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MAIMONIDES' TRUE BELIEF CONCERNING GOD:
A SYSTEMATIZATION

A systematization of Maimonides' statements on deity in the Moreh Nevuchim has for its purpose a logical, self-consistent statement of Maimonides' true belief concerning God. The difficulty that is faced in attempting to present a systematization is that in analyzing Maimonides' statements on deity two contradictory concepts of God can be found. One is referred to as the absolute transcendence view; the other as the qualified transcendence view. In the absolute transcendence view, God is an entity that is in no way to be found in human experience, neither as an object of knowledge nor as an entity that is related to in any other way. In the qualified transcendence view, God is taken to be an entity encountered in some way in human experience, either as an object of knowledge or as an object that is related to in an activity such as prayer. The sources of Maimonides' two concepts of God are taken from four areas: his treatment of the attributes of God; individual statements he makes throughout the Moreh; his treatment of creation; and his treatment of omniscience. After an analysis of Maimonides' remarks on the use of contradictions in philosophic and theological works, and based on other evidence as well, the author arrives at the conclusion that Maimonides' true belief concerning God is the absolute transcendence view.

Alvin J. Reines

March 21, 1985

Maimonides' True Belief Concerning God

A Systematization

The primary difficulty met with in presenting a systematization of Maimonides' true belief concerning God in the *Guide of the Perplexed* is that Maimonides gives basically two contradictory concepts of the nature of deity. Accordingly, a systematization requires a description of the contradictory views regarding God that appear in the *Guide*, an analysis of the reasons for the contradiction, a resolution of the contradiction, and a statement of Maimonides' true belief concerning God. The two views of deity Maimonides gives in the *Guide* will be referred to as the absolute transcendence concept and the qualified transcendence concept.

The absolute transcendence concept of deity is set forth by Maimonides in his formal discussion of God's attributes.¹ By absolute transcendence is meant that God is in no way an entity that is to be found in human experience, neither as an object of knowledge nor as an object that enters into relation with humans in any other way. The only language that may be employed with respect to deity is language that in no way purports to give information about what deity is, namely, action attributes or, preferably, negative attributes (I:52, 58-60). In presenting his absolute transcendence view, Maimonides states that persons who think or feel they have knowledge of God or that they are otherwise in relation with Him not only commit fundamental philosophic errors, but are also deluded by their imaginations into mistaking fantasy for reality (I:60). Thus in his treatment of the absolute transcendence concept, Maimonides, in addition to setting forth this theory, also vigorously attacks the qualified transcendence concept of deity. The qualified transcendence concept is that deity is in some manner to be found in human experience, that is, deity, although separate from the universe and superior to it in rank, quality, and degree, is nevertheless an entity with positive attributes knowable in some way to the human mind, or which can otherwise be related to by humans.

In setting forth his theory of absolute transcendence, Maimonides analyzes the properties that proponents of qualified transcendence commonly attribute to God and which they say are knowable to the human mind. He argues that these properties cannot be predicated of God (I:51-53). It is not our purpose here to enter into the details of Maimonides' arguments against positive attributes. Suffice it to say that according to Maimonides, positive attributes must be denied of God because they contradict three basic characteristics that philosophic demonstration has proved must be affirmed of God: absolute simplicity, absolute incorporeality, and absolute immutability (I:28, 57, 55 et passim). Employing these characteristics as criteria of admissibility, Maimonides in the course of his analysis describes the following properties that must be denied of God.

First, God has no essence of a kind that is intelligible to the human mind (I:51-52). Neither can God be known to humans by an essence that is divisible in parts and part of which is known to the human mind, for God is a perfect simplicity (I:52). Similarly, God, because He is a simplicity, has no nonessential properties or qualities by which He can be known (ibid.).

Secondly, God cannot be affected by or acted upon by any other being (I:55).

Thirdly, God cannot be described by relations to anything, for there is no relation between God and any of his creatures (I:52, 56).

