

The Problem, Background, and the Defining Categories

Is God dead? Asked Time magazine in its issue of April 8 1960. Yes "God is dead", responded three American scholars. These were Thomas Altizer of Emory University in Atlanta; William Hamilton of Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, and Paul Van Buren of Temple University.¹ This bold response to a very extraordinary question proved to be the birth of "The Death of God" school and one culmination of centuries of curiosities, research, and inquiry concerning the "Transcendent God" of theism.

These claims about the death of God were neither unusual nor new. It had been implied in the writings of many a philosophers and scientists. But to speak of "the death of God" in its modern grab is to invoke the name of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900),² who raised his cry in these very words at the end of last century. Writing about the stages in the process of God's death, Nietzsche observed, that ancient people had many gods. First, the many gods gave way to "an old grim-beard", "a jealous" God when "the ungodliest utterance came from a God himself." He declared that "There is but one God! Thou shalt have no other gods before me!" Then all other gods, as Nietzsche puts it, laughing and shaking upon their thrones exclaimed the interesting secret: "Is it not just divinity that there are Gods but no God?", and expired from their laughter.³ The old multiple deities, according to Nietzsche, were energetic and useful as they were connected with some human needs or some forces in the nature. The one God who replaced them was so transcendent that he was beyond humans creating will.⁴ On the other hand, he was too much intrusive, disturbing, and involved in human affairs. "The God who beheld every thing, and also man: that God had to die! Man cannot endure that such a witness should live."⁵ Commenting on Nietzsche's observations, Paul Ramsey explains that such a God "was too much God-with us, God in human, all-too-human form. He mixed too much in human affairs, even manifesting himself in this miserable flesh. In a sense, God's fellow-humanity killed him."⁶ He further observes, that "After the gods made in man's image, the God who proposed to make and remake man in his own image, that God too had to die."⁷

The "death of God" was necessary to liberate man from the unlimited restrictions or so-called religious interpretations of man and the universe that were imposed in the name of God upon the cultural products of men. This death, writes Karl Lowith, "demands of the man who wills himself, to whom no God says what he must do, that he transcends man at the same time as he is freed from God."⁸ Men were to be autonomous and unlimited creators of their cultures and destinies. They used to accomplish this task by projecting into cosmos their fears and aspirations, by creating their gods, but now they could achieve this autonomy through science and philosophy. So, Nietzsche observes, "God is dead in the hearts of men, science and rationalism have killed

him."⁹ Livingston, observes, that the outcome of this development is "the death of the ultimate ground and support of all traditional values. For over two thousand years men have derived their "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not" from God, but that is now coming to an end."¹⁰

By this "half-poetic, half-prophetic"¹¹ phrase Nietzsche meant to represent those great many critics of theistic understanding of God who had asserted for the past many centuries that the traditional, official, and transcendent God of theism has lost His authority over and usefulness to the world. This phrase implies that "In man the consciousness of an ultimate in the traditional sense has died."¹² The God who used to be worshipped as Creator of the universe, is no more accepted as the creator of man and his surroundings. In fact, it is the other way around. It is man who created God in his own image in himself.

The projection theories or claims about the human source of notions of the divine are not recent. It could be traced back to Xenophanes (BC 570-470), as old as six hundred years before Jesus Christ. Xenophanes, criticizing the anthropomorphism of Homer and Hesiod in their portrayal of gods, pointed out that "if oxen (and horses) and lions ...could draw with hands and create works of art like those made by men, horses would draw pictures of gods like horses, and oxen of gods like oxen...Aethiopians have gods with snub noses and black hair, Thracians have gods with grey eyes and red hair."¹³ It has also long been claimed that nature of religions and of gods is the product of man's attempts to understand and desire to control disturbingly puzzling natural phenomena around him. In the presence of hundreds of these religions and gods, or in the words of Cicero, "in this medley of conflicting opinions, one thing is certain. Though it is possible that they are all of them false, it is impossible that more than one of them is true."¹⁴ It is the "Awe", according to Cicero, evoked by terrifying natural phenomena and attempts to comprehend the power behind them, which has helped to produce conflicting religious opinions and the images of divine.¹⁵

In the fifteenth century, Francis Bacon (1561-1626) virtually substantiated Cicero's observations by noting that human beings in their understanding of things rely upon causes that "have relation clearly to the nature of man rather than to the nature of the universe."¹⁶ These significant observations were hallmark of a new era, the era of science. Bacon has been regarded by great many as the philosopher of modern science and the "prophet of empiricism."¹⁷ William Wotton long ago wrote: "My Lord Bacon was the first Great man who took much pains to convince the World that they had hitherto been in a wrong Path, and that Nature herself, rather than her Secretaries, was to be addressed to by those who were desirous to know much of her mind."¹⁸ S. E. Guthrie pays his homage to Bacon with the following words: "No clear beginning can be found for science in the modern sense, but most historians of science regard Bacon as the prophet of empiricism and hence of the separation of science from philosophy. Bacon also sounds the first clear warning against anthropomorphism. He rejects Aristotle, for example, largely for the latter's anthropomorphism. Bacon's warning has become a hallmark of subsequent science."¹⁹ Bacon maintained, that man anthropomorphizes. He found the source of anthropomorphism in his famous four sets of "idols and false notions",²⁰ namely the idols of the tribe, cave, marketplace, and theater. Bacon observes that "The Idols of the Tribe have their foundations in human nature itself, and in the tribe or race of men. For it is a false assumption that the sense of man is the measure of things. On contrary, all perceptions as well of the sense as of the mind are according to the measure of

the individual and not according to the measure of the universe. And human understanding is like a false mirror, which, receiving rays irregularly, distorts and discolors the nature of things by mingling its own nature with it."²¹ He further held, that the human perceptions are dependent upon human feelings and are motivated by them: "The human understanding is no dry light, but receives an infusion from the will and affections." "Numberless, in short, are the ways, and sometimes imperceptible, in which the affections color and infect the understanding."²² Bacon pinpointed the fundamental weakness of the human thought and its major stumbling block i.e., the human tendency to anthropomorphize. Joseph Aggasi, a modern philosopher of science, rates Bacon as the "*locus classicus*" of the critique of anthropomorphism.²³

In the sixteenth century, Bernard Fontenelle (1657-1757) renewed the old Cicerian approach by proposing a "universal evolutionary framework"²⁴ for the development of human thought and culture. Fontenelle himself was quite aware of the revolutionary nature of his observations: "Will what I am going to say be believed? There was philosophy even in those crude centuries, and it greatly assisted the growth of myths. Men whose intelligence is more acute than most are naturally inclined to seek the cause of what they see..."²⁵ These ancient philosophers used the same method as that of ours to explain the unseen and unknown phenomena, that "the unknown cannot be entirely different from what is known to us at present."²⁶ The ancient mind worked out the myth, the earliest form of science and philosophy, the same way as our mind works it out. Although they used crude images and metaphors vastly different from our sophisticated technological symbols and images. Fontenelle argued, that "This philosophy of the first centuries revolved on a principle so natural that even today our philosophy has none other; that is to say, that we explain...unknown natural things by those which we have before our eyes, and that we carry over to natural science...those things furnished us by experience."²⁷ The natural forces beyond human control lead people to imagine beings "more powerful than themselves, capable of producing these grand effects."²⁸

The diversity of natural forces explains the multitude of primitive divinities, "Nothing proves the great antiquity of these divinities better or marks more clearly the route the imagination took...in shaping them. The first man knew of no better quality than physical force; wisdom and justice had not even a name in the ancient languages, as they still do not today among the savages of America."²⁹ Therefore, "It was quite necessary that the gods reflect...both the times at which they were created and the circumstances which brought them into existence."³⁰ Hence Cicero, in the opinion of Fontenelle, was mistaken and unfair in calling the anthropomorphic gods of Homer as crude: "what he in his time saw as qualities befitting gods were not at all known in the time of Homer."³¹ It goes without saying that the gods are anthropomorphic in nature as they are the products of human thoughts and circumstances, and that the nature, qualities, and attributes of gods change with the change of human thought patterns and cultures.

The seventeenth century philosopher Benedict de Spinoza (1632-1677) follows Bacon in criticizing human tendency of anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism.³² To him, our perceptions of the world are nothing but the extension of our views regarding ourselves. As we do things for certain ends, likewise, we perceive the nature working for specific ends. But when the humans "cannot learn such causes from external causes, they are compelled to turn to considering themselves, and reflecting what end would have induced them personally to bring about the given

event, and thus they necessarily judge other natures by their own."³³ They further look "on the whole of nature as a means for obtaining such conveniences. Now as they are aware, that they found these conveniences and did not make them, they think they have cause for believing, that some other being has made them for their use. As they look upon things as means, they cannot believe them to be self-created; but, judging from the means which they are accustomed to prepare for themselves, they are bound to believe in some ruler or rulers of the universe...who have arranged and adapted everything for human use."³⁴

David Hume (1711-76), "the fine flower of the English ...eighteenth century mind", and a staunch "defender of Nature against Reason",³⁵ pioneered this line of approach in our modern times. He gave a more detailed account of anthropomorphic nature of the divine. To him, the notions about the divine did not spring "from reason but from the natural uncertainties of life and out of fear of the future; it functioned in giving the individual confidence and hope in his or her "anxious concern for happiness". It was a means of overcoming the "disordered scene" of human life."³⁶ Looking at the idea of God in an evolutionary perspective, Hume disposed of the theory of an original monotheism, and considered the earliest form of religion to be that of idolatry or polytheism. To Hume the origin of the idea of God turned out, as Basil Willey puts it, to be "much less respectable than an eighteenth century theist might have hoped. It was not by contemplating the spacious firmament on high that primitive man arrived at his notions of a divine original. He simply personified his own hopes and fears, and then proceeded to worship and placate the gods he made in his own image."³⁷

After putting the world of ideas in the realm of human experience, "our ideas reach no farther than our experience",³⁸ and that "all our ideas... are copies of our impressions",³⁹ Hume argued, that even refined and abstract ideas like that of the divine or God sprang only from "the materials afforded us by the senses and experience."⁴⁰ Therefore, according to Hume, "the first idea of religion arose not from a contemplation of the works of nature, but from a concern with regard to the events of life, and from incessant hopes and fears, which actuate the human mind."⁴¹ Man is worried about the "future causes", he has "the anxious concern for happiness, the dread of future misery, the terror of death, the thirst for revenge, the appetite for food and other necessaries. Agitated by hopes and fears of this nature, especially the latter, men scrutinize, with trembling curiosity, the course of future causes, and examine the various and contrary events of human life."⁴² This sheer anxiety leads man to imagine and formulate ideas about these powers: "These unknown causes, then, become the constant object of our hope and fear; and while the passions are kept in perpetual alarm by an anxious expectation of the events, the imagination is equally employed in forming ideas of those powers, on which we have so entire a dependence."⁴³

