

## HOW TO BEGIN TO STUDY

# The Guide of the Perplexed

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I BELIEVE that it will not be amiss if I simply present the plan of the *Guide* as it has become clear to me in the course of about twenty-five years of frequently interrupted but never abandoned study. In the following scheme Roman (and Arabic) numerals at the beginning of a line indicate the sections (and subsections) of the *Guide* while the numbers given in parentheses indicate the Parts and the chapters of the book.

### A. Views (I 1–III 24)

#### A'. Views regarding God and the angels (I 1–III 7)

- I. Biblical terms applied to God (I 1–70)
  - κ. Terms suggesting the corporeality of God (and the angels) (I 1–49)
    1. The two most important passages of the Torah that seem to suggest that God is corporeal (I 1–7)
    2. Terms designating place, change of place, the organs of human locomotion, etc. (I 8–28)
    3. Terms designating wrath and consuming (or taking food) that if applied to divine things refer to idolatry on the one hand and to human knowledge on the other (I 29–36)
    4. Terms designating parts and actions of animals (I 37–49)
  - λ. Terms suggesting multiplicity in God (I 50–70)
    5. Given that God is absolutely one and incomparable, what is the meaning of the terms applied to God in nonfigurative speech? (I 50–60)
    6. The names of God and the utterances of God (I 61–67)

7. The apparent multiplicity in God consequent upon His knowledge, His causality, and His governance (I 68-70)
- II. Demonstrations of the existence, unity, and incorporeality of God (I 71-II 31)
  1. Introductory (I 71-73)
  2. Refutation of the Kalām demonstrations (I 74-76)
  3. The philosophic demonstrations (II 1)
  4. Maimonides' demonstration (II 2)
  5. The angels (II 3-12)
  6. Creation of the world, i.e., defense of the belief in creation out of nothing against the philosophers (II 13-24)
  7. Creation and the Law (II 25-31)
- III. Prophecy (II 32-48)
  1. Natural endowment and training the prerequisites of prophecy (II 32-34)
  2. The difference between the prophecy of Moses and that of the other prophets (II 35)
  3. The essence of prophecy (II 36-38)
  4. The legislative prophecy (of Moses) and the Law (II 39-40)
  5. Legal study of the prophecy of the prophets other than Moses (II 41-44)
  6. The degrees of prophecy (II 45)
  7. How to understand the divine actions and works and the divinely commanded actions and works as presented by the prophets (II 46-48)
- IV. The account of the Chariot (III 1-7)
- A". Views regarding bodily beings that come into being and perish, and in particular regarding man (III 8-54)
- V. Providence (III 8-24)
  1. Statement of the problem: matter is the ground of all evils and yet matter is created by the absolutely good God (III 8-14)
  2. The nature of the impossible or the meaning of omnipotence (III 15)
  3. The philosophic arguments against omniscience (III 16)
  4. The views regarding providence (III 17-18)

5. Jewish views on omniscience and Maimonides' discourse on this subject (III 19-21)
6. The book of Job as the authoritative treatment of providence (III 22-23)
7. The teaching of the Torah on omniscience (III 24)

## B. Actions (III 25-54)

- VI. The actions commanded by God and done by God (III 25-50)
  1. The rationality of God's actions in general and of His legislation in particular (III 25-26)
  2. The manifestly rational part of the commandments of the Torah (III 27-28)
  3. The rationale of the apparently irrational part of the commandments of the Torah (III 29-33)
  4. The inevitable limit to the rationality of the commandments of the Torah (III 34)
  5. Division of the commandments into classes and explanation of the usefulness of each class (III 35)
  6. Explanation of all or almost all commandments (III 36-49)
  7. The narratives in the Torah (III 50)
- VII. Man's perfection and God's providence (III 51-54)
  1. True knowledge of God Himself is the prerequisite of providence (III 51-52)
  2. True knowledge of what constitutes the human individual himself is the prerequisite of knowledge of the workings of providence (III 53-54)

The *Guide* consists then of seven sections or of thirty-eight subsections. Wherever feasible, each section is divided into seven subsections; the only section that does not permit of being divided into subsections is divided into seven chapters.

The simple statement of the plan of the *Guide* suffices to show that the book is sealed with many seals. At the end of its Introduction Maimonides describes the preceding passage as follows: "It is a key permitting one to enter places the gates to which were locked. When those gates are opened and those places are entered, the souls will find rest therein, the eyes will be delighted, and the bodies will be eased of their toil and of their labor." The *Guide* as a whole is not merely a key to

a forest but is itself a forest, an enchanted forest, and hence also an enchanting forest: it is a delight to the eyes. For the tree of life is a delight to the eyes.

The enchanting character of the *Guide* does not appear immediately. At first glance the book appears merely to be strange and in particular to lack order and consistency. But progress in understanding it is a progress in becoming enchanted by it. Enchanting understanding is perhaps the highest form of edification. One begins to understand the *Guide* once one sees that it is not a philosophic book—a book written by a philosopher for philosophers—but a Jewish book: a book written by a Jew for Jews. Its first premise is the old Jewish premise that being a Jew and being a philosopher are two incompatible things. Philosophers are men who try to give an account of the whole by starting from what is always accessible to man as man; Maimonides starts from the acceptance of the Torah. A Jew may make use of philosophy and Maimonides makes the most ample use of it; but as a Jew he gives his assent where as a philosopher he would suspend his assent (cf. II 16).

Accordingly, the *Guide* is devoted to the Torah or more precisely to the true science of the Torah, of the Law. Its first purpose is to explain biblical terms and its second purpose is to explain biblical similes. The *Guide* is then devoted above all to biblical exegesis, although to biblical exegesis of a particular kind. That kind of exegesis is required because many biblical terms and all biblical similes have an apparent or outer and a hidden or inner meaning; the gravest errors as well as the most tormenting perplexities arise from men's understanding the Bible always according to its apparent or literal meaning. The *Guide* is then devoted to "the difficulties of the Law" or to "the secrets of the Law." The most important of those secrets are the Account of the Beginning (the beginning of the Bible) and the Account of the Chariot (Ezek. 1 and 10). The *Guide* is then devoted primarily and chiefly to the explanation of the Account of the Beginning and the Account of the Chariot.

Yet the Law whose secrets Maimonides intends to explain forbids that they be explained in public, or to the public; they may only be explained in private and only to such individuals as possess both theoretical and political wisdom as well as the capacity of both understanding and using allusive speech; for only "the chapter headings" of the secret teaching may be transmitted even to those who belong to the natural elite. Since every explanation given in writing, at any rate in a book, is a public explanation, Maimonides seems to be compelled by his intention to transgress the Law. There were other cases in which he was under such a compulsion. The Law also forbids one to study the books of idolaters on idolatry, for the first intention of the Law as a whole is to destroy every vestige of idolatry; and yet Maimonides, as he openly admits and even emphasizes, has studied all the

available idolatrous books of this kind with the utmost thoroughness. Nor is this all. He goes so far as to encourage the reader of the *Guide* to study those books by himself (III 29–30, 32, 37; *Mishneh Torah*, H. 'Abodah Zarah II 2 and III 2). The Law also forbids one to speculate about the date of the coming of the Messiah, yet Maimonides presents such a speculation or at least its equivalent in order to comfort his contemporaries (*Epistle to Yemen*, 62, 16 ff., and 80, 17 ff. Halkin; cf. Halkin's Introduction, pp. xii–xiii; *M.T.*, H. Melakhim XII 2). Above all, the Law forbids one to seek for the reasons of the commandments, yet Maimonides devotes almost twenty-six chapters of the *Guide* to such seeking (III 26; cf. II 25). All these irregularities have one and the same justification. Maimonides transgresses the Law "for the sake of heaven," i.e., in order to uphold or to fulfill the Law (I Introd. and III Introd.). Still, in the most important case he does not, strictly speaking, transgress the Law, for his written explanation of the secrets of the Law is not a public but a secret explanation. The secrecy is achieved in three ways. First, every word of the *Guide* is chosen with exceeding care; since very few men are able or willing to read with exceeding care, most men will fail to perceive the secret teaching. Second, Maimonides deliberately contradicts himself, and if a man declares both that *a* is *b* and that *a* is not *b*, he cannot be said to declare anything. Lastly, the "chapter headings" of the secret teaching are not presented in an orderly fashion but are scattered throughout the book. This permits us to understand why the plan of the *Guide* is so obscure. Maimonides succeeds immediately in obscuring the plan by failing to divide the book explicitly into sections and subsections or by dividing it explicitly only into three Parts and each Part into chapters without supplying the Parts and the chapters with headings indicating the subject matter of the Parts or of the chapters.

The plan of the *Guide* is not entirely obscure. No one can reasonably doubt for instance that II 32–48, III 1–7, and III 25–50 form sections. The plan is most obscure at the beginning and it becomes clearer as one proceeds; generally speaking, it is clearer in the second half (II 13–end) than in the first half. The *Guide* is then not entirely devoted to secretly transmitting chapter headings of the secret teaching. This does not mean that the book is not in its entirety devoted to the true science of the Law. It means that the true science of the Law is partly public. This is not surprising, for the teaching of the Law itself is of necessity partly public. According to one statement, the core of the public teaching consists of the assertions that God is one, that He alone is to be worshipped, that He is incorporeal, that He is incomparable to any of His creatures and that He suffers from no defect and no passion (I 35). From other statements it would appear that the acceptance of the Law on every level of comprehension presupposes belief in God, in angels, and in prophecy (III 45) or that the basic beliefs are those in God's unity and in Creation

(II 13). In brief one may say that the public teaching of the Law in so far as it refers to beliefs or to "views," can be reduced to the thirteen "roots" (or dogmas) which Maimonides had put together in his Commentary on the Mishnah. That part of the true science of the Law which is devoted to the public teaching of the Law or which is itself public has the task of demonstrating the roots to the extent to which this is possible or of establishing the roots by means of speculation (III 51 and 54). Being speculative, that part of the true science of the Law is not exegetic; it is not necessarily in need of support by biblical or talmudic texts (cf. II 45 beginning). Accordingly, about 20 per cent of the chapters of the *Guide* contain no biblical quotations and about 9 per cent of them contain no Hebrew or Aramaic expressions whatever. It is not very difficult to see (especially on the basis of III 7 end, 23, and 28) that the *Guide* as devoted to speculation on the roots of the Law or to the public teaching consists of sections II-III and V-VI as indicated in our scheme and that the sequence of these sections is rational; but one cannot understand in this manner why the book is divided into three Parts, or what sections I, IV, and VII and most, not to say all, subsections mean. The teaching of the *Guide* is then neither entirely public or speculative nor is it entirely secret or exegetic. For this reason the plan of the *Guide* is neither entirely obscure nor entirely clear.

Yet the *Guide* is a single whole. What then is the bond uniting its exegetic and its speculative ingredients? One might imagine that while speculation demonstrates the roots of the Law, exegesis proves that those roots as demonstrated by speculation are in fact taught by the Law. But in that case the *Guide* would open with chapters devoted to speculation, yet the opposite is manifestly true. In addition, if the exegesis dealt with the same subject matter as that speculation which demonstrates the public teaching par excellence, namely, the roots of the Law, there would be no reason why the exegesis should be secret. Maimonides does say that the Account of the Beginning is the same as natural science and the Account of the Chariot is the same as divine science (i.e., the science of the incorporeal beings or of God and the angels). This might lead one to think that the public teaching is identical with what the philosophers teach, while the secret teaching makes one understand the identity of the teaching of the philosophers with the secret teaching of the Law. One can safely say that this thought proves to be untenable on almost every level of one's comprehending the *Guide*: the nonidentity of the teaching of the philosophers as a whole and the thirteen roots of the Law as a whole is the first word and the last word of Maimonides. What he means by identifying the core of philosophy (natural science and divine science) with the highest secrets of the Law (the Account of the Beginning and the Account of the Chariot) and therewith by somehow identifying the subject matter of

speculation with the subject matter of exegesis may be said to be the secret par excellence of the *Guide*.

Let us then retrace our steps. The *Guide* contains a public teaching and a secret teaching. The public teaching is addressed to every Jew including the vulgar; the secret teaching is addressed to the elite. The secret teaching is of no use to the vulgar and the elite does not need the *Guide* for being apprised of the public teaching. To the extent to which the *Guide* is a whole, or one work, it is addressed neither to the vulgar nor to the elite. To whom then is it addressed? How legitimate and important this question is appears from Maimonides' remark that the chief purpose of the *Guide* is to explain as far as possible the Account of the Beginning and the Account of the Chariot "with a view to him for whom (the book) has been composed" (III beginning). Maimonides answers our question both explicitly and implicitly. He answers it explicitly in two ways; he says on the one hand that the *Guide* is addressed to believing Jews who are perfect in their religion and in their character, have studied the sciences of the philosophers, and are perplexed by the literal meaning of the Law; he says on the other hand that the book is addressed to such perfect human beings as are Law students and perplexed. He answers our question more simply by dedicating the book to his disciple Joseph and by stating that it has been composed for Joseph and his like. Joseph had come to him "from the ends of the earth" and had studied under him for a while; the interruption of the oral instruction through Joseph's departure, which "God had decreed," induced Maimonides to write the *Guide* for Joseph and his like. In the Epistle Dedicatory addressed to Joseph, Maimonides extolls Joseph's virtues and indicates his limitation. Joseph had a passionate desire for things speculative and especially for mathematics. When he studied astronomy, mathematics, and logic under Maimonides, the teacher saw that Joseph had an excellent mind and a quick grasp; he thought him therefore fit to have revealed to him allusively the secrets of the books of the prophets and he began to make such revelations. This stimulated Joseph's interest in things divine as well as in an appraisal of the Kalām; his desire for knowledge about these subjects became so great that Maimonides was compelled to warn him unceasingly to proceed in an orderly manner. It appears that Joseph was inclined to proceed impatiently or unmethodically in his study and that this defect had not been cured when he left Maimonides. The most important consequence of Joseph's defect is the fact, brought out by Maimonides' silence, that Joseph turned to divine science without having studied natural science under Maimonides or before, although natural science necessarily precedes divine science in the order of study.

