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A Biblical-Theological Study of the Old Testament Anthropomorphic Depictions of God

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ABSTRACT

The attribution of anthropomorphic characteristics to God in the Hebrew Bible has been a subject of considerable debate among scholars, especially regarding its implications for comprehending divine transcendence and immanence. This study examines the anthropomorphic features of God as depicted in the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament), while addressing the ongoing theological and philosophical debate about attributing human characteristics to a transcendent being. The research explores the tension between God's transcendence and immanence by investigating whether anthropomorphic depictions are literal, figurative, or reflective of the divine self-revelation. The study conducts a theological analysis of selected Old Testament scriptures, categorizing anthropomorphism into four distinct forms: structural, gestural, character-based, and aware anthropomorphism. A literature-based research methodology was used which involved analysis of selected biblical texts, engaging scholarly interpretations and comparative perspectives within the broader Ancient Near Eastern context. The paper contends that anthropomorphic depictions within the Bible are not solely metaphorical devices or projections of human qualities; instead, they serve as a fundamental theological framework that articulates God's relational and communicative presence. It found that biblical authors employed human characteristics such as physical attributes, emotions, gestures, and cognitive awareness, not to confine God's nature to human limitations, but to bridge the gap between divine mystery and human understanding. The main conclusion is that anthropomorphism in biblical texts serves as a theological tool to articulate God's involvement in human affairs, underscoring divine immanence without negating transcendence. The study contributes to biblical scholarship by deducing implications from biblical anthropomorphism for contemporary theological reflection, biblical interpretation, and Bible translation practices.

Keywords: *Anthropomorphism, Transcendent, Attributes, Human-Like Traits, Body of God, God's Emotion*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, humans have sought to understand and express their experiences with the divine through observable, descriptive features and language. The most significant way among them has been through anthropomorphism, which involves attributing human traits, emotions, and intentions to God. In the Christian Bible, for instance, particularly in the Old Testament, God is portrayed as a transcendent being (existing beyond and independent of the material universe),[1] yet with observable human-like descriptive features. He is often described with human-like traits, such as a body (including hands, feet, ears, mouth, head, and nose), emotions (like anger, crying, eating, loving, and sleeping), and actions (such as walking, talking, hearing, creating, and wrestling).

However, the amalgamation of anthropomorphic and transcendental tendencies of God, as depicted in the Christian Bible, creates significant tension for scholarly debate. This is because attributing mortal qualities and characteristics to God seems to contradict the biblical teaching that God is distinct from creation (transcendent). Based on this, there is the notion that the concept of anthropomorphism is a mere human fabrication and imagination. On the other hand, despite this tension, it seems quite difficult for scholars to dismiss the idea of the anthropomorphic depiction of God, given its prevalence in the Old Testament. These descriptions bridge the transcendent and the immanent (God's nearness and active presence in the world),[2] making the divine more comprehensible to human experience.

Anthropomorphism has been a widely debated theological concept, particularly in relation to its implications for the understanding of divine transcendence and immanence. Scholars such as John Calvin,[3] Karl Barth,[4] Jürgen Moltmann,[5] and Benjamin Sommer,[6] among others, have argued against the idea that the anthropomorphic depictions of God in the Hebrew Bible were intended as a corporeal deity. Sommer, for instance, suggests that the anthropomorphic tendencies in the Bible should be seen as figurative, metaphorical, and accommodative rather than literal, as they reflect the cultural and religious context of the time.[7] On the contrary, John Goldingay has contended that attributing human-like traits to God in Scripture is not merely poetic or metaphorical, but essential for divine self-revelation to make the transcendent God accessible to human comprehension.[8] This view is crucial, as it depicts the anthropomorphic concept as a foundational understanding of divine communication rather than merely human projection. Understanding anthropomorphic expressions from these scholarly perspectives is key for theological formulation, biblical interpretation, and Bible translation. Yet, not many contemporary scholarly works have been devoted to this subject, making a study on anthropomorphism worthy of undertaking.

Against this backdrop, the present paper examines the ongoing theological tension arising from the anthropomorphic representations of God in the Hebrew Bible, with particular emphasis on how such depictions may coexist with the affirmation of divine attributes. It explores structural, character, gestural, and aware forms of anthropomorphism and their significance for the Christian community. Through a critical analysis of selected Old Testament texts, the paper aims to provide a coherent theological framework for understanding and interpreting biblical anthropomorphism. The concluding

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[1] Zulfiqar Ali Shah, *Anthropomorphic Depictions of God: The Concept of God in Judaic, Christian, and Islamic Traditions: Representing the Unrepresentable* (Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2012), 10-11.
[2] Shah, *Anthropomorphic Depictions of God*, 12.
[3] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 1, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. and indexed by Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 121.
[4] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II/1, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957), 177.
[5] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, trans. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1974), 222.
[6] Benjamin D. Sommer, *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1–2.
[7] Sommer, *The Bodies of God*, 3.
[8] John Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology: Israel's Gospel*, Vol. 1 (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2003), 61.

section outlines the implications of anthropomorphic descriptions of God on theological interpretation and the translation of biblical texts, ensuring that the language pertaining to the divine-human relationship is accurately understood and effectively communicated. The examination of these themes is meant to contribute to contemporary theological, biblical and translation studies.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this qualitative study is primarily a literature-based biblical-theological analysis. This approach entails a critical examination of selected Old Testament texts through extensive engagement with scholarly interpretations, theological frameworks, and comparative perspectives within the broader context of the Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) region. The study draws on interdisciplinary insights from theology, philosophy, and design theory, particularly adopting a classification system proposed by Carl DiSalvo, Jodi Forlizzi, and Francine Gemperle to categorize anthropomorphism into four distinct types: structural, gestural, character-based, and awareness-based. Furthermore, it conducts a theological analysis of how biblical authors employ human characteristics and imagery to convey God's emotions, presence, and actions. There is also a comparative theological interpretation that places the biblical representations of God alongside those found in ANE religious traditions to reveal cultural continuities and theological distinctiveness.