Such an imagination leads man to personification. Hume argues that there is a universal tendency among mankind "to conceive all beings like themselves, and to transfer to every object, those qualities, with which they are familiarly acquainted, and of which they are intimately conscious. We find human faces in the moon, armies in the clouds; and by a natural propensity, if not corrected by experience and reflection, ascribe malice or good-will to every thing, that hurts or pleases us."⁴⁴ He brings a number of examples of this "propensity" and further argues, that "No wonder, then, that mankind placed in such an absolute ignorance of causes, and being at the same time so anxious concerning their future fortune, should immediately acknowledge a dependence

on invisible powers, possessed of sentiment and intelligence. The unknown causes which continually employ their thought...are all apprehended to be of the same kind or species. Nor is it long before we ascribe to them thought and reason and passion, and sometimes even the limbs and figures of men, in order to bring them nearer to a resemblance with ourselves."⁴⁵ This anthropomorphic tendency of modeling all unknown powers after our familiar human categories, is the foundation of our belief in the divine. Such was the case not only with the primitive man, "Even at this day, and in Europe, ask any of the vulgar, why he believes in an omnipotent creator of the world; he will never mention the beauty of final causes, of which he is wholly ignorant: He will not hold out his hand, and bid you contemplate the suppleness and variety of joints in his fingers, their bending all one way...To these he has been long accustomed; and he beholds them with listlessness and unconcern. He will tell you of the sudden and unexpected death of such a one: The fall and bruise of such another: The excessive drought of this season: The cold and rains of another. This he ascribes to the immediate operation of providence: And such events, as, with good reasoners, are the chief difficulties in admitting a supreme intelligence, are with him the sole arguments for it."⁴⁶

In light of what has been discussed, J. C. A. Gaskin and J. S. Preus declare Hume to be more the founder of the scientific study of religion than of the sociology or the philosophy of religion. For instance Preus observes, that Hume "stands in this account as the pivotal figure, being our clearest exemplar of the self-conscious turn from a theological to a scientific paradigm for the study of religion."⁴⁷ Such a perspective and evaluation of Hume manifestly differs from those of modern historians of the study of religion. W. C. Smith, a well known figure in the field, honors Edward Herbert of Cherbury (1583-1648) as the representative of Enlightenment view of religion and almost discards Hume.⁴⁸ Other scholars like E.E. Evans-Pritchard,⁴⁹ E. J. Sharp,⁵⁰ Jacques Waardenburg,⁵¹ Comstock,⁵² and P. Radin,⁵³ almost all of them begin later than Hume. Gaskin frequently criticizes this tendency of many scholars despite the amount of work available regarding Hume's ideas about religion.⁵⁴ In view of what has been discussed, one can conclude with Preus that "although Hume did not originate his anthropomorphic principle (it goes back to the Ionian philosopher Xenophanes), he installed it in the context of a coherent epistemological analysis, and his principle provided a useful point of reference for many successors who shared his assumptions, up to the present day."⁵⁵ Comte, Feuerbach, Tylor, and Freud are just a few names to be mentioned here.

Auguste Marie Francois Comte (1798-1857), the father of modern sociology, agreed with Hume and other modern philosophers and idealists in rejecting the transcendental metaphysics and theology. "Hostility to metaphysics," writes Edward Caird, "if by metaphysics be meant the explanation of the facts of experience by entities or causes, which cannot be verified in experience or shown to stand in any definite relation to it, is common feature of all modern philosophy, idealist or sensationalist. It is as clearly manifested in Descartes as in Bacon, in Kant and Hegel as in Lock and Hume."⁵⁶ Emphasizing the intimate relationship between ideas and society and the evolutionary nature of human thought, Comte applied his law of the three stages to the religious thought of humanity: the Theological-military, the Metaphysical-feudal, and the Positive-industrial. He located the idea of divine in the first and the primitive stage (Theological) of mankind. He further subdivided this age into three main periods. First: "Fetichism (a term coined by Charles De Brosses, a French contemporary of Hume)- Beginning of the Theological and Mili-

tary System". Fetichism, observes Comte, "allowed free exercise to that tendency of our nature by which man conceives of all external bodies as animated by a life analogous to his own, with difference of mere intensity."⁵⁷ The motif behind that, as Hume had already observed, was to try to apprehend and make some sense of "unknown effects".⁵⁸ As the humans begin with their anthropomorphic understanding that they are "in all respects, the center of the natural system, and consequently endowed with indefinite control over phenomena. This opinion, it is evident, results directly from the supremacy exercised by the imagination, combined with the natural tendency which disposes men in general to form exaggerated ideas of their own importance and power. Such an illusion constitutes the most prominent characteristic of the infancy of human reason."⁵⁹ After the idea originated in the anthropomorphic nature of mankind, it then developed into "polytheism",⁶⁰ and finally passing through the cultures of Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, and Jews,⁶¹ reached in the third stage and was modified into monotheism.⁶²

There are many a scholars who do not originate certain ideas, but the way they expand upon already existing ideas and the profound influence they exert upon the history of subsequent thought, make them very conspicuous and distinguished. They provide other genius writers with the spark that, in the words of Isaiah Berlin, "sets on fire the long-accumulated fuel."⁶³ Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872) was such a scholar. He not only developed the above sketched anthropomorphic theory of the essence of religion and gods to its ultimate dimension, but also provided philosophers like Marx and Engels with many crucial and seminal ideas. "Then came Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*", writes Frederick Engels, "One must himself have experienced the liberating effect of this book to get an idea of it. Enthusiasm was general; we all became at once Feuerbachians."⁶⁴ Richard Wagner saw in Feuerbach "the ideal exponent of the radical release of the individual."⁶⁵ Karl Marx marveled him with the following words: "His work consists in the dissolution of the religious world into its secular basis....Feuerbach resolves the religious essence into the human."⁶⁶ Marx perhaps was right.

To Feuerbach, "What distinguishes man from the brutes is the awareness of a distinctive human nature transcending individuality."⁶⁷ Man has reason, will and affection. "Man is nothing without some "objective."...We know man by his object; and in it his nature becomes evident: his object is his manifested nature and his true objective self."⁶⁸ Man can not escape his nature: "Not even in our imagination can we transcend human nature; and to the "higher" beings in which we believe we can attribute nothing better than human characteristics."⁶⁹ Feuerbach argues, that "The religious object of adoration is nothing but the objectified nature of him who adores",⁷⁰ because "the object of a subject is nothing else than this subject's own nature objectified. Such are a man's thoughts and moral character, such is his God; so much worth as man has, so much and no more has his God. Man's being conscious of God is man's being conscious of himself, knowledge of God is man's knowledge of himself. By their God you know men, and by knowing men you know their god; the two are identical. God is the manifested inward nature, the expressed self of man; religion is the solemn unveiling of man's hidden treasures, the revelation of his most intimate thoughts, the open confession of what he secretly loves."⁷¹ He further argues, that if the divine predicates are merely anthropomorphic as is often observed, "then the subject of them is merely an anthropomorphism too. If love, goodness, personality, etc., are human attributes, then their subject, the existing God to whom you attribute these attributes, and the very belief that there is a God, are also anthropomorphisms-i.e., presuppositions purely human in origin."⁷²

Therefore "God is your highest idea, the highest conception of your intellect, the highest conception you can possibly have."⁷³ Feuerbach concludes arguing: "This doctrine of mine is briefly as follows. *Theology is anthropology*: in other words, the object of religion, which in Greek we call *theos* and in our language God, expresses nothing other than the deified essence of man, so that the history of religion or, what amounts to the same thing, of God-for the gods are as varied as the religions, and the religions are as varied as mankind-is nothing other than the history of man."⁷⁴

Feuerbach, like Hume and others, maintains that the idea of God originates from human needs, desires, wishes, and shortcomings in human life, "the feeling of hunger or discomfort, the fear of death, gloom when the weather is bad, joy when it is good, grief over wasted pains, over hopes shattered by natural catastrophes; all these are feelings of dependency; but to subsume particular phenomena of reality under universal names and concepts is precisely the task implicit in the nature of thought and speech."⁷⁵ In short, "the foundation of religion is a feeling of dependency; the first object of that feeling is nature; thus nature is the first object of religion."⁷⁶ By projecting his feelings to the natural phenomena, man creates his gods and then worship them. Therefore, "To live in projected dream-images is the essence of religion. Religion sacrifices reality to the projected dream: the "Beyond" is merely the "Here" reflected in the mirror of imagination."⁷⁷ Guthrie observes, that "Feuerbach also sees religion as anthropomorphism, but his account differs from Hume's. Whereas for Hume religious thought concerns the external world, for Feuerbach it concerns the human self."⁷⁸ By promises of better life in the hereafter, argues Feuerbach, religion provides people "an escape mechanism, which prevents men from going after a better life in a straight line. Religion is as bad as opium."⁷⁹

Guthrie observes, that Feuerbach's anthropomorphic interpretations of religion differs "somewhat from those of Vico and Comte. For Feuerbach, it has three causes. As do his predecessors, he believes that one cause is cognitive confusion. Anthropomorphism and hence religion are simple, childish mistakes... Second, anthropomorphism is wishful thinking, motivated by desire... Third, religious anthropomorphism is a means, albeit unwitting, of attaining self-consciousness. Humans were unable to conceive of themselves clearly until they had created their image outside themselves."⁸⁰ Guthrie also observes, that "Feuerbach agrees with Schellermacher that God exists in human experience, but he adds that he exists *only* there. God is nothing but man's experience of himself..."⁸¹ The practical conclusion that Feuerbach draws from his thesis is, "What, therefore, ranks second in religion-namely, Man-that must be proclaimed the first and recognized as the first. If the nature of Man is man's Highest Being, if to be human is his highest existence, then man's love for Man must in practice become the first and highest law. *Homo homini Deus est*-man's God is Man. This is the highest law of ethics. THIS IS THE TURNING POINT OF WORLD HISTORY."⁸²

No doubt that Feuerbach's interpretations of the divine and religion proved to be the turning point in the subsequent world history. Karl Marx, following Feuerbach's thesis but replacing Feuerbach's "Man" with "Society and State", declared religion as "the imaginative realization of the human essence, because that essence has no true reality....It is the opium of the people."⁸³

