

The image features a dark green, textured background. At the top, two hands are depicted in a light, chalk-like or stucco-like style. The hand on the left is positioned higher and reaches down towards the center. The hand on the right is positioned lower and reaches up towards the center. Their fingers are just inches apart, and a bright, circular glow emanates from the space between them, suggesting a divine spark or a moment of revelation. The overall composition is symmetrical and evokes a sense of tension and divine spark.

Close Encounters with GOD

*Unveiling the Secret
of the Hidden-God*

DR. REGINALD O. CROSLY

Close Encounters with God

Unveiling the Secret of the Hidden God

Dr. Reginald O. Crosley



Strategic Book Group

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Strategic Book Group
P.O. Box 333
Durham CT 06422
www.StrategicBookClub.com

ISBN: 978-1-62212-429-9

Printed in the United States of America

Book Design: Suzanne Kelly

To my Grandchildren
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Acknowledgement

I wish to acknowledge and thank Pamela J . Neff Ph. D for thoughtful review and editing of the manuscript .

Synopsis of the Chapters

Foreword

The twenty-first century with its ecumenical spirituality presents a measure of difficulty in conceptualizing God. Do we have a unified vision of God between people from the West and people from the East? In *Close Encounters with God*, we present the self-revelation of Yahweh as he approaches human beings in person, face to face.

Introduction

It is imperative for people nurtured in the Judeo-Christian tradition to journey through their sacred scriptures in search of the Self-revealed Yahweh that could not be conceived in his totality and complexity by mankind's imagination. Yahweh did reveal himself in close encounters with human beings. And the revelation is that of a *dramatis persona*, an anthropomorphic divinity, a mysterious and complex person who acts in an astonishing manner, and a transcendence that defies our logical system.

Chapter 1. God's Close Encounters with the Patriarchs

Contrary to some prevailing ideas, Yahweh showed no disdain or reluctance to meddle with the physical world and mankind that he created in his own image and resemblance. By that involvement, he proved that the material world is not vile, but is instead a reality originating from his mind, wisdom, and love.

With the patriarchs, we discover his surprising *dramatis persona* in chaotic, convoluted, twisted, intricate situations involving intense conflicts of forces, emotions, and rationality.

Chapter 2. Yahweh and His Friend Moses

In their encounters, we have the opportunity to discover more traits in God's personality through his relationship with Moses that lasted for about forty years, through multiple theophanies (physical manifestations). Moses became more than a servant. He reached the status of a friend with the Self-revealed God. Yahweh did not speak to him in dreams or in a trance state, but face to face, as a man speaks to another man. During that long friendship they had occasions for arguments, disagreements, and reconciliations, as they spoke their minds openly.

Chapter 3. The Trek through Exodus in Search of Yahweh

The Self-revealed God also manifested his awesomeness in full view to a whole nation stationed in the desert at the foot of Mount Sinai. He landed through a vortex of singularity on the top of the mountain in the presence of the nation of Israel chosen to be his witness. That was a terrifying experience that justifies his other name, *El Olam*, the "Hidden God," because of his consuming fire. This manifestation commanded fear first and love afterward. In the desert he also spelled out his difficult atonement-punishment justice system.

Chapter 4. Yahweh and the Conquest of Palestine

Yahweh's character, temperament, and personality are revealed more and more in his participation in the wars against the Amorites and other early Palestinians. He did not deal by *fiat* in the conflicts but followed strategies appropriate to our physical world. During that period of campaign, he offered illustrations of his exotic justice system in atonement and punishment.

Chapter 5. Joshua's Encounters with Yahweh

In this case, there was no intimacy with Joshua in the manner that we have seen with Moses. Yahweh dealt with Joshua in visions, and at times his presence was manifest in the tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant. In that period Yahweh revealed more of his warrior character. He was the commander-in-chief who accepts no weakness, fear, or leniency toward enemies. He did not conduct civilized wars. In entering Palestine, Yahweh was deploying his strategy to be known as the God of all nations, not a tribal God.

Chapter 6. Yahweh's Encounters with the Judges in Israel

That period offers us the opportunity to enrich our knowledge and appreciation of Yahweh by observing and analyzing his anthropomorphic behavior with mankind. He continued to manifest himself in theophanies (physical appearances), as well as in dreams and visions to the selected judges. His stern and demanding personality imposed the fear of the Lord. His *dramatis persona* is illustrated through multiple challenges and scenarios. He experienced defeat, suffering, and discontent.

Chapter 7. Yahweh in the Conflict between Saul and David

In that conflict, Yahweh revealed his complex personality, and involved himself in dramatic scenarios and challenges from the created beings. He let nature take its course and did not interfere constantly in the affairs of men. He changed his mind or plans of action to comply with some variations in the course of history. His atonement-punishment justice system strikes us with its paradoxes.

Chapter 8. The Personal God Yahweh and His Favoritism

Fairness in Yahweh's case is not of an egalitarian nature. He reserved the right to show favoritism to whomever he wanted to favor, regardless of the good or bad disposition of the person. His

favoritism is much evident in the case of King David, although his stern personality showed no leniency when David committed adultery with murder. Yahweh's atonement-punishment justice system struck at David's dynasty and the nation of Israel.

Chapter 9. Yahweh's Encounter with King Solomon

God's foreknowledge of a person's bad deeds does not prevent him from exhibiting his favoritism toward that person. This is well illustrated with the kingship of Solomon. Yahweh covered him with blessings: knowledge, wisdom, creativity, wealth, fame. However, God was bruised by Solomon's idolatry and his atonement-punishment justice system struck at the nation of Israel for the sins of David and of Solomon.

Chapter 10. Yahweh's Behavior with the Kings of Israel and Judah

That period was a taxing era for the Self-revealed God in his dealing with the chosen witness-nation. His anthropomorphic personality is displayed in multiple difficult situations. He was definitely not a nirvana-like God. He was not immune to suffering. He faced constant challenges and stiff competition with the pagan gods and the attraction exerted by them on the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

Chapter 11. Yahweh and the Destruction of Israel and Judah

The awesome God of the Bible remains authentic to himself in mercy and in justice. He manifested his love and compassion by sending warning after warning to the divided kingdoms of the Israelites. But he failed to convince them to do the right things. Thus finally, he had to retaliate against them with disease, famine, wars, conspiracy, assassinations, defeat, and lastly, deportation into foreign lands.

Chapter 12. Yahweh's Encounters with Foreign Kings

In this sequence, Yahweh showed that he is not a tribal god, a mountain god, a desert god, but the God of the universe and of all nations. The dramatic Yahweh used the captivity of Israel and Judah to reveal himself to foreign nations. In these dramas, a new order always comes out of disorder. This is the dissipative dynamical blueprint of space-time. Also, these interventions of Yahweh in history show that he elects different nations for chosen purposes at different times.

Chapter 13. The Enigmatic Yahweh and Other Paradoxes

The dramatic person in Yahweh continues to accept challenges from opposing angelic principalities, and places the burden of counter-challenges on the shoulders of human beings and other angels. Furthermore, he explicitly reveals that he created good and evil, blessings and calamities. He does not give absolute freedom to mankind and other entities in the created universe. He participates in the affairs of man in the course of history and is the intelligent designer behind the finality in the progressive evolution in biology. He is very secretive, and reveals his plans sparingly even to the Son who proceeded from him.

Chapter 14. Yahweh's Presence in the New Testament

One of the major hurdles in Christianity concerning the person of Yahweh is the paradigm shift toward his loving nature responsible for the dispensation of grace. For many in Christendom, the grace or the love of God overshadows all the other attributes of God. This is an oversimplification of Yahweh's reality. The New Testament maintains, however, that God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. He remains the awesome God that must be feared and loved. The same *dramatis persona* is at work with his atonement-punishment system, requiring the shedding of blood for the remission of sins, demanding perfection in service and

in deeds, sacrificing the blameless for the evil of the wicked, expecting martyrdom of his witnesses in their confrontation with Yahweh's enemies. They should deny themselves and lose their lives for the glory of God.

Chapter 15. The Ultimate Attribute of Yahweh—Love

God's love for his creation, and for mankind in particular, was manifest even before he called space-time into being. In his eternity-dimension he performed a sacrifice: the holocaust of his only begotten Son, that is, his alter ego. The Self-revealed God of the Judeo-Christian tradition was the first to experience suffering and pain. In his omniscience he foresaw the developing drama that can doom his handiwork. To obviate the ominous outcome, he decided to die in the person of his Son. Thus, he gets his life back by giving life to mankind, the epitome of the creation made in his image and resemblance. This ultimate love elevates mankind to the status of God. That is the reason why he created man in his image, male and female he created them. The last shall be the first.

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Foreword

In recent years, there have been many successful books on God's interactions with mankind. In the wake of the new wave of spirituality that is spreading in the world, people have been eager to learn and experience more things about God. These books brought to mankind what people want to hear, such as universal love and harmony, peace and understanding, or goodwill among nations, and particularly self-realization and self-creation as manifestations of the divine in themselves. A new vision of ecumenism prevails as people of all walks of faith join together in meditation, prayer, or vision quest. Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Shamanism are sharing the same language or words to describe their goals in life.

However, many spiritual people fail to see that the God mentioned in those books does not present the same reality for everybody. Many people embrace an exotic vision of God because he or she stands in opposition to the teaching of established Western religions. They accept a foreign theology as an expression of the evolution of mankind, the path to full enlightenment, and divinization of humans.

Be that as it may, the new metaphysics born out of the sciences in the twentieth century stipulates that reality is a matter of choice and that we are living in parallel universes in a multiverse. Thus the presentations of God in these parallel worlds are bound to be different or to contradict each other. In our wishful thinking we would like to see these Gods as identical. But unfortunately they are not the same.

In this book, *Close Encounters with God*, we tackle the ominous task of presenting God in his Judeo-Christian theophanies. Let us say at the outset that this presentation is not going to be endorsed easily by the East or the West because it does not conform to the prevailing idealization of God in recent years. It does not allay the anxiety, the culpability, and the fear of judgment associated with the revelations of Yahweh.

Here the Self-revealed Yahweh stands in sharp contrast or opposition to the idealizing by the new spirituality that teaches an unconditional love; the inexistence of right and wrong; the non-existence of sin, of hell, or of paradise or heaven; no duality between God and man; no need for a Savior, as we can save ourselves by self-creation; the practice of selfness, or selfishness, as it is by helping ourselves first that we can help others.

Furthermore, the Self-revealed Yahweh has his own plan for the deification of mankind. The transformation of man into God will be done by him at the appropriate time. He has planted the seeds of this evolution in mankind already by the indwelling of his own eternity-dimension through his Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit. He plans to recreate the universe after placing his judgment and condemnation on the current one that does not share his nature. The unbroken wholeness of the Universal Soul is not the nature of the Self-revealed Yahweh. Believers in the Judeo-Christian God should know that in the parallel universe of Yahweh there is the dualism of time and eternity, and there is good and evil, right and wrong, light and darkness. There is the reality of sin as disobedience or opposition to Yahweh's will. The fall of Adam caused his death and is not an uplifting of his life. The biblical God sits in judgment of all creation and has established a system of punishment and atonement. He has dictated his laws with dos and don'ts. He is the punisher, the avenger, the redeemer, the Savior. His ultimate plan is to annihilate the current multiverse and to create a new heaven and a new earth.

Theologians of exotic cultures with their quantum choice of reality can quote many passages of the Old and New Testaments to illustrate their beautiful world vision and their pantheistic

monism. But beware! The biblical Yahweh is in the world but he is not of this world.

This book is written to help people recognize possible contradictory messages that come with slogans of love, success, power, and divine evolution. Not every teaching that says “you will be like God the Most High” comes from the Self-revealed Yahweh. If the teaching entices you to reject the awesome God, remember that you will have to appear before his judgment throne and only his mercy can save you from inexistence.

In this book we stress, to a great extent, the reality of Yahweh as a person and as a transcendence. He cannot be presented as a void with no activity or as an emptiness. He is not an intangible that can be described as an absence of qualities. He cannot be introduced as a set of negation, such as un-manifested, invisible, and intangible, because he has revealed himself through multiple theophanies. The non-Judeo-Christian metaphysics share some attributes with biblical divinity such as an unchanging, unborn, immeasurable, infinite nature of Yahweh. The Self-revealed God in his eternity-dimension has no beginning, no becoming, no end, no change or entropy. However, he has declared a dualism establishing the boundaries of time and space dimensions. He is not the created void which is filled with the potential for all life and experience as manifested in the monism of quantum fluctuation. A mystic who enters that void finds himself or herself in the Universal Soul that is not Yahweh per se, but is a blissful state of space-time or the conscious universe.

The search for the Self-revealed Yahweh in our Holy Scriptures unveils a very interesting person through tangible theophanies. Instead of an idea, a concept, or an infinite virtuality that has no face, we are offered the contemplation of an awesome person who can materialize himself in our quadri-dimensional reality in our likeness and resemblance to walk with us, to keep us company for a while, to converse with us, to argue, to discuss, to struggle, to fight, to share a meal, to enjoy the odor and taste of our food, to be thrilled by our singing voices, music, beat, and rhythm. He is also a dramatic personality full of love and compassion for the created world but is not reluctant to show

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his wrath, his discontent, his grief, his destructive power, his awesomeness, and his glory.

When we avoid placing on him our preconceived ideas of the divine, or the mystical approximation of some visionary traditions, we may learn to accept the Creator in his own reality, a reality that kindles awe, fear, admiration, and love.

Introduction

*I made Myself known to them in the land of
Egypt, I raised my hand in an oath to them,
saying “I am the Lord, your God.”*

– *Ezekiel 20:5.*

Why is it necessary to unveil the secret of the Hidden God? Is there a discrepancy between the commonly defined God and the One who has revealed himself to people whose testimonies constitute the Holy Scriptures of the Judeo-Christian tradition? In our time it seems that we are living with the assumption that everybody on this planet knows what is meant when we mention the word “God,” yet our different mental constructs and our quantum choice of reality have given us some profound differences in our conceptions of God. Nevertheless, many of our cultures do share some common attributes in their definition of God.