The impression derived from the Epistle Dedicatory is confirmed by the book itself. Maimonides frequently addresses the reader by using expressions like "know"

or "you know already." Expressions of the latter kind indicate what the typical addressee knows and expressions of the former kind indicate what he does not know. One thus learns that Joseph has some knowledge of both the content and the character of divine science. He knows for example that divine science in contradistinction to mathematics and medicine requires an extreme of rectitude and moral perfection, and in particular of humility, but he apparently does not yet know how ascetic Judaism is in matters of sex (I 34; III 52). He had learned from Maimonides' "speech" that the orthodox "views" do not last in a man if he does not confirm them by the corresponding "actions" (II 31). It goes without saying that while his knowledge of the Jewish sources is extensive, it is not comparable in extent and thoroughness to Maimonides' (II 26, 33). At the beginning of the book he does not know that both according to the Jewish view and according to demonstration, angels have no bodies (I 43, 49) and he certainly does not know, strictly speaking, that God has no body (I 9). In this respect as well as in other respects his understanding necessarily progresses while he advances in his study of the *Guide* (cf. I 65 beginning). As for natural science, he has studied astronomy but is not aware of the conflict between the astronomical principles and the principles of natural science (II 24), because he has not studied natural science. He knows a number of things that are made clear in natural science, but this does not mean that he knows them through having studied natural science (cf. I 17, 28; III 10). From the ninety-first chapter (II 15) it appears that while he knows Aristotle's *Topics* and Fārābī's commentary on that work, he does not know the *Physics* and *On the Heaven* (cf. II 8). Nor will he acquire the science of nature as he acquires the science of God and the angels while he advances in the study of the *Guide*. For the *Guide*, which is addressed to a reader not conversant with natural science, does not itself transmit natural science (II 2). The following remark occurring in the twenty-sixth chapter is particularly revealing: "It has been demonstrated that everything moved undoubtedly possesses a magnitude and is divisible; and it will be demonstrated that God possesses no magnitude and hence possesses no motion." What "has been demonstrated" has been demonstrated in the *Physics* and is simply presupposed in the *Guide*; what "will be demonstrated" belongs to divine science and not to natural science; but that which "will be demonstrated" is built on what "has been demonstrated." The student of the *Guide* acquires knowledge of divine science but not of natural science. The author of the *Guide* in contradistinction to its addressee is thoroughly versed in natural science. Still, the addressee needs some awareness of the whole in order to be able to ascend from the whole to God, for there is no way to knowledge of God except through such ascent (I 71 toward the end); he acquires that awareness through a report of some kind (I 70) that Maimonides has inserted into the *Guide*. It is characteristic of that report

that it does not contain a single mention of philosophy in general and of natural science in particular. The serious student cannot rest satisfied with that report; he must turn from it to natural science itself, which demonstrates what the report merely asserts. Maimonides cannot but leave it to his reader whether he will turn to genuine speculation or whether he will be satisfied with accepting the report on the authority of Maimonides and with building on that report theological conclusions. The addressee of the *Guide* is a man regarding whom it is still undecided whether he will become a genuine man of speculation or whether he will remain a follower of authority, if of Maimonides' authority (cf. I 72 end). He stands at the point of the road where speculation branches off from acceptance of authority.

Why did Maimonides choose an addressee of this description? What is the virtue of not being trained in natural science? We learn from the seventeenth chapter that natural science had already been treated as a secret doctrine by the pagan philosophers "upon whom the charge of corruption would not be laid if they exposed natural science clearly": all the more is the community of the Law-adherents obliged to treat natural science as a secret science. The reason why natural science is dangerous and is kept secret "with all kinds of artifices" is not that it undermines the Law—only the ignorant believe that (I 33), and Maimonides' whole life as well as the life of his successors refutes this suspicion. Yet it is also true that natural science has this corrupting effect on all men who are not perfect (cf. I 62). For natural science surely affects the understanding of the meaning of the Law, of the grounds on which it is to be obeyed and of the weight that is to be attached to its different parts. In a word, natural science upsets habits. By addressing a reader who is not conversant with natural science, Maimonides is compelled to proceed in a manner that does not upset habits or does so to the smallest possible degree. He acts as a moderate or conservative man.

But we must not forget that the *Guide* is written also for atypical addressees. In the first place, certain chapters of the *Guide* are explicitly said to be useful also for those who are simply beginners. Since the whole book is somehow accessible to the vulgar, it must have been written in such a way as not to be harmful to the vulgar (I Introd.; III 29). Besides, the book is also meant to be useful to such men of great intelligence as have been trained fully in all philosophic sciences and as are not in the habit of bowing to any authority—in other words, to men not inferior to Maimonides in their critical faculty. Readers of this kind will be unable to bow to Maimonides' authority; they will examine all his assertions, speculative or exegetic, with all reasonable severity; and they will derive great pleasure from all chapters of the *Guide* (I Introd.; I 55, 68 end, 73, tenth premise).

How much Maimonides' choice of his typical addressee affects the plan of his book will be seen by the judicious reader glancing at our scheme. It suffices to

mention that no section or subsection of the *Guide* is devoted to the bodies that do not come into being and perish (cf. III 8 beginning, and I 11), i.e., to the heavenly bodies, which according to Maimonides possess life and knowledge, or to "the holy bodies," to use the bold expression used by him in his Code (*M.T.*, H. Yesodei ha-Torah IV 12). In other words, no section or subsection of the *Guide* is devoted to the Account of the Beginning in the manner in which a section is devoted to the Account of the Chariot. More important, Maimonides' choice of his typical addressee is the key to the whole plan of the *Guide*, to the apparent lack of order or to the obscurity of the plan. The plan of the *Guide* appears to be obscure only so long as one does not consider the kind of reader for which the book is written or so long as one seeks for an order agreeing with the essential order of subject matter. We recall the order of the sciences: logic precedes mathematics, mathematics precedes natural science, and natural science precedes divine science; and we recall that while Joseph was sufficiently trained in logic and mathematics, he is supposed to be introduced into divine science without having been trained properly in natural science. Maimonides must therefore seek for a substitute for natural science. He finds that substitute in the traditional Jewish beliefs and ultimately in the biblical texts correctly interpreted: the immediate preparation for divine science in the *Guide* is exegetic rather than speculative. Furthermore, Maimonides wishes to proceed in a manner that changes habits to the smallest possible degree. He himself tells us which habit is in particular need of being changed. After having reported the opinion of a pagan philosopher on the obstacles to speculation, he adds the remark that there exists now an obstacle that the ancient philosopher had not mentioned because it did not exist in his society: the habit of relying on revered "texts," i.e., on their literal meaning (I 31). It is for this reason that he opens his book with the explanation of biblical terms, i.e., with showing that their true meaning is not always their literal meaning. He cures the vicious habit in question by having recourse to another habit of his addressee. The addressee was accustomed not only to accept the literally understood biblical texts as true but also in many cases to understand biblical texts according to traditional interpretations that differed considerably from the literal meaning. Being accustomed to listen to authoritative interpretations of biblical texts, he is prepared to listen to Maimonides' interpretations as authoritative interpretations. The explanation of biblical terms that is given by Maimonides authoritatively is in the circumstances the natural substitute for natural science.

But which biblical terms deserve primary consideration? In other words, what is the initial theme of the *Guide*? The choice of the initial theme is dictated by the right answer to the question of which theme is the most urgent for the typical addressee and at the same time the least upsetting to him. The first theme of the

*Guide* is God's incorporeality. God's incorporeality is the third of the three most fundamental truths, the preceding ones being the existence of God and His unity. The existence of God and His unity were admitted as unquestionable by all Jews; all Jews as Jews know that God exists and that He is one, and they know this through the biblical revelation or the biblical miracles. One can say that because belief in the biblical revelation precedes speculation, and the discovery of the true meaning of revelation is the task of exegesis, exegesis precedes speculation. But regarding God's incorporeality there existed a certain confusion. The biblical texts suggest that God is corporeal and the interpretation of these texts is not a very easy task (II 25, 31, III 28). God's incorporeality is indeed a demonstrable truth but, to say nothing of others, the addressee of the *Guide* does not come into the possession of the demonstration until he has advanced into the Second Part (cf. I 1, 9, 18). The necessity to refute "corporealism" (the belief that God is corporeal) does not merely arise from the fact that corporealism is demonstrably untrue: corporealism is dangerous because it endangers the belief shared by all Jews in God's unity (I 35). On the other hand, by teaching that God is incorporeal, one does not do more than to give expression to what the talmudic Sages believed (I 46). However, the Jewish authority who had given the most consistent and the most popularly effective expression to the belief in God's incorporeality was Onkelos the Stranger, for the primary preoccupation of his translation of the Torah into Aramaic, which Joseph knew as a matter of course, was precisely to dispose of the corporealistic suggestions of the original (I 21, 27, 28, 36 end). Maimonides' innovation is then limited to his deviation from Onkelos' procedure: he does explicitly what Onkelos did implicitly; whereas Onkelos tacitly substituted noncorporealistic terms for the corporealistic terms occurring in the original, Maimonides explicitly discusses each of the terms in question by itself in an order that has no correspondence to the accidental sequence of their occurrence in the Bible. As a consequence, the discussion of corporealism in the *Guide* consists chiefly of a discussion of the various biblical terms suggesting corporealism, and, vice versa, the chief subject of what Maimonides declares to be the primary purpose of the *Guide*, namely, the explanation of biblical terms, is the explanation of biblical terms suggesting corporealism. This is not surprising. There are no biblical terms that suggest that God is not one, whereas there are many biblical terms that suggest that God is corporeal: the apparent difficulty created by the plural *Elohim* can be disposed of by a single sentence or by a single reference to Onkelos (I 2).

The chief reason why it is so urgent to establish the belief in God's incorporeality, however, is supplied by the fact that that belief is destructive of idolatry. It was of course universally known that idolatry is a very grave sin, nay, that the Law has, so to speak, no other purpose than to destroy idolatry (I 35, III 29 end).

But this evil can be completely eradicated only if everyone is brought to know that God has no visible shape whatever or that He is incorporeal. Only if God is incorporeal is it absurd to make images of God and to worship such images. Only under this condition can it become manifest to everyone that the only image of God is man, living and thinking man, and that man acts as the image of God only through worshipping the invisible or hidden God alone. Not idolatry but the belief in God's corporeality is a fundamental sin. Hence the sin of idolatry is less grave than the sin of believing that God is corporeal (I 36). This being the case, it becomes indispensable that God's incorporeality be believed in by everyone whether or not he knows by demonstration that God is incorporeal. With regard to the majority of men it is sufficient and necessary that they believe in this truth on the basis of authority or tradition, i.e., on a basis that the first subsections of the *Guide* are meant to supply. The teaching of God's incorporeality by means of authoritative exegesis, i.e., the most public teaching of God's incorporeality, is indispensable for destroying the last relics of paganism: the immediate source of paganism is less the ignorance of God's unity than the ignorance of His radical incorporeality (cf. I 36 with *M.T.*, H. 'Abodah Zarah I 1).

It is necessary that we understand the character of the reasoning that Maimonides uses when he determines the initial theme of the *Guide*. We limit ourselves to a consideration of the second reason demanding the teaching of Incorporeality. While the belief in Unity leads immediately to the rejection of the worship of "other gods" but not to the rejection of the worship of images of the one God, the belief in Incorporeality leads immediately only to the rejection of the worship of images or of other bodies but not to the rejection of the worship of other gods: all gods may be incorporeal. Only if the belief in God's incorporeality is based on the belief in His unity, as Maimonides' argument indeed assumes, does the belief in God's incorporeality appear to be the necessary and sufficient ground for rejecting "forbidden worship" in every form, i.e., the worship of other gods as well as the worship of both natural things and artificial things. This would mean that the prohibition against idolatry in the widest sense is as much a dictate of reason as the belief in God's unity and incorporeality. Yet Maimonides indicates that only the theoretical truths pronounced in the Decalogue (God's existence and His unity), in contradistinction to the rest of the Decalogue, are rational. This is in agreement with his denying the existence of rational commandments or prohibitions as such (II 33; cf. I 54, II 31 beginning, III 28; *Eight Chapters* VI). Given the fact that Aristotle believed in God's unity and incorporeality and yet was an idolater (I 71, III 29), Maimonides' admiration for him would be incomprehensible if the rejection of idolatry were the simple consequence of that belief. According to Maimonides, the Law agrees with Aristotle in

holding that the heavenly bodies are endowed with life and intelligence and that they are superior to man in dignity; one could say that he agrees with Aristotle in implying that those holy bodies deserve more than man to be called images of God. But unlike the philosophers he does not go so far as to call those bodies "divine bodies" (II 4-6; cf. Letter to Ibn Tibbon). The true ground of the rejection of "forbidden worship" is the belief in creation out of nothing, which implies that creation is an absolutely free act of God or that God alone is the complete good that is in no way increased by creation. But creation is according to Maimonides not demonstrable, whereas God's unity and incorporeality are demonstrable. The reasoning underlying the determination of the initial theme of the *Guide* can then be described as follows: it conceals the difference of cognitive status between the belief in God's unity and incorporeality on the one hand and the belief in creation on the other; it is in accordance with the opinion of the Kalām. In accordance with this, Maimonides brings his disagreement with the Kalām into the open only after he has concluded his thematic discussion of God's incorporeality; in that discussion he does not even mention the Kalām.