3.0 ANTHROPOMORPHISM EXPLAINED

The term "anthropomorphism" originates from two Greek words *anthrōpos*, which translates to "human being," and *morphē*, meaning "form." This concept refers to the attribution of human form, characteristics, or actions to non-human entities, including animals, inanimate objects, and deities.[9] For Zulfiqar Ali Sha, anthropomorphism is "an invertebrate tendency to project human qualities into natural phenomena, consciously or not, or, the description of non-material, 'spiritual' entities in physical, and specifically human, form."[10] This suggests that anthropomorphism is a deeply ingrained human tendency to perceive the world from a human-centric perspective. Sha's definition implies that individuals instinctively attribute human characteristics to natural phenomena and forces, either consciously or unconsciously.

Anthropomorphism is a concept frequently employed by religious scholars and philosophical and mythological studies, to attribute human traits to deities. Although the anthropomorphic conception is well-regarded, it is important to clarify its original essence and relevance for today's audience.[11] This paper focuses on the religious practice or thought of humanizing the divine, particularly within the Judeo-Christian tradition, as informed by the Old Testament. Except for the term "God," it is widely contended that nearly all language used in the Bible to describe God is metaphorical.[12] Although some of these languages originate from the natural world, comprising both living and non-living elements, the vast majority of metaphorical languages used in the Bible are influenced by human experiences (including forms, emotions, roles, activities, and others).[13] Terence E. Fretheim argues that conventional concepts, such as the human body, emotions, parenthood, and nature, serve as essential frameworks for understanding more abstract or intangible subjects, including the church and God.[14] This implies that, without describing complex or abstract ideas such as divine realities in a more accessible, relatable, and familiar manner rooted in human experience, understanding and relating to the divine would be far more difficult. Thus, since God transcends direct

[9] Shah, *Anthropomorphic Depictions of God*, 24.
[10] Shah, *Anthropomorphic Depictions of God*, 24.
[11] Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa, "Form(s) of God: Some Notes on Metatron and Christ," *Harvard Theological Review* 76, no. 3 (1983): 269–88, 269.
[12] Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective*, vol. 14 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 5.
[13] Fretheim, *The Suffering of God*, 5.
[14] Fretheim, *The Suffering of God*, 5.

comprehension, human experiences and familiar concepts serve as a means of grasping his nature through the use of anthropomorphic language and metaphor.

In support of the use of metaphorical language to describe God, Walter Brueggemann and Rebecca Kruger Gaudino contend that Israel's testimony about God is an evocative rather than a definitive or literal description.[15] They explore Sallie McFague's perspective, which emphasizes the inherent tension in metaphor—it affirms a likeness between God and the metaphorical image, while simultaneously denying a complete equivalence between them.[16] For instance, Brueggemann and Gaudino posit that the phrase "Yahweh is a shepherd" conveys significant insights into the role of God, including such aspects as guidance, care, and protection.[17] However, it does not imply that Yahweh is to be understood as a literal shepherd tending to actual sheep.[18] Brueggemann and Gaudino build on this idea by arguing that Israel's theological rhetoric resists rigid or overly fixed interpretations of God.[19] Rather than fixing the divine to a single, complete definition, metaphorical language allows for a more dynamic and open-ended understanding. This approach helps keep discussions about God relational, experiential, and dynamic and guards against the risk of conceptual rigidity, where a single metaphor might mistakenly be seen as fully capturing God's nature.

Furthermore, John Goldingay, in his discussion of anthropomorphic language in the Old Testament (specifically in passages such as Gen. 18:20-21 and 22:12), notes that these texts depict God as engaging in actions to acquire knowledge.[20] He argues that "the depiction of God acting to discover information constitutes an instance of anthropomorphism."[21] He further asserts that such anthropomorphic expressions "presumably tell us something true about God's relationship with the world."[22] It is clear from his argument that anthropomorphism is more than mere metaphorical embellishment; it fulfils a didactic function, making God's nature and interactions comprehensible. Thus, anthropomorphic language is not merely a figurative device but an essential means of divine self-revelation that conveys genuine theological truths about God's nature and relationship with the world.

With this background, the next section considers the various kinds of anthropomorphism.

4.0 TYPES OF ANTHROPOMORPHISM

As a concept, anthropomorphism is often expressed in various forms, and it is essential to distinguish between these variations and their noticeable characteristics, since it describes abstract ideas or divine realities. In their article "Imitating the Human Form: Four Types of Anthropomorphic Forms," Carl DiSalvo, Francine Gemperle, and Jodi Forlizz discuss four categories of anthropomorphic forms: structural, gestural, character-based, and aware anthropomorphic forms.[23] Two key questions guide the classification and discussion of these types: What is the purpose of imitating human form, and which aspect of human form is being imitated?[24] The first question examines the specific aspects of humans that are mimicked or symbolized, while the latter describes both the materials and qualities associated with anthropomorphism.[25]

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[15] Walter Brueggemann and Rebecca Kruger Gaudino, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 62.
[16] Sallie MacFague cited in Brueggemann and Gaudino, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 62.
[17] Brueggemann and Gaudino, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 62.
[18] Brueggemann and Gaudino, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 62.
[19] Brueggemann and Gaudino, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 62.
[20] John Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology: Israel's Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 137
[21] Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology*, 137.
[22] Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology*, 137.
[23] DiSalvo, Carl, Jodi Forlizzi, and Francine Gemperle, "Kinds of Anthropomorphic Form," In *Futureground - DRS International Conference 2004*, edited by John Redmond, David Durling, and Alberto de Bono, 17-21 November 2004, Melbourne, Australia. https://dl.designresearchsociety.org/drs-conference-papers/drs2004/researchpapers/45, 3-4.
[24] DiSalvo, Forlizzi, and Gemperle, "Kinds of Anthropomorphic Form," 3-11.
[25] DiSalvo, Forlizzi, and Gemperle, "Kinds of Anthropomorphic Form," 5.