Fourthly, and in addition to the above general categories of properties that cannot be attributed to God, Maimonides lists specifically other properties that must be denied. Included in these are emotion (I:55) and even existence as the human mind understands it (I:56).

Maimonides' absolute transcendence concept of deity is made more explicit by drawing the full implications of the above statements and concretizing them with specific examples. Thus denying that God in any way is an object of human knowledge means that there is no being called God that the human person can understand or believe in. The very statement "God exists" is empty of content since the human mind has no idea of the entity referred to, and even if it did, would not know what existence in the case of such an entity means.² Moreover, the fact that God has no relation to any being other than Himself, and can be affected by no other being means, for example, that when humans pray they do not encounter God, or enter into any other relation with Him, and their prayers produce no effect upon Him. Furthermore, one cannot even say that God is aware of the human race — let alone that He intervenes in human affairs — since knowledge of humans entails entering into an epistemological relation with them. Similarly, God cannot be considered the "father" of human persons, a common liturgical

notion, but a relation that Maimonides explicitly denies exists between deity and any of his creatures (I:52). Finally, since God has no emotions He cannot be said to possess a quality such as mercy or compassion for His creatures, emotions commonly attributed to God in the Bible.

Unlike the absolute transcendence concept of deity, Maimonides' qualified transcendence concept receives no systematic treatment in the *Guide*. This concept is inferred from statements that Maimonides makes on diverse subjects. Accordingly, we will present the qualified transcendence concept by dividing the most important of Maimonides' remarks on which the concept is based into three categories: various individual comments Maimonides makes throughout the *Guide*; his treatment of creation; and his treatment of omniscience.

For the sake of clarity, the various individual remarks Maimonides makes that express his qualified transcendence concept of deity will be quoted as required.

1. Of Moses, Maimonides says, "He comprehended the true idea [essence] of God" (I:3). This contradicts the absolute transcendence concept which maintains the true idea or essence of God cannot be comprehended by the human intellect.³
2. Of God Maimonides says, "He visited the actions of the people, and after that made their punishment come down upon them" (I:10). The absolute transcendence concept, however, maintains that deity does not enter into relation with other beings.
3. Of everyone who climbs the ladder such as Jacob saw in a prophetic dream Maimonides says, "He necessarily attains knowledge of Him [God] who is upon it" (I:15). In the absolute transcendence concept knowledge of God is unattainable.
4. Of God with respect to the generation of the flood, Maimonides says, "God was angry with them in His heart" (I:29). According to the absolute transcendence concept God is incapable of emotion.
5. Similarly, addressing himself to persons who believe in the corporeality of God, Maimonides says, "Know accordingly, you who are that person, that when you believe in the doctrine of the corporeality of God or believe that one of the states of the body belongs to Him, you provoke His jealousy and anger, kindle the fire of His wrath, and are a hater, an enemy, and an adversary of God much more so than an idolator" (I:36). Not only does Maimonides attribute emotions to God here, but implies as well that God can enter into hostile relations with persons, neither of which with respect to deity are possible according to the absolute transcendence concept.
6. In explaining the biblical term *shama'*, Maimonides says one of its mean-

ings is "God responded to the prayer of man and fulfilled his wish, or did not respond and did not fulfill his wish" (I:45). According to the absolute transcendence concept, however, God does not relate to humans and cannot be affected by any being external to Himself.

7. Maimonides attributes emotions and relationship to God which, according to absolute transcendence, God does not possess, "For His favor and wrath, His nearness and remoteness, correspond to the extent of a man's knowledge or ignorance" (I:54).

8. Maimonides says, "When [Moses] prayed [to God] for knowledge of His attributes and asked for forgiveness for the people, he was given a favorable response with respect to their being forgiven" (I:54). Once again, contrary to absolute transcendence, God is described as experiencing emotion and relationship as well as being affected by an external agent.