It is necessary that we understand as clearly as possible the situation in which Maimonides and his addressee find themselves at the beginning of the book, if not throughout the book. Maimonides knows that God is incorporeal; he knows this by a demonstration that is at least partly based on natural science. The addressee does not know that God is incorporeal; nor does he learn it yet from Maimonides: he accepts the fact that God's incorporeality is demonstrated, on Maimonides' authority. Both Maimonides and the addressee know that the Law is a source of knowledge of God; only the Law can establish God's incorporeality for the addressee in a manner that does not depend on Maimonides' authority. But both know that the literal meaning of the Law is not always its true meaning and that the literal meaning is certainly not the true meaning when it contradicts reason, for otherwise the Law could not be "your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations" (Deut. 4:6). Both know in other words that exegesis does not simply precede speculation. Yet only Maimonides knows that the corporealistic expressions of the Law are against reason and must therefore be taken as figurative. The addressee does not know and cannot know that Maimonides' figurative interpretations of those expressions are true: Maimonides does not adduce arguments based on grammar. The addressee accepts Maimonides' interpretations just as he is in the habit of accepting the Aramaic translations as correct translations or interpretations. Maimonides enters the ranks of the traditional Jewish authorities: he simply tells the addressee what to believe regarding the meaning of the biblical terms. Maimonides introduces Reason in the guise of Authority. He takes on the garb of authority. He tells the addressee to believe in

God's incorporeality because, as he tells him, contrary to appearance, the Law does not teach corporeality, because, as he tells him, corporeality is a demonstrably wrong belief.

But we must not forget the most important atypical addressee, the reader who is critical and competent. He knows the demonstration of God's incorporeality and the problems connected with it as well as Maimonides does. Therefore the exegetic discussion of God's incorporeality which is presented in the first forty-nine chapters of the *Guide*, and which is pre-speculative and hence simply public as far as the typical addressee is concerned, is post-speculative and hence secret from the point of view of the critical and competent reader. The latter will examine Maimonides' explanations of biblical terms in the light of the principle that one cannot establish the meanings of a term if one does not consider the contexts in which they occur (II 29; cf. *Epistle to Yemen* 46, 7 ff.) or that while grammar is not a sufficient condition, it is surely the necessary condition of interpretation. For while the competent reader will appreciate the advantages attendant upon a coherent discussion of the biblical terms in question as distinguished from a translation of the Bible, he will realize that such a discussion may make one oblivious of the contexts in which the terms occur. He will also notice contradictions occurring in the *Guide*, remember always that they are intentional, and ponder over them.

The readers of the *Guide* were told at the beginning that the first purpose of the book is the explanation of biblical terms. They will then in no way be surprised to find that the book opens with the explanation of biblical terms in such a way that, roughly speaking, each chapter is devoted to the explanation of one or several biblical terms. They will soon become habituated to this procedure: they become engrossed by the subject matter, the What, and will not observe the How. The critical reader, however, will find many reasons for becoming amazed. To say nothing of other considerations, he will wonder why almost the only terms explained are those suggesting corporeality. It is perhaps not a matter of surprise that one chapter is devoted to the explanation of "place" and another to the explanation of "to dwell." But why is there no chapter devoted to "one," none to "merciful," none to "good," none to "intelligence," none to "eternity"? Why is there a chapter devoted to "grief" and none to "laughter"? Why is there a chapter devoted to "foot" and another to "wing" but none to "hand" nor to "arm"? Assuming that one has understood Maimonides' selection of terms, one still has to understand the order in which he discusses them. To what extent the explanation of terms is limited to terms suggesting corporeality, appears with particular clarity when one considers especially those chapters that are most visibly devoted to the explanation of terms, the lexicographic chapters. By a lexicographic chapter I understand a chapter that opens with the Hebrew term or terms to be explained

in the chapter regardless of whether these terms precede the first sentence or form the beginning of the first sentence, and regardless of whether these terms are supplied with the Arabic article *al-* or not. The lexicographic chapter may be said to be the normal or typical chapter in the discussion of God's incorporeality (I 1-49); thirty out of the forty-nine chapters in question are lexicographic whereas in the whole rest of the book there occur at most two such chapters (I 66 and 70). All these thirty chapters occur in I 1-45: two thirds of the chapters in I 1-45 are lexicographic. Thus the question arises why nineteen chapters of the discussion of God's incorporeality—and just the nineteen chapters having both the subject matters and the places that they do—are not lexicographic. Why do ten of these thirty lexicographic chapters begin with Hebrew terms preceding the first sentence and twenty of them begin with Hebrew terms forming part of the first sentence? Thirteen of the terms in question are nouns, twelve are verbs and five are verbal nouns: why does Maimonides in some cases use the verbs and in other cases the verbal nouns? Within the chapters, generally speaking, he discusses the term that is the subject of the chapter in question, first in regard to the various meanings it has when it is not applied to God and then in regard to the various meanings it has when applied to God; he proves the existence of each of these meanings in most cases by quoting one or more biblical passages; those quotations are sometimes explicitly incomplete (ending in "and so on") and more frequently not; the quotations used to illustrate a particular meaning of a particular term do not always follow the biblical order; they are frequently introduced by "he said" but sometimes they are ascribed to individual biblical authors or speakers; in most cases he does not add to the name of the biblical author or speaker the formula "may he rest in peace," but in some cases he does; sometimes "the Hebrew language" or "the language" is referred to. In a book as carefully worded as is the *Guide* according to Maimonides' emphatic declaration, all these varieties, and others that we forgo mentioning, deserve careful consideration. It goes without saying that there is not necessarily only one answer to each of the questions implied in each of these varieties; the same device—e.g., the distinction between lexicographic and nonlexicographic chapters or the tracing of a biblical quotation to an individual biblical author—may fulfill different functions in different contexts. In order to understand the *Guide*, one must be fully awake and as it were take nothing for granted. In order to become enabled to raise the proper questions, one does well to consider the possibility that there exists the typical chapter or else to construct the typical chapter, i.e., to find out which of the varieties indicated are most in accordance with the primary function of the chapters devoted to the explanation of biblical terms: only the other varieties are in need of a special reason.



The first chapter of the *Guide* is devoted to "image and likeness." The selection of these terms was necessitated by a single biblical passage: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. . . . So God created man in his image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them" (Gen. 1:26-27). The selection of these terms for explanation in the first chapter is due to the unique significance of the passage quoted. That passage suggests to the vulgar mind more strongly than any other biblical passage that God is corporeal in the crudest sense: God has the shape of a human being, has a face, lips, and hands, but is bigger and more resplendent than man since He does not consist of flesh and blood, and is therefore in need, not of food and drink, but of odors; His place is in Heaven from which He descends to the earth, especially to high mountains, in order to guide men and to find out what they do, and to which He ascends again with incredible swiftness; He is moved, as men are, by passions, especially by anger, jealousy, and hate, and thus makes men frightened and sad; His essence is Will rather than Intellect. (Cf. I 10, 20, 36-37, 39, 43, 46, 47, 58.) Maimonides tells his addressee that *selem* (the Hebrew term which is rendered by "image") does not mean, if not exactly in any case, but certainly in the present case, a visible shape; it means the natural form, the specific form, the essence of a being: "God created man in his image" means that God created man as a being endowed with intellect or that the divine intellect links itself with man. Similar considerations apply to the Hebrew term rendered by "likeness." The Hebrew term designating form in the sense of visible shape is *to'ar*, which is never applied to God. After having dispelled the confusion regarding "image" Maimonides says: "We have explained to thee the difference between *selem* and *to'ar* and we have explained the meaning of *selem*." He thus alludes to the twofold character of his explanation here as well as elsewhere: one explanation is given to "thee," i.e., to the typical addressee, and another is given to indeterminate readers; the latter explanation comes to sight only when one considers, among other things, the context of all biblical passages quoted. To mention only one example, the second of the three quotations illustrating the meaning of *to'ar* is "What form is he of?" (I Sam. 28:14). The quotation is taken from the account of King Saul's conversation with the witch of Endor, whom the king had asked to bring up to him the dead prophet Samuel; when the woman saw Samuel and became frightened and the king asked her what she saw, she said: "I saw gods (*elohim*) ascending out of the earth." The account continues as follows: "And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said: an old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle." Maimonides himself tells us in the next chapter that *elohim* is an equivocal term that may mean angels and rulers of cities as well as God; but this does not explain why that term is also applied to the shades of the venerable departed—beings

without flesh and blood—which frighten men either because those shades do not wish to be "disquieted," i.e., they wish to rest in peace, or for other reasons. To say nothing of other reasons, the rational beings inhabiting the lowest depth are in truth not men who have died, but all living men, the Adamites, i.e., the descendants of Adam, who lack Adam's pristine intellectuality (cf. I 2 with I 10). It looks as if Maimonides wished to draw our attention to the fact that the Bible contains idolatrous, pagan, or "Sabian" relics. If this suspicion should prove to be justified, we would have to assume that his fight against "forbidden worship" and hence against corporealism is more radical than one would be inclined to believe or that the recovery of Sabian relics in the Bible with the help of Sabian literature is one of the tasks of his secret teaching. However this may be, his interpretation of Genesis 1:26 seems to be contradicted by the fact that the Torah speaks shortly afterward of the divine prohibition addressed to Man against eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge: if Man was created as an intellectual being and hence destined for the life of the intellect, his Creator could not well have forbidden him to strive for knowledge. In other words, the biblical account implies that man's intellectuality is not identical with man's being created in the image of God but is a consequence of his disobedience to God or of God's punishing him for that sin. As we are told in the second chapter, this objection was raised not by the addressee of the *Guide* but by another acquaintance of Maimonides, a nameless scientist of whom we do not even know whether he was of Jewish extraction and who was apparently not very temperate in regard to drink and to sex. (Compare the parallel in III 19.) Maimonides tells his addressee that he replied to his objector as follows: the knowledge that was forbidden to Man was the knowledge of "good and evil," i.e., of the noble and base, and the noble and base are objects not of the intellect but of opinion; strictly speaking they are not objects of knowledge at all. To mention only the most important example, in Man's perfect state, in which he was unaware of the noble and base, although he was aware of the naturally good and bad, i.e., of the pleasant and painful, he did not regard the uncovering of one's nakedness as disgraceful. After having thus disposed of the most powerful objection to his interpretation of Genesis 1:26, or after having thus taught that the intellectual life is beyond the noble and base, Maimonides turns to the second most important passage of the Torah that seems to suggest that God is corporeal. More precisely, he turns both to the terms applied in that passage to God and to kindred terms. The passage, which occurs in Numbers 12:8, reads as follows: "he (Moses) beholds the figure of the Lord." He devotes to this subject three chapters (I 3-5); in I 3 he discusses explicitly the three meanings of "figure" and in I 4 he discusses explicitly the three meanings of the three terms designating "beholding" or "seeing"; in one of the biblical passages partly quoted, the Lord is

presented as having appeared to Abraham in the guise of three men who yet were one. Maimonides tells the addressee that the Hebrew terms designating "figure" and "beholding" (or its equivalents) mean, when they are applied to God, intellectual truth and intellectual grasp. The relation of I 5 to I 3-4 resembles the relation of I 2 and I 1. The view that man was created for the life of the intellect was contradicted by the apparent prohibition against acquiring knowledge. Similarly, "the prince of the philosophers" (i.e., Aristotle) apparently contradicts his view that man exists for the life of the intellect by apologizing for his engaging in the investigation of very obscure matters: Aristotle apologizes to his readers for his apparent temerity; in fact, he is prompted only by his desire to know the truth. This restatement of an Aristotelian utterance affords an easy transition to the Jewish view according to which Moses was rewarded with beholding the figure of the Lord because he had previously "hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God" (Exod. 3:6). The pursuit of knowledge of God must be preceded by fear of looking upon God or, to use the expression that Aristotle had used in the passage in question (*On the Heaven* 291b 21 ff.) and that does not occur in Maimonides' summary, by sense of shame: the intellectual perfection is necessarily preceded by moral perfection—by one's having acquired the habit of doing the noble and avoiding the base—as well as by other preparations. Maimonides' emphasis here on moral perfection, especially on temperance, as a prerequisite of intellectual perfection is matched by his silence here on natural science as such a prerequisite. The weeding-out of corporealism proceeds *pari passu* with the watering of asceticism. Having arrived at this point, Maimonides does something strange: he abruptly turns to the explanation of the terms "man and woman" (I 6) and "to generate" (I 7). The strangeness, however, immediately disappears once one observes that I 6-7 are the first lexicographic chapters after I 1 and one remembers that I 2 is merely a corollary of I 1: the explanation of "man and woman" and of "to generate" forms part of the explanation of Genesis 1:26-27. There it is said that "in the image of God created (God man); male and female created he them." Literally understood, that saying might be thought to mean that man is the image of God because he is bisexual or that the Godhead contains a male and a female element that generate "children of God" and the like. Accordingly, the last word of I 7 is the same as the first word of I 1: "image." Maimonides does not discuss the implication which was stated, for it is one of the secrets of the Torah and we are only at the beginning of our training. The explanation of the key terms (or their equivalents) occurring in Genesis 1:26-27 surrounds then the explanation of the key terms (or their equivalents) occurring in Numbers 12:8. The discussion of the most important passages of the Torah regarding incorporeality forms the fitting subject of the first subsection of the *Guide*. That subsection seems to be devoted to

five unconnected groups of terms; closer inspection shows that it is devoted to two biblical passages: Maimonides seems to hesitate to sever the umbilical cord connecting his exegesis with Onkelos'.