It is undoubtedly nearly impossible to definitively compile a completely comprehensive list of human or product-related qualities that contribute to anthropomorphic forms, given the vast array of possible variations and the limitless possibilities.[26] What follows explores DiSalvo, Gemperle, and Forlizz's categorization of anthropomorphism.

4.1 Structural Anthropomorphic Forms

The structural anthropomorphic form mimics the human body's construction and functionality, and emphasizes its materiality.[27] Andreas Wagner posits that there has been inadequate consideration of "material images" within the discourse regarding anthropomorphism.[28] Wagner further argues that this dimension of anthropomorphism distinctly illustrates how the external forms of divine realities were perceived in the Ancient Near East and Old Testament times.[29] This illustrates how divine beings are often depicted with tangible, physical, and bodily forms that resemble human anatomy. This form of anthropomorphism is typically characterised by the presence of shapes, volumes, mechanisms, or arrangements that mimic the appearance or functioning of the human body.[30] It imitates the structure, functions, or physical characteristics of the human body.

DiSalvo, Gemperle, and Forlizzi identify a poseable female artist's mannequin as a representative example of structural anthropomorphism. They argue that the product form imitates the human female body shape and some other joints of the human female body, which, in effect, are universal to the human body.[31] Their argument highlights the bodily form and mechanical structure of human beings when applied to non-human entities such as objects, deities, or artistic models.[32]

Wagner uses sculpture to buttress his point of material image by indicating that "a sculpture in human form is the result of the reproduction of parts of the body, each in their typical aspects."[33] He further asserts that human-form sculptures may seem purely materialistic at first glance; yet they adhere to the same fundamental "construction principles" as relief representations do.[34] This implies that artists intentionally depict bodily features based on standardized forms, rather than producing purely naturalistic representations. This further suggests that a divine or non-human entity is rendered in a human-like form, albeit in a stylized or symbolic manner, rather than as a flawless representation or imitation.

4.2 Gestural Anthropomorphic Form

Gestures are deliberate movements of the hands and body that are directly tied to speech and thought.[35] They are not mere accompaniments to speech but integral to the process of forming and expressing ideas.[36] This understanding of gesture as fundamental to communication provides a valuable lens for examining how human-like behaviours are attributed to non-human entities. DiSalvo, Gemperle, and Forlizz refer to it as a gestural anthropomorphic form and contend that it primarily imitates how individuals communicate with and through the human body, emphasizing behaviours.[37]

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[26] DiSalvo, Forlizzi, and Gemperle, "Kinds of Anthropomorphic Form," 8.
[27] DiSalvo, Forlizzi, and Gemperle, "Kinds of Anthropomorphic Form," 6.
[28] Andreas Wagner, *God's Body: The Anthropomorphic God in the Old Testament* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019), 21. (pdf)
[29] Wagner, *God's Body*, 21.
[30] DiSalvo, Forlizzi, and Gemperle, "Kinds of Anthropomorphic Form," 6.
[31] DiSalvo, Forlizzi, and Gemperle, "Kinds of Anthropomorphic Form," 6.
[32] DiSalvo, Forlizzi, and Gemperle, "Kinds of Anthropomorphic Form," 6.
[33] Wagner, *God's Body*, 100.
[34] DiSalvo, Forlizzi, and Gemperle, "Kinds of Anthropomorphic Form," 6
[35] David McNeill, *Hand and Mind: What Gestures Reveal About Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 1–2
[36] McNeill, *Hand and Mind*, 1-2.
[37] DiSalvo, Forlizzi, and Gemperle, "Kinds of Anthropomorphic Form," 6

Sharice Clough and Melissa C. Duff argue that gestures are not merely supplementary but are integral to human communication, playing a crucial role in both expressing and processing meaning.[38] In gestural anthropomorphism, motions or poses that suggest human action convey meaning, intention, or instruction.[39] The characteristics of this form are primarily identified by answering questions such as: is there action or expression, does that action convey something, and can you assign human action, among others.[40] The gestural anthropomorphic form is based on the understanding of human nonverbal communication and embodies the expressive nature of the human body.[41]

To illustrate this type of anthropomorphism, DiSalvo, Gemperle, and Forlizz use feedback generated from a Macintosh Operating System (OS) X login screen. They argue that just as the computer window quickly and briefly shakes from side to side when a wrong password is entered, it reflects a common human gesture that expresses "no."[42] They believe that the action of the computer window after an incorrect password is entered offers a gentle suggestion, mimicking a human head shake.[43] In this regard, just as the shaking motion of the Macintosh OS X login screen mimics a human head shake to communicate "no," biblical texts utilize gestural anthropomorphism to illustrate divine responses in ways that align with human understanding. This reinforces the theological concept that the actions of God, although transcendent, are frequently expressed through human corporeal forms to bridge the chasm between the divine and the human.

4.3 Anthropomorphic Character Form

This form of anthropomorphism imitates the traits, roles, or functions of individuals, thereby highlighting the specific purpose of each action. The anthropomorphic character form answers questions like: "Does it imitate human relationships? Could you describe its character or social role? Does it relate to human experience? Does it not have to be anthropomorphic?"[44] In line with this form of anthropomorphism regarding character, traits, and roles, Cynthia Breazeal shows how non-human entities can be designed with life-like qualities and be perceived as social beings with personality traits and intentions.[45] This concept by Breazeal is significant because it emphasizes imitating human traits, roles, and functions, as illustrated by the anthropomorphic form of character.

DiSalvo, Gemperle, and Forlizz used Jean-Paul Gaultier's "Le Male" perfume bottle to explain this form of anthropomorphism by embodying specific human traits and social roles rather than merely imitating human structure or gesture.[46] Their example highlights that the bottle's erotically charged form not only reflects a stylized masculine figure but also conveys cultural perceptions of masculinity, serving as a strong example of how objects can personify human identity, traits, and societal roles within anthropomorphic design. Consequently, similar to how the Gaultier "Le Male" perfume bottle embodies a culturally constructed notion of masculinity, biblical portrayals of God encapsulate divine attributes through human roles and characteristics, thereby rendering him more relatable and comprehensible. This indicates that in the anthropomorphic form of character, God is depicted with human-like characteristics, roles, and functions that shape his nature and relationships with humanity. These human-like attributes of God help convey his actions, nature, and relationship with his people in ways that humans can understand.