9. Maimonides says God engaged in an instructional dialogue with Moses in which He taught him proofs for His existence, and among other things, he states everyone knows God's essence and true reality, "He [Moses] says as it were: no one is ignorant of Your essence and true reality" (I:63). As commented earlier, from the absolute transcendence viewpoint God enters into no relationship of any kind, instructional or otherwise, and God's essence and true reality are unknowable to the human mind.

10. Maimonides asserts that he knows the working of the will of God, "For we claim that that which exists was made by the will [of the creator] and was not a necessary consequence" (I:73). According to absolute transcendence the will of God is part of His essence and unknowable.

11. Maimonides states, "We hold that what exists is in existence because of the will of the creator" (III:12). That is to say, everything that is described as God's work has been made by Him for the sake of His will and for no other purpose. As stated above, from the absolute transcendence viewpoint, knowledge of God's will is not possible.

12. Maimonides asserts, "For although we believe that God created the universe... His wisdom, which we are unable to comprehend, made the actual existence of the universe necessary, and the same immutable wisdom necessitated that nonexistence should precede the existence of the universe" (III:25). Although Maimonides here states that God's wisdom is incomprehensible, nonetheless he also states what that wisdom decrees.

13. Maimonides says we achieve a clear idea into the prudence and wisdom of God by examining the divine, namely, natural actions, "If you consider the divine, that is, natural actions, the deity's sagacious graciousness and wisdom... will through them become clear to you" (III:32). Maimonides here indicates a knowledge of the working of God's mind, which, since it is

identical with His essence, is, according to absolute transcendence, impossible.

14. Maimonides states, "Now God sent Moses to make out of us a kingdom of priests and a holy nation by means of the knowledge of God" (III:32). Contrary to the absolute transcendence concept, this statement indicates God entered into a direct relation with Moses, a being other than Himself.

15. Maimonides declares, "We are told to offer up prayers to God, in order to establish firmly the true principle that God takes notice of our ways, that He can make them successful if we worship Him, or disastrous if we disobey Him, that [success or failure] are not the result of chance or accident" (III:36). This statement contradicts the absolute transcendence viewpoint in at least two ways. It asserts both a relation between God and other beings and that other beings produce an effect upon God.

The second category of remarks on which Maimonides' qualified transcendence concept of deity is based appears in his systematic treatment of the question whether the universe is created or eternal (II:13-25). In this discussion Maimonides repeatedly indicates possession of extensive positive knowledge of God, knowledge that from the absolute transcendence concept of deity humans cannot possibly attain. This is readily seen in the following summary of Maimonides' remarks on deity that appear in the course of his discussion.

God, Maimonides states, existed an infinite span of time before the creation of the universe (II:13). Before the creation God existed alone, there were neither angels (Intelligences), spheres, nor that which is contained in the spheres (II:13). God then created the universe by His will and desire (II:13) and through His wisdom (II:18). God acted purposefully in creating the universe; it was not the necessary result of His existence (II:21). In creating the universe, God did not go from potentiality to actuality, neither did His will change in desiring the universe not to exist at one time and to exist at another (II:18). God created the universe in a certain order. He produced the universe in such a manner that the way it exists now, after attaining stability and perfection, is in no way the state it was in during the process of creation (II:17). In the process of creation, God's will determined the particular differences among the spheres and stars, including the direction and velocity of motion of each sphere (II:19). Everything in the universe was created by God for a certain purpose (II:19). In brief, the theory of creation Maimonides presents is that the entire universe, every existent other than God, was brought by Him into existence out of nonexistence. Until the universe was created, God existed alone, with neither the heavens nor that which they contain. He then created from nothing everything by His will.