At first glance the theme of the second subsection is much easier to recognize than that of the first. This seems to be due to the fact that that theme is not two or more biblical passages but biblical terms designating phenomena all of which belong essentially together: place as well as certain outstanding places, occupying place, changing place, and the organs for changing place. Nineteen of the twenty-one chapters of the second subsection are manifestly devoted to this theme. The discussion begins with "place" (I 8), turns to "throne" (I 9), a most exalted place that if ascribed to God designates not only the temple but also and above all the heaven, and then turns to "descending and ascending" (I 10). While this sequence is perfectly lucid, we are amazed to find that, whereas I 8 and 9 are lexicographic chapters, I 10 is not a lexicographic chapter. This irregularity can be provisionally explained as follows: when Maimonides treats thematically several verbs in one lexicographic chapter, those verbs are explicitly said to have the same or nearly the same meaning (I 15, 18); when he treats thematically verbs that primarily designate opposites but do not designate opposites if applied to God, he treats them in separate chapters (I 11, 12, 22, 23); but "descending" and "ascending" designate opposites both in their primary meaning and if applied to God: God's descending means both His revealing Himself and His punitive action, and His ascending means the cessation of His revelation or punitive action (cf. the silence on "returning" at the beginning of I 23). Maimonides indicates the unique character of the subject "descent and ascent" by treating it in a nonlexicographic chapter surrounded on the one side by four and on the other side by three lexicographic chapters. On the basis of "the vulgar imagination" God's natural state would be sitting on His throne and sitting is the opposite of rising. "Sitting" and "rising" (I 11 and 12) designate opposites but do not designate opposites if applied to God: although God's "sitting" refers to His unchangeability, His "rising" refers to His keeping His promises or threats, it being understood that His promises to Israel may very well be threats to Israel's enemies. A talmudic passage that confirms Maimonides' public explanation and in which "sitting" is mentioned together, not with "rising," but with "standing up" naturally leads to the discussion of "standing up" (I 13), which term, according to Maimonides, means if applied to God His unchangeability, an unchangeability not contradicted, as he indicates, by God's threats to destroy Israel.

Having arrived at this point, Maimonides interrupts his discussion of verbs or of other terms that refer to place and turns to the explanation of "man" (I 14). A similar interruption occurs shortly afterwards when he turns from "standing" and "rock" (I 15 and 16) to an explanation of the prohibition against

the public teaching of natural science (I 17). Although these chapters are subtly interwoven with the chapters preceding and following them, at first glance they strikingly interrupt the continuity of the argument. By this irregularity our attention is drawn to a certain numerical symbolism that is of assistance to the serious reader of the *Guide*: 14 stands for man or the human things and 17 stands for nature. The connection between "nature" and "change of place" (or, more generally, motion), and therewith the connection between the theme of I 17 and the subsection to which that chapter belongs, has been indicated before. The connection between "14" and the context cannot become clear before we have reached a better understanding of the relation between nature and convention; at present it must suffice to say that I 7 deals with "to generate." Although I 26 obviously deals with terms referring to place, it also fulfills a numerological function: the immediate theme of that chapter is the universal principle governing the interpretation of the Torah ("the Torah speaks according to the language of human beings"); 26 is the numerical equivalent of the secret name of the Lord, the God of Israel; 26 may therefore also stand for His Torah. Incidentally, it may be remarked that 14 is the numerical equivalent of the Hebrew for "hard"; I 28 is devoted to "foot": no chapter of the *Guide* is devoted to "hand," the characteristically human organ, whereas Maimonides devotes a chapter, the central chapter of the fourth subsection, to "wing," the organ used for swift descent and ascent. In all these matters one can derive great help from studying Joseph Albo's *Roots*. Albo was a favorite companion living at the court of a great king.

Of the twenty-one chapters of the second subsection sixteen are lexicographic and five (I 10, 14, 17, 26, 27) are not. Of these sixteen chapters two begin with Hebrew terms supplied with the Arabic article (I 23 and 24). Thus only seven of the twenty-one chapters may be said to vary from the norm. In seven of the fourteen chapters beginning with a pure Hebrew term, that term precedes the first sentence and in the seven others the Hebrew term forms part of the first sentence. Seven of these chapters begin with a verb and seven with a noun or a verbal noun. It is one thing to observe these regularities and another thing to understand them. The distinction between the verbs and the verbal nouns is particularly striking, since lexicographic chapters beginning with verbal nouns occur only in our subsection. Furthermore, of the three lexicographic chapters of the first subsection, one opens with nouns preceding the first sentence, one with nouns forming part of the first sentence, and one with a verb preceding the first sentence; orderliness would seem to require that there be a chapter opening with a verb that forms part of the first sentence. One of the chapters of the second subsection (I 22) begins with a verb preceding the first sentence but the first sentence opens with the verbal noun (supplied with the Arabic article) of the same verb; there occurs no other

case of this kind in the whole book. If we count this ambiguous chapter among the chapters beginning with a verbal noun forming part of the first sentence, we reach this conclusion: the second subsection contains four chapters beginning with verbs or verbal nouns preceding the first sentence and eight chapters beginning with verbs or verbal nouns forming part of the first sentence. Furthermore, the second subsection contains six chapters beginning with verbs and six chapters beginning with verbal nouns; of the latter six chapters three begin with pure verbal nouns and three begin with verbal nouns supplied with the Arabic article. The second subsection surpasses the first subsection in regularity especially if I 22 is properly subsumed. From all this we are led to regard it as possible that I 22 somehow holds the key to the mystery of the second subsection.

The first chapter of the second subsection (I 8) is devoted to "place," a term that in post-biblical Hebrew is used for designating God Himself. To our great amazement Maimonides is completely silent about this meaning of "place." His silence is all the more eloquent since he quotes in this very chapter post-biblical Hebrew expressions containing "place," since he admonishes the readers in this very chapter to consult regarding his explanation of any term not only "the books of prophecy" but also other "compilations of men of science" — Talmud and Midrash are such compilations — and since he had concluded the preceding chapter with a quotation from the Midrash. In the only other lexicographic chapter devoted to a term used for designating God Himself — in I 16, which is devoted to "rock" — he does not hesitate to say that that term is also used for designating God, for that meaning of "rock" is biblical. We see then how literally he meant his declaration that the first intention of the *Guide* is to explain terms occurring in "the books of prophecy," i.e., primarily in the Bible: he is primarily concerned with the theology of the Bible in contradistinction to post-biblical Jewish theology. He is alive to the question raised by the Karaites. As he puts it, not only does criticism of the talmudic Sages do no harm to them — it does not even do any harm to the critic or rather to the foundations of belief (I Intro., 5 end, 19 end, 46 end; cf. *Resurrection* 29, 10–30, 15 Finkel). This observation enables us to solve the difficulty presented by I 22.

I 18–21 opened with verbs; I 22 marks the transition from chapters opening with verbs to chapters opening with verbal nouns supplied with the Arabic article; I 23–24 open with verbal nouns supplied with the Arabic article. I 25 opens again with a verb. That verb is "to dwell." The transition made in I 22 and the procedure in I 23–24 make us expect that I 25 should open with the verbal noun "the dwelling," the *Shekhinah*, the post-biblical term particularly used for God's Indwelling on earth, but this expectation is disappointed. Maimonides makes all these preparations in order to let us see that he is anxious to avoid as a

chapter heading the term *Shekhinah*, which does not occur in the Bible in any sense, and to avoid the Hebrew term *Shekhinah* in its theological sense within the most appropriate chapter itself: when speaking there of the *Shekhinah* theologically, he uses the Arabic translation of *Shekhinah* but never that Hebrew term itself. He does use the Hebrew term *Shekhinah* in a theological meaning in a number of other chapters, but *Shekhinah* never becomes a theme of the *Guide*: there are no "chapters on the *Shekhinah*" as there are "chapters on providence" or "chapters on governance" (I 40 and 44). It should also be noted that the chapter devoted to "wing" does not contain a single reference to the *Shekhinah* (cf. particularly Maimonides' and Ibn Janāh's explanation of Isaiah 30:20 with the Targum *ad loc.*). In the chapter implicitly devoted to the *Shekhinah*, which is the central chapter of the part devoted to Incorporeality (I 1-49), Maimonides had mentioned the *Shekhinah* together with providence, but *Shekhinah* and providence are certainly not identical (cf. I 10 and 23). One should pay particular attention to the treatment of the *Shekhinah* in the chapters obviously devoted to providence strictly understood (III 17-18 and 22-23). With some exaggeration one may say that whereas the *Shekhinah* follows Israel, providence follows the intellect. In other words, it is characteristic of the *Guide* that in it *Shekhinah* as a theological theme is replaced by "providence," and "providence" in its turn to some extent by "governance," "governance" being as it were the translation of *Merkabah* ("Chariot"), as appears from I 70. Needless to say, it is not in vain that Maimonides uses the Arabic article at the beginning of I 23 and 24. He thus connects I 23 and 24 and the context of these chapters with the only other group of chapters all of which begin with a Hebrew term supplied with the Arabic article: III 36-49. That group of chapters deals with the individual biblical commandments, i.e., with their literal meaning rather than their extra-biblical interpretation, as is indicated in the chapter (III 41) that stands out from the rest of the group for more than one reason and that is devoted to the penal law. One reason why that chapter stands out is that it is the only chapter whose summary, in III 35, is adorned with a biblical quotation, III 35 being the chapter that serves as the immediate introduction to III 36-49. To repeat, the second subsection of the *Guide* draws our attention to the difference between the biblical and the post-biblical Jewish teaching or to the question raised by the Karaites. Maimonides, it need hardly be said, answered that question in favor of the Rabbanites, although not necessarily in their spirit. It suffices to remember that not only *Shekhinah* but also "providence" and "governance" are not biblical terms.

Like the first subsection, the second subsection is based on two biblical passages, although not as visibly and as clearly as the first. The passages are Exodus 33:20-23 and Isaiah 6. In the former passage the Lord says to Moses:

"Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me, and live: . . . thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen." Accordingly, Moses sees only the Lord's "glory pass by." In the latter passage Isaiah says: "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up. . . . Mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts." Isaiah does not speak, as Moses did, of "the figure of the Lord" or of "the image of God." Nor is it said of Isaiah, as it is said of Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: "they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet etc. . . . And the nobles of the children of Israel . . . saw God, and did eat and drink" and thus suggested that the vision was imperfect (cf. I 5 with Albo's *Roots* III 17). We are thus induced to believe that Isaiah reached a higher stage in the knowledge of God than Moses or that Isaiah's vision marks a progress beyond Moses'. At first hearing, this belief is justly rejected as preposterous, not to say blasphemous: the denial of the supremacy of Moses' prophecy seems to lead to the denial of the ultimacy of Moses' Law, and therefore Maimonides does not tire of asserting the supremacy of Moses' prophecy. But the belief in the ultimacy of Moses' Law and even in the supremacy of Moses' prophecy in no way contradicts the belief in a certain superiority of Isaiah's speeches to Moses' speeches—to say nothing of the fact that Maimonides never denied that he deliberately contradicts himself. The following example may prove to be helpful. In his *Treatise on Resurrection*, Maimonides teaches that resurrection, one of the thirteen roots of the Law, is clearly taught within the Bible only in the book of Daniel, but certainly not in the Torah. He explains this apparently strange fact as follows: at the time when the Torah was given, all men, and hence also our ancestors, were Sabians, believing in the eternity of the world, for they believed that God is the spirit of the sphere, and denying the possibility of revelation and of miracles; hence a very long period of education and habituation was needed until our ancestors could be brought even to consider believing in that greatest of all miracles, the resurrection of the dead (26, 18-27, 15 and 31, 1-33, 14 Finkel). This does not necessarily mean that Moses himself did not know this root of the Law but he certainly did not teach it. At least in this respect the book of Daniel, of a late prophet of very low rank (II 45), marks a great progress beyond the Torah of Moses. All the easier is it to understand that Isaiah should have made some progress beyond Moses.

The reason why progress beyond the teaching of the Torah is possible or even necessary is twofold. In the first place, the Torah is the law par excellence. The supremacy of Moses' prophecy—the superiority of Moses' knowledge even to that of the Patriarchs—is connected with its being the only legislative prophecy (I 63, II 13, 39). But precisely because his prophecy culminates in the Law, it reflects the limitations of law. Law is more concerned with actions than with thoughts

(III 27-28; I Intro.). Mosaic theology reflects this orientation. According to the opinion of many of our contemporaries, Maimonides' theological doctrine proper is his doctrine of the divine attributes (I 50-60). In that subsection he quotes passages from the Torah only in that single chapter (I 54) in which he discusses the thirteen divine attributes revealed to Moses (Exod. 34:5-7); those attributes—all of them moral qualities—constitute the Mosaic theology; they express positively what in negative expression is called in the same context "God's back parts." Although God's goodness had been revealed to Moses in its entirety, the thirteen attributes articulate only that part of God's goodness which is relevant for the ruler of a city who is a prophet. Such a ruler must imitate the divine attributes of wrath and mercy not as passions—for the incorporeal God is above all passion—but because actions of mercy or wrath are appropriate in the circumstances, and he must imitate God's mercy and wrath in due proportion. The ruler of a city on the other hand must be more merciful than full of anger, for extreme punitiveness is required only because of the necessity, based on "human opinion," to exterminate the idolaters by fire and sword (I 54). Following another suggestion of Maimonides (I 51-63) one could say that the adequate statement of Mosaic theology is contained in the divine name YHVH—a name by which God revealed Himself for the first time to Moses as distinguished from the Patriarchs: "I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name YHVH was I not known to them" (Exod. 6:3). Maimonides recognizes that this verse asserts or establishes the superiority of Moses' prophecy to that of the Patriarchs (II 35) but he does not explain that verse: he does not explain, at least not clearly, which theological verities other than the thirteen attributes were revealed to Moses but were unknown to the Patriarchs. Only this much may be said to emerge: Abraham was a man of speculation who instructed his subjects or followers rather than a prophet who convinced by miracles and ruled by means of promises and threats, and this is somehow connected with the fact that he called "on the name of YHVH, the God of the world" (Gen. 21:33) (I 63, II 13), i.e., the God of the trans-moral whole rather than the law-giving God. It is this Abrahamitic expression that opens each Part of the *Guide* as well as other writings of Maimonides. Considering all these things, one will find it wise to limit oneself to saying that the Mosaic theology par excellence is the doctrine of the thirteen moral attributes.