For many, God is the Creator, the Almighty, the Infinite, the Compassionate, the Benefactor, the Benevolent Universal Soul. For others, God is the divine unbroken wholeness of the universe (Bohm and Hiley, 1974) and we are fractals (Gleick 67, 246, 253) or parcels of this holism and we should thrive to discover that divine in us and in others. For the Judeo-Christian tradition, God is a person and a transcendence and his name is Yahweh. He is from another dimension that is called Eternity and is very different from our space-time in that it has no

beginning, no end, no entropy, or degradation. However, this God is present everywhere in space and time by his ubiquity although his essence is different from that of the universe. An era will come when he will allow the created world to enter into Eternity.

In the Judeo-Christian tradition we have a document that is the record of many peoples' encounters with Yahweh. It is commonly called the Bible. Those encounters were reported as facts and not as figments of imagination, hallucination, or illusion. In these contacts, God was not a mental abstraction, a philosophical deduction, or an idealization of our own virtues. The experiences can be categorized under "biblical realism," in which the encounters are objects of sense perception or cognition independent of philosophical idealization or abstraction.

The personal God Yahweh could not be satisfied with merely an intelligent deduction of his existence by the human creative mind. He took steps to establish contact with some selected individuals and also with a chosen nation where a whole crowd was invited to witness a display of his powerful presence on top of a mountain (Albright, W.F. 233-271). Thereafter, the contactees could not argue over his existence once they had been given the experience of a close encounter. They could rebel against him, avoid further visitation with him, violate his laws, run away from him, but they could not deny his existence and supremacy.

Biblical realism is a concrete way of looking at scriptures. Having been nurtured since the last century in a more complex vision of reality, as explicated in relativity theories, quantum mechanics, supergravity theory, the many-worlds interpretation of physics, string theories and chaos theory, we have come to acknowledge the multiverse presented in the Bible (Green 361). We can accept the testimonies of the biblical people as expressions of alternate realities or as close encounters of the two realms, that of *eternity* and that of *time*. We don't have to explain away everything on the basis of the Newtonian and Euclidean vision of the world. There is room for other expressions of reality. A new metaphysics has dawned upon us (R. H. March 1970), one that allows us to live with the paradoxes of our uni-

verse and the strangeness of Yahweh's own eternity-dimension. The transcendence of the divine is manifested in the physical manifestations of God in our quadri-dimensional reality.

One of the most important aspects in these encounters is the fact that the individuals were not in vision quest or in search of God when the Judeo-Christian creator revealed himself to them. The initiative started with Yahweh himself who self-manifests in theophanies, or tangible realities, or in visions or dreams (Ezekiel 20:9). In these encounters he revealed his attributes and his personality. Thus biblical realism posits that we must accept this unveiling if we want to understand some of the mysteries of the creator and of his creation. The presentation of his person has been neglected for the profit of some idealization or abstraction imagined by mystics, philosophers, or theologians. This is the reason why we want to invite our contemporaries on a journey of rediscovering the Self-revealed Yahweh, the God of the Judeo-Christian tradition, as manifested in their own scriptures.

In going back to the testimonies of the eye-witnesses, we can rediscover the real person of Yahweh in its complexity, its paradoxes, and its mysteries. This approach can also help us gather some understanding of the mystery of suffering, the mystery of iniquity, the prosperity of the wicked, the suffering of the blameless or the faithful servant, and the atoning death or sacrifice of the innocent as a scapegoat.

Many of us are troubled by the frequent anthropomorphic behavior of the biblical God (Karen Armstrong 209), and judge it unacceptable, blaming the eye-witnesses for a faulty mental construct and understanding of God. However, the problem resides with us who fail to take into account the revelation of Yahweh himself. Yahweh said, "Let us make man in our image and resemblance" (Genesis 1:26). It is obvious that many of God's actions and reactions will resemble that of men and women molded on his prototype or archetype. The Self-revealed Yahweh does not apologize for this paradox. The image and resemblance do not apply only in the lofty virtues and ethics, but also in interactions with other entities, individuals, environ-

ments either terrestrial or cosmic, and on physical morphology as well. Thus the created mankind is a theomorphic being.

In our journey of rediscovering an already revealed God, we will continuously try to understand the mind of God, although we know our human limitations as an entity of the created space-time. Further, Yahweh himself has told us of the abyss between our parallel universes, an abyss that he himself can bridge in reaching out toward us: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts nor are your ways my ways says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8–9). God had a profound reason to create us in his image and resemblance from the dust of planet Earth, and the reason is that he wants to redeem the cosmos by elevating man to the status of the Godhead (Romans 8:17).

Notice that mankind was the last entity that appeared in the development and evolution of the created world. Yahweh had problems in the beginning with the angelic realm of creation, when the most powerful covering cherub ambited to overthrow God and become the Most High. That cherub was called Lucifer, who became Satan when God crushed him down on a tiny planet of our galaxy. After re-organization of the dismantled planet and solar system, God created a being from the dust of that planet and secretly planned to elevate that last and puny being to the position of the Most High. The last shall be the first.

In following the thread of biblical realism, we will discover the dramatist in the person of Yahweh. God reveals himself to be a *dramatis persona* who has a supporting role in the drama written by him. He is the one who planned the tragedy of his own existence in which he himself as a protagonist gets hurt and suffers seriously, even to the point of death. Thus one of the surprises in rediscovering the real Yahweh is to find that God is not exempt from suffering (Isaiah 63:10). We have been accustomed to contemplating heaven or the eternity-dimension as a place of pure bliss and happiness, a place immune to pain, sorrow, and suffering. But nothing can be further from the truth when we take time to rediscover the person of Yahweh.

He can experience sadness, sorrow, anxiety, depression, anger, wrath, jealousy, vengeance, regret, disappointment, joy, happiness, hilarity, satisfaction, and bliss, to say the least. He can be provoked, challenged, opposed by this creation. He can accept failure in good sport, and regret of having made a wrong decision. He can change his mind, postpone a scheduled event, delay his action or determination, and take steps to start all over again, even to the point of creating a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21).

In seeing this presentation of the Self-revealed Yahweh, one can be disappointed and conclude that this is not the real God. This portrayal does not fit the traditional description or definition of a perfect God. This anthropomorphic divinity does not correspond to our lofty vision of the creator. However, we are facing a hurdle when it comes to defining perfections. Where do we find the criteria or parameters that establish perfections?

The Self-revealed Yahweh has given an appreciation of this hurdle in his encounter with the blameless Job from the land of Uz. After considering the calamities that befell him, Job concluded that something was not right with the treatment he received from God. The Self-revealed Yahweh answered him by calling his attention to the complexity of the created world, complexity that we can appreciate more and more in our contemporary time with the discovery of classical sciences, quantum mechanics, relativity theories, chaos theory and string theory, etc., but that Job certainly could not fathom.

How then do we dare place a judgment on God's behavior and actions? In facing the paradoxes of Yahweh's reality we have been taught by the saints of the Old and New Testaments to bow down in submission before the mysterious Yahweh and to accept his will and his person. The Self-revealed God said, "Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him? He who rebukes God, let him answer it" (Job 40:2). And Job said, after considering his ignorance of the anthropic world as well as of the divine dimension, "I know that you can do everything and that no purpose of yours can be withheld from you. You asked 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore

I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know” (Job 42:2-3).

As we progress in our rediscovery of the biblical God, we will realize that we cannot judge him by the local tenets of our world because we are of two different dimensions. What kind of judgment can you put on a creator who sacrifices his only begotten son to death in order to save a world that is going to go awry or in disorder? And that disorder is the matrix of evolution (Gleick 67, 246, 253), progression, entropy, sins, corruption, wickedness, as well as that of correction and renewal. Is the action of sacrificing the son a cruelty or an expression of love? Is the transfer system of punishment imposed on the children for the sins of their father an unfair method of justice? Is the testing of the faithful servant through trials and tribulations and even into martyrdom an act of benevolence or compassion? Why do the prophets of God in the Old Testament and the Apostles and other saints in the early church have to lose their lives violently as witnesses for God? Why does Abel have to die after offering the right type of animal sacrifice to God? (Isaiah 55:8–9, I Corinthians 1:25).

We cannot find fault in Yahweh, not because of our idealization of his person, but because he is the one who sets the rules for himself and for us. Whatever he does is just and fine and we must give glory to him. When he confesses a blunder like the decision to put men on this planet that is already an object of contention with the rebellious cherub, we have to acquiesce and thank him for his concern and praise him, considering that he has taken steps to redeem us and his creation (Romans 8:19–23).

Be prepared for a shock on rediscovering the Self-revealed God of the Judeo-Christian Bible. “Our God is an awesome God” (Nehemiah 1:5, 4:4, 4:14). Yahweh the Most High is a demanding, severe, strict, stern, distant, jealous, vengeful, “man of war” (Exodus 15:3), a consuming fire, the creator of light and darkness, peace and calamities (Isaiah 45:7). He created good and evil as a challenge for himself; he created time as a dimension for trouble. And at the same time, he is a very loving, graceful, patient, long-suffering, forgiving and compassionate person.

You will be astonished by the permissive will of Yahweh that lets nature follow its course or evolve in a dissipative dynamical system where disorder comes out of order and order out of disorder (Prigogine 1984). In your search for the real Yahweh, you will face some situations that would require immediate punishment, retaliation, vengeance, or opposition by God but nevertheless are allowed to occur without challenge by him. These fall under the paradoxical “permissive will” of God. This is a corollary of the patience attribute of God, causing him to be slow in anger and prone to observe as a bystander the dramas of life. By this, he allows time for repentance and changes in behavior. His retaliation for a violation, a sin, an abomination does not stop at the guilty person but can extend up to three or four generations of innocent offspring, and in many cases his patience awaits for the fullness of iniquity or wickedness before he strikes back forcefully. However in this transference-type of punishment, God will not kill in all cases a son for the sin of a father or a father for the sin of a son. But in some cases the community, the nation, or the land may suffer various disasters as a holocaust or sacrifice for the purification of the land.

Don't think that will not happen today because we are in a dispensation of grace. Don't be foolish—the God of the Bible does not change when we pass from the Old Testament to the New Testament. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Recall the warning of the resurrected Christ to the church of Laodicea, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent” (Revelation 3:19).

In trying to rediscover the Self-revealed God of the Bible, we have to reconsider the question of his nature. In the reductionist prevailing presentation of God, he is an invisible Spirit. That means he is not a person with whom we can speak face to face. In our scriptures, God is presented only once as a spirit in the gospel of John in the verse “God is spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). However, in placing this text in its context, we find that spirit is referred to as a universal ubiquitous power that can be worshipped everywhere and not only in Jerusalem. Jesus of Nazareth explained this to

the Samaritan woman concerned by the Jewish teaching “that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship” (John 4:20). Furthermore, Paul in his letter to the Corinthians said, “Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:17–18). Here again in context the word “spirit” refers to the ubiquitous force that can transform us into the glorious, incorruptible, eternal image of God.

In the Judeo-Christian scriptures, God does not define himself as a spirit. He defines himself as the “I Am”—that is “the Existence”—to Moses at the burning bush in the desert. He is invisible because he is *the Hidden God*. Nobody in space-time can stare at his face because he is a consuming fire when he manifests himself in full glory. However, he has materialized himself in our world as theophanies to visit Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, to visit Abraham and share a meal with him. He talked to Moses face to face inside the tabernacle. And Moses was allowed to see his back on top of Mount Sinai while he was in full radiance.

As we delve deeply in the scriptures in search of the Self-revealed Yahweh, we will discover more mysteries pertaining to the Godhead. We are all familiar with the notion of trinity, but the sacred triad is more complex than we imagined. The Apocalypse of John described the Holy Ghost as the Seven Spirits of God stationed just before the throne of Yahweh (Revelation 4:5). They should not be confused with angels. They were also the horns and the eyes seen in the body of the Lamb who is the Son. Thus this *Eloha* is in fact a group of seven different personalities, having different attributes or gifts of the spirit. Still they remain one entity of the Trinity, in the same way the Trinity remains one God.

After pondering on the complex and mysterious personality of Yahweh, instead of the easy portrayal of love and compassion cherished by reductionist theologians or philosophers, the believer will never see the world the old-fashioned way. Real-

ity or existence will take on new light and new colors. We will understand the wisdom of the ancient prophets who teach us to live in the fear of the Lord first and foremost, and then to love him after we get a chance to know him. Isn't it unrealistic to ask people to love God with all their heart, soul, and mind without first teaching them how to know who he is? This method will open the way to atheism, as it is like an infatuation with an ideal of beauty and justice that is not a real person but a pseudo reality, a potentiality, or someone existing in possibility. The Self-revealed Yahweh who took the pain of manifesting himself in tangible reality cannot accept such a distortion.

Rediscovering the real Yahweh and presenting him to the believers nurtured in the simplified version of love and compassion might create some disturbances in their faith. Thus a caveat is in order. There are some biblical Revelations that the church does not want to share with a category of believers because they are not ready mentally, emotionally, or spiritually to take the brunt of the truth. Those are the "babes" in Christ according to the Apostle Paul. He wrote "I speak to you as babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able" (1 Corinthians 3:1–2). The mature Christian, who is beyond a gospel fashioned after the constitutional pursuit of happiness, should protect the faith of the babes by giving them the most simple tenets of biblical revelation. There are some Revelations given to prophets such as Daniel and the Apostle John with the warning to keep them sealed or secret until an appropriate time. With Yahweh, the democratic transparency is not in the order of things, considering that Yahweh is a Hidden God who can keep secrets even from his Son the Christ (Acts 1:7, Matthew 24:36).

