (c) 1946 by The University of Chicago. Selections reprinted by permission of The University of Chicago Press.

Sections of pp. 44-46, 282, 341, 342-343, 346, and 349-50 from Simon J. De Vries, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow. Copyright (c) 1975 by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Selections reprinted by permission of William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Sections of Simon J. De Vries, art. "THE FALL" and art. "SIN, SINNERS" from The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, vols. II, IV. Copyright (c) 1962 by Abingdon Press. Used by permission.

FOREWORD

In The Achievements of Biblical Religion, Professor De Vries approaches biblical understanding from a strictly historical and exegetical methodology, placing special emphasis on the emergence of distinctive insights at the points where Israelite religiosity diverged from its cultural rivals within the ancient civilizations of the Near East. Sharing much with the ideology and practice of its neighbors, it nevertheless differed drastically from them in a number of crucial areas, specifically in its view of God, of man, of society, of history, and of finite existence. In each of these, a commitment to a transcendental monotheism produced a seriously developed personalism which came to be applied to God and to man equally, defining every aspect of their mutual interaction, together with the apprehension of total reality.

It is the claim of Professor De Vries that Israel's distinctive stance accounts for its survivability and for its contemporary relevance. In his book, he undertakes the responsibility of elucidating and illustrating from concrete textual data the process by which this took shape. The validity of his argument will be judged first of all by exegetical specialists and experts in biblical criticism. It has not been his intent, however, to speak only to fellow specialists, but rather to prepare a synopsis that can inform the educated public generally in the essentials of biblical truth. Thus his book makes recurring reference to rival philosophies of religion, contemporary as well as ancient, for he aspires to make his interpretation communicable in this language of universal human thought. It is with this in mind that he has turned to me with the very congenial request to provide his book with an introductory essay, couched in the professional language of philosophical and psychological discourse, outlining the way in which a personalistic epistemology underlies both his and my perception of Old Testament faith. This I gladly do, and I do it with the understanding that my function is to initiate with him a dialogue, a dialogue on the same subject but carried on in two distinct kinds of language. I shall speak in the language of philosophy; he speaks in the language of theological exegesis. We do not believe that the two contradict each other, but say the same thing in two different ways. It is our intent that as the reader proceeds with Professor De Vries's book, he will bear

in mind the observations that I shall present in the words that follow.

Old Testament faith and personalistic epistemology

The question to be answered here is, "How did a personalistic epistemology contribute to and shape the achievements of biblical faith reflected in the Old Testament?"

There is a possible misunderstanding that such a question can raise. I am not raising this question with the presupposition that the writers of the Old Testament had a well thought-out, fully articulated epistemological position. I agree with Gerhard von Rad's claim that the Old Testament traditions "do not' develop or define the contents of faith 'systematically'."[1] It should be pointed out, however, that an epistemology can be presupposed without being articulated. Furthermore, and this will be an underlying thesis of this essay, the reason why the Old Testament writers did not fully articulate an epistemology could be, itself, a manifestation of an underlying epistemological orientation. If Old Testament writers wrote within the framework of beliefs which can roughly be called a personalistic epistemology, they would be disinclined to systematize their orientation.

Personalistic epistemology

I shall present five major distinctions reflected in epistemological positions. The distinctions arise from fundamental questions about the nature of knowledge.

1. Basic versus inferential

One fundamental question to be answered is, "What type of knowledge is basic, direct, immediate or noninferential, and what type of knowledge is derivative, indirect, mediate or inferential?" Empiricists have treated sense-data propositions as basic. Logical empiricists, in the tradition of David Hume, have attempted to reconstruct the entire edifice of knowledge on a sensory foundation. Rationalists have treated some knowledge about the world as derived from basic postulates of reason--knowledge which is prior to sensory experience. From this basic knowledge other knowledge can be inferred by logical deducation.

Personalistic epistemology treats knowledge of other persons as basic, noninferential knowledge. It is not derived from more direct knowledge.

2. Social versus solitary

Basic knowledge for the epistemological personalist is, contrary to the empiricist and the rationalist, a social phenomenon; it is not characterized in the basic propositions of either a sensory or innate variety, the context of the solitary ego. Basic knowledge presupposes a community of persons.

There is, for the personalist, no epistemological problem of other minds. This problem is the predicament of those who treat basic knowledge as a product of the solitary ego. This is a predicament for those who treat the knowledge of other persons as inductively inferred from one's own case. For the personalist, knowledge of the self and its ideas is not the beginning point, not the foundation of our edifice of knowledge. Rather, self knowledge is itself a by-product of social interaction. The personalist shares this notion of self knowledge with those in the pragmatic tradition: William James, John Dewey, George Mead and the later Wittgenstein.

3. Holistic versus atomistic

At the heart of British empiricism is the belief that knowledge is a product of sensory atoms. For Locke, these are simply ideas, for Hume they are ideas and impressions, and for recent empiricists, with a phenomenalistic orientation, the atoms are sense date (e.g., Bertrand Russell and A. J. Ayer).[2] Greek philosophy featuring Platonic forms and Aristotelian universals, roots the edifice of knowledge in the building blocks--discrete units of knowledge. The units of knowledge are mortared together by various means of association. Knowledge reflected in sentences is a product of this association, and sentential meaning is a function of a relationship of word and discrete unit of reference. An atomistic theory of meaning often accompanies an atomistic theory of basic knowledge. The empiricist and the rationalist may disagree about the ontological status of the discrete referents; they may disagree about the principles of association, the mortar that binds the atoms. For the rationalist the basic building blocks of knowledge may be whole propositions acting as axioms.

The epistemological personalist, by contrast, will want to point out the holistic and contextual nature of basic knowledge. The atoms of knowledge seen as basic by both empiricists and rationalists turn out to be secondary by-products of analysis and abstraction from a holistic perception. Instead of the wholes being constructions of cognitive atoms of direct knowledge,' the atoms are a product of analyzing direct and immediate holistic cognitions--undifferentiated experience which may be given *an* analysis later. These cognitive wholes are not experienced as a series of discrete units of Humean data. This holistic orientation is not restricted to a personalistic terrain. There is in Hegelian idealism and pragmatism an appreciation for basic knowledge characterized in holistic terms. This is reflected in John Dewey's claim that "in actual experience, there is never any such isolated singular object or event; an object or event is always a special part, phase of aspect of an environing experienced world--a situation."[3]

4. Supra-propositional versus propositional

There is a temptation for both rationalists and empiricists to limit knowledge to what can be said. The epistemological personalist need not deny that a great deal of our knowledge is propositional; it can be expressed in propositions, but he points to what Michael Polanyi calls the tacit dimension.[4] This belief that we can know more than we can tell follows, in part, from the holistic orientation cited above. Our concepts (and therefore the propositions made up of concepts) are themselves by-products of more basic, holistic experience.

The epistemological personalist with a theistic orientation has the option of viewing revelation as something which extends beyond a body of proposition about God. The content of revelation is an historical encounter with God. Knowing is supra-propositional, reflecting a personal relationship that cannot, be fully characterized in propositions (without remainder). To say that knowledge of God is supra-propositional is not to claim that there is no truth in propositions about God. Theological propositions have their value, but they do not, as propositions, fully reflect the encounter of a personal God acting in human history. Theological propositions do not constitute basic knowledge of the divine encounter. The linguistic unit of inquiry into the divine encounter is not the isolated proposition presenting God's attributes or his essence; it is

not an argument form instantiated with propositions; it is, rather, the historical narrative reflecting the engaging dialogue with God. The pragmatics of language reflected in the prayerful response, the apprehensive dialogue and the emotive interest of the perceiver are as indicative of the personal encounter as one can hope to find in the content of declarative theological propositions about God. A free display of the pragmatics of language can only be found in narratives, the wider context of activity, the forms of life. It is here that one finds the rich variety of language games embedded in the Lebensform of personal encounter.[5]

To summarize, supra-propositional knowledge does not replace propositional knowledge; the former is basic in the sense that it is presupposed in propositional discourse; the tacit dimension surrounds discourse; furthermore, insofar as language can be used to express a personal encounter, the best that can be done is "expression" through the pragmatics of language: propositions-in-use, the story.

In Anglo-American philosophy rooted in British empiricism, the fundamental unit of cognition in expressed in a proposition or its component concepts. The edifice of knowledge is built on basic propositions and protocol statements.[6] The epistemological personalist points to the wider situation within which discourse takes place, the knowing that surrounds and conditions the "knowing thats".

5. Interested-active versus disinterested-passive

There is a watershed in epistemology which separates those who see knowledge as the object of disinterested, passive implantations on the tabula rasa and those, on the other hand, who see knowledge as the product of personal activity; The epistemological personalist will fall on the interested, active side of the dichotomy. Successful cognition makes demands upon the knower. In the words of Bergson, "The normal work of the intellect is far from being disinterested."[7] Marxists have taken this one step further noting that "the philosophers have interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it."[8] Not only is cognitive interested in the sense of active interpretation; the ultimate goal is action. Given the pragmatist's understanding of belief and knowledge, the cognition of the world cannot be separated from praxis. "Only that which has been organized into our dispositions so as to enable us to adapt our aims and desires

to the situation in which we live is really knowledge."[9]

The epistemological personalist, in characterizing the cognition of God in the divine encounter will stress the demands in action that are so intimately tied to that encounter. If action and personal response did not follow on the heels of cognition, the cognition would be suspect.

Epistemological personalism and Hebrew thought

If Old Testament writing presupposes epistemological personalism, (a) the writing must reflect the noninferential, basic status of cognitions of the divine encounter; (b) the basic knowledge will be social, not solitary; (c) it will be holistic. not atomistic; (d) it will be supra-propositional, not propositional; and (e) it will be interested-active, not disinterested-passive. These are the demands of the divine encounter insofar as it is a personal encounter. If the Old Testament writers presupposed epistemological personalism one would expect to find:

1. little inference proving the existence of the Thou in the encounter;
2. emphasis on the social and intrapersonal nature of divine revelation;
3. little theological analysis of the tacit dimension;
4. a reliance on story and historical narrative to point to what cannot be said;
5. interested-active participants in the knowing process - a knower whose knowledge makes demands on his behavior.

Are these elements present in the biblical writings? Let us examine each point.

1. There is wide acceptance among biblical scholars that God's existence is not, in the Bible, a matter of inferred knowledge. God's existence is viewed as basic knowledge. No attempt is made in the Old Testament to establish God's existence by *means* of *an argument* from more basic premisses. The praises of Israel are a response to a divine datum which is epistemologically basic. The Hebrew verb, yādāh, generally translated "to praise," properly means "to confess," "to accept," and "always refers to a preceding divine datum."[10]

2. The divine encounter is social and intra-

personal given the personal character of the relata in knowing relationship. Biblical scholars have pointed to the connotations of yādaʿ, "to know," reflecting a close personal relationship. The concept is flexible enough to range from "to understand" to "to sleep" with a woman.[11] Knowledge is not the activity of a solitary ego caught in the epistemological predicament of having to infer the world of others on the basis of one's solitary data. Furthermore, knowledge is not an asymmetrical, one-way relationship between mental act and object; it is, in fundamental usage, a symmetrical relationship between persons. In the Hebrew ontology of the knowing situation relative to the divine encounter, the relata in the knowing relationship are persons--not isolated egos and their subjective, mind-dependent objects of knowledge.

> There is no special faculty of the intellect of reason in Hebrew psychology. The word most commonly used for "mind" in Hebrew is simply the common word for heart (R. Dentan).[12]

The consequences of this are wide ranging. If knowing is, in its basic usage, a relationship engaged in by persons qua persons (not qua solitary egos), Hebrew epistemology is not compatible with much of western epistemology. In the mainstream of western epistemology, the ontology of the knowing situation is a relationship between mental act and object. Idealists and realists simply disagree on the ontological status of the object. Phenomenology is grounded in Husserl's ontology of the knowing situation in which an ego "intends" its objects. What I want to suggest is that whereas much western philosophy treats mentalistic acts such as knowing, believing, hoping, yearning, and desiring as subjective acts of the solitary ego, the Hebrew treats such concepts as intrapersonal. It is one of the great ironies of philosophical inquiry that very recent analyses of mentalistic concepts are closer to the Hebrew orientation in their intrapersonal treatment. Philosophy of mind since Ryle, Wittgenstein and Strawson reflects more of a tendency (a) to reject the act-object analysis of knowing and (b) to resist the reduction of personal concepts to sub-personal categories. By sub-personal categories I mean para-mechanical events taking place in solitary egos or mechanical events taking place in the central nervous system.[13]

Robert Dentan suggests that the Hebrew concept of mind "is a result of the Hebrew inability to think in

analytical terms."[14] What I want to suggest is that the Hebrew orientation does not reflect an inability at analysis, but rather a refusal to be reductionist, a refusal to replace the language of personal dialogue with a sub-personal technical language. Post-positivistic linguistic analysis does not equate analysis with reductionism, and a more perceptive view of the Hebrews might be that they refused reductive analysis because of their apprehension of knowing (and other like concepts) as Part of the personal (rather than, a sub-personal) language. Although there may be no explicit concept of personhood in the Old Testament, the Hebrews did not reduce the family of person-related concepts to the sub-personal, technical language of Cartesian egos, disembodiable spirits or the psysicalistic language of bodily characteristics and functions. In so doing they were treating person-language as irreducible.

3. Just as the Hebrews refused to reduce the relata in the knowing relation to sub-personal categories, they refused to abstract the knowing relation from the historical situations of encounter. The divine encounter reflects holistic knowledge which no series of propositions can fully express.

4. The characterization of the divine encounter falls, therefore, upon propositions embedded in stories and historical narratives of events. No attempt is made to give a fully propositional account of Yahweh, but rather, to show the situation in which Yahweh manifests himself. The manifestation' itself is supra-propositional.

5. Both knowledge and wisdom in Hebrew thought are behaviorally demanding. Both parties in the knowing situation are responsive and active. The beginning of wisdom is not a private act of cognition but 'a response: the "fear of Yahweh." The Hebrew enters the historical event of a knowing relationship with a sense of awe and leaves it with a sense of obligation. Yahweh's chosen are not the passive objects of his will, but free moral agents who relate to Yahweh with obligations resulting from the moral responsibility that comes with freedom. But obligation is mutual, and Yahweh in his sovereignty chooses to take on obligations to his chosen.

The contribution of epistemological personalism to Old Testament theology

In what precedes I have presented the major dis-

tinctions within which epistemological personalism may be understood. An attempt was made to correlate this epistemological orientation with Hebrew thought. I now wish to show how such a position relates to the major theological themes of the Old Testament as Professor De Vries presents them.

1. The transcendence and immanence of God

The transcendence of God bespeaks his lordship, but there is an epistemological dimension to transcend as well. The transcendence of God is reflected in the supra-propositional nature of the knowing situation. God cannot be captured in propositions. The most that can be done is to use historical narrative to point to the wider situation, the tacit dimension, in which Yahweh reveals himself. This epistemological transcendence of God does not imply that God cannot be approached, but that God cannot be adequately captured by propositions. The epistemological dimension of the immanence of God is reflected in the availability of the Other to related in a personal encounter.

Although we generally tend to think of transcendence as an attribute of God alone, it is interesting to note that in the epistemological sense, all parties in a knowing situation are transcendent. Persons qua persons cannot be fully described by a string of propositions without remainder. Whether the person is God or one's spouse or loved one, there is always an element that transcends the verbal, yet is presupposed in a personal relationship: the tacit dimension. Persons qua persons escape the laws of prediction and control--the prediction and control possible in the natural sciences but not the social sciences. No person, divine or human, is, qua free person, subject to prediction and control. It is this recognition of the epistemological transcendence of the other that existential and humanistic counselling psychologists have attempted to restore to psychology.

2. The divine image mirrored in human personhood

In the knowing relationship person meets person; this is not the relationship of mental act and object, the solitary Cartesian ego and the objects it "intends". To reduce person-talk to the technical language of pure body-talk or Cartesian ego-talk is to give up the primitive status of the concept of person. Such reduction presupposes abstractions and a conceptual framework of mind-body dualism such that personhood must be identi-

fled with one half of the dualism or the concatenation of the two elements thus abstracted. The concept of God as Pure Subject must be guarded against the dualism which forces personhood into either physicalistic or spiritualistic categories. The notion of a pure subject abstracted from person-language is not found in Hebrew theology. Ruach, the Hebrew word translated as "spirit", has its etymological roots in the physical world of breath and wind; if it were forced to one side of the dualism it would be the physicalistic side. To coerce Hebrew thought into such dualism is a temptation of translators who may be taking sidelong glances at their own conceptual system and its Cartesian heritage. Such dualism goes back even further than Descartes; the Claim of John 4:24 that God is spirit has a hellenized cast to it.

3. A life of fulfilling integrity within a covenant community

Once the knowing relationship in the divine encounter is seen as intrapersonal rather than as a sub-personal relationship among solitary egos, personal knowledge is "out of doors" and communal. In the covenant community, basic knowledge of the Other and others is possible. There is here no epistemological problem of other minds; this problem presupposes an ontology of the knowing situation that the Hebrews did not have. The problem arises when the solitary Cartesian ego must make inferences about the other on the basis of self-knowledge. The personalistic epistemology of the Hebrews (a) relocates basic or immediate knowledge, (b) treats the relata of the knowing situation as persons, not sub-persons and (c) refuses to reduce persons to Cartesian egos or their bodies. The problem of other minds dissolves within this framework.

The political analogue of the Hittite suzerainty treaty should not overshadow the personalistic dimension reflected in covenant knowing. (I have already commented on this intimate relationship.) There are ethical responsibilities which are directly proportional to the intimacy of the knowing relationship. There are active demands placed on the knower. This is expressed very well in the following passage from Amos:

> You only have I known of all the families of the earth. Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. (3:2)

4. History as responsible dialogue with God

Reference to historical events has a more elevated role for the epistemological personalist than might be found in other epistemological orientations. There are several reasons why history is important:

1. God is made manifest to persons in historical events (not to Cartesian egos in the solitude of closet contemplation).
2. The supra-propositional status of God-knowing follows from the assumption that there is an historical personal encounter.
3. Historical narrative and the pragmatics of language are, for personalism, as important as the more descriptive statements about God. Both point to divine revelation but neither constitute it.

Having already discussed (1) and (2), I shall concentrate on (3). It is tempting to view religious language as a series of descriptive propositions about God, but in covenant knowing there is a wide variety of language games to be played other than description of the personal encounter. In fact, given the supra-propositional nature of the encounter, such descriptions fail the knower anyway.

Speech acts are historical events in an historical context. The search for meaning without context reflects a bias for propositional knowledge divorced from the tacit dimension. The semantics of a language cannot be divorced from its pragmatics, the language at work in contexts of praise, admonition, threat, moral judgment, and devotional cooing. To focus on the semantic, lexical content of a static language-at-rest, without seeing the speech act in its telic and pragmatic context, is to retain but a shadow of its full meaning. A speech act without its pragmatic context is a mere mouth movement or a string of phonemes. An action qua action is a telic event, an event with a background of purpose. (This is the difference between my raising my arm and my arm's moving upward; signalling for a cab or merely moving my arm; performing a speech act or merely making noises.) It follows that if an historian studies human actions, the subject matter of history is, to a great extent, teleological.[15]

5. A meaning and purpose in the evils of finite existence

Epistemology cannot be separated from ontology, the ontology of the knower and the known. If Hebrew reli-

gious epistemology treats the knower as a person (as opposed to knower qua solitary ego or tabula rasa), one can get a view of a Hebrew personalistic ontology through the lenses of the personalistic epistemology. The knower has an ontological status such that, qua person, the knower cannot be reduced to some more basic entity (e.g., spirit, mind, matter) without loss. Persons are ontologically basic types of entities; to analyze them in terms of more basic types of entities is to lose them.

The consequences of the ontological basicness of persons are far-reaching. The proper subject of cognitive predication is the person qua person, but ascriptions of cognition are only part of that whole collection of characteristics which are most appropriately ascribed to persons. Person-death, for example, is a concept which cannot be reduced to body-death nor the separation of body and spirit. Personhood is communal and relational, and the meaning of personhood cannot be captured in solitary, nonrelational ascriptions any more than the concept of chess-king can be captured in descriptions of plastic or onyx. Person-death is a role disagreement, walking off stage, as it were, leaving Yahweh and the Telic Play. Offstage there is only silence, the silence of Sheol. Person-life (like person-knowing) is, on the other hand, a role engagement in a script filled with praise for Yahweh.16

> The dead do not praise Yahweh nor do any that go down in silence. (Ps. 115:17)

It is the Telic Play, the script of Yahweh's purposes, that gives meaning to the historical set; it is the play that gives purpose to the cast.

In the Telic Play there is always room for improvisation. Indeed, that is what one would expect from interested and active knowers. Knowing is not the pas*sive*, mechanical absorption of data by the tabula rasa. In the versonalistic orientation the vers process of knowing-presupposes an active agent, an agent who contributes to what he experiences through an interpretation of events. In this activity lies both the freedom and the fallibility of the knower.

Evils and tragedies gain significance in the Telic Play; there are different scripts which carry the cast toward various conclusions. The necessity of the consequences which follow the choice of scripts is a moral

necessity, not a mechanistic and fatalistic necessity. God's purposes transcend nature's mechanisms, and teleological explanations of events supersede mechanical explanations.17

Personalistic epistemology versus apocalyptic epistemology

In presenting the presonalistic epistemology reflected in the Old Testament, I do not wish to give the impression that this is the only epistemological orientation represented therein. I have set out the categories which I think will be an aid to further research into Old Testament epistemology. Second, I have presented the poles of emphasis defining personalistic epistemology, the orientation which I consider to be the dominant orientation of the Old Testament. Let us look at an epistemological orientation which represents the greatest deviance from the personalistic orientation.

The greatest deviance from the personalistic model is found in apocalyptic. First, apocalyptic locates knowledge of Yahweh in the solitary individual, the fantastic visions of the seer. There is no need for communal corroboration; there is a "gnostic" elite having direct access to the visions. The criterion for truth and understanding comes within the vision itself if it comes at all. Second, the content given in the apocalyptic vision is stated in propositional terms by the figures appearing in the visions. What is not always given is the interpreter's guide to the utterances of those appearing in the visions. (See Dan. 4:13, 8:15, 9:24-27, 12:7.) Third, the seer is passive in the uninterpretive sense. By the device of pseudonymity,[18] the seer presents the claims of angels and other characters in his visions. The passive receiver is relieved of the burden of his infallibility since only the active knower is fallible. With active interpertation comes fallibility, but the apocalyptic seer passively receives both sign and significance. (This is not to say that the significance is always given. See Dan. 12:9.)

Visionary seeing is to be contrasted with the teleological seeing of the personalistic orientation. What one sees in teleological seeing is determined, in part, by the telic categories (the categories of Yahweh's purposes) brought to the event by the perceiver. The categories used in the interpretation are a product of the perceiver's faith. The categories are not given as pure data of experience; they belong to the faithful.

Teleological seeing is compatible with a scepticism, an epistemological humility involving the realization (a) that experience is mediated by a conceptual structure and (b) that the conceptual structure does not capture Yahweh.

The apocalyptic vision is an immediate awareness of a futuristic Yahweh event, whereas the personalistic awareness of God, though mediated by teleological categories, is an awareness with a more immediate referent: God at work in the present event. The irony of this is that in the epistemological immediacy of the apocalyptic vision, Yahweh, as a referent, is more distant; in the personalistic orientation God is "seen" in the current event, a perception mediated by the categories held by faith.

In understanding various epistemological orientations, it is sometimes helpful to understand the various points at which scepticism may arise. An epistemology reflects not only the nature of knowing, but also, the nature of the failure of knowledge. Personalistic epistemology can be contrasted with apocalyptic epistemology in the accounts of the limitations of knowledge. Insofar as Yahweh-knowing in the personalistic orientation is supra-propositional, this orientation is compatible with a scepticism about the possibility of full and comprehensive propositional knowledge of Yahweh. Insofar as propositional knowledge of Yahweh involves an investment of the categories of faith, it is possible that the faithless do not see the work of the Lord. (Isa. 5:12, 5:19) Insofar as the claims of faith bridge the gap between a mere chronological event and the cognition of divine purpose in it, the Hebrew perceiver is making a teleological investment. If one accepts the standard definition of knowledge as justified, true belief, Yahweh is not known. Faith does not justify belief; faith provides the categories for teleological seeing, and the perceiver is fallible.

By contrast, the visionary seer of apocalyptic, since he does not recognize any active investment in what he sees, can attribute his lack of understanding to information withheld. The words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end (Dan. 12:7). The visionary seer receives self-justified atoms of experience; his limitations are a result of information withheld rather than a result of interpretations invested. A passive receiver, after all, is not fallible in interpretations if he is not the author of any. The epistemological atomism of apocalyptic cannot be separated from the qualitative orientation to time designations found in apocalyptic.19 Given the dominant epistemological orientation of apocalyptic, anorientation which supplanted teleological seeing with visionary seeing, one would expect a more mechanistic, less teleological view of time.20

In summary, apocalyptic epistemology emphasizes the solitary, atomistic, propositional and passive poles of our epistemological polarities; the personalistic orientation emphasizes the social, holistic, supra-propositional and active poles. Although, in apocalyptic, the seer passively receives both sign and signification, this epistemological immediacy comes at the cost of a temporal "distance" from the reality of Yahweh. In the personalistic orientation, on the other hand, epistemological mediacy and fallibility allow for a healthy scepticism21 and an active. fideistic. teleological seeing of an historically intimate Yahweh. Yahweh is close at hand for those with the eyes of faith.

I think there is good reason to believe that if ancient Israel had a dominant epistemology at all, it was a consistently personalistic epistemology. I have attempted to outline the nature of such an orientation and to show how this orientation fits within (a) the wider range of epistemological positions and (b) the central theological themes of the Old Testament that are to be dealt with in this book.

With the rise of modern existential philosophy the personalistic elements featured in existential epistemology have been rediscovered in Hebrew thought. But personalistic epistemology as I have defined it is an ideal type and is not actually represented in any particular current philosopher's position, although a full explication of Martin Buber's epistemology would reveal some essential similarities. There are a number of major differences that will be found between personalistic epistemology, as I have presented it, and current existentialist epistemology. First, I have charted a position more intimately tied to an epistemology (although not necessarily the metaphysics) rooted in the pragmatic tradition. Such a position stands over against a narrow empiricism and a rigid rationalism. Second, the basic status of persons, not reducible to minds and bodies, seems to be the major concern of recent language-philosophers more than among Husserl's followers. Third, a major theme in current existentialist philosophy, the act-object ontology of the knowing situation, is now

replaced by the person-person ontology of the knowing situation; the intentionality of consciousness is itself an abstraction from more primary person-person knowing experiences. Fourth, no wholesale attempt has been made to contrast Hebrew and Greek thought on the dubious basis of Greek proclivities toward logic, abstraction and analysis.23

With these observations before the reader I extend the invitation to all who will take this book in hand to ponder the deeper philosophical issues that arise for the reflective mind as one comes face to face with The Achievements of Biblical Religion.

David C. Mellick
Adjunct Professor of
Philosophy
The Ohio State University

---

1. Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology, I (New York: Harper, 1962), 116

2. For an excellent development of this theme see J. 0. Urmson's Philosophical Analysis (London: Oxford University Press, 1956). This book shows the influence of Russell's logical atomism on positivistic notions of analysis.

3. John Dewey, Logic: The Theory of Inquiry, Ch. IV, reprinted in John Dewey's Philosophy, Joseph Ratner, ed. (New York: Random House, 1939) p. 892

4. Michael Polanyi, The Tacit Dimension (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1967)

5. For a development of the technical notion of Lebensform see Ludwig Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations (New York: Macmillan, 1953).

6. I am referring to the atomic propositions of the early Wittgenstein and Bertrand Russell; the logical empiricists (e.g. Hempel and Neurath) carried on the notion with their concept of Protokollsatze,

7. See Henri Bergson, Introduction to Metaphysics, translated by T. E. Hulme (New York: Putnam's, 1912), pp. 40-43.

8. Friedrich Engels, Ludwig Feuerbach (International Publishers, New York, 1941). See pp. 82-84.

9. John Dewey, Democracy and Education (New York: Macmillan, 1916) p. 400

10. cf. von Rad, op cit, p. 357. Further support for this position can be found in John Baillie's Our Knowledge of God (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959). Chapter III, "Is Our Knowledge of God's Existence Inferential?" is relevant to the present discussion.

11. Denis Baly, God and History in the Old Testament (New York: Harper, 1976), p. 73. See also Delbert R. Hiller's Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1969), pp. 120ff.

12. Robert Dentan, The Knowledge of God in Ancient Israel (New York: Seabury, 1968), p. 37

13. D. C. Dennett, Content and Consciousness (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), pp. 90-96, 189-190. Following Ryle and the later Wittgenstein, Dennett refuses a rkductionistic analysis-of the personal language.

14. Dentan, op. cit., p. 37

15. I have dealt with the metaphysical issues concerning human actions in my doctoral dissertation, The Metaphysics of Behavior, Ohio State University, 1973. I chart the vast range of possible metaphysical positions characterizing the relation between bodily movements and actions. I develop a non-reductionistic but monistic position. The logical consequences are further developed relative to persons and personhood in "Locating Personhood: A Metaphysical Study" published in Research in Mental Health and Religious Behavior, ed. William J. Donaldson Jr. (Atlanta: The Psychological Studies Institute, Inc., 1976) pp. 18-24, with reaction papers, pp. 25-32.

16. Von Rad alludes to what I am calling "person-death" in Vol. I of his Old Testament Theology, p. 389.

See Psalm 88 and Isa. 38:18.

17. The logic of the Covenant relationship can be stated in terms of what logicians call Constructive Dilemma:

    If p then q
    If r then s
    p or r
    Therefore, q or s

    The conditionals involve a moral necessity; the consequents set out blessings or curses, and the choice of antecedents is left to the Hebrew nation. Yahweh does not predetermine a particular disjunct in the third premiss or in the conclusion. See Exodus 19 and Leviticus 26 for example conditionals.

18. Pseudonymity, whereby words are placed in the mouths of others, allows for the passivity of the receiver of the vision. Both symbol and interpretive significance, when given, come from the vision itself.

19. Professor De Vries describes the apocalyptic orientation toward time in his "Observations on Quantitative and Qualitative Time in Wisdom and Apocalyptic" printed in Israelite Wisdom: Samuel Terrien Festschrift, (J. Gammie et al, edd., Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), pp. 263-276, and in his Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) pp. 342ff.

20. Epistemologically speaking, apocalyptic is ateleological, although divine purposes await a future manifestation. See De Vries in Gammie, ed., Israelite Wisdom, p. 270.

21. See von Rad, Vol. I, pp. 453 ff. (especially p. 453, n. 1), for a discussion of scepticism in the Old Testament.

22. This is true of Sartre, who is more Cartesian in his analysis of cognition.

23. The Hebrew-Greek contrast is overstated in existentialist circles, but the development of this theme lies outside my goals in this present essay. I defer to James Barr on this point. See his Old and New in Interpretation (London: SCM Press, 1966), especially Chapter 2: "Athens or Jerusalem?--The Question of Distinctiveness."

