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TOWARD A COURSE IN JEWISH THEOLOGY FOR THE REFORM COLLEGE STUDENT

DONALD R. BERLIN

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for ordination.

Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion

1965

Referee, Prof. Sylvan D. Schwartzman

TO NORMA

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I should like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my teacher and rabbi, Dr. Sylvan D. Schwartzman, whose constant counsel, encouragement, and advice have been a source of deep inspiration to me throughout my studies at the Hebrew Union College. Without his motivation and assistance, I should never have entered into so fascinating a project as the scope of this thesis represents.

Further, I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to: the many professors who gave of themselves that I might learn religious thought; to Mrs. Esther Kaplan for her help in typing and advice on style; to Mrs. Charlie Jackson, who prepared the final manuscript; and, above all, to my wife, Norma, for her love, patience and understanding throughout the long period of preparation.

Donald R. Berlin

DIGEST

This thesis is devoted to the preparation of a text for Reform college students in Jewish theology. Its particular concern has been to present the student with an understanding of the problems one discovers in the utilization of thought and scientific method when applied to Judaism.

The introduction discusses the problems of the author in the task of writing such a work. There is also a brief analysis of three texts which are currently utilized in Reform Jewish High Schools.

The text itself is divided into eight chapters. The first chapter concerns itself with an examination of the situation of the average college student in his approach to Judaism. He wants to find "rational" answers. The next chapter, therefore, discusses the kinds of knowledge which are available in discovering the "truth" about anything. Criteria for knowledge are found to be wanting in an absolute sense. Finally, reason and Jewish faith are related in terms of determining their possibilities for application.

At this stage, there is a section dealing with the topic of "God, Torah and Israel." The subject of God is examined from the various points of view which existed throughout the course of Jewish history. The

Biblical, Rabbinic, Scholastic and Mystical views are particularly noted. Implications of a concept of Man are derived from each of these views as well. Continuing with a view of Torah and Israel, a similar kind of examination is undertaken.

The next section deals with a careful study and presentation of the major concepts of three Jewish thinkers: Kaufmann Kohler, Martin Buber and Mordecai Kaplan. An Attempt is made to relate the methodology of their thought with their concepts on God, Torah and Israel. The final chapter attempts to indicate to the student of Jewish theology some of the common aspects revealed in each of these theologians and to encourage further exploration of the subject.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

Motivation

Perhaps one of the most consuming interests of liberal rabbis in the last couple of decades has been in the exploration and research of Jewish Theology. It is difficult to ascertain whether the rabbinate has been motivated simply by common personal quests into the field or if the need has been stimulated by congregants.

Up until the 1940's, there was little interest in Jewish religious thougnt on the part of the American Jewish community and its rabbinical leadership. Since that time, there has been an increasing concern about the meaning of life, a revival of interest in Judaism and in the problems of Jewish religion and education. Much attention is now being given to Jewish Theology in academic circles, at various rabbinical seminaries, and on college campuses. Several new magazines and journals which contain an increasing number of articles on theological themes have made their appearance in the post-war period such as Judaism, CCAR Journal, Conservative Judaism, Jewish Heritage and Tradition.

Concern for the theoretical bases of religious faith has also occupied discussion and deliberation at recent rabbinical conferences.

In the spring of 1950, an institute on Reform Jewish theology was held at the Hebrew Union College. Subsequently, a permanent commission on Jewish theology was established under the chairmanship of Bernard Heller, with Eugene Borowitz, Jacob Petuchowski and Emil Fackenheim as members. Proceedings of the Central Conference of American Rabbis reflect lively discussions have taken place during the 1950's on such questions as the mission idea in Judaism and the importance of the "poetry and drama of observance."

During the last fifteen years, a number of books have appeared under the pens of Reform and Conservative rabbis devoted to theological concerns. While the majority of such works are directed at adults, there have been three basic texts produced for high school students in that time.

As this activity has progressed, college students have also become more involved and interested in theology. However, it is a fair judgment that very few of these students have clear insights and understandings

of Jewish religious thought. As a result of the prevalent general interest, college interest and my own interest, I was encouraged by Dr. Sylvan Schwartzman, professor of Jewish Education at the Hebrew Union College, to undertake this assignment and to develop some kind of project or writing in theology for the Reform college student. It was an opportunity to combine my own interest in theology (nurtured at the University of Toronto under Professor Emil Fackenheim) with an attempt at a creative composition.