In the nineteenth century, Charles Darwin advocated his theory of "Natural Selection" refuting the traditional theistic view of God as the Creator and Designer, and the nature as the manifestation of purposiveness, design, and immutability.⁸⁴ This, in the words of American botanist Asa Gray, was "a step decidedly atheistical."⁸⁵ Adam Sedwick, a former teacher of Darwin, argued with Darwin, that "It is the crown and glory of organic science that it does, through final cause, link material to moral.... You have ignored this link... you have done your best... to break it. Were it possible (which, thank God, it is not) to break it, humanity, in my mind, would suffer a damage that might brutalize it, and sink the human race into a lower grade of degradation than any into which it has fallen since its written records tell us of its history."⁸⁶ Darwin, in his *Descent of Man*, did argue that "the New World and the Old World monkeys; and from the latter, at a remote period, man the wonder and glory of the Universe proceeded."⁸⁷ He emphatically advocated evolutionary theory.⁸⁸ Such an interpretation of man and his universe, according to Livingston, "symbolized the final death blow to orthodox metaphysics."⁸⁹ It "challenged the very foundations of Christian beliefs. Darwin's interpretation of nature was more damaging to a Christian vision of the world than the revolutions of either Copernicus or Newton... Darwin challenged the entire biblical account of man's unique creation, fall, and need for redemption."⁹⁰ Darwin himself pinpointed the outcome: "I had gradually come, by this time, to see that the Old Testament from its manifestly false history of the world... and from its attributing to God the feelings of a revengeful tyrant, was no more to be trusted than the sacred books of Hindoos, or the beliefs of any barbarian... I gradually came to disbelieve in Christianity as a divine revelation... Thus disbelief crept over me at a very slow rate, but was at last complete."⁹¹ With Darwin's evolutionism, argues John Dillenberger, "Every need for a God as a necessary source of explanation had disappeared."⁹²

Evolution, starting with Darwin in biology, became extremely popular in almost all other disciplines. It caused an up roar in the religious circles and it is little wonder that it received a heated response from theologians.⁹³ Despite all opposition from theologians and others, it became the guiding principle in all leading disciplines of the nineteenth century. This is, perhaps, the reason that empirical scientists, anthropologists, philologists, psychologists, sociologists, and naturalists of the nineteenth century did not look for God in the heavens or beyond this utilitarian sphere. They searched for Him here in their own world either in the nature, or in the human soul,⁹⁴ or psychic,⁹⁵ or in human society,⁹⁶ and finally, all of them almost unanimously, were able to locate Him in human experience⁹⁷ i.e., in the mental process by which man acquires ideas and in the impact and influence his emotions and feelings have on him. "We cannot take a step towards constructing an idea of God", argued H. Spencer, "without the ascription of human attributes."⁹⁸

E. B. Tylor (1823-1917) advocated evolutionary/developmental rather degradation theory. Recognizing the survival of earlier cultural elements, Tylor defined them as "processes, customs, opinions, and so forth, which have been carried on by force of habit into a new state of society different from that in which they had their original home, and they thus remain as proofs and examples of an older condition of culture out of which a newer has been evolved."⁹⁹ Tylor propounded a plausible theory of "animism",¹⁰⁰ "the conception of human soul is the very *'fons et origo'* of the conception of the spirit and deity in general".¹⁰¹ Animism, to Tylor, was the primary formation of religious beliefs which developed into modern higher forms of religion. He argued that such a belief stemmed from an effort on the part of man to explain dream experiences and phenomenon of death. So this was an "attempt at interpretation."¹⁰² He further observed, that

"The evidence for the first alternative...seems reasonably strong, and not met by contrary evidence approaching it in force. The animism of the lower tribes...is a system which might quite reasonably exist among mankind, had they never anywhere risen above the savage condition."¹⁰³

Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), both agreed with Tylor that "religion is no longer "true" in the literal sense of statements it makes about the world and the gods."¹⁰⁴ They also agreed, that human beings anthropomorphize, and religion results from such a process. But they disagreed with Tylor's thesis that religion originated in mere speculation. Freud argued that, "It is not to be supposed that men were inspired to create their first system of the universe by pure speculative curiosity. The practical need for controlling the world around them must have played its part."¹⁰⁵ Therefore, "Animism came to primitive man naturally and as a matter of course... primitive man transposed the structural conditions of his own mind into the external world."¹⁰⁶ It is our responsibility to "ask where the inner force of those doctrines lies and to what it is that they owe their efficacy, independent as it is of recognition by reason."¹⁰⁷ Durkheim thought religion to be a sociological problem, while Freud took it as a psychological problem.¹⁰⁸

Freud argued, that belief in God and religion was an illusion, a childhood experience of an exalted father-figure, a projection of desires, fears, and sense of helplessness (as has already been seen in Hume and Feuerbach) into cosmos. It is not unreal or lie. It is a reality, but of the unconscious experience of infancy that needed to be decoded by psychoanalysis. Freud differed with the philosophers, poets, and psychologists of the past by giving a new interpretation to the unconscious experience. To Freud, unconscious was the repressed conscious "incapable of conscious."¹⁰⁹ The dynamic content of this unconscious was wishes, desires, and dreams. In his *Interpretation of Dreams*, he defined a wish by "a current in apparatus, issuing from pain [=accumulation of excitation] and striving for pleasure [=diminution of excitation through gratification], we call a wish."¹¹⁰ Every dream is a wish-fulfillment and a key to understand neurosis. Freud summarized his theory by the following words: "the theory of all psychoneurotic symptoms culminates in the one proposition that they, too, must be conceived as wish-fulfillment of the unconsciousness."¹¹¹ He further argued, that the wish and not the speculation or reason are the bases of all psychic activities: "man's judgments of value follow directly his wishes for happiness-that accordingly, they are an attempt to support his illusions with arguments."¹¹²

Man is surrounded by relentless, unfriendly, and untamed forces of nature: "There are the elements, which seem to mock at all human control: the earth, which quakes and is torn apart and buries all human life and its works; water, which deluges and drowns everything in a turmoil; storms...diseases...and finally there is the painful riddle of death, against which no medicine has yet been found, nor probably will be. With these forces nature rises up against us, majestic, cruel and inexorable; she brings to our mind once more our weakness and helplessness, which we thought to escape through the work of civilization."¹¹³ Chief among these strategies of civilization, is religion: "I have tried to show that religious ideas have arisen from the same need as have all the other achievements of civilization."¹¹⁴

When "Life, as it is imposed on us, is too hard for us: it brings us too many hurts, disappointments, insoluble tasks. To endure it, we cannot do without palliatives...."¹¹⁵ Man's childhood ex-

perience provides the clue for that: "Once before one has found oneself in a similar state of helplessness: as a small child, in relation to one's parents. One had reasons to fear them, and especially one's father; and yet one was sure of his protection against the dangers one knew....In the same way, a man makes the forces of nature not only into persons with whom he can associate as he would with his equals-that would not do justice to the overpowering impression which those forces make on him-but he gives them the character of a father."¹¹⁶ Therefore, God, in reality, is nothing but the reappearance of childhood unconscious experience and the projection of father-figure into the cosmos because "the root of every form of religion", to Freud, is "longing for the father."¹¹⁷ Again, in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, he elaborated this point contending that "the derivation of religious need from the infant's helplessness and the longing for the father aroused by it seems to me incontrovertible, especially since the feeling is not simply prolonged from childhood days, but is permanently sustained by fear of superior power of Fate. I cannot think of any need in childhood as strong as the need for father's protection.... The origin of religious attitude can be traced back in clear outlines as far as the feeling of infantile helplessness. There may be something further behind that, but for the present it is wrapped in obscurity."¹¹⁸ The decisive element of Freudian theory is the substitution of psychology for metaphysics, and as Stan Draenos observed, "The transformation of metaphysics into metapsychology substitutes an immanent 'within' for a transcendent 'beyond' as the ground of self-understanding."¹¹⁹

Freud, like Durkheim, connected his theory with "totemism" to give it a historical perspective. As J. G. Frazer and Durkheim explained before him¹²⁰ that in primitive tribes totem played two vital roles. The totem provided the tribesmen with protection, help, guidance, warning about troubles etc. and the clan members, on their part, respected, revered and protected the totem animal by establishing taboo around him. They strictly observed two laws in connection with the totem: firstly, no killing of the totem animal and secondly, no sex between clan members. Violations of these laws were punished to death.¹²¹ This primitive religious experience was unconscious also "the real reason must be 'unconscious'."¹²² Freud then connected totemism with psychoanalysis arguing that it was a "product of the conditions involved in the Oedipus complex."¹²³ He explained this complex with observing that the helpless child when enters the society and knows the limits of his father's abilities and powers and also becomes aware of his sexual desires his attitude towards his father changes and "takes on a hostile coloring and changes into a wish to get rid of the father in order to take his place with the mother."¹²⁴ The pre-oedipal identification with father helps repress these feeling: "Clearly the repression of Oedipus complex was not easy task...so the child's ego brought in a reinforcement to help in carrying out the repression by erecting this same obstacle [to realization of the oedipal wish] within itself. The strength to do this was, so to speak, borrowed from the father, and this loan was an extraordinarily momentous act."¹²⁵

Totem, then, was nothing but the substitution for the father. What "is sacred was originally nothing but the perpetuated will of the primeval father."¹²⁶ Freud further argued, that this was the ground of first primitive religious thought. Primitive people lived a horde life where the father ruled over the younger males of the group keeping all the females for himself. Other males wishes were repressed by sex restrictions. "One day the brothers who had been driven out came together, killed and devoured their father, and so made an end of the patriarchal horde. United they had the courage to do and succeeded in doing what would have been impossible for them

individually." Here in this so called historical act, Freud looks for the original clues: "The violent primal father had doubtless been the feared and envied model of each one of the company of brothers: and in the act of devouring him they accomplished their identification with him, and each one of them acquired a portion of his strength. The totem meal, which is perhaps mankind's earliest festival, would thus be a repetition and commemoration of so many things-of social organization, of moral restrictions and of religion."¹²⁷

The motive Freud wanted to accomplish through his research was to advocate that religion is a reality and enjoys tremendous power and durability because "the store of religious ideas includes not only wish-fulfillments but important historical recollections. This concurrent of past and present must give religion a truly incomparable wealth of power."¹²⁸ But still it is an illusion. People of our scientific era should abandon it. "A psychologist who does not deceive himself about the difficulty of finding one's bearings in the world, makes an endeavor to assess the development of man, in the light of the small portion of knowledge he has gained through a study of the mental processes of individuals during their development from child to adult. In so doing, the idea forces itself upon him that religion is comparable to childhood neurosis, and he is optimistic enough to suppose that mankind will surmount this neurotic phase, just as so many children grow out of their similar neurosis."¹²⁹ Commenting on Freud's theory, K. Armstrong observes, that to Freud "Religion belonged to the infancy of the human race; it had been a necessary stage in the transition from childhood to maturity. It had promoted ethical values which were essential to society. Now that humanity had come of age, however, it should be left behind. Science, the new *logos*, could take God's place. It could provide a new basis for morality and help us to face our fears. Freud was emphatic about his faith in science, which seemed almost religious in its intensity..."¹³⁰

Sigmund Freud, then, made the comfort theory of anthropomorphism as the clearest source of divine. He reduced the religion to "the feeling of infantile helplessness"¹³¹ and hence a childish, unconscious, or subconscious experience worthy to be discarded when humanity has grown up. Such a perspective of religion and God truly brought revolution in the subsequent history of thought,¹³² and God was brought from the heaven to the world of man, here and now, because he was too anthropomorphic.