PREFACE

Some prospective readers may not look further than the title of this book because they suspect it of a humanistic bias. Is biblical religion a cultural achievement--the achievement of man? Should we not rather be pointing to God's achievements, the blessings he has obtained for mankind and which he offers them as the gift of free grace? Unless such a demand is made in support of an absolutistic theocentricity, denying any role for man, this writer would affirm it, but would hasten to explain that the title uses "religion," the genitive modifier of "achievements," in a semi-metaphorical sense. Neither "religion" as such nor religious people have achieved anything by setting out to create something new, yet biblical religion did surely come to certain insights concerning God and the world that were distinctive and that were able to prepare the way for a whole new approach to God and a new understanding of the world.

The term "biblical religion" refers not to sacrifices or rituals or holy places, but to a distinctive stance on the part of biblical man over against God, determining a radically different approach to a whole array of religious beliefs and practices. Monotheistic personalism, unique to biblical faith, demanded a distinctive theology, a distinctive anthropology, a distinctive hamartiology and soteriology. It determined man's place in society, his role in history, and his attitude toward life and death.

It is with sad regrets that I dedicate this book to my dear departed colleague, Professor Ronald Williams, prematurely removed from a ministry of fruitful service in the teaching of theology at The Methodist Theological School in Ohio. Professor Williams saw the manuscript for this book at an early stage and helped shape my own comprehension of central points at issue. I cherish the notion that he might approve of it now as it goes to the press. Alongside Professor Williams, I am indebted to Professor Robert Tannehill of "Methesco" and to Professor Samuel Terrien, emeritus teacher at Union Theological Seminary in New York, for reading the manuscript and offering numerous helpful suggestions. I am particularly appreciative toward my former student, Professor David C. Mellick, for graciously providing this book with a Foreword, in which each of the Bible's

great achievements, as I see them, has been briefly set within a framework of philosophical understanding. I mention also the graciousness of Dean C. M. Kempton Hewitt of "Methesco" in expediting the means for preparing a camera-ready manuscript to be presented to the publisher. These have all been a special help and inspiration; yet I recall as most special of all what numerous students in my course on "The Achievements of Biblical Faith" have offered through the years by way of dialogue, reflection, and response.

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

1. Books, monographs, journals, series

AnBib	Analecta Biblica, Rome
ANEP	The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testment, ed. J.B. Pritchard, 2nd ed., Princeton 1969
ANES	The Ancient Near East, Supplementary Texts and Pictures Relating to the Old Testament, ed. J. B. Pritchard, Princeton 1969
ANET	Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament, ed. J. B. Pritchard, 3rd ed., Princeton, 1969
AOT	H. W. Wolff, Anthropology of the Old Testament, ET, Philadelphia 1974
BA	Biblical Archaeologist, New Haven, Missoula
BHT	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie, Tübingen
BKW	Bible Key Words, trans. J. R. Coates from G. Kittel, ed., TWZNT, New York, 1961-65
BO	Biblotheca Orientalis, Leiden
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament, Leipzig, Stuttgart
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, Giessen, Berlin
EJ	Encyclopaedia Judaica, Jerusalem 1971-72
EP	S. L. Terrien, The Elusive Presence, New York 1978

FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literature des Alten und Neuen Testaments, Göttingen
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament, Tübingen
IB	The Interpreter's Bible, Nashville 1951-57
ICC	The International Critical Commentary, Edinburgh, New York
IDB	The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Nashville 1962
IDBS	idem, Supplementary Volume, Nashville 1976
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature, Philadelphia, Missoula
JSJ	Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Periods, Leiden
NEB	The New English Bible Oxford, Cambridge 1970
NSHE	The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia, Grand Rapids 1909 1907-1
NTT	Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift, Wageningen
OOTT	T. C. Vriezen, An Outline of Old Testament Theology ET, Oxford 1958
OTS	Oudtestamentische Studien, Leiden
OTT	G. von Rad, Old Testament Theology, ET, 2 vols., New York 1962-65
OTTO	W. Zimmerli, Old Testament Theology in Outline, ET, Atlanta 1978
RHPhR	Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses, Strasbourg
RS	The Ras Shamra inscriptions, as listed in Ch. Virolleaud, Les inscriptions

	cuneiforms de Ras Shamra, Syria, 10 (1929), and later articles.
RSV	The Revised Standard Version of the Bible, London, New York 1952
SJT	Scottish Journal of Theology, Edinburgh, Cambridge
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
StUNT	Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
SVT	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, Leiden
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ET, Grand Rapids 1964-76
TDOT	Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, ET, Grand Rapids 1974--
THAT	Theologisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament, 2 vols., ed. E. Jenni, C. Westermann, Basel, 1971-76
TOT	W. Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, ET, 2 vols., Philadelphia 1961-67
TS	Theological Studies, Washington
TWZNT	Theologische Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, ed. R. Kittel and G. Friedrich, Stuttgart, 1932--
TZ	Theologische Zeitschrift, Basel
VT	Vetus Testamentum, Leiden
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alter. und Neuen Testament, Neukirchen-Vluyn
YTT	S. J. De Vries, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, Grand Rapids, London, 1975
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, Giesen, Berlin

2. General

art.	article
E	The Elohist
Grk.	Greek
Heb.	Hebrew
J	The Yahwist
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Massoretic Text
NT	New Testament
P	The Priestly document
par	biblical parallel(s)
p.b.	paperback edition

3. Apocryphal and intertestamental books

Ass. Mos.	Assumption of Moses
CDC	Damascus Code from the Cairo Genizeh
Ecclus.	Ecclesiasticus (= Jesus ben Sira)
1 En.	First (Ethiopic) Enoch
1QH	Hodayoth (or Thanksgiving Hymns) from Qumran Cave 1
1QM	Milhamoth (or War Manual) from Qumran Cave 1
1QS	Serek (or Manual of Discipline) from Qumran Cave 1

TRANSLITERATIONS

Greek

α = a	ε = e	ι = i	ν = n	ρ = r	φ = ph
β = b	ζ = z	κ = k	ξ = x	σ(ς) = s	χ = ch
γ = g	η = ê	λ = l	ο = o	τ = t	ψ = ps
δ = d	θ = th	μ = m	π = p	υ = u, y	ω = ô

Hebrew

1. Consonants: א ', 3 b, ג g, 1 d, ה h, ו w, ז z, ח ḥ, ט ṭ, י y, כ ך k, ל l, מ ם m, נ ן n, ס s, ע ', פ ף p, צ ץ ṣ, ק q, ר r, שׂ ś, שׁ š, ת t
2. Pointed vowels: ָ (long qāmes) ā, ַ (pathaḥ) a, ֶ . (seghol) e, ֶ . . (ṣērê) ē, ִ . (ḥireq) i (short) i (long).' ִ . (ḥōlem) 6, ָ (qāmeṣ batuph) o, ֻ (qibbuṣ) u
3. Vowels represented by points and vowel letters: ה ָ â, א ָ ā', י ִ . ê, א ֶ . ē', ה ֶ . ēh, י ִ . î, י ֹ ô, ה ֹ ōh, ו ֻ û
4. Diphthongs: ו ָ āw, י ָ āy, י ְ . êw, י ִ . iw
5. Sh'was: ְ (silent) = nothing, ְ (mobile) ᵉ, ֲ, ᵒ, ֱ, ᵃ, ... ᵉ

The Achievements of Biblical Religion

Introduction

1. The perspective of vision

This is a book that will endeavor to be all that both the main title and the subtitle imply. It is about "biblical" religion; it is also about "Old Testament theology." Even though this does not intend to say that the Old Testament exhausts the full meaning of what biblical religion implies, it does suggest that the Old Testament is definitively biblical. The further implication is that the New Testament, as part of the Bible, expands and enriches, but does not distort or radically modify, the Old Testament's representation. Reaching still further, it is our claim that New Testament Christianity is in no way a new religion, but the religion of the Bible. It does not weaken or abandon the great achievements of biblical faith, as crystallized in the Old Testament witness, but cherishes and preserves them, liberating them for the challenges of a new day and age.

The reader will discover that, as we take up each of the five great achievements of biblical religion, the discussion will terminate in a brief but pointed identification of specific New Testament concepts bearing on the particular question under discussion. This is not intended merely as a bridge over the gap of centuries separating the old and the new, but to show a logical and coherent line of development, as dictated by adherence to the biblical principle in question and the stimulus of the new age out of which Christianity emerged.[1] This book does not directly aspire to be an introduction to New Testament theology; therefore it stops short of extensive discussion, leaving further treatment in the hand of specialists. Its only aim is to show significant continuity in the midst of significant discontinuity.

Numerous efforts to explain the principle of continuity from the Old to the New Testament have been disappointing because they have failed to perceive how deeply and truly Hebraic the New Testament actually is. This is true in-spite of its marked Hellenistic shading, and in spite of early Christianity's anxious concern to mark off the delimitations of a solid new religious principle over against first-century Judaism. In this day of going back to one's roots, how important it is that Christians should trace their roots back to the remote beginnings, finding their spiritual model not only in a Jesus, but in an Isaiah and a Moses and an Abraham! It seems a shame that when contemporary Christians wish

to have someone tell them of their Hebraic heritage, they often call upon a rabbi. Surely, a visit from the rabbi would be extremely helpful to Christians needing to learn more about their Jewish brethren--but why should Christians have to ask Jews about their own Christian heritage?2 Perhaps this book will help Christians find their own way back to whence they have come.

A sabbatical leave spent by the writer at The Ecumenical Institute for Advanced Theological Studies in Jerusalem was an eye-opener for him. Established in Israel, but in an area where Christian and Muslim Arabs live, near Bethlehem, this unique institute brings together Jews and Muslims, but especially Christians from all the major branches, Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, and "Third World." Many discussions concern inter-Christian problems, but it was especially interesting to observe how Christians from the various communions responded to the varied field-trip experiences sponsored by the institute. Scholars and clergymen quickly identified themselves with one of the three groups that visit the Holy Land: historians, tourists, and pilgrims. There were no "tourists" among us--mere curiosity seekers, coming to gawk. Everyone fell into the first group or the third. Many of the Catholics and almost all the Protestants belong to the first group, but the Eastern Orthodox clearly belonged to the third. They were pilgrims, coming to worship more than to learn.

Ere long it became evident that Eastern Christians are especially prone to view the Holy Land, and all things Hebraic, strictly from the perspective of Christological mysticism.3 One particular Polish Father opted to visit St. Stephen's Church while the rest were visiting Hebron or Beer-Sheba; his reason was that the Old Testament history was, for him, no more than the record of remote historical origins, whereas the New Testament sites represented the locale of divine incarnation. Of course, this same clergyman insisted on kissing the supposed foot-marks of Jesus at the Mosque of the Ascension, in spite of the archaeologist-guide's clear explanation that the present soil level had been found to be twelve feet higher than in Jesus' time. It was also he who chided some of our group for turning their backs to the altar while standing in a circle around Jacob's Well in the chapel at Shechem/Sychar. Whereprecisely is the holy? For this eastern Father it was definitely not where once the Hebrews trod.4

For the present writer it was a thrill to walk

where Jesus walked. But he felt even more inspired when he camped out, like the early Israelites, at Kadesh-Barnea--where some scholars think they first made their bond with Yahweh; also when I walked at Shechem between Ebal and Gerizim, thinking of Joshua making the covenant "this day" (Josh. 24').

Just what is faith all about? Just where is the holy to be found? It all depends on one's perspective of vision--and that is where we must begin our discussion.

a. The Old Testament as viewed from the vantage-point of contemporary religion

(1) Refractory lenses in our line of sight

When modern Jews or Christians look upon the Old Testament (the Jews call it "Tenach"), they inevitably see it from their present perspective, unless they deliberately condition themselves to do otherwise. This produces blurring and distortion, because they are actually looking through the wrong end of the telescope of history. True enough, no one can jump out of his own skin; what we are must color what we see. But the vast advances of historical science over the past four or five centuries have offered us the means of recapturing ancient history from its own perspective. There is no reason, say, to depict the Hebrews in medieval European garb, surrounded by castles, as in the art of the Middle Ages, or even of Rembrandt. Archaeology has been a tremendous help. Scholars have deciphered a vast horde of ancient documents. The Old Testament is, in itself, an unparalleled literary phenomenon--a veritable library of documents from the first millenium before the Christian era, accurately testifying to the times in which it was produced. To hear this testimony is, of course, possible only for those who are willing and able to make effective use of the tools available.

When we speak of tools, we are thinking of hermeneutical (=interpretive) methods that are commensurate with the spiritual intent of Scripture, not just of research into cultural and physical externalities. To take up only the latter produces startling distortions. One example is a current comic-book and record combin-

ation being offered on television, luridly depicting Joshua before the wall of Jericho as though he were Buck Rogers. Another example is what Hollywood generally does when it produces a "Bible" film. Sensitive biblical scholars usually wince with pain when they view such a film. Why? Because the externalities may be faithfully reproduced while the spiritual intent is grossly abused. A notorious example was Cecil B. de Mille's blockbuster, The Ten Commandments. The producers spent part of their vast budget in interviewing biblical scholars and in doing archaeological research, yet in a "white-paper" that they sent out along with release of the film, they made it perfectly clear that they were using all this for the sole purpose of local color. Not even the external facts had to be correct. For instance, after stating the scholarly conclusion that camels had probably not been domesticated in the time of Moses, the book announced the producers' decision that they would be introduced in the film anyway, simply for visual effect. This might be excused as "poetic license" in a work of art (?)--but even where visual and dramatic accuracy was maintained in this film it reproduced only an extremely literalistic version of the exodus-Sinai event, not that which comes to light in terms of modern critical understanding.5

No doubt, the total effect on popular thinking of this commercial exploitation of Bible themes is considerable. Aware of its deficiencies, many churches and synagogues attempt to counteract its effect through the preparation of more theologically responsible materials, but literaristic church-school literature continues to attract popular preference even in the main-line churches. The church and synagogue today are in the position of having to re-educate their own membership, trying to correct and compensate for an erroneous method, that they themselves developed.

Judaism sees the Bible history through the sympathetic but distorting lens of rabbinic tradition and Jewish experience. Many Jews, even today, continue to resist a genuinely historical understanding of their own Scripture. Thus even they need to turn the telescope around, and to see themselves from the Hebraic, biblical perspective, rather than to see the biblical Hebrews from the perspective of ethnic Jewishness.

Nevertheless, a modern Jew is related to Abraham at least as closely as a modern Italian is to Romulus and Remus, or a modern Englishman to Beowulf. That is

to say, there is a distinct, unbroken line of tradition. The mark in his flesh that comes with circumcision dynamically incorporates him into the fellowship of Abraham. The matzos of his seder meal connect him with the first passover meal of the exodus. It is much more difficult for the modern Christian to make this kind of link with the Old Testament. He enters into a bond with Jesus in the Eucharistic meal, but to reach back to remoter origins exceeds the boundaries of his spiritual awareness. To be truthful, if the church confessions did not explicitly declare the Old Testament to be part of his Holy Scripture, he would be inclined to leave it entirely to the Jews--which is, in fact, precisely what theologians of a marcionizing disposition have been advising us to do.6

The light originating in the achievements of ancient Hebraic faith has to pass through a series of distorting lenses before it reaches the spiritual retina of the modern-day Christian. Nearest to his eye is a vast and conflicting mass of church dogma and ecclesiastical tradition, shaped over the nineteen hundred years that have passed since the apostolic period. To the Eastern Orthodox, the Nestorian, the Coptic, the Roman Catholic, the Calvinist, the Lutheran, the Anabaptist, and each of several hundred distinct sects and subgroups in modern Christendom, this mass is significantly different. Behind this prism, and affecting the vision of virtually every oriental and occidental Christian subgroup, is the heavy gauze of Hellenistic thought and culture; this has radically reshaped the message of the first kerygma about Jesus. Still further back, from our present standpoint, is the Christ-event itself--the radical reshaping of Hebraic eschatology through the presence of one who Christians believed had fulfilled it. And even beyond the radical new perspective that had come with the appearance of Jesus as Messiah, another lens distorting the original light is that of postbiblical Judaism, which made a number of drastic alterations--especially apocalypticism and Torah rigorism--in the original vision. Thus the modern-day Christian sees the Hebraic achievement in reduced scale, blurred and distorted by intervening panels of new interpretation. He has difficulty perceiving the concerns of the early church except through the lens of modernity; or the original Christian kerygma except through the lens of the hellenizing creeds; or pre-Christian Judaism except through the lens of the New Testament polemic; or original Hebraism except through the lens of its postbiblical reshaping.

(2) The Old Testament in Christian and Jewish hermeneutical tradition7

The distortion of distance that we have been describing can be readily illustrated from within each distinct group and period of religious development since the time when Christianity emerged out of Judaism.

The earliest Christians thought of themselves as the true and faithful heirs of authentic biblical tradition. They never had the slightest doubt that what we call "the Old Testament" was their Bible. Thus they interpreted themselves by the Old Testament, and the Old Testament by themselves. They were simply "the latter-day saints" of whom the prophets spoke!

What came to be known as rabbinic Judaism saw the Old Testament differently. The Jews who rejected the Christian claim were as much influenced by apocalypticism as the early Christians were, but to them two particular features of Old Testament religion were so important that they could not view the mild Galilean teacher--and still less his radically innovative proselytizer, Paul--as fulfillers of God's design.8 These features were covenantal law and nationalistic messianism, now reshaped by the pressures of an age far different than the age that had given them birth.

Certain early Christian groups, particularly in Asia and Africa, retained much of the gospel's original Hebraic flavoring. This was a marked characteristic of a Christian Palestinian group known as the Ebionites.[9] But Christianity's destiny was in Europe, civilized by Greek culture and ruled by Roman might. Perhaps already in the first century, the message of Jesus' original disciples and Paul began to undergo modification at the hands of those whose minds could not escape the habits of Hellenistic thought. Paul was apparently struggling with incipient Gnosticism in his Corinthian correspondence.[10] The Johannine literature, while insisting on the veritable humanity of Christ, was already introducing significant alterations in a hellenizing, non-Hebraic direction.11 In the sub-apostolic era, Marcion's proposal to reject the entire Hebraic tradition was countered by orthodoxy's earliest decision concerning the Canon, explicitly retaining the Old Testament as Scripture;[12] nevertheless, the Christological and Trinitarian formulations of the early church councils--all held in the Hellenistic area--made significant compromises in the direction of non-Hebraic

conceptuality.[13] From the apostolic age onward, the Old Testament heritage was destined to undergo distortion, reduction, and obfuscation. Now it was ransacked mainly for predictions of Christ's coming, needed especially in controversy with the Jews, who quite rightly rejected most of the strained and contrived argumentation of an apologist like the famous Justin.14 Old Testament historiography--which we see as lying at the very core of Hebraic faith--became irrelevant for Christian piety except by way of allegorical symbolism. (The Jews themselves were responsible for developing this method of interpretation; it became prevalent wherever Jews lived in close community with Hellenistic gentiles, as in the writings of Philo of Alexandria,[15] and became an essential element in rabbinic midrash.)[16] All in all, the early and medieval church viewed the Old Testament as a tentative guidebook for piety and morals, now abstracted from the irrelevant history of an ancient people, from whom the Christians had separated themselves. The Old Testament was the most esteemed where it pointed, either by direct prediction or by allegorical allusion, to Christ.17

The Renaissance and the Reformation brought a revived interest in the Hebraic Scriptures. After a long period of darkness, the Crusades had made European Christians aware of the ancient homeland of their faith. Emerging humanism began to produce new interest in the classical world; it also brought new standards of literary criticism. Luther and the other Reformers discovered that the Hebrew Old Testament omitted those "apocryphal" books of the Greek Septuagint and Latin Vulgate that offered proof-texts for controverted Catholic dogmas, such as purgatory and intercession for the saints. Now that sola Scriptura had been raised to the level of absolute religious authority, supplanting church tradition, Protestantism began to cultivate the study of the Hebrew language and the Old Testament writings. Unfortunately, what Protestants were seeking in the Old Testament was doctrine--a body of religious truth that would combine with New Testament doctrine in defining "the whole counsel of God" for a new age. The Calvinistic wing took more from the Old Testament (as in Calvin's Institutes),[18] the Lutherans took relatively little from it;[19] but to both it was a body of propositional truth, and little else. And what was done with Uncongenial elements? In practice, the Lutherans depended mainly on the rule of Christological allusion; what pertains to, alludes to, or points to Christ is valid, and the rest is worthless. The Calvinists deve-

loped more consistently a rule accepted in theory by both wings of the Reformation, that of interpreting Scripture by Scripture; yet the New Testament remained as the norm by which the Old Testament should be interpreted. The Roman Catholics, meanwhile, responded by reaffirming the Old Testament, but according to the Vulgate text and literary content. It, too, needed this body of Scripture for proof-texting, even though the ecclesiastical magisterium retained status as the final arbitor. Anxious at the prospect of admitting any historical principle of interpretation, the inquisitional machinery suppressed the writings of Richard Simon (ca. 1680), who endeavored to explain certain discrepancies in the Bible on the basis of developing tradition within it.20 Ironically, the development of tradition was precisely the principle on which Catholicism had been relying so heavily in its controversy with the Reformation: Scripture plus tradition; i.e., Scripture as modified by tradition.21 But a tradition antedating that of the Christian church itself was felt to be too unmanageable to be tolerated by a Catholicism in dispute with Protestantism. It is only in the present century that the Roman church has felt free to accept a historical principle of biblical interpretation.22

The Renaissance went beyond the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. It produced modernity, with its radical rejection of ecclesiastical authority. As the Enlightenment made headway, especially in eighteenth and nineteenth century Germany, it stimulated a rationalistic criticism of both the Old and New Testaments that was long held in suspicion in the churches.23 Gradually, church scholars came to accept a historical criticism, but much of this went hand in hand with deistic theologies far removed from the naive belief of the ancient Hebrews and Christians. When Hegelianism had become a dominant philosophy in Europe, biblical scholars were wont to regard the Old Testament faith, and that of the New Testament as well, as infantile expressions of emergent humanism--no more. Now the Old Testament seemed very remote; the Jews were scorned, along with traditionalistic Christians, for modeling their faith and practice too much upon it. The rise of Romanticism, especially under the influence of Herder, modified this somewhat, for the Romanticistic scholars were able to admire a David and an Abraham as much as a Socrates. The nineteenth century ended, and the twentieth century began, praising the psalmists and prophets, but despising Israel's bloody heroes and dreary law-givers. Modernity had reshaped the Old Testament to its taste; its

ancient, sovereign word could no longer be heard in its ears. If this had not been so, perhaps the European, and especially German, church might have retained sufficient prophetic zeal to have withstood the monstrous claims of National Socialism. But it was so; because the Old Testament was dead, the Jews had to die![24]

Although many modern-day Jews and Christians find themselves locked into one of the levels of distortion that we have been describing, the patient and diligent study of Scripture on its own terms, and in the light of all that modern historical investigation has revealed, offers the tools for at last rediscovering the real achievements of Hebraic faith and appropriating them for contemporary benefit. Literary and historical criticism have been useful; even more helpful has been the study of form and tradition, as reflected in the individual texts of Scripture. The critical approach need no longer be seen as irreverent or destructive; it is usable as a highly effective theological tool, capable of extracting the biblical witness on its own terms, and as seen in its own time but with lasting validity for all times. It invites modern Christians and Jews to step into the past and appropriate the biblical achievement directly for themselves. Those who are able to accomplish this discover that the Bible, including the Old Testament, can speak authoritatively to our times. What is distinctive about Scripture is relevant for today.

b. New Testament Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism as viewed from the vantage-point of the ancient Hebraic achievement

It is well to turn the telescope of history around, and to judge what has emerged out of the Hebraic tradition from the criterion of that tradition itself. From this perspective, we will be able to discern why certain features have been sacrificed along the road of historical progress, and why certain features may now rightly be abandoned in the contemporary light of a better day. We will also be able to see what is normative and worth preserving, in the face of all distortions produced by ancient and modern history. In the final analysis, only those biblical insights that authentically enlighten the mysteries of human existence will survive as models for modern self-understanding. The amazing thing is that, in the midst of all its histori-

cal relativity, biblical faith represents an achievement that not only challenged the ancient world of darkness, but challenges the darkness of today. Ours may truly be "the post-Christian age'"; is this the same as to say that it is also the "post-Biblical age?" Perhaps so: but let us porider the survivability of biblical peoplehood and biblical tradition. These reach from the ancient past to now; their prognosis for the future may not be as dismal as some say it is.

(1) Biblical faith in its classical formation

The Hebrews who gave us the Old Testament were a Semitic people, living and thinking much as their neighbors did. One thing gave them an absolute distinctiveness: their emergent monotheistic faith, opening up the possibility of richer insights into the meaning of both human and divine personhood. This did not come all at once, but through a gradual historical process. All the same, the commitment the Israelites made at the very beginning of their corporate life dominated the entire course of their spiritual development, gradually weeding out inimical elements. Along the historical pathway of this people, a number of unresolved conflicts remained as elements of tension. We think especially of a nationalistic ideology, cherishing the prospect of eventual political restoration; also the notion of being a special people belonging to the one god who was also God of the whole world. These were destined to produce subbiblical elements in a new age when Israel's relative isolation from world conflict would be broken. During the classical Hebraic period--the time when the tribes joined in their alliance and later adopted the political structure of kingship--they were still fortunate to be left unmolested by any foreign power.25 This was the time of nurturing, then, for biblical faith. Its great achievements were sown, sprouted, and grew to fruitful ripeness. It may be added that the political crises that appeared toward the end of this period, when the Assyrian and Babylonian empires began to threaten Israel's and Judah's independence, forced the flower of full-grown monotheism to reveal its richest color. This was the time of the great prophets; also the time of classic historiography. It was the age that established the noblest patterns of psalmody and brought Israel's epic literature to its fullest form. It was the time of the great biblical parenesis, Deuteronomy.[26] This was the time also when the transcendental and immanentistic dimensions of divine holiness had been fully defined; when the promise and problem of man had been

clearly expressed, and the way af restoration had been pointed out; when election and covenant and the law had been firmly established; when God's and man's work in history had been charted out; when God's concern for suffering and dying man had begun to penetrate the veil of mystery and misunderstanding. A coming age would enrich and clarify man of these achievements, though in some cases it would impoverish and confuse them; but history's dark pathways could never obscure them altogether.

(2) Biblical faith under the pressures of imperialistic deprivation

(a) The emergency of Judiasm

Those who are not well versed in biblical studies sometimes make the mistake of applying the term "Judaism" to the entire Old Testament phenomenon. Without denying that the roots of Judaism are indeed to be found in classical Hebraism, it is important to restrict this term to the postexilic and postbiblical extension of original Israelite peoplehood. The term "Jew" is the anglicization of Hebrew yehudî, yehudîth, which mean a person belonging to the tribe, nation, or province of Judah--and only by extension a person adhering to the faith and religion of the people originally associated with this territory.27 Since the tribe and nation of Judah also looked upon itself as part of Israel, even during the period when there was a separate kingdom of Israel in the northern part of Palestine, the Jews took over this name as an alternative, exclusive ap ellation once the northern kingdom had ceased to exist.[28] Although numerous "Jews" in the diaspora traced their tribal origins to one of the northern tribes (Tobit to Naphtali, Saul of Tarsus to Benjamin, etc.), it was in fact only remnants from the territory of Judah that were able to return to Palestine at the end of the Babylonian exile, ca. 520 B.C., and restore what they could of the original national and religious structure. Here commences the actual history of the "Jews" in the accepted meaning of that word.

We have mentioned that the Assyrian and Babylonian empires swallowed up the ancient Israelite kingdoms, ending their respective nationalistic structures. Both these empires followed the policy of massive depor-

tation. In both territories, numerous individuals were allowed to remain behind, but they were forced to accept the presence of deportees from various foreign lands, brought to live among them (II Kings 17:24ff.). In any event, the leading classes were taken away (II Kings 24:15-16, 25:11, Jer. 40:1), the intent being to keep them in exile permanently. Were it not for the abrogation of the policy of deportation, put into effect by the Persians, allowing significant elements of strongly ideological leadership to restore Yahwistic leadership in Jerusalem, this might have brought Israel's grand spiritual achievement to final extinction.29 Upon what a slender thread was suspended the destiny of western and world culture!

Despite the high hopes that accompanied the Jews' return to Palestine, their expectation of restoring covenantal society as it once existed were doomed to disappointment. Never for the next five hundred or a thousand years was the grip of imperialism to be relaxed. Each foreign power exercising political control in Palestine would exceed its predecessor in effecting the policy of stifling nationalistic independence and religious distinctiveness. The deliberate program of the Greeks who supplanted the Persians, and after them the Romans, was to discourage, or even suppress, the most distinctive practices of ancient Hebraism. Throughout the Mediterranean world, this was an age of religious electicism and cultural homogenization.30

Certain notable modifications of classical Hebraic religion emerged as a response to this situation of deprivation. Reacting against the apostacy of Jews who could not resist adopting Greek and Roman ways as their ticket to worldly success, a faithful core drew tight their circle of ethnic distinctiveness, relying ever more heavily on a rigoristic observance of the Torah to give themselves the indelible self-identification that would be needed for survival. In times of intolerable pressure, as under Antiochus Epiphanes, ca. 167 B.C. and under the last Roman procurators., the Palestinian Jews were driven to armed revolt--in the second instance with disastrous results. This was in A.D. 66-70. This happened once again, in A.D. 135, under Bar Kochba, and this time the Jews were banned from Jerusalem permanently. The Romans enslaved many Jews. The temple was destroyed, their last hold on the Holy Land was ended. From now onward, the Jews were destined to exist in cultural isolation, a harried and deprived people, held together by the unrelenting

hostility of gentile society.

Viewing this cultural change from the vantage point of classical Hebraism, we observe a distinct loss of biblical personalism. Yahweh was no longer Yahweh, a God elusive yet intimately close. Now it was the Torah that revealed his presence and his holiness, Israel's consciousness of sin and unworthiness had intensified in the face of manifold ostensible signs of God's continuing wrath. Relief from guilt, no longer obtainable for Israel as a people, was sought through an ever more-diligent devotion to the requirements of Torah. Election and covenant were interpreted in terms of ethnic distinctiveness and Torah rigorism. The mystery of death, suffering, and injustice lay hidden more deeply than ever behind the curtain of divine inscrutability. Worst of all, the Jews had now all but lost all sense of Gods' role in history. The aeon in which they were now living belonged not to him and to them, but to the hostile forces pitted against them.

(b) The emergence of Christianity

What was an obstacle for Judaism was an opportunity for Christianity. That is, the eclecticism and homogenization demanded by the Mediterranean imperial system opened the way for Christianity's universal appeal to be heard and have an impact.31 A disheartened world was ripe for the clear spiritual call of his new faith, even when its adherents were suppressed and persecuted. Christianity did what Judaism could not do: capitalize upon the leveling-out policy of imperialistic culture, eventually adopting much of its magisterial structure for the consolidation of its gains.32

But what were the sacrifices that were made? Features that the first Christians inherited from Judaism's late modifications to Hebraic faith, but which later Christians relinquished, were its ethnicity, its nationalistic aspirations, and its increasingly legalistic definition of morality. Features that it compromised--original and authentic elements of Hebraic faith that Christianity relinquished--were the sense of biblical Peoplehood and Judaism's devotion to covenantal morality. Meanwhile, Christianity embraced two non-biblical and subbiblical concepts that were destined to become

the root of endless controversy and fruitless speculation in the centuries to come. From Greek philosophy the developing church adopted essential aspects of a monistic concept of reality, assigning an ontic divinity to Christ while encouraging the attitude that the experiential world is unreal. From late Jewish apocalypticism--meanwhile firmly repudiated within rabbinic Judaism--Christianity took over a belief in a world following this present world, again encouraging the attitude that the present experiential world is meaningless and ultimately unreal.