Original Goal

The initial scope of the work was to examine the writings of about five different contemporary Jewish thinkers and to present their ideas in a prepared text. This was to be done in such a way as to activate an interest in the subject of theology. The plan was to indicate the problems of theology in relation to the ideas and concerns of the college student as reflected in philosophy and science particularly. Finally, it was hoped that the material could be presented in as simple a form as possible in order to facilitate the student's comprehension.

Modus Operandi

a. Initial Research

My first task was to conduct extensive research into the field of Jewish religious thought in order to be acquainted with the subject matter as well as with major Jewish thinkers.

For general information, I examined the following: Isaac Husik's A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy, Julius Guttmann's Philosophies of Judaism, Reform Judaism Essays by Hebrew Union College Alumni, Edgar Sheffield Brightman's A Philosophy of Religion and several articles in the Jewish Encyclopedia. I collected notes under various topics alphabetically which included: Bible, covenant, death, God, immortality, law, man, Messiah, Messianic Age, mission, peoplehood, prayer, revelation, resurrection, sin, suffering, theodicy, and Torah.

b. Specific Research

My next task was to conduct research into the works of six major Jewish thinkers. These included Eugene Borowitz, Martin Buber, Samuel Cohon, Abraham Cronbach, Emil Fackenheim, and Mordecai Kaplan. There were quite a few books written either by or about

these men with the exception of Fackenheim and Borowitz. All of their works appeared in journals and magazines. Of course, Dr. Fackenheim authored Paths to Jewish Belief, a text for high school students in this area. I made outlines of each man's thought according to the above-listed topics.

c. Interviews

In order to gain some perspective of my task, I interviewed informally ten students from the Hebrew Union College undergraduate program. I discovered that while most of them had a fair knowledge of Jewish history, customs and ceremonies, and general Jewish knowledge - none of them discussed "God" from the context of Judaism. Most were uncertain about whether they believed in God, yet indicated that they had undergone "religious experiences." They had some knowledge of the God-concepts portrayed in the Bible but appeared to know nothing of the rabbinic conceptions of God. When I suggested certain rabbinic views, they identified them simply with Orthodox Judaism and quickly dismissed them. They were all familiar with the names of Martin Buber and Mordecai Kaplan but none was familiar with their points of view. They were looking forward to

obtaining some strong theological foundation during their years at the "College," but some indicated that they "knew" this was unlikely to happen because of what they had heard from rabbinic students. Interestingly, in their very broad definitions of God, they all identified "morality" and "goodness" as key attributes of God. However, none felt that they were impelled by God when confronted with a moral question.

d. Examining Existing Materials

I carefully examined three existing materials in the area of Jewish theology being used in the high school departments of Reform Religious Schools.

1. Roland B. Gittelsohn. Little Lower than Angels (New York: U.A.H.C., 1955.)

This text covers the range of material well and is particularly effective in the way it uses its language. The text's principal defects are that it presents a naturalistic view of God primarily. There is far too much illustrative material. In fact, the student can get so engrossed in the scientific illustrations that he can forget the points that are being made. Furthermore, there is the suggestion that empirical evidence is being demonstrated in order to

prove religious propositions. I do not believe that this was Rabbi Gittelsohn's intention. My own teaching experience indicates that the book does not conquer one's desire to hold anthropomorphic images of God - though this is clearly one of the purposes of the text.

2. Emil Fackenheim. Paths to Jewish Belief. (New York: Behrman House, 1960.)

This text presents a personal concept of God in a systematic development. While it highlights the major developments in Jewish theology in a fine form, Dr. Fackenheim has had great difficulty in reducing his language to the level of the teen-ager. This is a problem which I shall discuss further on. I sympathize with him a great deal. The book not only suffers from language but from structure as well - something that is very important to this age-group.

3. Arnold J. Wolf. Challenge to Confirmands. (New York: Scribe Publications, 1963.)

Since this was the last of the three books I read, I began to wonder seriously what we were trying to do with these high school students. While the questions which Rabbi Wolf raises are good ones, I wonder whether his students are prepared for what he has to offer them.

One of the problems in Jewish education on all levels is making people realize the time factor of Jewish history. Unfortunately, people tend to make contemporary ideas which are very old. Also, people tend to fuse extreme rationalistic and extreme romantic conceptions of God together. This text is a good example of why this occurs. Rabbi Wolf throws all periods of Jewish history together and all viewpoints in liberal thought are mixed. One moment, he speaks of Milton Steinberg's views and without any warning, he can switch to Martin Buber. I believe that this book suffers because it is a potpourri of concepts, time, places and people. I am not convinced in reading this text that Rabbi Wolf is certain of his goals.