The objections that can be raised from the absolute transcendence position against Maimonides' statements concerning deity in his treatment of creation are pervasive. Since the nature of God's existence is entirely unknown to the human mind, how can Maimonides know the state in which God existed before the creation of the universe? Moreover, since God's essence is entirely unknown to humans, and His will and wisdom are one with his essence, how can Maimonides know it was through them God created the universe, or what it means to speak of God's will and wisdom? Similarly, since God's essence is unknown, how can Maimonides know God acted purposefully in creating the universe, and not through the necessity of His own essential nature? Furthermore, how does Maimonides know, since God's essence is unknown, that deity has not from all eternity been in the act of creation? Least of all, it would appear, that Maimonides can know the order in which deity created the universe and that He directly and personally determined the structure, direction, and velocity of each of the spheres.

The third category we will explore in which Maimonides presents a qualified transcendence concept of deity is his theory of God's omniscience. Maimonides' theory of omniscience, as in his theory of creation given above, makes statements about God that require information that, according to the absolute transcendence concept, is impossible for the human mind to know. The following is a brief summary of Maimonides' remarks on God's omniscience pertinent to this inquiry.

God knows everything that is other than Himself; nothing is hidden from Him (III:16). The way in which God obtains knowledge of everything other than Himself is not from the things themselves, but from the fact that He produced them — and He knows everything that derives from His actions by knowing the true reality of His own immutable essence (III:21). God knows many things, but this does not result in a plurality in Him; also He knows changeable things, but His knowledge does not change when the object of His knowledge changes (III:20). God knows the infinite and things not in existence (III:20). Thus God knows all events before they take place, but He constantly knows them, and, therefore, He acquires no new knowledge. Hence God knows things when they are in a state of possibility, but His knowledge that the possible thing will come into existence does not change its nature as possible in any way; it remains possible (III:20). Accordingly, God's knowledge of one of two eventualities does not determine their outcome however certain that knowledge may be of the occurrence of the one eventuality (III:20). In short, God is absolutely omniscient, nothing is unknown to Him. His knowledge constitutes a perfect unity; there is no multiplicity in it even though He knows things belonging to different

species. Also, His knowledge may have as its object that which does not exist. In addition, God's knowledge is not finite and can have as its object something that is infinite. Furthermore, God's knowledge does not undergo change even when apprehending changing things, for he obtains no new knowledge He did not have before. Finally, God's knowledge of things does not change their nature; that which is possible remains possible. His knowledge does not bring about one of two possibilities even though He knows how one will come about.

From the above summary of Maimonides' theory of God's omniscience, it is apparent Maimonides makes statements signifying awareness of God's knowledge that from the absolute transcendence viewpoint cannot possibly be attained by the human mind. For one thing, God's knowledge, according to the absolute transcendence concept, is one with His essence, and His essence is entirely unknowable. Thus how can Maimonides know that God knows all things other than Himself by knowing His own essence, which would require Maimonides to have knowledge of that essence? Moreover, the various statements Maimonides arbitrarily makes about God's knowledge that are apparent contradictions, such as His knowing many things without becoming a multiplicity, are unintelligible and nonsensical to the human mind.

We have now seen that in his treatment in the *Guide* of the nature of God, Maimonides' statements present an inconsistent and self-contradictory *mélange*, at times expressing 'the absolute transcendence concept, at other times the qualified transcendence concept. To arrive at a systematic account of Maimonides' God concept requires resolving this contradiction. Before attempting this, a crucial question must be raised. Do we have reason to think that Maimonides intended to communicate a systematic view of deity when he wrote the *Guide*, or are we artificially superimposing system upon his thoughts about God? It is possible, for whatever reasons there may be, intellectual or emotional, that Maimonides never was able to decide between the absolute transcendence and qualified transcendence concepts of deity, and the result is the self-contradictory theological statements we find throughout the *Guide*. I think that Maimonides did have a systematic view of deity he intended to communicate in the *Guide*, namely, the absolute transcendence concept, but he wished to obscure it. For contradictions constituted a device Maimonides employed to keep his true beliefs from the unqualified reader.