The one very large plus in Christianity's restoration and reinvigoration of the ancient Hebraic faith was its new sense of the meaning of Heilsgeschichte--something Judaism had utterly lost. It was Christianity that now had a clear sense of God's purpose in history. This was despite the fact that its earliest eschatological expectation had fallen short of realization. Perhaps the kingdom of God had not fully come in Jesus' lifetime, nor in the lifetime of Paul. Nevertheless, Christ was now the ruler of history.33 Death had not crushed him; he was alive, sitting at the right hand of the Father, preparing to come again! Unmistakeably, Christianity regained a renewed sense of God's intimate nearness. Jesus' earthly ministry had made God close and accessible to men once more.

(3) Biblical faith in the setting of world culture

(a) Major directions in post-imperial Christian theology and religion

A second radical shift from the original situation out of which biblical faith came into existence occurred when neither Judaism nor Christendom found it possible any longer to regard Jerusalem and the Holy Land as the cultural center of their religious inspiration. This began to happen, for Christendom, when the Emperor Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman empire. For the followers of Jesus, neither of the original promises to Abraham, that of land and that of peoplehood, any longer had direct relevance. Christianity was a religion for all the world, and all

the world (i.e., as centered in the European west) had been claimed for the Christian religion. We can best judge the degree of departure from the Bible's great achievements by sketching Christendom's course of progress through two diametrically opposite situations, from the imperial age until the present.

1) The age of Christian theocracy

European culture became Christian culture--if need be, by the sword. Popes struggled with emperors, and bishops with kings, to assert paramount authority, but the European church claimed all European persons in its membership. Those outside the church, the Jews, the Gypsies, the heretics, and the like, were regarded as non-citizens. The state was charged with enforcing the church's decrees. The church, especially its western branch, came to be structured like an empire, tolerating no appeal to a divine authority outside itself. Toward the end of this theocratic age, even those religionists who appealed directly to the Bible as the ultimate authority found it virtually unthinkable that deviating doctrinal and ecclesiastical systems should be tolerated within one and the same secular community (so Calvin's Geneva, Anabaptistic Münster, Puritan New England, and the like).

Although in some measure each of the main achievements of original Hebraism came to reappearance in Catholic and Protestant Europe, they were no longer held together by any recognizable dynamic principle.e. Perhaps the most noticeable loss was that of the original experience of divine personalism. Greek modes of thought thoroughly dominated Christian dogma. The Bible had been reduced to a collage of moral and theological principles--revered, but no longer alive.

2) The age of secular autonomy

The western world after the Renaissance has undergone a process of drastic secularization--not suddenly, but irresistably and irreversably. With the rise of the European states and the settlement of the new lands beyond the seas, the Catholic and Protestant churches have gradually broken down into a myriad of rival splinter groups, each endeavoring to bring in the kingdom of

of God in its own special way. America has witnessed the logical extreme of this process, the complete separation of state and church. Meanwhile, the imposing edifice of classical Christian dogma has been eroded from within and from without. In the age of rationalism (which still dominates the minds of "free thinkers" toward the end of this twentieth century!), the adherents of the Biblical tradition found themselves driven into cultural isolation, while those who embraced modern culture either forsook the church or sought to reconstitute it without the original supernatural and personalistic basis of biblical faith. Now, today, however, the church sees a new opportunity to choose between life and death, good and evil. A new door of understanding has been opened up for those Christians who dare, and care, to follow the arduous pathway to a rediscovery of the Bible's achievements.

(b) The pathway of post-imperial Judaism

1) "The wandering Jew"--estrangement and oppression

For the Jew living in the post-classical age, religion has been mainly a matter of devotion to the past and fidelity to the norms of ethnicity. It would be beside the point to trace this history in detail, for it is well known. Since the first and second century, Judaism has had no homeland--only a peoplehood. The Jewish people have been mainly strangers in a grudging and often hostile social environment. They have felt that they have had no voice in the course of world history. So it has been, at any rate, until the European age of revolution, when many Jews enthusiastically accepted the full rights and responsibilities of secular citizenship. This progress has not been without severe setbacks, as we know. So violent has been the clash between modern Slavic (in Poland and Russia) and Teutonic (in Germany) ethnicity on the one hand, and Jewish ethnicity on the other, that the very extinction of the Jewish people was in prospect. Ironically, even liberated Jews, those who forsook the marks of Jewish ethnicity and adopted western ways,. came to be threatened by the Nazi fury.34

Here, very markedly, the ancient Hebraic achievement has seemed remote. In the holocaust experience particularly, God has seemed to care less for his ancient people's suffering, and their righteous cause, than he had seemed to care for wretched Job. The one transcendant reality remaining very near and dear has been Torah. It is the tangible symbol that the biblical God will at last return to recompense his beleagured people.35

2) The new restorationism

Even though many present-day Jews insist that God does not intend that they should return to the Holy Land until the end of history, an enthusiastic majority sees the State of Israel as the Eschaton within history. It is ironic, but hardly surprising, that numerous Jews, particularly in Palestine, are eager to embrace state and nation while forsaking ethnicity, and even religion. Suddenly, history has become relevant once more--but for many citizens of Israel this history remains purely secular. Those who find the goal of their ancient faith fulfilled in the restoration of Zion do well to embrace their duties of nationhood in the light of ancient Israel's election and covenantal calling, remembering that the God who saves is also the God who judges.

This then, is the perspective of vision from which we are invited to consider the achievements of biblical religion. These achievements are still relevant for today. They are still the norm by which human culture is to be judged. If we cherish human culture without them, we deserve to wander in the darkness that we ourselves have made.

2. The problem of essentiality

When one confesses that the Scripture, is, or contains, the word of God, one is groping with the problem of essentiality. Is all of it essential? Is all of it on an equal plane? Think of the fundamentalist who flips his Bible open, snatching a text to inspire him at the moment. This would be appropriate if each and every passage of Scripture were absolutely equal in truth, worth, and authority. But it is utterly ahistorical, neglects to let Scripture be the test of Scripture. and accepts biblical continuity while ignoring biblical discontinuity.36

a. Continuity versus discontinuity within scripture

Both continuity and discontinuity must be recognized, whether between the two Testaments, Old and New, or between the various parts of the respective books.

The fact that the Bible is a book (the ongoing world's best-seller) and can be purchased in a bookstore impresses us with the continuity of Scripture. It expresses the solidarity of a single religious tradition. Among the world's sacred writings, the Bible is distinctive, with a very specific stance and special concept in comparison with books like the Bhagavad Gita or the Quran. Moreover, Christians affirm that the whole Bible, Old Testament and New Testament, testifies to faith in the one same God. The God of the Hebrews is the God of the Christians, who see the eschatological predictions of the Old Testament as finding fulfillment in Christ and the events of the New Testament era. Certain essential qualities are clearly identifiable in both Testaments. The church resists the Marcionistic heresy of reducing Scripture by discarding the Hebraic element.

Within the New Testament there appears to be a greater continuity than within the Old Testament, with its wider range of materials, The Old Testament is the literary crystalization of the spiritual experience of an ancient people over a vast period of time, ranging

from ca. 1250 to ca. 150 B.C.37 Over so long a period, amid drastically changing conditions, there had to be considerable discontinuity. This was in fact much greater originally than the biblical text presently reveals, for it is the product of enormous harmonization, normalization, and translational elimination, st ndardizing almost all to the norm of rabbinic piety.38

b. Options in contemporary research

(1) A thematic prinoiple of unity

Some Old Testament scholars have endeavored to identify a thematic principle of unity. Such is the work of the Swiss scholar, Walther Eichrodt (Theology of the Old Testament).39 Eichrodt identifies the covenant as the central, formative concept of Old Testament faith, and in his influential two-volume work attempts to relate every religious idea of the Old Testament to it. The results are often arbitrary and artificial. The arrangement of this work is systematic, like the classical works on dogmatics. Somewhat similar is the treatment of the Dutch scholar, Theodor Vriezen (An Outline of the Theology of the Old Testament),40 which identifies the concept of the holiness of God as central to everything else. Both these works are stimulating, informative, and eminently worthwhile. Yet certain materials get left dangling. Too many biblical witnesses were unconcerned with these central ideas. We have to look for what it was among them all that accounts for their getting included in the Canon of Holy Scripture.

(2) A process of religious growth

Another way of approaching the challenge of isolating the principle of unity amid discontinuity is to identify a process with a certain dynamic or cohesion; or at least, a process with a significant element of historical logic and necessity. To look for this kind of process requires a greater degree of historical ori-

entation than the method just described, where common ideas from various times and situations can be compared and arranged. Within the last half-century we have seen several works with this approach, each of them arranging the materials from the various Old Testament books according to the principle of religious development or spiritual growth. The evolutionary scheme often lies at the basis of this approach, placing the more simple materials at the beginning and tracing a process of internal development from one form of religion to another. Millar Burrows, Ludwig Koehler, and Otto Procksch have followed this method.[41] Their common tendency is to overemphasize the simplicity and primitivity of the early materials--such as the Genesis legends--and to assign a late date to the materials that differ from them the most widely. According to this method, Psalm passages praising animal sacrifice are automatically dated early, while Psalms with wisdom sayings and prayers are dated late.

(b) A process of theological tradition

1) Gerhard von Rad

Valuable as some of the books mentioned have been, they are becoming superseded by a better and more valid approach-- one that sees the biblical writings as theological testimonia within an ongoing process of witnessing to the experience of God's working. To look for essentiality in terms of theological tradition is quite different from looking for it in terms of relative religious sophistication. It is one thing to analyze religious phenomenology; this is, properly speaking, Religionsgeschichte (Ger. for "History of Religion"). It is quite another thing to analyze the dynamic growth of a people's testimony about their life with God. It is only the latter that can be properly called Biblical Theology. This holds true even in contemporary life, where churches with different theologies may have similar liturgies, or vice versa. Or in any event, liturgy often has little to do with a church's theological stance. Cultic practice and theology do influence each other, but are not identical to each other. The Israelites carried out the same burnt offerings as did the Canaanites, but on the basis of an entirely different

conception of Deity.

We are especially indebted to the German scholar, Gerhard von Rad, for bringing us to this insight. Among his mans' important writings, the most influential is his two-volume Old Testament Theology.[42] Here he treats individual groups of writings, scattered among a variety of biblical-books, as witnesses to what the God of Israel had done for his people in their history. Von Rad laid great stress upon Heilsgeschichte (saving history) as the theological tradition of God's saving acts on behalf of his people, beginning with the exodus from Egypt and continuing throughout their historical existence, on toward an eschatological fulfillment in the future. According to von Rad, those biblical writings which testify the most clearly to the experience of God's saving deeds lie at the heart of Scripture. Those that reflect it only weakly--or in traditionalistic lip-service, like Qoheleth and Proverbs--are only tangentially contained within the Canon of the Holy Word. Whether or not this is the best way of defining the principle of continuity amid discontinuity, von Rad's great contribution to our thinking is his emphasis that Yahweh, the God of Israel, revealed himself effectively in the history of his people; and secondly, that the sacred writings of the Old Testament are to be heard as testimonies to the experience of, and participation in, the divine action. God acts; the people testify. Revelation is not some private mystical experience. It is not a set of religious propositions. It is not a holy book dictated by an angel, like the Quran. It is God's action in human life, as witnessed by and to his own people. The task of Biblical Theology is not to systematize a set of religious ideas. It is to trace; critically but sympathetically, the development of the tradition about the experience of God's presence in the history of his people.

Gerhard von Rad was an Old Testament scholar who found it impossible to remain with some narrow specialization in the area of criticism or linguistic study. Although devoted to painstaking literary labors, he was driven by his insights into the broad relevance of ancient Israel's theological traditions to seek encounters within the whole range of systematic and philosophical enquiry, challenging all theologians to take more seriously the Bible's claim that God acts in and through history, and is present in every aspect of human experience.

In a biographical reminiscence of his teacher, H. W. Wolff raises up three aspects of von Rad's life work that were, in Wolff's estimation, definitive: (1) von Rad's apprehension of the Old Testament documents as elements in an ongoing, ever-growing tradition, emerging out of the life of the ancient Israelites and witnessing to their faith; (2) his emphasis on Israel's special kind of realism with respect to God's presence in historical event, forbidding any abstraction of God as a theological idea, remote from the struggling of humankind; and (3) his urgent concern to use the situation illumined by exegesis as the model for authoritative preaching in our time.43

The concept of a kerygmatic situation into which, or out of which, a revelatory word was spoken is one of von Rad's most stimulating insights. Through enscripturation, redaction, and preservation, this is what has become the normative body of holy Scripture. Here we have a potent model for any who would hope to encounter revelatory meaning in the reality they experience. Because it developed dynamically, Scripture must not be used as a concatenation of fixed, propositional truth, theoretically definitive for every place and age. For modern man it may do something less, but also far better: illumine the universal dimensions of his stressful situation, showing the presence of transcendental concern. If modern man will take seriously the Bible's claim that its God is a living God, he may expect that the God who revealed himself in Israel's need may reveal himself in his need too. This is a valid alternative to atheistic secularism on the one side and to pietistic dualism on the other.

2) Samuel Terrien

Von Rad has been criticized by Vriezen, Eichrodt, and others of subjecting the whole Old Testament to his special value-judgment in identifying the materials within the Heilsgeschichte mainstream as primary, and those outside as secondary witnesses. This criticism is well taken because von Rad has not always succeeded in establishing an organic connection between these two groups of documents.44

Perhaps the impasse will be overcome by the thesis of Samuel Terrien in his latest book, The Elusive Presence: Toward a New Biblical Theology.43 Terrien in

effect bridges the gap between the method of Koehler (religious growth) and the method of von Rad (theological tradition), bringing together the insights of Religionsgeschichte and Biblical Theology. His book does more with Religionsgeschichte than analyze cultic practice and religious belief; it does more with Israel's theological tradition than trace the origin and development of the dominant motifs. It concentrates its discussion on the entire range of theological traditions which have to do with an awareness of the elusive presence of Yahweh, from the epiphanic visitations to the patriarchs, to the Sinai theophanies, to concepts of the divine presence in the temple, to the prophetic visions, to psalmody, wisdom, and cultic celebration. It goes on from there to establish, perhaps for the first time, a clear development to the New Testament's testimony to an awareness of God's presence in Jesus Christ--mainly in the annunciation, the transfiguration, and the resurrection traditions--going on to elucidate his presence in Holy Spirit, Church, and Eucharist.

c. Finding the true center of gravity

Each of the previously discussed methods has its measure of validity, yet the search for the true center of gravity within the Old Testament, and within Scripture as a whole, goes on.

One firm axiom is that the Scriptures are to be read, not as a book of dogmatic proof-texts or pious sentiments, but as the crystallization of testimony from the community of faith respecting its variegated experience of the presence and power of a living God, appearing in diverse ways and diverse places to the prophets and the apostles, but most clearly in Jesus Christ. Another clear commitment on our part is to do full justice both to continuity and to discontinuity, discerning the commonness of all the witnesses while viewing their disparity and disagreement as evidence of dynamic growth and vitality.

But is the commonness of all scriptural witnesses the only vantage-point fromwhich to interpret and evaluate the measure of divergence? Certainly not, for this is precisely the method of fossilized orthodoxy in its rejection of so-called heresy. No, the diversity actually enriches the texture and quality of Spiritual understanding. What then is the norm? Is all diversity

equally valid and fruitful? Is there no distinction between degeneration and creativity?

Like finding the epicenter of an earthquake by drawing seismic arcs from two or more observatories, it may be suggested that we seek the true center of gravity in Scripture by finding the point of convergence between two lines or axes, those that bind it together while keeping it distinctively apart.

Two rules may guide us:

(1) In examining all the biblical witnesses, it is significant and essential continuity among them, illumined and put into perspective by relevant elements of discontinuity, that will be the most revealing of what is the most central and essential.

(2) In examining the cultural context of the Bible, it will be the Bible's divergence and distinctiveness, illumined and put in perspective by elements of commonality, that will be the most revealing of what is most central and essential.

We follow first the pathway of what is common, basic, essential among all the biblical witnesses, in the midst of their variety and discontinuity. We add the adjectives "basic" and "essential" to "common" because Scripture's commonness, to be significant, must be not accidental, but constitutional--not just something that happened through historical growth and grew into a predetermined shape because of common rootage. We must see that there is a certain tenacity or virtual inevitability in the growth of Scripture--that in a sense Christ and the church and the Holy Spirit are logical and necessary outgrowths, and fulfillments of vital seed planted long ago in the promises to the patriarchs and the experience of deliverance from Egyptian bondage. From Genesis to Revelation there is a witness to one and the same God, working onward age by age, bringing his works to ever greater perfection. This is the line of commonality, bringing together the diverse elements within the great flowing stream of holy Scripture.

Defining what is distinctive of biblical faith in differentiation from its cultural context is the second plane or line, intersecting the first at many points to show Scripture's authentic heritage. We need to look at the Bible, not only as the church's (and synagogue's) holy book, but as a prize of human literature. Its

timeless quality is not only for Jews and Christians, but for all men. 46 By all means we must see the Bible within the context of its time and the civilization in which it was produced. Here again we will discover discontinuity amidst continuity, and each will prove to be equally significant. The beginner is surprised to find a great measure of continuity between the biblical world and the non-biblical world-- that is to say, between the Hebrew people, with their religion and faith in one God, and their contemporaries in the ancient Near East, the Egyptians and the Babylonians and others. One may be surprised to discover how many similar ideas they share. One should also be prepared to encounter a great measure of commonality within the thought-world of the New Testament, conditioning the religious attitudes of Jews as well as Christians. We readily acknowledge the early hellenization of the church, but it is important to know that Judaism was strongly influenced by Greek thought long before (and long after) the emergence of Christianity.

But what is common from one culture to another is not as significant, in the final analysis, as what is distinctive, and it is this by which a culture of religion or faith must finally be judged. What we need to know about the Hebrew religion is what made it different from the religions of its neighbors. So too Christianity' in opposition to Judaism as well as in opposition to paganism. Why did biblical faith, Old Testament and New Testament, hold fast to only one God? Why did the Hebrews see themselves as chosen and covenanted unto God out of all humanity? Why did they, with Christians after them, hold fast to belief in God's effective action in their historical existence?

If we are willing to ponder why Judaism and Christianity have not only survived, but grown and expanded over the world, in the face of opposition and persecution, we must recognize that they had something dear to hold on to, something that made their lives different from those of their pagan neighbors, something worth dying for and transcending death.

There are five areas in which this distinctiveness of biblical faith comes to clear expression, and this provides the structure of our book:

1) the transcendence and immanence of the biblical God;

2) the concept of a divine image mirrored in human personhood;
3) commitment to a life of fulfilling integrity within a covenant community;
4) an understanding of history as responsible dialogue with God;
5) a sense of meaning and purpose in the evils of finite existence.

These are the major achievements of biblical religion, defining the Scripture's distinctiveness in the midst of common human culture.

3. Methodology

a. Theoretical basis

What is the norm of biblical faith? How do we find it? Not in the words of Scripture, or in the ideas or doctrines which it expresses or presupposes. Normativeness is not in the ipsissima verba of Scripture, as biblicism affirms. It can be fairly stated that biblicists revere the words of Scripture-in and for themselves often in resistance to the charismatic presence of a higher authority. Jesus challenged the Jews of his time for doing this, for resisting him with their piddling legalisms while he was busy saving human lives. Biblicism reveres the very words of the biblical text, but without criticism and discernment, superstitiously endowing them with magical power and supernatural authority. True, for the biblicist some words do have greater potency than others, especially Jesus' words when printed in red and in the language of the King James Version! Popular as this naive and simplistic view may be in many religious circles, offering all that many superficial seekers want and expect, it cannot stand up to the kind of scrutiny that serious theological scholarship feels duty bound to apply. While posing as ultrapious, it actually involves a form of gross impiety, imposing a preconceived dogmatic stricture on the sovereign word of God, refusing to let it be seen for what it is, subjecting it to the tyranny of adolescent misunderstanding.

Those who hold to a biblicistic prejudgment are confronted by immense methodological problems, simply because the text of Scripture is actually embarrassingly fluid, hazy and unclear-- as every student quickly discovers when he begins to dig into the Greek or Hebrew

original. This is very upsetting to the naive beginner, who becomes nervous without the pacifier of an inerrent and eternally comforting Bible.47

It is also a serious mistake to define the religious ideas and theological doctrines contained in the Bible as normative, for the Bible offers no comprehensive system of truth, no perfectly consistent pattern of religious thought. Which ideas and which doctrines are we to choose? This pietistic, yet very liberal, attitude falls readily into the trap of subjectivism. As important as the ideas of the Bible are, to affirm them as the principle of authority within the Bible is a gross misunderstanding because the Bible was never composed as a theological treatise. It contains no effective theoretical statement of a single theological proposition. The intent of the men who wrote it was something quite different than to offer dogmas and doctrines and pious ideas. This is also the point of essential weakness in the so-called proof-texting method, listing Bible texts that purport to prove a set of doctrines, as in the classical books of Catholic and Protestant dogmatics.

What is normative about the Bible is its participation in, and interpretation of, revelatory event; i.e., the whole tradition about revelatory event, witnessing to the experience of God's self-revelation--not in words, not in ideas, not in doctrines, but in face-to-face encounter. The correct methodology in biblical study is to find a principle of normativeness in terms of a revelatory event which took place not just in some person's mind but in the arena of history.

What is history? It is more than bodies bumping together on the football field. It involves the convergence of meanings in human and divine encounter. The experience of God's revealing presence in historical event needs therefore to come to expression in human words, which, preserved, cherished, and expanded under the impact of fresh occurrences of revelatory event, develop into the organism of Holy Scripture.

b. Exegesis and theology

We are now in a position to make a concluding statement about the relationship between exegesis (the scientific, critical interpretation of the biblical text)

and theology. The bond between them can be succinctly stated in two principles, as follows.

(1) The only normative theology is situational and and experiential. It is possible to abstract a theological system. This is the proper, and necessary, task of systematic theology. We can also apply the principles of the philosophy of religion in order to develop a system for understanding a wide variety of theoretical subjects related to theology. But let us remember that theology itself remains the task and responsibility of the church. Therefore the only really effective theology is one that is drawn from the biblical tradition of theological experience.[48] It is one that relates directly to life--to my life and your life and the lives of the people around us. However sophisticated, refined, and philosophically undergirded one's theology may be, if it does not bear directly on one's own life and the lives of other real people, it is no valid theology at all. If our theoretical discussions produce only an idea of God, this cannot be valid because it does not relate to us as persons. The God of Scripture is real and living, no idea or doctrine. He is a God who can help sufferers in the sickroom and comfort mourners in the cemetery. One should feel sorrow for the clergyman who must minister to people in need when he has nothing in his own heart and mind beyond a set of theoretical ideas!

(2) Only contextual exegesis has theological validits. Inasmuch as real theology is situational and experiential, it makes sense that the kind of exegesis that has theological validity is that which penetrates beyond mere ideas and words to an awareness of revelational experience. One cannot get at the vital experience of the writers of Scripture without a deep and sympathetic appreciation of the literary, historical, and cultural context of their words. The texts of Scripture require to be intensively researched, for the writer of each individual text was himself a real, living, breathing, needing, craving, sinning, yearning human person. He was giving witness to an experience of God's presence in his own life and the life of his community. It is, frankly and forthrightly stated, the task of exegesis to recover as well as possible the massive detail about the writer's spiritual condition, and the existential situation out of which, and to which, he spoke. The serious Bible student is challenged to come to any particular passage of Scripture with the expectation, hope and desire of uncovering what these particular words meant to the person who wrote them, and what they were designed to convey in the minds and souls of those who first listened to or read them.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

J. Barr, Old and New in Interpretation, New York, 1966.

W. Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament (hereinafter TOT), I, 25ff., 512ff.

Old Testament theology:

- The problem and the method
- The problem of Old Testament theology

G. von Rad, Old Testament Theology (hereinafter OTT), I, 3ff.

A history of Yahwism and of the sacral institutions in Israel in outline

- Origins
- The crisis due to the conquest
- The crisis due to the formation of the state
- Endeavours to restore the past
- The constituting of the post-exilic cultic community

idem, I, 105ff.

The theology of Israel's historical traditions: Methodological presuppositions

- The subject-matter of a Theology of the Old Testament
- The unfolding
- The oldest pictures of the saving history

idem, II, 319ff.

The Old Testament and the New

- The actualization of the Old Testament in the New
- The Old Testament's understanding of world and man, and Christianity
- The Old Testament saving event in the light of the New Testament fulfilment

S. Terrien, The Elusive Presence (hereinafter EP), pp. 9ff.

Cultus and faith in biblical research

T. C. Vriezen, An Outline of Old Testament Theology (hereinafter OOTT), llff., 91ff., 143ff.

The Christian Church and the Old Testament

- The Old Testament as the word of God, and its use in the church
- Basis, task and method of Old Testament theology

W. Zimmerli, Old Testament Theology in Outline, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978 (hereinafter OTTO), pp. 238ff.

The openness of the Old Testament message

NOTES

1. Cf. J. Barr, Old and New in Interpretation, New York, 1966.

2. Our generation is seeing various attempts to place a positive Christian interpretation on the Old Testament without resorting to unwarranted allegorical and Christological procedures; e.g., A. A. van Ruler, Die christliche Kirche und das Alte Testament, Munich, 1955; G. A. F. Knight, A Christian Theology of the Old Testament (Richmond, 1959). On the special problems of validating the Old Testament from the vantage-point of New Testament authority, see two symposia: C. Westermann, Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics, Richmond, 1963; and B. W. Anderson, The Old Testament and Christian Faith. New York, 1963; also S. J. De Vries, "Basic Issues in Old Testament Hermeneutics," Journal of The Methodist Theological School in Ohio, 5/1, (1966), 3-19.

3. Of various indigenous groups in the Holy Land today, those of Greek Orthodox persuasion seem less in sympathy with Zionistic nationalism than any other. This unquestionably has much to do with such outbreaks of sharp animosity on public issues as controversy in the Israel government's expropriation of parklands adjacent to the ancient Church of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem, which was itself desecrated by Israeli soldiers during the War of Independence.

4. See my remarks on the significance of holy place over against that of holy time in Yesterday, and Tomorrow: Time and History in the Old Testament (Grand Rapids and London, 1975), p. 348, n. 11. This title will hereinafter be abbreviated as YTT.

5. See G. von Rad, Old Testament Theology I, 175-187; M. Noth, Exodus, Philadelphia: 1962; also A History of Pentateuchal Traditions, trans. B. W. Anderson, Englewood Cliffs 1972; B. W. Childs, The Book of Exodus, A Critical, Theological Commentary, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974; J. Plastaras, The God of the Exodus: The Theology of the Exodus Narratives, Milwaukee 1966; E. W. Nicholson, Exodus and Sinai in History and Tradition, Richmond: John Knox, 1973; S. Herrmann, Israel in Egypt, Naperville 1970.

6. So especially A. Harnack and the antisemitic "Deutsche Christen" movement. R. Bultmann, though he denies being marcionistic, relegates the Old Testament to pre- and subChristian "Vorverstandnis" in his articles, "The Significance of the Old Testament for the Christian Faith," Anderson, op. cit., pp. 8-35, and "Prophecy and Fulfillment ," Westermann, op. cit., pp. 50-75 (both translated from German originals); so also the articles of F. Baumgärtel, F. Hesse, C. Michalson, and J. Dillenberger in these two volumes. To assess the significance of the strong opposition to this position among all the remaining contributors to this volume, see De Vries, "Basic Issues," pp. 17-19; also S. J. De Vries "The Early Years of Barth and Bultmann," Journal of The Methodist Theological School, 5/2 (1967), 22-29.

7. For what follows, see R. Grant, The Bible in The Church, A Short History of Interpretation, New York, 1954; P. R. Ackroyd, et al., edd., The Cambridge History of the Bible, 3 vols., Cambridge 1963-1970.

8. See S. Sandmel, We Jews and Jesus, New York 1965.

9. See art, "Ebionites," (G. Uhlhorn), NSHE, IV, 57.

10. Cf. W. Schmithals, Die Gnosis in Korinth, eine Untersuchung zu den Korintherbriefen, 2nd. ed. Gottingen, 1965; R. Bultmann, Theology of the New Tesament, I (New York 1954), pp. 164-183.

11. Cf. Bultmann, ibid., II (1955), pp. 15ff.; R. E. Brown, "'Other Sheep not of This Fold': The Johannine Perspective on Christian Diversity in the Late First Century," JBL 97 (1978), 5-22.

12. See art. "Canon of the NT" (F. W. Beare), IDB; I, 52ff.; J. Knox, Marcion and the New Testament, Chicago 1942; H. Lietzmann, The Beginnings of the Christian Church (New York 1937), pp. 333-353.

13. Cf. A. C. McGiffert, A History of Christian Thought, I (New York-London, 1932), 246ff.; J. L. Gonzalez, A History of Christian Thought, I (Nashville-New York, 1970) 268ff.; J. Pelikan, The Christian Tradition, A History of the Development of Doctrine, I (Chicago 1971).

14. See art. "Justin Martyr"(N. Bonwetsch), NSHE, VI, 282ff.

15. See art. "Philo of Alexandria" (0. Zbckler), NSHE, IX; 38ff.

16. See G. Vermes, "Bible and Midrash: Early Old Testament Exegesis," Cambridge History of the Bible, I, 199-231; H. L. Strack, Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash (Philadelphia 1945), pp. 201ff.; A. G. Wright, The Literary Genre Midrash, New York 1967.

17. Cf. B. Smalley, The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages, Oxford:1952.

18. Cf. J. T. McNeill, The History and Character of Calvinism, Oxford: 1954, pp. 212-214.

19. See H. Bornkamm, Luther and the Old Testament, trans. E. W. and R. C. Gritsch, ed. V. I. Gruhn, Philadelphia 1969.

20. See J. Steinmann, Richard Simon et les origins de l'exégèse biblique, Bruges, 1960; Cf. H. J. Kraus, Geschichte der historischkritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments (2nd ed., Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1969), pp. 65-70.

21. Cf. G. H. Tavard, "Tradition in Theology," J. F. Kelly, ed., P e r s p e c t i v e s (Notre Dame: Fides Publishers, 1976), pp. 84ff.

22. Cf. 0. Cullmann, Vatican Council II; The New Direction. Essays selected and arranged by J. D. Hester, New York 1968.

23. See Kraus, op. cit., 80ff.; S. J. De Vries, Bible and Theology in The Netherlands (Wageningen 1968), pp. 7ff., 22ff., 45-87.

24. cf. Kraus, op. cit., pp. 425-433; J. Smart, "A Mat-

ter of Life or Death," The Divided Mind of Modern Theology (Philadelphia 1967), pp. 206ff.

25. Egyptian dominance over Palestine ended ca. 1200 B.C., and, apart from occasional raids like that of Pharaoh Sheshonq (= Shishak, I Kings 14:25f.), was never restored until, very briefly, in the time of Necho I (609-604 B.C.). Once David subdued the Transjordanian kingdoms (II Samuel 10, 12), Israel remained safe on its eastern border until the Aramean raids of the ninth century and the Assyrian and Babylonian conquests of the eighth centuries, respectively. That is to say, once inimical groups like the Philistines and Edomites had been either assimilated or brought under vassalage, David's kingdom was able to enter a period of relative security and international peace lasting for two or three centuries.