In the history of the church, there was a time when the clergy did not advocate the reading of the Bible by the lay people, under the pretext that they would not understand, that they would come up with unorthodox interpretations, or they would start questioning the dogma of the establishment. In fact the Holy Scriptures have been subjected to different interpretations in Judaism before the coming of Christianity (which is an offshoot of Judaism

with its own brand of interpretation of the texts). At the time of Jesus of Nazareth, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Zealots, the Essenes, and others had opposite views on many subjects of the scriptures. In the first century church, there were doctrinal differences between Judeo-Christians and Pagano-Christians, and Gnostics appeared early on the scene to complicate matters for the fathers of the church (Leisegang 1951).

Indeed, it was very important to maintain a doctrinal core of basic tenets of the religion against the vagaries of multifaceted syncretism. One way to arrive at a harmonious understanding is to keep the doctrine simple for the masses and their teachers. And when it comes to the person of the Self-revealed God with all his mystery and paradox, it is better to define him as the embodiment of love and compassion. However, in our time, people who have access to higher education on reading the Holy Scriptures cannot help noticing the reductionist presentation of the Self-revealed God, the awesome Yahweh by the establishment. Would it not be more enlightening to approach him in his awesomeness, his anthropomorphism, his *dramatis persona*, his secrecy, his unfathomable intelligence, and his paradoxical love and compassion? This book is our attempt. I hope that in rediscovering the Self-revealed Yahweh we can worship him in fear, admiration, and love (Deuteronomy 6:5, 13).

CHAPTER 1

God's Close Encounters with the Patriarchs

Many people in Christianity are perplexed about the reality of the biblical God. They have been nurtured with an abstraction of God that does not correspond with his actions in the world. People often ask how a God of love and compassion can let all the evil things happen in the world. Where was God when the holocaust was taking place in Germany? Where was God when the Europeans killed millions of Native Americans and bound millions of Africans into slavery? Where was God during the two World Wars? Where was God when the terrorists on September 11, 2001 killed 3000 people in America? Where was God when the tsunami of December 24, 2004 destroyed 250,000 people in eleven countries in one day? How can God heal a group of people in experimental studies and ignore the suffering of the control subjects?

Many people don't seem to see the God of love and compassion at work in this world. They are disappointed and confused about the benevolent God presented in the monotheistic religions, Christianity in particular.

Is there a way to find out if that God of love and compassion really exists as described? Can the philosophers, the theologians, or the mystics help us find the real God? Where shall we go to really find out about the true portrayal of the Judeo-Christian God? The answer is that there is a document delivered

through the ages in the Judeo-Christian cultures of the Middle East, a document known as the Bible, and it contains the reports of close encounters of the Creator with various contactees in the area. That document presents the testimonies of individuals about their meeting with the Self-revealed God named Yahweh or *Elohim* (K. Armstrong 402, 407). Here the reader has to make a choice in accepting or rejecting the testimonies of the Middle Eastern men or women. Are we to judge their accounts by our modern, contemporary criteria and try to imagine a new tale to explain their tales? If we do so, we will be much further away from the reality we seek.

In the prevailing approach of our day, we design a psychological appraisal of the biblical witnesses and declare that they have a mythical mind, a dominant right cerebral hemisphere, an undeveloped left cerebral hemisphere, a fairy-tale mentality, and a primitive man's fear of the forces of nature and the gods that personify them (K. Armstrong, 209). And on this assessment, we would typically suggest to reject their testimonies and descriptions of the person of God, and then we would come up with our own abstractions born out of an idealization of infinite virtues summarized in the expression "love and compassion." But in reality, the idealization does not fit the gestalt. Yahweh, the Self-revealed God of the Bible, is more complex and mysterious than that modern simplification or abstraction of the divine.

All through the Old Testament and the New Testament, wisdom teaches the seekers of ultimate reality to show the fear of the Lord first and foremost and then to love him in return for his mercy. But for contemporary psychology, fear is an emotional abuse that should be avoided and condemned. Likewise, many theologians did not want to have a God that created fear in their psyche. A paradigm shift led them to adopt the picture of a God who is essentially love and compassion. The Gospel according to John became the revelation par excellence of the transcendent and personal Yahweh. Yet in the gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke and in the Apocalypse, God remains authentic to himself: the awesome God that commands fear, admiration, and obedi-

ence, the creator who began the universe with the Big Bang. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews states, “You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; and they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak you will fold them up, and they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will not fail” (Hebrews 1:10–12).

And when considering the person of the Son of God, the author maintains the same attributes: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). Thus in our search for the Self-revealed Yahweh through the scriptures we discover that he is the Almighty (Genesis 17:1). He is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29). He is omnipotent, immutable, ubiquitous, filling heaven and earth (1 Kings 8:27, Jeremiah 23:24). He requires perfect obedience. He is omniscient, unsearchable (Romans 11:33, Job 11:7), possessing holiness, justice, wisdom, intelligence, faithfulness, mercy, goodness. He is also a jealous God (Exodus 34:14). He is the judge of all (Genesis 18:25) and a counselor, a refuge in distress, a redeemer, a savior. He is love (John 3:16). He also has his favorite persons (Romans 9:13). He is the avenger (Romans 12:19) and he can pour out his wrath (Hosea 5:10). He can swear by his wrath (Hebrews 3:11) and can utterly destroy by the fierceness of his wrath (Revelation 16:19). This is the God that the Judeo-Christian scriptures want us to worship in fear and love.

What is the fear of the Lord? That fear is not the overwhelming emotional outburst in imminent danger or the unpleasant strong emotion in anticipation of catastrophe or harm. It is not the severe anxiety state or painful agitation in the presence of danger. The fear of God is the reverent wonder and awe in the presence of the Creator. The awareness of his might, power, infinitude, intelligence, profoundness, mystery, otherness, his creative and destructive capacity, his demanding disposition, his jealous disposition, his fierceness and his wrath when facing violation of his covenants, agreements, contracts or the practice of wickedness, abomination, unrighteousness, or idolatry. The fear of the Lord is also the awareness of his love and compassion

toward the created world and particularly mankind, the beings molded in his image.

However, the civilized West has chosen to adore an abstraction, a simplified version derived only from one attribute, that of love. But this makes it difficult for us to harmonize this reductionist view with the sacrifice imposed on the Son, the Christ, on the cross. God's holiness and perfection would not accept anything less than the torrid crucifixion. The love attribute of Yahweh does not eliminate his powerful wrath. It exists in a dialectical manner with the other attributes.

In our journey of rediscovery, we acknowledge the validity of the contactees' testimonies as pertaining to biblical realism. Yahweh is first introduced to us in the drama of the Garden of Eden, a place where God is shown in activities. Adam and Eve are not placed in a wild jungle of the planet, but in a garden intelligently designed by a loving and caring person. However, that transcendent person acts as a dramatist with a mysterious plot: the newcomers must be subjected to testing, they must use their intelligence, their creativity, and their relative free will. He warns them about the existence of Good and Evil by revealing the presence of that tree in the middle of the garden, a tree that testifies of the pre-existence of good and evil as a product of Yahweh's creativity unveiled later in clear terms to the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 45:7).

Notice also that Yahweh manifests himself face to face to Adam and Eve. He appears to them in his theophanic presentation not as the consuming fire at Sinai. Our first parents did not have to strain their brain in conceptualizing God. They experienced him in a very close encounter. And when they disobeyed his command, they went into hiding as he approached in the garden. Their experience of the reality of the personal God will be transmitted to their offspring from generation to generation as a testimony. Immanent to his transcendence is a person who can walk the earth, meet people, and submit himself to the laws of nature. Questions like "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9) signifies that temporarily Yahweh accepts the limitations of space and time inherent to a theophanic manifestation. We will see more of that later.

The drama of the Garden of Eden also shows us that an ideal environment, such as a humanitarian democratic land of milk and honey, is no guarantee of good behavior, because aberration is bound to happen in space-time. Irregularities erupted in Eden and will occur again during the future millennial kingdom under the Christ, particularly toward the end when the rebellious cherub will be released from the bottomless pit (Revelation 20:7–9).

That first drama also depicted the methods of God's judgment system. The God of love and compassion was not lenient toward the protagonists. Both of them received a punishment that would affect them throughout their life on earth besides the capital punishment of eventual death. Furthermore God continued to have a relationship with them after performing an atoning sacrifice, a blood sacrifice in killing two innocent animals and making tunics of their skin to cover the two sinners. In that occurrence, the first human beings received the revelation that "there is no remission of sin without shedding of blood" (Hebrews 9:22).

The dire consequences of this original sin do not rest only with the perpetrators. They extend to the whole planet and its inhabitants. A curse is placed on the vegetal kingdom as well as the animal kingdom because of the unbroken wholeness of the universe (Bohm and Hiley 1974). Although they did not participate in the violation, they are suffering for the sake of atonement: this is an atoning-resonance where the blameless has to suffer for the deeds of the wicked. "Cursed be the ground because of you...thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to you" (Genesis 3:17–18). This is a major paradox for our human logical system. This modality of justice brings perplexity to our minds. Abraham and Job had reservations concerning this method (Job 9:22). Likewise in our contemporary time as in the past, the people of God, the blameless faithful servants, will suffer God's wrath or the immanent justice of natural laws when society allows abominations and sins of all kinds to abound without the restraints of God's laws. Their sins defile the land or the planet and atoning sacrifices of the blameless are required

to clean the earth. However, the prayers or petitions of the saints can call on God's mercy to postpone his retaliatory judgment for a later date.

From the preceding drama in the Garden of Eden, we began to appreciate the originality of the *Eloha* named Yahweh. He is not the nirvana realm of Buddha (K. Armstrong 404) where there is no suffering and no desire, because he is a transcendental personality who is actively involved in dealing with the plurality of multiverse, facing the rebellion of angels and men, and experiencing suffering. We realize that the Self-revealed Yahweh is not a simple entity or the abstraction designed by some philosophers and theologians. Some scholars have idealized God under unreal light. True, Yahweh is perfect in all aspects, because he is the source of all existences or all dimensions. We cannot find "wrong" in him. We must accept his anthropomorphism. We should not negate this paradoxical wonder because he created man in his image "male and female, he created them" (Genesis 1:27).

We should not be surprised to see Yahweh behaving in manners similar to that of man when he enters the realm of man, when he materializes in space and time, and takes the appearance of man in his multiple theophanies. It is a fact that God can override the laws and principles of ordinary reality. But when he does so, he follows some alternate pathways of space and time that we did not know existed, pathways revealed recently by quantum mechanics, relativity theories, and chaos or complexity theory. We are perplexed by some statements in scripture that show much anthropomorphism in God's behavior. We have seen earlier in the Garden of Eden that he had to look for Adam and Eve who went into hiding because they discovered their nakedness. In his omniscience Yahweh should have known where they were. But in entering the realm of space and time as a physical manifestation, he had to follow the conditions of life on earth. He submitted temporarily to the laws of nature.

Theologians of higher criticism have a tendency to blame the "primitive" mentality of the biblical writers, or Middle Eastern exaggeration, when in fact those contacted reported things

at the level of perception or common sense (W. F. Albright 1940, 111). The same limitations are observed in the question to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” (Genesis 4:9). God had received information from the voice of Abel’s blood that cried out to him from the ground, but he came down to get the full picture, to confront Cain and curse him as “a fugitive and a vagabond” (Genesis 4:12). The idea is that the omniscient God from the eternity-dimension must modulate his manifestation when he enters the realm of man’s dimension.

We have a similar situation in the story of the Tower of Babel. The omniscient God came down “to see the city and the tower which the sons of man had built” (Genesis 11:5). He came down also to confuse their language and scatter them over the face of all the earth (Genesis 11:7–8). Thus the Self-revealed God is far from being the abstraction imagined by some theologies. He is moving between different dimensions and each dimension has its own rules and regulations. God as the source of all dimensions, the origin of all existences, cannot be defined only as “pure spirit.”

The word “spirit” suggests many meanings or interpretations. It can be psychic force, cogito, or the immaterial intelligent or sentient part of a person, or vital energy, life, power, existence. Yahweh did not define himself to Moses as pure spirit but as the “I Am,” that is, “Existence” or Eternal Being. For materialist thinkers, the spirit of man is an immaterial essence but remains a physical force or energy. For an enlightened mystic like Saint Paul, faith or cogent trust can materialize into actual, visible, touchable things. Paul also speaks about “spiritual body” of a different texture than our ordinary physical manifestation. That would be the spiritual body of Yahweh and of Jesus Christ after his resurrection. That spiritual body is not subjected to decay and death because it is from the eternity-dimension and not from time, although it can manifest itself in our space and time.

Before Moses, God was known by many other different names such as *El Elyon*, God Most High (Genesis 14:1), and *El Olam*, the Everlasting God (Genesis 21:33). *Olam* in Hebrew signifies secret or hidden things; therefore we have the idea of

things kept secret and of indefinite duration (Scofield 34). This gives us also the “Hidden God.”

The all-sufficient transcendent being, when he manifests himself in man’s world, shares the conditions of humanity. Thus in the encounter with Abraham by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as the patriarch sat in the tent’s door in the heat of the day, God appeared as a traveler with two other companions and approached the tent. In accordance with Middle Eastern hospitality, Abraham offered his assistance to them. He recognized them as important people, probably by their outfits. These three travelers accepted washing their feet, resting, and they enjoyed a good meal of calf, butter, and milk. Then they asked the whereabouts of Sarah, Abraham’s wife. The omniscient Elohim should have known where Sarah was—inside the tent in accordance with Near Eastern customs—but in his incarnate state, he needed to ask questions.

