Note on Transliteration and some Forms of Expression

A simplified system is used for Hebrew and Aramaic, on the grounds that those who read these languages do not need complicated transliteration, while those who do not will only be mystified by it. The only diacritical signs used are:

Consonants: ' (aleph), ḫ (ḥeth), ṭ (ṭeth) ' (ayin), essage (šade), essage (sin), essage (shin).

Vowels: no signs are used except " to denote essage and the other half-vowels, Ē Ā Ō.

Bgdkt ‘Letters: the aspirated forms are not distinguished in transliteration. Admittedly this makes some words look strange, and consequently I have allowed some irregularities, e.g. nefēš. Some familiar forms of names etc. are left, e.g. ‘Achor’, and sometimes the context of a discussion may make it appropriate to follow Jewish habits of transliteration, e.g. tzaddik instead of essage.

When 'adam is used it is intended to signify that the word is being considered in its generic or indefinite sense. In Genesis this sense is clear in 1:26ff.; the word is not used definitely as a personal name, without an article, till 3:17. In that sense I use ‘Adam’ as usual.

‘Hebrew Bible’/‘Old Testament’. This has become an ecumenically sensitive issue, and I have kept it in mind; but it is important to be accurate. The two terms are not identical either in denotation or in connotation. On the whole I prefer (with the early Church) to say ‘the scriptures’, though this may not be precise enough. Often (but not always) it is accurate to say ‘the Hebrew Bible’; sometimes it simply is not applicable to the ‘scripture’ which is being referred to. Today Christians are being urged to drop ‘Old Testament’ in favour of ‘Hebrew Bible’, on the grounds that the former connotes a ‘triumphalist’ attitude towards Judaism. I do not believe that such a connotation is necessarily there, and many Christians would be astonished to learn that the implication was ever drawn; but past hurts call for present sensitivity. However, it is no solution to
call for 'Hebrew Bible' when it is not applicable. The traditional Christian canon of scriptures includes books which were never in Hebrew but were written in Greek or translated into it from Aramaic. The books which make up the Hebrew Bible are arranged differently by Jews and Christians, and with different implications; many features of the Christian arrangement go back to the LXX (Septuagint) which was itself a Jewish production. The traditional name of the Christian collection and arrangement of the scriptures is 'the Old Testament', and in a context of Christian understanding of the canon this remains appropriate, provided it is made clear that no devaluation of the Jewish understanding of scripture is implied. When the scriptures are studied in a Jewish context, then it is appropriate to call them 'the Hebrew Bible'. In ecumenical discussion or shared study there should be mutual recognition of the two overlapping conceptions of scripture, and mutual acceptance of the terminology which is traditional and accurate for each.

'Inclusive Language': In no sentence framed by myself, I believe, have I referred to human beings in general as 'man' or 'men'. On the other hand I have not abandoned the biblical convention of using masculine pronouns with reference to God. It is not more true to ascribe maleness to God than femaleness, and any expression which seems to do either is an anthropomorphic metaphor; theologically it is desirable to use the metaphor inclusively. But I do not think that the Bible can now legitimately be textually 'corrected', while in exegesis or bible-based theologizing it is ponderous to keep insisting on both genders. Gender in biblical expressions is a proper subject for exegetical and theological discussion, but it is not always the essential point to discuss. We need a set of neutral gender pronouns in English, as well as a word meaning Anthropos/Homo/Mensch.