26. For details concerning the growth of the various Old Testament documents one should consult the major works on Introduction. See now particularly the innovative, comprehensive treatment offered in B. S. Childs, An Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), where a complete list of similar works is given.

27. See art. "Jew" (R. Posner), EJ, X, 22ff: "Jewish Identity" (A. Hertzberg), EJ, X, 53ff.; art. "Jew, Jews, Jewess" (J. A. Sanders) IDB, II, 897ff.

28. Cf. art. "Israel, Names and Associations of" (A. Haldar), IDB, II, 765f.

29. For details, cf. P. R. Ackroyd, Exile and Restoration, Philadelphia **1968.**

30. See E. Mary Smallwood, Jews Under Roman Rule, Leiden: Brill, 1976; cf. also E. Schürer, A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus, N. N. Glatzer, ed., New York 1961; S. Safrai and M. Stern, edd., The Jewish People in the First Century, 2 vols. Assen: van Gorcum, 1974-.

31. Cf. the classic study of W. M. Ramsay, St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen, New York and London, **1896**; also S. V. McCasland, "New Testament Times: The Graeco-Roman World," IB, 7, 75ff.

32. Christianity changed from a persecuted sect to a

vrivileaed state-religion after the time of the emperor-Constantine, A.D. 313 (Edict of Milan). Subsequently the church developed a centralized hierarchy, with the See of Rome taking over elements of imperial authority at the collapse of the city in the mid-fifth century.

33. Cf. 0. Cullmann, Christ and Time; The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History, Rev. ed., London 1962; C. H. Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and its Development, Chicago 1937.

34. Cf. Richard Gutteridge, The German Evangelical Church and the Jews 1879-1950, Oxford: Blackwell, 1976; especially Chap. V, "The Niiremberg Laws and their Effect upon the Evangelical Church, 1935-1938" (pp. 152ff). The Evangelical Church was paralyzed when facing the duty of witnessing against the immorality of Nazi antisemitism by a traditionalistic maintenance of the two-realms doctrine, leading it to the pretension that political matters were none of her concern. It was not until the Nazis interfered with the internal church matter of enforcing the so-called "Aryan Clause" against pastors of Jewish descent that formidable opposition arose within the church. The church was always concerned to protect Jewish church-members, and especially pastors, but had little to say about the plight of the Jewish people as a whole. The Nazis were very effective in playing off the latter against the former, enticing the church authorities into leaving the non-Christian Jews in their hands at the price of laying off the non-Aryan church members.

35. See the burgeoning literature on the Holocaust experience, especially as interpreted by Elie Wiksel; cf. H. J. Cargas, Harry J. Cargas in Conversation with Elie Wiesel, New York: Paulist Press, 1976; J. K. Roth, A Consuming Fire: Encounters with Elie Wiesel and the Holocaust, Atlanta: John Knox, 1979; E. L. Fackenheim, God's Presence in History: Jewish Affirmations and Philosophical Reflections, New York: New York University Press, 1970.

36. Cf. J. Barr, Fundamentalism (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978) pp. 36ff.

37. The song of Deborah in Judges 5 is likely the

earliest (ca. 1250 B.C.), additions to Daniel the latest (164 B.C.), literary materials contained within the canonical Old Testament. However, the bulk of this was composed between ca. 950 B.C. (J) and 350 B.C. (completion of the Pentateuch, the Prophets collection, most of the Writings).

38. The story of the transmission of the biblical text is long and involved; cf. S. Talmon, "The Old Testament Text," P. R. Ackroyd, ed., The Cambridge History of the Bible, I, 159ff., E. Wiirthwein, The Text of the Old Testament, Oxford 1957.

39. Two vols., trans. J. A. Baker, Philadelphia 1961-1967

40 Tr. S. Neuijen, Wageningen, 1958; 2nd. ed. 1969

41. M. Burrows, An Outline of Biblical Theology, Philadelphia 1946; L. H. Koehler, Old Testament Theo-, Philadelphia 1957; 0. Procksch, Theologie des Alten Testaments, Gütersloh 1950.

42. New York, 1962-65, tr. D. M. Stalker

43. Wolff, "Gerhard von Rad als Exeget," pp. 9-20 in H. W. Wolff, ed., Gerhard von Rad, Seine Bedeutung für die Theologie, Drei Reden von H. W. Wolff, R. Rendtorff, W. Pannenberg, Munich 1973

44. Cf. G. F. Hasel, Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972; W. Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, I (Philadelphia 1961), 512-520 ("The Problem of Old Testament Theology")

45. New York: Harper, 1978

46. Literary studies concerning the Old Testament were stimulated by the writings of Robert Lowth (d. 1787) and especially scholars of the German Romanticistic movement such as Johann Gottfried Herder (d. 1803). Throughout the nineteenth century it was much the vogue to approach the Bible, and especially the Old Testament, in terms of its aesthetic appeal. This approach continues to inspire such books as P. C. Sands, The Literary Genius of the Old Testament, Oxford 1926, and C. A. Dinsmore, The English Bible as Literature, Boston 1931. Although the Romanticistic bias that the Bible is

nothing more than admirable human literature must now be set aside, its beauty as literature needs to continue to be studied and admired, as in the recent writings of Luis Alonso-Schökel and James Muilenburg (see particularly the latter's Commentary on Second Isaiah in IB).

47. Cf. J. Barr, Fundamentalism, pp. 310ff. ("Objectivity").

48. *See* the impressive argumentation of W. Zimmerli in his article, "Promise and Fulfillment," C. Westermann, ed., Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics, pp. 89-122. A number of present-day systematicians are responsive to this call (notably H. Diem *in* Germany, H. Berkof in Holland), but they are still very much in the minority.

Chapter I

The Transcendence and Immanence of God

"THE HOLY GOD"

Yahweh, the god of the Israelites (see Ex. 3:14f.), who is also the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is unique in his holiness, transcendently distinctive while intimately near in his immanence.

Ontologically, he is absolutely different from all created being, sharing nothing of the metaphysical substance of the world.

Personalistically, we know him as the absolutely Other, who nonetheless shares our lives by ruling and healing them. It is in a relational sense that we speak of him as "the HOLY God."

Introduction: The concept of holiness

a. Otto: The Holy as mysterium tremendum

Rudolf Otto's book, The Idea of the Holy, first published in German in 1917, began a new phase in the discussion of transcendantal realities.1 Otto coins a special term, "the numinous." The Latin word numen means divine will and power, hence a god or goddess, also a spirit or apparition. In Otto's view the Latin numen is equivalent to Heb. qadôš, Grk. hagios and Lat. sacer.

He goes on to analyze the contents of the numinous and then describes mankind's subjective response to it. He gives this the name "mysterium tremendum," another Latin expression with two distinct elements, viz., the tremendum, which is man's trembling before the aweful and majestic numen; and the mysterium, which includes the element of fascination in the presence of the Great Unknown. According to Otto the trembling or shuddering (tremendum) is more than natural, ordinary fear, implying that a mysterious reality is beginning to loom before the mind and touch the feelings. It may be manifested as demonic dread--a horror in the presence of a dangerous unknown force--or as worshipful awe in the presence of a deity who is known, loved and trusted. It is the uncanny feeling that we all experience when we listen to ghost stories and when our flesh shudders with a sense of horror too irrational to be called fear. It is also the marvelous experience of ecstatic awe that causes one to cry "Holy, holy, holy!" as the God of heaven and earth draws near. The feeling of tremendum overpowers us and takes complete possession of our will.

The opposite reaction to the numinous presence--ever an inseparable element in man's total subjective emotion--is what Otto calls mysterium. Being confronted by the Wholly Other, feeble man is struck dumb with blank wonder, amazement, and astonishment. He succumbs to a state of stupor and numbness, unable to flee in terror.

The qualitative content of the numinous experience is the element of fascination. As Otto says, "The numinous is something that allures with a potent charm, and the creature, who trembles before it, utterly cowed and cast down, has always at the same time the impulse to

turn to it; nay, even to make it something of his own. The 'mystery' is for him not merely something to be wondered at but something that entrances him . ..a strange ravishment, rising often enough to the pitch of dizzy intoxication." (p. 31)

Such are the elements that Otto has analyzed in the numinous experience. One may experience them--shuddering, stupification, fascination--in various situations. They hold a vital position in all religions, however high or low, that are more than pure abstraction. In religious forms such as Hinduism, the numinous may be expressed in the fearful, horrible, or even disgusting. There are traces of demonic dread in isolated biblical stories as well; but as a whole, the Old Testament and New Testament lie on a much higher plane, in which the character of the divine Being is rationalized, being worthy of trust and love because he is both rational and moral. The Old Testament/New Testament God is more than numen; he is a personal and loving Father.

b. The sacred and the profane

The Bible, expecially the Old Testament, knows nothing of our distinction between secular and religious orders (church and state). It does, however, sharply distinguish between the sacred/sacral (qādôš) and the profane (Heb. tāmē', "unclean"). Although God is everywhere and in all things, he is effectively and actively present only in the qādôš. This need not be, but usually is, institutionalized. The essence of biblical religion, in distinction from other ancient religions, is that its God, Yahweh, is elusively present; i.e., present where he freely and sovereignly chooses to be present and reveal himself. A completely different religious impulse interacts with this in the biblical tradition (especially in the Solomonic temple with its cultic apparatus) to tie this God to one place, one land, one people, one religion. It is especially in the service of this kind of religious domestication that the Israelites built up an elaborate system for offering the qōdeš (holiness) of God to the needs of a worshiping people in the form of priesthood, shrine, ritual, and liturgy. Eventually a special day (the Sabbath), a special book (the Torah) and a special people became the prime bearers of the divine holiness.

c. The fear of God

Among a variety of Hebrew words expressing humankind's reverential response to the presence of Deity, the most widely used is the verb yārē' and noun yir'â, "fear." True to the basic epiphanic tradition, the "fear of God" refers in many early passages to the spontaneous emotion that comes with an immediate awareness of the divine transcendance. This is the mysterium tremendum described by Otto. We read of Jacob in Gen. 28:17: "And he was afraid (wayyirā') and said, 'How awesome (nôrā') is this place!'" Of the Israelites gathered before Mount Sinai, Ex. 20:18 tells us this: "Now when all the people perceived the thunderings and the lightnings and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid (restoring YR' from the ancient versions; cf. v. 20) and trembled."- II Sam. 6:6-9 tells of a certain Uzzah falling dead because he had transgressed a taboo against touching the ark of Yahweh, leading David to "become afraid" of Yahweh (wayyirā' dāwîd' et YHWH, v. 9).

The competing tradition of institutional formalism, seen especially in postexilic passages, tends to reduce "the fear of God" to something less direct and intuitive. Much of the spontaneity of primitive worship is lost as the God of the Israelites becomes progressively more remote and abstract, as that "God-fearing" comes to mean Torah-observing, religious, faithful to the pfous practices of orthodoxy.2

1. The Elusiveness of the divine presence

Among the numerous images for the supernatural used in the history of world religions, some are more fitting, others are less fitting. The two particular images applied to Yahweh, the God of Israel, are especially suited to expressing the paradoxical opposites of transcendentaland immanant. These are the figure of lordship, expressing the more transcendantal side of personalism, and the image of parenthood, expressing more the immanentistic side of personalism. These two images together, the ancient Hebrews found worthy for expressing their peculiar conception of divine holiness.

a. In extrabiblical religion

(1) the gods and cosmic process

Nonbiblical religiosity associates the supernatural with the rest of reality by way of ontic identity. All beings share the same substance; it is only the form of that substance that differs within experiential and non-experiential reality (see Aristotle's sophisticated philosophy based on this distinction). All worldly phenomena are a part of cosmic process. Even Diety is involved in it. The reality known as "God" is not distinguished from the phenomenal world. The animate world is especially suffused with Deity; but inaminate reality is a potent bearer of Deity as well. Deity is everywhere present as the element of awesomeness, mysteriousness; but it readily lends itself to localization and institutionalization in specially numinous locales, persons, and practices.

The following excerpts from an outstanding interpreter of ancient Near-Eastern mythology, Henri Frankfort, may help us understand the nonbiblical mode of intellectual conceptuality:

> Natural phenomena, whether or not they were personified and became gods, confronted ancient man with a living presence, a significant "Thou," which ... exceeded the scope of conceptual definition ... The mythopoeic mind, tending toward the concrete, expressed the irrational, not in our manner, but by admitting the validity of several avenues of approach at one and the same time. The Babylonians, for instance, worshiped the generative force in nature in several forms: its manifestation in the beneficial rains and thunderstorms was visualized as a lion-headed bird. Seen in the fertility of the earth, it became a snake. Yet in statues, prayers, and cult acts it was represented as a god in human shape. The Egyptians in the earliest times recognized Horus, a god of heaven, as their deity. He was imagined as a gigantic falcon hovering over the earth with outstretched wings, the colored clouds of sunset and sunrise being his speckled breast and the sun and moon his eyes. Yet this god could also be viewed as a sun-god, since the sun, the most powerful thing in the sky, was naturally considered a manifestation of the god and thus confronted man with the same divine presence which he adored in the falcon spreading its wings over the earth.
>
> Since the phenomenal world is a "Thou" confronting early man, he does not expect to find an impersonal law regulating a process. He looks for a purposeful will committing an act. If the rivers refuse to rise, it is not suggested that the lack of rainfall on distant mountains adequately explains the calamity. When the river does not rise, it has refused to rise. The river, or the gods, must be angry with the people who depend on the inundation .... Some action, then, is called for ... In Egypt, where annual records of the heights of the Nile flood were kept from the earliest historical times, the pharaoh nevertheless made gifts to the Nile every year about the time when it was due to rise. To these sacrifices, which were thrown into the river, a document was added. It stated, in the form of an order or a contract, the Nile's obligations .... (The intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man, pp. 19f., 15f.)[3]

(2) Supernaturalism within the immanentistic thought-world

As we compare biblical religion with nonbiblical religion, we find that, as far as the experience of the Holy is concerned, there is nothing phenomenologically distinctive in the one or in the other. Psychologically

speaking, the Israelite worshiper shares an experience similar to that of the Hittite or the Egyptian or the Babylonian. The important distinction is ideological and philosophical, for we find that all forms of ancient oriental and classical religions grounded their conception of the supernatural in immanentistic monism.

Definitions. IMMANENTISM: the concept of the supernatural as inherently and necessarily present in experiental reality.
MONISM: a philosophical system in which all reality, divine as well as creaturely/human, shares the same ontological substance.

In nonbiblical religions, the supernatural is never couched in terms that distinguish it sharply from the natural order. Somehow, the worshiper is part of what is worshipped. The world of nature, the world of deity, and the human world are all interpreted as part of the same essential process. Thus supernatural means "bigger than," rather than "other than," the natural. The familiar gods of the Greeks and Romans, for instance, were not understood as essentially or ontologically different from humankind, but were rather larger, more powerful, more fierce and frightening than humankind. Just as ancient cultures failed to distinguish the metaphysical substance of various persons from one another, they failed to distinguish the person of the worshiper from the being of the deity.

One should not be surprised, actually, to hear of the wide-spread classical institution of emperior worship. Ontologically, there was no distinction between man and Deity. The Egyptians actually believed that the pharaohs were "sons of God," i.e., embodiments of Deity. Perhaps it was Egyptian influence on the Romans, as earlier on the Greeks, that encouraged their kings and emperors to insist on the honors and distinctions (including formal worship) belonging to the gods. Their power and achievements tempted them to forget their motality; their religion and philosophy put no-obstacles in the way.[4]

On the other hand, Judaism and Christianity, with their monotheism and their conception of God's grand transcendence and universal sovereignty, were never able to compromise on this sorely disputed point, even if it meant persecution and death for their refusal. Ultimate issues of religious philosophy were at stake; for those who stood within the biblical tradition, it was no mere

dogma or theory, but their life and death commitment to a living God, that was in dispute.

(3) The identification of the Holy with special places, phenomena, and institutions: readings from ancient Near-Eastern mythology

The primeval hillock (cf. holy mountain traditions in other religions)[5], ANET 31[6]

There is a city in the midst of the waters [from which] the Nile rises, named Elephantine. It is the beginning of the beginning, the beginning nome, (facing) toward Wawat. It is the joining of the land, the primeval hillock of earth, the throne of Re, when he reckons to cast life beside everybody. 'Pleasant of Life' is the name of its dwelling. 'The Two Caverns' is the name of the water; they are the two breasts which pour forth all good things. It is the couch of the Nile, in which he becomes young (again)....He fecundates (the land) by mounting as the male, the bull, to the female; he renews (his) virility, assuaging his desire. He rushes twenty-eight cubits (high at Elephantine); he hastens at Diospolis seven cubits (high)....

COMMENT: Reference is made to the island of Syene in the Nile just north of the lowest cataract. Wawat is the adjoining territory in Nubia. The myth identifies this spot as the center of creation.[7] The Egyptians reproduced it symbolically in their pyramids, representing the most elemental geometric form.

Hymn to the Nile, ANET 372-73. An extensive liturgy praising Nile as deity[8] contains the following excerpt:[9]

Worship of the Nile. Hail to thee, 0 Nile, that issues from the earth and comes to keep Egypt alive! Hidden in his form of appearance, a darkness by day, to whom minstrels have sung. He that waters the meadows which Re created, in order to keep every kid alive. He that makes to drink the desert and the place distant from water....The Lord of fishes, he who makes the marsh-birds to go upstream....The bringer of food, rich in provisions, creator of all good, lord of majesty,

sweet of fragrance.... He who makes every beloved tree to grow, without lack of them. He who brings a ship into being by his strength, without hewing in stone.... He who was sorrowful is come forth gay.... Vomiting forth and making the field to drink, anointing the whole land, making one man rich and slaying another....A maker of light when issuing from darkness, a fat for his cattle. His limits are all that is created. There is no district which can live without him....Entering into the underworld and coming forth above, loving to come forth as a mystery....He who establishes truth in the heart of men....Men began to sing of thee with the harp, and men sing to thee with the hand. The generations of thy children jubilate for thee....When thou risest in the city of the Ruler [Thebes],[10] then men are satisfied with the goodly produce of the meadows....When the Nile floods, offering is made to thee, oxen are sacrificed to thee, great oblations are made to thee, birds are fattened for thee, lions are hunted for thee in the desert, fire is provided for thee. And offering is made to every other god, as is done for the Nile.... 0 all men who uphold the Ennead [the nine-god pantheon], fear ye the majesty which his son, the All-Lord, has made by making verdant the two banks. So it is "Verdant art thou!" So it is "O Nile, verdant art thou, who makest man and cattle to live!"

Hymn to Enlil, ANES 573-74. Representing the tendency toward universalization, the Hymn to Enlil celebrates Ekur/Duranki, his temple at Nippur, as pre-eminent shrine:

Enlil, whose command is far-reaching, lofty his word (and) holy,
Whose promouncement is unchangeable, who decrees destinies unto the distant future,
Whose lifted eye scans the land,
Whose lifted beam searches the heart of all the land--
When Father Enlil seats himself broadly on the holy dais, on the lofty dais,
When Nunamnir carries out to supreme perfection lordship and kingship,
The earth-gods bow down willingly before him,
The Anunna humble themselves before him,

Stand by faithfully in accordance with (their) instructions.
The great (and) mighty lord, supreme in heaven (and) earth, the all-knowing one who understands the judgment,
Has set up (his) seat in Duranki -- the wise one,
Made pre-eminent in princeship the kiur, the "great place,"
In Nippur the lofty bellwether of the universe he erected (his) dwelling.
.....
In Nippur, the beloved shrine of the father, the Great Mountain,
The shrine of plenty, the Ekur, the "lapis lazuli" house, he raised up out of the dust,
Planted it in a pure place like a (high) rising mountain,
Its prince, the Great Mountain, Father Enlil,
Set up (his) dwelling on the dais of the Ekur, the lofty shrine.
....
Enlil, when you marked off holy settlements on earth,
You built Nippur as your very own city,
The Kiur, the mountain, your pure place, whose water is sweet,
You founded in the Duranki, in the center of the four corners (of the universe),
Its ground, the life of the land, the life of all -the lands,
Its brickwork, of red metal, its foundations of lapis-lazuli,
You have reared it up in Sumer like a wild ox,
All lands bow the head to it,
During its great festivals, the people spend (all) their time in bountifulness.

Enlil, the holy Earth that fills you with desire,
The Abzu, the holy shrine, so befitting for you,
The deep mountain, the holy cella, the place where you refresh yourself,
The Ekur, the "lapis-lazuli" house, your noble dwelling, awe-inspiring --
Its fear (and) dread reach heaven,
Its shade is spread over all the lands,
Its front stretches away to the center of heaven,
All the lords, all the princes,
Conduct thither (their) holy offerings,
Offer (their) prayers and orisons to you.

Thou art in my heart,
And there is no other that knows thee,
Save thy son, Nefer-kheperu-Re Wa-en-Re,
For thou hast made him well-versed in thy plans
and in thy strength.

The world came into being by thy hand,
According as thou hast made them.
When thou hast risen they live,
When thou settest they die.
Thou art lifetime thy own self,
For one lives (only) through thee.
Eyes are (fixed) on beauty until thou settest.
All work is laid aside when thou settest in the
west.
(But) when (thou) risest (again),
[Everything is] made to flourish for the king,...
Since thou didst found the earth
And raise them up for thy son,
Who came forth from thy body:
the king of Upper and Lower Egypt,...Akh-en-
Aton,... and the Chief Wife of the King...
Nefert-iti, living and youthful forever and
ever.

COMMENT: While recognizing interesting parallels with Psalm 104, one should note the many differences. Aton is all; all is Aton. Though he cares specially for Egypt (as the true Nile), he cares also for other lands, coming as the Nile of rainfall. This hymn is not truly monotheistic because of its patent immanentism and pantheism.

(4) On the resort to manipulation: readings in ritual and magical texts

A classic study is W Robertson Smith's book, The Religion of the Semites.[14] For the ancient world, many new texts have been published, supplementing what Smith had to say.[15]

We need to look at ancient nonbiblical religion as an institutional process with its priesthood, its rituals and sacrifices, its myths. All of this was developed by the pious mentality of the ancient world, as an expression of the mysterium tremendum, that reaction within the creaturely mind and heart that recognizes the special presence of the supernatural at particular places and times. More and more, this all tends to become institutionalized, making man's role in religion essentially manipulative. Man is terrified by the presence of the numinous; he needs to control and manipulate it to his profit -- or at the very least to ward off its potent evil. So myth, the form of sacred story explaining how things are what they are in deepest reality, is developed as one way of comprehending the mysterious, numinous reality behind all earthly phenomena.[16] Ritual is developed in face-to-face confrontation with the numinous reality represented in the institutional cult. By these two together, the supernatural world is somehow brought under man's control. Or at least, such the priestly guilds led their followers to believe. They introduced themselves as an indispensable go-between, gaining untold profit for themselves, and power beyond belief, becoming in various times and places more powerful than the king himself. (Such was the case with Akh-en-Aton, for instance, whose downfall was engineered by the offended priests of Thebes.)[17]

Few moderns have any notion of ancient ritual. Here is a recently published example from Ugarit, a second-millenium, B.C., city in upper Syria:

Month of Ḫiari: On the day of the New Moon
a bull and a ram for the Mistress of the Mansion.
On the fourteenth: Baʿlu two loaves of layer-bread.
On the eighteenth the king shall wash himself Clean.
On the following day: sacrificial meat in the pit
of Ṣapānu;
ingots of silver and gold, an offering of two rams
for Bittu-bēti;
a bull and a ram as a burnt-offering, a bull as a
peace-offering for Baʿlu;
a bird for Ṣapānu; a throat and a ram for Rišpu
of [Babātu]; two birds for Inšu-Ilīma;...
In the pit of Rišpu human semen as a burnt-
offering and a dainty bit from the basin.
On the following day: in the pit of Ḫiari
thirty-eight head of small cattle, seven bulls;
the house of Baʿlu of Ugarit two rams.
On the following day: for Rišpu-Mālik a bull
and a ram;
for the Mistress of the Mansion a ram that has
been pierced and a ram;
the Brackish Fountain a ram; the Vineyard of
Milku a ram.
On the following day: for Koṯaru two (rams).

On the following day the well-being of the people will be the result of (the offering of) this sacrificial meat. (J. C. de Moor in Ugaritica V, p. 318, RS 24.249)

COMMENT: For us this is boring and sterile, but for the ancient worshiper it was full of fascination.[18] The priest responsible for following out the prescribed sacrificial calendar, presenting a variety of valuable and numinous offerings to a variety of deities, or to the same deity under different appelatives, would not dream of departing a hair's breadth from it. Fear and terror were present, but no doubt love and devotion as well. Ancient ritual is predicated on the concept of quid pro pro ("this for that"; "something for something else"), following a certain order of doing honor to the Deity, with the purpose of receiving proportionate benefits in return.

This also explains the psychology of magic. Inasmuch as the primitive mind could not be readily satisfied with a manageable number of dieties, there was always the dread of unidentified powers beyond the recognized order. Within this uncontrolled world, beyond the range of effective ritual manipulation, supernatural power could become dangerous and hostile. In order to secure oneself from evil in the spiritual area beyond the reach of ritual, men sought to ward off malevolence, and enlist beneficence, through the whole secret order of magic and incantation. This was extra insurance. Magic is still with us even in our scientific order of reason; how much more in the ancient world!

Here is an incantation from ancient Egypt (ANET 328, Magical Protection for a Child):[19]

Another charm. Mayest thou flow away, he who comes in the darkness and enters in furtively, with his nose behind him, and his face reversed, failing in that for which he came!

Mayest thou flow away, she who comes in the darkness and enters in furtively, with her nose behind her, and her face turned backwards, failing in that for which she came!

Hast thou come to kiss this child? I will not let thee kiss him! Hast thou come to silence (him)? I will not let thee set silence over him! Hast thou come to injure him? I will not let thee injure him! Hast thou come to take him away? I will not let thee take him away from me!

I have made this magical protection against thee out of clover -- that which sets an obstacle -- out of onions -- which injures thee -- out of honey -- sweet for men, (but) bitter for those who are yonder [the dead] -- out of the roe of the abdju-fish, out of the jawbone of the meret-fish, and out of the backbone of the perch.

COMMENT: In the dynamistic conception underlying this incantation, the spoken word -- recited in precise order, style, and inflection -- was potent; yet it was accompanied by the administration of esoteric medications, powerful in the spiritual world like healing herbs in the physical.

Excursus on ritual in Hebrew religion.[20]

In critiquing nonbiblical religion, we are not losing from mind how important sacrificial ritual was throughout the Old Testament period, from the patriarchs until the time of Christ. In earliest times it was minimally regulated, and could occur away from established shrines. But we can clearly trace a tendency toward regulation, centralization, and institutionalization, putting all under the authority of a priestly aristocracy while eliminating all traces of pre-Yahwistic and sub-Yahwistic belief and practice. It was only at a period of devastation and dispersion -- the exile in Babylon -- that the sacrificial cult was entirely interrupted; so too when the Romans captured, and later destroyed, Jerusalem in the Christian era.

It appears that the Israelites accepted sacrificial worship as normal and expected; no doubt they simply inherited it from their ancestors and predecessors. Numerous narratives mention it as part of orthodox practice. Moreover, the Pentateuch -- particularly Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy -- have sections that are very largely given over to cultic legislation. Two literary genres predominate: ritual (as in Lev. 1), specifying the precise procedure for bringing an offering, of which there were several different kinds; and torah (as in Lev. 7:19-27), instructing the people with regard to what were, and were not, proper sacrifices.[21] The Israelite priests were much concerned to assure that

worshipers and sacrifices met the criteria of purity, and that the ritual proceeded in proper order. This accorded with what the laity expected of them, so much so that when they did become slack they were severely chastised, as in the classic words of Malachi (2:7-8):

> The lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and men should seek instruction (tôrāh) from his mouth . . . .But you have turned aside from the way; you have caused many to stumble by your instruction (tôrāh); you have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says Yahweh of hosts....

Nevertheless, the fact that biblical religion was able to survive without the sacrificial cult during the exile reveals that it did not really depend on it. The prophets sometimes polemicize against it, or appear to do so (e.g., Isa. 1:10-17). Amos 5:25 is difficult, but may be taken to mean that the earliest writing prophet, Amos, was aware of a time in Israel's prehistory when its religion had no place whatever for sacrificial worship (see also 5:21-22). Most recent scholarship agrees, however, that the prophets were condemning hypocrisy, formalism, externality, and eclecticism -- faults of the worshiper's heart and mind. All the same, Old Testament religion was clearly moving away from a reliance on sacrificial worship, as can be clearly seen from severai surprising declarations in the Psalms:

> Sacrifice and offering thou dost not desire;
> but thou hast given me an open ear.
> Burnt offering and sin offering thou hast not
> required. (40:6)
>
> If I were hungry, I would not tell you;
> for the world and all that is in it is mine.
> Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood
> of goats?
> Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving,
> and pay your vows to the Most High. (50:12-14)
>
> Thou hast no delight in sacrifice;
> Were I to give a burnt offering thou wouldst not
> be pleased.
> The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;
> A broken and contrite spirit, 0 God, thou wilt not
> despise. (51:16-17)

In conclusion, we may say that sacrifice and ritual were vehicles by which the Israelite people were able

to carry out an organized and regular worship. Mechanically, it functioned like similar practices in non-biblical religion. The Yahwists were not different in being more sincere, or more devout, in their praise and adoration. The difference was not phenomenological but theological. The fact that their God was one, not many, and presented himself to them as purely spiritual, rejecting every emblem and image, encouraged the development of a more highly personalistic interaction between deity and worshiper. Thus, ritual and liturgy remain purely instrumental wherever biblical religion is true to its higher personalistic understanding of God.

b. The God of Israel

(1) Apprehended in terms of personalistic dualism

We have described, explained, and illustrated the concept of divine holiness -- and of human response to it -- within the immanentistic beliefs of the ancient peoples neighboring the Israelites. In many ways their experience and response paralleled those of their neighbors, yet a profound difference remained. What was the distinctive element in Israel's apprehension of, and response to, the world of the supernatural? It is clearly the Bible's radical transcendentalizing of the God-concept. Israel's God is not part of the cosmic process. The attribution of personhood is developed along the lines of separation and distinction. Not only does he become bigger, stronger, more powerful ("supernatural" in a literal sense), but radically other, and sovereign in his differentiation.

We may refer to this as "personalistic dualism" in the sense that it denies monism. Israel's God, Yahweh, is in no way ranked with other deities, but stands radically alone. He is in no way controllable or manipulatable through ritual or magical formulae, but operates as sovereign Lord over all, exercizing his will upon the animate and inanimate world, but also upon mankind. Martin Buber's classic, I and Thou,[22] has helped moder theologians take divine personhood more seriously. It stands at the very core of biblical religion, giving it a radical distinction over against its rivals in the

ancient world.