Problems

It is easy to criticize others; it is another thing to overcome the difficulties. One problem is to decide how much you can assume the students know. In preparing this text, I felt I had to make the assumption that Jewish college students know little or nothing about basic Jewish theology (especially Rabbinic theology). Furthermore, I assumed that they did not have a real

grasp of the problems of scientific method and epistemology in determining truth.

While doing the research, I became aware of my own limitations in these above areas, even though I have been working for some time in these fields. One thing became very clear to me. Every Jewish religious thinker I examined was highly skilled in his understanding of Jewish sources as well as having excellent insights into basic philosophical problems. Thereupon, I decided to change the planned structure of my thesis.

The second problem I do not believe I have fully overcome - it is the problem of language. One of the key purposes of theological speculation is to form clear and distinct propositions about religious terms which are initially abstract. The writer, philosophically trained, who tries to reduce to simple terms what these propositions mean, engages in a severe struggle. He lives in dread fear that he is distorting the meaning of ideas. Either he maintains the purity of his ideas in obscure language or he becomes awkward in the formulation of simpler sentences. Some of my chapters have been re-written several times. Nevertheless, I have not been able to make the language less stilted

in parts. I am quite aware of the problem. This involves especially difficult decisions when writing for college students. Some of them are intellectually sophisticated enough to understand difficult ideas. Others are not. Just how "simple" must one's language be?

The last problem I raise is an extremely difficult one in the area of Jewish theology. This concern revolves around the particular theological attitudes and ideas of the writer. Earlier I criticized others for the single point of view they presented. Perhaps, this is best. There is a large area of theological conceptualization which is highly personal and subjective. Try as one may, it is difficult to disassociate oneself from his own ideas so that he becomes objective. For the young man in this field, he is doubly plagued by constantly changing ideas. I have read and re-read certain materials. I have spent hours considering my own view of theology. There is no doubt that in this past year I, like Jacob, "have wrestled with the Lord." For that encounter alone, I am grateful. I believe that I have arrived at a respectable theology - something important for a new rabbi.

Revised Goal

I felt that it would be important for the student to learn two key points about theology.

a. These ideas have taken many years to develop.

b. A theology says more about the theologian than it does about God. The Jewish religious thinker is a product of his time and place in the history of the cosmos.

As a result, I reformulated my goals. I decided to present to the student what I considered to be a real problem: How he could be a religiously oriented individual utilizing his reason without it becoming an obstacle to his faith. This involved the presentation of the uses of reason or ways of knowing, a basic introduction to the major concepts of Judaism and the variety of ways they have been conceived, and the development of these ideas in the thought world of twentieth century philosophers. I felt it would be too extensive a task to represent all of the men whose names I mentioned earlier. Therefore, I selected the major types of representative thought which are most influential at present. Since Samuel Cohon reflects much of the views of Kaufmann Kohler, I felt it would better to use Kohler since he was the

originator of so many of these concepts, and also because his name is more prominent.

What I have learned

I feel that I have learned an enormous amount in the preparation of this thesis.

1. I had to review medieval Jewish philosophy in its entirety.
2. I studied the basic theology of the rabbis in detail.
3. I was exposed to most of the religious thinkers in America since the end of World War II.
4. I discovered the significant problems of teaching "our faith" to others who lack background.
5. I obtained a religious orientation which is coherent and compelling.

For all this, I am truly grateful.

CHAPTER I

"PROBLEMS I NEVER UNDERSTOOD"

Dilemmas We Face

Today's college student faces serious dilemmas with respect to the religion of Judaism. He finds that, in many respects, he is a "religious" person but that he is unable to accept "Judaism" as his religion. He is in a state of religious schizophrenia - turning first one way and then another. He is not prepared to deny his being "Jewish." This is his identity and there is no good reason for him to change it. After all, he knows many Jews who are not "religious." Therefore, he wishes to maintain a kinship with other Jews. On the other hand, he feels that he is basically a "good" person, a moral being. He tries to live according to the fundamental precepts of morality. As such, he wonders whether in the final analysis this is not the higher goal of religion.

Many students claim that they find "social action" one of the most positive and striking features of Judaism. They admit we need to fight for the rights of the underprivileged, those who are unjustly discriminated against, the old and the sick. They believe that corruption must be checked, that exploitation of people is unjust and that there exist many inhumane and unrighteous forms in our society - some simply "de facto" (in fact) and some by means of "de jure" (in law) as well. But does one have to be Jewish to believe in social action? Do not other religious groups believe in social action? In fact, are there not groups which are not religiously affiliated who believe in social action? In this sense, are not all men religious? Let us go further in viewing the problem of the college student and his religion.