Maimonides' use of contradictions as a device for withholding information from those unqualified to receive it is explicitly described in the Introduction to the *Guide* he gives on method. He lists seven causes of

contradictions to be found in literary works. Two of the seven, the fifth and seventh, he states, are the reasons for contradictions in the *Guide*. They are described as follows:

The fifth cause arises from the necessity of teaching and making someone understand. For there may be a certain obscure matter that is difficult to conceive. One has to mention it or to take it as a premise in explaining something that is easy to conceive and that by rights ought to be taught before the former, since one always begins with what is easier. The teacher, accordingly, will have to be lax and, using any means that occur to him or gross speculation, will try to make that first matter somehow understood. He will not undertake to state the matter as it truly is in exact terms, but rather will leave it so in accord with the listener's imagination that the latter will understand only what he now wants him to understand. Afterwards, in the appropriate place, that obscure matter is stated in exact terms and explained as it truly is.

The seventh cause. In speaking about very obscure matters it is necessary to conceal some parts and to disclose others. Sometimes in the case of certain statements this necessity requires that the discussion proceed on the basis of a certain premise, whereas in another place necessity requires that the discussion proceed on the basis of another premise contradicting the first one. In such cases the vulgar must in no way be aware of the contradiction; the author accordingly uses some device to conceal it by all means.

Since Maimonides, of course, does not inform his readers which of the categories of causes of contradictions he is employing, we can only conjecture with respect to the various contradictions between the absolute transcendence concept of deity and the qualified transcendence concept to which of the categories these contradictions belong. It appears to me that they belong to the seventh cause of contradictions. The reason is that in the category of contradictions described by the fifth cause the contradictory statement should serve as a premise of another statement. But none of the absolute transcendence concept's statements serves as a premise of the qualified transcendence concept's statements, and likewise, none of the latter serves as a premise of the former. Thus it is the seventh cause of contradictions Maimonides employs, and he was attempting to conceal either the absolute transcendence concept or the qualified transcendence concept from the multitude.

The question now arises: which view of deity was Maimonides attempting to conceal, the absolute transcendence concept or the qualified transcendence concept? It seems clear that Maimonides was attempting to conceal the absolute transcendence concept. For there would be no cause for Maimonides to keep the qualified transcendence view of deity from the multitude,

namely, the philosophically untrained rabbis and laypersons who subscribed to Rabbinic Judaism. The reason is that in its fundamentals the qualified transcendence concept of deity is the same as that of Rabbinic Jewish theology. Just as did the qualified transcendence concept, Rabbinic Judaism declared belief in a creator God, a deity of whom positive, meaningful knowledge could be attained; an omniscient deity who, aware of humans, rewards and punishes them; a deity to whom humans can relate through prophecy, prayer, and other actions; and a deity upon whom humans can call in their time of need.

Three significant reasons, however, can be given for Maimonides keeping his absolute transcendence concept of deity from the multitude. Absolute transcendence, one must bear in mind, puts forth a concept of deity who is completely unknowable, who relates to nothing other than Himself, who cannot be said to know of humans or exercise providence over them, who cannot be related to through prophecy, prayer, or other actions, and who cannot be called upon in time of distress. These reasons are:

1. The absolute transcendence view differed in the fundamentals of its theology from that of Rabbinic Judaism. Accordingly, a charge of heresy by the multitude of Rabbinic Jews could be levelled against Maimonides for holding the absolute transcendence position. It is a matter of common historical knowledge that Maimonides was frequently forced to defend himself against charges of heresy from the Rabbinic hierarchy.

2. Maimonides believed that a moral obligation existed to keep metaphysical knowledge from the multitude for he believed it could only injure those who were unprepared to receive it (I:32). Accordingly, since the absolute transcendence view entails metaphysical knowledge, Maimonides had a moral obligation to conceal it from the multitude.