It is quite evident from the above discussions that in the long battle between followers of religion on the one hand, and philosophers, scientists, empiricists, social scientists, and other skeptics of religion on the other hand, the decisive moment came in the middle of the nineteenth century. The evolutionary scheme of Darwin was applied to the study of developmental stages of religion. Supposing that the idea of divine has its origin in the world of man, many scholars did extensive research to locate the exact source of the origin of the idea of God and religion. Some of the scholars like Father Wilhelm Schmidt and others used their research data to prove original monotheism.¹³³ But they were a minority in the face of great majority of anthropologists, psychologists, sociologists, and even some of the so called theologians who contended that origin of religion lied in the simple forms of primitive cultures in animism, fetishism, totemism, developing into higher forms of religious beliefs like polytheism, monolatry, monotheism, and finally into ethical monotheism of modern religions like Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Despite their differences, they mostly agreed on one point; that God does not have an objective reality of his own.

He depends upon human needs, aspirations, and fears for his existence. They had no hesitation whatsoever to assert that the word "God" is nothing but a reification, personification or projection of forces found in the external, internal and social world of man. Talk about God is basically talk about man or, as we have discussed above, in the words of Ludwig Feuerbach "Theology is anthropology".¹³⁴

Such an understanding of the divine continued in the twentieth century. Franz Boas saw most religions as "dogmatized development" of anthropomorphism.¹³⁵ Horton made anthropomorphism central to religion.¹³⁶ Levy-Strauss argued, that "religion consists in a humanization of natural laws" and in "anthropomorphization of nature."¹³⁷ Many other anthropologists argued much the same.¹³⁸ In short, anthropomorphism was thought to be, and still is, in the words of R. J. Z. Werblowsky, "central problem" in theology, history of religions, and religious philosophy.¹³⁹ E. Bolaji Idowu observed, that anthropomorphism has "always been a concomitant of religion, all religions, every faith. In the purest religion... there can be no way of avoiding anthropomorphism."¹⁴⁰ Guthrie argued that "religion *is* anthropomorphism."¹⁴¹

In light of the above observations, when we look at the known faith traditions of the world, we see that anthropomorphism is embedded in the scriptures of almost all of them. Theologians of most of these traditions vainly try hard to eliminate anthropomorphisms from their scriptures, but very often the text of the scripture refuses such a treatment.

It is impossible to discuss all the religious traditions in our limited enterprise. Therefore, we will confine our observations only to the three Semitic religions that claim their origin in Abrahamic faith i.e, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The Hebrew Bible shows God "as humanlike both mentally and physically, as befits his proposal to make "man in our image"... and the New Testament gives Him a completely human form, in Jesus."¹⁴² In spite of many efforts on the part of some Jewish scholars and Church Fathers (as we will see later in following chapters), the concept of a "physically humanlike God has persisted."¹⁴³ Most Muslims, like their Jewish and Christian friends, always try to avoid anthropomorphisms but the struggle is "chronic as elsewhere."¹⁴⁴ The cause, in the opinion of Gibb and Kramers is "to be found in the Kur'an, which strongly emphasizes the absolute uniqueness of God and yet at the same time plainly describe him in the language of anthropomorphism, giving him a face, eyes and hands and talking of his speaking and sitting."¹⁴⁵

In view of such pervasive nature of anthropomorphism some theologians like W. J. Duggan call it "indispensable."¹⁴⁶ F. B. Jevons argues, that it "has characterized religion from the beginning [and] characterizes it to the end."¹⁴⁷ Other scholars like Hugo Meynell¹⁴⁸ and Ferre try to defend anthropomorphism and resolve the paradox by analogy, faith or any other possible means to save and advocate the validity of religion. For instance Ferre in his article "In Praise of Anthropomorphism", wishes to re-evaluate this "deep seated antagonism to anthropomorphism in discourse about God, and to offer reasons to praise rather than bury such a speech."¹⁴⁹ He concludes arguing that anthropomorphism not only is "*not necessarily demeaning* religiously to the Most High [that is, we need not think Him mean or pretty, for example] but also is *necessarily not avoidable* logically if the language of either the believer or the philosopher is not to be emptied of all content."¹⁵⁰ On the other hand, Guthrie observes that "Ferre's praise, however, amounts to admitting

once more that if we cannot say anything anthropomorphic about God, we cannot say anything at all... This, however, merely makes a virtue of necessity."¹⁵¹

In spite of the pervasiveness and defense on the part of a few scholars, anthropomorphism continues to be an "anathema"¹⁵² stuck to religion as Humphrey Palmer observes. Paul Tillich (1868-1965) seems to be determined to get rid of it. To Tillich, the traditional Christian names for the deity, like Father and Lord, are all too anthropomorphic. Such names make the divinity a perfect heavenly person living above the world.¹⁵³ In Tillich's view, the word 'religion' is derogatory,¹⁵⁴ and even the name 'God' is objectionable because it makes the deity an object amongst other worldly objects, "The concept of a "Personal God" interfering with natural events, or being "an independent cause of natural events", makes God a natural object beside others, an object among others, a being among beings, may be the highest, but nevertheless *a* being. This indeed is not only the destruction of the physical system but even more the destruction of any meaningful idea of God."¹⁵⁵ Tillich, in an effort to avoid anthropomorphism, creates new names for the deity: "Being-itself", "Ground of Being", "the Unconditional", and others are preferable to the term God. Armstrong observes, that to Tillich, "You could not say: "I am now having a special 'religious' experience," since the God which is being precedes and is fundamental to all our emotions of courage, hope and despair. It was not a distinct state with a name of its own but pervaded each one of our normal human experiences. A century earlier Feuerbach had made a similar claim when he had said that God was inseparable from normal human psychology. Now this atheism had been transformed into a new theism."¹⁵⁶

In short, religion, according to Tillich, is "directedness of the spirit toward the unconditional meaning."¹⁵⁷ "The name of this infinite and inexhaustible depth and ground of all being is God. That depth is what the word god means. And if that word has not much meaning for you, translate it, and speak of the depths of your life, of the source of your being, of your ultimate concern, of what you take seriously without any reservation."¹⁵⁸

Not many scholars or theologians accept Tillich's definition of God. Rene Williamson argues that "Christian God is a person, a living person", whereas Tillich's one is "devoid of color and power... bloodless"; it fails to impress or convince the ordinary believer.¹⁵⁹ David Pailin finds him "tortuous",¹⁶⁰ Gaskin accuses Tillich of a "modern loss of nerve",¹⁶¹ Donald Crosby finds his terms having an "unsettling ambiguity",¹⁶² and Guthrie observes, that "Trying to eliminate the disease, however, he kills the patient."¹⁶³ Guthrie also argues, that "Like birdshot fired at a flock in general, it hits nothing at all. The less anthropomorphic Tillich makes God, the more God becomes incomprehensible."¹⁶⁴

Many scholars prefer a somewhat anthropomorphic notion of God rather than obscure, unintelligible and non-personal God. Swinburne, for instance, begins his book by observing "By a theist I understand a man who believes that there is a God. By a 'God' he understands something like a person."¹⁶⁵ Brandon,¹⁶⁶ Kai Nielsen,¹⁶⁷ and A. Gallus agree with Karl Jasper that "if religion is demythologized, it is no longer religion."¹⁶⁸ Moshe Greenberg well summarizes the situation: "contemplative thinkers among Jews, Christians, and Moslems have always recognized the predominance of anthropomorphism as the mode of religious perception and discourse and have declared it an obstacle to true knowledge of God."¹⁶⁹ Finally Guthrie observes: "Most theologians

admit that to eliminate anthropomorphism is to eliminate religion. The religion cannot be extricated from anthropomorphism suggests that anthropomorphism is even more than its matrix. Rather, religion looks like anthropomorphism, part and parcel."¹⁷⁰

On the other hand, religion with such an understanding of God, has been denied by great many scholars, philosophers, and scientists of modern times. In addition to the scientific developments or scientific metaphysics and mechanical interpretation of the nature, such an apathy towards religion can partly be attributed to anthropomorphic nature of the theistic notions of God. W. M. Thackeray, commenting about Thomas De Quincy, Robert Browning, Matthew Arnold, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and Emily Bronte, once remarked that they were "a set of people living without God in the world."¹⁷¹ Jean Paul Sartre (1905-80) rejected God. Maurice Merleau Ponty (1908-61), Albert Camus (1913-60), and Logical Positivists like A. J. Ayer (1910-91),¹⁷² advocated heroic atheism.¹⁷³ Ayer argued: "Theism is so confused and the sentences in which 'God' appears so incoherent and so incapable of verifiability or falsifiability that to speak of belief or unbelief, faith or unfaith, is logically impossible."¹⁷⁴

Physicist Steven Weinberg,¹⁷⁵ Astronomer Sandra Faber,¹⁷⁶ Biologists S.E. Luria,¹⁷⁷ paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould,¹⁷⁸ and philosophers like E. D. Klemke,¹⁷⁹ all are happy to live in the world without God. Sandra Faber argues, that "the universe was created out of some natural process, and our appearance in it was totally a natural result of physical laws in our particular portion of it... or what we call our universe. Implicit in the question, I think, is that there is some motive power that has a purpose beyond human existence. I do not believe in that. So I guess ultimately I agree with Weinberg that it is completely pointless from human perspective."¹⁸⁰ Physicist Mar Davis argues: "To answer in the alternative sense really requires you to invoke the principle of God, ... and there is no evidence that He is around, or It is around. On the other hand, that does not mean that you cannot enjoy your life."¹⁸¹ The Cornell professor of natural history, William Provine, summarizes the position of almost all biologists, and indeed of most of other scientists of our time as well: "Everything proceeds purely by materialistic and mechanistic process.... modern science directly implies that the world is organized strictly in accordance with mechanistic principles. There are no purposive principles whatever in nature. There are no gods and no designing forces that are rationally detectable. The frequently made assertion that modern biology and the assumptions of Judeo-Christian tradition are fully compatible is false."¹⁸² The idea of God as the external agency governing the universe leaves American philosopher Klemke "cold. It would not be mine.... I, for one, am glad that the universe has no meaning, for there is man all the more glorious."¹⁸³ What Feuerbach envisioned a century ago is, then, fully accomplished. And finally, Thomas Altizer follows Nietzsche and gives the so called "good news" of God's death arguing: "Only by accepting and even willing the death of God in our experience can we be liberated from a transcendent beyond, an alien beyond which has been emptied and darkened by God's self alienation in Christ."¹⁸⁴ Unlike Altizer, Hamilton does not get mystical at all. His secular man does not need God or any God-shaped holes. His man wants to find his own solutions in the world.¹⁸⁵