For Jewish youth, the problems really occur when they are asked to be "religious." While some of the Jewish customs and ceremonies are enjoyable, praying is "dull and boring." Prayer is especially difficult if one does not know to whom one is praying. As a result, many students spend hours discussing "Is there a God and, if so, where is He?" Out of such discussion come many other comments. "Religion is hypocritical. People say one thing and do another. Some people, piously involved in religious

expression at one moment, will lie to you, cheat you, and curse at you at another moment. Religion is just full of pious platitudes." Yes, out of such "bull sessions" come many criticisms of faith and religion. "Religion has held back progress in the past. Men have murdered and plundered in the name of religion. Religion has divided men and made them hate each other. Religion is unscientific, unobjective and cannot be proven." Perhaps, the greatest indictment of religion is that it has claimed "truths" and continues to claim "truths" which are at best doubtful. All these problems may be said to be of an ideological nature.

There are other problems which are more sociological and psychological in appearance. First, the temperament of the college community, the "stance of the intellectual" is thought to be non-religious. Religion may be all right for little old ladies, for people who need a "crutch" in life, but not for the enlightened man, not for the person who wants "to be true to himself." In a certain sense, many students have found that religion often interferes with "life's joys." "Why should anyone deprive himself of doing something enjoyable for the sake of his religion?

Religion just isn't that serious or important to me? How often I have argued with my parents on what I can do and what I can't do because of my faith! How silly for them to expect me not to date non-Jews! Those many boring sessions at religious school which I was forced to attend when I could have been sleeping! Religion is nothing other than an emotional 'jag' and it just doesn't hold me."

Not every student is critical and upset over his religious heritage. Some students "accept" their religion quite readily. They maintain that they have a belief in God, that they look for moral and spiritual guidance in their religion and that they enjoy its celebrations. Yet, do they show any real "concern?" There is no appreciable difference in the way many of these people lead their lives and in the way those who decry religion at every opportunity live. Those who affirm Judaism do not attend religious services regularly, do not engage in Jewish study, and do not seem to be any more involved "religiously" than those who do deny Judaism as a religion. Why should this condition persist? These are problems and situations which may be directed not only among college-students but generally among adult Jews. At the root of these problems issues forth the complaint: "Judaism isn't intellectually challenging!" This is a most interesting and tell-tale comment. It is a comment

which suggests certain misunderstandings about religion in general and Judaism in particular. It also suggests certain things about the people who make the charge. For Reform Judaism, this will be a particularly crucial question.

Who says Judaism is not intellectually challenging?

In laying the charge that Judaism does not challenge intellectually, there is the suggestion that a certain amount of thought has been given to the issues of Judaism. There is indication that people have asked certain questions such as: Is there a God? What can I believe about God? What is the significance of prayer? Do I feel anything when I pray? How can I know for certain what is good and what is bad in life? Are ethics and morals absolute or relative? What happens to me when I die? Is Judaism the most supreme religion? Why can't there be one universal religion? Am I really different in any way from my fellow Christian friends? What does Judaism insist I believe? What does it do for me? Does Judaism express the truth about the world? Has Judaism all the answers?

Such questions have been asked over and over again by many different people. Implicit in such questions is

more than simple questioning as to whether one should accept Judaism seriously as a religious doctrine. These are important questions about life itself. Perhaps such questions are not always posed in these exact words, but think about it. You are concerned at various times about your life. You do want to discover truth about the world. You do engage in certain kinds of morality in our society. You do experience moments of wonder and awe as to "what it's all about." In so far as you confront these problems, you are engaged not only in religious quests but you are functioning in an intellectual way, i.e. you are thinking out your problems and searching for answers. Perhaps you do not believe that this is religious functioning. Religion asserts all the answers, you think. Does it really? These are very difficult questions. Many different answers have been provided. Perhaps, you have attempted some answers. How far did you go in your investigation? Did you get the answers you were seeking? Did you give up the quest?

What is Judaism to you?

If you had to give a definition of what Judaism is, what would be your answer? Would you say that Judaism is

believing certain things about the nature of the world? Would you say that Judaism is an elaborate system of customs and ceremonies? Is Judaism the ideas and attitudes of people who call themselves "Jews?" Is Judaism the writings of Scripture? Is Judaism what rabbis say it is? Or perhaps, is it what congregational bodies say it is? No doubt, you have heard Judaism described as a folk-religion, as a religion of "deed" rather than "creed," as a "way of life." Perhaps, you have other answers as to what Judaism is. As a little exercise, why not consider what you think Judaism is. Really, what is it?