3. The absolute transcendence concept of deity implies both the belief that God is not aware of humans and that He does not dispense reward and punishment to them. Maimonides states that the former belief disheartens pious persons and the latter belief leads to social disorder (III:19, 17; cf. II:23). Accordingly, since the absolute transcendence concept has potentially destructive social consequences it must be withheld from the multitude.

Still another argument can be given that Maimonides' true belief is the absolute transcendence concept of deity. As commented upon earlier, two of the major expositions of the *Guide* in which Maimonides presents his qualified transcendence concept of deity are his theories of creation and omniscience. According to Maimonides' own definition of true belief, however, one cannot authentically believe in either of these theories. Maimonides

defines true belief in the following way:

Belief is only possible after a conception; for belief is the affirmation that what has been conceived is outside the mind just as it has been conceived in the mind. If together with this there is joined the conviction that no belief different from it is in any way possible, and that there does not exist in the mind any way of refuting that belief, or of thinking that the contrary can be possible there is then certainty [that the belief is true]. (I:50)

According to this definition, several conditions must be met for a belief to be considered true. Among them are the conviction that no different belief is possible, the conviction that there is no way of refuting the belief, and the conviction that there is no way of thinking that the contrary of the belief is possible. These conditions cannot be met by Maimonides' theories on creation and omniscience by Maimonides' own admission. The reason is that Maimonides explicitly states that he has no demonstrative proof with respect to either his theory on creation or omniscience. Maimonides has no proof for his theory of creation just as Aristotle has no proof for the contrary theory of eternity (II:25); and similarly, with regard to the theory of omniscience, Maimonides has no proof for his opinion just as the philosophers have no proof for their contrary opinion (III:21). Clearly enough, then, the theories on creation and omniscience Maimonides presents cannot meet the test he requires of a true belief. That is to say, since Maimonides has no proof of the views he presents and no disproof of the views his opponents present, he is unable to arrive at the conviction that no different belief from his own is possible, or that there is no way of refuting his belief (since it has not been proved, refutation is not even necessary), or that there is no way of thinking the contrary is possible. Consequently, none of the qualified transcendence properties attributed to deity based on Maimonides' theories of creation or omniscience constitute his true belief concerning God. Hence we conclude that the preponderance of evidence supports the conclusion that Maimonides' true belief with respect to God is the absolute transcendence view.

We thus arrive at a significant question regarding Maimonides' absolute transcendence concept of deity. This is whether Maimonides ever indicates the kind of religious life that a person would ideally pursue in a world where absolute transcendence could be openly declared to be the true concept of God. That which would be required is a religious life suitable for a person whose concept is that God is in no way an object of experience, and who, therefore, is entirely unknown, who neither relates to humans nor can be related to, and upon whom no effect can be produced and, therefore, who cannot be prayed to in time of need or at any other time.

I believe that Maimonides does hint at the mode of religious life that would be suitable with respect to such a concept of God. He does this in a remarkable passage where he explains why the Israelites were not commanded to give up sacrificing animals even though such activity is inappropriate for enlightened divine service. The Israelites, Maimonides explains, were accustomed to animal sacrifice, and it would have been too much to ask them to renounce it. In the same way, he says, if a prophet were to come in his day, and tell the people that the true service of God consisted not in attempting to relate to Him, but in meditation, people would reject the prophet, for his teaching would be contrary to the belief and practice to which they were accustomed. It requires little imagination in reading the following passage to see an oblique analogy to the Rabbinic Jews of Maimonides' day in the ancient Israelites and to recognize Maimonides as the latter-day prophet.