Second, the Mosaic legislation was contemporary with the yet unbroken and universal rule of Sabianism. Therefore the situation in the time of Moses was not different from the situation in the time of Abraham, who disagreed with all men, all men having the same Sabian religion or belonging to the same religious community. The innovation was naturally resisted, even with violence, although

it was not a principle of Sabianism to exterminate unbelievers. Yet the Torah has only one purpose: to destroy Sabianism or idolatry. But the resistance by the Sabians proper was less important than the inner Sabianism of the early adherents of the Torah. It was primarily for this reason that Sabianism could be overcome only gradually: human nature does not permit the direct transition from one opposite to the other. To mention only the most obvious example, our ancestors had been habituated to sacrifice to natural or artificial creatures. The sacrificial laws of the Torah are a concession to that habit. Since the simple prohibition or cessation of sacrifices would have been as unintelligible or distasteful to our ancestors as the prohibition or cessation of prayer would be now, God provided that henceforth all sacrifices be transferred to Him and no longer be brought to any false gods or idols. The sacrificial laws constitute a step in the gradual transition, in the progress from Sabianism to pure worship, i.e., pure knowledge, of God (cf. I 54, 64); the sacrificial laws were necessary only "at that time." The Sabians believed that success in agriculture depends on worship of the heavenly bodies. In order to eradicate that belief, God teaches in the Torah that worship of the heavenly bodies leads to disaster in agriculture whereas worship of God leads to prosperity. For the reason given, the open depreciation of sacrifices as such occurs not yet in the Torah but in the prophets and in the Psalms. Conversely, the Torah is less explicit than the later documents regarding the duty of prayer (III 29, 30, 32, 35-37). No less important an adaptation to Sabian habits is the corporealism of the Bible. For Sabianism is a form of corporealism; according to the Sabians, the gods are the heavenly bodies or the heavenly bodies are the body of which God is the spirit (III 29). As for the Bible, Maimonides' teaching on this subject is not free from ambiguity. The first impression we receive from his teaching is that according to it the corporealistic understanding of the Bible is a mere misunderstanding. For instance, *selem* simply does not mean visible shape but only natural form, and even if it should sometimes mean visible shape, the term must be considered to be homonymous, and it certainly does not mean visible shape but natural form in Genesis 1:26-27 (I 1; cf. I 49). In other cases, perhaps in most cases, the primary meaning of the term—say, "sitting"—is corporealistic but when it is applied to God, it is used in a derivative or metaphoric sense; in those cases the meaning of the text, the literal meaning, is metaphoric. Generally stated, the literal meaning of the Bible is not corporealistic. But there are also cases in which the literal meaning is corporealistic, for instance in the many cases in which the Bible speaks of God's anger (cf. I 29). One must go beyond this and say that generally speaking the literal meaning of the Bible is corporealistic because "the Torah speaks in accordance with the language of the children of Man," i.e., in accordance with "the imagination of the vulgar," and the vulgar mind does not admit, at

least to begin with, the existence of any being that is not bodily; the Torah therefore describes God in corporealistic terms in order to indicate that He is (I 26, 47, 51 end). The Bible contains indeed innumerable passages directed against idolatry (I 36), but, as we have seen, idolatry is one thing and corporealism is another. The corporealistic meaning is not the only meaning, it is not the deepest meaning, it is not the true meaning, but it is as much intended as the true meaning; it is intended because of the need to educate and to guide the vulgar and, we may add, a vulgar that originally was altogether under the spell of Sabianism. What is true of the biblical similes is true also of the metaphoric biblical terms. According to the talmudic Sages, the outer of the similes is nothing while the inner is a pearl; according to King Solomon, who was "wiser than all men" (I Kings 5:11), the outer is like silver, i.e., it is useful for the ordering of human society, and the inner is like gold, i.e., it conveys true beliefs (I Intro.). Hence it is not without danger to the vulgar that one explains the similes or indicates the metaphoric character of expressions (I 33). For such biblical teachings as the assertions that God is angry, compassionate, or in other ways changeable, while not true, yet serve a political purpose or are necessary beliefs (III 28). A third possibility emerges through Maimonides' thematic discussion of providence. There he makes a distinction between the view of the Law regarding providence and the true view (III 17, 23). He could well have said that the true view is the secret teaching of the Law. Instead he says that the true view is conveyed through the book of Job, thus implying that the book of Job, a nonprophetic book whose characters are not Jews and that is composed by an unknown author (II 45; *Epistle to Yemen* 50, 19-52, 1 Halkin) marks a progress beyond the Torah and even beyond the prophets (cf. III 19). We recall that the simple co-ordination, taught by the Torah, of the worship of the Lord with agricultural and other prosperity was merely a restatement of the corresponding Sabian doctrine. As Maimonides indicates when explaining the account of the revelation on Mount Sinai, the beautiful consideration of the texts is the consideration of their outer meaning (II 36 end, 37). This remark occurs within the section on prophecy in which he makes for the first time an explicit distinction between the legal (or exegetic) and the speculative discussion of the same subject (cf. II 45 beginning). Accordingly, he speaks in his explanation of the Account of the Chariot, at any rate apparently, only of the literal meaning of this most secret text (III Intro.). Or to state the matter as succinctly as Maimonides does in the last chapter, the science of the Law is something essentially different, not only from the post-biblical or at any rate extra-biblical legal interpretation of the Law, but from wisdom, i.e., the demonstration of the views transmitted by the Law, as well.

Undoubtedly Maimonides contradicts himself regarding Moses' prophecy. He declares that he will not speak in the *Guide* explicitly or allusively about the

characteristics of Moses' prophecy because or although he had spoken most explicitly about the differences between the prophecy of Moses and that of the other prophets in his more popular writings. And yet he teaches explicitly in the *Guide* that Moses' prophecy, in contradistinction to that of the other prophets, was entirely independent of the imagination or was purely intellectual (II 35, 36, 45 end). His refusal to speak of Moses' prophecy has indeed a partial justification. At least one whole subsection of the section on prophecy (II 41-44) is devoted to the prophecy of the prophets other than Moses, as is indicated by the frequent quotation in that subsection of this passage: "If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream"; for the Bible continues as follows: "My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all my house" (Num. 12:6-7). Still the assertion that Moses' prophecy was entirely independent of the imagination leads to a great difficulty if one considers the fact, pointed out by Maimonides in the same context (II 36; cf. II 47 beginning), that it is the imagination that brings forth similes and, we may add, metaphors, as well as the fact that the Torah abounds if not with similes, at any rate with metaphors. To mention only one example, Moses' saying that Eve was taken from one of Adam's ribs or that Woman was taken out of Man (Gen. 2:21-23) or derived from man reflects the fact that the word *ihah* (woman) is derived from the word *ish* (man) and such substitutions of the relation of words for the relation of things are the work of the imagination (cf. II 30 and 43; I 28; and *M.T.*, H. Yesodei ha-torah I). In order to understand the contradiction regarding Moses' prophecy, we must return once more to the beginning. Maimonides starts from accepting the Law as seen through the traditional Jewish interpretation. The Law thus understood is essentially different from "demonstration" (II 3), i.e., the views of the Law are not as such based on demonstration. Nor do they become evident through "religious experience" or through faith. For, according to Maimonides, there is no religious experience, i.e., specifically religious cognition; all cognition or true belief stems from the human intellect, sense perception, opinion, or tradition; the cognitive status even of the Ten Commandments was not affected by or during the revelation on Mount Sinai: some of these utterances are and always remained matters of "human speculation," while the others are and always remained matters of opinion or matters of tradition (I 51 beginning and II 33; *Letter on Astrology* §§ 4-5 Marx; and *Logic* chap. 8). As for faith, it is, according to Maimonides, only one of the moral virtues, which as such do not belong to man's ultimate perfection, the perfection of his intellect (III 53-54). The views of the Law are based on a kind of "speculative perception" that human speculation is unable to understand and that grasps the truth without the use of speculative premises or without reasoning; through this kind of perception peculiar

to prophets, the prophet sees and hears nothing except God and angels (II 38, 36, 34). Some of the things perceived by prophets can be known with certainty also through demonstration. While for instruction in these things nonprophetic men are not absolutely in need of prophets, they depend entirely on prophets regarding those divine things that are not accessible to human speculation or demonstration. Yet the nonrational element in the prophetic speeches is to some extent imaginary, i.e., infra-rational. It is therefore a question how nonprophetic men can be certain of the supra-rational teaching of the prophets, i.e., of its truth. The general answer is that the supra-rational character of the prophetic speeches is confirmed by the supra-natural testimony of the miracles (II 25, III 29). In this way the authority of the Law as wholly independent of speculation is established wholly independently of speculation. Accordingly the understanding or exegesis of the Law can be wholly independent of speculation and in particular of natural science; and considering the higher dignity of revelation, exegesis will be of higher rank than natural science in particular; the explanations given by God Himself are infinitely superior to merely human explanations or traditions. This view easily leads to the strictest biblicism. "The difficulty of the Law" may be said to arise from the fact that the miracles do not merely confirm the truth of the belief in revelation but also presuppose the truth of that belief; only if one holds in advance the indemonstrable belief that the visible universe is not eternal can one believe that a given extraordinary event is a miracle (II 25). It is this difficulty that Maimonides provisionally solves by suggesting that Moses' prophecy is unique because it is wholly independent of the imagination, for if this suggestion is accepted, the difficulty caused by the presence of an infra-rational element in prophetic speeches does not arise. Yet if Moses' prophecy alone is wholly independent of the imagination, the Torah alone will be simply true, i.e., literally true, and this necessarily leads to extreme corporealism. Since corporealism is demonstrably wrong, we are compelled to admit that the Torah is not always literally true and hence, as matters stand, that the teaching of the other prophets may be superior in some points to that of Moses. The fundamental difficulty of how one can distinguish the supra-rational, which must be believed, from the infra-rational, which ought not to be believed, cannot be solved by recourse to the fact that we hear through the Bible, and in particular through the Torah, "God's book" par excellence (III 12), not human beings but God Himself. It is indeed true in a sense that God's speech gives the greatest certainty of His existence, and His declaring His attributes sets these attributes beyond doubt (cf. I 9 and 11, II 11), but God Himself cannot explain clearly the deepest secrets of the Torah to flesh and blood (I Introd., 31 beginning). He "speaks in accordance with the language of the children of man" (I 26), things that might have been made clear in the Torah are not made clear in it

(I 29), God makes use of ruses and of silence for only "a fool will reveal all his purpose and his will" (I 40; cf. III 32, 45 and 54) and, last but not least, as Maimonides explains in the *Guide*, God does not use speech in any sense (I 23) and this fact entails infinite consequences. One is therefore tempted to say that the infra-rational in the Bible is distinguished from the supra-rational by the fact that the former is impossible whereas the latter is possible: biblical utterances that contradict what has been demonstrated by natural science or by reason in any other form cannot be literally true but must have an inner meaning; on the other hand, one must not reject views the contrary of which has not been demonstrated, i.e., which are possible—for instance, creation out of nothing—lest one become thoroughly indecent (I 32, II 25). Yet this solution does not satisfy Maimonides. Whereas he had originally declared that the human faculty that distinguishes between the possible and the impossible is the intellect and not the imagination, he is compelled, especially in his chapters on providence, to question this verdict and to leave it open whether it is not rather the imagination that ought to have the last word (I 49, 73, III 15). He is therefore induced to say that the certainty of belief is one's awareness of the impossibility of the alternative or that the very existence of God is doubtful if it is not demonstrated or that man's intellect can understand what any intelligent being understands (I 50 and 51 beginning, 71, III 17). This is acceptable if the Account of the Beginning and the Account of the Chariot are indeed identical with natural science and divine science and if these sciences are demonstrative. But this enigmatic equation leaves obscure the place or the status of the fact of God's free creation of the world out of nothing: does this fact belong to the Account of the Beginning or to the Account of the Chariot or to both or to neither? (Cf. *Commentary on the Mishnah*, Hagigah II 1.) According to the *Guide*, the Account of the Chariot deals with God's governance of the world, in contradistinction not only to His providence (cf. I 44 on the one hand, and on the other I 40, where Maimonides refers to III 2 and not, as most commentators believe, to the chapters on providence, just as in III 2 he refers back to I 40), but also to His creation. By considering the relation of the Account of the Beginning and the Account of the Chariot, one is enabled also to answer completely the question that has led us to the present difficulty, the question concerning the order of rank between the Mosaic theophany and the Isaian theophany. The Account of the Beginning occurs in the Torah of Moses but the Account of the Chariot, which is identical with the divine science or the apprehension of God (I 34), occurs in the book of Ezekiel and in its highest form precisely in the sixth chapter of Isaiah (III 6; cf. also the quotations from the Torah on the one hand and from other biblical books on the other in III 54).

