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MOSES MAIMONIDES' DOCTRINE OF GOD

M. Maimonides achieved distinction and fame during the Middle Ages. Known also as Rambam, representing his full name and title, Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, he was born in Cordoba, Spain on March 30, 1135, during the Hebrew feast of Pesach. His father, a Talmudist and member of the rabbinical court, saw to it that the young Moses was trained in Hebrew and Arabic literature. Around 1148, when Moses was about 14, the Almohades invaded Cordoba and, in their fanaticism, gave the Jews the choice of conversion or exile. Maimonides accepted exile and, perhaps also, cryptoconversion. By age 13, he had studied Arabic philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, physics, and medicine, and had learned Aristotelian philosophy from Arabic sources.

About 1160, after several years of wandering in Europe, he settled in Fez, North Africa. Here, many Jews posed as Muslims¹. When a fanatic Jew circulated a text charging such persons with apostasy, Maimonides wrote an *Epistle on Apostasy* in order to avert their actual conversion. He claimed that an oral confession of Muslim faith and participation in Islamic worship constituted only nominal homage to the Prophet, and not a denial of one's Judaic convictions.

The family of Maimonides moved to Palestine about 1165, living first in Jerusalem and then in Hebron. Moving later to Egypt, they lived first in Alexandria and then in al-Foustat, the old Cairo. Maimonides began to practice medicine after the death of his brother David, and assumed leadership in the Jewish community². As he grew in fame and stature, many sought his counsel; from 1170 to 1180 he was physician to the Sultan and his vizier. In 1168 he finished his long *Commentary on the Mishnah*, a work he wrote in Arabic but which was later translated into Hebrew. The last chapter, «Sanhedrin»,

1. See Julius Guttman, *Philosophies of Judaism*, transl. David W. Silverman, Garden City, N.Y. 1964, p. 173. Guttman states: «What determined this choice of domicile is unknown; Fez was also under Almohad dominion».

2. He became a renowned scholar in medicine. Guttman, *Philosophies of Judaism*, p. 174.

expounds his views on the immortality of the soul and the thirteen principles of faith.

In 1180, Maimonides collected and codified, in fourteen volumes, the laws, doctrines and liturgical practices in the *Mishnah Torah* (Second Law). Maimonides wrote this work in Hebrew to enable his coreligionists to understand the oral teachings that were scattered through the vast talmudic literature. The first book, the «Book of Knowledge», was a philosophical clarification of Hebrew doctrines. Rational in character, the exposition suggested a messianic hope for the brotherhood of man. In Arabic, Maimonides also wrote a treatise on the 613 rabbinical precepts, distinguishing between talmudic and biblical teachings. His code was severely criticized by many colleagues.

His principal contribution was the *More Nebukim* or «Guide for the Perplexed», written in Arabic. A *summa* of Jewish theology and philosophy, this work explains Maimonides' convictions. The great impact of this work upon the medieval schoolmen was evidenced in their writings³. Maimonides also wrote several important works on medicine. His death, in 1204, was mourned by Jews, Muslims, and Christians alike because of his great contributions to philosophy and for his humanitarian activities as a medical doctor⁴.

1. Sources.

The two sources that influenced the development of Maimonides' view of God were Greek philosophy and the Bible. Consequently, Maimonides' task was to come to terms with the philosophy of Aristotle as Philo had earlier come to terms with the philosophy of Plato. Fundamentally, he endorsed the biblical idea of God as Creator and absolute One. This was evidenced in his writing in his defense of God as Creator of all things *ex nihilo*.

The biblical concept of God is monotheistic: God alone is One, and is independent of anything that is created or of any creature's experience⁵. This God is not an abstract force in nature, but the personal Creator of all

3. Ibid., p. 173. Among those influenced by Maimonides were Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas.

4. See Solomon Zeitlin, *Judaism: A Biography*, New York 1935. The whole book is devoted to the life and works of Maimonides. See also A. Cohen, *The Teachings of Maimonides*, New York 1968, pp. 7-18.

5. G. Quell, *Oeos* in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, transl. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1965, p. 87.

beings; not merely a disembodied Mind, according to Agus, but an infinite Personality :

He was the living God, who looks «to the poor and lowly in spirit». He faces man not merely as infinite force ...; He also confronts him on the human plane with infinite compassion⁶.

The names of God in the Bible do not express his essence, but describe his reality and activity. YHWH is the absolute God, the fulness of divine essence, the One and All, the one true God—an interpretation attributed to God Himself in *Exod.* 3:14, where it was told that God appeared to Moses in the burning bush and ordered him to become the leader of his people. Moses asked the voice coming out of the bush, «What is the name of the God that sends you, that I shall tell the people?» The answer came, «I am who I am». In the Septuagint version the same sentence is translated as, «I am the Being» (or «I am He Who Is»: Ἐγὼ εἰμὶ ὁ ὢν)⁷. The meaning of this expression exists on several levels: (1) that God exists and is living, the meaning of the Platonic ὄντως ὄν, or the real existence of all being and existence⁸; (2) that God exists eternally, without beginning or end⁹; (3) that God is unchangeable forever; and (4) that, very importantly, God remains hidden in his essence, making only his existence known to man.

Thus biblical religion taught that God is absolutely simple: that is, God's infinite perfection is expressed in anthropomorphic terms that depict the relationship of God to the world, and especially to man. These terms are not abstractions of God, but are derived from the divine reality and God's activity in the world. While the divine activity is God's presence in the world and in history, God's essence remains ineffable and mysterious. Man's inability to know God's essence does not mean remoteness or lack of concern on God's part for his creation. On the contrary, God's relationship to the world is evident in his participation in history—directing his people as recorded in the Scriptures. While man, in order to understand God, attributes to him qualities manifested in various ways, God's essence remains totally transcendent¹⁰.

6. Jacob Bernard Agus, *The Meaning of Jewish History*, Vol. I, New York 1963, p. 63.

7. *Exodus* 2: 22 - 3: 22.

8. This is also discussed by Plato in *Philebus* 59 d where he speaks of «Really Real», τὸ ὄν ὄντως.

9. In Plato's *Symposium* 211a αἰεὶ ὄν: «always is», and *Timaeos* 38 c πάντα αἰῶνά ἐστιν: «eternally is».

10. Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, Chicago 1960, p. 229. He claims that before Moses God was not known as the transcendent, who is Lord over the whole universe.

Maimonides sought to purify Judaism of anthropomorphism, anticipating that such a turn of mind could lead to polytheism or idolatry¹¹. With his keen intellect, he also culled material from the philosophers to interpret and present in a rational way the biblical doctrines of God. Like the Arab philosophers of his time, Maimonides studied the ancient Greeks, utilizing their philosophy to develop his theological doctrines.

Maimonides was critical of Plato, viewing the Greek philosopher's works as full of parables that the serious reader should ignore¹². Maimonides addressed himself primarily to Plato's doctrine of creation in time from pre-existent matter. Since Maimonides was faithful to the biblical doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, he denied that the Platonic doctrine could be literal truth¹³. While Maimonides also criticized Plato's use of mythical and veiled language, the *Guide* itself is replete with such language¹⁴.

Aristotle made greater impact upon Maimonides through the Arabian philosophers, who read Aristotle in translation. The first of such translations, made in A.D. 450, were in Syrian, not Arabic; the advent of Islam brought a gradual transition into Arabic¹⁵. Maimonides considered Aristotle the «chief of the philosophers»¹⁶, and adopted his philosophical method of reasoning without following it totally. Liberal use of the ideas and methods of Aristotle indicates that Maimonides, like his contemporaries, used Greek philosophy to articulate his own views¹⁷.