Definitions: PERSON; PERSONALISTIC. Lat. etymology, "mask," "stage character" is not in consideration. A person is an intelligent, willing, acting being, conscious of his/her feelings and rational processes. A person is the subject of action; may also be its object. We apprehend other persons first of all as objects, and continue to treat them as such because objects are manipulable, useful for the gratification of our own desires. Many people fail to grow as persons, especially in social interaction; likewise, the full personhood of others is often abused or ignored. We grow as persons as we recognize ourselves and other human beings as subjects, responsible for intelligent and moral behavior. We cannot develop our personhood in isolation (see the feral children), but only in creative interaction with other persons as subjects.

God as person. Setting aside the trinitarian reference of this term, we mean that the biblical God is not just a numinous power greater than other numinous powers. His majestic Presence is analogous to the otherness that distinguishes human persons from one another, but infinitely greater. God is pure Subject over against us as acting, willing subjects -- acting upon us and interacting with us. As sovereign Subject he is Lord, not making irrational demands and threats like a blind despot, but controlling our lives, with all of reality, for a benign purpose.

On the caricaturing of divine personhood in non-biblical religion, see below. Within the parameters of biblical faith, the greatest sin is to abuse or neglect the sovereign Personhood of God.

DUALISM. Alternately: PLURALISM. The philosophy that sees more than a single ontic reality. Opposite to monism.

Excursus on God as absolute Subject

There is an essentiality in using personalistic images in our analogical speech about the supernatural, for in no other way can we effectively preserve a worthy concept of divine subjecthood.

Some recent theological treatments of this topic have been especially helpful. We think particularly of the analytical work of the German-American theologian, Paul Tillich, culminating in his influential Systematic Theology.[23] We are indebted to Tillich for his stern warnings against the all-too-common tendency to objectify God, treating him as an object to be analyzed and put into logical propositions. Do we not tend to conceive of God as an entity outside ourselves, possessing some kind of objective existence? Tillich insists that we must think of God as pure Subject, for an object is something that may be approached by, and perhaps manipulated by, the observing interpreter. All objects that we know are limited entities. We cannot conceive even of the universe as otherwise than limited -- and yet what lies beyond its outer limits? At least every object that we know is limited by being outside ourselves as observers, and this is equally true whether the object in question be material or spiritual. Thus every object has limits; but does God have limits? Whatever exists, except God himself, is limited in scope, size, strength, impact, and conditions of existence. Whatever exists, except God, is qualified by other beings. The existence of all objects is qualified, contingent, conditioned, and dependent. But when we talk about God, we talk about One who is beyond all conditions and qualifications. He is himself absolutely incontingent , yet he absolutely impinges upon all other existences.

If God is no object, he must indeed be pure Subject. We apply to him the analogy of subjecthood from our human experience of subjecthood. Although we human beings are objects, with all the contingencies and limitations of objects, we do participate in the experience of subjecthood. We are self-conscious, rational creatures, aware of our individual existence, and in a limited way, able to control it. Although we know that we are contingent beings, there is something within our being that reaches beyond contingency and conditionedness. Although each of us must act within his own

limitations and contingencies, at least in our imagination and in the exercise of our will, we can reach beyond them. It is this analogy of subjecthood that is the most appropriately applied to the concept of God. Our power of imagination, reason, and will are attributes that we necessarily ascribe to God, but in an absolute sense. We can imagine many things -- but he can imagine all. We can know more and more things, and then still more things -- but God already knows everything that we shall ever know. We can will great things -- even space flights and empires -- but God wills everything that is.

If God is indeed pure Subject, it is altogether inappropriate that one should attempt to control or manipulate him. As we become aware of him, we can do no other than respond to him. Our fitting response is the mysterium tremendum: trembling in awe, gazing in wonder.

(a) The epiphanic tradition as normative

Biblical scholars universally recognize two competing conceptions of God in Israelite religion: (1) cultic and institutional; (2) epiphanic and charismatic. The first belongs to the temple and the Davidic establishment; the second belongs to the patriarchal and the exodus traditions -- taken over but not completely assimilated within the mainstream of classical Hebraic worship. We must look to the epiphanic tradition for the primitive roots of Yahwism. Israel began as something radically different from its neighbors, and became normalized to the ideals of international culture only when it adopted the political structures of statehood.

Definitions: EPIPHANY/EPIPHANIC. Terrien's book (see above)[24] has clarified a distinction which he insists upon -- often confused in contemporary discussion. A theophany (from Grk. theou-phaneia, "manifestation of deity") refers to spectacular displays of numinous power in a natural cataclysm, as in the Sinai revelation of Exodus 19. An epiphany (from Grk. epi-phaneia, "manifestation," "revelation") need not be spectacular or involve natural phenomena. It occurs wherever the presence

of Israel's God is mysteriously revealed, usually through his sudden address. He is seldom perceived in visual form (Deut. 4:12, 15 deny that God can be seen; but see Ex. 24:10-11 for a very old and authentic contrary tradition); patriarchs and prophets preferably apprehend God in his word to them. As might be expected, the temple ritual made much of visual symbols of the divine presence, especially in a mystical cloud of glory, the skekinah.[25]

1) Primitive epiphanic legend

Two spectacular examples occur in composite literary contexts, Gen. 28:10-22 and Ex. 3:1-6.[26] The Yahwistic and Elohistic materials interwined in each of them emphasize distinctive conceptions of the divine presence.

Gen. 28:10-22: Jacob left Beer-Sheba and went toward Haran. And he came to a certain place (māqôm), and stayed there that night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place (māqôm), he put it under his head and lay down in that place (māqôm) to sleep. And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! And behold, Yahweh stood above it and said, "I am Yahweh, the god of Abraham your father and the god of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants; and your descendants shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and by you and your descendants shall all the families of the earth bless themselves. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done that of which I have spoken to you." Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely Yahweh is in this place (māqôm); and I did not know it." And he was afraid, and said, "How awesome is this place (māqôm)! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." So Jacob rose early in the morning,

and he took the stone which he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it . . ..Then Jacob made a vow saying, "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then Yahweh shall be my god, and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that thou givest me I will give the tenth to thee.

Ex. 3:1-6: Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law... and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the angel of Yahweh appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and lo, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, "I will turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt." When Yahweh saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here am I." Then he said, "Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place (māqôm) on which you are standing is holy ground." And he said, "I am the God of your 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 at God.

COMMENT: Māqôm," regularly has the specific meaning, "holy site," "shrine"; so here. Bethel became an established Israelite shrine,27 but Sinai did not.28 The site of each story, in the most primitive underlying tradition, was remote and lost to memory. The divine act of self-revelation, not man's celebration, made each holy.

Definitions: YAHWIST/IC and ELOHIST/IC: Historical criticism has long established separate documentary sources in the Pentateuch. The two earliest are the one that refers to the patriarchal God as "Yahweh " and is hence called the Pahwist (abbr. J), and'another that calls him "Elohim" (pl. "gods," but sing. for Israel's God in monotheistic faith), and is hence called the Elohist (abbr. E). J is probably Judaean and dates from ca. 950 B.C., while E is probably northern Israelite, dating from ca. 850 B.C.29

In Genesis 28 and Exodus 3 the two are compositionally intertwined, as the variation of the divine names shows. J's version of Genesis 28 is an epiphany, since Yahweh speaks but is not seen; E's version moves toward theophany in that Jacob sees God's angels in a dream, even though he does not see God himself.30 J's version of Exodus 3, on the other hand, is strikingly theophanous, for he sees the marvelous burning bush, a visible symbol of the divine presence; E's version, meanwhile, remains staunchly epiphanous, for God only speaks.31

The Pentateuch also has a late Priestly source (P), which was intertwined with an earlier redactional intertwining of J and E.

Both these narratives bring to clear expression the meaning divine holiness in personalistic terms. In the burning-bush story of Exodus 3, the god Yahweh first reveals himself to Moses (and through him, to Israel). The very strange phenomenon of a bush that is all ablaze, yet upon close inspection is not being consumed by the fire, expresses powerfully the elusive presence of God's supernatural power. It is especially important that the locale of divine self-revelation is no established shrine or temple, but the empty desert. In the story of Jacob at Bethel, Yahweh (E: God) mysteriously reveals himself at a place (māqôm) far from every known religious observance or distinction. In the J version, this God, previously unknown to him but now identifying himself with the gods/God of his ancestors, surprisingly promises him to be with him wherever he may go, even in a foreign country far away from the land of promise, bringing him back in his own good time.

This narrative's significance cannot be over-rated. It shows that in Israel's early epiphanic tradition, God displays his numinous power and presence not in particular shrines and rituals, but freely and sovereignly, always in terms of personal endearment and commitment. In other words, Jacob does not manipulate God, but God "manipulates" him. In terms of the narrative context this is especially important, for Jacob has just deprived Esau of the patriarchal blessing in a cynical effort to control his own destiny at the expense of all who might stand in his way.32

2) Classical liturgy: Psalm 18 = II Samuel 22

Under a line of Davidic kings, ruling in an unbroken dynasty for more than four hundred years, the people of Judah developed a strong liturgical tradition in praise of their god Yahweh. Most of this is preserved in the Psalter, the hymnbook of the Jerusalem temple. This contains a remarkable variety of individual compositions, differing in length from very short to complex; in mood, from bitter lament to exulting joy. Many psalms are for recitation by individual worshipers, others are designed for the worshiping congregation. In all of them we discern an intimate relationship of trust. One who suffers appeals to the God who has known him from the womb (Ps. 22:9-11); one who has been delivered from suffering or peril praises the same God, adoring him in passionate love and devotion. The psalms are designed, no doubt, to be used over and over again, by clergy and by laity, in situations parallel to the original predicaments which inspired their composition. As such, they were able to function as worthy appeals to the Almighty. But they did not rely on a magical pattern of holy words; rather, on the reality of a deeply trustful relationship which each believer experienced. For each Israelite believer, three things were certain: (1) Yahweh was his God; (2) this God was accessible through prayer, quick to answer; (3) this God was all-powerful and able to help him in his need.

The creative genius of the psalm-writer ranged far and wide to find appropriate images for bringing this all to worthy expression. He drew from two special realms, nature and history, often mingling the two together.[33]

Psalm 18, which appears also in II Samuel 22,[34] eloquently expresses the psalmist's feeling of mysterium tremendum. It was designed for recitation by the Davidic kings in celebration of their victories, imitating the style of the individual thanksgiving psalm. We offer extracts from its fifty one verses:

1 I love thee, 0 Yahweh, my strength.
2 Yahweh is my rock, and my fortress, and my
deliverer; my god, my rock, in whom I take
refuge; my shield, and the horn of my
salvation, my stronghold.

COMMENT: In this hymnic ascription of praise, Yahweh is the sole source of power and strength. Unrestrainedly, the psalmist-king makes his personal claim: "He is my god."

4 The cords of death encompassed me,
the torrents of perdition assailed me;
5 The cords of Sheol entangled me,
the snares of death confronted me.

COMMENT: Death, sheol, perdition -- personified in Canaanite myth -- hyperbolically symbolize the psalmist's specific distress in historical experience.

6 In my distress I called upon Yahweh,
to my god I cried for help.
From his temple he heard my voice,
and my cry to him reached his ears.
7 Then the earth reeled and rocked;
the foundations also of the mountains
trembled because he was angry.
8 Smoke went up from his nostrils and
devouring fire from his mouth;
glowing coals flamed forth from him.
9 He bowed the heavens and came down;
thick darkness was under his feet.
.....
12 Out of the brightness before him
there broke through his clouds
hailstones and coals of fire.
13 Yahweh also thundered in the heavens,
and the Most High uttered his voice,
hailstones and coals of fire.
14 And he sent out his arrows and scattered them,
he flashed forth lightnings and routed them.
15 Then the channels of the sea were seen,
and the foundations of the world were laid
bare,
at thy rebuke, 0 Yahweh, at the blast of the
breath of thy nostrils.

COMMENT: Anthropomorphic (from Grk. anthropou-morphikē, "in human form") and anthropopathic (from Grk. anthropou-pathikē, "with human passion") images jostle elbows with the language of theophany, featuring upheavals in nature (storm, hail and lightning, flood). Although Israel's neighbors took such language realistically, in the psalm, biblical religion is already moving toward the abstrative realm of pure metaphor.

16 He reached from on high, he took me, he drew
me out of many waters.
17 He delivered me from my strong enemy and from
them who hated me, for they were too mighty
for me.
18 They came upon me in the day of my calamity;
but Yahweh was my stay.
19 He brought me forth into a broad place;
he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

COMMENT: Cosmic imagery flows into the form of historic allusion. One special day brought Yahweh's deliverance from overpowering enemies. "A broad place" is a metaphor borrowed from the imagery of shepherding (cf. Psalm 23). The reference to Yahweh's "delight" occasions the testimony of integrity in vv.22-26, concluding with the wisdom asserveration of v. 27, "For thou dost deliver a humble (ʿānî) people, but the haughty eyes thou dost bring down."

The psalm is too long to repeat the rest in full, but one should note two special features of the following verses: (1) in vv. 32-45, the psalmist elaborates his previous, meagre allusion to a historical victory over an opposing military force; though metaphor continues, the description often becomes too concrete (and too full of vengeful glee) to function well typologically for worshipers in situations of need that are not directly analogous to that of military conflict; (2) the theme of a grateful, adoring praise continues to the end, appearing with special stylistic finesse in vv.30, 32, and 47, where hāʾēl is probably a vocative, producing the following translations:

30 O God -- his way is perfect, the promise of
Yahweh proves true;
he is a shield for all those who take
refuge in him!
32 O God -- the one who girded me with strength
and made my way safe!
47 O God -- who gave me vengeance and subdued
people under me!

(b) Its universalistic and particularistic dimensions

As we study the wide range of literature within the Old Testament, dating from a period of more than a thousand years, we discern a theological development in which Yahweh becomes more than the god of a particular individual, clan, tribe, or nation. The Israelites came more and more to the conviction that their god, committed to them as his special nation, was also the sovereign Lord of all the nations -- even of the whole world. Their exclusive loyalty to him led in logical and psychological inevitability to the claim of his exclusive divinity. Yet throughout this development, even to the point where Yahweh becomes the God of heaven and earth, they believed that he retained his special commitment and concern for them. A problem arose: did he govern the whole world for them, or had he chosen for them, or had he chosen them in order to govern the whole world? They struggled with various answers to this question. Nevertheless, Yahweh's sovereign and universal lordship became axiomatic, and it was especially this lordship image that was employed as a suitable vehicle for bringing to expression their conception of divine holiness. Yahweh was worshiped and honored as Lord of all that was dependent upon him. This lordship was expressed in terms of personal will, understood as eminently beneficent and unrestrainedly committed to the well-being of those under Yahweh's care.35

The mythic image which Israel chose to apply to itself as an expression of its pecular relationship to the Lord Yahweh was a saving event within history, referred to as the exodus. This was Israel's normative and constitutional, numinous confrontation with Deity. They remembered it in an ancient hymn known as the song of Miriam (Ex. 15:21):

Sing to Yahweh, for he has triumphed gloriously;
the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.

They remembered it also in a narrative of holy celebration (Ex. 14:24, 27, 30):

In the morning watch Yahweh in the pillar of fire
and of cloud looked down upon the host of the
Egyptians and discomfited the host of the Egyptians
. . ..And the sea returned to its wonted flow when
the morning appeared, and the Egyptians fled into
it; SO Yahweh routed the Egyptians in the midst of
the sea.... Thus Yahweh saved Israel that day from
the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the
Egyptians dead upon the seashore.

It is crucially significant that the people whom Yahweh chooses for himself become his people in historical event. They are not as the Egyptians, the Babylonians, or the Greeks, who identified themselves as a people in terms of mythological identification with divine substance, tracing their origins to a generative process within the cosmic order of reality. Of all earthly peoples, Israel is singul r in celebrating the fact that they were once slaves. 3%

(2) Worshiped as uniquely spiritual

In nonbiblical religion, no ontological distinction was made between the being of the gods and that of other entities; hence there was no barrier to the cultic domestication of the gods in the form of visual images or idols. It can be said that the idol represented the god; but in a real sense the idol also was the god -- that is. a concrete manifestation of theod.37 This brought'the god near to the worshiper, near to the priest. The god was constantly subjected to the adulation of ritual praise, and was expected to respond effectively to the worshiper's need. Together, his honorific name and his cultic image brought him into the orbit of human control. Not so in Israel. In spite of numerous clear instances of shortcoming and apostacy -- whether on an individual or community scale -- official Yahwism forbade both the visual representation and the idle, man-centered invocation of this god, both of which would tend to intrude upon the elusiveness and dignity of his sovereign holiness. Hence the second and the third commandments of the decalogue occupy a crucial position in the establishment of biblical religion. Each deserves careful attention.

(a) The second commandment protecting Yahweh's sovereign spirituality38

"Thou shalt not make unto thyself a graven image, or any likeness of anything in heaven above or in the earth beneath or the water under the earth." So reads the second "word," or commandment, of the Decalogue (Ex. 20:4, Deut. 5:8).

The second commandment specifically excludes the various forms in which this prohibition might be breached, thereby guaranteeing Yahweh's sovereign spirituality. The other religions of the ancient world were constantly making all kinds of images and emblems of their deities, and offering homage to them. Why? The mythopoeic mentality behind these forms of worship is unable to recognize an essential distinction between the image or emblem, and the god which they represented. But because a particular god could be recognized with differing qualities and attributes, many images might be needed to express his full presence. Thus, for instance, the god Horus, the Egyptian falcon god. Graphic images recovered from ancient Egypt represent Horus as a falcon. To the Egyptian, the image is Horus; but the falcon soaring in the sky is also Horus. Or the bright clouds of the sunset are Horus; or the sun burning in the heavens; or Pharoah sitting on his throne. Each of these many images endeavors to express a single reality. Each image concretizes the meaning of divine presence, bringing this reality under intellectual and cultic control. Yahwism, however, forbids every effort to reduce the Deity to a managable, manipulable concept, whether represented in graphic figures or in mental imagination. All are equally invalid and equally pretentious. The biblical God is no object, subject to our control, but a sovereign Subject, ever evading our grasp while holding us under his command and control.

The second commandment is an absolute prohibition. There must be no "graven image" (pesel), i.e., no representation in glyptic art; there must also be no "likeness" (temûnâ) -- a broader term covering every possibility of graphic or symbolic representation. Creatures in heaven, on earth, and in the underworld ocean are excluded as models. Israel is forbidden either to "bow down" or to "serve" such idols or images; i.e., show outward gestures of honor and veneration, or engage in the public and private cult of them. Even if such idols or images purport to represent Yahweh, Israel's god (think of the golden calf in Bethel and Dan, I Kings 12:28-29!), they are taboo. The worship of Yahweh cannot tolerate them, because they give a wrong and misleading notion of who and what sort of god Yahweh is. Yahweh cannot be symbolized by a concrete image because such an image tends to reduce him to a single, isolated quality or power, and Yahweh is beyond all reduction. He cannot be present in an idol because he is sovereignly present everywhere in the world. He comes to Moses out in the desert, in a bush that burns

but is not reduced to ashes. He comes to Jacob in the open field at night, on his way to Paddan-Aram. He is everywhere present with his power and personal concern, but he cannot be grasped or captured. The second commandment guards against a prevalent evil in the cultural world of ancient Israel: domesticating God, depriving him of his sovereign lordship. Yahweh can be no falcon soaring in the sky, or the sun shining in the heavens. He is no sacred tree growing by a spring. He is purely spiritual -- spiritual in an eminently sovereign and personalistic way. This is what is meant also in John's Gospel (4:24), "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

(b) The third commandment, forbidding cultic and magical manipulation39

"Thou shalt not take (nāśā', "lift up," "mention") the name of Yahweh in vain (lᵉšāw', "for no good purpose," "idly.") ." So reads the third commandment of the Decalogue (Ex. 20:7, Deut. 5:11).

To raise up a name means invoking it for cultic or quasi-cultic (as in swearing an oath) purposes. Here we fringe on the area of magic and dynamism. The ancients understood well the importance of knowing and using a person's name in order to get his or her attention. Without knowing a person's name, one cannot enter into effective communication or personal interaction. Hence ancient cult and magic are made effective by naming the god or demon in question. The name is an effective handle, which if accompanied by an appropriate ritual, brings the supernatural power under control. Like the bridle for a horse, the name of a god grasps hold of him and puts his power in the service of man. This is what Yahwism prohibits in the third commandment. Israel is forbidden to invoke Yahweh's name for selfish purposes or idle ends, but only for the purposes that this God himself has intended and authorized. He has given his name to man to be celebrated in praise and gratitude and adoration.

> This is my name forever, and thus am I to be memorialized thoughout all generations. (Ex. 3:15)

But the third commandment guards against all misuse of Yahweh's name because it involves misuse of his divine

personhood. To understand this, one should perhaps think of the efforts we make to protect greedy exploiters from capitalizing on the name of a celebrity for some illicit commercial gain, as, for instance, in an advertisement or letter of recommendation. The law would give a person whose name was thus misused the right to sue the offender for the illicit profits, and for punitive damages to boot. In a real sense, this offense would infringe on the plaintiff's personhood as well as on his property rights. One's name is an extension of one's person, and must be guarded jealously. How much more, then, the name of the grandest of all personal beings, the God of the Bible? Yahweh says to Israel, "I have given you my name, but you are not to use it lightly, irreverently, or to selfish gain. That is using and abusing me, violating my personhood." If we really respect other human persons, we do not go around using their names as handles for controlling them, or using them to our selfish advantage. If we truly respect and revere God, we will not use his name idly, superstitiously, or for selfish purpose.

2. The Anthropomorphism of God

Except in primitive notions of the supernatural as a blind power, force, or emanation, the gods came to be envisaged in animal or human form, and are given the attributes, powers, and passions of these higher forms of life. Where specifically human analogies are involved, one may properly speak of anthropomorphism or anthropopathism. The virtues and the vices of human life are ascribed to Deity -- which is, as we have observed, a higher, only more powerful manifestation of the same ontic reality in which humankind itself participates.

Books on religious phenomenology are filled with research about various manifestations of anthropomorphism in the religions of the ancient and modern world and from all of them the student of the Bible has mudh to learn.[40] The latter is more specifically interested, however, in the ancient Near-Eastern religions. Two recent books are useful to the English reader: Siegfried Morenz, Egyptian Religion (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973), and Thorkild Jacobsen, The Treasures of Darkness, a History of Mesopotamian Religion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978). Jacobsen brings much relevant material for a comparative diachronic study by showing that in Mesopotamia, fourth-millenium B.C. religion understood the gods as providers and fertility forces, whereas third-millenium metaphors saw them more as rulers and second-millenium metaphors depict them as parents. The Bible, coming into existence in the first millenium and on into the Christian era, flatly rejected the fertility metaphor as part of its polemic against Baalism, but combined the rulership and parenthood metaphors.[41] It should be clear from Jacobsen's study that the Israelites did not invent these metaphors, but adapted them from its cultural world.

a. In extrabiblical mythologies

Most of the developed religions employ a lesser or greater degree of an anthropomorphic characterization of Deity, in which the gods are described in human form, with human emotions and human activities. In some religions the gods closely emulate human behavior. Particularly striking is the familiar mythology of Greece

and Rome, in which most of the vices and faults of humankind were attributed to the gods. These human traits are sometimes combined with the most grizzly elements of animalistic behavior. Especially is this true of aspects of the Hindu faith: the Shiva figure and the like. The inclination toward anthropomorphism must be recognized as a more or less logical and necessary development in human religious conceptuality. Wherever the numinous was seen as alive and potent, imagery was taken from the animal, but preferably the human world, to represent it.

It is revealing to compare biblical anthropomorphism with its extrabiblical counterpart. In Egypt, in the Hittite empire, and in Mesopotamia, numerous literary materials, liturgical documents, and mythical texts were developed to give expression to an anthropomorphic representation of Deity, explaining the world of the supernatural on analogies borrowed from observation of human life, and at the same time explaining various experiences and phenomena in human life as based on design and purpose within the supernatural world. The forces from beyond human control that impinged on, and threatened, man's existence were deified and anthropomorphized: the heat of the sun, the driving power of the rain, the force of the wind, the irrepressible greening of the grass.

In Mesopotamia, the first became known as Utu, the second as Ninurta, the third as Enki, the fourth as Dumuzi. Each was personified, praised and celebrated in myth and sacred song. Though there was much cross-over and eclecticism, each god or goddess had a specific realm or function and represented a particular area of life force. A good example of this would be Ea/Enki from Sumerian-Babylonian religion. He is the god of fresh water, the fluid that courses through the irrigation ditches and springs up from the earth, bringing fertility to the land. He also becomes the god of wisdom and secret knowledge because of fresh water's power to appear from hidden sources. An analogy has been drawn between two separate realms of reality because each is seen as deriving its force from the same center of power. Another example would Baal, familiar to us from the biblical polemic. Baal can be understood from the Ugaritic myths as a storm god (=Hadad), but also as a god of fertility (=Dagan); the primitive worshiper has drawn an analogy, not very obvious to us but apparent to him, between these two aspects of divinity. Sometimes exceedingly perplexing combinations have been

made, as in the case of the Inanna/Ishtar/Anata figure. She is a goddess of love, but also of war; a ferocious lover, but also a blood-thirsty killer. She paradoxically combines the dual aspect of the life principle: living-dying; loving-hating.

(1) Representative varieties

(a) "Enuma Elish," ANET 61ff., representing comprehensive anthropomorphism[42]

This is one of the most familiar texts from the ancient Near East. It is called "the Babylonian creation myth," although the Semitic Babylonians and Assyrians only borrowed it from their non-Semitic (fourth millenium B.C.) predecessors, the Sumerians. The title consists of the two first words in Babylonian and means, "When above...." The work as a whole is a classic cosmological (having to do with the origin of the cosmos) and theogonic (having to do with the generation of the gods) myth, but is structured as a liturgy for the annual celebration of the enthronement of Babylon's chief god, Marduk (taking over from Enki, chief deity of the Sumerians). Although it is highly lyrical and poetic, it follows a tightly woven narrative development, in which the various deities engage in animated conversation and dynamic interaction. The theme is that of mortal conflict between the forces of chaos, represented by the primordial ocean, Tiamat, and her allies, on the one side; and Marduk/Enki, with his allies, on the other. Tiamat appears as grotesque and demonic, yet she speaks as a human being. So does also Marduk, and the other gods as well. Once he is installed in a postion of supreme power, he engages Tiamat with force and strategm, in the end splitting her body into two separate parts, which become the earth and the sky.

As worthwhile as a careful reading of the entire myth would be, we choose two sections for our present purpose. We read first of Marduk's birth (ANET 62) from Tablet I:

In the chamber of fates, the abode of destinies,
A god was engendered, most able and wisest of gods.

In the heart of Apsu [the deep] was Marduk created,
In the heart of holy Apsu was Marduk created.
He who begot him was Ea, his father;
She who bore him was Damkina, his mother.
The breast of goddesses he did suck.
The nurse that nursed him filled him with awesomeness.
Alluring was his figure, sparkling the lift of his eyes.
Lordly was his gait, commanding from of old.
When Ea saw him. the father who begot him,
He exulted and glowed, his heart filled with gladness.
He rendered him perfect and endowed him with a double godhead.
Greatly exalted was he above them, exceeding throughout.
Perfect were his members beyond comprehension,
Unsuited for understanding, difficult to perceive.
Four were his eyes, four were his ears;
When he moved his lips, fire blazed forth.
Large were all four hearing organs,
And the eyes, in like number, surpassing was his stature;
His members were enormous, he was exceeding tall.
"My little son, my little son!
My son, the Sun! Sun of the heavens!"
Clothed with the halo of ten gods, he was strong to the utmost,
As their awesome flashes were heaped upon him.

COMMENT: The grotesqueries of this description express the awe and reverence of Marduk's worshipers, confronted by the mysterium tremendum of his presence at his royal shrine. Otherwise his description incorporates typical human traits. He is conceived and born; he is suckled as a little child. His father Ea is filled with pride, boasting of his splendor and expressing tenderness and endearment. He has a mouth, eyes, ears, and limbs (members), but more and bigger than any other.

We choose also, from Tablet IV, the lines that depict the confrontation between Marduk and Tiamat. As in the story of David's battle with Goliath in I Samuel 17, there is first a mutual exchange of taunts, then the combat (ANET 66-67):

Tiamat emitted [a cry], without turning her neck,
Framing savage defiance in her lips;

"Too [imp]ortant art thou [for] the lord of
the gods to rise up against thee!
Is it in their place that they have gathered,
[or] in thy place?"
Thereupon the lord, having [raised] the flood-
storm, his mighty weapon,
To [enraged] Tiamat he sent word as follows:
"Why art thou risen, art haughtily exalted,
Thou has charged thine own heart to stir up
conflict,
.....
Thou hast appointed Kingu as thy consort,
Conferring upon him the rank of Anu,
not rightfully his.
Against Anshar, king of the gods, thou seekest evil
[Against] the gods, my fathers,
thou hast confirmed thy wickedness.
[Though] drawn up by thy forces,
girded on thy weapons,
Stand thou up, that I and thou meet
in single combat!"
When Tiamat heard this,
She was like one possessed;
she took leave of her senses.
In fury Tiamat cried out aloud.
To the roots her legs shook both together.
She recites a charm, keeps casting her spell,
While the gods of battle sharpen their weapons.
Then joined issue Tiamat and Marduk,
wisest of gods.
They strove in single combat, locked in battle.
The lord spread out his net to enfold her,
The Evil Wind, which followed behind,
he let loose in her face.
When Tiamat opened her mouth to consume him,
He drove in the Evil Wind that she close not
her lips.
As the fierce winds charged her belly,
Her body was distended and her mouth was wide open.
He released the arrow, it tore her belly,
It cut through her insides, splitting the heart.
Having thus subdued her, he extinguished her life.
He cut down her carcass to stand upon it....

COMMENT: Even the monstrous Tiamat has humanlike organs: mouth, legs, belly, heart, intestines. Like Marduk, she uses sarcasm and irony in her taunt. One can envisage the scene as similar to any violent struggle between man and man, or man and beast, except for the fact that mysterious forces like the Evil Wind play a

crucial role (so regularly in ancient battle narratives, especially those of the Old Testament, where mysterious forces from God turn the tide of battle, rather than mere human valor).43

A selective anthropomorphism in the Egyptian creation myths, ANET 3-6[44]

To articulate their concept of theogony, the Egyptians made use of a variety of dynamic processes observed in animal and human life, from sexual copulation to the effective power of authoritative speech. From our sensibilities, we would rank them on various levels of spiritual value, but in the ancient Egyptian mind they rank equally as alternative concepts of dynamic force. We offer the following extracts, in which a worshiper is speaking to a god, or a god is himself represented as speaking.

0 Atum-Kheprer, thou wast on high on the (primeval) hill; thou didst arise as the ben-bird of the ben-stone in the ben-house in Heliopolis; thou didst spit out what was Shu, thou didst sputter out what was Tefnut. Thou didst put thy arms about them as the arms of a ka, for thy ka was in them.

The gods came into being as Ptah: --
Ptah who is upon the Great Throne...;
Ptah-Nun, the father who [begot] Atum;
Ptah-Naunet, the mother who bore Atum;
Ptah the Great; that is, the heart and tongue of the Ennead;
[Ptah]... who gave birth to the gods;...
There came into being as the heart, and there came into being as the tongue, (something) in the form of Atum. The mighty Great One is Ptah, who transmitted [life to all gods], as well as (to) their ka's, through this heart, by which Horus became Ptah, and through this tongue, by which Thoth became Ptah.
(Thus) it happened that the heart and tongue gained control over [every] (other) member of the body, by teaching that he [Ptah] is in every body and in every mouth of all gods, all men, [all] cattle, all creeping things,

and (everything) that lives, by thinking and commanding everything that he wishes.