Once one has granted that there is an intra-biblical progress beyond the

teaching of Moses, one will not be compelled to deny the possibility of a post-biblical progress of this description. The fact of such a progress can only be proven if there are characteristic differences between the Bible and the post-biblical authoritative books. We could not help referring for instance to Maimonides' tacit confrontation of the talmudic view according to which the outer of the similes is "nothing" and of Solomon's view according to which it is "silver," i.e., politically useful; taken by itself this confrontation suggests that Solomon appreciated the political to a higher degree than did the talmudic Sages. The differences in question are to some extent concealed, since the post-biblical view ordinarily appears in the guise of an explanation of a biblical text. Maimonides discusses this difficulty in regard to homiletic rather than legal explanations; he rejects both the opinion that these explanations are genuine explanations of biblical texts and the opinion that since they are not genuine explanations, they ought not to be taken seriously; in fact the talmudic Sages used a poetic or a charming device, playing as it were with the text of the Bible, in order to introduce moral lessons not found in the Bible (III 43). He indicates that he will not stress his critique of the talmudic Sages (III 14 end). Since the emphasis on serious differences between the Bible and the Talmud could appear in the eyes of the vulgar as a criticism of the talmudic Sages, he has spoken on this subject with considerable, although not extraordinary, restraint. Whenever he presents a view as a view of the Law, one must consider whether he supports his thesis at all by biblical passages, and if he does so, whether the support is sufficient according to his standards as distinguished from traditional Jewish standards. In other words, in studying a given chapter or group of chapters one must observe whether he uses therein any post-biblical Jewish quotations at all and what is the proportion in both number and weight of post-biblical to biblical quotations. In the first chapter explicitly dealing with providence (III 17), he speaks of an "addition" to the text of the Torah that occurs "in the discourse of the Sages"; as one would expect, he disapproves of this particular "addition." This statement is prepared by an immediately preceding cluster of talmudic quotations that are in manifest agreement with the teaching of the Torah and that strike us with particular force because of the almost complete absence of talmudic quotations after the end of III 10. In this twofold way he prepares his silence on the future life in his presentation of the Torah view on providence: the solution of the problem of providence by recourse to the future life is more characteristic of the post-biblical teaching than of the Bible. According to the talmudic Sages, "in the future life there is no eating, nor drinking" and this means that the future life is incorporeal (*M.T.*, H. Teshubah VIII 3). It follows that the Talmud is freer from corporealism than the Bible (I 46, 47, 49, 70, II 3). Accordingly certain talmudic thoughts resemble Platonic thoughts and are expressed with the help of terms of

Greek origin (II 6). Similarly it was Onqelos the Stranger who more than anyone else made corporealism inexcusable within Judaism and may well have thought that it would be improper to speak in Syriac (i.e., Aramaic), as distinguished from Hebrew, of God's perceiving an irrational animal (I 21, 27, 28, 36, 48; cf. II 33). The progress of incorporealism is accompanied by a progress of asceticism. To mention only one example, the Talmud is to say the least much clearer than the Bible about the fact that Abraham had never looked at his beautiful wife until sheer self-preservation compelled him to do so (III 8, 47, 49). There is a corresponding progress in gentleness (I 30 and 54). Finally, the Talmud is more explicit than the Bible regarding the value of the intellectual life and of learning for men in general and for prophets in particular (II 32, 33, 41, III 14, 25, 37, 54). But even the Talmud and Onqelos do not contain the last word regarding the fundamentals as Maimonides indicates by a number of remarks (I 21, 41, II 8-9, 26, 47, III 4-5, 14, 23). One example for each case must suffice. The talmudic Sages follow at least partly the opinion according to which the Law has no other ground than mere Will, whereas "we," says Maimonides, follow the opposite opinion (III 48). "We" is an ambiguous term. As Maimonides has indicated by as it were opening only two chapters (I 62 and 63) with "we," the most important meanings are "we Jews" and "Maimonides." As for Onqelos, he removes through his translation the corporealistic suggestions of the original but he does not make clear what incorporeal things the prophets perceived or what the meaning of a given simile is; this is in accordance with the fact that he translated for the vulgar; but Maimonides explains the similes and he is enabled to do so because of his knowledge of natural science (I 28). Progress beyond Onqelos and the Talmud became possible chiefly for two reasons. In the first place, the ever more deepened effect of the Torah on the Jewish people as well as the rise and political victory of Christianity and Islam have brought it about that the Sabian disease has completely disappeared (III 49, 29). Second, the fundamental verities regarding God are genuinely believed in by nonprophetic men only when they are believed in on the basis of demonstration, but this requires for its perfection that one possess the art of demonstration, and the art of demonstration was discovered by the wise men of Greece or the philosophers, or more precisely by Aristotle (II 15). Even Kalām, i.e., what one may call theology or more precisely the science of demonstrating or defending the roots of the Law, which is directly of Christian origin, owes its origin indirectly to the effect of philosophy on the Law. In spite of its defects, the Kalām is very far from being entirely worthless; and properly understood, as prior to Maimonides it was not, it is even indispensable for the defense of the Law. Kalām entered Judaism long after the talmudic period, in the Gaonic period (I 71, 73). All the more must the introduction of philosophy into Judaism



be regarded as a great progress, if it is introduced in due subordination to the Law or in the proper manner (i.e., as Maimonides introduced it to begin with in his legal works). One must also consider the considerable scientific progress that was made by both Greeks and Muslims after Aristotle's time (II 4, 19). All this does not mean, however, that Maimonides regarded his age as the peak of wisdom. He never forgot the power of what one may call the inverted Sabianism that perpetuates corporealism through unqualified submission to the literal meaning of the Bible and thus even outdoes Sabianism proper (I 31); nor did he forget the disastrous effect of the exile (I 71, II 11): "If the belief in the existence of God were not as generally accepted as it is now in the religions [i.e., Judaism, Christianity, and Islam], the darkness of our times would even be greater than the darkness of the times of the sages of Babylon" (III 29). This is to say nothing of the fact that Sabianism proper was not completely eradicated and could be expected to have a future (cf. I 36). It goes without saying that Maimonides also never forgot the Messianic future, a future that may or may not be followed by the end of the world (cf. I 61 with II 27). In spite of this, one is entitled to say that Maimonides regarded the step that he took in the *Guide* as the ultimate step in the decisive respect, namely, in the overcoming of Sabianism. As he modestly put it, no Jew had written an extant book on the secrets of the Law "in these times of the exile" (I Introd.). At the beginning, the power of Sabianism was broken only in a limited part of the world through bloody wars and through concessions to Sabian habits; those concessions were retracted almost completely by the post-Mosaic prophets, by the Aramaic translators, and by the Talmud, to say nothing of the cessation through violence of the sacrificial service, and the conversion of many pagans, which was assisted by military victories, to Christianity or Islam. Now the time has come when even the vulgar must be taught most explicitly that God is incorporeal. Since the Bible suggests corporealism, the vulgar will thus become perplexed. The remedy for this perplexity is the allegoric explanation of the corporealistic utterances or terms that restores the faith in the truth of the Bible (I 35), i.e., precisely what Maimonides is doing in the *Guide*. But the progress in overcoming Sabianism was accompanied by an ever increasing oblivion of Sabianism and thus by an ever increasing inability to remove the last, as it were, fossilized concessions to Sabianism or relics of Sabianism. Maimonides marks a progress even beyond the post-Mosaic prophets in so far as he combines the open depreciation of the sacrifices with a justification of the sacrificial laws of the Torah, for his depreciation of the sacrifices does not as such mean a denial of the obligatory character of the sacrificial laws. He is the man who finally eradicates Sabianism, i.e., corporealism as the hidden premise of idolatry, through the knowledge of Sabianism recovered by him. He recovered that knowledge

also through his study of Aristotle, who after all belonged to a Sabian society (II 23).

If the *Torah for the Perplexed* thus marks a progress beyond the Torah for the Unperplexed, Maimonides was compelled to draw the reader's attention at an early stage to the difference between the biblical and the post-biblical teaching. In that stage that difference alone was important. Hence to begin with he treats the Bible on the one hand and the post-biblical writings on the other as unities. Generally speaking, he introduces biblical passages by "he says" (or "his saying is") and talmudic passages by "they say" (or "their saying is"). He thus suggests that in the Bible we hear only a single speaker while in the Talmud we hear indeed many speakers who, however, all agree at least in the important respects. Yet in the first chapter of the *Guide* "he" who speaks is in fact first God, then the narrator, then God, and then "the poor one"; in the second chapter "he" who speaks is the narrator, the serpent, God, and so on; God "says" something and the narrator "makes clear and says." But the *Guide* as a whole constitutes an ascent from the common view, or an imitation of the common view, to a discerning view. Accordingly, Maimonides gradually brings out the differences concealed by the stereotyped, not to say ritual, expressions. For instance, in I 32 he introduces each of four biblical quotations by the expression "he indicated by his speech"; only in the last case does he give the name of the speaker, namely, David; the saying of David is somewhat more akin in spirit than the preceding three sayings (of Solomon) to a saying of the talmudic Sages quoted immediately afterward; the talmudic Sages had noted that Solomon contradicted his father David (I Introd. toward the end). In I 34 he introduces by the expression "they say" the saying of a talmudic Sage who tells what "I have seen." The unnamed "he" who, according to I 44, spoke as Jeremiah's providence was Nebuchadnezzar. In I 49 he quotes five biblical passages; in two cases he gives the names of the biblical authors, in one of the two cases adding "may he rest in peace" to the name. In I 70 he introduces a talmudic passage with the expression "They said," while he says at the end of the quotation, "This is literally what he said." Names of biblical teachers occur with unusual frequency in some chapters, the first of which is II 19 and the last of which is III 32. Near the beginning of II 29 Maimonides notes that every prophet had a diction peculiar to him and that this peculiarity was preserved in what God said to the individual prophet or through him. The prophet singled out for extensive discussion from this point of view is Isaiah; thereafter six of the other prophets are briefly discussed in a sequence that agrees with the sequence of their writings in the canon; only in the case of the prophet who occupies the central place (Joel) is the name of the prophet's father added to the name of the prophet. One must also not neglect the references to the difference between the Torah proper and the

Mishneh Torah, i.e., Deuteronomy (cf. II 34-35 and III 24). Maimonides' link with the Torah is, to begin with, an iron bond; it gradually becomes a fine thread. But however far what one may call his intellectualization may go, it always remains the intellectualization of the Torah.

Our desire to give the readers some hints for the better understanding of the second subsection compelled us to look beyond the immediate context. Returning to that context we observe that after Maimonides has concluded the second subsection, he again does something perplexing. The last chapter of the second subsection dealt with "foot"; that passage of the Torah on which the second subsection is based speaks emphatically of God's "face" and His "back"; nothing would have been simpler for Maimonides than to devote the third subsection to terms designating parts of the animate body or of the animal. Instead he devotes the fourth subsection to this subject; the first two chapters of the fourth subsection are devoted precisely to "face" and to "back" (I 37 and 38). The third subsection, which deals with an altogether different subject, thus seems to be out of place or to be a disconcerting insertion. Furthermore, the third subsection is the least exegetic or the most speculative among the subsections devoted to Incorporeality; six of its eight chapters are not lexicographic; five of them are in no obvious sense devoted to the explanation of biblical terms and do not contain a single quotation from the Torah; one of these chapters (I 31) is the first chapter of the *Guide* that does not contain a single Jewish (Hebrew or Aramaic) expression, and another (I 35) does not contain a single quotation of Jewish (biblical or talmudic) passages. One is tempted to believe that it would have been more in accordance with the spirit of the book if the most speculative among the subsections devoted to Incorporeality had formed the end of the part devoted to that subject. In order to understand these apparent irregularities, it is best to start from the consideration that, for the general reason indicated, Maimonides desired to divide each of the seven sections of the *Guide* into seven subsections and that for a more particular reason he decided to treat Unity in three subsections; hence Incorporeality had to be treated in four subsections. Furthermore, it was necessary to place almost all lexicographic chapters within the part treating Incorporeality or conversely it was necessary that the majority of chapters dealing with Incorporeality should be lexicographic. For the reasons given where they had to be given, it proved convenient that the majority of chapters of the first subsection should be nonlexicographic and the majority of chapters of the second subsection should be lexicographic. It is this proportion of the first two subsections that Maimonides decided to imitate in the last two subsections devoted to Incorporeality: the majority of chapters of the third subsection became nonlexicographic and the majority of chapters of the fourth subsection became lexicographic, but—for a reason to be indicated presently—in such a way

that the third subsection is more predominantly nonlexicographic than the first, and the fourth subsection is more predominantly lexicographic than the second. It is reasonable to expect that the distribution of lexicographic and nonlexicographic chapters among the four subsections has some correspondence to the subject matter of those subsections. If one defines their subject matter by reference to the subject matter of their lexicographic chapters, one arrives at this result: the first subsection deals with the specific form, the sexual difference, and generating, while the third subsection deals with sorrow and eating; the second subsection deals chiefly with acts of local motion or rest, while the fourth subsection deals chiefly with the parts of the animate body and sense-perception. To understand this arrangement it suffices both to observe that the first quotation regarding sorrow is "in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children" (Gen. 3:16) and to read Maimonides' explanation (in I 46) of the relation that links the parts of the animal and its acts to the ends of preservation. Furthermore, it would be a great mistake to believe that the emphasis on sorrow and eating is weakened because these two themes are the only lexicographic themes of the subsection in which they are discussed. Finally, Maimonides used in the most appropriate manner the lexicographic chapters devoted to sorrow and to eating as an introduction to the first series of speculative chapters occurring in the *Guide* and thus brought it about that the third subsection (in contradistinction to the first and the second) ends with nonlexicographic chapters (I 31-36); he thus prepared a similar ending of the fourth subsection (I 46-49); this enabled him to indicate by the position of the next lexicographic chapter (I 70), which is the last lexicographic chapter, as clearly as possible the end of the first section or the fact that I 1-70 form the first section.

