

Man's fundamental  
reverence to the  
supreme being



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The God of the Old Testament is no less omnipotent today. By definition, the theoretical notion of an all-consuming being points to human limitation and protects the God from being touched by constantly varying human perception. The ultimate, embodying force of the universe exists in and of itself; it is absolute, regardless of a human's characterization and personification of God. The need to embrace a singular image of God comes naturally with human psyche, yet to fully comprehend what God is, was, and will always be exceeds human capability. As the Bible relates mankind's historical plight to understand our place in God's universe, what reads is not an account of the Lord's evolving compassion, but a linear description of man's gradual realization of an infinitely gracious God, supremely expansive in the air of existence. Inside the pages of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, man's picture of the Lord takes on numerous forms. Each attempt to conceive the source of freely given grace represents the will to receive, to live properly and humbly in gratitude to the God that exists larger than life. Exhibiting the fundamental storyline to Judeo-Christian scripture, the Poetical and Wisdom Books of the Hebrew Bible illustrate the paradox of mankind's affliction, as God's breadth of mercy seems to fail in eliminating evil. The Book of Job presents an outwardly innocent man who nevertheless struggles to survive pain and tumult. As Job's sudden misery leads him to question the justice of the universe, the Lord's baffled response puts Job in his inherently sinful and lesser place in the structure of God's world: "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?" (Job 38: 4). In this Old Testament work, it is not God's justification for Job's treatment that matters, but how Job reacts in the face of an omnipotent force. Although angry with God, Job doesn't repudiate the relationship; he only seeks a coherent

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explanation of God's rationale. The Book of Job challenges the common ethical dynamics of crime and punishment, sin and retribution. Job suffers regardless of his innocence or guilt; while the lowly human desires the clarification he believes God owes him, God, in effect, owes him nothing, thus making His freely given grace infinitely sacred. Psalm 51 likewise emanates the superiority of the relationship between the ultimate life-giver and His lesser offspring. As Job faced the reality of his inherent sin and his intrinsic connection to God, so does Psalm 51 read, " my sin is ever before me...Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me" (3, 5). Humans in the early biblical writings discover their undeniable dependence on the force that created them, thereby rooting mankind's worth in God only. In gratitude, King David seeks to reciprocate God's grace back to its divine source, resolving to " teach transgressors [His] ways" (13), and thus reflect the glorified " God of [his] salvation" (14). The Old Testament credits more to the character of God than His presupposed superiority. As the Bible presents evolving human discernment of the Lord in heaven, His personification develops from that of a righteous ruler for the exiled Israelites to a divine Father for the marginalized Christians of the first century. Within the Prophetic Books of the Hebrew Bible, God's relationship with Hosea foreshadows His impending characterization as a Heavenly Father. God moves Hosea to foster familial love for an unfaithful wife, a situation which results in barefaced betrayal analogous to the Lord's experience; as Hosea mourns his wife's prostitution, the Lord explicates His corresponding situation, speaking in the words of a grievous parent: " When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son... How can I hand you over, O Israel?" (Hosea 11: 1, 8). The people's betrayal of God

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uncovers another instance in which humans are called to be timidly subordinate to their guardian on high, regardless of His affection. " They shall go after the Lord, who roars like a lion...his children shall come trembling from the west" (11: 10). Despite supposed shifts in the New Testament's portrayal of the Lord, the prologue to the Book of John sustains the Jewish view of God's sublime power. While drawing from the Jewish creation story, the writer of John simultaneously places Jesus back at the beginning of time, equal with the Father, and a definitive source of the universe. As David's salvation was infinitely within grasp, so does Jesus encompass the human world in the Book of John: " He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being" (John 1: 2-3). Here, the view of God's ultimate power has not changed; Christianity's differentiation from Judaism roots itself in the proclamation that Jesus and the Lord are one and the same. Regardless, the gospels make a similar call to individuals to live in gratitude to the source of their worth. Due to the framework of human perspective, Judeo-Christians are necessarily left with perceptions of God as a human, fatherly figure. The Bible offers an array of opportunities to differentiate, to compare and contrast the seemingly contradictory identities of God, formidable to ancient Israelites, and the Messiah—the living source of salvation—to early Christians. In all our efforts to perceive God as an all-powerful individual, we forget that only we are individuals, and God remains the ultimate body that is the source of all things. As God is believed by many to have created man in His image, man persistently idealizes a God that is accessible to human rationality. This God exhibits the comprehensible characteristics of an omnipotent ruler, a steadfast companion, a loving parent, such that the Bible

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represents the limitations of human consciousness and the historical inscrutability of God; yet through this literary chronology of Western society's developing views toward the source of all things, God's unconditional love for mankind presents itself in His unfailing effort to be comprehensible within the realm of human perception. Likewise, the various peoples of the Bible collectively exemplify humanity's intrinsic subordination to their divine origin. The mystifying Father exceeds human intellect and infinitely encompasses the universe, as His children rest humbly in the palm of His hand.