The dimensional gap between time and eternity appears in the conversation between God and Abraham. The Lord said, “I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son” (Genesis 18:10). Sarah, who was past menopause, laughed at the idea. God was upset and said, “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” (Genesis 18:14). And, “At the appointed time, I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son” (Genesis 18:10). The expression “according to the time of life” most likely refers to the dimension time in ordinary reality, in opposition to the eternal realm. This could in part explain the delay in fulfilling God’s promises, although the delay might be for another reason or purpose, that is, to encourage man to seek the presence of the Lord, to seek communion with him day by day, to walk with God like Enoch. However, for God who is the eternity-dimension per se, the promise is already there, fulfilled in the present. Time has to follow a complex, dynamical pathway before the event could be seen in actuality.

The theophany or visitation of God in the flesh at that time had another purpose: an investigation of the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah in order to destroy them by an asteroid, if

their wickedness was truly of the utmost. God is omnipresent in the cosmos. He is receiving information continually from every corner. Why then come down to investigate? Is there a limitation to God's omniscience? No, but there is a gulf between time and eternity. There is a separation between the two realms. In the scripture, it is God himself who is telling us that because of the separation, he must come down to investigate, to see directly in person what is going on in the Middle East. This state of affairs makes it imperative for us earthlings to ceaselessly keep communication with God by praying, asking, searching, and knocking at God's door.

God is a hidden God, *El Olam*, the everlasting Hidden God. We must continually send him information about our needs as we recognize the paradox of the eternity that is at the same time close by and far away. For these reasons and for others that we do not know, God will always be a mystery. Yahweh is not an opened person. He hides himself and keeps secrets. He does not reveal all at once.

Let us recall that God created us in his image and resemblance literally in space and time. Yahweh, being the prototype, the archetype, the blueprint of man's design, must possess most of the features seen in the replica. When he materializes in our plane of existence, he must eat, drink, sleep, rest, be sad or happy, be grieved or vengeful, be able to smile or laugh, and so on. Some of his actions and promises can trigger a big laugh in us. He has used sarcasm with the man named Job. Sometimes his actions are colored with a dark sense of humor, such as in the case of Jonah in the belly of a monster fish, or making a ninety-year-old woman deliver a baby boy. In the Pentateuch there is no mention of Yahweh laughing because in most of his theophanic encounters with man, he came down for serious business: to make a covenant, to pronounce judgment on a situation, to warn of an imminent danger, to call someone for a difficult task or ministry, to bring confusion or disarray in the community of men, as we have seen at Babel. Considering that smiling is one of the great expressions of the faces of man and woman, something highly beautiful, we must conclude that the

prototype must be able to express that great expression in his theophanic appearance.

Compared to the virtual God of the reductionist abstraction, the personal God of the Judeo-Christian scriptures has a fascinating transcendence. When he comes down in our world he begins to analyze things, to ponder, to hesitate, to change course, to change his mind. “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing...?” (Genesis 18:17). And when he did reveal his purpose to Abraham, he discussed the matter with the man.

In the history of mankind on planet Earth, God permits the dynamics of nature to destroy the righteous and the wicked in flood, earthquake, tsunamis, tornadoes, hurricanes, fire, drought, epidemics. In the book of Job, it is recognized, “This is one thing, therefore I said it, ‘He destroyed the perfect and the wicked’” (Job 9:22). These incidences are not always done in judgment; it is part of the dynamics of the planet’s ecosystem. Also, when God decides to use the forces of nature in judgment, it would seem reasonable to take into consideration the case of the righteous living side by side with the wicked, according to Abraham’s sense of righteousness. In fact, God did listen to Abraham’s plea for the good men and women of the cities Sodom and Gomorrah. But there were fewer than ten good adults in their midst. There was only Lot’s family, that is, four persons—Lot, his wife, and two virgin daughters—and they were taken away from the cities. The other members of Lot’s family such as sons, daughters, and sons-in-law were not righteous. So they perished in the “brimstone and fire” or the fallen asteroid. Lot’s wife perished also, because she disobeyed the order not to look behind.

God does not want us to take him for granted, and by the same token, neglect our communion with him. God wants us to seek him diligently, to walk before him, or walk with him. This becomes apparent in his dealing with Isaac. After Isaac married Rebekah, he had to plead with God for thirty years to change his wife’s barrenness, although he came from a family that had received the promise of a multitude of offspring (Genesis 25:21). Likewise Jacob was a child of that promise. The Lord said, “Return to your country and to your family, and

I will deal well with you.” However, Jacob had to wrestle with God for a whole night to receive blessing (Genesis 32:24–26). In this struggle with God’s theophany, we can see the dominance of the laws of nature in our plane of existence. By incarnating momentarily in time dimension, God subjected himself to the limitations of nature. He had to fight like a wrestler with an athletic Jacob. Yahweh himself recognizes that Jacob prevailed in the match. Be it Yahweh himself or an angel or envoy from the other dimension, the person was subjected to the laws of particles, atoms, molecules, and bodies on planet Earth. Otherwise how could Jacob prevail against God or his angel? This was not an intense psychological struggle with God, as some theologians would like us to believe.

The all-knowing God foretold to Abraham that his offspring would be enslaved in a foreign country for about four generations or four hundred years. Couldn’t God prevent that? Yes, but the slavery was the result of the immanent justice of God who punishes our sins up to the fourth generation, and rewards our good deeds to the thousandth generation.

The servitude in Egypt was the atoning effect of the crimes of the sons of Jacob (Israel) who murdered Shechem, the prince who violated their sister Dinah (Genesis 34). In fact, the murder was committed by Simeon and Levi. Their crime was so monstrous that the atoning effect fell on the whole family, including the innocent members. Simeon and Levi should have forgiven Shechem because the prince confessed the rape and made reparation by marrying Dinah and undergoing circumcision. Jesus of Nazareth later will teach that we should forgive our neighbor when he or she confesses and repents the bad deed (Luke 17:4). We should always seek justice and peace. However, in the contemporary events of 9/11/2001, we have to seek justice against our assailants Al Qaeda and their network of terrorists, and violent Jihadism, because they were not repentant. They are bent on destroying us completely. Their attack was an act of war and we must defend our country.

In the case of Jacob’s family, there are other sins perpetrated that call for the punishment or servitude in Egypt, such

as the incestuous act of Reuben who went and laid with Bilhah, his father's concubine (Genesis 35:22), and the hatred of Joseph's brothers for him (Genesis 37). In due time, Egypt will be punished also for its bad treatment of the children of Israel. Although Egypt was the instrument of God's justice against the sins of Abraham's descendants, Egypt became also murderer, such as when the Pharaoh ordered the killing of all newborn males of the Israelites (Exodus 1:16). "And also the nation whom they serve I will judge: afterward they shall come out with great possessions" (Genesis 15:14).

Yahweh the God of the Torah is a very patient person. He watches the actions of men and women and does not intervene rapidly or disruptively. He is like a bystander in many cases, if not most cases. For him, there is a rating of men's actions. All of us do wrong every day and, according to Jesus of Nazareth, the righteous can sin seventy times seven in a day. However, there are worse sinners than others. The Amorites were such a group of wrongdoers. Yahweh decided to take their land away in Palestine and to give it to the descendants of Abraham. But God had to wait for about 400 years to do so because "the iniquity of the Amorites (was) not yet complete" (Genesis 15:16).

By being a bystander, God allows man's relative free will to manifest itself. He does not interfere with our decisions on all occasions. Abraham lied twice about his wife being only his sister. Sarah misinterpreted God's promise of a son and introduced Hagar into her marriage with Abraham. God did not prevent the coalition of Kings (Chedorlaomer, Tidal, Amraphel, Arioch) from attacking and capturing Lot, Abraham's nephew, during their war against Sodom (Genesis 14:9–12). God did not prevent Lot from choosing to live in Sodom, which was a land of milk and honey "like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar" (Genesis 13:10). God did not discourage Isaac from preferring Esau when God preferred Jacob. God did not intervene to thwart Jacob's scheme of stealing Esau's blessings from their father Isaac. God did not prevent Laban from tricking Jacob who wanted Rebecca as his wife. God did not prevent Rebecca from stealing the house gods of her father Laban. He did not block the

rape of Dinah, Jacob's daughter, by the prince Shechem, or the killing of Shechem and all the males in his family by Simeon and Levi (Genesis 34:25). God did not forestall the incestuous act of Reuben who laid with Bilhah, the concubine of his father Jacob (Genesis 35:22). God did not forestall the selling of Joseph as a slave to Midianite traders by his brothers who hated him. God did not prevent Potiphar's wife of accusing Joseph of sexual harassment and attempted rape (Genesis 39:14).

However, in all these events or actions, God brought order out of disorder, in a manner similar to the dynamics of complexity theory. God has his own plan in the evolution of mankind in history. And he weaves his plan in the web of mankind's actions. Disasters and upheavals happen in the solar system and on planet Earth and God does not stop them from occurring. Sometimes he may warn certain persons or protect a few according to his own choice. He has the power to change everything but he does not use that power indiscriminately. However, that power is available to us, the believers, but we have to ask in order to receive the protective power of Yahweh. We must ask, seek, and knock at his door every day in order to receive his blessing. We must strive to walk with him.

From the preceding analysis, we can see that when God chooses someone for a covenant, a service, or an office, he does not offer him or her an idle life without tribulation. Difficult situations will arise because of our mistakes, sins, bad judgments, miscalculations, and the actions of other people, our challengers, competitors, and the upheavals of nature. The only guarantee that we have is that God is with us, in the middle of everything. Paradoxically, he must be suffering with us. We have to remember also that Jesus of Nazareth and the apostles died violent deaths as martyrs for the sake of the Gospel. Why? God's logical system is not comprehensible to us. We cannot always understand God's cogito from his eternity-dimension. We will see later how the concepts of atonement and witnessing for God can be the rationale behind martyrdom.

The anthropomorphic God of the Bible tells us that he can show favoritism to those he wants to favor in any circumstance

or situation. At the same time, he is no “respector of persons,” that is, he does not show favoritism because of social class, intelligence, wealth, and beauty. He follows his own like or dislike. He usually favors his friends, people who trust him or have faith in him. But sometimes there is no visible reason for us to understand. He loved Jacob and hated Esau, before they were born, before they started to do any action. If he had loved Esau, God would have passed over the man’s neglect of the right of the firstborn to show his favoritism. He continued to love Jacob in spite of his schemes dictated by selfishness, jealousy, callousness, greediness. When his friend Abraham lied about Sarah being his wife because he was afraid of the lustful Egyptians and their Pharaoh, God’s anger flared up against the Pharaoh who took Sarah in his harem. When Abraham committed the same mistake with King Abimelec, God’s wrath fell upon Abimelec and there was no punishment for Abraham. Isaac repeated his father’s mistake with the same Abimelec, apparently without any punishment, while the anger of God struck the Palestinian king. Some theologians and philosophers find excuses for such favoritism, for example, the omniscience of God who sees the heart of man and future behavior. But being not a “respector of persons,” the prescience of God does not dictate his favoritism.

The anthropomorphic God is very patient with us, just or unjust, evil- or good-doers, but he is also unpredictable in his retaliation. Throughout the Bible, the saints have been troubled by the fact that God let the wicked prevail and be successful. The wicked can prosper through cunningness, imagination, creativity, persistent search and research, or just mere luck or happenstance.

The first murder in the Bible followed God’s favoritism toward Abel’s offering while rejecting the offerings of Cain. Cain was a very industrious person, developing agriculture to produce good crops. He toiled hard, while Abel just attended a flock of lambs. However, God preferred a blood sacrifice as a symbol of the sacrifice of Christ the Son in eternity-dimension to save the universe. Probably God explained that to Cain. “If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do

well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it” (Genesis 4:7). Thus it seems that in this enigmatic passage, God tells Cain to choose a “blood sacrifice for the remission of sin.”

There are more things in this passage than sacrifice. There is also an admonition to control our tendencies. Furthermore, in all likelihood Cain must have received instruction from Adam about the importance of blood sacrifice, the holocaust of a blameless animal. How did Adam and Eve learn of the value of blood sacrifice? From Yahweh himself who, after their sin of disobedience, to make them acceptable in his sight, sacrificed animals, shed their blood, and covered Adam and Eve with tunics of the skins. Notice also in this passage of Genesis 3:21, God himself did the holocaust, as a type of the sacrifice of the Christ in eternity-dimension. Thus, humanity thereafter must perform holocaust of atonement because there is no redemption without the shedding of blood. Notice also that animals are sinless creatures in time-dimension, and only sinless beings can be used as symbols of the sacrificial lamb of eternity (Revelation 13:8). The fruits from Cain’s agricultural skill could not be accepted as offerings for sin atonement, but only as tokens of thanksgiving. Thus the animals on planet Earth share the destiny of mankind in the plan of salvation. The fruit of vine and the bread made of grain will be introduced later as symbols of blood and flesh of the Son’s sacrifice on the cross. This is also in continuation of the sacrifice of Melchisedek who had received that revelation at the time of Abraham (Genesis 14:18, Psalms 110:4, Hebrews 5:5–6) and shared with him bread and wine.

The importance of blood sacrifice, particularly of the first-born of the flock or of the family, was stressed to Abraham when God asked him to sacrifice Isaac on an altar. Later on, Moses will introduce the Aaronic priesthood whose duty is to perform blood sacrifice in the temple. If the Jewish temple is rebuilt in our days, the Aaronic priesthood must resume the sacrifice.

An important question about Abel’s murder can trouble believers. Why did God not protect Abel and prevent his murder? Did he try to do that by advising Cain to control his

anger and depression? Maybe yes, but he foresaw that Cain was going to kill Abel. Why did God not protect the just man Abel? Here again, we see the bystander attitude or *apatheia* of God who let nature take its course, and the relative free will of man to act up. Here also lay our limitations in understanding the mysterious mind of Yahweh. However, we do have a rescue platform with this hurdle. We can petition God directly to intervene, to participate, and to act. From Abraham's intercession for Sodom and Gomorrah, from the psalms of David, the faith of Daniel's companions in the furnace, and the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, we know that we can have God do some actions. "Ask, seek, and knock" and in Psalm 22:19, "But you, O Lord, do not be far from me—O my strength, hasten to help me."