Maimonides' predecessor by a millenium, Philo, the great Alexandrian Jewish philosopher, also strove to harmonize philosophy and the Bible. Contrary to Plato and Aristotle, for whom man could know God's essence, Philo followed Scripture in declaring God's essence unknowable: he used terms like «ineffable» (ἄρρητος), «unnamable» (ἄκατανόμαστος), and «incomprehensible» (ἄκατάληπτος). Philo was responsible for introducing the notion of the incomprehensibility of God's essence into Western philosophical

11. Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, transl. Salomo Pines, Chicago 1969, I 1-7, pp. 21-175. Maimonides analyzes every Hebrew term in reference to God and interprets it either as homonym, allegory, or symbolism (Hereinafter referred to as *Guide*).

12. Ibid., p. 1xxv.

13. Ibid., II 13, pp. 283-84; II 25, p. 328.

14. Ibid., 1xxv-1xxvi. Leo Strauss claims that in this method Plato was the principal source by way of al-Farabi and the other Arab philosophers. See his *Philosophie und Gesetz*, Berlin 1935, pp. 87-122.

15. F. E. Peters, *Aristotle and the Arabs*, New York 1968, pp. 58-67.

16. Pines, *Guide*, I 15, p. 29.

17. Ibid., pp. 1xi-1xiii.

thought¹⁸. Philo's influence on Maimonides, through this doctrine, is patent, though unacknowledged by Maimonides¹⁹. Similarly, Maimonides was indirectly influenced by Plotinus, since Arabic translations of Greek philosophy included fragments of the *Enneads* gathered under the title *Theology of Aristotle*²⁰.

Arabic philosophy, per se, appears to have been equally important in the development of the Maimonidean system. Maimonides accepted and utilized those doctrines that were compatible with his own, at the same time rejecting whatever he thought to be misinterpretations. He quoted the Arab al-Farabi extensively, for example, apparently esteeming him second only to Aristotle²¹. While Maimonides expressed some reservations concerning the Arab Avicenna, he embraced much of his negative theology. The negative way appears as the central theme in Maimonides' *Guide*²².

2. Method.

By method is meant the use of the tools of scholarship to attain a specific goal. Maimonides' methods of understanding God were reason, historical research, and biblical hermeneutics. While Maimonides used the philosophic method of demonstration — that is, the Aristotelian syllogism — he did not accept that method fully; he transformed it and blended it with biblical presuppositions²³.

Maimonides was faced with a basic conflict between Jewish and Greek methodologies, a conflict lying in the location: the Bible placed the soul in the heart, the Greeks located it in the brain. Aristotle's syllogism required the mind to operate abstractly, without feeling or emotion. For the Jews, following the Bible, thinking was through the heart, devoid of abstractions²⁴.

18. Harry Austryn Wolfson, *Religious Philosophy: A Group of Essays*, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1961, p. 6. See also his *The Knowability and Describability of God in Plato and Aristotle*, «Harvard Studies in Classical Philology» 56/57 (1947), 233-49.

19. Pines, *Guide*, I 54, p. 123

20. A. Altmann and S. M. Stern, *Isaac Israeli: A Neoplatonic Philosopher of the Tenth Century*, Scripta Judaica I, Oxford 1958, pp. 95 ff.

21. Pines, *Guide*, pp. lxxviii-xcii.

22. Ibid., p. xcv.

23. A. Cohen, *The Teachings of Maimonides*, Prolegomena by Marvin Fox, New York 1968, p. xxii. Fox in the «Prolegomena» points out that some modern Jewish scholars claim that Maimonides transformed all those doctrines and methods of Aristotle before he made use of them. Pp. xxii-xxiii.

24. Ibid., p. 3.

Maimonides' main purpose, however, was to reconcile philosophy and religion. He sought to reconcile the results of divergent methods more than the methods *per se*: thus, he believed that religion was true revelation from God while philosophy led to truth through reason. Maimonides ultimately concluded that truth does not contradict truth, and that disagreements are due to misinterpretation²⁵.

Essentially, Maimonides employed the Aristotelian *apodeictic* method, or demonstration, as a principal philosophic method²⁶. He rejected the Platonic method of dialectics in the name of *Kalam* — or dialectics. He believed that dialectics would lead to the division of the reality of God. Rejecting the method of «analogy» in demonstrating the existence of God, Maimonides at the same time wrote of the absolute perfection of God, claiming that there could be «no likeness whatsoever between Him and any other being»²⁷. Instead, Maimonides preferred the *via negativa*, precisely because of the absolute dissimilarity between God and all other beings²⁸. Analogy (ἀνάλογους) originally referred to mathematical proportions; but in theology it implied that two terms are similar. The claim made for this method is that the similarity between two qualities does not violate God's otherness: thus, «goodness» is in God in an infinite way, but in man in a finite way²⁹. However, the absolute incorporeality of God, and Maimonides' negative attri-

25. Ibid., p. 16.

26. Plato, *Sophist* 224 e-226 a; *Republic* 499 a; *Phaedrus* 261 c as a technique in definitions. This method is *synagoge* (collection) and *diairesis* (division). Aristotle rejected dialectics as not being strict demonstration (*Analytics* I, 24 a-b; *Topics* I, 100 a-b). Plato used this method to show the division between «sensible things» and the «Ideas», *Metaphysics* 987 b. The *apodeixis* (demonstration, proof) is the logic of syllogistic demonstration that leads to episteme — true knowledge. *Posterior Analytics* I, 71 b-72 b. Only the universals are definable. The individuals are undemonstrable. *Metaphysics* 1039 b. Maimonides rejected dialectics as a method for the proofs of the existence of God. Salo Wittmayer Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, New York 1965, p. 89.

27. Leo Strauss, «How to begin to study the Guide for the Perplexed», in Pines, *Guide*, p. xlviii.

28. Ibid. See also Ben Zion Bokser, *The Legacy of Maimonides*, New York 1962 p. 33: «God and man are totally dissimilar and we cannot draw analogies between them».

29. Frederick Ferre, *Analogy in Theology*, *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* I (1967): 94. Modern interpreters in philosophy of religion choose to discuss «analogy» widely and ignore negative theology. See F. Ferre, *Language, Logic, and God*, New York, 1961, pp. 67-78; W. T. Blackstone, *The Problem of Religious Knowledge* Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1963, pp. 62-70; Shubert Spero, *Is the God of Maimonides truly unknowable?*, «Judaism» 22 (Winter 1973): 72, n. 21.

butes, irrevocably rule out the use of the method of analogy in the theology of Maimonides: God is absolutely One in every respect³⁰.

The Greek method of allegory, on the other hand, was used liberally by Maimonides in the *Guide* to interpret revelation. The Church Fathers had employed it to interpret biblical truth in their times. The allegorical method «more probably grew up gradually with the growth of the more conscious, more scientific use of mythical language to express religious and philosophic speculations»³¹.

The Jewish use of allegory was expressed in two ways: in Palestinian Judaism as symbolic or typological, and in Alexandrian circles for philosophical or mystical modes of thought³². Philo synthesized the two into a method that later became the «foundation-stone to Christianity» in the interpretation of the Hebrew Bible: he interpreted allegorically numbers, animals, objects, plants, heavenly bodies, and words found in the Bible in order to prove rationally some truth or doctrine³³. Use of allegory in Judaism was extensive through the Middle Ages; at that time, it was used to dispel anthropomorphism. Until the time of Maimonides, five rules for allegorical interpretation of the Bible were used when a text contradicted reality, reason, another text, or rabbinical tradition³⁴.

Using allegory, Maimonides compared the inner meanings of words to gold and the external or literal meaning to silver³⁵. Claiming that the language of Genesis was allegorical, with many homonyms, Maimonides preferred the allegorical method: he had in mind original sin, by which he meant Adam's sin and punishment³⁶. Unexpectedly, however, Maimonides interpreted the miracles and many prophecies in a literal fashion. Not so surprising was his literal acceptance of legal enactments and the law. His method was thus confined «between the barriers of his rationalism on the one hand

30. Strauss, in Pines, *Guide*, pp. xlvii-xlix.

31. J. Tate, *The Beginnings of Greek Allegory*, «Classical Review» 41 (1928) 215.

32. Louis Ginzberg, *Allegory The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. I (New York 1901), p. 403. The evolution of the allegorical method in Judaism is discussed in this article, pp. 403-411.