If you have really considered a definition of Judaism, you have encountered a real problem. If you would also consider the definition of religion in general; again, you would encounter problems. There are no <u>easy</u> answers. Why? Because to limit our definition might exclude certain ideas which properly belong to Judaism. Yes, Judaism is concerned with God, the universe, and man. Yes, Judaism expresses a morality for individuals and societies. Yes, it involves rites, customs and ceremonies, a body of law, and a sacred literature. Yes, Judaism is represented by institutions through which are expressed

the above ideas. Yes, Judaism is followed by the people - Israel through whom it has evolved for centuries. It is all these and more. It is "more" because to distinguish any one of these concepts from the other would not do justice to a proper definition.

Judaism is a living, thriving organism. This is one of the basic difficulties for those who try to think about it. How does one capture the history, the literature, the ideas, the experiences of people in different places and at different times in one's thought? You can only do this by taking the parts and carefully examining them. In this manner, you can find an intellectual challenge. But remember that there will be difficulty in putting the parts all together.

Misunderstandings we have

Aside from the problem of defining Judaism, many of us commit certain injustices when approaching our problems.

(a) Our first injustice is compartmentalization. We try to set Judaism aside as only a certain part of life - the so-called "religious" part. Many of us reduce Judaism to a particular set of beliefs, customs and ceremonies. Yet, are you less Jewish when engaged

in so-called "secular studies," when you are at business, when you are relaxing, when you are making love, or when you are engaged in any other activity? You might think so and you might actually do such. However, Judaism, properly understood, involves all of your life's involvements no matter what you are doing. Nevertheless, it is difficult not to put Judaism in a compartment when intellectualizing about it. One can only think about one thing at a time. But let us not make the mistake of thinking that this is <u>all</u> there is to Judaism.

(b) The next injustice is one of <u>naive ignorance</u>. Many people who think about the contents of Judaism come up against a real problem when considering "God". First, they assert what Judaism says about God. Then, they try to see whether they believe the assertion or not. There is a serious problem here. Perhaps, it is your problem as well. Have you really acquired an <u>understanding</u> of what Judaism has claimed about God. Most people might well believe that they have arrived at such an understanding. You might claim that you attended a religious school where you were taught about God. You might say that you learned certain views from your parents and friends. As a result, you may very well have <u>an</u> under-

standing. The next question is: what is the level of your understanding?

Many Jews think of Judaism as a child-centered religion because of the many involvements which Judaism provides for the child. Nevertheless, Judaism is a religion for adults as well as for children. The sad fact is that many Jews never go beyond an understanding of Judaism that was acquired as a child or a teen-ager. There are levels of understanding ideas about God, man, and ethics that have never been considered by adult Jews in depth. As such, it is no wonder that they find some of their Jewish ideas inadequate for their lives. They are simply and naively ignorant as to what many Jewish ideas mean on an adult level.

(c) Another mistake is to think that Jewish ideas are absolute and complete. People use the expression "Judaism says..." in a dangerous way. For example, when examining a concept of God, we note many different concepts in the Bible. These, in turn, are amplified by the Rabbinic conception as depicted in the Talmud. God was understood a little differently by medieval Jewish philosophers such as Maimonides. Spinoza made significant changes in his view. In modern times, Jewish

religious thinkers have added many new and different conceptions. We shall say more about why this occurred further on. Suffice it to say that Judaism is dynamic and evolutionary in its ideology. Its nature has not been such that one accepts or rejects it. It is not an either/or situation. Judaism needs to be understood and lived. But supposing you do not want to understand or you cannot understand; then, we agree it will be difficult to live this way. However, we believe that you <u>will</u> want to understand it and that you <u>can</u> find some level for understanding. Therefore, we believe you <u>will</u> be able to live as a religious Jew. This is one of the purposes of this book. Our reasons for saying this will come at the end. Our warning here is threefold. First, Judaism has not answered all its concerns for all time. Secondly, not every Jewish idea of the past is accepted today. Finally, most Jewish ideas are not as simple as they often appear. Many are quite complex. Therefore, we must be careful when we say "Judaism says..." not to think that everything is absolute and complete.

These injustices of compartmentalization, naive ignorance and acceptance of an absolute and complete system have led many astray in approaching Judaism.

Therefore, it is not only difficult to define Judaism, but we must eliminate many of our misconceptions about it. In so far as we wish to describe Judaism as a religion, it is necessary to consider the historical circumstances under which it developed, the background of the people who were leaders in shaping it, the ideas which its followers have held and the manner in which these ideas were grounded in the experience of people through rites, customs, ceremonies, laws and literature. We shall not undertake such a definition in this book. We point it out as something important in order to show the wide dimensions involved in a full examination of the Jewish religion.