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[38] Sharice Clough and Melissa C. Duff, "The Role of Gesture in Communication and Cognition: Implications for Understanding and Treating Neurogenic Communication Disorders," *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* 14 (2020): 419-429, 420.
[39] DiSalvo, Forlizzi, and Gemperle, "Kinds of Anthropomorphic Form," 6
[40] DiSalvo, Forlizzi, and Gemperle, "Kinds of Anthropomorphic Form," 8.
[41] DiSalvo, Forlizzi, and Gemperle, "Kinds of Anthropomorphic Form," 6
[42] DiSalvo, Forlizzi, and Gemperle, "Kinds of Anthropomorphic Form," 6
[43] DiSalvo, Forlizzi, and Gemperle, "Kinds of Anthropomorphic Form," 6
[44] DiSalvo, Forlizzi, and Gemperle, "Kinds of Anthropomorphic Form," 7.
[45] Cynthia Breazeal, *Designing Sociable Robots* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 8.
[46] DiSalvo, Forlizzi, and Gemperle, "Kinds of Anthropomorphic Form," 7.

4.4 Aware Anthropomorphism

This type of anthropomorphic representation encapsulates the human capacity for cognition, intentionality, and inquiry, while also recognizing the social attributes that are intrinsic to human existence.[47] What distinguishes it from the anthropomorphic representation of character (which emphasizes the individual within society) is the emphasis on the collective essence of humanity.[48] This anthropomorphic shape includes all entities that indicate self-awareness in relation to others, the capacity to create or alter abstract concepts, or the ability to engage actively with others.[49] This means it considers the intellectual, reflective, and relational aspects of humanity, instead of focusing solely on physical attributes and actions. In other words, such anthropomorphism endows non-human entities with the capacity for self-awareness and social-emotional interactions. These entities meaningfully engage with others through various methods of communication and empathy, as well as other cooperative abilities.

In the biblical context, aware anthropomorphism depicts God as possessing cognitive and relational depth—thinking, choosing, grieving, planning, and interacting with others—not merely as a powerful entity, but as a social, thoughtful, and purposeful presence. This human-like representation connects divine transcendence with human comprehension by using deeply human modes of consciousness to convey ideas about God. It is primarily recognized by addressing crucial questions, such as: "Is there a semblance of awareness? Does it simulate human consciousness? Can you connect with it as a human? Must it be anthropomorphic?"[50]

5.0 ANTHROPOMORPHISM IN THE CONTEXT OF ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN WORLD

The perspective of the Ancient Near East regarding deities holds considerable significance about Israel's comprehension of God. In contrast to the more clearly defined and anthropomorphic deities of ancient Greece, the gods of the ancient Near East (ANE)—including those worshipped by the Babylonians, Assyrians, Canaanites, and Egyptians—were frequently viewed as entirely different, able to inhabit multiple forms simultaneously and exhibiting fragmented or fluid qualities.[51] In these traditions, gods were not necessarily discrete beings but could blend identities and manifest in various locations simultaneously.[52] This perspective suggests a fundamental ontological difference between gods and humans: while ANE deities often exhibited human traits and behaviours, they were composed of a qualitatively different "substance," not only in power or scale but in nature.[53] For instance, in the Mesopotamian religion, the goddess Ishtar existed simultaneously as Ishtar of Arbela and Ishtar of Nineveh, distinct yet fundamentally unified.[54] Similarly, the god Adad appeared in multiple localized forms, such as Adad of Kurba'il and Adad of Alep, each with specific cultic significance yet maintaining essential unity.[55]

Furthermore, Egyptian religious thought also embraced this multiplicity, where gods like Amun could manifest as Amun-Ra, blending solar and hidden aspects into a single, fluid divine identity.[56] In Canaanite religion, Baal was worshipped under various epithets tied to specific locations or aspects of nature, such as Baal-Hadad, the storm god.[57] This broader ANE understanding of divine embodiment suggests that gods transcended human limitations of space and substance, reinforcing a

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[47] DiSalvo, Forlizzi, and Gemperle, "Kinds of Anthropomorphic Form," 7.
[48] DiSalvo, Forlizzi, and Gemperle, "Kinds of Anthropomorphic Form," 7.
[49] DiSalvo, Forlizzi, and Gemperle, "Kinds of Anthropomorphic Form," 7.
[50] DiSalvo, Forlizzi, and Gemperle, "Kinds of Anthropomorphic Form," 7.
[51] Benjamin D. Sommer, *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 12
[52] Sommer, *The Bodies of God*, 12.
[53] Sommer, *The Bodies of God*, 12.
[54] Sommer, *The Bodies of God*, 13-15.
[55] Sommer, *The Bodies of God*, 14.
[56] Sommer, *The Bodies of God*, 12.
[57] Sommer, *The Bodies of God*, 12.

qualitative ontological divide between gods and humans. While depicted with human traits and emotions, gods were composed of a fundamentally different "substance," often envisioned as radiant or energetic rather than merely physical.[58]

This theological perspective immensely impacted Israel's religious imagination, which did not exist in isolation but engaged in continuous dialogue and tension with its surrounding cultures. Although the Hebrew Bible often depicts Yahweh (the God of Israel) with human-like attributes—hands, eyes, and mouth—it simultaneously reflects the ANE tendency to envision divine presence as multilocal and transcendent.[59] Sommer observes that, although the Hebrew Bible consistently portrays God with human-like attributes—such as hands, eyes, and a voice—it also reflects the ANE tendency to conceive of divine presence as multi-local and transcending physical boundaries.[60] This indicates that, similar to their neighbours, ancient Israelites viewed their God as able to function in various dimensions of existence and manifest in multiple forms without diminishing divine essence unity.