The present situation regarding God and religion is well described by J. Hillis Miller: "The lines of connection between us and God have broken down, or God himself has slipped away from the places where he used to be. He no longer inheres in the world as the force binding together all

men and all things. As a result the nineteenth and twentieth centuries seems to many writers a time when God is no more present and not yet again present, and can only be experienced negatively, as a terrifying absence."¹⁸⁶ He further observes, that "The city is the literal representation of the progressive humanization of the world. And where is there room for God in the city? Though it is impossible to tell whether man has excluded God by building the great cities, or whether the cities have been built because God has disappeared, in any case the two go together. Life in the city is the way in which many men have experienced most directly what it means to live without God in the world."¹⁸⁷ There is a strong sense of alienation, isolation, and nihilism among the modern man. In the words of Dostoyevsky, " if there is no God, then everything is permitted."¹⁸⁸ Religious values are not binding. Moral values are not ultimate but quite relative. They are disappearing, at least in the United States of America, with an unprecedented speed. Family values are diminishing in most parts of the developed world. Human beings are almost lost: " We are alienated from God; we have alienated ourselves from nature; we are alienated from our fellow men; and finally, we are alienated from ourselves, the buried life we never seem able to reach. The result is a radical sense of inner nothingness."¹⁸⁹ Still there are God conscious people in the world, but the majority presents the exact picture of what the Qur'an says: "And be ye not like those who forgot God, and He made them forget themselves."¹⁹⁰

What has been discussed above alludes to two distinct charges against the theistic understanding of God. The first is that of anthropomorphism. It does not mean a total denial of Gods' existence on their part. It simply means that any material description of God, as the advocates of this charge against religion would contend, is conditioned by and derived from mans' understanding of his own nature. Those since Xenophanes who press this charge maintain that God transcends this material world and is solely different from and utterly unlike human beings; therefore, any description of Him in terms of human nature, no matter how greatly qualified, will distort His perfection and will be worse than no description of Him at all.

The other charge is that of 'invention'. The supporters of this charge contend that God is a fiction having no real existence of his own at all. He depends ontologically on human beings as they invent him by a cosmic projection of their nature, characteristics and qualities. Guthrie summarizes these charges as follows: "People who say religion anthropomorphizes usually mean one of two different things: either that it attributes human characteristics to gods or that, in claiming gods exist, it attributes human characteristics to nature. In the former meaning, religion makes gods humanlike at least in crediting them with the capacity for symbolic action. In the latter...religion makes nature humanlike by seeing gods there."¹⁹¹

To understand the depth and reality of the charge we need to define the related terms i.e., anthropomorphism and transcendence.

Anthropomorphism:

Anthropomorphism is from Greek 'anthropos' (human being) and 'morphe' (form). As a term it is relatively modern and was attested in the eighteenth century.¹⁹²

A general definition of anthropomorphism could be: "an inveterate tendency to project human qualities into natural phenomena-consciously or not."¹⁹³ Or "as the description of non-material, "spiritual" entities in physical, and specifically human, form."¹⁹⁴

Used in its religious sense, the term denotes a universal human tendency to experience, express and appeal to the divine in human shapes or categories. Anthropomorphism, says Martineau, "denotes the ascription to God of a human form or member."¹⁹⁵ In its wider sense the term has been used to cover attribution of any kind of human characteristics, activities, emotions, or feelings to God. It is also defined as to form "religious concepts and ideas in human terms, in accord with the shapes and metaphors of this world and human experience of it."¹⁹⁶ Essential to anthropomorphism is the description of God and formulation of the concepts pertaining to Him in human forms.

There are two major forms of anthropomorphism. The first, in which appeal is made to physical or corporeal traits of the deity, is called "physical anthropomorphism". The second refers to ascription of human feelings and emotions like love, hate, desire, anger, repentance, and the like to God and is called "mental, psychical or psychological anthropomorphism". It is also called "anthropopathism", a term coined by John Ruskin (1819-1900), from Greek '*anthropos*' (man) and '*pathein*' (suffering).¹⁹⁷ Both these forms allude to the same notion that "the character qualities and function of the deity are derived from human life."¹⁹⁸

Contrasted to this mood of imagination is that which has been termed as "theriomorphism", a tendency to describe and embody the divine being in forms and categories borrowed wholly or partly from the animal world. But, according to Werblowsky, "the ultimate, residual anthropomorphism, however, is the theistic notion of God as personal, in contrast to an impersonal conception of the divine."¹⁹⁹

There are two standard explanations given by various scholars in connection with anthropomorphism i.e., the theory of comfort and the theory of familiarity. Guthrie explains that "The familiarity account holds that in order to explain the nonhuman world, we rely on our understanding of ourselves because these are easiest or most reliable. The comfort, or wish fulfillment, account holds that we feel better if we can see the nonhuman world as like ourselves." Each of the above categories has several versions. The familiarity account has two chief versions, which Guthrie calls as "confusion" and "analogy". He further observes, that these versions "are on a continuum. They share the notion that anthropomorphism consists in extending models of what we know to what we do not know. They differ in that the confusion version assumes this extension is involuntary, unconscious, and indiscriminate, while analogy version assumes it is voluntary, conscious, and discriminating."²⁰⁰ We have already seen examples of confusion theory in Feuerbach, Freud, Spinoza, and Comte, while analogy theory, to various extents, in Hume and Fontenelle. The religious version of analogy theory was successfully advocated by St. Thomas Aquinas.²⁰¹

The comfort theory is also widespread. It is closely related to the wish-fulfilling theory of religion, as we have seen in Feuerbach, and Freud. Freud argues that the human beings humanize nature so that they "can breath freely, can feel at home..."²⁰² L. White argues that the anthropomorphic philosophy is "wish and will projected from human mind."²⁰³ It "sustained man with il-

lusions [and] provided him with courage, comfort, consolation, and confidence."²⁰⁴ Each of these theories, Guthrie observes, "has little truth but neither is sufficient."²⁰⁵ Both have some difficulties.

The charge of anthropomorphism against religion, first²⁰⁶ brought by Xenophanes of Colophon, in its original form denoted nothing but ascription to the deity of bodily figure. There was not much consideration given neither by Xenophanes nor by his successors to attribution of intellectual as well as moral attributes and qualities to God that might be akin to the human. Consequently, the Christian apologists like Justin Martyr²⁰⁷ had been using this charge against pagan religions and polytheism of that time.²⁰⁸ Latourette observes that these Church Fathers, "excoriated the immoralities ascribed to gods by the current myths, pilloried the follies and inconsistencies in polytheistic worship, and poured scorn on the anthropomorphic conceptions and images of the gods."²⁰⁹ In the fourth century, anthropomorphism was charged by the orthodox Fathers on a group of African Christians. In the consequent history the charge had been repeatedly made to repudiate various religious traditions because of their conception of God in corporeal terms.²¹⁰ The medieval philosophers and theologians like al-Farabi and Moses Maimonides developed it further so far as to cover various aspects of God's intellectual as well as moral attributes.²¹¹ It never became a serious weapon against God himself or against religion as a whole except after the enlightenment period and its resulting negative effects on man's attitude towards God. This change of direction, perspective, and emphasis is such a development that is too complex to be traced here; however two factors could be adduced as leading to such a development in the pre-enlightenment period. Firstly, the traditional incarnational theology, and, secondly, the usage of personal pictures of God in popular piety during the pre-enlightenment era.

The empirical scientists and scholars, in their effort to restrict boundaries of the traditional God and influence of the Church, exalted this charge of excessive visual imagery or anthropomorphism and extended it to cover all aspects of God akin, in any sense, to the human. The charge of anthropomorphism was pressed so hard and beyond the limits that it ran out of its bounds and became merely a term of reproach and a vehicle for the expression of dislike. Now, according to Martineau, "you can scarcely recognize any quality, however spiritual, as common to the Divine and the human nature, without incurring the imputation of 'anthropomorphism'."²¹² A term which "when fastened upon a belief, is apparently supposed to make an end of it for a every one above a 'philistine'."²¹³ In spite of several modern efforts to avoid such an end to religion, as we have seen above, the situation in our times is almost the same as just mentioned by Martineau.

Incarnation:

Anthropomorphism forms the genus of which 'Incarnation' constitutes a species. God may be described in human categories and shapes without emerging within the representation of a human being "in our image and likeness". But the term "*incarnation*" specifically alludes to the representation of human being as in the image of God. Jacob Neusner defines "incarnation" as "The representation of God in the flesh, as corporeal, consubstantial in emotion and virtue with human beings, and sharing in the modes and means of actions carried out by mortals."²¹⁴ This is more likely a definition of the popular concept of incarnation. The idea that God or gods have incar-

nated in this sense, is quite widespread in the history of religions. "According to Ninian Smart", writes Brian Hebblethwaite, "it constitutes a third, incarnational, strand alongside the numinous and the mystical strands in the religious experience of mankind. The Christian doctrine of Incarnation represents this strand in its most highly developed form. The central Christian doctrine states that God, in one of the modes of his triune being and without in any way ceasing to be God, has revealed himself to mankind for their salvation by coming amongst them as man. The man Jesus is held to be the incarnate Word or Son of God. Taken into God's eternity and glorified at the resurrection, the incarnate one remains for ever the ultimate focus of God-man encounter; for he not only, as God incarnate, mediates God to man, but also, in his perfect humanity, represents man to God."²¹⁵

Such a definition slightly differs from the interpretation of incarnation as understood in popular Christianity. This definition represents a more like intellectual trend in the Christianity rather than popular Christianity where literal rather than metaphorical interpretations are more common. In popular Christianity, God is represented in the person of historical Jesus Christ. He seems to be presented in corporeal forms and is said to be physically suffering for men's sins.²¹⁶ We will have the opportunity to discuss the issue at length in chapter 3.