33. Ibid., pp. 404-05. The use of the allegorical method by the Church Fathers, as influenced by Philo, is well documented in H. A. Wolfson's *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1970, pp. 24-72. For the use of allegory by Origen, see A. J. Philippou's *Origen and the Early Jewish-Christian Debate*, «The Greek Orthodox Theological Review» 15 (Spring 1970) 148.

34. Ibid., p. 407.

35. Ibid. Maimonides was the first Jewish Philosopher to set up this principle. Pines, *Guide*, 6 b, pp. 11-12.

36. M. Friedländer, «Analysis of the Guide for the Perplexed», in *The Guide for the Perplexed*, New York 1956, p. Lii.

and his fidelity to tradition on the other»³⁷; The Bible, he believed, ranked as the most perfect esoteric book. Leo Strauss says of Maimonides that he has imitated and taken the Bible as a model to write his own esoteric work, the *Guide*³⁸.

3. Maimonides on God.

A single God as the ultimate reality has always been the central idea of Judaism. Maimonides consistently tried to present monotheism in a rational way to the intellectuals of his day. Yet God was depicted as the personal, living God of the Bible, not as an abstraction of philosophy. Maimonides discussed thoroughly the existence, the unity, the incorporeality, and the negative attributes of God. In developing his arguments, he summarized, successively, the proofs for the existence of God articulated by the Arabic school, the *Kalam*; then those of the philosophers, and finally the elaboration of his own position³⁹.

God's Existence.

Maimonides first analyzed each of twenty premises for the existence of God⁴⁰. The basic presupposition of the *Kalam* is stated in the first two premises: (1) all things are composed of atoms that are the substance of all things, and (2) the void or vacuum exists. Exhibiting a striking similarity to Epicurean thought, the *Kalam* emphasized an underlying atomism as the real order of things. Excluding the God who acts, the result is a doctrine of the absolute sovereignty of the power of God. According to the *Kalam*, the atoms in each moment of time create *ex nihilo* all things⁴¹, leading to the absolute determinism of Epicurean thought.

Enumerating the twenty six Aristotelian propositions alleging to prove

37. Ginzberg, *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, p. 408.

38. Leo Strauss, «The Literary Character of the *Guide for the Perplexed*» in *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, Glencoe, Ill. 1952, pp. 60-61. Also his article in Pines, *Guide*, p. xiv. The opening chapter of the *Guide* is devoted to the discussion of homonyms in the Bible as referred to God.

39. Pines, *Guide*, II 2, pp. 252-54.

40. Ibid., I 73. The most significant of these premises are summarized in Isaac Husik's *A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, New York 1969, pp. 249-52. We need not summarize them here.

41. Leo Strauss, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, New York 1965, p. 150. Pines, *Guide*, I 73, pp. 195-96.

God's existence⁴², Maimonides found them not to be conclusive proofs but merely Aristotle's opinion⁴³. From these propositions, however, Maimonides developed his own proofs of God's existence in terms of four basic arguments: (1) motion; (2) causality; (3) necessary being, and (4) potentiality and actuality.

Motion, for Maimonides, involved generation and corruption or change. Further, motion had to have a mover, which in turn must have another mover; this infinite regression was demonstrably impossible⁴⁴. Maimonides pressed the argument of motion further, attempting to explain the circular motion of the spheres. Assuming motion to come either from within or outside the sphere, he conceived of four possible movers: (1) a body external to the sphere; (2) a separate incorporeal substance; (3) an internal divisible incorporeal power; (4) an internal indivisible power. Maimonides rejected the first choice because it involved an infinite regress. He also discarded the third because it was inconceivable for a finite body to move in infinity. The last possibility was rejected on the ground that an intellect within a sphere cannot be a cause of constant motion. This left only the second choice: a separate, incorporeal, indivisible, and unchangeable power that moves the spheres without itself being moved either *per se* or *per accidens* — in short, God⁴⁵. But this was an Aristotelian, not a biblical, God, and hence would require modification to conform to Maimonides' doctrine of creation.

The causality argument assumed that a thing is composed of two elements. It was further assumed that one of the elements exists separately; therefore the other exists separately. Applying these assumptions to motion, it could be argued that «causing motion and being moved» reside in the same object. But Maimonides objected that some things moved without themselves causing motion — for example, stones. He therefore concluded that there must also be things that cause motion without them-

42. Pines, *Guide*, II Introduction, pp. 135-41.

43. Ibid., p. 240.

44. Proposition 25, in Pines, *Guide*, II Introduction, p. 239. The Aristotelianism of Maimonides is discussed by George Vajda, *Introduction à la Pensée Juive du Moyen-Age*, Paris 1947, pp. 129-46.

45. Pines, *Guide*, II 1, pp. 244-45; Husik, *A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, pp. 257-58. Aristotle is occupied with the proof of God in *Physica* VII, and with the problem of motion in *De caelo* II 3. In *Metaphysics* M, each sphere has an unmoved mover but the first sphere is moved by the First Unmoved Mover, who is above the others as first principle. See C. J. De Vogel's *Greek Philosophy: A Collection of Texts*, Leiden 1967, p. 34. On the doctrine of the Prime Mover, pp. 96-101.

selves moving or being moved. Further, such things are necessarily beyond division and time⁴⁶.

The argument of necessary being depends on the premise that we do not doubt the existence of things that we perceive with our senses. Either these things are subject to generation and corruption or they are not. If the former, then total decay, hence nonexistence, is a possibility. But, Maimonides argued, things existed by their own necessity⁴⁷. Therefore God is a necessary and unchanged existent.

The argument of potentiality and actuality resembled, in form, the argument of motion: everything that has passed from potentiality to actuality must have had an agent outside itself to cause the transformation. As in the first argument, it follows that such an agent is neither material nor potential but exists *per se*: such an agent is none other than God, who is incorporeal but pure actuality⁴⁸.

After inspecting these four arguments, Maimonides based his own argument on generation and corruption. Thus, he argued that things are brought into being by a first intelligible, God. As necessary existence, God has neither cause nor body.

God's Unity and Incorporeality.

Maimonides also employed the philosophical method of demonstration to show that God is one⁴⁹. He used reason to reconcile the Aristotelian and biblical positions on God's unity and incorporeality: first by accepting Scripture as authority and then invoking reason as an aid. He stated his belief as follows: «God is One and possesses true unity without admitting plurality or divisibility in any sense whatever»⁵⁰. Maimonides contended that the anthropomorphic language of the Scriptures was intended to facilitate under-

46. Husik, *A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, pp. 258-59; Pines, *Guide*, II 1, pp. 246-47.

47. Husik, *A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, pp. 59-60; Pines, *Guide*, II 1, pp. 247-48. See also Arthur J. Arberry, *Avicenna on Theology*, London 1951, p. 25 where Avicenna points out the contingency of being upon necessary being. Though this is deterministic, Maimonides used it as a terminological and notional framework to emphasize God's remoteness from human conception. Pines, *Guide*, p. xcvi.

48. Pines, *Guide*, II 1, p. 249; Husik, *A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, p. 260.

49. Pines, *Guide*, II 2, pp. 252-53; Friedländer, *Guide*, pp. 154-55; Cohen, *The Teachings of Maimonides*, p. 34. Of all the proofs in the Middle Ages, the most popular one among the Jewish thinkers was that of motion.

50. Friedländer, *Guide*, I 50, p. 67.

standing by the masses⁵¹. Believing such language did the opposite, however, he attempted to explicate the fundamental issue in clearer terms.