Moreover, the Hebrew Bible present Yahweh as simultaneously present in the temple, in heaven, and leading Israel in the wilderness (e.g., Exod. 40:34-38).[61] God's manifestation in multiple "bodies" or localized forms without fragmentation of identity resonates strongly with the ANE world. Thus, as Israelite religion evolved towards a more exclusive form of monotheism, it neither detached from its cultural context nor abandoned the adaptability of divinity, instead transforming it into a monotheistic framework. A comprehension of this extensive Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) context clarifies the Hebrew Bible's depiction of a deity who is simultaneously immanent and transcendent, singular yet expressed in various forms—an understanding profoundly entrenched in, yet uniquely evolved from, its ANE setting.

6.0 ANTHROPOMORPHISM IN SOME SELECTED HEBREW BIBLE

Despite the ongoing scholarly debate regarding attributing human characteristics to God in the Old Testament, the undeniable evidence of anthropomorphism in the text has made it increasingly difficult to dismiss. In support of this position, Anne K. Knafl cites Ulrich Mauser as stating that anthropomorphic depictions of God appear consistently throughout the biblical texts. These depictions do not diminish over time.[62] This challenges the common belief that the Hebrew Bible shows a linear development from early, crude, and physical portrayals of God to later, more abstract and spiritualized understandings.[63]

Furthermore, anthropomorphism remains an essential and enduring feature of biblical discourse about God, resisting any attempt to establish a clear trajectory toward a wholly non-anthropomorphic theology.[64] Instead, to demonstrate that the Hebrew Bible, much like the New Testament, employs divine anthropomorphism to distinguish God's character from that of humans, it effectively highlights the assumed similarities between the divine and humanity.[65] This suggests that, while one cannot overlook the anthropomorphic traits of God in the Bible, a clear distinction remains between divine and human characteristics. The Bible often makes comparisons between God and humanity, depicting him with a face, a physical form, a voice, and hands, among other attributes. The subsequent discussion analyses several passages from the Old Testament that illustrate the assignment of human-like characteristics to God, categorized under the four kinds of anthropomorphic forms previously mentioned; namely, structure, gesture, character, and awareness.

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[58] Sommer, *The Bodies of God*, 2.
[59] Sommer, *The Bodies of God*, 14.
[60] Sommer, *The Bodies of God*, 13-14.
[61] Sommer, *The Bodies of God*, 2-3, 38-39.
[62] Anne K. Knafl, *Forming God: Divine Anthropomorphism in the Pentateuch* (University Park: Penn State Press, 2014), 20; Ulrich Mauser, "Image of God and Incarnation," *Interpretation* 24 (1970): 336-356, 337.
[63] Knafl, *Forming God*, 20; Ulrich Mauser, "Image of God and Incarnation," *Interpretation* 24 (1970): 336-356, 337.
[64] Knafl, *Forming God*, 12.
[65] Knafl, *Forming God*, 12.

6.1 Structural Depictions of God

Contrary to the assumption by many scholars, Benjamin D. Sommer argues that the God of the Hebrew Bible has a body.[66] He defines body as "something located in a particular place at a particular time, whatever its shape or substance."[67] According to Mark S. Smith, Sommer's definition appears to be broader than both the concept of human or divine bodies in the Bible and the usage found in contemporary society.[68] Smith, however, contends that "a definition of 'body' for biblical and material without reference to the human body would not account for the central role that the human body plays in biblical anthropomorphism generally and in biblical representation of God's body in particular."[69] Considering that *kabod,* which Sommer includes in his definition as a body, does not constitute a divine entity in the Priestly passages of the Pentateuch, Smith concludes that *kabod* is suitable for the discourse regarding God's bodies.[70] It follows that since the divine being manifests itself on earth, a consideration of God's body is appropriate.

Moreover, numerous passages in the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament, attribute a physical form to God. Smith contends that Genesis uniquely depicts God using tangible, anthropomorphic imagery not commonly found in other biblical books.[71] Sommer has contended that, about God's form and shape, the physical structure of God, there is enormous and profound evidence of it in the Bible.[72] He cites Genesis 1:26 when God was addressing various unnamed heavenly beings as follows "Let us make humanity in our form, according to our shape, so that they may rule …."[73] He argues that it can be inferred from the text that God and the unnamed heavenly creatures possess bodies, which presumably means that human bodies will be similar to theirs.[74] However, Sommer was quick to add that this divine body is not composed of the same type of matter as a human body.[75] In support of his point, he cites Kaufmann, who maintains that the biblical God had a form but no material substance. [76] However, Sommer believes Kaufmann's portrayal captures the peculiar type of anthropomorphism found in many parts of the biblical canon, rather than the whole Hebrew Bible.[77]

While some sections of Genesis, such as 1:26, among others, point to a non-material anthropomorphism, others reflect a concrete conception of God's body, which he terms "material anthropomorphism."[78] Thus, the corporeal form of God may, at certain times, assume a shape and possess a substance similar to that of the human body.[79] Supporting this perspective, Smith cites Genesis 2–3, which he identifies as the earliest text attributing a physical form to God.[80] The phrase within the passage, "God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life," suggests a concrete action reminiscent of mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.[81] This suggests a profound physical action, similar to the idea of God descending and engaging in the act of performing "mouth-to-mouth resuscitation"

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[66] Sommer, *The Bodies of God,* 1.
[67] Sommer, *The Bodies of God,* 80.
[68] Mark S. Smith, 'The Three Bodies of God in the Hebrew Bible', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 134 (2015): 471-488, 473.
[69] Smith, "The Three Bodies of God," 473.
[70] Smith, "The Three Bodies of God," 473.
[71] Smith, "The Three Bodies of God," 477.
[72] Sommer, *The Bodies of God,* 1.
[73] Sommer, *The Bodies of God,* 2.
[74] Sommer, *The Bodies of God,* 2.
[75] Sommer, *The Bodies of God,* 2.
[76] Sommer, *The Bodies of God,* 2.
[77] Sommer, *The Bodies of God,* 2.
[78] Sommer, *The Bodies of God,* 2.
[79] Sommer, *The Bodies of God,* 2.
[80] Smith, "The Three Bodies of God," 473.
[81] Smith, "The Three Bodies of God," 473.