His Ennead is before him in (the form of) teeth and lips. That is (the equivalent of) the semen and hands of Atum. Whereas the Ennead of Atum came into being by his semen and his fingers, the Ennead (of Ptah), however, is the teeth and lips in this mouth, which pronounced the name of everything, from which Shu and Tefnut came forth, and which is the fashioner of Ennead....

Thus all the gods were formed and his Ennead was completed. Indeed, all the divine order really came into being through what the heart thought and the tongue commanded.

[Re says]: I planned in my own heart, and there came into being a multitude of forms of beings, the forms of children and the forms of their children. I was the one who copulated with my fist, I masturbated with my hand. Then I spewed with my own mouth: I spat out what was Shu, and I sputtered out what was Tefnut....

Appeal to human motivation through extended anthropomorphism in a Hittite battle ritual, ANET 354-55:[45]

"See! Zithariyas is appealing to all the gods; he brings his complaints before you. So pass judgment on his case, all ye gods! Let it be of great concern to the gods!"

"In fact they [the sactuariesl have been taken away by these people not from Zithariyas alone, they have been taken away from all you gods, all of you; from the Sun-goddess of Arinna, from the Storm-god of Nerik, from the Storm-god (and) from the Patron-god, from Telepinus (and) from all the (other) gods. From you (also) have his cities been taken."

"See! Zithariyas is bringing his case before all of you, gods. Take your own case to heart! Pass

judgment on your own case in passing judgment on the case of Zithariyas!"

"Blot out the Kashkean country, 0 gods! Let every single god take thought for his place of worship and win it back!"

COMMENT: The crass cynicism of this appeal is appalling to our sensibilities, yet it was normal in ancient religious practice. The king Zithariyas appeals for divine help in winning back territory. In doing so, he asks not for mercy and generosity, but for jealous self-concern on the part of the gods whose shrines lie within the territory affected. They are no better or worse than the king; that is, all too human, even though mysteriously greater and more powerful.

Illustration of the irrational: Ludlul Bel Nemeqi, ANET 435[46]

The title means, "I will praise the lord of wisdom." This is a Mesopotamian complaint song in which a worshiper appeals for divine help. He approaches the Deity as a person interested in him and willing to help. The element of the irrational that often appears in human behavior emerges in the following words:

Oh that I only knew that these things are
well pleasing to a god!
What is good in one's own sight
is evil for a god.
What is bad in one's own mind
is good for his god.
Who can understand the counsel of the gods
in the midst of heaven?
The plan of a god is keep waters,
who can comprehend it?
Where has befuddled mankind ever learned
what a god's conduct is?

COMMENT: This represents the dead-end of anthropomorphism. Human beings conceive of the gods as like themselves in order to control and influence them. When the gods display the human traits of erratic non-responsiveness and irrational unconcern, the numinous

becomes demonic and threatening. The human worshiper has no reward for his devotion; his god has become too much like himself.

(2) Anthropomorphic personification as caricature

There is very lively action going on in these stories. The gods and goddesses do everything -- only on a larger scale -- that any human being could be expected to do. All sorts of human emotions, activites, and qualities are attributed to the various gods. They talk excitedly among themselves, plot together, and decide the course of events in heaven and on earth. There is a clear order of priority among them: some are high up in the privy council, with the chief god (Anu/El/Re) in the highest height, while other gods occupy a rank beneath. The course of the universe is ordained in their administration, yet the gods are themselves subject to decrees and fates and predetermined times. None -- not even the heaven god -- is absolutely unlimited in power and capacity. One of the most startling facts about them is the limitedness of each individual god. There is no universality among them. Rank there is, but no omnipotence. The very fact that there are so many gods is evidence of the desire of the human heart for a principle of universality, yet this cannot be found in one particular divine figure. The individual gods are understood as having will, thoughts, and emotions -- a life at least as active as our human life -- but each limits all others, just as in human life.

In what sense are we justified in calling this conception "personification?" To what extent has ancient nonbiblical religion succeeded in producing a valid concept of divine personhood? True, there is a reaching for personhood as transcendent otherness. Analogies are drawn from the observation of human persons. However, in every case the distinct element of personification remains as a caricature, rather than as a genuine and worthy insight into the secret of sovereign personhood.

Cartoonists are masters of caricature, delineating in a few bold storkes one simple, isolated, and unavoidably distorted aspect of the subject's personhood. Thus

Charles De Gaulle's nose, or Richard Nixon's jowls, or Jimmy Carter's teeth. In the realm of human interaction we are constantly falling into the temptation of caricaturing our fellow human persons. Think of the waitress saying, as she brings her serving tray to the table, "Let's see, you are the ham sandwich, aren't you?" How drastically my personhood has been reduced when I have become a ham sandwich! True, it is just a way of speech, yet it does represent a common tendency. Just as, to the waitress, I have no importance to her person beyond receiving and paying for a ham sandwich, my significance in other persons' lives is ever in danger in becoming the caricature of my personhood. It is easier for us to deal with other persons by getting an easy handle on them; we are really threatened when we are confronted with the complexity of their real personhood, along with the unavoidable responsibility of relating to them as persons.

Essentially this caricaturing is what happens in the anthropomorphism of nonbiblical religiosity. Utu is righteousness, Enlil is authority, Enki is creativity. It makes no difference that paradoxical combinations are produced, such as the depiction of Inanna/Ishtar as goddess of love and of war, for the apparent opposites simply express the contradictions of human life.

(3) The breakdown of personalistic interaction

Students of ancient religion agree that the gods fall into three distinct categories: (1) representatives of primordial forces; (2) territorial rulers; (3) personal patrons. We are reminded of Thorkild Jacobsen's historical analysis of the development of Mesopotamian religion, mentioned above, showing that the first type predominated in the fourth millenium, the second in the third millenium, and the third in the second millenium, B.C.[47] When Mesopotamian society was yet living close to nature, it looked for divine force in its most patent aspects: sun, water, earth, and the like. As more complex and sophisticated political structures developed in this region -- and this occurred chiefly after ca. 3000 B.C., the end of Sumerian civilization -- the= peoples showed greater homage to the ruler-gods of the various city-states, and chiefly Marduk of Babylon or Asshur of Nineveh. Their respec-

tive myths produced a special place for each deity; none was left out, even when relegated to a relatively lower position within the cosmic order. With the tribal and territorial idea came gradually the notion of a personal patron, and evidently the individual worshiper felt free to choose which particular god or goddess to serve.48 His impulse was to worship the one who had shown, on some specific occasion, an interest in him -- the willingness to respond to his appeals. But what inference was to be drawn when a worshiper's appeals went unattended? Had his god ceased to care for him? Was he occupied elsewhere? Had some other deity -- someone hateful and malevolent -- obtained mastery? This is the mystery of divine inscrutability that produced anxiety and profound malaise in the hearts of ancient worshipers, especially in times of political upheaval and social disruption. Little wonder that by the time of Christ so many common worshipers in Asia and Europe had given up belief in a personal god! Where was there evidence that the ancient deities were effective in response to human need?

b. The god of Israel

The Bible likewise uses anthropomorphic images as symbols of divine personhood. If God is to be understood as sovereign Subject, acting upon us as persons and interacting with us, human language can scarcely avoid making use of analogies from human personhood. Yet the personhood of the biblical God is no caricature, no reduction of cosmic force to manageable labels. Only Those models are applied as preserve the concept of his sovereign otherness (lordship) and the concept of his intimate concern and commitment to human needs (parenting, fatherhood). Transcendence and immanence, paradoxically related to each other, together express the full orbit of divine personhood. The biblical God is near, but cannot be grasped. He responds to our appeal, but cannot be commanded.

This is, to be sure, the apt model of human personhood. Modern studies in sociology and psychology reveal the mystery of personhood in human beings. We are all sovereign subjects reaching out to one another, needing one another and wanting to be needed, grasping yet refusing to be grasped. Can any better model be found

to symbolize the transcendently Other, the supreme Subject?

(1) The unavoidability of "myth"

The word "myth" has a wide range of definitions. We are already familiar with its specific, formal definition as an aetiological story of gods and men in primordial interaction, defining cosmological realities. Nowadays the phenomenologists of religion and the depth-psychologists are using the word "myth" as a term for the archetypal images appearing in various kinds of imaginative conceptuality.[49] T The German New Testament scholar, Rudolf Bultmann, has brought the word "myth" into the center of modern theological discussion in his program of "demythologizing" the New Testament.[50] Mythological language, in the broad sense employed by Bultmann, means all non-realistic or non-logical language; that is, analogical and symbolical language. Even Bultmann acknowledges that "myth" in this sense in inevitable in religious language; only, modern theologians must penetrate beneath the mythological structure of first-century religious discourse to get at the heart of the Christian proclamation. In reinterpreting this for the twentieth-century, post-Renaissance mind, new symbols or "myths" must be found. The question we must all face is, Can religious thought imagery in a theological program that remains ture to the biblical heritage while becoming relevant to the realities of the modern world?

We cannot avoid making analogies when attempting to speak about the "wholly Other," simply because we do not know its (his) own proper language. Religious language therefore must be, and remain, human language. How are we to experience and speak about God, the wholly Other, except by comparing our experience of him with our experience of ourselves and other finite persons? Thus anthropomorphic language must enter into the structuring of our "mythology." We have to choose between completely abstractive language, talking perhaps about an "It" out there -- some kind of force or mind -- and carefully chosen personalistic images. The Bible insists that its God is a living God. Even the image of life, ascribed to this God, is no doubt an anthropomorphic symbol; yet a religious discourse that would

avoid pure abstractionism must make use of it. And if the biblical God is living, a worthy anthropomorphism will inevitable choose the language also of thinking, willing, feeling, and acting to express the meaning of his being alive. The question is whether the Bible's choice of anthropomorphic images succeeds in bringing to better expression the fullness of divine holiness. We need to look carefully at the principles of biblical anthropomorphism.

(2) The sterility of an abstractive God-concept

We recall our previous emphasis on the radical personalism of biblical religion. This has been eloquently expounded by two eminent Jewish scholars of our generation, Martin Buber in I and Thou[51] and Abraham Heschel in The Prophets.[52] Especially in the latter, one finds an impassioned defense of the concept of a suffering, involved God. Heschel protests against the abstractive reductionism of Greek philosophy, which has deeply influenced Christian dogma. Greek thought rejected the silly caricuatures of mythology, but in doing so jettisoned all effective personalism with respect to its notion of supreme Being. Deity is no longer a "someone" but a "something," a "causeless cause" beyond all phenomenal experience, the unmoveable mover of all things, a principle beyond all other principles, a cause behind all causes. As we suggest, Christian thought has gone far in applying these Greek notions to its definition of God; see the treatiese of St. Augustine St. Thomas, and others. These categories may have some usefulness in terms of philosophical understanding; but, as Heschel argues, they must not substitute for biblical images of God. Biblical language helps us see that any God who may seriously be believed in must be one who is somehow intimately involved in our own life, caring for our suffering, passion and frustration.[53] How can we be comforted and helped in our sorrow and pain if we have a God who is not vitally concerned about them? There is a danger that we misappropriate the analogy of human suffering and human passion, limiting our understanding of the biblical God on that basis. Nevertheless, can we ever do entirely without it? Can we entrust our life to a strange, remote Deity out in the outer fringes of the universe, who perhaps got everything working in primordial time but now sits by, outside the scene of human turmoil, in abstract, impassionate detachment? Is that the God who can help

human beings in their struggling and striving? If one believes the answer to be "no," one must accept that he cannot entirely dispense with a worthy anthropomorphism.

(3) The sobriety of biblical anthropomorphism

The important thing is that we choose appropriate analogies, those that effectively express the depth and richness of human personhood, avoiding'demeaning caricature. The Bible has no direct description of God. It very rarely speaks of "seeing" God, and even then guards against irreverence by suggesting that onlv a fleeting image has been conveyed: thus Ex. 24:10, "there was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness"; Ex. 33:21ff, "And Yahweh said, 'Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand upon the rock; and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen';" Ezek. 1:27-28, "Upward from what had the appearance of his loins I saw as it were gleaming bronze, like the appearance of fire enclosed round about; and downward from what had the appearance of his loins I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness round about him. Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round him."[54]

The Bible much prefers the symbol of speaking, emphasizing God's intellect, will, and emotions. That is to say, spiritual qualities, those that characterize personhood, are preferred to physiological elements, except as these may become concrete representations of the spiritual realities behind them. Thus the 'eyes' of God symbolize his awareness, the "ears" of God symbolize his attentiveness, his "hand" and "arm" are the symbols of his strength, the 'heart" of God betokens his concern. His 'mouth' and "tongue' are organs of communication, hence of revelation. Sometimes Yahweh does very human things, like walking in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:8). This daring image may actually go back to an underlying pre-Yahwistic myth,[55] yet it produces no scandal in its present setting, lending itself very readily to a non-literalistic interpretation. When we compare even so relatively grossly anthropomorphistic

an image with the rife imagery of the Babylonian creation myth, we become aware how modest it actually is. Certain typical human emotions, such as jealousy, wrath, compassion and love, are attributed to Yahweh; but these never give the impression of selfishness or pettiness or prideful vanity, as in numerous non-biblical documents.

It is little wonder that Yahweh's presence is often symbolized by non-anthropomorphic images such as fire or light, for these are the figures of glorious brilliance and mysterious power. A common (mostly early) image is that of Yahweh's mal'ăk, his "messenger" (not "angel") -- meaning simply the extension of his personal presence.[56] Another common image is that of Yahweh's rûªḥ, appropriately rendered "spirit," but meaning also "wind." The analogyof the force of wind expresses the coming and the presence of the powerful God. We feel the wind blowing on us, cooling or heating us, while unable to see it at all; so too God as spirit. Without our will God comes and moves and drives us. "The spirit (pneuma = rûªḥ) blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes." (John 3:8)[57]

In late Old Testament literature there is a marked tendency -- intensified in postbiblical Judaism -- toward an abstractive transcendentalizing of the divine image. In the deuteronomic literature there is preference for "the Name" (haššēm) as a surrogate for "Yahweh."[58] Eventually the Jews refused to actually pronounce their God's proper name, even when reading it in the sacred text. Because the Jews would speak "ʾăḏōnāy" (my lord) where they read the Tetragrammeton, YHWH, the Massoretes inserted the vocalization for that name, resulting in the strange hybrid that became "Jehovah" in European religious usage. The rabbis of the Talmudic period regularly used surrogates like "the Glory" or "the Presence."

A somewhat different tendency was at work in the occasional hypostatization of the term "wisdom," which is personified as a woman in Proverbs 8 and Ecclus. 1, 24. It is likely that more was at work here than a purely metaphorical play on the feminine gender of this Hebrew word. The female deity Isis plays a wisdom-giving and life-providing function in Egyptian mythology, similar to the role assigned to ḥokmâ in the above-mentioned biblical passages. Furthermore, the (male) deity of Mesopotamian religion, Ea/Enki, was

both a wisdom-giver and a life provider. Hebrew creationism may have seen appropriate imagery in its semi-personification of divine Wisdom, which performs God's work of undergirding the structure of all reality, while bringing all of life into a pattern of harmonious purpose.[59]

(4) The ultimate anthropomorphism: Christological incarnationism

Israel knew God as "Yahweh" -- a name first revealed to Moses (Exodus 3). At first he was intimately close, but later grew transcendently remote. Neither Jews nor Christians continue today to call God by this all-but-forgotten name. Generic names, like God (=El, Allah), have been forced to serve, but these are sheer appellatives, and as such fall short of expressing the uniqueness of a Deity who reveals himself as infinitely personal.

Another personal name -- that of an ancient Palestinian Jew, Jesus -- is often spoken in contemporary Christian devotion, serving as the virtual equivalent of "God." It was Greek influence in the late sections of the New Testament and in the early church that ventured to confer on a mortal man the ontological status of Deity. In the Hebraic mode of conceptuality, Jesus would have represented Deity in a relational, not in an ontological sense. He. manifested the divine image in unique perfection, fulfilling a task assigned to mankind as a whole in virtue of creation (Genesis 1), thus becoming the "second Adam." Jesus Christ was the "Son of God" because he faithfully mirrored God, even in his tragic dying. It was natural that the early church gradually came to assign supernatural functions and powers to him, identifying him firmly as the victorious, saving Messiah and also the transcendent "Son of Man." It was a radical step beyond this that went so far as to identify him as God.[60]

Not surprisingly, gnosticizing doceticism -- the view that the earthly man, Jesus, was a mere apparition -- became a serious challenge to early Christian orthodoxy. Although the church repudiated this heresy, its Christological compromises have never resolved the philosophical difficulties created by calling a man God. The contemporary challenge for Christians is to take seriously their Christology, but with proper, genuinely

biblical limits on this Potent anthropomorphic symbol. To equate the biblical God with one of his creatures is a stark betrayal of biblical faith. To attribute ontological godhood to the creaturely man, Jesus, may be the ultimate idolatry. Jesus was "divine", but in the sense that he was like God, and that God was like him. The God who was once known as Yahweh became uniquely manifest in him; even so, Jesus Christ did not exhaust the meaning and the fulness of God.

Excursus on the Christolonical titles

The title "Lord" (Grk. kúrios, equivalent to Heb. ʾădōnây, a surrogate for Yahweh) came to be applied to Christ equally with God. This is honorifie and appellative. It did not directly imply Deity in an ontological sense.

The title "Son of God" was unquestionably applied to Jesus even among the first generation of Christians. They were, however, all Jews, who, although to some extent influenced by Greek modes of thought, would have remained essentially Hebraic in their thinking about God. Both in Hebrew and in Aramaic, "son of" means one who is very similar to someone or something else. Thus "son of eighty" means one who belongs to the group of octagenarians. "Son of Belial" means a worthless fellow. "Son of man" simply means "mortal human being." "Son of God" means one who is very much like God -- one who reveals him and mirrors him, one who is closely related to God and completely under his direction.[61] Since the Hebrews rejected the pagan notion of geneological generation among the gods, how could they have conceived of God actually begetting man, a human being? Though "son of God" is a name that was applied to Jesus, this was certainly not meant in a generative sense. Jesus of Nazareth was so God-filled, in the church's adoring memory, that he was a true "Son of God."[62]

Once Christianity became predominantly gentile, Greek modes of thought drastically modified this early conception. The Greeks, like other nonbiblical religionists, had no difficulty in conceiving of men actually being generated by the gods; there were in fact men who were half divine, as there were gods who were half human. Thus the Hebraic confession of Jesus as "Son of God" was modified to mean that God had actually begotten him. The early church confessed Christ as "the only-begotten Son of God" while Mary, elevated to celestical glory, became theotokos, "the Mother of God." In trinitarian formulations, the Latin church's personae (actually, actors or roles on a stage), as applied to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, retained more of the original Hebraic conception than the Greek church's equivalent, hypostaseis, "modes of being." It is the Nicene Creed that is the most insistent in declaring that Christ shared the metaphysical substance (ousia) of the Father.[63]

(5) Sexual imagery and the divine fatherhood

As has been stated, the Bible develops the image of sovereign lordship to express its notion of divine transcendence. To represent the element of immanence, it chooses the symbol of fatherhood. The two complement each other. Fatherhood prevents lordship from becoming overpowering and remote, just as lordship prevents fatherhood from becoming sentimentalized and maudlin. The biblical God is a Lord who governs us, decreeing our existence and ruling our life, yet in a fatherly, compassionate, and infinitely caring way.

The notion of divine fatherhood has been very precious to the church. Has the church not made as the first article of its Creed the confession, "I believe in God the Father, maker of heaven and earth?" Yet the advocates of a radical feminism are demanding that we cease to speak of God as Father. How does this square with the most authentic impulses of biblical religion? Is divine fatherhood offensive to the humanistic spirit? If it is really offensive, it should no doubt be discarded, along with other outworn symbols. Or have some taken offense through misunderstanding and intolerance?

The Old Testament employs frequently, and with rich variation, the image of divine fatherhood. One should observe that in the vast preponderence of occurrences, it is Israel as a people to whom God is related as Father, not the individual Israelite. Thus Jesus

enjoyed a very unique relationship with God as his Father (cf. John 14:2-7, etc.).64 Appropriately, the Old and New Testaments apply the corresponding figure Qf wife (but never of mother!) to the human counterpart of God as Father. Thus we come across passages in which Israel is symbolized as Yahweh's wife (Hosea 2, Jeremiah 2-3, Ezekiel 16, 23), just as the church becomes the bride of Christ in Eph. 5:21-32; cf. Rev. 21:2, 9. For the Old Testament, the symbol of Israel as Yahweh's bride is a very daring one, yet it is carefully chosen to express the intimate personalism of a relationship that has been threatened by Israel's intimate personalism of a relationship that has been threatened by Israel's infidelity and apostacy.

Isaiah 54:1-8 has a specially beautiful expression of the fidelity and love of a husband, conscious of his wife's waywardness, yet yearning for her and restoring her to himself:

> Sing, O barren one, who did not bear;
> break forth into singing and cry aloud,
> you who have not been in travail!
> For the children of the desolate one will be more
> than the children of her that is married,
> says Yahweh.
> . . . . . *
> Fear not, for you will not be ashamed;
> be not confounded, for you will not be
> put to shame;
> For you will forget the shame of your youth,
> and the reproach of your widowhood
> you will remember no more.
> For your Maker is your husband,
> Yahweh of hosts is his name;
> And the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer,
> the God of the whole earth he is called.
> For Yahweh has called you
> like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit,
> like a wife of youth when she is cast off,
> says your God.
> For a brief moment I forsook you,
> but with great compassion I will gather you.
> In overflowing wrath for a moment
> I hid my face from you,
> but with everlasting love I will have
> compassion on you, says Yahweh, your Redeemer.

The essential bond of husband and wife is covenantal faithfulness, in which each commits him or herself

to the other. When one or the other forsakes this vow, estrangement comes. Because this is true in the intimate interrelationships of human husbands and wives, it is an apt image, picked up in the Bible and used effectively for the condition of Israel's apostacy, rejection, and restoration.

As early a prophet as Hosea, and later, most effectively, the prophet Jeremiah, used the image of the faithless wife--one who has gone the way of harlotry and has forsaken her true love--after whom this husband nevertheless yearns and whom he seeks in redeeming love.

So bold does the Bible become. But a question arises concerning the propriety of also employing the image of God as wife or mother.65 Some facile popular treatments have, in fact, been playing to the galleries on this question, claiming that the Bible does ascribe certain feminine qualities and characteristics, such as motherly compassion, to God. Much has been made, for instance, of the frequent ascription to Yahweh of raḥāmā, usually translated "compassion," but from a more concrete noun, rehem, meaning "womb." We must be very cautious about claiming this as implying a distinctively feminine attribute, for metaphorical license is a more appropriate explanation than any confusion about Yahweh's sexual identity.66 Is this not, in fact, entirely within the bounds of proper symbolization? Cannot a loving fatherexperience something akin to a mother's uterine emotions? We may be instructed by reading very closely another passage in which Yahweh claims this emotion for himself. It is Isa. 49:14-15, which comes as close an any biblical text to claiming maternal emotions for Yahweh:

> Zion said, "Yahweh has forsaken me,
> my Lord has forgotten me.'
> Can a woman forget her sucking child,
> that she should have no compassion on the son of
> her womb?
> Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.

We note that the compassionate woman in question is not Yahweh himself. Yahweh simply has more compassion, greater fidelity, than such a mother, for he does what they seldom, but sometimes, forget to do.

Apart from this sort of tangential allusion, the mother image is studiously avoided in the Bible, and the reason is actually not hard to find. In the first

place, the choice of the parenting image is a very vital one, one that is used very effectively in the Bible for expressing the intimate relationship of God to his people. It accentuates his obligation to them as well as their obligation to him. True, the parenting image does emerge in a number of nonbiblical texts as well, but never so freely and consistently as in the Bible. The Bible speaks of the fatherhood of God as the perfect epitome of a devoted, loving, concerned, conscientious care of the part of the Deity for his needy and often wayward children. Where do we find an image so moving as that of Hos. 11:1-3?

> When Israel was a child, I love him,
> and out of Egypt I called my son.
> The more I called them, the more they went from me;
> they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning incense to idols.
> Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms;
> but they did not know that I healed them.
> I led them with cords of compassion, with the bands of love,
> and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws,
> and I bent down to them and fed them.

Yet this God is a he, not a she. He is Father , not Mother. Since personhood is vital and parenthood is important, the Bible never refers to the Deity as an "it," for this would utterly depersonalize him. It is worthwhile taking note of the fact that the Hebrew language has no neuter pronoun, as in the Greek, and in our English language. In Hebrew, nouns, pronouns, adjectives and verbs have either the masculine or the feminine gender, so that even inaminate objects are given the one gender or the other. This is not to say that inanimate objects are personified as having sexual characteristics. True, this may occur metaphorically, as in the frequent references to Jerusalem as "she." However, this is scarcely more than a linguistic convention, according with the custom of referring to all geographical entities as feminine.

So if God is to have personhood, he must be addressed--and referred to--as feminine or masculine. It cannot be feminine for a reason that we modems can scarcely comprehend within our own cultural background. It has more to do with Israel's struggle for religious distinctiveness than with any patriarchal social bias it

may have inherited from cultural ancestors. The deepest reason for Israel's avoidance of the motherhood image in reference to its God is its tense apologetic against vegetative religious concepts.67 The alternative to emergent biblical faith were one or another form of vegetative or fertility religion, in which the principle of procreation becomes directly deified. The numinous lay immediately in the power of generation and reproduction. We find this in the Mesopotamian religions, in the religion of Egypt, but especially in the closest rival of the Hebrew's faith--that of Canaanite religion in Palestine. It was with them that the early Hebrews came into close contact. They had to struggle from the very beginning of their settlement among the Canaanites because of the overpowering attractiveness of this religion. The mythology and ritual of the Canaanite religion (known to us now especially from a near neighbor, that of the city of Ugarit on the north-Syrian coast) were rife with images and imitations of the sexual activity among the deities. Little wonder, then, that the pantheon of such cultures had numerous female deities along with the males. Sexual identification is applied without restraint to each particular deity, but particularly to those that are directly associated with the life-forces. The Israelites early on learned about the male fertility-god, Baal, and the female fertility-goddess, Astarte. It was the copulative interaction of such gods that guaranteed the fructification of nature! Little wonder that the Canaanites were so fond of these particular gods! The earth's fertility is indeed an amazing and miraculous process, one that ought to excite the wonder and admiration of any sensitive human spirit. We ourselves observe the power of animal and human reproduction: a new born lamb, a chick hatched, a baby born to a human mother, the grass becoming green in the springtime after a long period of dryness, the flowers blooming, the corn growing. Such were literally the products of a divine force for the primitive mind, and the tendency of worship it was irresistible. Little is the Wonder, then, that the Israelites found it essential, in trying to maintain monotheism as the vehicle of a very meaningful personalism in their concept of God, to resist the impulse represented by Baal and Astarte. To make concessions would have lead to polytheism and a breakdown Of the unity and universality of the divine image, as in the words of Elijah's challenge to the vacillating Israelites, "How long will you go on limping on two opinions?" But the people were already so far gone that they "did not anwer him a word." (I Kings 18:21) Futhermore, the introduction of sexual identifi-

cations of the gods into Hebrew religion would have tended to produce vegetative pantheism, shattering the oneness and the lordship.68

Thus the ancient Hebrews had to contend so directly with the concept of divine motherhood, as objectified especially in the Asherah-figures associated with the Canaanite earth mother, that they came strenuously to repudiate the motherhood image in their god Yahweh. They wanted a parent image, but had to repudiate the mother image. The danger of introducing the mother image into their concept of Deity lay in its pointedly vegetative implications. Because the infant is attached to its mother very intimately, first by the umblical cord within the womb, then in the mother's arms and at her breast, it has a feeling of direct biological derivation from her. Gradually the infant gets to know its father--if he remains within the family circle--as intimate companion, provider, parent, teacher, but it is only the force of educational development that teaches him that this male shared responsibility for its conception. Thus the image of mother was heavily laden with pantheistic potentialities, appropriate to a monistic, vegetative religion like that of Canaan, but was unavoidably destructive to the monotheistic faith.

This is what was at stake in the Bible's rejection of the mother symbol. As we trace the further history of our religious tradition, we observe that a pristine father symbol was in danger of falling into the opposite error. The biblical God did become rigidly patriarchal, reflecting an increasingly severe social patriarchalism as experienced by the early church as well as by rabbinical Judaism. We should not be amazed, therefore, that a counter-movement arose in catholic Christianity, seeking a feminine surrogate in the figure of the Virgin Mary, dubbed "Mother of God," but in fact fulfilling the cravings of worshippers who saw motherhood as a worthy symbol for the numinous Other in control of our precarious creaturely existence.

Now that times have changed, should we begin to call God "Mother"? Who will forbid those to whom this would be a meaningful expression of authentic biblical faith? But it is not too late to rebaptize religious symbols? And besides, have the perils of pantheism in fact been permanently sanitized?

How about "Parent" for God? This would indeed allow sexual ambiguity. But the word "parent" is a functional

rather than natural term. Parents do not, in fact, exist; only male and female human beings who may or may not become parents exist. To call God "Parent" is as vapid as calling him "Mind" or "Power" or "Love" because abstractions do not make effective symbols for Deity.

If we are to retain the Bible's peculiar combination of transcendence and immanence, we may have no other choice than to call God "Father," and to keep on referring to him in the masculine gender. But two things must be said: (1) the biblical God is not bisexual (as some blithe spirits have been claiming!) but radically asexual. In what text are specifically male attributes or activities claimed for Yahweh (apart from the forementioned husband/Yahweh, wife/Israel passages, where only the spiritual qualities of the marriage relationship are in view)? True, Yahweh gets angry, punishes, even fights; but females do these things too, depending on the circumstances. (2) The masculine gender is little more than a linguistic convention; in the case of its use with reference to the biblical God it functions to express his personhood, nothing more.64

Excursus: On calling God "you"

Until very recently liturgical English preserved the singular and plural distinctions in the second-personal pronouns. Singular "thou, thy/thine, thee" and plural "you, your/yours, ye" were retained in prayer to the Deity, along with the appropriate verbal inflections. Both the RSV and NEB, official versions for the English-speaking churches, continue this usage. But suddenly our public worship has been swept clean of it, and we are calling God "you."

Three things have been responsible for this change: (1) eagerness to adopt "the language of the people" and to jettison traditionalism; (2) relative illiteracy in a generation of newly ordained ministers, unable to cope with the verbal forms that accompany the "thees" and "thous";(3) modernization of the liturgy in the Roman Catholic Church, which has made an abrupt change from Latin to the common English "you."

There is nothing sacrosanct about "thou" and "thee" for the Deity. A debate in support of this claim would fall on its face because these are only the old familiar

forms, retained for the Deity when common speech shifted over the the plurals, as has occurred likewise in current French and German. Looking to the Bible for an example is no help because the Hebrew and the Greek use the identical pronoun forms for God as for man. Yet this point should be observed: until the recent revolution, our liturgical English did possess a special pronoun for address to the Deity, and is it not an advantage to be able to speak to the divine "Thou" as a Person not altogether like human persons? What is it that we want to emphasize when we speak to God: his transcendance or his immanence? In contemporary Protestant worship, the danger of overfamiliarizing God is far greater than the danger of making him too fearful and too remote; therefore "Thou" could help preserve that sense of mysterium tremendum that our gawking, back-slapping generation seems to miss so sorely. This may be a futile plea, but it does express a concern that is genuinely relevant to the topic of divine transcendence and divine immanence within an appropriate biblical scheme of understanding.