From the preceding accounts, we can see that God's direct actions in the universe and in man's world are sporadic. He has established laws and principles in the universe from the Big Bang to modern contemporary times. The cosmos has evolved according to some cogent design until we get to the upheaval of Genesis 1:2—"The earth was without form and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep." At that point, he intervened directly to bring order out of that disorder. "And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters." God has established laws and principles in the universe so that he does not have to intervene all the time. There are laws of cause and effect and of immanent justice, among others. For the creation of man, he had to intervene in a very specific manner. Man is not only a product of natural evolution, he is also a product of God's direct intervention to make him in "his image and resemblance." All nature is trying to actualize or reproduce the image of God in all entities but they could not do so successfully without God's help or direct intervention (Romans 8:20–23).

Also, in history God will intervene at some point to choose Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, the nation of Israel, the prophets, the superpowers such as Assyria, Babylonia, the Medes and Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Arabs, the Western powers. He intervenes at times in the life of some peo-

ple, cities, neighborhoods, etc. Otherwise God has long periods of silence. But we can break that silence by prayer in following the recommendations of the prophets and the Christian Master.

Jesus of Nazareth told us in Matthew 24 that we will always have famines, droughts, hurricanes, storms, epidemics, wars and rumors of wars. Those things must happen. The second coming of Christ did not happen as expected in A.D. 70 when the temple was destroyed. However, Jesus did return before that—spiritually—at Pentecost with the outpouring and indwelling of the Holy Ghost. There was no disaster on that day. But that baptism of the Holy Spirit made the disciples bold enough to preach the imminent physical second coming.

Be that as it may, upheavals, wars, droughts, famines will strike our world every year. Why does God not prevent that? Why do we have to pray every day for deliverance from evil? Jesus states, “You will have tribulations in the world, but take courage, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). But Yahweh the creator with all his love for his creation keeps a stand-by attitude and a permissive will toward these calamities. We have to seek shelter every day because evil is continually menacing the world. If we do not ask help, rescue, protection, assistance from God on a daily basis, we will not have them automatically. Jesus said, “You don’t receive, because you don’t ask in my name” (John 16:24).

Why must we have tribulations in the world? Why does God have that stand-by attitude? Is it because of a condemnation of the world because of sin? According to the apostle Paul, sin entered the new world with Adam and Eve’s disobedience, and as a result, the planet Earth was cursed. But upheavals, disasters, and darkness were in the universe before the coming of man. There is a constant alternation of order and disorder in the cosmos. The law of entropy permeates all entities in creation. The law of entropy or degradation—dissipation of energy—is what the apostle Paul and Ecclesiastes call vanity. “Vanity of vanity. All is vanity” (Ecclesiastes 1:2). It is a law of perpetual becoming or change, and by the same token is associated with upheaval, disaster, disruption, and death.

Paul said in the book of Romans that the universe was subject to that vanity by the will of the Creator who wanted the cosmos to be that way. The world is that way because it is not the eternal realm, the dimension that is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Yahweh is the only transcendence that is eternal. There is no shadow of change in him. But time and space, from which the angels, the cosmos, and mankind come, is perpetually becoming or changing. This is not the result of sin. Sin will come later to make things worse. Thus the cosmos by its very nature longs for that eternal state of stability in harmony and happiness, and to see that, time and space must enter into the eternity-dimension.

The cosmos cannot accomplish that harmony by itself. Yahweh must intervene at the appropriate moment to do that transformation or salvation. That salvation was planned before the creation of the world to save it from the law of vanity, not from sin per se, because there was no sin at the first moment of creation and its aftermath. That plan was put in place to guide the evolution of the cosmos toward the realm of eternity, so that God will be all in all (Romans 8).

The Israelites and, later, the Jews were longing after a messianic age, an era of peace and harmony between fauna and flora, a period of respite from hurricanes, tornados, earthquakes, droughts, famines, pestilence, epidemics, and wars (see Isaiah 2:2–4, 11:6–9, 65:17–25, 66:22–23, and Revelation 22:1–5, 21:1–27). The messianic age, as envisioned by Isaiah and John in the Apocalypse, contains the idea of a new creation brought forth in accordance to new laws and principles different from the ones prevailing in the cosmos issued from our Big Bang. There will not be decaying of forces and energies, perpetual becoming, alternation of order and disorder, diseases and death. There will instead be eternal life in Yahweh. We cannot truly imagine what that will be like.

Evil and suffering constitute one of the biggest mysteries in the universe, apart from the nature of God himself. The initial catastrophe of the Big Bang and its aftermath—with supernovae, quasars, black holes, galaxy collisions, star collisions,

planet and asteroid collisions—do not constitute evil per se. But the presence of a vulnerable creature in their midst can generate evil and suffering.

The case of Lucifer, or Satan, is another big mystery. He was created out of time-dimension, as a being subject to the law of becoming. He would remain in the presence of the Lord as a light-bearer, as long as he chose to obey the will of Yahweh. He was also given relative free will, a double-edged sword: a disposition to go either toward obedience or disobedience, good or evil. Unfortunately, he chose rebellion and evil. Very powerful, he was created with an ability to wreak havoc in the dynamic universe. Unless Satan was opposed by other powerful agents, cherubim, seraphim, archangels, and God's Holy Spirit himself, Satan would utterly destroy man who was created in the image of Yahweh.

The case of the fallen man, or Adam, instigated by Lucifer to come to rebellion, is another big mystery in the scale of evil. Our heart has become desperately wicked, bent on mayhem and criminal behavior. It is a "blessing" that we are "mortal," otherwise it would be utter despair to exist in that state of wickedness forever. Yahweh had a plan of salvation for such downfall. The only creatures of time that are not included in the plan of salvation are Satan and his angels, because they don't want to repent and confess their sins. They still plan to oppose God's will in the universe. Lucifer wants to become the Most High, the *El Elyon*. Likewise, we humans, if we do not repent and confess our sins, will not be forgiven. Forgiveness is not unconditional.

Jesus of Nazareth—who thought a great deal about forgiveness of wrongs and sins—never hesitates to rebuke the wrongdoers. Judas Iscariot misunderstood Jesus' ministry and behaved like a traitor. But at the end, he confessed his error and hanged himself. Maybe he is not lost forever, because on the cross Jesus forgave his executioners because they did not know what they were doing as instruments in the plan of salvation. This is a very complex situation (John 17:12). In spite of that forgiveness that erases the consequences of the act, the immanent justice took effect in the two Jewish wars against the Pax Romana. And after

four generations or four hundred years, Rome was sacked by the Barbarians.

Another complex question in the mind of men is that of destiny. Many religions and theologians think that there is a written destiny for every man or woman on earth. This is in contradiction with the notion of relative free will or free choice. Our contention is that there is no written destiny by God for every individual on earth. What does exist is a destiny for some individuals and some superpowers. The rest of us fall under a general destiny of sinners carrying the burden of the curse on Adam and Eve and receiving the offer of a free redemption through the atoning death of a member of the Godhead.

There is also a special destiny or predestination for the universe at large. Its evolution is designed by Yahweh to work in accordance with a dissipative dynamical system, to be subjected to the law of vanity, to have a finite existence, to have a beginning and an end. In that framework, Yahweh retains the right to intervene when he sees fit; but otherwise he lets nature take its course.

According to the prophet Daniel, Yahweh the Most High has predetermined the succession of superpowers on earth, and the last one will be from another dimension. The succession of superpowers occurs through major wars, intricate schemes, and complex deployments. The destiny of the nation of Israel is designed by Yahweh in general outline because he wants Israel to be a witness for him amidst the nations, and no matter what destruction happens in Israel, that nation will bounce back to existence, reborn from its ashes like the Phoenix. In the deployment of history, Yahweh may want one thing but the nations or the individuals may want something else, and thus they can derail the predestined plan of Yahweh. On different occasions God chose someone for a service such as a prophet, an envoy, a messenger, or a witness, but the person is reluctant to do the job. The chosen person may object, argue, rebel, go another way or go to the other place. Such was the case with Moses, Jonah, and the Israelites on many occasions. In those situations, God has to struggle with the person or the nation, using force, tricks, or schemes to bring his predestined plan to actuality.

The history of Joseph, the beloved son of Jacob, is a case in point. Joseph apparently was predestined to be a leader, an important person in the land of Pharaoh for the good of his parents and siblings and to bring the progenitors of the twelve tribes of Israel into the foreign land where they would be enslaved for hundreds of years. All of this is part of the convoluted design of God's plan in history.

Man's relative free will and shortcomings interrupted the design in a dramatic fashion at many steps. Joseph was spoiled by his father, became boastful and arrogant, and told of his dreams that portend to a destiny of glory. This behavior incited hatred in the hearts of his brothers. He was also a whistle-blower—and nobody likes a spy or a whistle-blower. The brothers decided to kill him, but by the intervention of Reuben, the first-born, Joseph's life was spared and they sold him as a slave to traveling traders of Ishmaelite or Medianite origin. The traders in turn sold him to Potiphar, an officer captain of Pharaoh's guard. The scriptures state that God was following these developments closely and that he was weaving his own plan in the human scheme of destruction. "The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man" (Genesis 39:2). And Potiphar saw that the Lord was with Joseph and he made him "overseer of his house, and all that he had he put under his authority" (Genesis 39:4).

God's plan for Joseph and for the future nation of Israel will be derailed again by the lustful wife of Potiphar who became infatuated with the handsome Joseph. When she tried to get him in bed with her, Joseph fled, leaving his tunic behind. Enraged, she accused Joseph of attempted rape. That was a death knell, but instead Joseph was sent to prison. God had to intervene again to protect Joseph's life and God used the young man's talent for clairvoyance and dream interpretation to get him out of prison after many years, and to lead him to the Pharaoh's palace where he would become governor. It is important to note that Joseph always ascribed his talents of dream interpretation to God himself. Human shortcoming kept Joseph in prison for longer than expected after he helped the Pharaoh's butler in dream

interpretation when the latter was in prison with Joseph. He was supposed to help Joseph get out of prison earlier, but he forgot about Joseph for two years. God intervened by sending a portent, a dream, to the Pharaoh that no Egyptian wise men could interpret. That rang a bell in the memory of the butler, who then told the King about Joseph. The rest is history.

The seven years of plenty followed by seven years of drought and famine were designed by God—or used by him, as these things must happen anyway in the economy of the planet—to direct his own plan for the destiny of the children of Israel. This fluctuation of weather patterns fits the El Niño sequences in our time. God can use these features of nature for his own purpose.

Yahweh, the Self-revealed God, does not like too much simplicity in his actions. God's intelligence, cogito, designs, plans, and creations are very complex, intricate, and mysterious. He does not seem to delight in simplicity. He likes drama or dramatic developments. He accepts challenges from his creatures, angels, men, and women. This is all too evident in the pages of the Bible. The revealed God of the Judeo-Christian scriptures is not the simple do-gooder who is pure love and who dispenses "unconditional forgiveness." The idealist philosophers and theologians ignore the dialectics of nature and of God's cogito. Many of them think in a very simplistic manner: God is spirit—God is love—God is not vengeful—God has no wrath—God cannot violate his own laws of physics—God cannot change his mind—God cannot be seen. However, the revealed Yahweh manifested himself in various ways and presented himself in ways that contradict the concepts of the idealists (Ezekiel 20:9).

Although God likes challenges, he can also be tired of some challenges, as he said in Genesis 6:3: "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh, yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." He accepted the pleading of Abraham in favor of Sodom and Gomorrah. He accepted the argumentation of Job; he listened carefully and then blasted at Job because he was angry at Job's self-righteousness and criticism of Yahweh. "Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? He who rebukes God, let him answer it" (Job 40:2) and "Now prepare

yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me: would you indeed annul my judgment? Would you condemn Me that you may be justified?" (Job 40:7–8).

Why God waited so long to call on Abraham, when the latter was very old, seventy-five years old, to make a covenant, and to promise a multitude of children when Sarah was past menopause? One answer would be that he wanted to test Abraham's faith. That is true. But there is more—he does not take pleasure in easy performance for his own sake. Is anything too hard for Yahweh to do? No, but he always chooses the hardest route. Sarah was sterile and post-menopausal. That deserved a good laugh, and Sarah did laugh, and Abraham was tickled to death. He laughed his heart out. And Yahweh was upset and said, "... you will call your son I laugh." In Hebrew, that is "Isaac." Here is our God, our personal transcendent God, the God that created us in his "image and resemblance."

How is God going to bring a child to the old couple? Is it by fiat, or by a miracle? What is a miracle? It is the introduction of alternate pathways already in existence in nature into the physiology of Sarah and Abraham. There is no strong reason why the ovaries should stop producing eggs. In our time, we have found fertility drugs that can make a sterile woman fertile in egg production. We can be strongly sure that there are other resources in our physiology that can do the same thing. The revealed Yahweh knows his creation and he can switch one pathway in place of another. However, we must realize that there are other types of miracles that are complete novelties or new creations from Yahweh's own eternal-dimension.

When God switches pathways, he is not violating his own laws. He is using laws that we have not yet discovered. For God, the creation of the cosmos was a very taxing thing to do. The Bible does not expose all the details because science is not its purpose—its purpose is the revelation of the person of Yahweh, and his work and interaction with nature, men, and angels. Genesis 1:1 simply states that "In the beginning God created heaven and earth." Recently we have discovered the complexity of space and time born out of nothingness, according to modern contem-

porary cosmologists, a pre-Big Bang plasma that spun down into a super dense, super hot Planck's nugget that exploded in the bang, leading over twelve or thirteen billion years to the formation of particles of matter and energies, then galaxies, stars, planets, earth, and man (Green 362). For this, you need the mind of the finest mathematicians, physicists, chemists, and cosmologists, and you must use much logic, intuition, and imagination.