personally, in stark contrast to a remote directive issued from Heaven. Sommer, in accordance with this perspective, asserts that God's action of breathing a life-sustaining breath into the first human suggests the presence of a mouth or some organ with which to perform this act.[82] This act depicts God not merely as an abstract entity, but as a tangible being with human traits, such as a mouth, actively engaging with creation in a distinctly human manner. Sommer further asserts with greater clarity that, Genesis 3:8, which states "And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking…" (KJV), implies that a being who engages in walking possesses a corporeal form – more specifically, a form that closely resembles legs.[83]

Beyond the physical, embodied form of God as observed in some texts in Genesis, other texts portray God with human-like physical features in a figurative manner. Esther J. Homari refers to this form of portrayal as "metaphorical anthropomorphism."[84] She further cites Isaiah 41:10 and 42:6 to argue that human body parts — such as a strong hand, an outstretched arm, the eye of God, and the nose of God — may sometimes overlap with certain forms of anthropomorphism.[85] However, they must be understood as representational or metaphorical, as they are all based on the concept of God having a human-like form. For instance, in the texts Exodus 33:23, Psalm 8:3-4; 18:6-10; 34:15; 89:13, Isaiah 59:1; 30:27, Jeremiah 1:9, Ezekiel 1:26-28, among others, God is depicted as having physical human attributes, such as hands, a face, and a semblance of humanity.

6.2 Gestural Depiction of God

Gestural depiction of God refers to the use of bodily movements and symbolic actions to express or represent aspects of God's character, presence, or work. The examination of divine actions, as depicted through anthropomorphic gestures in the Bible, holds considerable significance in rendering divine activity more accessible and understandable to a human audience. Various biblical passages in the Old Testament can be analysed to support this conception of God. Psalm 18:16 states, "He reached down from heaven on high and took hold of me…" (NIV). In this Psalm, Yahweh is pictured as having appeared to rescue the anointed Davidic ruler from the overwhelming powers of enemies and death.[86] Brueggemann puts it this way: "God delivered this chosen one from the powers of death."[87] This observation is noteworthy due to the historical account presented in 1 Samuel 24 and 26, to which this Thanksgiving Psalm is believed to be associated.[88] In this narrative, during Saul's pursuit of David, he entered the very cave in which David and his men were concealed deeper within; however, they remained undetected by Saul and his men (1 Sam. 24). Even though there is no explicit physical manifestation of God to indicate a tangible deliverance by God, David, however, is seen in Psalm 18:16 ascribing to God the actions or gestures of men, such as "reaching down" and "taking hold of," to suggest his direct involvement in his deliverance from Saul. David might have interpreted the invincibility of himself and his men as a gesture of divine deliverance, thereby promoting a relational understanding of the divine and bridging the gap between divine transcendence and human experience. Moreover, the word "*Moshe*", used in Psalm 18, is also found in Exodus 2:10 as the root to mean "drawn from" or "drawn out," conveying a powerful imagery of rescue.[89] Brueggemann avers that

[82] Sommer, *The Bodies of God,* 2.
[83] Sommer, *The Bodies of God,* 2.
[84] Esther J. Hamori, *When Gods Were Men: The Embodied God in Biblical and Near Eastern Literature* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 33.
[85] Hamori, *When Gods Were Men,* 33.
[86] Walter Brueggemann and William H. Bellinger, *Psalms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 97-98.
[87] Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 98.
[88] Mark David Futato, *Interpreting the Psalms: An Exegetical Handbook* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2007), 121.
[89] C. F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 5, *Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1866–1872), 267.

David found himself in a perilous situation.[90] Thus, it is not unexpected that David perceived his deliverance as a consequence of divine intervention.

Beyond the Psalms, the image of God's hand shaping clay, as observed in "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done? says the Lord. Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel" (Jer. 18:6 RSV), reflects a human artisan at work. Commenting on this text, Charles L. Feinberg asserts that, "Jeremiah speaks of the Lord in strongly anthropomorphic terms to accommodate our human inability to comprehend the divine mystery of God's ways." Feinberg's point does not imply that God is literally a potter, but rather that such imagery bridges the gap between divine transcendence and human understanding. Through the gesture of potting, the abstract concept of God's will, thus his sovereign purpose, intention, plan, and authority, becomes concrete and accessible, making divine activity comprehensible in relational and behavioural terms. J. A. Thompson has observed that the verb *yasar*, meaning "to fashion, shape," which can also be interpreted as "to create," occurs in Isaiah 29:16, 45:9, and 64:8 to express the creatureliness of humanity.[91] This suggests that God is depicted as a potter who intends to create or reshape Israel, which is regarded as the clay once more.[92] The idea of God who creates humans from clay appears to be common in Near Eastern myth, which Israel was familiar with.[93] This implies that the prophet Jeremiah may be conveying a gesture of divine agency, intentionality, and relational involvement by depicting God as a potter. He employs a familiar human action to symbolize God's sovereign control and capacity to shape the destiny of his people.

6.3 Depiction of God's Character

Beyond mere physical features or gestures, the Old Testament portrays God as reflecting human traits, roles, or social functions. In various instances and narratives in the Bible, God does not merely replicate human functions; instead, he is ascribed a social identity that reflects a divine personality with which humans can establish a connection. This relationship encompasses not only his role as a transcendent being but also his engagement within moral and social frameworks, as well as his modelling of roles familiar to human experience. For example, in Deuteronomy 32:6, which states, "Is he not your father, who created you…?" (ESV) God is given a relational role, depicted not only as a creator but also as a caring, protective, disciplining, and intimate father figure. Stephen L. Cook observed that the text "Father, who created you" echoes other texts, such as Exodus 4:22; Hosea 1:10; 11:1; and Deuteronomy 1:31, where Israel is referred to as God's son.[94] He sees this covenantal relationship between God and Israel as foundational, personal, and emotionally intense.[95] His observation frames God not only in terms of what God does (Creator, Sustainer) but also in terms of who God is (Father, moral figure, emotionally invested being). This father-son motif exemplifies character anthropomorphism, which endows God with a familiar human role. It presents God as a deity who feels, remembers, and cares.