Can Judaism be thought?

The greatest injustice which we often inflict on Judaism is that it is incapable of meeting the challenges of modern thought as reflected in science and philosophy. Western society has come to depend a great deal on these two areas. To say that Judaism is incapable of meeting such challenges usually indicates either a misunderstanding of Judaism, modern thought or both. The major task of this book will be to show how Jewish religious thinkers

have indeed pondered not only problems of Judaism, but have been keenly interested in all matters of modern thought.

We must issue a caution before we begin. While we maintain that Judaism is capable of meeting intellectual challenge, while it has many valid and worthwhile ideas, while it expresses certain kinds of truth - Judaism may not be experienced only in thought. In the final analysis, we must live it, we must feel it and we must react to it.

Involved in the consideration of Jewish thought are ideas set in a context. This context may be historical, sociological, psychological, geographical or philosophical. It may be a single context or a combination of contexts. Would that we could concern ourselves carefully with each of these areas! However, that would go beyond our scope. Nevertheless, we shall be mindful of all these contexts. What we first wish to present are some ideas on what we mean by thought. Then, we shall examine basic theological considerations in Judaism as developed throughout the ages. Finally, we shall want to see how a contemporary Jewish religious thinker approaches the task of relating Judaism and modern thought.

It is our hope that new vistas of religious thought and new quests may be undertaken. It is a demanding and challenging task which we face. While we attempt to examine the relationship of Judaism and modern thought, we need to realize that it is a task which properly belongs not only to rabbis and professional scholars, but to every Reform Jew. It involves our approach to life, our attitude to life and the very significance of our lives - individually and collectively. Let us not consider our challenge too lightly. No doubt we shall confront many problems. Our aim is to try and understand, to learn and to grow intellectually in our pursuit of Judaism. Let none say that these were "problems I never understood."

CHAPTER II

THE PROBLEM OF KNOWLEDGE

Why Knowledge is a problem

It is common for us to speak of having acquired such items as "knowledge," "meaningfulness," and "truth." We use these terms all the time. However, it may surprise you to learn that these are not totally clear words. They do not represent the same things to all of us. By the word "knowledge," we usually think simply of "information." By the word "meaningfulness," we get a certain idea of "insight" or "clear understanding." When we say the word "truth," we usually mean something like "certain," "reliable" or "correct" with respect to information or knowledge. As you can see, we go in a circle - never clearly knowing what each of these words

really means. The fact is that scientists, philosophers and religionists do not always use these words in the same way. We could go further and say that there is no agreement on what constitutes "knowledge." Yet we use the word all the time. It must mean something.

When we speak of knowledge, we usually mean a particular kind of knowledge. We might say that anything that occurs to the individual mind is knowledge. Would you agree? Some people claim that only units of thought expressed in words constitute knowledge. Others believe that these units of thought must be agreed upon by many people to be knowledge. Yet are there not aspects of our knowledge that cannot be put into words? Or even if we put them into words, do these words always fully indicate what we wish them to mean? Would you agree that knowledge to be knowledge requires common consent? Certainly our inventions and discoveries are knowledge before everyone accepts them. About the most we can say is that knowledge has something to do with what goes on in the mind of a person as he reacts to the world. Yet, what is this "something" that goes on? That is the crux of our problem: "How do we know what we know?"

Philosophy students will have some insight into this problem. Not only can you not prove that God exists, but you would have difficulty proving your own existence. Go ahead! Try to prove you exist even to yourself, let alone to anyone else. Where will you start? With your mind perhaps? Well, you might say that you see yourself when you look into a mirror. How do you know the mirror is not distorting your image? How do you know that what you see is really you? We have all seen mirrors which were tricky. Well, you say that you can touch yourself and that you feel something there. Firstly, you do not touch yourself. You may touch your head, your nose, your other hand, your stomach, your leg, but how do you know whether the rest of you is there? Moreover, you could be deceiving yourself. Finally, suppose you were paralyzed in your arms and legs and could not touch yourself, would that mean that you did not exist? No matter which one of the five senses you used, you could deceive yourself. We know the senses can play tricks on us. If you place a straight stick in water, it appears bent to the eye but straight to the touch. We know that we sometimes are deceived by what we hear, what we taste and what we smell as well.