At one point in the evolution of the created universe, a major catastrophe wrecked our solar system, and planet Earth in particular. It could have been planetary collision or bombardment of asteroids. Thus the earth became "without form and void, and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:2).

Some people think that this verse describes the Big Bang. This is an incorrect interpretation, because at the Big Bang, there was no planet, no darkness, and no waters. These things came later in the evolution of the universe. In that second verse, we are dealing with a wrecked earth and solar system. Following this cosmic catastrophe, Yahweh has to work hard to put things back in place, to bring order out of disorder. At the end, the anthropomorphic God was tired and he rested on the seventh day. Furthermore, after each step in the reconstruction of our solar system, he paused to make judgments on his work and found that, so far, things looked pretty good. When we came to the creation of Eden and of man, we realized that God did not blink like a genie and he did not use *fiat*. He worked diligently to create them: "Let us make man in our image" (Genesis 1:26), and "The Lord planted a garden Eastward in Eden, and there he put the man whom he had formed" (Genesis 2:8).

One of the simple questions that comes to mind in reference to the first chapter of Genesis is the following: how big is God to create such a huge universe? Logically, it seems to us that it is impossible that a being could be bigger than the cosmos. However, to understand this puzzle, we have to remember that we are dealing with two different dimensions—that of Yahweh, called eternity (Isaiah 57:15), and another one called space-time. The latter appears huge because we are minute. At the scale of the

universe, we humans and our planet are not bigger than a proton or an electron. Also, we are limited by space and time. For God's eternity-dimension, there is no such thing as space and time, past, present and future, height, width and depth. However, a singularity appears to us when God materializes inside our space and time to do some specific tasks, such as the planning of the Garden of Eden and the creation of man from dust in his image and resemblance. Or when he visited Abraham and sat down and shared a meal with him, or wrestled with Jacob like two sportsmen.

Another very important concept to understand is that the Self-revealed Yahweh is in the world but is not of the world. He is not the universal soul, the cosmic soul (MacGregor 89). The universe exists in him, by him, and for him. Yahweh is not a pantheistic divinity. He is not part of the unbroken wholeness of the universe. And every man and woman on earth does not have Yahweh in them. They are not eternal. They are part and parcel of time and space. This must be clearly understood by everyone in the Judeo-Christian tradition. In our search for the God of the Bible, we are not going to discover him within ourselves, because he is not of the holism of our cosmic reality. He is the Otherness.

By going into one's self, in searching the inner-self, one can discover something great, good, lovable, altruistic, benevolent, ubiquitous, miraculous, paranormal, luminous, transformative, creative, but it is not Yahweh, the Self-revealed God of the Bible. Our scriptures reveal ways to discover Yahweh, to become part of his own unbroken wholeness, to become divine, to share the nature of his eternal dimension (1 Timothy 6:16).

Jesus of Nazareth teaches us at length about the way that allows us to become divine, to be translated from the nature of time to the nature of eternity. When this is accomplished, we can discover God in us, the "I Am" of the Bible. For this to happen, the Nazarene teaches us that we must be born of the spirit. Spirit is a word that stands for Yahweh's own reality, nature, realm, or dimension. It should not be confused with the virtuality or immateriality of modern philosophies, or the consciousness

born out of the information processing network of the circuitry of our nervous system.

How does this spirit manifest itself into our world? Jesus of Nazareth compares its reality to that of a wind, something capable of producing a physical contact, a gravitational power that can subjugate, push, pull, lift, or move you from one place to another. It is a force, a power that can be heard, felt, and seen—a force that is ubiquitous and can affect many people at the same time (Acts 2:2–3).

In John 3:8, the Nazarene says, “The wind blows where it will. You hear the sound it makes but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes...” He further describes that spiritual phenomenon as a power. “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you...” (Acts 1:8). That otherworldly dimension erupted into the ordinary reality of the apostles as they gathered in one place on the day of Pentecost. “Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them” (Acts 2:2–3). Indeed, as Jesus of Nazareth promised, that Spirit or divine force came down on earth, in our plane of existence, and has been with the believers since then. He did not leave this place of ours, and he continues to dwell within each person who accepts the gift of Yahweh. He is the power that creates a new entity and a new spiritual being, a new dimension in man and woman. This is a new addition to our composite-self, a new being born not only in the image and resemblance of Yahweh, but into the nature of Yahweh, the eternal-dimension.

This new spiritual entity is often at war with the ordinary spirit of man. The ordinary spirit wants to live in accordance with the laws of biology on the planet, while the new spiritual entity follows the laws of his own divine dimension (Romans 8:9–12). The conflict between them causes the spiritual entity to be grieved and to intercede for us with fervent prayers “with groaning that cannot be expressed in speech. He who searches hearts knows what the Spirit means, for the Spirit intercedes for the saints as God himself wills” (Romans 8:20–27).

Jesus of Nazareth in his encounter with the Rabbi Pharisee Nicodemus, member of the Sanhedrin, stressed the big divide between the two dimensions or realms—that of the flesh and that of the spirit. He said, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit” (John 3:6). We traditionally have been taught that we have a soul that is immortal or eternal. This is inaccurate. Our natural spirit or souls are of the nature of time and space and are not eternal. All the components of the natural man are diverse expressions in the scale of frequencies of the created masterforce that has a beginning, will have an end, and is subject to decay and dissipation into nothingness.

Some Christians, of an ascetic or holiness order that strives for a stringent morality, in their proselytism often ask, “Are you a born-again believer?” They fail to understand that the new birth is not merely a change in mentality or behavior, or a switch to a life of sacrifice, abandoning all corrupt desires, and accepting total negation of self, but rather the addition of a new dimension to the old components of our natural person. The apostle Paul calls it the incorruptible body, the spiritual body, or the indwelling spirit, which is a fractal of the Holy Ghost, the divine essence of the eternal Yahweh (1 Corinthians 15:44).

As partakers of God’s covenants, we do need a life of holiness and blamelessness. God in his encounter with Abraham told him, “Walk before me and be blameless” (Genesis 17:1). But for us Christians, the blamelessness will be the fruit of the new spiritual body. In the struggle between our two bodies, we need help from Yahweh himself. That is the reason why Paul desperately asked, “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Romans 7:24–25). And the answer is: Yahweh himself through Jesus Christ.

This new creation is a gift from the personal transcendent God of the Bible. And as usual, nothing is simple with Yahweh the Most High. In order to offer this gift to us, someone had to suffer to satisfy the justice and wrath of the creator. It was the Son who agreed to offer himself in atonement holocaust for the transformative gift of the universe, before the foundation of the

world. At the appropriate time the Son's sacrifice was actualized in space and time, on the cross at Golgotha. To realize this endeavor, the Son became mortal by taking a body of flesh that, like the previous theophanies of God, was subject to the laws and principles of Mother Nature. In fact, he became something more sinister on the cross. He carried all the sins of humanity and became sin (2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 Peter 2:24).

This was not an easy thing to do—to put to death an eternal being. This is a fundamental contradiction as far as eternity-dimension is concerned. That is the reason why the sacrifice of the Christ is eternal and can give eternal salvation to the believer. This is the paradox of eternity that allows the incarnation of Christ in the dust of the cosmos and manifests as flesh. Remember the equation—“that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit” (John 3:6).

The law of degradation of energy does not apply to the non-degradable, immutable eternity. Thus when death occurs in that realm, it requires an eternal occurrence to give eternal salvation, and it allows the wonder of incarnation. Indeed, nothing is impossible to Yahweh, as he said to Abraham and Sarah. Still this is one of the unfathomable paradoxes in the world of Yahweh. And this is what allows the mortal man and woman to acquire a new nature, the passage from the corruptible to the incorruptible.

The Self-revealed God of the Bible, when accepted as manifested in his multiple encounters with the Middle East individuals, remains an amazing personality who should be contemplated in fear and awe. Why does God keep dealing with the fallen man and allow the existence of this troubled world? The gospel of John stated, “He loves the world” (John 3:16). The depth of that love is beyond our understanding. To keep loving this world means to accept continuous challenges, difficult tasks, and complex situations. God loves this created world to the point of suffering literally for its salvation. He has sacrificed his alter ego, his only begotten Son, to redeem the universe. The irony in all of that drama is the fact that God realizes that he must wipe out this whole universe at some point and recreate

a new one. But before he takes that drastic action, he wants to save as much as he can from the current universe (Revelation 21:1–5).

How can we understand the love of God for this created world? This world has been a disappointment from the angelic realm to the Adamic sphere. The covering cherub¹ Lucifer had been perfect until iniquity was found in him. Adam and Eve had been blameless until they gave in to the temptation to be like God, knowing good and evil. However, the enigmatic Creator has revealed to us that he is the one who created the light and the darkness, made peace and calamity, introduced good and evil. “I, the Lord, do all these things” (Isaiah 45:7).

By placing the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden, Yahweh tells us that the existence of evil was already in the universe. Furthermore, the manner of creation through a dissipative dynamical system, where disorder comes out of order and vice versa, is bound to produce calamity, darkness, light, disease, malformations, upheavals, and catastrophes. The presence of vulnerable creatures like us makes things worse. A storm going at nine hundred miles an hour on planet Jupiter or an asteroid striking that major planet could do no harm because there are no biological entities like us on its surface.

Could it be that God feels he has some kind of responsibility in the drama of existence and realizes that he has to sacrifice himself in order to redeem the world? His implacable wrath fell on himself and on all the *Elohim* of the Godhead. Indeed the sacrifice at Golgotha as well as in eternity affects not only the Son, but also the Father and the Holy Ghost. God’s will to give the ultimate existence, eternal life, to the world is the expression of absolute love. That love should not be understood only as the expression of an emotional sensitivity or affection, a fondness, a feeling of compassion or sympathy. It is not only the unwillingness to cause distress, harm, damage, or offense. It is not only a tendency toward clemency or a disposition to be benevolent or

¹ “Covering cherub” is a biblical expression defining the cherub that covers God’s face so God can remain the Hidden God.

forgiving. God's love can be all of the above, although he does not hesitate to rebuke and chasten and to put us through trials and tribulations (Revelation 3:19). In essence, God's love is a grandiose vision for the destiny of the world and mankind. It is a fabulous project to take the lowest entity in its fleeting existence to the status of eternity and to be one with him in glory, power, and beauty. To realize that grandiose project, Yahweh must be strong, strict, demanding, and resourceful.

The Self-revealed God of the Bible is not that benign being of light described in near-death experiences or out-of-body experiences by individuals across the continents. He is a stern personality with a dark sense of humor, a very sensitive person who gets upset quite often, although he is very patient, kind, and loving. He presents himself as the Lord of hosts or armies, the jealous God, and the avenger. The book of Nahum says, "God is jealous and the Lord avenges, the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserves wrath for his enemies—the Lord is slow in anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked" (Nahum 1:2–3).

Love and wrath coexist in the personality of Yahweh. The Bible stresses the fear of God, the fear of the Lord first and foremost. The love of God follows, after we have learned to appreciate his mightiness. We cannot love God without knowing him. We teach our children to love God by presenting them a virtual picture of God. We should teach them the fear of the Lord first, as that fear can lead to respect, obedience, and the disposition to walk with God and learn to love him with all our heart and all our mind. We should keep in mind that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Psalms 111:10).

In the story of Joseph in Genesis, we can see how the God of the Bible participates in the affairs of men according to the dissipative dynamical system of his created world. His plans follow the meandering, intertwining activity of things in nature and society. According to Joseph's own interpretation, God used the bad dispositions of his brothers to send him to Egypt, to prepare for the arrival of Israel's sons, for their establishment in the land of Goshen and the proliferation into twelve tribes who would

later be enslaved by another pharaoh, in accordance with the prophecy given to Abraham long ago. Egypt would be punished for the mistreatment of the Israelites, and the Israelites would get out of Egypt with great wealth.

Joseph said, “But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life” (Genesis 45:5). “So now it was not you who sent me here, but God” (Genesis 45:8). Thus our God likes drama and clever schemes in dealing with mankind. Our world is tragi-comical at times, a pure tragedy at other times, and merely a comedy sometimes.

In terms of theophany, Yahweh never spoke face to face with Joseph like he did with Abraham and Jacob. Joseph’s statement seems to be an interpretation of the events *a posteriori*, because of the happy ending of his own destiny. However, his interpretation appears to be correct because of Yahweh’s patterns of actions—weaving through the up and down, turns and twists of everyday life which includes human selfishness and stupidity, wickedness and ingenuity, anxiety and fear, compulsion and insecurity, neurosis and psychosis.

The scriptures state that God was with Joseph all along to protect him and turn evil into good. But Joseph had no actual visions although he was a gifted seer. In the meantime, Yahweh continued to appear to Jacob in visions and stated, “I am God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there,” and “I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again” (Genesis 46:3–4).

One of the other attributes of Yahweh to consider is his patience. That patience at times appears to be leniency toward our wickedness and wrongdoings. Humans should be grateful for his patience, otherwise God would have wiped us off the surface of the earth. That patience of God can explain his stand-by attitude while nature and creatures act up in certain situations. This can be an expression of the difference between time and eternity. God knows the restrictions of the nature of space and time while humans ask why Abraham has to wait twenty-five

years to have Isaac, and why Isaac has to wait thirty years to have Jacob and Esau. Why does Jacob have to mourn the loss of Joseph for about twenty years, and why does Joseph have to suffer for thirteen years in Egypt before he became the prime minister of the superpower state?