Psalm 23 is among the biblical texts that use a myriad of imagery to convey its message to readers. Futato, in his commentary on the Psalm, argues that the biblical poet frequently uses imagery from everyday life, allowing readers to easily connect with.[96] He suggests that the most renowned and

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[90] Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 98.
[91] J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 434.
[92] William L. Holladay, *A Commentary on the Book of Jeremiah: Chapters 1-25* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 516.
[93] Lawrence Boadt, CSP, *Jeremiah 1-25* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 139.
[94] Stephen L. Cook, *Reading Deuteronomy: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2014), 232-233.
[95] Cook, *Reading Deuteronomy*, 232-233.
[96] Futato, *Interpreting the Psalms*, 42.

cherished image of God in the Bible is found in a song of confidence, presumably the 23rd Psalm.[97] Brueggemann also observes a rich interplay of imagery in the Psalm and contends that God as a shepherd is the predominant metaphor.[98] While some scholars argue that the metaphor extends throughout the entire Psalm, Brueggemann observes a shift from the image of a shepherd (1-3) to one of hospitality (4-5).[99] The flock of sheep is viewed as a vulnerable traveller at risk in narrow ravines and treacherous paths.[100] According to Brueggemann, all these images converge into a statement of Yahweh's steadfast trustworthiness in all circumstances.[101] The term "shepherd" is an ancient designation used to refer to a king whose duty is to protect and provide for his subjects.[102] By referring to God as shepherd, the psalmist attributes a recognizable and respected social role to God. This encourages readers to see God as a figure who leads by power, faithfulness, provision, and care. Like a good ruler or caregiver, God, depicted as a shepherd, ensures his people's well-being, rest, and protection— the sheep. This image attributed to God conveys the qualities of someone capable, intentional, and caring for those in their charge.

6.4 Aware Anthropomorphism

Aware anthropomorphism ascribes human-like consciousness, intentionality, and relational qualities to nonhuman entities or divine beings. The Old Testament contains a rich array of texts that depict God not only in human form, gesture, and character, but also with a profoundly human inner life, including thoughts, emotions, decisions, and social interactions. This view is shared by Kari Latvus, who asserts that the God of the Old Testament is pictured anthropomorphically in his expressions of emotions and passions, such as love, anger, and jealousy, which are similar to human feelings.[103] The text, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people…I have heard them crying out…and I am concerned about their suffering" (Exod. 3:7-10 NIV), is significant in portraying God's thoughts, emotions, and decisions. God's declarations, "I have surely seen," "I have heard," and "I have known," reveal his awareness of the suffering of the people of Israel in Egypt.[104] Alfred Korankye, while reflecting upon the text, asserts that the actions of God underscore the profundity and certainty of his observation, attentiveness, and profound empathetic comprehension of human pain and suffering.[105] Korankye's insight emphasizes that God understands suffering and shares in the experience of the people. This holds considerable significance, as it not only provides God with a voice or a hand but also endows God with a heart and moral consciousness, a trait characteristic of humans. Lester Meyer notes that "God is aware of his people's suffering even before they begin to complain about it."[106] Meyer's observation highlights a form of social and emotional awareness, particularly how empathetic individuals can detect a friend or loved one's distress, even if it is concealed. This suggests that divine perception is not simply a reaction but rather anticipatory.

Further still, the profound focus on the supremacy of God's love in Hosea 11 seems to establish this chapter as the most recognized and cherished passage in the entire book of Hosea.[107] In the text,

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[97] Futato, *Interpreting the Psalms*, 42.
[98] Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 122.
[99] Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*122.
[100] Brueggemann and Bellinger, 122.
[101] Brueggemann and Bellinger, 122.
[102] Brueggemann and Bellinger, 122-123.
[103] Kari Latvus, *God, Anger and Ideology: The Anger of God in Joshua and Judges in Relation to Deuteronomy and the Priestly Writings* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 89.
[104] Lester Meyer, *The Message of Exodus: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1983), 47.
[105] Alfred Korankye, *God and Human Suffering: A Postcolonial Reading of Exodus 2:23-25 and 3:7-10 for the Akan Context* (Master's Thesis: Queen's College, 2025), 22.
[106] Meyer, *The Message of Exodus*, 47
[107] Daniel J. Simundson, *Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987), 83.

God is depicted as a parental figure conveying feelings of affection towards his children who have not lived up to expectations. The anguish and pain expressed in his words are highly relatable to the emotions that human parents often share. In verse one of the text, "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son," (ESV) there is a deeply emotional statement that reveals God's tender, parental love, expressing affection, nostalgia, and a desire for intimacy. From the text, two essential terms capture God's attitude: "love" and "call." Daniel J. Simundson argues that God's first expression of love for Israel lays the groundwork for various parental actions he later describes, including calling, teaching them to walk, lifting them up and holding them, healing, touching their cheeks, bending down to care for them, and providing nourishment.[108]

Moreover, Simundson describes the statement in verse eight, "My heart recoils within me," as "a look inside God's heart."[109] This is because the heart "implies conscious thinking, understanding, making decisions, and willing a certain outcome."[110] The heart is the seat of emotion, passion, and tender feeling, which have all been ascribed to God in the text.[111] Consequently, God's response to Israel's betrayal and profound anguish was guided by the attributes of compassion, love, and mercy, rather than retribution.

Having explored the various forms of anthropomorphic depictions of God in the Hebrew Bible, it is crucial to assess the theological and interpretive implications that arise from these depictions. This is significant because understanding how human-like portrayals of God shape theological reflection and influence biblical interpretation deepens the understanding of scripture and informs how translators render these texts faithfully across different cultures and languages. The following section critically examines these broader implications for theological discourse and Bible translation.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THEOLOGICAL-BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION AND BIBLE TRANSLATION

This section explores the theological significance of the body of God, with a focus on its relevance for contemporary understanding. A thorough scriptural analysis highlights the human attributes predominantly ascribed to God and elucidates how these attributes shape and impact our understanding, perspectives, and interpretations of his nature.