Perhaps, you wish to turn to something else. You might discover that you were thinking about your existence. Therefore, you might say like one famous philosopher "I think; therefore, I am." However, this philosopher made a mistake. He assumed that by the act of his thinking there was a thinker - an I. However, he was wrong; there is only thinking. Supposing you were having a dream and that you were not even thinking - only dreaming. Suppose some wicked demon was purposely deceiving you by convincing you that you were thinking, but that you were really not thinking at all. How would you know? You might say that you would ask someone else to confirm whether you really existed. This other person might also deceive you. Furthermore, you could never be sure that there was another real person. Sometimes, in our dreams, we visualize other people simply as parts of our imagination. All this is simply to demonstrate that the problem: "How do we know what we know?" is not simple. In a certain sense, it is why there is no agreement.

Let us proceed to discover what some of the different ways of knowing have been considered to be. Let us see what different kinds of knowledge have been demonstrated and how religious knowledge is made known.

Is anything "certain"?

(a) How "certain" is science?

In the last section, we pointed out how it would be difficult for you to prove your own existence. We presented an outline of the steps involved in such an argument. Surely, you did not conclude that you did not exist! In fact, perhaps you are still looking for an answer to prove your existence. No matter what objections you might raise, we are convinced that we could counter all of your arguments. Suppose we are right, what difference does it make? We are pointing to the relationship between the problem of "certainty" and knowledge. Not only is it difficult to determine just what knowledge is, we can never be certain of it. We can never really know that it is complete and absolute.

Many college students often make distinctions between scientific knowledge and non-scientific knowledge. They feel certain about the former and, at least, skeptical about the latter. Scientific knowledge is true for everyone and beyond question. Until one considers the problems involved in ascertaining what knowledge is, until one realises the limitations of knowledge, one is capable of entertaining the fallacy of the superiority of scientific knowledge over non-scientific knowledge as an axiomatic principle.

How does the scientist know what he knows is certain, that it is true, that it is complete? The scientist may inform us about the probability of a ball landing on the street below if it is thrown from a window. Why? Because the scientist has performed enough experiments involving a solid mass suspended in air to know that it will fall. We all recognize why this phenomenon occurs - it is because of the scientific law of gravity. In similar manner, we know a great many scientific facts about the universe. What we often overlook is the fact that the scientist makes certain <u>assumptions</u> both at the beginning of his task and at the end.

Before any scientist begins to work, he assumes that there is a real physical universe which exists. He does not question how he knows this - he merely assumes its truth. In reflecting about his experience, the scientist formulates hypotheses about certain operations which nature experiences. When these hypotheses are tested, various results occur. In such a manner, the scientist is able to obtain objective information about the world. It is objective because the scientist does not allow his emotions and feelings to stand in the way. There is only one problem - how can he be sure that these objects

really exist? Is the scientist totally and completely detached from his data? Is there a difference in knowing what the things themselves really are and his perception of them? What about the principles with which the scientist works? How can we be absolutely certain of the principle of order in the universe? Does this not require an "act of faith" of sorts? Earlier we noted that the ball dropped from a window would probably land on the street below. The scientist knows that his knowledge must always be tentative for future use. There are no guarantees. His knowledge may tell him what will probably happen, but there is no assurance that it MUST happen in any particular manner.

(b) Certainty is not popularity.

Scientific knowledge may be more popular than non-scientific knowledge. However, there is no reason for calling it superior. For example, modern science may be very useful for causing the total destruction of the world. This is not to say that such scientific knowledge is in itself bad or inferior though it might lead to the worst "hell" imaginable. In fact, it may take all of the resources of non-scientific endeavors to prevent such an occurrence. Why should science be so popular? First, such knowledge possesses more

agreement among people today. It is more limited in its scope. It is more specialized in its vocabulary and in its functions. It is our contemporary stance to admire it. This popularity may be explained in this way. Science is able to satisfy certain of our fundamental needs more simply. Through science, we can prevent disease and obtain food, shelter and clothing. It keeps us warm and lights up our world. It helps us to travel. In short, it is very "practical" and dependable for teaching us about certain functions of living. However, in seeking the truth about the world, it does not encompass and include all of our experience or fulfill all of our needs. Furthermore, it requires a certain set of assumptions on our part which do not assure us of ultimate truths. Surely, a popular vote will not give us truth.