The people in the biblical dramas are uneasy with the slowness of Yahweh's interactions at times. In the case of the great flood, it took some time before God would "remember Noah, and every living thing, and all the animals that were with him in the ark" (Genesis 8:1). When it comes to the bondage in Egypt, we recall that God foretold it to Abraham, and it was supposed to last many years during their four hundred years in the land of the pharaohs. It seems that out of the four hundred years, they were in slavery only during the last two hundred years. At the end, the Israelites suffered also the murder of their newborn males by the xenophobic Egyptian authority. Finally God "heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the Children of Israel and God acknowledged them (Exodus 2:24–25).

Why was it necessary to suffer for so long? We humans are upset by the length of time assigned to these tribulations. Could not God shorten the years of these miseries, like Jesus of Nazareth predicted in the gospel, "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved, but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" in reference to the tribulations at his second coming (Matthew 24:21).

We cannot scrutinize the depth of God's mind. We are limited in our dimensions. The patience of God can explain in part his slowness in anger, in revenge, and in retaliation. However, it produces severe distress in us when we are in need or expecting a blessing. Furthermore, God's blessing on the blameless endures for a thousand generations while his punishment can last up to four generations. Fortunately, confession and prayers for forgiveness can spare us the brunt of God's justice. In the case of Jonah and the Ninevites, God changed his mind about destroying them when the whole nation repented, to the dismay of the prophet Jonah. But about one hundred years later, at the

time of the prophet Micah, the Ninevites indulged again in violence and evil and they were destroyed by the Babylonians in 612 B.C., as prescribed by Yahweh.

In our search to rediscover the Self-revealed God in the Judeo-Christian scriptures, we are surprised by the conspicuous absence of aversion toward the physical world in the disposition of the Creator, and also by his silence about an afterlife in heaven. Contrary to some theology or metaphysics that teach a complete separation between God and the physical world because of the decaying nature of our world, Yahweh is deeply involved in earthly interactions. The theophanies of God in the repeated close encounters with the Middle Easterners are proof of this fact. In his dealings with mankind from Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and the prophets of the Old Testament he confined himself to their habitat, the planet Earth. He does not consider the physical world an impure entity to be avoided. He does not show any aversion or repugnance toward the dust of the universe. And because of the introduction of iniquity or sin into the physical world, God plans to recreate it with the incorruptible nature of his own dimension—eternity. And he will come to dwell with man on the new earth.

But until that re-creation, the destiny of man in life and in death is on planet Earth. All of the blessings offered to the patriarchs are confined within their earthly habitat. In the pages of Genesis there is no mention of going to heaven after death. In the third chapter, death is pronounced as a return to the particles of dust. “For dust you are, and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:19). And because of the unbroken wholeness of the universe, returning to dust is returning to wave and particle states of the cosmos. In terms of duration, dust has the lifespan of stars and galaxies. However, organic life or biological entities have a very limited existence. Some trees have a longer lifespan compared to animals. There are some fig trees on the Mount of Olives that have been in existence for about 2000 years. Some sequoias in California have been on earth for 3500 years. The longest life we have seen in Genesis is that of Methuselah, at 969 years (Genesis 5:27). But dust is made out of electrons, protons, neu-

trons, and other particles that came out thirteen billion years ago or so, yet thirteen billion years of existence is not eternity. We have to remember that eternity is God's own dimension and that it has no beginning, change, or end, while time is characterized by past, present, and future, hallmarks of perpetual becoming and dissipation.

Man was given a chance in Eden to enter the realm of "eternal life" but he ignored the *tree of life* that was available without restriction or penalty and instead ate the fruit of the *tree of knowledge of good and evil* that was a forbidden one. A caveat is important here—contrary to some popular interpretations, that tree is not a symbol of the sexual act, because when Adam and Eve were created God commanded them to have intercourse, to copulate. "Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it'" (Genesis 1:25).

As for the tree of life after the fall of man, God made it in turn a forbidden tree by placing menacing "cherubim at the east of the Garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life" (Genesis 3:24). Why keep that tree in the garden? Why keep the garden there anyway? God's dealings remain always mysterious. Probably the garden and the tree of life were maintained there for a while to remind mankind of a hope of salvation.

The tree of life was offered to man in the first place, but he neglected it and fell for the attraction of knowledge as suggested by the adversary Lucifer. That acquisition would make him like Yahweh the Most High. That was a big lie. Eating of the tree of life would be more likely capable of accomplishing the transformation from perishable to eternal being. But God would not take any more chances this time. He put his fearful body guards and their heavy weapons in the garden. Those cherubim were more powerful than Lucifer.

Furthermore, God does not want man to live forever in the state of sin. Sin, death, *sheol*, or hades are in time, are of the finite dimension. There is no eternal hell. Being in hell for all eternity is a contradiction to God's design—time versus eternity. God will not keep evil or sin in his eternity, his own realm,

because his plan is to redeem time by incorporating it into his own dimension. Thus the interdiction to the access of the tree of life is for the good of man and woman. “Behold, the man has become like one of us to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” (Genesis 3:22). When man will be redeemed by accepting the sacrifice made on his behalf, he will have access to the tree of life as stated in the book of Revelation. “In the middle of its street [the city of God on the new earth] and on either side of the river, was the tree of life...” (Revelation 22:2).

In the account of Genesis, God did not reveal at once everything about the tree of life. He did not mention the word “eternal” in reference to the tree of life. The rebellious cherub was watching the creation of man and the planning of the garden. He knew about the interdiction. He knew about death and life because before Adam came, plants and animals on earth were dying every day and born every day. So for him, the tree of life was just a good source of nutrients to stay alive on earth. And because God has given dominion of planet Earth to man, Satan considered man a usurper of his territory, as earth was Satan’s dominion before the catastrophe of Genesis 1:2.

Thus Satan was interested in the demise of man. So he zeroed in on the interdiction of the tree of knowledge with a twisted question to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” Thus Satan is putting a wrong statement into the mouth of God. He twisted God’s words. Satan’s question is also preposterous because he has seen Adam and Eve eating of the fruits of the garden every day. Eve corrected the wrong statement, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden, but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’ Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die for God knows that in the day you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil’” (Genesis 3:1–5).

The statement “you will be like God” is Satan’s ambition for himself. See Ezekiel 28:2, “I am god, I sit in the seats of

gods, in the midst of seas” and Ezekiel 28:14–15, “You were the anointed cherub who covers...you were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you.”

See also Isaiah 14:13–14, “For you have said in your heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will also sit on the Mount of the Congregation...I will be like the Most High.”

The dramatic Yahweh casts Satan down on the planet Earth of Genesis 1:2, causing an upheaval or *tohu-bohu*.² After God reconstructed the planet, he did not put Satan in prison or out of the planet. He let him roam around and even let him enter the specific garden of the Middle East. The dramatic Yahweh likes challenges and complicated scenarios, to our dismay. But we humans must accept his will like Job did after criticizing God’s permissive will.

When Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob died, Genesis does not speak about them going to heaven, but going to the tomb in the company of their ancestors. “Then Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age...and was gathered to his people” (Genesis 25:8). “So Isaac breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people...” (Genesis 35:29). “When Jacob had finished commanding his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people” (Genesis 49:33).

What about the notion of going to heaven after death as taught by Christian and Islamic traditions? There is no mention of it in the book of Genesis. In that book, God deals with humans in life and death within the framework of planet Earth. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob received the covenant of blessings on earth, long life, many children, and their return to dust from whence they came. There is one puzzling exception to the linear dynamics of death—this is the case of Enoch in Genesis 5:24. “And Enoch walked with God and he was not, for God took him.” Where did God take him? The text does not say where. But this has been interpreted throughout history as a conversion of Enoch to the abode of Yahweh, to the dimension called eter-

² *Tohu-bohu* is the Hebrew expression for the state of earth in Genesis 1:2.

nity. It seems that Enoch, like Elijah later on and Jesus of Nazareth, did not sustain the decay of death, but was transformed directly into the reality of God's own dimension.

In the evolution of revelation in the Bible, we will learn of further disposition of man's soul and spirit after death. Genesis spoke of the soul of man, but, first, as the breath of life, as an energy infused in the dust to make man biological. But the same breath created also the stars and the galaxies. "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth" (Psalms 33:6).

Genesis also speaks about the spirit of God that will "not strive with man forever for he is indeed flesh" (Genesis 6:3). Genesis does not speak about the spirit of man but about his soul and flesh. We have learned from other cultures—African, Egyptian, Greek, Far Eastern, Amerindian—that the soul is a complex entity made of different planes or states of energies, and one of them is called spirit (Crosley 288, 290 B). Thus comes the notion of man's body, soul, and spirit.

In Genesis it is also conceptualized that the blood is the soul of the living man or woman. Some students of the Bible see the blood as the seat of the soul. But in modern times, blood circulation is the manifestation of a living biological entity, like sap is the circulation of life in plants. In that sense, animals have souls also. They are living creatures like man and subjected to the same judgments as man although they did not commit the original sin of Adam and Eve. The animal kingdom in general is a "blameless group." They do not sin, and yet their blood is offered to God on the altar as burnt offerings sin offerings to redeem human sinners. Only a blameless entity can redeem a sinner. The soul of the animal is offered in sacrifice for the soul of man.

As far as the blood of man is concerned, if an animal kills a man, it must pay for the homicide with its own blood: "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God, he made man" (Genesis 9:6). Also, "Surely for your life blood I will demand a reckoning, from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of Man" (Genesis 9:5).

Those tenets are the template of capital punishment in the Bible. The God of the Bible, Yahweh, does not offer “unconditional forgiveness.” Even the innocent person or animal that kills must be killed in retaliation by man’s justice. Yahweh is not a God of weakness and leniency. Later on in the development of Israelite society, God’s prophet will establish cities of refuge for people who commit homicide by accident (Numbers 35:6). In there they were protected from retaliation until judgment. But if the person leaves the city of refuge, he becomes prey of vigilantes (Numbers 35:26).

In modern society, leniency removes the deterrence of capital punishment and perpetuates the aggression of the outlaws toward law-abiding citizens and the peaceful community. When capital punishment is ignored or abolished, society will suffer the immanent response of more crimes and murders. The weaknesses of civilized society make them more vulnerable to the violence of criminals.

Some people would go so far as to abolish animal sacrifices on the altars of religion on the argument of cruelty toward animals. However, the Self-revealed God of the Bible, Yahweh, sacrificed his only begotten Son on the cross for the sins of the world. There is no Christianity without that violent sacrifice on the cross. All the apostles of the original church suffered the violence of martyrdom, except probably John. Many converts in the early church sought martyrdom, a violent death, in exchange for a crown of glory in the afterlife. In Judaism, the synagogue did not replace the temple. In the first century A.D. it existed side by side with the temple where the sacrifices were offered. In our time if the temple is rebuilt, the ultra-orthodox Jews expect to see the return of animal sacrifices on the altar.

The God of the Bible gave dominion of the planet to man as the scriptures put it. “Fill the earth and subdue it” (Genesis 1:28). This is not a license to destroy the earth but the power to dominate, protect, and enhance life on it. That dominion was Lucifer’s domain before his rebellion and the wreckage of the planets. And when God brought forth humankind after the re-organization of the solar system, Satan, the cherub, decided to

wreck havoc again by teaching disobedience to Eve and Adam. With the curse on man, woman, serpent, and the planet and its contents, Satan brought back disorder out of order. But the dynamics of nature allow an alternation of order and disorder so that Satan could not take back completely the dominion of the planet. He is opposed by God's good men, women, and angels. He even tried to lead the new Adam, Jesus of Nazareth, into his camp, by asking the Messiah to worship him in return for the domination of all the kingdoms on earth.

Before the fall of man and woman, there was no enmity between the human and animal kingdoms. It is highly probably that they could communicate verbally or telepathically. The serpent was the most cunning of all the beasts of the field but not the only intelligent.

The upheavals of nature outside the Garden of Eden—earthquakes, cyclones, hurricanes, hot and cold weather—could not affect human life. But the disobedience of Adam and Eve reduced us to the level of the biological creatures that were on earth before us. If there was no fall in Eden, the lifespan of man would be indefinite and would end by a conversion from time to eternity. A blueprint of this is given in the conversion of Enoch, Elijah, to God's eternal realm. Jesus of Nazareth's body at the resurrection was translated into a "spiritual body" that can manifest itself in ordinary physical form as well as in God's own dimension. Such is the destiny of man at the point Omega envisioned by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the scientist-theologian (T. de Chardin 1949).

The God of the Bible has no objection to behaving like human beings, because he was the one in the first place who created us in his image and resemblance. He confesses an error in one aspect of man's creation. "And the Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and he was grieved in his heart. So the Lord said, 'I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them'" (Genesis 6:6-7).

Notice also that in this situation, the animal kingdom that did not sin was also cursed and destined to annihilation because of the sin of the dominion of Adam.

We cannot criticize God or talk about shortcomings or limitations in his omniscience or omnipotence. Job, the man of Uz, tried to criticize God, but he had to recant when God told him that he was dealing with something unfathomable by a creature such as himself. In the case of Genesis, chapter 6, it is God who confesses his error and was depressed about it. But he owes no apology to anybody but himself.

In comparing God and his image, we should keep in mind the difference between time and eternity. The judgment we can place on God's actions or behavior does not have the same value as that applied to man's actions and behavior. This is not a judgment of condemnation or criticism of wrongdoing, but the observation of a paradox in God's actions as seen from the vantage point of time-dimension. It is better to acknowledge God's own judgment about his actions or deeds, and very often he tells us his own appreciation. This is a state of affairs that makes God unfathomable, unsearchable, or difficult to understand.