The unity of God is one of the most fundamental of issues in Judaism. According to Strauss, the three most basic Judaic truths are the existence of God, his unity, and his incorporeality⁵². Maimonides placed God's unity as second in his creed:

The Unity of God ... implies that the cause of all is one; not one of a genus nor a species, and not as one human being who is a compound divisible into many unities; not unity like the ordinary material body which is one in number but takes on endless divisions and parts. But He, the exalted One, is a unity in the sense that there is no unity like His in any way. This is the second cardinal doctrine of the faith which is indicated by the assertion, «Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God the Lord is One» (*Deut.* 4: 4)⁵³.

Thus the absolute unity is not in any way similar to any other unity.

Maimonides' faith in the oneness of God — in philosophical terms, God's simplicity — became the main concern of his *Guide*. He articulated this concept with care in the following passage:

He is not two nor more than two, but one; so that none of the things existing in the universe to which the term one is applied is like unto His oneness; neither such a unit as a species which confuses many (individual) units, nor such a unit as a body which consists of parts and dimensions. His oneness is such that there is no other oneness like the universe⁵⁴.

Maimonides thus used the term «one» in the scriptural sense of numerically one, denying any possibility of composition or «of divisions in any way whatever»⁵⁵.

In harmony with Aristotle's view, Maimonides also treated God's incorporeality as a biblical doctrine:

That the Holy One, blessed by He, is incorporeal, is clearly set forth in the Torah and in the Prophets, as it is said, «(Know therefore) that the Lord, He is God in heaven above,

51. Ibid., I 20, p. 35.

52. Strauss, in Pines, *Guide*, p. xxi.

53. Louis Jacobs, *Principles of the Jewish Faith*, New York 1964, p. 70.

54. «Mishneh Torah» in *The Judaic Tradition*, texts ed. and Introduced by Nahum N. Glatzer, Boston 1969, p. 280.

55. Pines, *Guide*, I 50, p. 110. In Aristotle «one» means a measure that applies to things constituted of many parts whereas «simple» means indivisible and without parts. *Metaphysics* Λ, 1072 a 30-35. See also H. A. Wolfson, *Philo: Foundation of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, II, Cambridge, Mass. 1968, 98-99. Aristotle says: «Oneness is not the same as the simple; for 'one' signifies a measure, but 'simple' signifies the manner in which something exists» (*Aristotle's Metaphysics*, transl. H. G. Apostle, Bloomington, Ind. 1966, p. 204).

and upon the earth beneath» (*Deut.* 4 : 39); and a corporeal being is incapable of being in two places at one time⁵⁶.

Thus the contention emerged that the anthropomorphism of the Bible was equally misleading on this issue. In like fashion, the philosopher swept such terminology aside so that the truth of God's incorporeality would stand free⁵⁷.

God's Attributes.

Maimonides' treatment of divine attributes was consistent with his analysis of God's unity and incorporeality. Thus, in affirming God's absolute unity, Maimonides excluded any conceptual or actual partition, which might lead to plurality⁵⁸. Maimonides' concept of God as simple essence was derived from Neoplatonism, as transmitted by Arabian Aristotelianism. Maimonides could not accept any positive attributes for God. Typically, however, he reviewed attempts to formulate positive attributes before disposing of them.

Maimonides discussed five groups of positive attributes. The first kind, that of definition, described the essence as determined by its cause. This was dismissed on the ground that God has no prior cause. The second kind described a thing in terms of part of its definition. As this implied a compound essence, it could not be applied to God. The third kind was based on the quality of an object, rather than its essence; but quality is one of nine categories of accident, and hence inapplicable to God. The fourth kind was that of relation, time, place, or of another individual. But there is no relation of God with anything else; moreover, time implies motion, which is an accident of the body — and Maimonides had already demonstrated that God was incorporeal. The fifth attribute described a thing by its actions or performance. These attributes stand remote from the essence of the thing and hence applicable to God as Creator. God's actions emanate from his essence and are not externally superimposed on his essence⁵⁹. In sum :

God is one in every respect, containing no plurality or any element superadded to His essence; and the many attributes of different significations applied to God originate in the multitude of His actions, not in a plurality existing in His essence, and are partly em-

56. Glatzer, *Mishneh Torah*, p. 280.

57. Husik, *A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, p. 261.

58. Guttman, *Philosophies of Judaism*, p. 180.

59. Pines, *Guide*, I 52, pp. 114-19; Friedländer, *Guide*, I 52, pp. 69-72; Husik, *A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, pp. 262-63.

played with the object of conveying some notion of His perfection, in accordance with what we consider perfection⁶⁰.

The attributes of God as discussed by different philosophers are either «essential» or «actional». The former include: God is living, is powerful, is wise, and has a will. This kind of list would endanger, for Maimonides, the absolute oneness of God. Strauss explicates these dangers:

Maimonides concludes from the unqualified oneness and simplicity of God that it is impossible that God should have positive attributes. Each positive attribute would posit a manifold in God. Thus, it is in particular impossible to attribute intellect and will to God, to distinguish God's intellect and God's will from His essence. For this reason the distinction between intellect and will in God loses the significance it has in precise speech⁶¹.

Thus, Maimonides felt constrained to reject positive attributes in God.

In an attempt to describe what God was not, Maimonides believed, lay less possibility of error than in efforts to describe what God was. The difference was rooted in the nature of language:

Know that the description of God, may He be cherished and exalted, by means of negations is the correct description — a description that is not affected by an indulgence in facile language, and does not imply any deficiency with respect to God in general or any particular mode⁶².

Such a negative, or apophatic, method is traceable to neoplatonism. The medieval philosophers were influenced by Plotinus, whose thesis of a transcendent God⁶³ was evidenced in the *Enneads* by negative terms referring to God. For Plotinus, God is utterly different from created beings in an ontological sense: beyond the world, beyond the senses, beyond reason — in short, beyond human categories⁶⁴. God, for Plotinus, was simple, ineffable, and absolutely transcendent⁶⁵. Regarding the Jewish contribution to the apophatic method, Philo's significance lay in his insistence that human reason can know only created beings⁶⁶.

60. Friedländer, *Guide*, I 52, p. 72.

61. Strauss, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, p. 152.

62. Pines, *Guide*, I 58, p. 134; Cohen, *The Teachings of Maimonides*, p. 89.

63. Sp. D. Kyriazopoulos, *Προλεγόμενα εἰς τὴν Ἑρώτησιν περὶ Θεοῦ* (Prolegomena to the Question of God), Athens 1960, pp. 20-21; Julius Guttmann, *Philosophies of Judaism*, p. 182. Wolfson claims that the negative method originated with the pagan philosopher Albinus and through Plotinus entered Christian thought by way of pseudo-Dionysius. Wolfson, *Philosophical Implications of the Problem of the Divine Attributes in the Kalam*, «Journal of the American Oriental Society» 79 (1959) 74.

64. Kyriazopoulos, *Προλεγόμενα* ..., p. 21. The classical study on attributes is by David Kaufmann, *Geschichte der Attributenlehre in der Jüdischen Religionsphilosophie des Mittelalters von Saadja Ben Maimuni*, Gotha 1877, pp. 363-470.

65. Kyriazopoulos, *Προλεγόμενα* ..., pp. 21-22.

66. Ibid., p. 22. Wolfson claims that Philo is the first philosopher to speak of God's

For Maimonides, the «negative is absolute» — that is, absolutely unknowable and incomprehensible — and not at all a question «of degree of perfection»⁶⁷. This goes beyond a mere statement of the weakness of man's reason — to the nature of God himself⁶⁸. True knowledge of the reality of God is not possible until human attributes are denied: to attribute something to God is to make him like that thing, a mere creature; the attributes which show perfection in us would be imperfections in God, since there is no similarity between God and creation. Hence true knowledge of God follows only after rejection of all attributes⁶⁹.

