


Chapter 1

The Concept of God in the Old Testament: A Phenomenological Approach

Ubong E. Eyo

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7140-7399>
University of Calabar, Nigeria

Gregory A. Onah

University of Calabar, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Old Testament studies have posed a lot of challenges to scholarship. They made people like Marcion read it with a pen-knife frame having in mind to cut off those texts of 'horror' which present the Old Testament God as a wicked God who lacks compassion and the spirit of benevolence. This monstrous presentation of the Old Testament God has propelled some scholars like Pail Copan to ask, is the God (of the Old Testament) a moral or monster? This view of the Old Testament God is occasioned by the challenges involved in the studying of the Old Testament as an ordinary literary work, historical work, archaeological work, or a theological document. Viewing this canon from a theological perspective leads one to reading it from a religious perspective. This brings to the fore studying the religion of the Old Testament from a phenomenological perspective with an eye specifically on the concept of the Old Testament God. From a phenomenological perspective, it shows that the theistic concept was borne from varied experiences. It shows the nature and character of their God.

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INTRODUCTION

Old Testament studies has posed a lot of challenges to scholarship. It made people like Marcion to read it with a pen-knife having in mind to cut those texts of ‘horror’ which present the Old Testament God as a wicked God who lacks compassion and the spirit of benevolence. This monstrous presentation of the Old Testament God has propelled scholars like Pail Copan to ask, is God (of the Old Testament) a moral or monster, “does God have an unhealthy self-preoccupation?” (Copan, 2011, p. 27). This problem of viewing the Old Testament God from this perspective is occasioned by the challenges involved in the studying of Old Testament as an ordinary literary work, historical work, archaeological work or a theological document. Viewing this canon from a theological perspective leads one to reading it from a religious perspective. This brings to the fore studying the religion of Old Testament from a phenomenological perspective with an eye specifically on the concept of God.

BRIEF UNDERSTANDING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE CHALLENGE OF METHODOLOGY

The Bible generally is the sacred book (scripture) of Christian religion. Worthy of note, this is divided into two major sections called testaments from the Latin word *testamentum* meaning covenant. These two major sections are Old Testament and New Testament. The Old Testament is majorly the Jewish scripture (though accepted by Christians) and speaks of the covenant God had with Israel, while the New Testament is concerned with the fulfilment of God’s covenant with humanity fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The Old Testament is often said to be the shadow of which the New Testament is the reality. Scholars are of the opinion that, the Old Testament in the New Testament concealed while the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed. Our concern in this study is with the Old Testament.

The Old Testament is structured differently by Roman Catholics and Protestant Churches; that of Roman Catholics is the Scripture of Judaism with seven (7) other books which were originally written in Greek language unlike the other parts which were written majorly in Hebrew language. Protestants only limit themselves to the thirty-nine (39) books of the Jewish scripture. The additional books by Roman Catholic are called Apocrypha by Protestants, but generally, they are called deuterocanonical books by Roman Catholics.

Old Testament Bible which is a collection of a library of many books whose composition spanned over one thousand years comprises of the Torah, *N^obi'im* and *K^ethubi'im* (TANAK or TNK) which is commonly translated as the Law, Prophets and Writings (*hagiographa* – Holy Writings). Old Testament is a canon not only to

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