For the time being it can be argued, that whenever God is portrayed in corporeal terms and categories, shown engaged in activities practiced by mortals in the ways and moods mortals do, then we have a case of incarnation over there. There are two possibilities of Gods' incarnation. The first, in which God is told to be manifesting Himself in individuals like king, emperor, *Imam* (spiritual leader) or other human personalities and is a common phenomena in various religious traditions like Hinduism, Greek religions, some traditions of Judaism,²¹⁷ and some extreme *Shi`ah* sects of Islamic faith as we will see later in chapter 4. The second type of incarnation is that in which God, or the second person *logos*, is thought, at least in the popular Christianity, to be personally adopting a human mortal personality and living on earth for a specific period of time in history. Such an understanding of the incarnation is unique to Christianity only among the Semitic religions. This most familiar form of incarnation derives from the Christian conviction that the union of divinity and humanity takes place in the person of Jesus of Nazareth and is quite controversial even among the Christians, as will be discussed in chapter 3.

After this introduction, definition, and background of the term anthropomorphism, it is pertinent to briefly discuss the nature of the charge that religion by nature is anthropomorphic, and that being anthropomorphic God has no reality of his own outside the world of man. Before going to the main theme and the crux of the thesis i.e., the study of anthropomorphism and transcendence in the Bible and the Qur'an, here we should try to fix some of the boundaries of the charge of anthropomorphism and estimate the grounds of its dislike.

As far as the nature of the problem is concerned, it can be located in the assertion that an attribute, quality, or category simply being present in the human sphere is disqualified for being referred to God. This is too much of a qualification. Its application would devoid God of all meaning and relevance to human sphere.²¹⁸ Almighty God, as accepted in almost all theistic traditions, is the source of all beings. Human beings depend upon God for their origin, existence, being, and continuity. It is natural (and is a universal fact) for the humans to have longing for their source of

existence and being. To them their personal mode of being is the highest one. Therefore it is natural as well as appropriate to think about the unknown God through whatsoever is certain and known to the human beings, to establish a viable relationship. There is little doubt that the human person has the highest value for human beings (though not the most understood one). So it would not be degrading to ascribe to God personality as the definite perfect Being, absolutely other than the human person by His very nature. Thus personality is the gateway of our knowledge. Human beings, observes John Calvin (1509-1564), "must therefore borrow comparisons from known objects, in order to enable us to understand those which are unknown to us; for God loves very differently from men, that is, more fully and perfectly, and although he surpasses all human affections, yet nothing that is disorderly belongs to him."²¹⁹ I.T. Ramsey in his "Religious Language",²²⁰ F. Ferre in his "Basic Modern Philosophy of Religion",²²¹ J. Macquarrie in his "God-Talk",²²² and many²²³ others have developed the thought further to show that these known comparisons or religious images serve as conceptual models, but with some definite qualifiers. I. Ramsey views religious language in terms of "models and qualifiers" that function in "logically odd" ways to stimulate "discernment situations." He observes, that "for the religious man "God" is a key word, an irreducible posit, an ultimate of explanation expressive of the kind of *commitment* he professes. It is to be talked about in terms of the object-language over which it presides, but only when this object-language is qualified; in which case this qualified object-language becomes also currency for the odd *discernment* with which religious *commitment*, when it is not bigotry or fanaticism, will necessarily be associated."²²⁴ Ramsey argues, that "We should expect religious language... to be constructed from object language which has been given appropriately strange qualifications..."²²⁵ This odd object-language have "a distinctive significance, and we might even conclude in the end that odder the language the more it matters to us."²²⁶

Ramsey further observes that the religious assertion such as "God is loving", "claims that we can model God in terms of "loving" situations; but we also saw that, as it stands, the assertion is logically incomplete in an important way, and that to avoid this incompleteness we ought to insert some appropriate qualifiers such as "infinitely" or "all." More correctly, then, we must say: "God is infinitely loving," or "God is all-loving" when we have a qualified model of the kind we have been discussing..."²²⁷ He concludes, that "special positioning can nevertheless be reached from ordinary language, to which words like "love" belong, once this ordinary language has been appropriately qualified, as by the word "infinite." Here then is a method by which not only are problems overcome, but where at every point we plot and map our theological phrases with reference to a characteristically religious situation- one of worship, wonder, awe."²²⁸

Ferre also argues that "One way of making sense of the logical situation is to consider theistic images in their speculative function as a type of conceptual models."²²⁹ He further argues that "in all logical respects... anthropomorphic theistic imagery can function on its speculative side as a vivid metaphysical model. It can give conceptual definiteness to the ultimate nature of things by picturing all of reality as constituting either creature or Creator, each with specific characteristics; it can suggest patterns and unity in the totality of things in terms of its representation of the various relations between the entities so pictured; and it can give a sense of intelligibility, an aura of meaning and familiarity, by virtue of the appeal to personal purpose, volitional power, and moral principle as the ultimate explanatory categories."²³⁰ He concludes, that "the theistic model, as religious imagery, is a kind of symbolism which may function, for those who adopt it, to overcome

the threat of the arbitrary on its valuational side as well as to meet the cognitive challenge of strangeness and disconnection on its theoretical side. This it attempts to do by portraying the best as also most relevant, and thus showing "brute fact" not to be just "brutal" but, rather, to display the propriety that is its final vindication. And so theoretical and practical reason rejoin one another once more, at the upper reaches of the search for understanding."²³¹ Therefore, to Ferre, "anthropomorphic theistic imagery has a reasonable claim on any who judge the success of ultimate imagery, in part at least, in terms of its capacity to stimulate and sustain valuational fullness in the lives of those who adopt it."²³²

Moreover, historically and ontologically God existed from eternity, long before human beings could speculate about him. The personality of God should have been the origin of man's understanding of human personality. St. Thomas observes: "from the point of view of what the word means it is used primarily of God and derivatively of creatures, for what the word means- the perfection it signifies- flows from God to creature. But from the point of view of our use of the word we apply it first to creatures because we know them first. That...is why it has a way of signifying that is appropriate to creatures."²³³ He further observes that on the other hand: "all words used metaphorically of God apply primarily to creatures and secondarily to God. When used of God they signify merely a certain parallelism between God and creature. When we speak metaphorically of a meadow as 'smiling' we only mean that it shows its best when it flowers, just as a man shows at his best when he smiles: there is a parallel between them. In the same way, if we speak of God as a 'lion' we only mean that, like a lion, he is mighty in his deeds. It is obvious that the meaning of such a word as applied to God depends on and is secondary to the meaning it has when used of creatures."²³⁴ Ralph M. McNerny explains St. Thomas's position on the issue observing that, "The names common to God and creatures, like "being" said of what falls into the various genera, happens to be such that the perfection from which the name is imposed to signify is in each of the things, but according to a scale of greater and lesser perfection, *a magis et minus* which will be revealed in the various *rationes* of the common name. Thus there will be participation *per prius et posterius* or, in the case of the divine names, God will have the perfection *essentialiter*, be one in substance with truth, for example, and creatures will be true *per participationem*."²³⁵

The Dutch dogmatician Herman Bavinck observes that "All virtues primarily are in God, and only then in his creature. He possesses them *per essentiam*, those only *per participationem*. The metaphors we are using to describe the divine are true in so far as they rest on the truth of God himself."²³⁶ He further observes, that "God made us theomorphic, we are justified in speaking of him in an anthropomorphic way."²³⁷ Both St. Thomas as well as Bavinck's observations should be qualified with the claim that God created us theomorphic in a spiritual and moral sense and not in corporeal sense; therefore, we have no choice but to find some common ground and language to have a useful relationship with and experience of the divine, but that experience should be expressed only in a spiritual imagery and not in concrete material or gross corporeal imagery. Only those metaphors or anthropomorphic expressions should be used which do not violate Him being transcendental other, the unique, utterly different from His creatures. Only those phrases of commonly used object-language should be allowed of Him that do not make Him fully resemble His creatures and are appropriate to His exalted majesty. Even then the commonality or sharing ground will be superficial. It would be just to facilitate the communica-

tion and in no way or shape absolute. Only in God's case these images, attributes, and names are in absolute form while in the human sphere they are just relative.

If it be so, then, allegation of anthropomorphism in its negative sense regarding expressing God in appropriate human categories and terms for communication purposes, as found in some developed theistic understandings of God, would lose its foundation. Illingworth observes that human's belief "in a personal God, from whatever source it is derived, must obviously be interpreted through his consciousness of his own personality."²³⁸ As man's idea of personality in most cases is derived from and interpreted in terms of man's consciousness of his own personality, all personal, theistic notions of God in a sense would have to be somewhat anthropomorphic and should not be regarded, as Theodore Parker did, as "a phantom of the brain that has no existence independent of ourselves."²³⁹ There are scholars who would disagree with Parker. As a matter of fact, religion by its very nature is somewhat anthropomorphic and even "in its highest and most transcendental effort ... can never escape from anthropomorphism."²⁴⁰ This anthropomorphic tendency is intrinsic to and connected with human limitations and not with the divine sphere or Being.