C. A valid God-concept for today

The Bible has chosen to speak of God in analogies from human personhood that are authentically expressive of human personhood in its deepest dimensions and in its highest nobility, avoiding the superficiality and abusiveness of every kind of caricature. Because it uses images of divine personhood that open the way to a richer understanding of God as person, it leads also to a deeper awareness of human beings as persons, opening up the pathway to the dimensions Qf faith.

Above all, what the Bible is anxious to secure is a radical personalism in its understanding of God and of man. Yahweh may be like the wind, but he is more than wind. He may be like the fire, but he is more than fire. These are only symbols, manifestations, revelations; and his inner being remains hidden behind the supernatural appearances. Yahweh may appear in the cult, but he may also appear in the remote desert, in a fiery bush. Wherever his presence is apprehended, his worshipers see no more than sparks from the inner light of his ineffable glory.

Where the biblical God does choose to appear the

most fondly is in human life; that is to say, in certain persons and peoples he chooses as special manifestations of his presence. This was the experience of great charismatic persons like the prophets. An awareness of being vehicles of the divine presence among his people Israel inspires their preaching and draws their entire earthly existence into the divine service. Think of an Amos or a Jeremiah or an Ezekiel. The biblical tradition of the elusive Presence produces at last the most righteous Jew of all, Jesus of Nazareth, who was , so highly aware of God's will governing his life that he became the very "Son of God." Jesus Christ was, as it were, the very personification of God in human flesh. This is the deepest meaning of the incarnation. He is God's final and absolute self-revelation in the sense that his life revealed the presence of God as fully and finally as human life may ever reveal it. Jesus showed in his passion and in his triumph over death the deepest secret of the divine purpose and the divine personhood; that is, Jesus' willingness to die upon the cross revealed that God himself is with us in our suffering; Jesus' triumph Qver death reveals that death cannot defeat God.

Thus the Bible's anthropomorphism--and especially the ultimate anthropomorphism of the incarnation--offers us a valid God-concept for today. No science or philosophy or theology will be able to dispense with the rich insights that it has to offer.

Ultimately, biblical personalism becomes the model and basis for Hebraic humanism and humanitarianism, of which we shall have more to say later. This may be the ultimate criterion of the Bible's universal validity. The Bible can stand the test of whether it is genuinely applicable to human needs in every age and at all times because it is essentially humanistic in the best sense of the word. Already in the Old Testament,- and then by inheritance in the New Testament as well, the divine pathos is altogether directed toward the salvation and well-being of humankind. The appropriate image of divine personhood, still applicable today, is that of sovereign Lord, along with that of compassionate, committed Father. The biblical God is not subject to the beck and call of his human worshipers, yet he is ever responsive to them. They are unable to control or manage him, or to use him to their selfish ends, yet he always turns to them, controlling all their life to their ultimate well-being, working for the enrichment of their authentically personal existence. This is the

very heart of the biblical heritage.

In attempting to identify and elaborate a valid God-concept for today, we need to ask very seriously whether the concept of God that we choose answers the real and burning questions of human existence, those that we know are real within our experience. Can we be satisfied with any conception of God that is devoid of personalistic pathos? That is to day, can we do without the awareness of a God who cares, a God who answers, a God who acts? If we have neutered our God, or objectified our image of him, depriving him of these endearing qualities, we have lost the essence of biblical faith. How can a man at all believe in himself unless he sees some meaning and purpose in his existence, and how can he find these without the image of a God who can help him, and will?

This is the first of the great achievements of biblical faith, one worth struggling to retain, and worth striving to fulfill.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

On the Holy; revelation:

H. Balz, G. Wanke, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (hereinafter TDNT), IX, 189ff., phobeō, etc.

The word group among the Greeks
Phobos and phobeomai in the Old Testament
Fear in Palestinian and hellenistic Judaism
The word group in the New Testament
Fear in the early church and gnosticism

J. Behm, TDNT, IV, 742ff., morphē, etc.

The form of God in the Old Testament and Judaism
The morphē of Christ in the New Testament

W. Eichrodt, TOT, I, 206ff., 228ff.

The nature of the covenant God
Affirmations about the divine being
Affirmations about the divine activity

idem, II, 15ff.

The forms of God's self-manifestation
Manifestation of God in the realms of nature and of man
The spiritualization of the theophany

idem, II, 46ff., 69ff.

The cosmic powers of God
The spirit of God
The word of God
The wisdom of God

H. Kleinknecht, et al., TDNT, III, 65ff., theos, etc.

The Greek concept of God
El and Elohim in the Old Testament
The early Christian fact of God and its conflict with the concept of God in Judaism

A. Oepke, TDNT, III, 556ff., kaluptō, etc.

The idea of revelation in religious history generally

Revelation in the Greek world and hellenism
Revelation in the Old Testament
The attitute of Judaism to revelation
Revelation in the New Testament

0. Procksch, K. G. Kuhn, TDNT, I, 88ff., hagios, etc.

The use of the term holiness in the Old Testament
The history of the term in the Old Testament
The concept of holiness in rabbinic Judaism
Hagios in the New Testament

H. W. F. Saggs, The Encounter with the Divine in Mesopotamia and Israel (London: Athlone, 1978)

S. Terrien, EP, 63ff., 106ff., 166ff., 227ff., 410ff., 44aff.

Epiphanic visitation to the patriarchs
The Sinai theophany
The presence in the temple
The prophetic vision
Presence as the Word
The name and the glory

T. C. Vriezen, OOTT, pp. 153ff.

The nature of the knowledge of God as an intimate relationship between the holy God and man

idem, pp. 205ff.

Other ways in which God reveals himself

On myth:

G. Stahlin, TDNT, IV, 762ff., muthos

The development of the meaning
Myth in the Greek world and hellenism
Muthos and myths in the Old Testament (LXX) and Judaism
Muthos in the New Testament

S. Talmon, Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, tr. J. T. Willis from G. J. Botterweek and H. Ringgren, Theologisch Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974--; hereinafter TDOT), III, 427ff., har, gibʿāh

World mountain
Omphalos
World axis
Cosmological references
Israel's "mountain-god"

H. Traub, G. von Rad, TDNT, V, 497ff., ouranos, etc.

The Greek usage
The Old Testament
The Septuagint and Judaism
The New Testament

On the cultus:

G. Behm, TDNT, III, 180ff., thuō, thusia, thusiastērio

The concept of sacrifice in the New Testament

W. Eichrodt, TOT, I, 98ff.

The covenant statutes: The cultus

B. Kedar-Kopfstein, TDOT, III, 234ff., dam

Ethics and law
Magical power
Eating blood
Blood of sacrifices
Blood of the covenant
Yahweh as avenger of blood

R. Meyer, F. Hauck, TDNT, III, 413ff., katharos, etc.

Clean and unclean outside the New Testament
In primitive religion
In Greek religion
In Old Testament religion
Judaism
Clean and unclean in the New Testament

G. Schrenk, TDNT, III, 221ff., hieros, etc.

The way from Old Testament prophecy to Jewish apocalyptic and hellenistic Judaism
The attitude of Jesus and early Christianity towards the temple
The priest of the Greek world
The priest in the history of Israel
Hiereus in the New Testament
The high-priest in Hebrews

R. J. Thompson, Penitence and Sacrifice in Early Israel Outside the Levitical Law, Leiden: Brill, 1963

R. de Vaux. O. P., Studies in Old Testament Sacrifice, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1964

T. C. Vriezen, OOTT, pp. 250ff.

The cultus

W. Zimmerli, OTTO, pp. 148ff.

Israel's sacrificial worship: praise of Yahweh and cry for help

On idolatry:

J. de Moor, TDOT, I, 438ff., ʾᵃsherāh

J. de Moor, M. J. Muldcr, TDOT, II, 181ff., baʿal

The Canaanite Baal outside the Old Testament
Baal in the Old Testament

H. D. Preuss, TDOT, III, 1ff., gellulim

G. von Rad, TDNT, II, 351ff., eikōn

The prohibition of images in the Old Testament

G. von Rad, OTT, I, 203ff.

The first commandment and Yahweh's holy zeal
The veto on images in the Old Testament

W. Zimmerli, OTTO, pp. 120ff.

Yahweh's commandment
The first commandment
The prohibition against images and against naming the name of God

On monotheistic personalism:

E. Barbotin, The Humanity of God, trans. M. J. O'Connell, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1970

C. Colpe, TDNT, VIII, 400ff., ho huios tou anthrōpou

The linguistic problem
Old Testament concepts

The Son of Man in the New Testament

R. Kittel, G. von Rad, H. Kleinknecht, TDNT, II, 381ff., eikōn

Images of God and men in Judaism and Christianity
The Greek use of eikōn
The divine likeness in the Old Testament
The divine likeness in Judaism
The metaphorical use of image in the New Testament

H. Koster, TDNT, VIII, 572ff., hupostasis

Greek usage
Hupostasis in Judaism
The New Testament
Further early Christian usage

C. J. Labuschagne, The Incomparability of Yahweh in the Old Testament (Pretoria Oriental Series, 5), Leiden: Brill, 1966

T. W. Mann, Divine Presence and Guidance in Israelite Tradition: The Typology of Exaltation, Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1977

W. von Martitz et al., TDNT, VIII, 334., huios, huiothesia

Ben (bar) as a broader term of association
Ben (bar) as a term of relationship to God
The messiah as Son of God
The Davidic Son of God
The eschatological role of the Son of God and the absolute ho huios

W. Zimmerli, OTTO, pp. 17ff., 70ff.

The revealed name
Yahweh, God of Israel since Egypt
Yahweh, God of the fathers: the promise
Yahweh, creator and king

W. Zimmerli, J. Jeremias, TDNT, V, 654ff., pais theou

The ʿebed YHWH in the Old Testament
The LXX translations
Pais theou in later Judaism in the period after the LXX
Pais theou in the New Testament

On divine lordship:

F. M. Cross, TDOT, I, 242ff., ’ēl

’ēl in the Semitic languages
The character and function of the god El in Canaanite and related texts
El in the Old Testament

0. Eissfeldt, TDOT, I, 59ff., ’ādhon

W. Foerster, G. Quell, Bible Key Words from Gerhard Kittel's Theologisch Worterbuch zum Neuen Testament, trans. J. R. Coates, 5 vols., New York: Harver, 1951-65 (hereinafter BKW), II/I, "Lord"(=TDNT, III, 1034ff.)

The meaning of the word kurios
Gods and rulers as kurioi
The Old Testament name for God
"Lord" in late Judaism
Kurios in the New Testament

H. Ringgren, TDOT, I, 267ff., ’elōhim

Concepts of God in the ancient Near East
The three words for God; Definition
’elōhim as an appellative
Assertions of incomparability
’elōhim as a designation of Yahweh

On divine creatorship:

J. Bergman, H. Ringgren, K.H. Bernhardt, G. von Boterweck, TDOT, II, 242ff., bārā’

Theological usage: Of cosmic powers; In the historical realm

W. Eichrodt, TOT, II, 93ff.,

Cosmology and creation

W. Foerster, TDNT, III, 1000ff., ktizō, etc.

Belief in creation in the Old Testament
The doctrine of creation in later Judaism
Creation in the New Testament

G. von Rad, OTT, I, 136ff.

The primeval history
The place in the theology of the witness concerning creation
The pictures of Jahweh's act of creation

On divine fatherhood:

H. Ringgren, TDOT, I, lff., ’ābh

God as Father

C. Schrenk, G. Quell, TDNT, V, 945ff., pat&, etc.

The father concept in the Indo-European world and Graeco-roman antiquity
The father concept in the Old Testament
The father concept in later Judaism
Father in the New Testament

NOTES

1. The Idea of the Holy, tr. J. W. Harvey, London, 1923; see also Otto, Religious Essays: a Supplement to "The Idea of the Holy," London 1931.

2. See further in S. Plath, Furcht Gottes, Der Begriff YR’ im Alten Testament, Berlin 1963; cf. B. J. Oosterhoff, De Vreze des Heren in het Oude Testament, Utrecht 1949.

3. From Chapter I, "Myth and Reality," by H. and H. A. Frankfort, The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1946.

4. See art, "Emperor-worship" (R. M. Grant), IDB, II 98ff.; E. Stauffer, Christ and the Caesars, trans. K. and R. G. Smith, Philadelphia 1955.

5. E. g., Zaphon in Ugaritic mythology, Carmel and Jerusalem in the Bible. Cf. W. Robertson Smith, Lectures on the Religion of the Semites, 3rd ed. (London, 1927), pp. 116ff.; also R. E. Clements, "Sacred Mountain, Temples and the Presence of God,"

God and Temple (Oxford 1965), pp. lff.

6. J. A. Wilson, tr.

7. Cf. the navel of the earth tradition found in various religions; thus Jerusalem in the Old Testament (see S. L. Terrien, "The Omphalos Myth and Hebrew Religion," VT, 20 [1970], 315-38; also E. A. S. Butterworth, The Tree at the Navel of the Earth, Berlin 1970).

8. Cf. Ezek. 29:1-12

9. J. A. Wilson, tr.

10. In citations, words are enclosed in square brackets as supplied in a broken text by the translator or as supplied by myself with the purpose of furnishing an essential identification for the understanding of the reader. Words in parentheses are supplied by the translator,

11. S. N. Kramer, tr.

12. J. A. Wilson, tr.

13. See J. H. Breasted, The Dawn of Conscience (New York - London, 1933), ppx6-70; G. Nagel. "A propos des rapports du psaume 103 avec les textes egyptiens," Festschrift fiir A. Bertholet, W. Baumgartner et al., edd. (Tubingen 1950), pp. 395-403.

14. See n. 5.

15. The classic treatment is Sir James G. Frazer's multi-volume Golden Bough, abridged in a 1940 one-volume edition (New York: Macmillan). Another classic is G. van der Leeuw, Religion in Essence and Manifestation, 2 vols., trans. J. E. Turner from the German (New York 1963). These treat contemporary as well as ancient cultures. The rich and varied literature on ancient Near-Eastern religion is now being assimilated in the ambitious series, "Die Religionen der Menschheit," ed. C.M. Schröder (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer), in which "Aegyptische Religion" by S. Morenz (1960 = Egyptian Religion, Ithaca, N.Y., 1963) has appeared in print, along with H. Gese, "Die Religionen

Altsyriens" (1970). Volumes are projected in this series for the Sumerian (J. J. van Dijk), Babylonian-Assyrian (R. Borger) and Asia Minor (E. von Schuler) religions, with comprehensive bibliographies. A convenient summary of Sumerian, Babylonian-Assyrian, and West-Semitic religions may be found in H. Ringgren, Religions of the Ancient Near East (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973), where recent literature is cited.

16. Cf. van der Leeuw, op. cit., II, 413ff.; also art. "Myth" (T. H. Gaster), IDB, S. H. Hooke, ed., Myth, Ritual, and Kingship, Oxford 1958.

17. Cf. Breasted, op. cit., pp. 303ff.; Morenz, op. cit., pp. 146-q.

18. On ritual and magic, see E. Lehmann in A. Bertholet and E. Lehmann, edd., Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte, I (Tübingen 1925), 87ff.

19. J. A. Wilson, tr.

20. On the following, compare R. de Vaux, Ancient Israel, Its Life and Institutions, trans. J. McHugh (New York 1961), pp. 415-56; H. J. Kraus, Worship in Israel (trans. G. Busweli, Oxford 1966), pp. 112-24. The classic study is G. B. Gray, Sacrifice in the Old Testament, Its Theory and Practice, Oxford 1925.

21. These primitive genres have been described by R. Rendtorff in Die Gesetze in der Priesterschrift (FRLANT 62, Göttingen 1953); cf. W. Malcolm Clark, "Cultic Law," J. H. Hayes, ed., Old Testament Form Criticism (San Antonio: Temple University Press, 1974), pp. 124f.

22. 2nd ed., tr. R. G. Smith, New York 1958.

23. Three vols., Chicago, 1951-63. On the following see especially I, 171-74.

24. The Elusive Presence, pp. 68ff.

25. On the tradition background of this concept, see now Terrien, ibid, pp. 131ff., 197ff. See also art. "Shekinah" (D. Moody), IDB, IV, 317ff.

26. Except in special instances, we offer the RSV text

with the substitution of "Yahweh" for "the LORD."

27. With respect to the Bethel shrine-site, cf. H. J. Kraus, Worship in Israel, pp. 146ff.

28. The actual location of the original mountain(s) bearing these names is unknown; cf. art "Sinai, Mount" (G. E. Wright), IDB. It is not improbable that Horeb and Sinai derive from originally independent traditions, secondarily equated as the same.

29. For further information see the Introductions to the Old Testament and art. "Pentateuch" (D. N. Freedman), IDB, III, 711ff.; see also the 'Introduction" to G. von Rad, Genesis, A Commentary (Philadelphia 1961), and M. Noth, A History of Pentateuchal Traditions (tr. B. W. Anderson; Englewood Cliffs, 1970), pp. 5-41.

30. J is vv. 10-11a (up to "place"), 13-16, 19a; E is in vv. 11b-12, 17-18, 20-22. See Terrien, The Elusive Presence, pp. 84f.

31. J is in vv. 3a (up to "wilderness"), 2-4a (up to "to see"), 5, 7-8a, 16-17; E is in vv. 2b, 4b, 6 9-13, 15; v. 14 is a secondary expansion of E. On the interpretation of the meaning of the divine name in this account, see Chapter IV, Introduction, a, 4 ("The Name of God"). On the theophany-epiphany, see Terrien, The Elusive Presence, pp. 109-19.

32. Chap. 27 (J), containing the narrative of the stealing of Esau's blessing; cf. the birthright narrative (J) in Gen. 25:27-34.

33. See "The religion and piety of the psalms" in art. "Psalms, Book of" (J. Hempel), IDB, III, 942ff.; also H. J. Kraus, "Zur Theologie der Psalmen," Psalmen, I (Biblischer Kommentar, Altes Testament XV/1; Neukirchen-Vluyn 1966), pp. LXIVff.

34. See the commentaries. This is one of the rare instances in which the identical text has been preserved (with only minor variations significant to the understanding of the processes of textual transmission) within the Old Testament (cf. also II Kings 18-20 par Isa. 36-39; II King 25 par

Jeremiah 52; parallel passages in Kings-Chronicles). The Psalms version came naturally into the earliest Psalter collection, while II Sam. 22:2-51 entered as a late addition to the deuteronomistic history-book.

35. I am particularly to my student, Dale Broadhurst, for the reminder that "in both the biblical and Vedic traditions, there has been an evolution in the understanding of the nature of God. Both traditions have as their point of departure the ritualistic worship of a god or gods within a henotheistic cosmology. Both produced sacred scriptures witnessing the revelatory action of God within human existence. Both eventually moved to a universalistic view of God. Both gave birth to religious movements witnessing the incarnation of God within the world of man. Trinitarian Christianity at the folklore level is almost indistinguishable from the Krishna cult of Vaisnava Hinduism." (Private communication) What then accounts for the essential difference between the two? As I have defined it, it is largely the matter of the seriousness with which the biblical tradition develops the concept of both divine and human personhood, producing in Judaism and Christianity an involvement in history and a moral responsibility for social improvement that cannot be found within the Hindu tradition.

36. See further on this in Chapter IV, 1, b, (1), (b) "A biblical unicum: Israel is constituted historically rather than mythically."

37. See Frankfort, op. cit., pp. 10ff., also idem, Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society and Nature, Chicago 1948; M. Noth, The Old Testament World, tr. V. I. Gruhn (Philadelphia 1966), pp. 280-87; art. "Idolatry" (J. Gray), IDB, II, 675ff.

38. See B. Childs, The Book of Exodus (Philadelphia 1974), pp. 404-9; G. von Rad, Old Testament Theology, I, 212-19.

39. cf. Childs, ibid., pp. 409-12; W. E. Staples, "The Third Commandment," JBL, 58 (1939), 325ff.

40. Cf. G. van der Leeuw, op. cit., pp. 65-187.

41. E. A. Speiser, tr.

43. See I. Seeligmann, "Menschliches Heldentum und gottliche Hilfe," TZ, 19 (1963), 386-411.

44. J. A. Wilson, tr.

45. A. Goetze, tr.

46. R. H. Pfeiffer, tr.

47. op. cit., passim, summarized on pp. 223-26, "Assessment of Second Millenium Religious Achievement."

48. Cf. W. Robertson Smith, op. cit., pp. 28ff., "The Nature of the Religious Community, and the Relation of the Gods to their Worshippers."

49. Cf. M. Eliade, Myth and Reality, tr. W. R. Trask, New York 1963; also the wide-ranging discussions surrounding the theories of Jung and Levi-Strauss.

50. See Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," pp. lff. in the symposium, Kerygma and Myth, A Theological Debate, H. W. Bartsch, ed., New York 1961; cf. also Bultmann's books, History and Eschatology (1957) and Jesus Christ and Mythology (1958). For a brief summary of the debate see art. "Myth in the NT" (E. Dinkler), IDB, III, 487ff.

51. M. Buber, I and Thou, tr. R. G. Smith, 2nd ed. New York 1958.

52. New York 1962.

53. Cf. K. Barth, Die Menschlichkeit Gottes, Theologische Studien, 48; Zollikon 1956,

54. Cf. S. Terrien, The Elusive Presence, pp. 257-61

55. See Chapter IV, 1, b, (4) Miracle and Wonder in the Old Testament; Chapter V, 1, c, (2) Death as punishment; (3) The search for immortality.

56. Cf. G. von Rad's discussion on pp. 75ff. in vol. I of Kittel-Friedrich, TWZNT=TDNT.

57. See art. "Spirit" (S. V. McCasland), IDB, IV, 432ff.; cf. art. "Holy Spirit" (G. W. H. Lampe),

IDB, II, 626ff.

58. See art. "Name" (R. Abba), IDB, III, 500ff.; also S. Terrien, The Elusive Presence, pp. 138ff., 197ff.; G. von Rad, "Deuteronomy's 'Name' Theology and the Priestly Document's 'Kabod' Theology," Studies in Deuteronomy, trans. D. Stalker (London 1953), pp. 37ff.; cf. von Rad, Old Testament Theology, I, 47ff.

59. Cf. B. Mack, Logos und Sophia, Göttingen 1973; Terrien, The Elusive Pre's'ence, pp. 350ff.

60. One of the best presentations of this theme is U. Mauser, Gottesbild und Menschwerdung; Eine Untersuchung zur Einheit des Alten und Neuen Testaments, BHT 43, Tübingen 1971, suggesting the possibilities of fruitful work along these lines; cf. my review in JBL, 92 (1973), 124f. See also the influential work, D. M. Baillie, God was in Christ (New York 1955).

61. Cf. P. A. H. de Boer, "The Son of God in the Old Testament," OTS, 18 (1973), 189-207.

62. Cf. R. Bultmann, "Lord and Son of God," Theology of the New Testament, I, 121-33.

63. Cf. B. Lonergan, The way to Nicea; The Dialectical Development of Trinitarian Theology, Philadelphia 1976 (especially pp. 43-55, "Of One Subtance"); E. J. Fortman, The Triune God, A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972 (especially pp. 62-70, "The Nicene Phase").

64. Cf. J. Jeremias, "Abba," Abba: Studien zur neutestamentlichen Theologie und Zeitgeschichte (Göttingen 1966), pp. 15-67.

65. See P. A. H. de Boer, Fatherhood and Motherhood in Israelite and Judean Piety (Leiden: Brill, 1974), especially pp. 14-48. Amidst a large outpouring of-publications on woman's new role in religion, few have been so responsible in scrutinizing the Old Testament on its own term as P. Trible, God and the Rhetoric of 'Sexuality (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978). Those who have patience to explore beyond the Bible's culture-conditioned

patriarchalism discover an authentic humanism that breaks out to unparalleled examples of positive appreciation for the worth and dignity of womanhood.

66. Although the verb RḤM is generally employed of Yahweh as subject, it is used also of male human persons, as of Nebuchadrezzar in Jer. 42:12 (cf. negative in Jer. 42:12, 50:42).

67. On the religion-phenomological significance of the God-mother concept, see G. van der Leeuw, op. cit., I, 90-100 ("The Form of the Mother"); also W. Robertson Smith, op. cit., pp. 54-60.

68. See W. Harrelson, From Fertility Cult to Worship, New York 1969.

69. For a thorough and balanced discussion of the entire problem of sexual/sexist imagery and language in theology, see G. H. Tavard, "Sexist Language in Theology" TS, 36 (1975), 700-24.

Chapter II

The Divine Image Mirrored in Human Personhood

"THE RIGHTEOUS GOD"

God's true sovereignty (his responsible freedom in transcendence) comes to full manifestation with man's genuine personhood (responsible freedom in finiteness). Hence, as God is like man (anthropomorphism), man is like God (theomorphism).

It is in his capacity of being like God in a personalistic and relational sense (imago Dei), that man is capable of bringing wrath and judgment on himself; but, in responsible personhood, he also lies open to the possibility of reconciliation and resoration. As man is free to change for the worse or the better, God is free to change the evil in man to the better.

In man's estrangement from God and in his restoration to God, he confronts God as righteous -- a concept that involves God's judging, but also saving action.

Introduction: Divine and Human Righteousness in Judgment and in Salvation

The Hebrew word ṣedeq/ṣᵉdāqâ, usually rendered by dikaiosunē in Greek, covers a wide semantic range. Over its wide range of nuancing, it adequately expresses an essential rightness and integrity, in God as well as in man, binding them together in dynamic interaction. Whenever this bond is shattered, man the creature experiences the consequences of transgression as wrath; wherever it is restored, its blessings are experienced as divine favor and salvation.

a. "Righteousness" as a covenantal ideal

Sometimes ṣᵉdāqâ means "firmness" or "truth"; sometimes it means "vindication," "deliverance," or "salvation." It is, in a word, a prime term for covenant well-being, defined as total rightness in relation to God and in relation to one's fellow men. If it is not the full synonym of šālôm ("wholeness," "harmony"), it is certainly the indispensalbe relational basis for it. As such, it is the polar opposite of riš'â, "wickedness" (cf. Psalm 1).

In spite of the fact that the verbal root ṢDQ is occasionally employed in juridical contexts (cf. Ex. 23:7, Deut. 25:1ff.), it is not essentially a legal term. It serves rather to express the demands of a correct interpersonal relationship. This is especially apparent in the earliest traditions, such as are found in the Jacob-Laban story and in the narrative about Jacob and Tamar. In Gen. 30:33 Jacob tells his father-in-law that his ṣᵉdāqâ (RSV "honesty") will show up in the sequel of the way in which he is handling their mutual business affairs. In Gen. 38:26 the same patriarch admits that his wronged daughter-in-law is more in the right than he because her prostitution has been occasioned by his own derogation of duty toward her. The obligation in each text lies more within the range of social obligation than of legal requirement. Wherever human persons had a bond with each other, ṣᵉdāqâ was demanded (along with its synonym, ḥesed, meaning brotherly loyalty"). If this was true in relationships with non-Israelites like Laban and Tamar, it was all the more

true within Israel's unique covenant society, in which the ideal was to live in complete harmony with one's fellows, as well as in obedience, devotion, and perfect fidelity toward the God who had chosen this people and given them his covenant.

b. The "righteousness" of God

Inasmuch as Yahweh's integrity guaranteed his covenant with Israel, he was himself often spoken of as "righteous" (Zeph. 3:5; cf. Gen. 18:25, Ps. 50:6). In simple translation, this means that God fulfills his obligation to rule the world as its lord and creator, for the benefit of his chosen people. Thus "righteousness" is a salvation-word. It is not strange that some texts speak of Yahweh's saving acts as sidqot-YHWH (Judg. 5:11, I Sam. 12:7, Mic. 6:5, Dan. 9:16). Yahweh governs history by his "righteousness" -- also nature (cf. Ps. 145:17) and the nations. Over his own peculiar nation, Israel, Yahweh appointed a king, who was charged to execute "righteousness" in his name (Ps. 72:1; cf. 110:5-6). This was a prerogative later to be assigned to the Messiah (cf. Isa. 9:6).[1]

c. "Righteousness" for the individual Israelite

Inasmuch as Yahweh's initiative alone arranged the covenant with Israel, it was clearly Yahweh's prerogative to set up the conditions of "righteousness." One of the priestly duties, carried out in Yahweh's name and with his authority, was to declare whether a man were "righteous" or "wicked" (cf. Ezek. 18:9). It is the constant source of anguish underlying many of the psalms of complaint that the distressed worshiper had been waiting in vain for such a declaration, whether from the priest directly or by revelation from God. Such a supplicant might indeed have many sins -- might confess them freely (cf. Psalm 51, Psalm 130) -- yet express confidence that Yahweh would forgive him as one of his "righteous."

Many are the pangs of the wicked,
but steadfast love (ḥesed) surrounds him
who trusts in Yahweh.
Be glad in Yahweh and rejoice, 0 righteous,
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!
(Ps. 32:10-11)

Passages in which a claim is being made to "righteousness" (cf. Ps. 7:9,17:1-5, 18:22-24,26:1-6) are to be understood as referring not to sinlessness or moral perfection, but to this stance of conscious integrity within the framework of covenantal living.

Yahweh's commandments, particularly such codes of apodictic law as are found in the great Decalogue of Ex. 20:2-17, came to serve as an external standard for defining "righteousness" (cf. especially Ezek. 33:14-16, which makes this connection very clear). As such, the commandments were regularly recited in the covenant assemblies (see the model ritual of Deut. 27:11ff.). Before a worshiper was allowed to present himself in temple, he was confronted with the recitation of an entrance-torah, such as is found in Psalm 15 or Ps. 24:3-5:

Who shall ascend the hill of Yahweh,
and who shall stand in his holy place?
He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who does not lift up his soul to what is false,
and does not swear deceitfully.
He will receive blessing (bᵉrākâ) from Yahweh,
even righteousness (ṣᵉdāqâ) from the God of
his salvation.

If one were able conscientiously to confess that he was such a person as these lines demanded, he would be welcome to enter the ša'ᵃrê-ṣedeq, "the gates of righteousness" (Ps. 118:19-20), even to full rejoicing in the presence of his God. The ideal of complete and conscious devotion to God's law is presented in such late compositions of Psalms 1 and 119 as the basis for a paradigmatic "righteousness", after which every devout Israelite earnestly strove.

d. "Righteousness" as a spiritual problem

Misconceptions arose as to the possession of "righteousness" or the lack of it, along with some vexing problems concerning God's ways with men. One problem concerned the relation between corporate and individual guilt. It was thought by some that the "righteousness" of a few could redeem many (Gen. 18:22-23, Ezek. 14:12ff.; cf. Isa. 53:4-6); contrariwise, there were some who believed that an individual's "righteousness" would not suffice to release him from the guilt that had fallen on the many. "Righteousness" had become quantified, hence it could be passed down as an inheritance from one's fathers; and so likewise its opposite, "wickedness." The prophet Ezekiel was especially anxious to correct this latter view, which he saw as leading to an immoral fatalism. In the eighteenth and thirty-third chapters of his book he declares emphatically that every individual person is directly answerable before God for his own ṣ̌ ᵉdāqâ and its consequences. "The soul that sins, it shall die!" (18:4)

Another serious source of misgiving -- closely related to the preceding -- was the undeserved evil (or good) that the practical man observed in his daily experience. "Righteousness" was supposed to produce blessing, while "wickedness" was supposed to produce suffering and evil (so Deut. 30:15ff.). Sometimes the source of inequity lay within convenantal society, and this is the occasion of the complaint psalms. Thus Hab. 1:13:

> Thou who art of purer eyes than to behold evil,
> and cannot look on wrong,
> Why dost thou look on faithless men,
> and art silent when the wicked swallows up
> the man more righteous than he?