But the custom which was in those days general among all men, and the general mode of worship in which the Israelites were brought up, consisted in sacrificing animals in those temples which contained certain images, to bow down to those images, and to burn incense before them. . . His wisdom and His gracious plan, which is displayed in regard to all His creatures, did not require that He give us a Law prescribing the rejection, abandonment, and abolition of all these kinds of worship. For one could not then conceive the acceptance of [such a Law], considering the nature of man, which always likes that to which it is accustomed. At that time it would have been similar to a prophet in these times who, calling upon the people to worship God, would say: "God has given you a Law forbidding you to pray to Him, to fast, to call upon Him for help in misfortune. Your worship should consist solely in meditation without any works at all." (III:32)

One final point remains to be made with respect to Maimonides' true belief concerning God, that is, the absolute transcendence concept of deity. This is what, according to his system, becomes of such fundamental categories of religious events as prophecy, providence, and soteria.⁴ If humans, as Maimonides says, cannot experience or relate to deity in any manner whatsoever, how can these events occur? The answer is that there is a difficulty only if the Rabbinic Jewish or a similar view of prophecy, providence, and soteria is taken as true. For the Rabbinic Jewish view require the qualified transcendence concept of deity in which God is known or related to if these events are to occur. Thus prophecy in Rabbinic Judaism is a supernatural act in which deity directly or indirectly relates to a prophet, and supernaturally reveals his truth to the latter. The occurrence of providence is likewise a supernatural act in which deity, who is in a continuing supernatural relation with humans and the world, dispenses reward and punishment to humankind. Similarly, soteria is attained through relationship with deity, by direct

experience or address in prayer, and ultimately in an afterlife enjoyed in the presence of God. For Maimonides, however, prophecy, providence, and soteria as conceived by Rabbinic Judaism are fantasies produced by the imagination, and false. Maimonides holds that prophecy, providence, and soteria are natural events. This means, in Maimonides' cosmology, that they are attained not by virtue of a relationship with deity, but through a relationship with the Active Intellect.⁵ Hence, simply put, the religious life for Maimonides does not require knowledge of or relationship with God. Consequently, Maimonides can at the same time set forth an absolute transcendence concept of deity and a prescription for the attainment of prophecy, providence, and soteria, the most sublime stages of human existence.

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Notes

¹ I:50-60. Translations from the *Guide* are taken primarily from the Pines translation. I have, however, made occasional changes for the purpose of clarity.

² Maimonides (in I:58) attempts to give the statement "God exists" some measure of meaning without implying that it conveys knowledge of God. He says, "For instance, it has been demonstrated to us that some being necessarily exists other than those essences apprehended through the senses and which we comprehend by means of the intellect. We say of this something that it exists, that is to say, its nonexistence is impossible." What Maimonides seems to say is that "God exists" means "the nonexistence of some being of which we have no idea (but which we call 'God') is impossible." An interesting question of meaning is present here.

³ Efodi and Shem Tov, *ad loc.*, call attention to Maimonides' contradiction here. They provide two explanations, the primary one being that it is an instance of the fifth cause of contradictions that are found in a literary work described by Maimonides in his Introduction to the *Guide* (see below). Albo, in his Introduction to Vol. II of the *Ikkarim* also refers to the contradiction here. M. Friedländer, in his translation (*The Guide of the Perplexed*, p. 40f., n. 3), discusses the problem (he erroneously cites the commentators as stating it is the seventh cause of contradiction). Friedländer's attempted solution to the problem, which is the alternative solution of the commentators, is contrived and unconvincing. Moreover, Maimonides, in I:63, makes a similar statement remarking that Moses says to God, "No one is ignorant of your essence and true reality." See below.

⁴ I use *soteria* to refer to the ultimate state of meaningful existence attainable by the human person. It is analogous to "salvation," but does not necessarily possess the supernatural connotation that is usually associated with the latter.

⁵ See A.J. Reines, *Maimonides and Abrabanel on Prophecy* (Cincinnati, 1970), xxviii.; A.J. Reines, "Maimonides' Concept of Mosaic Prophecy," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 40-41 (1969-1970): 333-338; A.J. Reines, "Maimonides' Concepts of Providence and Theodicy," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 43 (1972): 177-193.