God as the absolute reality causes the most perfect effects, and his actions are known in creation and in history. «God thus appears as the essentially incomprehensible cause of the most perfect actions», stated Guttman⁷⁰. The God of Aristotle was a self-enclosed being, thinking eternally the most noble object, while avoiding any concern with the external creation⁷¹. Maimonides followed both the neoplatonic and scriptural frameworks in which God is in continuous operation.

God's actions, which are knowable to creatures, are not accidents, because there cannot be accidents in God:

All the actions of God stem from His essence, which admits of no internal plurality. In God's case we do not know His essence, and so this power remains a mystery to us. But these actions are not, nor do they derive from, distinct properties in or qualities of God. They are unique deeds or events, not qualities, habits, or traits⁷².

Similarly, relational attributes, being accidents, were not allowed by Maimonides: God is not dependent ontologically on another cause⁷³. The negative

essence as incomprehensible. See his *Religious Philosophy: A Group of Essays*, p. 6. Also his *Philo*, Vol. II Cambridge, Mass. 1968, p. 111. Wolfson makes the point that before Philo the unknowability and incomprehensibility of God's essence was not a philosophical speculation. See his *The Knowability and Describability of God in Plato and Aristotle*, «Harvard Studies in Classical Philology» 56-57 (1947) 233-49.

67. Jehuda Melber, *The Universality of Maimonides*, New York 1968, pp. 54-55.

68. Kyriazopoulos, *Προλεγόμενα* ..., pp. 22-23; in Pines, *Guide*, I 54, p. 123; Maimonides says: «His essence cannot be grasped as it really is». See also Pines, *Guide*, I 59, p. 139.

69. Pines, *Guide*, I 58, p. 134; Kyriazopoulos, *Προλεγόμενα* ..., p. 15; Cohen, *Teachings of Maimonides*, p. 89.

70. Guttman, *Philosophies of Judaism*, p. 183.

71. Agus, *The Meaning of Jewish History*, p. 203.

72. Seymour Feldman, *A Scholastic Misinterpretation of Maimonides' Doctrine of Divine Attributes*, «The Journal of Jewish Studies» 19 (1968) 28.

73. Ibid., pp. 25-26.

theology of Maimonides, in short, is a means to positive results: realizing God's perfection⁷⁴. All the names of God except the tetragrammaton, YHWH, provide evidence of his actions. This lone exception is not derived from anything else, and its meaning remains unknown⁷⁵.

God as Creator.

The fact of creation provides basic access to the Maimonidean concept of God. Here, too, both biblical and philosophical views are involved. The important philosophical views are those of Plato and Aristotle; the biblical view is that God creates everything *ex nihilo*⁷⁶. Time did not exist before the world's creation; without the world, there was neither motion nor time.

The central theme of the Holy Scriptures is sounded in the opening sentence of *Genesis*: «In the beginning, God created heaven and earth». God is the Creator and Master of the universe. All the things that the eye can see and the hand can touch are the works of God. But he is beyond and above all that is material. And He is not an abstract idea, but a living personality⁷⁷.

The Platonic view of creation encompassed a world subject to genesis and decay, and originating in both matter and time. The God, or Demiurge, made the world after the eternal models (eidos); being good, the Demiurge made the world as good as possible, placing order and beauty in it⁷⁸.

Aristotle viewed the world as existing eternally, just as did time and motion. Instead of genesis and corruption in matter there is merely eternal change of forms. Motion is the vehicle of change and the world is eternal; if it were not, God would have to bring it into existence, and in so doing, change himself from potential to actual creator. But God is changeless. Therefore the world is eternal. Moreover, it would be absurd to conceive of God as idle in eternity and as deciding «yesterday» to create the world⁷⁹.

74. Husik, *A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, p. 266.

75. Pines, *Guide*, I 61, pp. 147-50; Husik, *A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, p. 265. See also Herman Cohen, *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism*, transl. Simon Kaplan, New York 1972, pp. 94-99. God reveals only his effects to Moses, not his essence, p. 95.

76. Creation *ex nihilo* (ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων), first appeared in *II Macabees* 7: 32 as clear doctrine. Cf. 1: 24; 7: 23.

77. Agus, *The Meaning of Jewish History*, p. 21. See also Husik, *A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, p. 269.

78. Husik, *A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, p. 269; Plato, *Timaeus* 28 c-30 c; C. J. De Vogel, *Greek Philosophy: A Collection of Texts*, Vol. I, pp. 263-64.

79. Husik, *A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, p. 270; Pines, *Guide*, II 14, pp. 287-88. The examination of creation according to philosophy and his own position is in

Ironically, Maimonides did not disprove Aristotle but adapted Aristotle's ideas to prove the creation of the world. Thus, for Maimonides, only after God created the world were the laws of nature — of generation and corruption — framed. Maimonides, according to Guttman, was more concerned with God's freedom:

In his [Maimonides'] critique of the Aristotelian doctrine of the eternity of the world, he insists that its fundamental opposition to the Jewish doctrine of creation does not relate to the question of whether the world was eternal or had a temporal beginning, but to the question of whether the world emanated from God of necessity or was freely created by him⁸⁰.

Interpreting such views, it becomes clear that Maimonides wanted to establish that the freedom of the Creator is compatible with his sovereignty⁸¹. He also approximated the Platonic view, with one vital difference: creation came about, not from prior, hylic substance, but from nothing⁸². Maimonides thus rejected much of the Greek philosophical view of creation because he wished to remain faithful to the Jewish tradition of freedom, as opposed to determinism⁸³.

The objection to creation is that it requires change in God. Maimonides countered that change is found in temporal bodies, but not in God. Aristotle and his followers spoke of an incorporeal Active Intellect that acts at some times but not at others⁸⁴. For Maimonides, the question of creation was crucial to the entire spirit of the Torah: without creation, the Torah becomes false. With the spirit of the Torah went the true worship of God⁸⁵.

According to Maimonides, all beings besides God — even the separate intelligences — are created *ex nihilo*. The separate intelligences of Aristotle correspond to the angels of the Bible. There is a crucial difference between the Platonic universals and the Aristotelian separate intelligences, on the one hand, and the angels on the other: the former are eternal and emanate by necessity while the latter, Maimonides held, are created by God. Maimo-

the *Guide*, II 13-24. E. Gilson, *Maimonide et al Philosophie de l'Exode*, «Medieval Studies» 13 (1951): 223-25.

80. Guttman, *Philosophies of Judaism*, p. 187. Maimonides «maintains absolute finitude in space as well as in time». Israel Isaac Effros, *The Problem of Space in Jewish Medieval Philosophy*, Vol. 9, New York 1917, p. 96.

81. Ibid.

82. Jacobs, *Principles of the Jewish Faith*, p. 137-38. God's eternity is outside the process of time, p. 138.

83. Emanation as an alternative is also rejected. Pines, *Guide*, II 12, p. 279.

84. Pines, *Guide*, II 18, pp. 299-302.

85. Ibid., II 27, pp. 332-33.



nides interpreted the spheres — which Aristotle considered living and rational — as true angels of the Bible⁸⁶. God is the cause of the spheres; they are attracted to God and desire to become similar to God. The number of separate intelligences is equal to the number of spheres. The origin of man's reason is in Active Reason, God's way of communicating with man: reason flows from God through the Active Intellect, to the spheres, and finally to man⁸⁷.

Human Destiny.

Maimonides devoted much attention to the problem of human destiny and human perfection, a problem that he saw as linked with God through the phenomenon of prophecy. In order to attain human perfection, according to Maimonides, both the rational and the imaginative faculties must be perfected; the prophet was viewed as the living exemplar of human perfection, and could attain the highest goal of the perfect man — the vision of the Glory of God. A prophet is active with regard to others more so than for himself. «Prophecy, like any other attainment of knowledge, commences with the divine influence which moves through the Active Intellect and then descends upon man»⁸⁸.