Sometimes the problem lay in the inexplicable agonies of a private individual; so Job, with his cry, "How can a man be just (yigdaq) before God?" (9:2) Sometimes it lay in the tragedies of international politics, such as led to the ruin of Israel's nationhood. As long as the Jews suffered under foreign imperialism, they were confronted with the disparity between doleful experience and blissful ideal. Was it they, the covenant people, who had ceased to be righteous: or had God himself departed from righteousness? Hard as it was to admit that the first could be true, it was impossible to believe the latter. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25)

e. Jesus Christ as the most righteous Jew

Church doctrine has made much of the impeccability (from Lat. peccare, "to sin") of Christ, speculating whether this should be taken to mean an inability to sin or a simple absence of sin. The New Testament lacks, however, unambiguous testimony to this concept. The strongest prooftext seems to be Heb. 4:15, "We have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning." Though this may be taken to imply more, all it actually affirms is that Christ remained true to God in every trial and affliction (see the context).

We fall into docetic heresy when we think of Jesus as a human being who was incapable of any creaturely error or misunderstanding. Did he never make a mistake in arithmetic, or never button his coat wrong? This is hardly the conception promoted in the earliest Christological affirmations. What the primitive church did confess was his paradigmatic righteousness, and this because it was an indispensable attribute of the messiahship which it claimed for him.2 The ideal comes to expression in Isa. 9:7:

> Of the increase of his government and of peace
> there will be no end,
> upon the throne of David and over his kingdom
> to establish it and to uphold it,
> with justice and with righteousness
> from this time forth and forevermore.

In the intertestamental literature, the image of the righteous Messiah is combined with the figure of the transcendental Son of Man, of whom I En. 46:3 has the following to declare:

> This is the Son of Man who hath righteousness,
> with whom dwelleth righteousness,
> and who revealeth all the treasures of
> which is hidden,
> Because the Lord of Spirits had chosen him,
> and whose lot hath the pre-eminence
> before the Lord of Spirits in uprightness
> forever.

Undoubtedly it is this tradition that St. Matthew has in mind when he tells the story of Jesus' baptism. Unlike his Synoptic parallels, Mattew has John the Baptist arguing that Jesus should not be baptized (3:14), but Jesus insists, "Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (v.15).[3] This statement would remain enigmatic for us if we were to suppose that receiving baptism were actually required either by Jewish law or Jewish tradition; it was not.[4] The righteousness which Jesus sought to fulfill through baptism was the messianic righteousness of perfect harmony and rightness with God. His baptism established a new, creative, and redemptive relationship between a wrathful God and a wayward humanity. It became the effective symbol by which the Christian believer becomes one with God through faith in Christ (see Paul's moving figure of baptism as burial in Romans 6).[5]

Excursus on further Christological statements[6]

Although the synoptic tradition refrains from attributing any blame or wrongdoing to Jesus, it makes no statement claiming absolute sinlessness or inerrancy for him. In the epistles, where a more speculative Christology is developed, sinlessness is ascribed to him as a symbolic idealization.

The earliest is the Pauline statement in II Cor. 5:12, ton mē gnonta hamartian huper hēmōn hamartian epoiēsen, "him who did not know sin, on our behalf he (God) made to be sin." This expresses Paul's notion of a vicarious interchange, Christ's innocence and blamelessness being substituted for humanity's guilt.

Heb. 7:26 identifies Christ as a high priest possessing the following qualities: he is hosios (sanctified), akakos (blameless), amiantos (unspotted), kechōrismenos apo tōn hamartōlōn, (separated from sinners). All these were attributes of the ideal priest; Jesus had them to perfection. But the important contrast in this context is between the temporality and creaturely weakness of the Levitical priesthood, on the one hand, and Christ's eternal unfailingness on the other. The emphasis is on his office rather than on the events of his private life, about which the writer has nothing to say.

I Pet. 1:19 speaks of Christ as "a lamb without

blemish and without spot" -- i.e., a perfect sacrifice to atone for his people's sin.

I Pet. 2:22: hos hamartian ouk epoiēsen oude heurethē dolos en tō stomati autou, "who did not commit sin, nor was guile found in his mouth." The context is an exhortation-to submissiveness under wrongful persecution, using Christ as an example (hupogrammon). His perfect suffering has not only vicariously efficatiousness, but is exemplary in intent, according to v. 24.

I John 3:5 reads: kai oidate hoti ekeinos ephanerōthē hina tas hamartias arēi kai hamartia en autō ouk estin, "and you know that that one appeared in order to bear (the) sins, and sin was not present in him." The writer goes on immediately to say that "everyone who abides in him does not sin," while "all who sin have not seen or known him." This is obviously a symbolic idealization, functioning in an exordium for Christians to emulate Christ's purity, vv. 3-10. In the sequel of vv. 11-24, this receives practical interpretation in terms of living in perfect love with the Christian brethren.

John 8:46: "Which of you convicts me of sin?" In the context of Jesus' controversy with the Jews, the sin in question is that of telling a falsefood concerning his authority; this Jesus emphatically denies.

F. Justification by faith[7]

Misunderstanding arises whenever God's and man's "righteousness" becomes identified with moral perfection or an external conformity to an ethical code. Taking our cue from the meaning of Christ's righteousness (i.e., perfect identification with, and submission to, God's redemptive plan), we need to understand a Christian's righteousness in personal, rather than in moralistic, terms.

St. Paul is the great architect of Christian doctrine of righteousness. Galatians, his earliest epistle, passionately defends it against legalism. It is in Rgmans that he fully articulates and explains it. That epistle commences its long and involved discourse

with a programmatic affirmation in 1:16-17:

> For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith....

The gospel presents divine righteousness as the essence of a saving relationship. Dikaiosunē stands for God's sovereign freedom to receive sinful mankind, as well as for mankind's responsible freedom to turn from sin to salvation, through faith in God's goodness and in man's salvability, as demonstrated paradigmatically, and most ideally, in Christ's own embodiment of the divine righteousness.

1. The theomorphism of man

As has been said, God is no object, but the unlimited Subject who is constantly addressing us at every point of our creaturely existence. He is absolutely free in his moral responsibility (righteousness) toward us, as well as in his lordship over us. This comes to its richest manifestation as it confronts us as human persons in the responsible exercise of our own freedom within the limits of our finite existence.. Although we are but finite creatures over against an infinite Creator, we are still free within the limits of our finitude -- free to embrace righteousness and forsake wickedness, which is the idolatrous deification of ourselves and of other contingent, finite ends.

Unavoidably, we speak of God -- if we speak of him at all -- as being in some ways like man.8 This we call anthropomorphism. But at the same time we affirm that man is in some ways like God, and the appropriate term for this is theomorphism (from Grk. theou-morphismos, "God-formliness" . The two are essential correlates of each other.

a. The problem and potential of man

Inasmuch as we must talk about man in order to learn more about God, we turn next to the problem and potential of man. We observe man's essential dignity, arising from his self-awareness. We observe his creativity and aesthetic powers. We observe his rational and moral faculties, bringing purpose and worth to activities that would otherwise remain on a purely animal level. We observe also man's propensity to misuse the powers, and abuse the freedom, that raise him above animal nature. And in the end, man's essential being remains a mystery. As Alexander Pope has said, man is a paradox -- of the earth, yet not of it; reaching for divinity, yet far removed from it:

> Know then, thyself, presume not God to scan,
> The proper study of mankind is man.
> Placed on this isthmus of a middle state,
> A being darkly wise, and rudely great:
> With too much knowledge for the skeptic side,

With too much weakness for the stoic's pride,
He hangs between, in doubt to act or rest:
In doubt to deem himself a god or beast;
In doubt his mind or body to prefer;
Born but to die, and reasoning but to err;
Alike in ignorance, his reason such,
Whether he thinks too little or too much:
Chaos of thought and passion, all confused;
Still by himself abused or disabused;
Created half to rise, and half to fall;
Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;
Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurled;
The glory, jest and riddle of the world!
(Easay on Man)

To review the history of civilization is to survey a vast and amazing story of man's achievements through the ages, yet all crumbles at last into dust. Nothing can withstand the ravages of time, not even the great pyramids of Egypt; yet it is not so much the desert sands that erode what man has done, as man's own rape of civilization. What we need above all is an awareness of history, for we cannot measure man except in its perspective. It can make optimists of us, or pessimists. We can look back on the history of the human race with a great deal of sorrow and alarm, or with satisfaction and gratitude. Along the pathway of struggle, error and waywardness, mankind has continued to ascend the ladder of progress, and we can expect this to continue in the future. Before we make a facile choice between optimistic and pessimism, let us become aware that no-one can be solidly optimistic about the prospects for the human race without being also firmly pessimistic regarding man's potential for wayward self-destruction. Mankind has amazing powers, but the most amazing power is to misuse those powers. Sin seems to be a part of the human condition. Standing between the animal world and the world of Deity, all man's gifts of self-awareness, acting, willing, remembering, and imagining -- those things that make him like God -- automatically open him up to the possibility of sin.

b. Extrabiblical anthropologies

As has been our method in the previous chapter, we look first to see the various alternatives in primitive and modern thought concerning the being and nature of man. Here we introduce the term anthropology (Grk.: anthrōpou-logia, "discourse about humankind"), not in the accepted university meaning: a scientific discipline concerning the biological origin and sociological development of the human species; but in the sense employed in classical learning, which is the theological understanding of man's religious nature. Early civilizations reflected on man's nature, but we may subsume all the various options under forms of monism. Previously applied to concepts of Deity, the term "monism" pertains also to concepts of human existence. Extra-biblical religion in its various forms conceives of man as caught up in the same universal process in which Deity is involved. God is the macrocosm, man the microcosm, but all belong within the same scheme of reality.

As we look into the ways in which the phenomenon of human existence is contemplated in the ancient world, we discern that beneath a facile, surface judgment of optimism (making man like God), the ultimate verdict on man is very pessimistic. In flattering himself, ancient man covered himself with degradation and despair. This is because being like God was in itself not very ennobling.

(1) The heritage of Greek thought in western civilization

We in our western society are heavily indebted to the heritage of Greek thought, which had very much to say about human existence. One may turn particularly to Plato's great treatise, "The Republic," for a perceptive analysis of the human phenomenon. We identify here an idealistic image of man, in which man is seen to be halfway between the ephemeral forms of sensuous reality and the mental abstractions which form the eternal model for his existence in this physical universe.9 Ultimately, we can trace the major developments in modern philosophies about man to this heritage. The dominant attitude toward the question of man today may be identified as a nominalistic nihilism; and while in many ways this philosophy rejects Plato's idealism, at the same time it presupposes it even in denying it. That is to say, in the one as in the other, man's responsible personhood, independent of a monistic involvement in nature, is sacrificed. Man as God is affirmed; but man as animal is affirmed even more emphatically. What is

forgotten is what makes man distinctively different from both God and the animal in the midst of all similarities.

Excursus on humanistic naturalism[10]

Humanistic naturalism is a nihilism that reduces all things human to an ultimate nothingness. A logical or philosophical stance which reduces individual human events to the status of arbitrary or accidental appearances, naturalism invites the conclusion that there is nothing lastingly and truly significant in the existence of human beings. Hence the profound cynicism and eagre hedonism of contemporary life. If man is God, his sins are excused; if man is a beast, his sins are necessary.

(2) Far-Eastern anthropology

Very much in the center of attention today is eastern thought, especially far-eastern thought. Although this has come to popularity in the last decade, it has been an option before us ever since the Orient was opened up by European colonialism. The various philosophies and religions of the Far East have their own distinctive attitude toward human existence. (Here we pass over Islam, which forms a bridge between western and Far-Eastern thought because it has been so profoundly influenced by the biblical heritage in its own unique way.) Looking at Hinduism and Buddhism. the most representative forms of Asian religion, we observe a profound pantheistic quietism. In pantheism, all existence participates in the being of divinity. The phenomenal world is but an outflowing of God's own essence. Unavoidably, human life as well as animal life is a peculiar manifestation of this universal reality. The pathos, the suffering, and the sorrow that accompany human existence at most levels are seen as inevitable, hence the practical attitude of the miserable peasant and the luxuriating landlord is the same: a quietistic acceptance of things as they are. Man is discouraged from attempting strenuous efforts toward self- or mutual improvement. Social reformers in Indian and other Asian lands are frustrated by the general attitude that the

pervasive poverty and degradation around them is part of an eternal cycle of 'reality, which nothing can change. Again, an apparent optimism, flattering man as an outpouring of divinity, is actually a profound pessimism.

(3) Ancient Near-Eastern anthropologies

From this look westward and eastward, we glance backward to the ancient Near-Eastern concept of humanness, for here is the closest context for biblical anthropology. What we see here is, once more, essential monism. Like the other extrabiblical options, it brings a shallow optimism masking a profound pessimism.

Ancient Near-Eastern anthropology can be regarded in terms of primitive naturism. As has been previously stated, it belongs within the orbit of prelogical thought, yet not without some philosophical profundity. In what we would be tempted to call a crassly realistic mythologizing, Israel's neighbors identified man with the gods and with nature. We will benefit from a scrutiny of some representative examples.

The creation of man, ANET 7-8[12]

> The All-Lord [Re] says in the presence of those stilled from tumult [the dead].... "I did four good deeds within the portal of the horizon. I made the four winds that every man might breathe thereof.... I made the great inundation that the poor man might have rights therein like the great man....1 made every man like his fellow. I did not command that they do evil, (but) it was their hearts which violated what I had said....1 made their hearts to cease from forgetting the West [the realm of the dead], in order that divine offerings might be given to the gods....I brought into being the four gods from my sweat, while men are the tears of my eye.

COMMENT: This Egyptian cosmology is artificially constructed on the scheme of the number four. It expresses a beneficent intent on the part of the gods, and gives mankind blame for social evil. One of Re's good deeds

was putting the fear of death into the human heart as a motivation for carrying on the sacrificial cult. With respect to the creation of man, it is important to observe that, just as with the gods, mankind comes into being as an exhudation of the divine substance; the gods come from Re's sweat, mankind from the tears in his eye.

Mankind made from clay and Kingu's blood,
"Enuma Elish," ANET 68-69[13]

When Marduk hears the words of the gods,
His heart prompts (him) to fashion artful works.
Opening his mouth, he addresses Ea
To impart the plan he had conceived in his heart:
"Blood I will mass and cause bones to be.
I will establish a savage, 'man' shall be his name.
Verily, savage-man I will create.
He shall be charged with the service of the gods
That they might be at ease!
The ways of the gods I will artfully alter...."
Ea answered him, speaking a word to him,
Giving him another plan for the relief of the gods:
"Let but one of their brothers be handed over;
He alone shall perish that mankind may be fashioned.
Let the great gods be here in Assembly,
Let the guilty be handed over that they may endure."
Marduk summoned the great gods to Assembly;
Presiding graciously, he issues instructions.
To his utterance the gods pay heed.
The king addresses a word to the Anunnaki:
"If your former statement was true,
Do (now) the truth on oath by me declare!
Who was it that contrived the uprising,
And made Tiamat rebel, and joined battle?
Let him be handed over who contrived the uprising.
His guilt I will make him bear.
You shall dwell in peace!"
The Igigi, the great gods, replied to him,
To Lugaldimmerankia, counselor of the gods,
their lord:
"It was Kingu who contrived the uprising,
And made Tiamat rebel, and joined battle."
They bound him, holding him before Ea.
They imposed on him his guilt
and severed his blood (vessels).
Out of his blood they fashioned mankind.

He [Ea] imposed the service and let free the gods.
After Ea, the wise, had created mankind,
Had imposed upon it the service of the gods...
Marduk, the king of the gods, divided
All the Anunnaki above and below.
He assigned (them) to Anu to guard the instructions
Three hundred in the heavens
he stationed as a guard.
In like manner the ways of the earth he defined.
In heaven and on earth six hundred
(thus) he settled.

COMMENT: The divine purpose in creating man is simply to make them slaves as substitutes for the gods, who will now be relieved to stand guard over the cosmic ordinances. The slavery of mankind is fully justified as an effect of the imposition of guilt on the chief rebel-god, Kingu, whose blood -- no doubt mixed with earth -- is sufficient in quantity, so that Marduk's original scheme of killing off many gods becomes unnecessary. The text continues with a description of the building of Marduk's shrine at Babylon by the gods. At the dedication ceremony, the gods make the following petition to Marduk with respect to mankind's duty in providing for the temple's upkeep.

"Most exalted be the Son, our avenger;
Let his sovereignty be surpassing,
having no rival.
May he shepherd the black-headed ones,[14]
his creatures.
To the end of days, without forgetting,
let them acclaim his ways.
May he establish for his fathers
the great food-offerings;
Their support they shall furnish,
shall tend their sancturaries.
.....
May he order the black-headed to re[vere him],
May the subjects ever bear in mind their god,
And may they at his word pay heed to the goddess.
May food-offerings be borne
for their gods and goddesses.
Without fail let them support their gods!
Their lands let them improve,
build their shrines,
Let the black-headed wait on their gods."

COMMENT: This liturgical text naturally expresses the desire of the temple priesthood in Babylon to secure a

regular and generous outpouring of gifts, not only for the great central shrine in Babylon, but for the vast galaxy of lesser sacturaries throughout the territories under its control. It is clear that mankind has no significance or purpose except to wait on the world of Deity, along with the elaborate cultic apparatus designed to honor it.

The creation of Enkidu, the alter-ego of Gilgamesh, ANET 73-78[15]

The rich Gilgameshtradition has gathered many accretions and embellishments in its complex development.[16] Although it contains mythic elements, it is essentially epic in conception. Once an earthly king, Gilgamesh here becomes semideified. With the incorporation of the Enkidu motif, this epic becomes an aetiology not only for mankind's likeness to the gods, but also of mankind's kinship with the beasts. In the beginning of the Assyrian version, Gilgamesh' affinity with the gods has become a problem; he is so strong and boisterous that he is disturbing the social order. The officials complain to the god:

"Two-thirds of him is god, [one-third of him is human].
.....
The onslaught of his weapons verily has no equal.
.....
Gilgamesh leaves not the son to his father;
Day and night [is unbridled his arrogance].
.....
Gilgamesh leaves not the maid to [her mother],
The warrior's daughter, the noble's spouse!"
.....
"Thou, Aruru, didst create [the man];
Create now his double; his stormy heart let him match.
Let them contend, that Uruk may have peace!"
When Aruru heard this,
A double of Anu she conceived within her.
Aruru washed her hands,
Pinched off clay and cast it on the steppe.
[On the step]pe she created valiant Enkidu,
...essence of Ninurta.
[Sha]ggy with hair is his whole body,
He is endowed with head hair like a woman.

The locks of his hair sprout like Nisaba [the] goddess of grain].
He knows neither people nor land;
Garbed is he like Sumuqan [the god of cattle].
With the gazelles he feeds on grass,
With the wild beast he jostles at the water-place,
With the teeming creatures his heart delights in water.

A hunter who sees him reports to Gilgamesh, who provides a harlot to seduce him into manhood. An earthy scene follows. As soon as Enkidu spots the harlot he lies with her, and ere long he forsakes the wild beasts for the company of mankind:

For six days and seven nights Enkidu comes forth, mating with the lass.
After he had had (his) fill of her charms,
He set his face toward the wild beasts.
On seeing him, Enkidu, the gaselles ran off.
The wild beasts of the steppe drew away from his body.
Startled was Enkidu, as his body became taut,
His knees were motionless -- for his wild beasts were gone.
Enkidu had to slacken his pace -- it was not as before;
But he now had [wi]sdom, [br]oader understanding.
Returning, he sits at the feet of the harlot.
He looks up at the face of the harlot.
His ears attentive, as the harlot speaks;
[The harlot] says to him, to Enkidu:
"Thou art [wi]se, Enkidu, art become like a god!
Why with the wild creatures dost thou roam over the steppe?
Come, let me lead thee [to] ramparted Uruk,
To the holy temple, abode of Anu and Ishtar,
Where lives Gilgamesh, accomplished in strength,
And like a wild ox lords it over the folk."
As she speaks to him, her words find favor,
His heart enlightened, he yearns for a friend.

And so Enkidu goes off to Uruk, symbol of civilization, to become Gilgamesh' friend and bosom companion. First he fights a contest with Gilgamesh, but is subdued by Gilgamesh' superior strength and skill. Enkidu, after all, is half beast and half man, whereas Gilgamesh is half human and half divine. Together, they represent the conflicting forces within mankind's self.

Utnaphishtim becomes a god, ANET 95[17]

Utnapishtim, or Atrahasis, was warned by Ea that the gods intended to destroy mankind, so he made a boat and survived. In the sequel, Ea is defending his betrayal before Enlil, the cosmic constable, by arguing that the flood that he had sent was doo drastic a means of gaining control over humankind's tendency toward boisterousness, and that he was therefore justified in allowing this one man to escape. Anyway, this man had gained knowledge of the secret through his ability to interpret a dream that he had given him, proving that he was truly wise. Having proven that he was wise, he is now to be granted immortality, making him the virtual equivalent of a god. He says:

> Enlil went aboard the ship.
> Holding me by the hand, he took me aboard.
> He took my wife aboard and made (her) kneel by my side.
> Standing between us, he touched our foreheads to bless us:
> "Hitherto Utnapishtim has been but human,
> Henceforth Utnapishtim and his wife shall be like unto us gods.
> Utnapishtim shall reside far away,
> at the mouth of the rivers!"
> Thus they took me and made me reside far away,
> At the mouth of the rivers.

COMMENT: The story goes to tell how Gilgamesh fails to achieve immortality in spite of his heroic efforts.[18] It is not strength and prowess that bring a man to the status of godhood, but the wisdom that Utnapishtim possessed. The boundaries between godhood and manhood are blurred; yet irresistibly Mesopotamian religion speculates about the true nature of man's being, akin to Deity in its lowliness and in its grandeur.

(e) Merikare's instructions: Mankind as cattle of the god, ANET 417[19]

Wo choose as a final example a didactic passage from early Egypt, where instruction is given regarding the function of man in service of Deity; the language and conception are characteristically Egyptian, elo-

quently expressing this peculiar brand of primitive monistic immanentism:

> Well directed are men, the cattle of the god.
> He made heaven and earth according to their desire,
> and he repelled the water-monster. He made the breath of life (for) their nostrils. They who have issued from his body are his images. He arises in heaven according to their desire. He made for them plants, animals, fowl, and fish to feed them. He slew his enemies and injured (even) his (own) children because they thought of making rebellion. He makes the light of day according to their desire, and he sails by in order to see them. He has created a shrine around about them, and when they weep he hears.
> He made for them rulers (even) in the egg, a supporter to support the back of the disabled.
> He made for them magic as weapons to ward off what might happen, or dreams by night as well as day. He has slain the treacherous of heart among them, as a man beats his son for his brother's sake. For the god knows every name.

COMMENT: The image of mankind as cattle epitomizes this entire expostion. Men are utterly dependent on Deity, who begot them as his own perfect image.[20] At times they become troublesome to the gods, requiring chastisement. Through the cult, they can always appeal to Deity as shepherd[21] and provider.

c. Biblical anthropology

(1) A personalistic Wholism

Commensurate with the biblical affirmations respecting the being of God, the Bible's anthropology identifies man as a discrete, independent subject, related to other subjects not by ontological derivation but in personalistic interaction. As an authentic person, God is not part of the world-process but is sovereign Lord over it. Man is involved in- the world-process, Yet in such a way that he is not altogether under control of it. He may actually stand apart from it in working creatively to master and modify it. Thus there

is a transcendence in man's own stance over against the cosmic order, just as there is a transcendence in God's stance toward man and toward the world. Because man's existence finds a center in his own being, his self is unified. Not only does the Bible depict man as separate and distinct from other created entities; it depicts him also as integrated within himself as an effective center of thought will and action. There is nothing of Greek dualism in'the Bible -- that system of philosophical thought that sees man as a comingling of the world of sense and the world of ideal reality. None of that: man is a whole, with no dichotomy between his body and his spirit, representing different stages or forms of reality within him. A personalistic wholism prevails. There is, indeed, a spiritual aspect to man's being, yet this is not conceived as something essentially different and distinct from his physical existence. The Hebrew word used most frequently for the "soul" of man (nephesh) means also his vital self, the dynamic center of his existence.[22]

This antique biblical insight is, amazingly, now being abundantly confirmed by modern psychology. Within man's vital existence, everything is now seen as part of a single process. We are discerning more and more clearly that our mental life is deeply rooted in our physical existence, making any separation between them impossible.

(2) The essential affirmations

Over against monistic anthropologies, with their ineluctible pessimism: we may characterize biblical anthropology as realistically optimistic, even laudatory. In spite of a popular misconception that the Bible emphasizes human depravity, it is not really "down" on man. To be sure, it is in dead seriousness about sin. It does not gloss over the dreadfulness of human depravity. Yet the Bible does not depict sin as part of man's essential nature. It has no myth like Enuma Elish, preaching that man has bad blood, that he inherits his titanic rebelliousness directly from the supernatural world. It does have a fall story, and about that we shall presently have more to say; in it, man becomes sinful through his own free choice, and not through some flaw in his created nature.

Thus the essential biblical affimations about man are the following: (1) Man is one in his being -- not a compromise, not a duality. There is a unity in man's individual personhood, just as there is a solidarity within the human family and in society, and harmony in man's relationship to the natural world. (2) Man is essentially free, which means responsibly free. Irresponsible freedom is no freedom because it has no parameters, no perspective, no context. A person who is responsible for his actions is free, for herein lies purpose and direction. This is what man is in his created self: no flotsam on the surf, or a rudderless ship drifting on the surge of the sea, but a self-conscious chooser and actor, working creatively to change his environment for the better. Alas, nature or accident or sickness or human cruelty sometimes deprive us of the full measure of this freedom! When that happens, and it happens all too often, a severe handicap has been placed on our efforts to bring to full realization our measure of genuine personhood as human selves.[23] (3) Man is essentially good -- and hence votentially good. Because man is created good, he has the potentiality of achieving positive goodness -- perfection within the perspective of his own creaturely limitations. The fact that he can go astray, or go completely into ruin, lends even greater significance to the goodness of his real achievements. On the contrary, the possibility of great goodness for any man, and for every man, measures the depth of his failure when he fails to achieve it -- or worse still, when he fails to strive to achieve it. It is the achievements of a Beethoven and Shakespeare and a Rembrandt -- not the mumblings of the masses of mankind -- that tell the true measure of man's potential goodness.

(3) The *imago dei*: Man as created creator

Christian theology has made much of the concept of the divine image in man. It is mentioned twice in the first chapter of Genesis. In v. 26 God says, "Let us make man in our image (b^{e}ṣalmēnû), after our likeness (kidmutēnû), and let them have dominion...." In v. 27 we have the narrative report of what God does: "SO God created man in his own image (b^{e}ṣalmô), in the image of God (b^{e}ṣelem ^{e}lōhîm) he created him; male and female he created them."

Before the rise of modern biblical criticism, it was excusable that discussions of the creation narrative in Genesis 2 should interject the concept of the imago dei. Now that the separate origin of Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 has been firmly established (they belong to the P and J strands, respectively), we should use only chap. 1 as an immediate contextual framework for understanding what was meant by this striking terminology.

Genesis 2 (J) has an entirely different structure and ideology. Man is made first, before plants and herbs exist on the ground; forming his substance from the dust, Yahweh breathes into his nostrils the breath of life (nišmat ḥayyim) so that he becomes a living being (nepeš ḥayyā). After this, Yahweh prepares a fertile garden, forms the animals and creates the woman, then puts man to the test of obedience. More will be said of this narrative later. In it the creation motif is subordinate and instrumental to the major theme of mankind's fall. Thus its intent is strikingly different from that of the P story in Gen. 1:1-2:4a, which is strictly an aetiology for the created order in God's good universe.24

Just what the divine image is, has been the subject of many lively debates and heated controversies. We shall avoid some serious misconceptions by sticking closely to the P story as a context for interpreting it. First of all, let us note that mankind is created by God. Not too much should be made of the verb bārā', "create,"25 for it appears here as the poetic parallel for ʿāśāh, "make." The important thing is that man's existence is strictly at God's pleasure and by his power. This is made emphatic by the discourse in v. 26, in which God communes with himself (the reason for the plural remains a mystery)26 about what he is ready to do. This structural feature is lacking in the narrative of the preceding acts of creation, where God simply commands and it is done. The creation of man comes, as a matter of fact, as a seemingly superfluous act on the sixth day of creation, for the living creatures have already been created and identified as good (v.25).27 But God has one more thing to do before he can rejoice in his perfect work: make man. So it is evident that man has a very special purpose in God's design.

God's decision is that he will make man in his own image (ṣelem, used four times in vv. 26-27; dᵉmḥt, used once in parallelism, is explicative). We saw in the

Merikare text that the Egyptian mind could readily confuse appearance and reality. It read, "They who have issued from his body are his image." Man as divine progeny and man as divine image are identical, for no distinction is made between two things that are, and that only look alike. We may be sure that there is no such confusion in Genesis. To the Hebrew mind. an image is not equivalent to the reality which it images, it simply reflects that reality. Hebrew ṣelem means a carved object representing some other reality. Thus, in being similar to God, man is not necessarily equal to God. Yet the P writer is using a daring expression. He is saying that, just as the idols of the heathen gods were carved out to represent them, man is now appointed to image God. Man is going to serve as the visual representative of God on earth. We must keep in mind the second commandment, forbidding the making of any image or likeness of Yahweh as the object of Israel's worship. P does not in any way violate this prohibition; he only says that, what idols may *not* do, man has been appointed by his Creator to do in the very beginning. Man is the divine surrogate; there is no other. We must, of course, see this in the total context of the P creation story. To be God's image is to be God's representative and to do God's work. This is why v. 27 places in parallelism the striking line, "Male and female he created them." This is needed because directly God blesses them to make them fruitful, charging them with the responsibility of exercising dominion over the creatures that he had already made. Surely this passage teaches that the propagation of human life is a special manifestation of the divine purpose in creating man. What it is also affirming is that in propagating its kind, and in subduing the earth, man as divine image-bearer is carrying out two divine works. Ensuring fertility and exercising responsible care are two distinctive divine actions. In ancient Near-Eastern mythology, these are assigned to the Various gods. In the Bible, they are assigned by God to man. This is the meaning of the imago dei.

Man's having dominion has been seriously misinterpreted. This text offers nosanction for the commercial exploitation, or rapacious ravaging, of the earth's resources. Against this, modern-day ecologists rightly protest. The text of Genesis 1 is simply saying that human lordship over nature is a manifestation of divinity, and by lordship is meant creatorship. The earlier verses of this chapter set forth the whole work of divine creation in a series of six days, leading to the