The biblical depiction of God, characterized by anthropomorphic traits, features, and roles, including attributes such as God's face, hands, back, ears, eyes, arm, voice, anger, love, and joy, comprises not only metaphorical implications but also theological assertions affirming that God is relational, accessible, and engaged in human affairs. Although God is understood to be incorporeal, these representations convey God's immanence and engagement with creation in a way that is comprehensible to humans. In line with that, Latvus has noted that discussions regarding the concept of God appear to be intrinsically indefinable; instead, they encompass human comprehension of the absolute, as our assumptions and beliefs about God, whether derived from ancient or contemporary sources, are mediated through human experiences and interpretations.[112] This supports the notion that when scripture refers to God's "hand," "face," or "eyes," it does not aim to depict God's literal anatomy, but rather to articulate God's actions, presence, and relational attributes in a manner that is comprehensible to human audiences. From the discussion, God is depicted as having "seen," "heard," and "known" the plight of the people of Israel (Exod. 3:7-10), illustrating his awareness of their suffering. This underscores God's profound thoughtfulness and empathy towards the anguish experienced by humanity. It affirms that God is not a distant observer of human suffering but a relational presence who responds with compassion and justice. He does not remain aloof, unconcerned,

[108] Simundson, *Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah*, 84-85.
[109] Simundson, *Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah*, 87.
[110] Simundson, *Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah*, 87.
[111] Simundson, *Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah*, 87
[112] Latvus, *God, Anger and Ideology*, 89-90.

disinterested, or uninvolved with the affairs of mankind. Instead, he demonstrates a specific interest in addressing humanity's suffering. This enables believers to connect with God as someone close, attentive, and emotionally engaged with human affairs**.**

Furthermore, as discussed above, the anthropomorphic representations of God as a "loving parent" in the book of Hosea 11 demonstrate his profound expression of divine parental affection, mercy, and compassion, which carry significant theological implications for contemporary society. The betrayal by his "son," Israel, expected to elicit judgment and punishment, was instead met with love. This indicates that the love of God is neither static nor abstract; rather, it is manifested through tangible acts of parental affection and care. It embodies relational love instead of a contractual obligation. This is not a deity bent on destruction, but one moved by mercy and inner turmoil, choosing compassion instead of condemnation. Simundson notes that this divine quality arises from the heart, which houses emotions and is the source of decision-making.[113] The divine attribute of God is of substantial significance, as it provides hope to those who have deviated from the right path, assurance to those who experience fear of abandonment by the divine, and serves as a paradigm for ministry founded on empathy, patience, and restorative love. Within the contexts of pain, fractured relationships, or spiritual disorientation, this parental love of God resounds powerfully: God's mercy surpasses our shortcomings, and divine love is unwavering in its quest for redemption and reconciliation. The parental love of God encourages both individuals and faith communities to reconceptualize God not as a punitive entity, but as a compassionate parent who humbly descends to embrace, heal, and restore.

In Bible translation, two principal methodologies generally guide the efforts of translators, whether one uses formal equivalence or dynamic (functional) equivalence philosophy of translation.[114] Formal equivalence aims to maintain the precise wording and grammatical structure of the source text, while dynamic equivalence endeavours to effectively convey the text's intended meaning in a natural and comprehensible manner within the context of the target language and culture.[115] Isaac Boaheng argues that the goal of Bible translation is not mere word-for-word substitution but to produce "an accurate rendering of the text written in such a way that the Bible retains its literary beauty, theological grandeur, and, most importantly, its spiritual message."[116] This implies that translators must discern whether a literal translation of a passage most effectively conveys the intended message or if a more idiomatic or functional approach is necessary for comprehension in the target language. This distinction assumes critical importance when interpreting anthropomorphic expressions of God in the Hebrew Bible.

As argued throughout this paper, such expressions—such as God's "hand," "face," or "walking"—should not be understood literally, as though God possesses a physical form or body. Instead, they reflect figurative and accommodative language that helps bridge divine transcendence and human comprehension. Boaheng emphasizes that figurative language, such as metaphors and idioms, must often be rendered non-literally to avoid misrepresenting theological truths in translation.[117] Consequently, a translator engaged with anthropomorphic texts must acknowledge that, although these expressions utilize human experience to depict divine action, they should not be interpreted as physical descriptions of God. In this context, a dynamic equivalence approach might be more suitable, enabling translators to express such texts in a manner that retains their intended meaning without misleading the reader about the nature of God. Where the literal rendering is unavoidable, a footnote may be issued to guide the reader in understanding the text.

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[113] Simundson, *Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah*, 87.

[114] Alfred Korankye, Emmanuel Twumasi-Ankrah, and Isaac Boaheng, "Genesis 1:1–3 in Selected Akan Mother-tongues: A Grammatico-syntactic Analysis," *Journal of Mother Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics and Theology* 5, no. 16 (2024): 3121–3131, 3123-3124.

[115] Korankye, Twumasi-Ankrah, and Boaheng, "Genesis 1:1–3," 3123.

[116] Isaac Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators* (Wilmington: Vernon Press, 2022), 7.

[117] Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue*, 168.

8.0 CONCLUSION

This article explored and critically analysed the anthropomorphic depictions of God in the Old Testament. It argued that these human-like portrayals are not merely figurative or imaginative projections but are rooted in scripture as legitimate theological expressions that reveal God's relational nature. It demonstrated that such portrayals serve as a bridge between divine transcendence and human comprehension. As biblical texts continue to shape theological interpretation and translation methods, recognizing the intricacies of anthropomorphic language encourages scholars and faith communities to engage with scripture in a more embodied and relational manner. Future studies could investigate how these insights influence intercultural theology and modern interpretations of divine embodiment. Finally, depicting God in human terms serves as a reminder that the divine chooses to be known, seen, and experienced through the framework of human comprehension.

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