Ordinarily, the intellect of man is perfected through training and is leavened by the imagination, which contributes to the prophetic knowledge and experience⁸⁹. Moses, however, acted in a special way; the state of perfection achieved by Moses was the highest that any human being may attain. Going on such an assumption, Bokser described Moses well:

... so completely emancipated from the claims of his bodily nature that he functioned veritably as a disembodied intelligence. As such he communed with God directly, without the mediation of the Active Intellect⁹⁰.

86. Pines, *Guide*, II 5, p. 259; Husik, *A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, p. 268. The connection of the separate Intellects and spheres is the Active Intellect. *Guide*, II 3-12, pp. 254-280. Maimonides accepted the separate Intelligences as living and rational, like the angels and not abstract forms or ideas or universals.

87. Husik, *A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, p. 272.

88. Ben Zion Bokser, *The Legacy of Maimonides*, New York 1962, p. 42.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 44; Pines, *Guide*, I 46, 73, II 32, 36, 37, 38. Prophecy is not confined to any people or community. Bokser, *The Legacy of Maimonides*, p. 45.

90. *Ibid.*, 46. For the rabbis, God is not reached mainly by metaphysics but through personal experience of his revelation and continuous operation in the world. «To the Jew, God was at one and the same time above, beyond, and within the world, its soul and its life». Solomon Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology: Major Concepts of the Talmud*, New York 1961, p. 25.

Maimonides' discussion of God was essential to a determination of the nature of human perfection. Following neoplatonism, Maimonides saw a continuous «flow» of divine power from God by way of the Active Intellect. The prophetic vision would be the most perfect communication of God with man. There are, however, three opinions on the origins of prophets: (1) that, as the masses imagine, God selects a person and inspires him to be a prophet without any qualifications except that of moral goodness; (2) that, as the Arabic philosophers, including Aristotelians, believed, anyone who attains intellectual and moral perfection can become a prophet: it is a question of human capability and not of divine grace; and (3) that, as Maimonides held, it was a matter of both human capability and divine grace; God could bestow or withhold prophecy⁹¹. The imaginative faculty, for Maimonides, thus served as a medium for prophecy: the effluence comes from the Active Intellect to the human intellect, which then affects the imagination⁹².

The purpose of man's life is to attain knowledge of God as much as is humanly possible. Common human acts, such as eating, drinking, sleeping, pleasure, and recreation serve to maintain good health; in that state, it is possible to reflect on the highest and most noble truths of God. Even the arts and the sciences serve ultimately to benefit man's knowledge of God⁹³.

Maimonides examined the Jewish doctrine of God's concern for his creation — particularly for man. God's knowledge differs from human knowledge, the philosopher believed; if God knows something it is a reality — but God also knows the causes of things. Maimonides also discussed the five views of providence: (1) the Epicurean view that all things happen by chance; (2) the concept of inner order, in which the laws of nature determine the universe; (3) the Muslim Ashyriyah, that claims God predetermines everything — whatever God does or wills as good; (4) the Muslim Mu'tazila, that teaches reward and punishment, despite the absence of free will; and (5) the view that incorporates the previous view with an espousal of free will, as given in the Scriptures⁹⁴. Maimonides endorsed the last view: «The theory of man's perfectly free will is one of the fundamental principles of the

91. Jacobs, *Principles of the Jewish Faith*, pp. 186-87.

92. Alvin Jay Reines, *Maimonides and Abrabanel on Prophecy*, Cincinnati 1970, p. 87. Moses is the greatest of the prophets because he did not use his imagination. See also Pines, *Guide*, II 35, p. 367: «To every prophet except Moses our master prophetic revelation comes through an angel».

93. Husik, *A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, p. 285. The true notion of God is the only presupposition for true worship. Friedländer, in *Guide*, II 51, p. 385.

94. Pines, *Guide*, III 17, pp. 464-69; Friedländer, *Guide*, III 17, pp. 282-85; A. Cohen, *The Teachings of Maimonides*, pp. 192-201.



Law of our Teacher Moses and of those who follow the Law»⁹⁵. The idea of providence must therefore be closely related to God's intellect. The providence of God is extended to all creation, with special concern for the Jewish people⁹⁶.

Maimonides spoke of providence and God's omniscience in traditional Judaic terms : God knows all things, and in a cosmic way. The Jewish doctors asked : «He who created the eye does not see? He who created the ear does not hear?» But Maimonides noted the futility of such questions by asking in his turn, «He who created the stomach does not digest?». God's way of seeing is beyond the human way, in short; it is cosmic⁹⁷. The basic error is the confusion of God's knowledge with human knowledge. Maimonides emphatically pointed out that «His [God's] knowledge is not of the same kind as ours, but totally different from it and admitting of no analogy»⁹⁸. Thus one could distinguish two kinds of knowledge : that type that pertains to God — his unity, incorporeality and existence; and that which pertains to social and political welfare⁹⁹.

Maimonides went further, using an allegory to convey a significant point. God was depicted as a king in his palace, which is closed. Some people enter the palace as others stand near the king, hearing his speech. The image of God as a king sitting on his throne served to point out that only philosophers and prophets are able to hear him; others will, in turn, learn from them¹⁰⁰.

According to this view, the degrees of perfection of man are described in terms of four types : (1) the perfection of possessions, which is the most defective; (2) the perfection of health; (3) the attainment of moral virtues; and (4) true perfection of the intellect. The last, for Maimonides, was the highest attainment : the individual achieving this type of perfection understands the end of life to be the knowledge of God, or imitation of God, which is true salvation. As Bokser states, «the quest to be godlike, to imitate his ways, is a natural disinterested quest for a spiritually mature person, and rewards and punishments do not figure in it»¹⁰¹. However, moral restrictions are necessary for the preliminary development of human beings¹⁰²; the To-

95. Friedländer, *Guide*, III 17, p. 285.

96. Friedländer, *Guide*, III 18, p. 289.

97. Pines, *Guide*, III 19, pp. 477-480.

98. Friedländer, *Guide*, III 20, p. 293.

99. Pines, *Guide*, III 28, pp. 512-14.

100. Pines, *Guide*, III 51, pp. 618-28.

101. Bokser, *The Legacy of Maimonides*, p. 53 and p. 137, Note 9,

102. Pines, *Guide*, Introduction; I 34, 54, 69; II 16, 25; III Introduction 1-7, 10, 28, 35, 39, 42, 48, 54.

rah discourages excesses. Maimonides endorsed the Aristotelian «golden mean», which had its counterpart in rabbinical doctrines. The Torah meets the needs of all people, in contrast to philosophy which is for the select few. Maimonides, however, often read many of Aristotle's doctrines into the biblical teachings¹⁰³.

The expectation of the Messiah was stated as the twelfth principle in the Maimonidean creed: «He will send our anointed (our Messiah) at the end of days, to redeem them that wait for the end — His salvation»¹⁰⁴. This Messianic belief gave the Jews comfort and strength throughout their stormy history — a unique doctrine with no parallels in ancient times. Since the Jews did not have a golden age, they dreamed of one in the future. The historical development of the idea of the Messiah is difficult to ascertain because of the different opinions among scholars. However, there is a development from the earliest prophets through the rabbinic period and the Middle Ages up to the present¹⁰⁵.

The Maimonidean idea of the Messiah referred to eschatology and salvation. There is not a fixed day for the coming of the Messianic age, nor is the time of the Messiah found in the Scriptures¹⁰⁶. The fullest expression of Maimonides' views are found in his letter to Yemen: the true Messiah will be a great prophet whom God will single out as he did Moses, and «his greatness will be superior to all men»¹⁰⁷. The manifestation of the Messiah will occur first in the land of Israel¹⁰⁸.

Maimonides went a step further than his predecessors and gave this doctrine of the Messiah the status of dogma: that is, he made it indispensable to Judaism as an article of faith. It is described that Maimonides «takes away its circumstantial character and popular salvation and puts on its cosmic stamp, making it a universal necessity»¹⁰⁹.