The term '*aṣab*', which we thought convenient in our context to render by "sorrow," as well as the term "eating," may refer to God's wrath with those who rebel against Him or to His enmity to them. Since His wrath is directed exclusively against idolatry and since His enemies are exclusively the idolaters (I 36), the two terms refer indirectly to idolatry. But "eating" is used also for the acquisition of knowledge. With a view to this second metaphoric meaning of "eating," Maimonides devotes to the subject of human knowledge the five speculative chapters immediately following the explanation of "eating" (I 30). In the last chapter of the subsection (I 36) he reconsiders the prohibition against idolatry on the basis of what had emerged in the five speculative chapters. The third subsection deals then with both idolatry and knowledge in such a way that the discussion of idolatry surrounds the discussion of knowledge. This arrangement affects the discussion of knowledge: Maimonides discusses knowledge with a view to its limitations, to the harm that may come from it and to the dangers attending it.

One can say that the first series of speculative chapters occurring in the *Guide* deals with forbidden knowledge (cf. particularly I 32)—forbidden to all or to most men—within the context of forbidden worship.

The third subsection throws light on the relation between the Bible and the Talmud. Since we have treated this subject before, we limit ourselves to the following remark. In the chapter dealing with "eating," Maimonides explicitly refuses to give an example of the use of the word in its primary meaning: the derivative meaning according to which the word designates the taking of non-corporeal food has become so widespread as to become as it were the primary meaning (cf. the quotation from Isa. 1:20 with Isa. 1:19). Regarding the meaning of "eating" as consuming or destroying, which he illustrates by four quotations from the Torah and two quotations from the prophets, he says that it occurs frequently, namely, in the Bible; regarding the meaning of "eating" as acquiring knowledge, which he illustrates by two quotations from Isaiah and two from the Proverbs, he says that it occurs frequently also in the discourse of the talmudic Sages and he proves this by two quotations. No talmudic quotation had illustrated the meanings of *ʿaṣab*. The talmudic Sages compared the acquisition of knowledge of the divine things to the eating of honey and applied to that knowledge the saying of Solomon: "Hast thou found honey? Eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it." They thus taught that in seeking knowledge one must not go beyond certain limits: one must not reflect on what is above, what is below, what was before, and what will be hereafter—which Maimonides takes to refer to "vain imaginings" (I 32); Maimonides, who explains what is meant by the fact that man has a natural desire for knowledge (I 34), warns not against the desire for comprehensive knowledge, but against seeming knowledge.

With regard to the fourth subsection, we must limit ourselves to the observation that it is the first subsection that lacks any reference to philosophy or philosophers. On the other hand the expression "in my opinion" (*indī*), which indicates the difference between Maimonides' opinion and traditional opinions, occurs about twice as frequently in the fourth subsection as in the first three subsections taken together. Another substitute is the references to grammarians in I 41 and 43—references that ought to be contrasted with the parallels in I 8 and 10—as well as the rather frequent references to the Arabic language. One grammarian is mentioned by name: Ibn Janāh, i.e., the son of Wing who with the help of Arabic correctly interpreted the Hebrew term for "wing" as sometimes meaning "veil" and who may therefore be said to have uncovered "Wing." Another substitute is the reference (in I 42) to an Andalusian interpreter who, in agreement with Greek medicine, had explained as a natural event the apparent

resurrection of the son of a widow by the prophet Elijah. Through his quotations from the Bible in the same chapter Maimonides refers among other things to a severe illness caused by the circumcision of adults as well as to the biblical treatment of leprosy. The chapter in question deals with the Hebrew term for "living"; that term is the only one occurring in the lexicographic chapters of this subsection that is not said to be homonymous; this silence is pregnant with grave implications regarding "the living God" (cf. I 30 and 41).

The last chapter of the fourth subsection is the only chapter of the *Guide* that opens with the expression "The angels." This chapter sets forth the assertion that the angels are incorporeal, i.e., it deals with the incorporeality of something of which there is a plurality. Maimonides thus makes clear that Incorporeality and not Unity is still the theme as it had been from the beginning. The next chapter opens the discussion of Unity. Incorporeality had presented itself as a consequence of Unity; Unity had been the presupposition, an unquestioned presupposition. Unity now becomes the theme. We are told at the beginning that Unity must be understood clearly, not, as it is understood by the Christians, to be compatible with God's trinity, or, more generally stated, with a multiplicity in God (I 50). In the fifth subsection Maimonides effects the transformation of the common, not to say traditional, understanding of Unity, which allowed a multiplicity of positive attributes describing God Himself, into such an understanding as is in accordance with the requirements of speculation. The fifth subsection is the first subsection of the *Guide* that may be said to be entirely speculative. Hence the discussion of Unity, in contradistinction to the discussion of Incorporeality, is characterized by a clear, if implicit, distinction between the speculative and the exegetic discussion of the subject. In the first four subsections there occurred only one chapter without any Jewish expression; in the fifth subsection five such chapters occur. In the first forty-nine chapters there occurred only nine chapters without any quotation from the Torah; in the eleven chapters of the fifth subsection ten such chapters occur. In spite of its speculative character the fifth subsection does not demonstrate that God is one; it continues the practice of the preceding subsections by presupposing that God is one (I 53, 58, 68). Yet from this presupposition it draws all conclusions and not merely the conclusion that God is incorporeal: if God is one, one in every possible respect, absolutely simple, there cannot be any positive attribute of God except attributes describing His actions.

Maimonides knows by demonstration that God is one. The addressee, being insufficiently trained in natural science (cf. I 55 with I 52), does not know Unity by demonstration but through the Jewish tradition and ultimately through the Bible. The most important biblical text is "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one" (Deut. 6:4; cf. *M.T.*, H. Yesodei ha-Torah I 7). To our very great

amazement, Maimonides does not quote this verse a single time in any of the chapters devoted to Unity. He quotes it a single time in the *Guide*, imitating the Torah, which, as he says, mentions the principle of Unity, namely, this verse, only once (*Resurrection* 20, 1-2). He quotes the verse in III 45, i.e., the 169th chapter, thus perhaps alluding to the thirteen divine attributes ("merciful, gracious . . .") proclaimed by God to Moses. Whatever else that silence may mean, it certainly indicates the gravity of the change effected by Maimonides in the understanding of Unity. The demonstrated teaching that positive attributes of God are impossible stems from the philosophers (I 59, III 20); it clearly contradicts the teaching of the Law in so far as the Law does not limit itself to teaching that the only true praise of God is silence but it also prescribes that we call God "great, mighty, and terrible" in our prayers. Hence the full doctrine of attributes may not be revealed to the vulgar (I 59) or is a secret teaching. But since that doctrine (which includes the provision that certain points that are made fully clear in the *Guide* are not to be divulged), is set forth with utmost explicitness and orderliness in that book, it is also an exoteric teaching (I 35), if a philosophic exoteric teaching.

As Maimonides indicates, the meaning of "the Lord is one" is primarily that there is no one or nothing similar or equal to Him and only derivatively that He is absolutely simple (cf. I 57 end with I 58). He develops the notion of God's incomparability, of there being no likeness whatsoever between Him and any other being on the basis of quotations from Isaiah and Jeremiah as distinguished from the Torah (cf. I 55 with I 54). He is silent here on Deuteronomy 4:35 ("the Lord he is God; there is none else beside him"), on a verse that he quotes in a kindred context in his Code (*H. Yesodei ha-Torah* I 4) and in different contexts in the *Guide* (II 33, III 32 and 51). Yet absolute dissimilarity or incomparability to everything else is characteristic of nothing as well as of God. What is meant by God's absolute dissimilarity or incomparability is His perfection: it is because He is of incomparable perfection that He is incomparable; it is because He is of unspeakable perfection that nothing positive can be said of Him in strict speech and that everything positive said of Him is in fact (if it does not indicate His actions rather than Himself) only the denial of some imperfection. The meaning of the doctrine of attributes is that God is the absolute perfect being, the complete and perfectly self-sufficient good, the being of absolute beauty or nobility (I 35, 53, 58, 59, 60 end, II 22). If this were not so, Maimonides' doctrine of attributes would be entirely negative and even subversive. For that doctrine culminates in the assertion that we grasp of God only that He is and not what He is in such a manner that every positive predication made of Him, including that He "is," has only the name in common with what we mean when we apply such predications to any being (I 56,

58, 59, 60). If we did not know that God is absolutely perfect, we would ascribe we know not what to what we do not know, in ascribing to Him "being," or we would ascribe nothing to nothing; we certainly would not know what we were talking about. What is true of "being" is true of "one," i.e., of the immediate presupposition of the whole argument of the first section of the *Guide*. Let no one say that Maimonides admits attributes of action as distinguished from the negative attributes; for, not to enter into the question whether this distinction is ultimately tenable (cf. I 59), through the attributes of action God is understood as the cause of certain effects, and it is difficult to see how "cause," if applied to God, can have more than the name in common with "cause" as an intelligible expression. But since we understand by God the absolutely perfect being, we mean the goodness of His creation or governance when we say that He is the "cause" of something (cf. I 46). By his doctrine of attributes Maimonides not only overcomes all possible anthropomorphisms, but also answers the question whether the different perfections that God is said to possess in the highest degree are compatible with one another or whether certain perfections known to us as human perfections—for instance, justice—can be understood to constitute in their absolute form divine perfection: God's perfection is an unfathomable abyss. Thus we understand why the doctrine in question in spite of its philosophic origin can be regarded as the indeed unbiblical but nevertheless appropriate expression of the biblical principle, namely, of the biblical teaching regarding the hidden God who created the world out of nothing, not in order to increase the good—for since He is the complete good, the good cannot be increased by His actions—but without any ground, in absolute freedom, and whose essence is therefore indicated by "Will" rather than by "Wisdom" (III 13).

From the speculative discussion of the divine attributes, which as positive predications about God Himself proved to be mere names, Maimonides turns in the second of the three subsections dealing with Unity to the purely exegetic discussion of the divine names; the exegetic discussion still deals with "the denial of attributes" (I 62 and 65 beginning). It seems that the audible holy names have taken the place of the visible holy images, and it is certain that "name" is connected with "honor" and everything related to honor. The difficulty is caused less by the multiplicity of divine names—for, as the prophet says, in the day of the Lord "the Lord shall be one and his name shall be one" (Zech. 14:9)—than by the fact that this most sacred name, the only divine name antedating creation (I 61), is communicated to men by God (Exod. 6:2-3) and not coined or created by human beings. Since God does not speak, Maimonides must therefore open the whole question of God's speaking, writing, and ceasing to speak or to act (I 65-67). Furthermore, the most sacred name, which is the only name indicating God's essence and which thus

might be thought to lead us beyond the confines of human speculation, is certainly no longer intelligible, since we know very little of Hebrew today (I 61-62). Therefore in the last subsection devoted to Unity (I 68-70), which is the last subsection of the first section, Maimonides returns to speculation. It would be more accurate to say that he now turns to philosophy. In the three chapters in question he refers to philosophy, I believe, more frequently than in the whole discussion of Incorporeality (I 1-49) and certainly more frequently than in the speculative discussion of the attributes (I 50-60); in the exegetic discussion of the divine names (I 61-67), if I am not mistaken, he does not refer to philosophy at all. He now with the support of the philosophers takes up the subject that we cannot help calling the divine attribute of intellect as distinguished from the divine attribute of speech in particular (cf. I 65 beginning). We learn that in God the triad "intellect, intellecting, and the intellect" are one and the same thing in which there is no multiplicity, just as they are one in us when we actually think (I 68). Maimonides does not even allude here to the possibility that "intellect" when applied to God has only the name in common with "intellect" when applied to us. It may be true that God thinks only Himself so that His intellection is only self-intellection and is therefore one and simple in a way in which our intellection cannot be one and simple, but this does not contradict the univocity of "intellect" in its application to God and to us. Self-intellection is what we mean when we speak of God as "living" (cf. I 53). It follows that even "life" is not merely homonymous when applied to God and to us. It likewise follows that what is true of the intellect is not true of the will: the act of willing and the thing willed as willed are not the same as the act of thinking and the thing thought as though: are the same. The reader of the next chapter (I 69) may find this observation useful for understanding Maimonides' acceptance of the philosophic view according to which God is not only the efficient or moving and the final cause of the world but also the form of the world or, in the expression of the Jewish tradition, "the life of the worlds," which he says means "the life of the world."