In his close encounters with some chosen human beings, he gave us some laws—dos and don'ts—in taking into consideration our finite nature. Before the fall, Adam was immune to sin. Whatever action he took before the fall could not be labeled as good or bad. He was given power or dominion over the planet Earth and its contents—trees, animals, and their varieties in the scale of evolution. He was ordered to copulate and multiply and fill the earth with offspring. The only interdiction was one imposed on a single tree at the center of the garden. Adam and Eve violated that simple interdiction and from then on their actions are labeled as good or bad.

On the other hand, God's actions in blessing and cursing, in construction and destruction, in joy or suffering, in anger or wrath, in favoritism or forgiveness, in discrimination, and in love or hate, are right and just. In the book of Revelation, when facing the outpouring of the seven last plagues on earth, the redeemed in heaven stand on the sea of glass and sing the praise of God with these words: "Just and true are your ways, O king of the saints" (Revelation 15:3).

God has no frame of reference but himself. We just have to take his word for it when he says, “I am sorry”; “I made a blunder”; “I am depressed”; “I am grieved”; “I am jealous...”

The Western world is uncomfortable with a God like this. Thus they have created another God besides Yahweh, a God that has no resemblance to man. Evidently Yahweh cannot be happy with such a picture. He is not going to change his personality to fit the imagination of man. In time and space, reality is a matter of choice for *homo sapiens* (Dewitt, Graham 1973), but that principle does not extend to God’s own dimension. We cannot undo God, re-create God, or redesign God. He is the Otherness. He is the Eternal existence. He is the One who calls time and space into existence with a beginning, a becoming or evolution, and an end.

From our vantage point in time, we can ask perplexing questions such as, Why did God create chaos and darkness in the solar system? It was in retaliation against the proud cherub Lucifer. Why did God create Lucifer with relative free choice? That was because God does not like simplicity, or unchallenging situations. Too much linearity and simplicity is boring to God. And the ultimate question could be, Why did God create a finite time and space with embedded complexity and dissipation, decay and renewal? The apostle Paul said, “The creation was subjected to futility [entropy], not willingly, but because of Him [Yahweh] who subjected it in hope” (Romans 8:20).

Why must the earth, with its flora and fauna, and the solar system and galaxies suffer the consequences of man’s sin or disobedience? This is because man is the epitome of the whole creation. Man is made of the energies and particles issued from the primordial bang. Thus he represents the cosmos. He is the cosmos, and his fate is also that of the cosmos.

So far in our trek through the book of Genesis, we have much evidence that the Self-revealed God Yahweh manifested himself on multiple occasions as a visible person. This is contrary to the prevalent teaching that God is invisible, that nobody can see God, nobody can prove or disprove the existence of God.

In Genesis the question of proving the person of God is irrelevant because he presented himself in person to the patriarchs.

In the New Testament, Jesus of Nazareth stated, "Nobody has seen God, but the Son that reveals him to the world" (John 1:18). Here the Nazarene is talking about Yahweh in full splendor, power, and majesty in his own dimension, the eternity-dimension. However in the Genesis encounters and in other books of the Pentateuch as well as in the historical, poetic, wisdom, and prophetic books, Yahweh stepped down into space and showed himself in physical form. In the tohu-bohu of Genesis, chapter 1, it was not an abstraction that stepped into the cosmos to rearrange the solar system and the universe beyond.

Some Bible students consider that the theophanies of God in the Pentateuch and the rest of the Old Testament were manifestations of the Christ, the Son of God, before his final incarnation in the womb of the virgin Mary. In that sense, the Christ is truly the one who reveals the anthropomorphic Yahweh to the world in theophanies and incarnation. Jesus' statement about the visibility of the Father corroborates the notion of a hidden God who is shielded by the winged cherubim and seraphim so that no one can see his face except the Son and his Holy Spirit. Considering that nothing is impossible to the Father, it remains highly possible that the theophanies were his own manifestations.

As we progress in our rediscovery of the biblical God, it becomes more and more obvious that Yahweh has no hesitation or reluctance to meddle and entangle with his created physical world. Being the Essence of existence, he is the Source of all things. Everything that appears in the universe emanates from his word or breath. Here is the fundamental reason why space and time must re-enter God's eternity-dimension.

The God of the Bible manifested himself again to Noah to instruct him in the making of the ark of gopherwood (Genesis 6:14). After the flood, Noah and his family offered a sacrifice of burnt offering to Yahweh on an altar, a holocaust of clean animals and birds. And the personal Yahweh "smelled a soothing aroma." This, one more time, shows us that the Self-revealed God of the Bible, in his manifestation on our physical plane, can

smell, see, hear, taste, and touch like us who are made in his image and resemblance.

Notice also that the encounters with Yahweh in Genesis are not usually frightening. He does not show himself in his awesomeness, in all his splendor or terrifying power like in the display at Sinai in Exodus. There was no fearful sight when God approached Abraham and talked to him directly, not in a dream, but in person (Genesis 12:1–4, 7; 13:14; 15:1–17). After each of these close encounters, Abraham built altars and offered sacrifice and prayer to the Lord God. In one occasion the Bible reports an encounter as a vision followed by a dream (Genesis 15:1–17). In a vision we may have altered states of consciousness, that is, a state of modulated frequencies to a higher level in our makeup. Our waves and particles vibrate differently, allowing us to see beyond ordinary sensory perceptions. It does not happen that way with each encounter with God. In some visits the Bible does not use the word vision, but simply states that Yahweh appears and talks.

In Genesis chapter 15, Abraham questioned the reality of the promises given him by God. Realizing how troublesome was the piece of land of Canaan—located at the crossroads of Asia, Europe, and Africa—Abraham asked, “Lord God, how shall I know that I will inherit it?” (Genesis 15:8). To answer that question Yahweh asked for a burnt offering of a heifer, a female goat, a ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon. The offerings were on the altar when Abraham fell into a deep sleep. It was a nightmare as “horror and great darkness fell upon him” (Genesis 15:12). This was the first time the Bible reported a fearful encounter with Yahweh. That darkness was not simply the absence of light but the presence of a shadowy horror. Still at dusk, the sun was going down and the night had not yet advanced when the dark horror fell upon Abraham. The darkness or evil is not within God or part of him like the demiurge of the Gnostics (Armstrong 96; Leisegang 275), but rather a created entity as revealed in the book of Isaiah, “I form the light and create darkness. I make peace and create evil. I, the Lord, do all these things” (Isaiah 45:7).

The unfathomable, mysterious God of the Bible let the darkness fall on Abraham as a portent of the tribulations that the children of Abraham—his descendants from the line of Isaac and Jacob will suffer in Egypt, and after four generations will escape during a time of great affliction, and after many wars will enter the land of the Amorites.

After the dream was over, the sun went down and the dark night set in completely. And it came to pass that “there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passes between the pieces of the holocaust” (Genesis 15:17). On that day, the Self-revealed Yahweh made a covenant with Abraham to give him land from the river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates (Genesis 15:18).

In approaching the scriptures from the point of view of biblical realism, it becomes more and more evident that the God named Yahweh is the person that took the first step to encounter human beings. The awareness of his existence did not come by intellectual or spiritual abstraction but by corporeal events. The patriarchs did not imagine God. God himself moved through the features of space and time. Such was the case with Hagar, the concubine of Abraham. As she was fleeing the mistreatment of her mistress Sarai, she stopped by a spring of water for a resting moment when the manifestation of Yahweh talked to her, gave her instructions to return to Abraham’s house, and pronounced blessings on her, “I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude” (Genesis 16:10). This is the same type of promise given Abraham and, later, Isaac and Jacob. A very interesting statement came from the mouth of Hagar, “Have I also here seen Him who sees me?” (Genesis 16:13). Evidently, Hagar was bedazzled by this encounter. She could not believe her eyes. But at the end, she was convinced that she has seen the Most High and she called the place, *Beer-lahai Roi*, “you-are-the-God-who-sees” (Genesis 16:13). Thus for the ordinary people of the Bible, the physical manifestation of God is a strong reality.

When Abraham was ninety-nine years old, Yahweh visited him again and reiterated his previous promises, establishing

a covenant, the circumcision between the man and him, “My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant” (Genesis 17:13).

The philosophers and theologians of various backgrounds can argue at length about the infinite attributes that constitute God, but the people of Genesis had close encounters of a physical nature with Yahweh. If the Bible is a corpus of tales, we should not replace them by tales of theologians or philosophers, idealistic or materialistic ones.

Hagar, the concubine of Abraham, saw the Lord in a close encounter a second time in the desert of Paran after she was put out of Abraham’s house by his wife Sarah. Abraham was not happy with the decision, but Yahweh sided with Sarah and told Abraham to listen to his wife. Thus Hagar and Ishmael were sent away. As they wandered in the desert, they ran out of water and the son was about to die of thirst and dehydration when the angel of the Lord, or a manifestation of Yahweh, came to their rescue and showed them a well of water nearby. The boy as a descendant of Abraham became a great nation and formed an important branch in the genealogy of the Arabs, later becoming a superpower for many centuries.

A dramatic Yahweh tested Abraham with a request that brought distress to the soul of a father when God asked Abraham to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac as a burnt offering on an altar. At the very last minute, in the nick of time, Yahweh broke the suspense by stopping Abraham’s hand with a shout, “Abraham, Abraham, ...do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me” (Genesis 22:12). Thus the God of the Bible on many occasions manifested himself not in abstraction but by physical sounds. He spoke loud and clear.

The personal anthropomorphic God of the Bible appeared also in person to Isaac after the death of Abraham. Although Isaac was the first person in Genesis to be reported as a meditator (Genesis 24:63), he was not in a trance state when Yahweh appeared to him in Gerar, in the land of the Philistines. When Isaac left Gerar because of competition over water with the Phi-

listines, and went to Beersheba, the Lord came to him the same night, not in a dream but face to face, saying, “I am the God of your father Abraham, do not fear, for I am with you” (Genesis 26:24). Again this shows us that the faith of the patriarchs is not based on simple intuition, intelligent abstraction, or deduction but on concrete physical events.

Jacob is the third patriarch in the line of Abraham to experience close encounters with the Self-revealed Creator. Jacob’s first contact with the personal God came through a dream in which he saw a vortex connecting two realms. The vortex is described as a ladder whose base was on the earth and the top reached to heaven, something like a whirling or rotating tunnel with angels ascending and descending on it, and at the top stood the Lord God. This was a dream as indicated in the Bible, but this was not our ordinary everyday dream. In it there was intertwinement with parallel dimensions. That dream opened doors to exotic spheres, to visions of alternate realities. When this happens, there are changes in the makeup of our universe. This is an equivalent of the expression, “I saw heaven open.”

Jacob’s second encounter with God’s manifestation was again through a dream (Genesis 31:11–13) in which he received instruction to return to Palestine. While on his way to the Promised Land, he came across beings from another dimension that he recognized as angels of God. And he said to himself, “This is God’s camp” (Genesis 32:1–2). In his trek he came also across the ford of Jabbok and, as the night set, he retired in solitude. It was there that Jacob had an extraordinary experience with the God of the Bible. The encounter was not only in terms of sight and sound but it was also physical in the form of a sporting event, a wrestle with Yahweh the Most High that lasted from darkness to the break of day. Jacob sustained a dislocated hip joint but he prevailed in the struggle and received the blessing for which he had asked (Genesis 32:24–32). For this reason, God changed Jacob’s name to Israel. Jacob realized that this was the most unusual encounter in his life: he fought body-to-body with God and he said, “I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved” (Genesis 32:30).

The Self-revealed God of the Bible will again appear to Jacob on three other occasions (Genesis 35:1; 35:9; 45:2–4). The text is not very specific in the first two encounters, but for the last one (Genesis 45:2) the text says, “Then God spoke to Israel in the vision of the night” The term “vision” can be understood either as a dream or as an altered state of consciousness in which our perception exists beyond ordinary ranges.

So far everything in our Judeo-Christian tradition leads us to the recognition of a personal transcendent God who took the first steps to encounter human beings. It is more rational to see these accounts as biblical realism and to dwell on these facts instead of the approximations of philosophical and theological deductions. Our faith should be based on the testimonies of these common men and women. The author of the book of Hebrews defined faith in the following manner: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1).

There are two aspects in the faith of the patriarchs that we should consider. The first aspect corresponds to Paul’s definition in that the patriarchs accepted the promises given them by Yahweh as *actual fact* although the promises appear farfetched and unrealistic at the moment. That faith is simply trust in God’s statements. It is also trust in a reliable person. In our modern times we do likewise with our scientists doing controlled studies although their conclusions can be biased or erroneous. However, we still reserve the right to question the findings and the conclusions. Abraham likewise questioned God directly for aspects of the promises that he did not understand. He even laughed at some of the promises, although he knew that nothing is impossible with God who created the visible things from invisible things (Hebrews 11:3).

The second aspect of the faith of the patriarchs comes from tangible, actual experience with a person Yahweh manifested in physical form or theophanies. The Self-revealed God in actuality sits down and shares a meal with Abraham, argues about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, or wrestles with Jacob in a physical challenge. In the same way that we don’t question

the existence of our parents, the patriarchs don't question the existence of God.

There is no blind faith there. Theologians and philosophers often speak about blind faith in religion, as if it was completely irrational. This is a grave error. So-called blind faith is primarily a trust in the testimonies of the contactees—patriarchs, prophets, saints—in the same manner in which I believe in the existence of quarks, axions, electrons, protons, neutrons, and strings; I rely on the testimonies of physicists, even though I don't have a chance yet to enter their inner sanctum to experiment with these entities. Until then, I am living with them as physical realities. Likewise in accordance with Paul's definition of faith, I take the promises of Yahweh as evidence even before seeing them in actuality.

Furthermore, modern physics teaches us also that “reality is matter of choice” as we create our own reality by believing in chosen aspects of nature. A subatomic entity can be either wave or particle, depending on my belief or my choice. My hope or my expectation gives substance to the reality of the wave or the particle (Theimer 245).

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