The talk about God in appropriate personal terms is very much symbolic and metaphorical in nature. Without tracing the history of this approach, it would suffice to quote St. Thomas Aquinas' (1224-1274) classical position here. He argued: "For God provides for all things according to the kind of things they are. Now we are of the kind to reach the world of intelligence through the world of senses, since all our knowledge takes its rise from sensation. Congenially, then, Holy Scripture delivers spiritual things to us beneath metaphors taken from bodily things."²⁴¹ He further observed, that "It seems that no word can be used literally of God. For we have already said that every word used of God is taken from our speech about creatures, as already noted, but such words are used metaphorically of God, as when we call him a 'rock' or a 'lion'. Thus words are used of God metaphorically."²⁴² He observed that "Some words that signify what has come forth from God to creatures do so in such a way in which that part of the meaning of the word is the imperfect way in which the creatures shares in the divine perfection. Thus it is part of the meaning of 'rock' that it has its being in a merely material way. Such words can be used of God only metaphorically. There are other words, however, that simply means certain perfections without any indication of how these perfections are possessed- words, for example, like 'being', 'good', 'living' and so on. These words can be used literally of God."²⁴³ Their content, then, is established by *analogy*.²⁴⁴

Aquinas was preceded in this by the Muslim Aristotelian Avverroes (1126-98), who distinguished between univocal, equivocal, and analogous predication.²⁴⁵ The former two kinds were rejected by the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) and the third i.e., analogous became a fundamental concept in Christian circles.²⁴⁶ M. Luther disagreed with Aquinas' interpretation of metaphor, and argued, that when Christ is called a 'rock' the old word 'rock' gets a completely new sense. Although Luther defended the correlation between God-talk and human experience, between *cognitio dei et hominis*, still he does not seem to deny that God-talk is somewhat symbolic. The example that "Christ is a flower", means to Luther "that Christ is a flower but not "a natural one."²⁴⁷ J. Calvin (1509-64) seriously worked to show metaphorical nature of the biblical language²⁴⁸ and tried extensively to explain these metaphors in his commentaries.²⁴⁹ H. Bavinck,²⁵⁰ Ian Ram-

sey,²⁵¹ Harry Kuitert,²⁵² Just van Es,²⁵³ Jenet Soskice,²⁵⁴ and many others agree to the fact that God-talk is very much symbolic and metaphorical in nature. These "symbolic elements", argues John Macquarrie, "in theological language preserve the mystery and transcendence of God, and acknowledge that he is characterized by an 'otherness' that goes beyond the grasp of rational thought. Such symbols are evocative rather than straightforwardly descriptive."²⁵⁵ Soskice goes that far to argue that not only religious but in all language the distinction between literal and metaphorical is determined by the context and use alone. She observes that "what we call 'literal' usage is accustomed usage and that metaphorical usages which begin their careers outside the standard lexicon may gradually become lexicalized."²⁵⁶

It is necessary to add a word of caution that the fact that religious language or God-talk is metaphorical in nature should not allow anybody to violate the basic rules of language or spirit of the text itself to invent something which is not really there in the text. The spirit of the text must be maintained. The metaphors should be based upon standard usages of the language,²⁵⁷ and not upon mere excuses of some subjective agency or unverifiable suppositions. They should be found from within the textual context and not arbitrarily invented to substantiate certain pre-cooked thoughts or claims, or to put something into the scripture which is not really there.

We conclude this part of the discussion with Guthrie, who observes that "there is no religion without relationship, no relationship without significant communication, no significant communication without language, and no language without likeness. For the most rudimentary communication, humans may gesture; but even gesture depends on human likeness such as smiling, frowning, eating, and breathing. In any case, communication requires some commonality in context, in communicative system, and in content. Fully human relationships require language in some form. Any god worth talking about- that is, any god we can talk with- must be at least so like us as to share our language and its context. A shared language already is more than all humans have in common."²⁵⁸

Religion, on the other hand, is communicative as Geertz,²⁵⁹ Bellah²⁶⁰ and many others agree.²⁶¹ M. Buber describes God as one who speaks and communicates, "a God whom men trust because he addresses them by word and calls them."²⁶² To Buber, "God is the Being that is directly, most nearly, and lastingly, over against us, that may properly only be addressed, not expressed."²⁶³ Swinburne's God is a person and language is fundamental to persons, "persons use language to communicate..."²⁶⁴ Krasner also pinpoints living and ongoing communication.²⁶⁵ Even to Feuerbach "the essential act of religion... is prayer."²⁶⁶ Guthrie gives a detailed account of such a communicative process.²⁶⁷ Therefore, there is no choice for religious believers as well as the scriptures but to be communicative. And for the communication to be meaningful and appropriate to the profundity of religious experience, it has to be personal and hence somewhat anthropomorphic.

Although scientists starting with Bacon²⁶⁸ have always disliked anthropomorphisms and have always tried to minimize it if not possibly eliminate it, anthropomorphism in this minor sense is intrinsic to all human achievements and endeavors including science and philosophy.²⁶⁹ Philosophers of science like E. Thomas Lawson,²⁷⁰ scholars of religion like Robert McCauley,²⁷¹ and sociologists of science like Barry Barnes, all argue that science is the "most elaborated and sys-

tematized of all forms of knowledge, and the least anthropomorphic".²⁷² On the other hand, primatologist Linda Fedigen observes, that though the fundamental achievement of science is the "realization that we are not the center of, nor the prototype for, all else in the universe, [but] while anthropomorphism is to be avoided or minimized, it will not be eliminated."²⁷³ Philosophers like Percy Nunn argue that the very notion of matter in Physics is anthropomorphic. Anthropomorphism, to Nunn, is "too deeply rooted in human nature to be easily suppressed. The average student of physics to-day is probably still at heart an anthropomorphist. He takes his science to be a hunt after causes [that] convey into the transactions between material bodies features of the traffic between man's mind and his environment."²⁷⁴ Brightman observes, that "all knowledge-scientific, philosophical, or religious-must be based on human experience and reason; hence, anthropomorphism is unavoidable. The question should be: what kind of anthropomorphism, critical or uncritical?"²⁷⁵

Guthrie does a comprehensive survey of various branches of science to conclude that "This survey of philosophy and science, with a brief excursion into space, shows that anthropomorphism occurs even in the most systematically self-critical domains of thought and in the most technical undertakings. The survey may seem to support Nietzsche's claim that it does so fundamentally, intrinsically, and inevitably. However, most philosophers and scientists, and I, agree instead with Bacon that at least egregious anthropomorphism can in principle largely be eliminated and that doing so improves our understanding of the world.... Although philosophers and scientists are the people wariest of anthropomorphism, and though most now regard it as unalloyed error, they are as prone to it as the rest of us. And while modern reflection tends to diminish it, some forms, generally judged inoffensive, survive. Anthropomorphism, then, though fundamental neither to philosophy nor to science, criticized by both and evidently antithetical at least to science, continues to appear in them."²⁷⁶

Now, if the religious conception of God is rendered to be anthropomorphic by the scientists and empiricists merely because of the fact that it is limited by the conditions of human personality or controlled by the experience and thoughts which are provided by human personality, then, the world, as A. Balfour puts it, "presented to us by science can no more be perceived or imagined than the Deity as represented to us by Theology."²⁷⁷ In the words of Martineau, "In every doctrine, therefore, it is still from our microcosm that we have to interpret macrocosm: and from the type of our humanity, as presented in self-knowledge, there is no more escape for the pantheist or materialist, than for the theist. Modify them as you may, all casual conceptions are born from within, as reflections or reductions of our personal, animal, or physical activity: and the severest science is, in this sense, just as anthropomorphic as the most ideal theology."²⁷⁸

Man is at a loss to perceive the deity but in three possible forms i.e., personal, animal, physical, or as Mind, Life, Matter. The only question would be which one of these forms is his choice; whether one construes the deity with his highest attributes and, thus, feels extremely strong feelings of reverence and dependence upon Him, or by the middle qualities which he shares with some other organisms; or by the lowest characteristics that he shares with every physical thing. The first choice will be '*anthropomorphism*'. The second will be '*biomorphism*' or '*zoomorphism*', and the third '*hylomorphism*' or '*azzoomorphism*'.²⁷⁹ And '*anthropomorphism*', perhaps, will be a better choice than the empiricists choice of '*hylomorphism*' or '*azzoomorphism*'. It shall be then, as

Farnel puts it, "no rebuke to religion to describe it as anthropomorphic; but we may condemn any particular form of anthropomorphism as narrow or trite or degrading."²⁸⁰ The degrading anthropomorphisms will be those expressions which are used without proper qualifiers and precautions so as to make God look like a human being or assign to God any thing inappropriate or incompatible with His Infinitude, Majesty, Absoluteness, Perfection, or in other words 'His Otherness and Transcendence'. Due and proper limits must be maintained between what is human and what is Divine. Failing to do so will prove to be degrading to the Deity and will certainly be detrimental to the very nature of religion. Metaphorical or seemingly anthropomorphic expressions should be used to provide human imagination with a kind of modality, but soon the imagination be alerted and cautioned not to go very far because God transcends all human modalities and conceptions and cannot be fully grasped or conceptualized by any material model or figure. He cannot be and must not be reduced to the categories of human thinking and must not be modelled on a blown-up anthropocentrism. He by his very nature is unknown to us in his essence. Therefore none of the above categories of minor or seemingly anthropomorphic expressions, as argues Macquarrie, "can be taken literally. This means that they have to be both affirmed and denied, so that theological language has a paradoxical character."²⁸¹ A healthy tension has to be maintained between the affirmation and the denial process of even such a minor expression. Intelligible concepts and models should be developed to articulate and bring home the idea of the creator God, but it must be done so carefully so as not to fall into sheer abstraction or sheer anthropomorphism or corporealism. Both extremes would infringe upon the transcendence and mystery of God. Such extreme notions would fail to reach the depths of human beings and would be at a loss to create proper response, a sense of mystery and ineffability very much essential to the proper man-God relationship.

Transcendence:

Transcendence, on the other hand, is the term most commonly used to signify God's continuous providential guidance to and independence of this material world by emphasizing His apartness from and elevation above this world. R. B. Edwards observes that, "The other-worldliness of supernaturalism rests on this divine attribute. God exists "beyond space" and "before time", since the entire spatiotemporal universe owes its existence to him."²⁸² Moreover, the term transcendence denotes that God Himself and notions about His existence, Absoluteness, Power and Authority are not this-worldly humanly created conceptions; therefore, they cannot be meaningless and empty terms to be dispensed with, as conceived by empiricists. Contrary to that, God and His revelation are the fundamental sources and ground of meaningfulness in this world.

The etymology of the word 'Transcendence' shows that it is from the Latin root '*Scando*' which means 'I climb'; when to this root prepositions like *ad*, *de*, and *trans* are added we get words as '*ascend*' '*desend*' and '*transcend*'. So the word '*transcend*' would literally mean "something has climbed out of something,"²⁸³ or something has "risen above" and "went beyond" something.²⁸⁴ This going beyond presupposes two things: a difference between the one which transcends and that which is transcended. It also presupposes a relationship or relevance between them. As a metaphor, the term transcendence has been used to convey a number of varied though related meanings;²⁸⁵ therefore the precise significance of the term in any particular work would be de-

terminated from the context in which it is used. In this enterprise, the term will be used for the God, His uniqueness and otherness, and to denote His unique mode of relationship to the world.