103. Bokser, *The Legacy of Maimonides*, pp. 55-59.

104. Jacobs, *Principles of the Jewish Faith*, p. 368.

105. Ibid., p. 370. We are not going to develop the doctrine of the Messiah here as it is found in Israel, because it is beyond the scope of this work. The classic work on this topic is by Joseph Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel*, transl. W. F. Stinespring, New York 1955. In this work the development and variety of the messianic idea is well described and documented.

106. A. Cohen, *The Teachings of Maimonides*, p. 220.

107. Ibid., p. 221. Also Joseph Sarachek, *The Doctrine of the Messiah in Medieval Jewish Literature*, New York 1932, pp. 126-60. In this work a detailed analysis is to be found of the Jewish idea of the Messiah in Middle Ages.

108. Ibid., p. 122.

109. Sarachek, *The Doctrine of the Messiah*, p. 133.

The age of the Messiah will be in the Holy Land, and at that time all war will cease, giving man time to study the wisdom of God as well as the fulfillment of his laws¹¹⁰. Maimonides «aimed at the liquidation of apocalypticism in Jewish Messianism», favoring an eschatological view of the perfection of humanity¹¹¹. However, for Maimonides the fulfillment of the commandments by man would not depend on the coming of the Messiah. The messianic age would be a transitional period, preliminary to the world to come. It would not signal the end of history, but the «threshold» of an eternal present¹¹². It would also be an event realized in the community. That is, it would be, as the prophets announced, a true affirmation of God's Lordship in the world. Since man is in principle completely capable of mastering his own future, the apocalyptic view that strips man of his freedom to act must be rejected. «The anti-apocalyptic vision of Maimonides», states Scholem, «says only that the Messianic age will strengthen man's capability by favorable conditions of universal peace and universal happiness, but not that it will make possible that capability for the first time»¹¹³.

The ultimate end of the Messianic period will be the restoration of the Garden of Eden¹¹⁴. The thirteenth principle of the Jewish faith refers to the resurrection of the dead. This doctrine is basic in rabbinic Judaism, and is found in the Jewish prayer book. While Maimonides seemed to contradict himself as to the doctrine of the survival of the soul and the resurrection of the body, he affirmed that he always had «true belief in the physical resurrection»¹¹⁵.

The world, for Maimonides, will have no end. The Cabbalistic view of cyclic worlds, each lasting seven thousand years, had no place in the Maimonidean doctrines. The scriptural statements of the destruction of the world are figurative only, and not doctrine that must be believed¹¹⁶. The logic of creation compels us to believe in the indestructibility of nature: God does not create and then destroy; this would be contradictory to the purpose of creation. God created the world to attain permanence.

110. Julius H. Greenstone, *The Messianic Idea in Jewish History*, Philadelphia 1943, p. 147; A. Cohen, *The Teachings of Maimonides*, pp. 225-26.

111. Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, New York 1971, p. 26.

112. Ibid., p. 30.

113. Ibid., p. 31.

114. A. Cohen, *The Teachings of Maimonides*, p. 228.

115. Jacobs, *The Principles of the Jewish Faith*, p. 404. Sarachek states: «It is the key to all miracles, and must be accepted as a matter of faith», *The Doctrine of the Messiah*, p. 153. Some interpreters claim that Maimonides accepted only the survival of the soul and not the resurrection of the body.

116. Sarachek, *The Doctrine of the Messiah*, p. 160. The physical body is to perpetuate

4. The Influence of Maimonides.

The influence of Maimonides upon Western thought has been considerable. A violent controversy took place among the Jews in the thirteenth century concerning the «orthodoxy» of Maimonides. An especially bitter struggle between the followers of Maimonides and his opponents took place in Spain and southern France. This resulted in a request that the Christian authorities intervene and burn Maimonides' «heretical» works¹¹⁷.

Maimonides understood philosophy as an instrument of theological speculation that throws light on obscure passages of the Scriptures. He was cognizant of Aristotle's weaknesses, especially as regards the doctrines of creation and providence, which oppose the biblical doctrines. Maimonides' general position on such questions was followed by Thomas Aquinas¹¹⁸, whose discussion of divine attributes, prophecy, Pentateuch, and other subjects constantly referred to Maimonides. It is evident that Aquinas used the method to harmonize the Aristotelean doctrines with common doctrines shared by Jews and Christians. Duns Scotus had Maimonides as a model, as did Leibniz¹¹⁹. The influence of Maimonides entered the modern world through the works of Spinoza. Though Spinoza was critical of Maimonides, he was influenced by his writings to a great degree.

The influence of Maimonides on Jewish theology has been deep and lasting, as has been evidenced by the thought and controversies of Jewish theologians and philosophers following Maimonides' lifetime¹²⁰.

A detailed study of the influence of Maimonides on medieval and modern Western thought remains to be carried out. Yet knowledge of the sources

the human spectres; in the future world, life will be eternal, making the body unnecessary. This brought much confusion and discussion as to the position of the resurrection in Maimonides. Cf. p. 158.

117. Guttman, *Philosophies of Judaism*, p. 208; Vajda, *Introduction à la Pensée Juive du Moyen-Age*, p. 147-151.

118. L. Van Steenberghen, *Aristotle in the West: The Origins of Latin Aristotelianism*, transl. Leonard Johnson, New York 1970, p. 21. Maimonides' *Guide* was translated from Arabic into Hebrew and from Hebrew into Latin (about 1230), making great impact on Latin scholasticism. Cf. p. 94.

119. Husik, *A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, pp. 306-07. E. Gilson points out that the *Guide* does not resemble the Christian theologies which came after Maimonides. It does not have their systematic order, nor does it claim to be a system. E. Gilson, *History of the Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, New York 1955, p. 230. The discussion of Western Scholastics in relation to the divine attributes posited by Maimonides is in the article by S. Feldman, *A Scholastic Misinterpretation*, pp. 23-39.

120. Husik, *A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, pp. 308-11.

of Western European thought is incomplete without such a study. The philosophy of Maimonides is an ingenious blend of the Greek reasoning process and the Judaic religious experience. The God of Maimonides is the God of utter unknowability, the First Cause. But he is also the Creator and the Sustainer of all creation. This great medieval philosopher gave justification to the Jewish community to use reason to combat idolatry, witchcraft, magic, and other extremes that the masses of people were tempted to adopt.

The light that his thought has thrown on the understanding of God is a significant aid in understanding his age and people. Thus Maimonides stands out as the true and classical example of the individual philosopher who believes in God, proved by philosophy as Cause and experienced by religion (Judaic) as Creator and Providence. His God is the God of Reason and Will, the God who gives purpose (entelechy) and governs the world. Beyond that, he is the God of Love and Reason who attracts all before his exalted throne, and who is commonly worshiped as Creator and Lord of all.

ΤΟ ΔΟΓΜΑ ΠΕΡΙ ΘΕΟΥ ΕΙΣ ΤΟ ΕΡΓΟΝ ΤΟΥ ΜΑΪ·ΜΟΝΙΔΟΥ

Περίληψις.