This must suffice toward making clear the perplexing and upsetting character of Maimonides' teaching regarding Unity. The true state of things is somewhat obscured, to say nothing of other matters, by a certain kind of learning that some readers of the *Guide* can at all times be presumed to possess: the doctrine of attributes restates the Neoplatonic teaching, and Neoplatonism had affected Jewish thinkers long before Maimonides; those thinkers had already succeeded somehow in reconciling Neoplatonism with Judaism. But when different men do the same thing, it is not necessarily the same thing, and Maimonides surely did not do exactly the same thing as the pagan, Islamic, or Jewish Neoplatonists who preceded him. Every open minded and discerning reader must be struck by the

difference between the hidden God of Maimonides' doctrine of attributes and the hidden God who spoke to the Patriarchs and to Moses or, to employ Maimonides' manner of expression, by the difference between the true understanding of God as it was possessed by the Patriarchs and by Moses and the understanding of God on the part of the uninitiated Jews. The result of his doctrine of the divine attributes is that the notion of God that gives life and light to the ordinary believers is not only inadequate or misleading but is the notion of something that simply does not exist — of a merely imaginary being, the theme of deceived and deceiving men (I 60). What is true of the ordinary believer is true at least to some extent of the addressee of the *Guide*. The destruction of the old foundation forces him to seek for a new foundation: he is now compelled to be passionately concerned with demonstration, with the demonstration not only of God's unity but of His very being in a sense of "being" that cannot be entirely homonymous. For now he knows that the being of God is doubtful as long as it is not established by demonstration (I 71). Now he has been brought to the point where he must make up his mind whether or not he will turn altogether to the way of demonstration. Maimonides shows him three ways of demonstrating God's being, unity, and incorporeality: the way of the Kalām, the way of the philosophers, and Maimonides' own way (I 71 end, 76 end, II 1 end). While Maimonides cannot simply accept the philosophers' way, he prefers it to that of the Kalām for the following reason. The Kalām begins, not from the world as we know it through our senses or from the fact that things have determinate natures, but from asserting that what the philosophers call the nature, say, of air is only custom and hence of no inherent necessity: everything could be entirely different from what it is. The Kalām cannot live without reference to what we know through our senses, for in contradistinction to simple belief whose first premise is the absolute will of God, it attempts to demonstrate that God is and hence it must start from the given, and at the same time it must deny the authoritative character of the given. The philosophers on the other hand start from what is given or manifest to the senses (I 71, 73). Maimonides turns first to the analysis and critique of the Kalām-demonstrations. He presents the premises of the Kalām (I 73) and then the Kalām demonstrations that are based on those premises (I 74-76). Maimonides' critique does not limit itself to the technical Kalām reasoning. For instance, the first proof of the createdness of the world and therewith of the being of the Creator assumes that the bodies that we see around us have come into being through an artificer and infers from this that the world as a whole is the work of an artificer. This proof, which does not make any use of the premises peculiar to the Kalām, is based on inability, or at any rate failure, to distinguish between the artificial and the natural. The second proof is based on the premise that no infinite whatever is possible; it

therefore first traces men to a first man, Adam, who came out of dust, which in turn came out of water, and then traces water itself to unqualified nothing out of which water could not have been brought into being except by the act of the Creator (I 74; cf. *Logic* chaps. 7, 8, 11). It is not difficult to recognize in this proof elements of biblical origin. Since the Kalām premises as stated by Maimonides are necessary for the Kalām proofs (I 73 beginning and toward the end) and the Kalām proofs do not in all cases follow from those premises, those premises while necessary are not sufficient. After all, the Kalām selected its premises with a view to proving the roots of the Law: the premise of its premises is those roots. While the First Part ends with the critique of the Kalām, the Second Part opens with "The premises required for establishing the being of God and for demonstrating that He is not a body nor a force in a body and that He is one," i.e., with the premises established by the philosophers. Maimonides thus indicates that the seventy-six chapters of the First Part, which lead up to philosophy through a critique of the popular notions of God as well as of theology, are negative and pre-philosophic, whereas the one hundred and two chapters of the Second and Third Parts are positive or edifying. In other words, the First Part is chiefly devoted to biblical exegesis and to the Kalām, i.e., to the two trans-logical and trans-mathematical subjects mentioned even in the very Epistle Dedicatory.

The Kalām proves that God as the Creator is, is one, and is incorporeal by proving first that the world has been created; but it proves that premise only by dialectical or sophistical arguments. The philosophers prove that God is, is one, and is incorporeal by assuming that the world is eternal, but they cannot demonstrate that assumption. Hence both ways are defective. Maimonides' way consists in a combination of these two defective ways. For, he argues, "the world is eternal — the world is created" is a complete disjunction; since God's being, unity, and incorporeality necessarily follow from either of the only two possible assumptions, the basic verities have been demonstrated by this very fact (I 71, II 2). Yet the results from opposed premises cannot be simply identical. For instance, someone might have said prior to the Second World War that Germany would be prosperous regardless of whether she won or lost the war; if she won, her prosperity would follow immediately; if she lost, her prosperity would be assured by the United States of America who would need her as an ally against Soviet Russia; but the predictor would have abstracted from the difference between Germany as the greatest power which ruled tyrannically and was ruled tyrannically, and Germany as a second-rank power ruled democratically. The God whose being is proved on the assumption of eternity is the unmoved mover, thought that thinks only itself and that as such is the form or the life of the world. The God whose being is proved on the assumption of creation is the biblical God who is characterized by Will and

whose knowledge has only the name in common with our knowledge. If we consider the situation as outlined by Maimonides, we see that what is demonstrated by his way is only what is common to the two different notions of God or what is neutral to the difference between God as pure Intellect and God as Will or what is beyond that difference or what has only the name in common with either Intellect or Will. But God thus understood is precisely God as presented in the doctrine of attributes: Maimonides' demonstration of God's being illumines retroactively his merely assertoric doctrine of attributes. God thus understood can be said to be more extra-mundane not only than the philosophers' God but even than the biblical God; this understanding of God lays the foundation for the most radical asceticism both theoretical and practical (III 51). In other words, both opposite assumptions lead indeed to God as the most perfect being; yet even the Sabians regard their god, i.e., the sphere and its stars, as the most perfect being (III 45); generally stated, everyone understands by God the most perfect being in the sense of the most perfect possible being; the doctrine of attributes understood in the light of its subsequent demonstration leads to God as the most perfect being whose perfection is characterized by the fact that in Him Intelligence and Will are indistinguishable because they are both identical with His essence (cf. I 69). Yet, since the world is of necessity either created or eternal, it becomes necessary to restore the distinction between Intellect and Will. Generally speaking, the *Guide* moves between the view that Intellect and Will are indistinguishable and the view that they must be distinguished (and hence that one must understand God as Intelligence rather than as Will) in accordance with the requirements of the different subjects under discussion (cf. II 25 and III 25). For instance, in his discussion of Omniscience — in the same context in which he reopens the question regarding the relative rank of imagination and intellect — Maimonides solves the difficulty caused by the apparent incompatibility of Omniscience and human freedom (III 17) by appealing to the identity of Intellect and Will, whereas in his discussion of the reasons for the biblical commandments he prefers the view that the commandments stem from God's intellect to the view that they stem from His will.

The reader of the *Guide* must consider with the proper care not only the outline of Maimonides' way but also all its windings. In doing this he must never forget that the demonstration of the basic verities and the discussion of that demonstration is immediately preceded by the discussion of Unity or that the discussion of Unity constitutes the transition from exegesis to speculation. If the world or more precisely the sphere is created, it is indeed self-evident that it was created by some agent but it does not necessarily follow that the creator is one, let alone absolutely simple, and that he is incorporeal. On the other hand, if the sphere is eternal, it follows, as Aristotle has shown, that God is and is incorporeal; but on this

assumption the angels or separate intelligences, each of which is the mover of one of the many spheres, are as eternal as God (cf. I 71, II 2 and 6). It is therefore a question whether monotheism strictly understood is demonstrable. Maimonides does say that Unity and also Incorporeality follow from certain philosophic proofs that do not presuppose either the eternity of the world or its creation, but it is, to say the least, not quite clear whether the proofs in question do not in fact presuppose the eternity of the world (cf. II 2 with II 1). Besides, if there were such proofs, one is tempted to say that there is no need whatever for provisionally granting the eternity of the world in order to demonstrate God's being, unity, and incorporeality, yet Maimonides asserts most emphatically that there is such a need. None of these or similar difficulties is, however, by any means the most serious difficulty. For while the belief in God's unity, being, and incorporeality is required by the Law, that belief, being compatible with the belief in the eternity of the world, is compatible with the unqualified rejection of the Law: the Law stands or falls by the belief in the creation of the world. It is therefore incumbent on Maimonides to show that Aristotle or Aristotelianism is wrong in holding that the eternity of the world has been demonstrated: the eternity of the world which was the basis of the demonstration of God's being, unity, and incorporeality is a dubious assumption. Yet it is not sufficient to refute the claims of Aristotelianism in order to establish the possibility of creation as the Law understands creation, for if the world is not necessarily eternal it may still have been created out of eternal matter. Maimonides is then compelled to abandon or at any rate to refine the disjunction on which his original argument was based. The original disjunction (the world is either eternal or created) is incomplete at least to the extent that it blurs the difference between creation out of matter and creation out of nothing. It brings out the opposition between Aristotle and the Law but it conceals the intermediate possibility presented in Plato's *Timaeus*. Plato's version of the doctrine of eternity is not inimical to the Law, for while Aristotle's version excludes the possibility of any miracle, the Platonic version does not exclude all miracles as necessarily impossible. Maimonides does not say which miracles are excluded by the Platonic teaching. Two possible answers suggest themselves immediately. It is according to nature that what has come into being will perish; but according to the Law both Israel and the souls of the virtuous have come into being and will not perish; hence their eternity *a parte post* is a miracle, a miracle that is more in accordance with creation out of nothing than with creation out of eternal matter. Second, God's special providence for Israel, according to which Israel prospers if it obeys and is miserable if it disobeys, is a miracle not likely to be admitted by Plato, whose teaching on providence seems to have been identical with that presented in the Book of Job: providence follows naturally the intelligence of the individual

human being. In accordance with his judgment on the relation between the Aristotelian doctrine and the doctrine of the Law, Maimonides proves by an extensive argument that the Aristotelian doctrine is not demonstrated and is in addition not probable. As for the Platonic doctrine, he explicitly refuses to pay any attention to it on the additional ground that it has not been demonstrated (II 13, 25-7, 29, III 18; *Yemen* 24, 7-10; *Resurrection* 23, 16-24, 17; *Letter on Astrology* §§ 19 ff. Marx). That ground is somewhat strange because according to Maimonides the Aristotelian and the biblical alternatives have not been demonstrated either. In his critique of the Aristotelian doctrine he makes use of the Kalām argument based on a premise that so defines the possible that it might be either the imaginable or the non-self-contradictory or that regarding which we cannot make any definite assertions because of our lack of knowledge; the premise in question excludes the view according to which the possible is what is capable of being or what is in accordance with the nature of the thing in question or with what possesses an available specific substratum (cf. I 75, II 14, III 15). The reader must find out what the premises of the preferred premise are, how Maimonides judges of those premises, and whether the argument based on the premise in question renders improbable not only the eternity of the visible universe but the eternity of matter as well. At any rate, being compelled to question the Aristotelian doctrine, Maimonides is compelled to question the adequacy of Aristotle's account of heaven. That questioning culminates in the assertions that Aristotle had indeed perfect knowledge of the sublunar things but hardly any knowledge of the things of heaven and ultimately that man as man has no such knowledge: man has knowledge only of the earth and the earthly things, i.e., of beings that are bodies or in bodies. In the words of the Psalmist (115:16): "The heavens, even the heavens, are the Lord's; but the earth hath he given to the children of Man." Accordingly, Maimonides suggests that the truth regarding providence, i.e., that theological truth which is of vital importance to human life, comes to sight by the observation of the sublunar phenomena alone. Even the proof of the First Mover of heaven, i.e., the philosophic proof of God's being, unity, and incorporeality, to say nothing of the being of the other separate intelligences, becomes a subject of perplexity (II 22, 24; cf. II 3, 19, III 23). And yet it was knowledge of heaven that was said to supply the best proof, not to say the only proof, of the being of God (II 18). Maimonides had said earlier that very little demonstration is possible regarding divine matters and much of it regarding natural matters (I 31). Now he seems to suggest that the only genuine science of beings is natural science or a part of it. It is obvious that one cannot leave it at this apparent suggestion. The least that one would have to add is that the strange remarks referred to occur within the context in which Maimonides questions Aristotle's account of heaven in the name of astronomy or, more precisely,

in which he sets forth the conflict between philosophic cosmology and mathematical astronomy—that conflict which he calls “the true perplexity”: the hypotheses on which astronomy rests cannot be true and yet they alone enable one to give an account of the heavenly phenomena in terms of circular and uniform motions. Astronomy shows the necessity of recurring for the purpose of calculation and prediction to what is possible in a philosophically inadmissible sense (II 24).

We have been compelled to put a greater emphasis on Maimonides' perplexities than on his certainties, and in particular on his vigorous and skillful defense of the Law, because the latter are more easily accessible than the former. Besides, what at first glance seems to be merely negative is negative only in the sense in which every liberation, being a liberation not only to something but also from something, contains a negative ingredient. So we may conclude with the words of Maimonides with which we began: The *Guide* is “a key permitting one to enter places the gates to which were locked. When those gates are opened and those places are entered, the souls will find rest therein, the bodies will be eased of their toil, and the eyes will be delighted.”

Leo Strauss

## TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

### THE PHILOSOPHIC SOURCES OF The Guide of the Perplexed

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MAIMONIDES (1135–1204) wrote *The Guide of the Perplexed* in his mature age, after he had composed several works on the halakhah (notably *Mishneh Torah*) and also one treatise on logic, a juvenile effort, entitled *Sinā'at al-manṭiq*, “the art of logic,” but better known under the Hebrew name *Milloth Ha-higgayon*. As far as the method of exposition is concerned, there is a striking difference between *Mishneh Torah* and the *Guide of the Perplexed*,<sup>1</sup> in which the earlier work is repeatedly referred to. In the *Mishneh Torah* Maimonides set out to produce order—a systematic, lucid, and authoritative legal code—out of the chaotic disorder of talmudic literature, and he succeeded most admirably in this undertaking. In the *Guide*, on the other hand, the systematic expositions of the Aristotelian philosophers are often dislocated and broken up; sometimes wholly unconnected subjects are brought together; in a word, order is turned into disorder. As Maimonides explains in his Introduction this was done for good and sufficient reasons and does not, by any means, indicate that he had lost his gift for lucid exposition. Indeed this gift is brilliantly displayed in certain passages of the *Guide*, for instance in the formulation of the premises of the Mutakallimūn (I 73) and of the premises of the philosophers (beginning of Part II).

The peculiar method used by Maimonides in composing his work is perhaps the main reason for the disconcerting impression it is apt to produce at first upon most of its readers. This impression was certainly aimed at by Maimonides. His book's impact depends upon it. However, the educated public of Maimonides'

1. See Leo Strauss, “The Literary Character of the Guide for the Perplexed,” in *Essays on Maimonides; An Octocentennial Volume*, ed. S. W. Baron (New York, 1941), pp. 37–91.