The God transcends the world not in the sense that He is out of the world, but in the sense that "He stands over against all finite being" and is "not identical with or His power not exhausted by the realm of finite being".²⁸⁶ He is never non-being like the finite beings.²⁸⁷ The God "transcends structure",²⁸⁸ the unbreakable necessities, both spatially and temporally, and is free in relation to all of them. To Niebuhr, this freedom of God means that He "is not identifiable with any created structure, nor is he a necessary product of such structure."²⁸⁹ He cannot be explained or comprehended fully by these structures or, in the words of Tillich, by "the world of polarities and finitude."²⁹⁰ These finite structures are neither self-sufficient nor self-explaining, while God is self-sufficient as well as self-explaining. He is self-explaining through acts of creation and revelation. Moreover, He is the source of explanation and meaning for the finitude and hence, as the transcendent and unique reference, solves their "problem of meaning."²⁹¹ Without such a transcendental reference the human life, as observes Richardson, will be nothing but "meaninglessness and absurdity, a pointless and empty burden silly to be endured."²⁹²

In short, God's transcendence, to quote Heim, "means that he is not a member of the series, nor is he the series itself, but rather its Lord."²⁹³ He is the creator "who makes finite and relative existence possible...and is the source of all reality."²⁹⁴ He is the Absolute, the Perfect, the Almighty, the Omniscient, the Omnipresent, the Holy, the Eternal and, as Van Der Leeuw puts it, the "highly exceptional and extremely impressive 'other',²⁹⁵ the "Other" who differs from all that is usual and familiar to this world of senses. He, as Illingworth observes, "sustains all finite beings in existence, or in other words imparts to them all the reality that they possess, while transcending them as immeasurably as the creator ever must transcend the creature. He is our infinite and absolute Other. He is all that what we are not."²⁹⁶ Consequently, His existence or authority does not depend on our feelings or emotions. He exists independent of the whole material world and is not subject to the limitations of whatsoever is other than Him.

Immanence:

The term "*Immanence*" denotes God's presence in this world and is thought to be the 'polar opposite' of the term transcendence.²⁹⁷ The word 'immanence' is derived from the Latin base "*manere* meaning to stay or to remain." The addition of the preposition 'in' gives the meaning of '*staying in*' or '*remaining within*'.²⁹⁸ It is pertinent to notice that what stays in something or remains within something is distinguishable and distinct from that which it stays in; otherwise, it will merely be a part of the other. Keeping this fact in mind, it can be argued that the term '*Immanence*' is not a polar opposite of the term '*Transcendence*.' In a sense the transcendence of God presupposes a relationship of God with the world He transcends, while necessitating His "otherness" than it. God, as Niebuhr observed, "is certainly in the structures and temporal processes just as the human person is 'in' its organism. But both the human and the divine person possess a freedom over and above the processes and structures."²⁹⁹ (Freedom, to R. R. Niebuhr, means neither being identifiable nor created by any created structure). So the transcendent God is related to this world of senses as the original and the only source of its creation and existence, as the Creator

and the Sustainer. He stays within the world of material and is immanent in every aspect of its existence by means of His eternal power, knowledge, authority, protection, love, and many other infinite and absolute attributes and qualities, but still is wholly 'other' than the world. Therefore, "when, then, we contrast the transcendence, or surpassing nature, with the immanence or indwelling presence of God we are only describing, in our very inadequate human language, two aspects of one and the self-same Being. But they are very different aspects."³⁰⁰ This is probably the reason that J. R. Illingworth argues that both the transcendence and the immanence are "not alternatives but correlatives."³⁰¹ Each of them has some elements of the other.

Such a theistic understanding of the 'Transcendence' is the pivot around which Semitic religions i.e., Judaism, Christianity, and Islam exist. The belief in such a transcendent God sinks deep into the personalities of those who believe in Him and shapes their whole life.³⁰² This belief is not something they can keep to themselves; there is a kind of compulsiveness behind it; urgency is of the essence of it. All the activities of true believers seemed to be molded into and dictated by the particular kind of belief they possess in regard to the 'Transcendent' because, to them, He is the sole and the only source of their very existence, the One Unified, Perfect being that, though distinct from the cosmos, is the source of it, and continues to sustain and providentially guide it. Interestingly enough, the approaches adopted by the followers of these Semitic traditions regarding anthropomorphic and corporeal depictions of this "Transcendent" God are different to certain degrees. The Jewish Scripture (the Hebrew Bible) is inundated with anthropomorphic expressions and depictions of God, though the medieval Jewish theologians and philosophers like Saadia ibn Joseph (Saadia Gaon) (882-942), M. Maimonides (1135-1204), and many modern scholars of our times, have been trying to eliminate or at least minimize these scriptural anthropomorphisms by various methods of interpretation. On the other hand, the pervasiveness of anthropomorphism in the Hebrew Bible makes such intellectual attempts superficial. The Christianity's dogma of the person of Christ and "Incarnation" is also anthropomorphic. In spite of ample emphasis in the Christian tradition upon the transcendence of God and His uniqueness, the presence of dogmas like "Incarnation" and frequent usage of the expressions like the Father, Son, God in human form, God on earth, Mother of God, the face and hands of God etc., leaves tinges of corporealism in the human mind. What will follow is a detailed discussion of the transcendental and anthropomorphic tendencies in the Bible (with its two constituent parts i.e., the Old Testament and the New Testament) and the Qur'an, but before turning to such a discussion, let us briefly define also philosophical perspective of transcendence.

Transcendence; Philosophical:

The above discussed religious concept of 'Transcendence' is different from philosophers' interpretation of it. Their notion of transcendence stands in sharp contrast to their concept of the divine immanence. They, in their efforts to press Gods' unity and oneness and to purify His being from all human attributes or characteristics, go so far as to cut all His relationship with, and, in some cases, direct authority over this world of perception. This extreme notion of transcendence, starting from Pythagoreans and Platonists³⁰³ and permeating through Philo and Neo-Platonists to a great number of philosophers and theologians from all three traditions, identifies God with that source of divine reality from whom all other realities emanate wittingly or unwittingly as the light emanates from the sun.

To Plato this world and what it contains is just nothing but a copy of the "Ideas" in a higher sphere. Behind these `Ideas' in higher realm is the "Ultimate Idea", and that is the Idea of Good.³⁰⁴ Speusippus, the successor of Plato as the head of the Old Academy, developed Platos' philosophy of Ideas into "the notion of the absolute transcendence of the supreme First Principle."³⁰⁵ It was Philo,³⁰⁶ a Jewish theologian and philosopher of Alexandria, who incorporated this emphatic doctrine of divine transcendence into religious theology to avoid anthropomorphic notion of deity presented by the scriptures and to insist on man's total inability to perceive God's essence. The limitations of this enterprise do not allow us to discuss further details.³⁰⁷

In what follows we will discuss anthropomorphism and transcendence in the Old Testament, New Testament and the Qur'an.

1 ¹See C. W. Christian and G. R. Wittig (Ed), "Radical Theology : Phase Two, J.B. Lippincott Comp., N.Y.,

1967, 45²For biography see J. Larrian, Nietzsche: A Biographical Introduction, Studio Vista, London, 1971³Frie-

drich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, in *The Philosophy of Nietzsche*, Modern Library, N.Y., 1954, Part III, Ch. 52, par 2, 190, Thus Spoke Zarathustra has been separately translated by R. J. Hollingdale and is available from

Penguin Books, Baltimore, 1964⁴Ibid, part II, Ch.24, 98⁵Ibid, part IV, ch. 67, 264-267⁶Paul Ramsey in his preface to Gabriel Vahanian, *The Death of God*, George Braziller, N.Y., 1961, xv⁷Ibid, xiv⁸Karl Lowith, *From Hegel to*

Nietzsche, the Revolution in Nineteenth Century Thought, Trans. by David E. Green, Holt, Rinehart and Winston,

N.Y., 1964, 322⁹Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Hollindale trans., 10¹⁰James C. Livingston, Modern Christian

Thought, Macmillan, N.Y., 1971, 196; also Walter Kaufmann, Nietzsche, Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist,

Princeton, N.J., 1974, 96-97¹¹ Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, edited by Carl E. Braaten, Simon and Schuster, N.Y., 1968, 497¹² Ibid, 497¹³ This is an oft-repeated statement quoted in majority of the works on Greek thought. For instance see J. M. Robinson, *Introduction to Early Greek Philosophy*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1968, 52; W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, Cambridge UP, Cambridge, 1962, 1, 370; Edward Hussey,

The Pre-Socratics, Duckworth, London, 1972, 13; and Mircea Eliade, The Encyclopedia of Religion, Macmillan,

N.Y., 1987, "Anthropomorphism ", 1, 316-320¹⁴Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods*, trans. by H. C. P. McGregor, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1972, 71¹⁵See for details David A. Pailin, *The Anthropological Character of Theology*, Cambridge UP, Cambridge, 1990, 31¹⁶Francis Bacon, *The New Organon and Related Writings*, ed. by Fulton H. Anderson, Liberal Arts Press, N.Y., 1960, 52¹⁷S. E. Guthrie, *Faces in the Clouds*, Oxford UP, Oxford, 1993, 158; and Charles Singer, *A Short History of Scientific Ideas to 1900*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1959, 264 ff¹⁸William Wotton, *Reflections Upon Ancient and Modern Learning*, 3rd Ed., London, 1705, 348¹⁹Guthrie, *Ibid*, 158-159²⁰Bacon, *Ibid*, 47²¹*Ibid*, 48²²Quoted in Guthrie, 160²³Joseph Agassi, " Anthropomorphism in Science " in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, Philip P. Wiener (Ed.), Charles Scribners Sons, N.Y., 1973²⁴J. Samuel Preus, *Explaining Religion*, Yale UP, London, 1987, 43²⁵Quoted from *Ibid*, 43; Leonard M. Marsake has partially translated

the works of B. Fontenelle, see Marsake (Ed.), *The Achievements of Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle*, *Sources of Science*, No. 76, Johnson, N.Y., 1970, see also Marsake's "Bernard de Fontenelle" In *Defence of Science*, *Journal*

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1969, 122-135²⁹²Richardson, *Ibid*, 114²⁹³Quoted from Farley, *Ibid*, 122-123 and also see Karl Heim, *God Transcendent*, James Nisbet and Co., London, 1935, 16ff²⁹⁴J. R. Illingworth, *Divine Transcendence*, Macmillan, London, 1911, 13²⁹⁵Van Der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, 1-23²⁹⁶Illingworth, *Divine Transcendence*, 16²⁹⁷See *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 7-168²⁹⁸Sabapathy, *Ibid*, 1²⁹⁹C. W. Kegley, (Ed.), Reinhold Niebhr, *His Religious, Social and Political Thought*, Macmillan, N.Y., 1956, 299³⁰⁰Illingworth, *Ibid*, 13³⁰¹*Ibid*, 72³⁰²See K. Heim, *God Transcendent*, 218 and Farley, 128³⁰³See Reese, *Ibid*³⁰⁴See E. A. Tylor, *Platonism and Its Influence*, Cooper Square Pub. Inc., N.Y., 1963, 113ff³⁰⁵David Winston, *Philo of Alexandria*, Paulist Press, N.Y., 1981, 22³⁰⁶See Samuel Sandmel, *Philo of Alexandria, An Introduction*, Oxford Press, N.Y., 1979³⁰⁷See H. A.

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