Τὸ ἄρθρον παρουσιάζει τὴν διδασκαλίαν περὶ Θεοῦ τοῦ ἰουδαίου φιλοσόφου τοῦ Μεσαίωonos Μαΐμονίδου (1135-1204). Ὁ Μωϋσῆς Μαΐμονίδης ἐγεννήθη εἰς τὴν Ἰσπανίαν, ἀλλ' ἐζησε καὶ ἐδημιούργησε τὸ θεολογικὸν-φιλοσοφικὸν ἔργον του εἰς τὴν Αἴγυπτον, ὅπου ἤργασθη ὡς ἱατρός. Ἦτο ἀρχηγὸς τῶν Ἰουδαίων τῆς Αἰγύπτου καθὼς καὶ τῆς διασποράς, πού ἐζήτει ἀπὸ αὐτὸν ἔγκυρον γνώμην εἰς σπουδαῖα θέματα, διότι τὸν ἐθεώρει αὐθεντίαν τῆς ἰουδαϊκῆς βιβλικῆς καὶ ραββινικῆς φιλολογίας. Ὡς φιλόσοφος ὁ Μαΐμονίδης κατέβαλε κάθε προσπάθειαν νὰ ὁδηγήσῃ τοὺς συμπατριῶτας του εἰς τὴν πατροπαράδοτον ἰουδαϊκὴν πίστιν καὶ ἰδιαιτέρως νὰ διατηρήσῃ καθαρὰν καὶ ἀμόλυντον τὴν βιβλικὴν πίστιν εἰς τὸν ἕνα Θεόν. Τὸ σπουδαιότερον ἔργον του εἶναι ὁ «Ὁδηγὸς τῶν ἀμφιγνωμῶνων» (*More Nebukim*). Τὸ ἔργον αὐτὸ ἐπηρέασε καὶ τοὺς σχολαστικοὺς φιλοσόφους τοῦ Μεσαίωonos εἰς τὴν μορφήν καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν τῆς διδασκαλίας των περὶ Θεοῦ.

Ἡ φιλοσοφία καὶ θεολογία τοῦ Μαΐμονίδου βασίζεται εἰς τὴν ἀρχαίαν ἐλληνικὴν φιλοσοφίαν καὶ εἰδικώτερα εἰς τὸν Ἀριστοτέλη. Ὁ Μαΐμονίδης ὡς Ἰουδαῖος δὲν παρεμέρισε τὴν βιβλικὴν καὶ ραββινικὴν φιλολογίαν εἰς τὴν διαμόρφωσιν τῆς διδασκαλίας του. Ἡ μεθοδολογία του εἶναι ἡ ἀποφατικὴ προσέγγισις πρὸς τὸν Θεόν. Ἡ λογικὴ (ἢ ὁ ὀρθὸς λόγος) εἶναι δι' αὐτὸν τὸ μέσον, διὰ τοῦ ὁποίου θεμελιώνεται ἡ ἀληθὴς βιβλικὴ πίστις εἰς τὸν Μονοθεῖσμόν καὶ τὴν δημιουργίαν τοῦ κόσμου ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ἡ γνώσις

τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐπιτυγχάνεται διὰ τῆς ἀρνήσεως τῶν κοσμικῶν ἰδιωμάτων ἀπὸ τὴν οὐσίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Ὁ Μαΐμονίδης ὡς θαυμαστής τοῦ Ἀριστοτέλους μεταχειρίζεται τὰς φιλοσοφικὰς ἀποδείξεις τοῦ ἀρχαίου φιλοσόφου διὰ τὴν ὑπαρξιν τοῦ Θεοῦ. Βεβαίως ὑπάρχουν διαφοραὶ μεταξὺ τῶν δύο φιλοσόφων, ἀπὸ τὰς ὁποίας ἡ σπουδαιότερα εἶναι ὅτι ὁ μὲν Ἀριστοτέλης διδάσκει τὴν αἰωνιότητα τῆς ὕλης καὶ τοῦ κόσμου, ὁ δὲ Μαΐμονίδης, βασιζόμενος εἰς τὴν ἰουδαϊκὴν φιλολογίαν, τὴν δημιουργίαν τοῦ κόσμου (καὶ τῆς ὕλης) «ἐκ τοῦ μηδενός». Ὁ Μαΐμονίδης διὰ τὴν ἀποδείξιν τὴν ἐνότητα τοῦ Θεοῦ, τὴν ὁποίαν θεωρεῖ ὡς ἀπόλυτον ἰουδαϊκὴν ἀρχήν, μεταχειρίζεται τὴν πλωτίνειον μεθοδολογίαν. Ὁ Θεὸς εἶναι ἀπολύτως εἷς καὶ ἡ οὐσία του εἶναι ἀπολύτως πέραν τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου νοῦ καὶ κάθε κοσμικῆς ἢ λογικῆς κατηγορίας. Ἡ ἀκαταληψία τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Θεοῦ εἶναι κεντρικὴ ἐννοια εἰς τὴν Θεολογίαν τοῦ Μαΐμονίδου. Οὔτε ἄγγελοι οὔτε τέλειοι ἄνθρωποι, οὔτε ἐν ζωῇ οὔτε μετὰ θάνατον, εἶναι δυνατόν νὰ θεωρήσουν ἢ νὰ συλλάβουν τὴν οὐσίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ. Οἱ ἄνθρωποι καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι μόνον τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Θεοῦ θεωροῦν. Ὁ Θεὸς ὅσον ὑφορᾷ εἰς τὴν οὐσίαν του εἶναι ἀπολύτως ἄγνωστος καὶ ἀσύλληπτος ἀπὸ τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην διάνοιαν.

Αὕτη εἶναι ἡ μεγαλυτέρα προσφορά τοῦ Μαΐμονίδου εἰς τὴν Δυτικὴν Φιλοσοφίαν, ἡ ἀποφατικὴ μέθοδος τῆς Θεολογίας του. Εἰς τὸν Θεὸν μόνον ἀρνητικὰ χαρακτηριστικὰ ἀρμόζουν, τὰ ὁποῖα ἀποκλείουν τὴν πολυθεΐαν καὶ τὸν πανθεϊσμόν. Ὁ ἰουδαῖος φιλόσοφος ἀρνεῖται κάθε ὁμοιότητα καὶ ἀναλογία τῶν δημιουργημένων ὄντων πρὸς τὸν Θεόν. Ἡ ἀπόδειξις τῆς ὑπάρξεως τοῦ Θεοῦ εἶναι, ὅπως ἐλέχθη, ἀριστοτελικὴ καὶ ἀρχίζει ἀπὸ τὴν πολλότητα καὶ φθοράν τῶν ὄντων καὶ καταλήγει εἰς τὴν πρώτην αἰτίαν καὶ τὸ ἀνώτατον ὄν. Ὁ Θεὸς εἶναι ἡ αἰτία ὅλων χωρὶς νὰ ἀλλοιώνεται ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἡ οὐσία του. Ὅταν παρατηρῶμεν τὴν γένεσιν καὶ τὴν φθοράν, φθάνομεν λογικῶς εἰς ἓν ἀπόλυτον ὄν, ποῦ εἶναι ἀναγκαῖον καὶ ἡ αἰτία τῆς δημιουργίας.

Τέλος ἡ Θεολογία τοῦ Μαΐμονίδου προσδιορίζει τὴν φύσιν τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης τελειότητος. Ὁ σκοπὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εἶναι νὰ ἀποκτήσῃ γνῶσιν τῆς βουλήσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ τὰ ἀνθρώπινα ἔργα εἶναι ἐκφράσεις τῆς ἀληθείας, δηλαδὴ ὁδηγεῖται ἀπὸ τὴν Θεϊαν Πρόνοιαν. Ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὅπως καὶ ὁ Θεὸς εἶναι ἐλεύθερος. Ἡ ἐλευθερία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εἶναι νὰ γνωρίζῃ καὶ νὰ ἐκτελῇ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ὁ Θεὸς εἶναι ὅπως ἓνας βασιλεὺς, ποῦ μόνον οἱ πιστοὶ του καὶ οἱ τέλειοι τὸν πλησιάζουν. Εἰς τὸν Θεὸν κοντὰ εὐρίσκονται οἱ προφῆται καὶ οἱ ἅγιοι, δηλαδὴ οἱ πιστοὶ ποῦ ἐκτελοῦν τὸ θέλημά Του. Ὁ Θεὸς λοιπὸν διὰ τὸν Μαΐμονίδην εἶναι ὁ Δημιουργὸς καὶ ὁ Κυβερνήτης τοῦ κόσμου, ἡ αἰτία καὶ ἡ λογικὴ ἀρχὴ κάθε δημιουργικῆς ἐνεργείας.

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