The most "popular" aspect of science is that all its forms are impersonal. Everything in science is under investigation in a special way. Objects become objects because they are stripped of their concrete experience and individuality. However, we must remember that this is an abstraction from experience. Is a table a table unless it can be experienced as such? We might say

that it has the potentiality of being a table. However, a flat surface with a protruding piece of material at each of its corners cannot simply be called a table. To people in some parts of the Asiatic world, this is an altar. To the scientist, it may be no more than a body suspended in space in a particular way. To a carpenter, it may be a work of art. When we create the abstraction, it may be less real than it was in its concrete wholeness. Again, we raise the question, what kind of "certainty" have we acquired?

Is language an obstacle to knowledge?

(a) Words can be misleading.

As you read these words, remember that they are only symbols. Fortunately, we both have a general understanding of the same symbols or language. If we were to begin writing in hieroglyphics, in numbers, or in another language, you might not understand what we were saying. One of the key difficulties about knowledge is that the only way in which we can communicate it is by representing experience in symbols. Different symbols have distinct meanings. More than

that, various symbols demand a certain emotional response from us. Some symbols can be explained by other symbols while some can not be further described at all.

If we use the word "chair," you may not know about the specific chair we have in mind. However, you have seen enough chairs to have a general idea as to what we are talking about. In general, chairs have a certain kind of shape. You could never misunderstand what we mean. You will probably not react emotionally to the word "chair" unless you have a particularly favorite one in mind. For most people, there is no sense of excitement. On the other hand, saying the word "chair" to the convicted murderer may arouse all sorts of emotional reactions. To him, "chair" may represent fear, punishment or death. To most of us, this word will not set off any sort of excitement. If you wanted more information, we could reduce this word to a definition by which we would use other symbols. For example, we could say that a chair "usually has four legs and a back, may or may not have arms and is used for the seating of one person." There is a high degree of probability

that you will clearly understand.

Supposing we were to use the word "red." You would probably ask: "To what are you referring?" Do we mean a red face, a red rose, a red cross, a red sweater, a red what? Actually, we are not referring to anything. We are simply saying "red." Again, you might be prompted to ask: "Are you talking about a light red, a bright red or a medium red?" Our answer is that we are thinking simply of a plain, ordinary red. Could you ever understand what we were talking about? Strangely, most people experience some sort of emotional response to this word. You might be happy if you associate red with flowers. You might be sad if you think of blood. Or you could be angry if you identify "red" with a communist. Suppose you ask us for a definition. All we could say was that red "is of the color or hue red." We are incapable of reducing this word any further. All we could do would be to point to something which is red to make you understand.

Sometimes we use one word which has several meanings. The word "land" is a good example. We might mean it as a noun or as a verb. As a noun, we may be indicating "the

solid part of the surface of the earth." Or perhaps, land is "a portion of the surface of the earth, considered by itself, as a country, estate, farm or tract." Some people use this word with respect to the nature or quality of the ground such as soil. As a verb, land means "to disembark, to set or put on shore from a ship." It need not be this definition. It could be "to come to rest in a particular place" such as to land an airplane. Another meaning is "to catch" as in the expression "to land a fish." For such words, we depend upon one's understanding of the different uses of vocabulary. However, it can also lead to subtle confusions.

(b) Idioms and abstractions increase our problem.

We might consider other problems of language. For example, we may have several words which express the same idea. For example, "see", "look", "perceive", "observe", "note" are all very close in meaning. Confusions may arise over grammar, syntax and idioms. If you have ever studied a foreign language, you will know what we mean. For example, in English, we have the expression, "it is raining cats and dogs." The foreigner, hearing this idiom for the first time, is

undoubtedly astounded. We cannot be serious about such a phenomenon taking place.

There are certain words we use in thought which cause us considerable difficulty. What do we mean when we speak of "absolute" and "relative?" We may use such terms to refer to space, time, values and ideas. Similarly, we use the terms "particular" and "universal." At best, such terminology is indicative - it points towards something. Yet can the mind fully comprehend a universal idea? An example of a universal statement is: "All men are born." We might be able to accumulate considerable evidence for believing this. However, we would need to make such an idea into an abstraction, i.e. we would have to point to the statement and have faith that it is true in <u>all</u> cases. Actually, we can never do more than assert that in any <u>single</u> instance, it is true.

Even though all of these problems exist, we continue to use language all of the time in order to think and in order to communicate what we experience. There are some people who believe that the only kind of knowledge we can

have is that which is put into words. Otherwise, it is not knowledge. This is a problem. When I kiss someone, I have certain kinds of experience depending on whom I am kissing - my sweetheart, my parents, my child, or an acquaintance. It might be very difficult to adequately describe the distinctions between each type of kissing or even the completeness of any one of the experiences.

Language is the tool of knowledge and is certainly not an obstacle. However, it does present certain problems. It is objective yet subjective, impersonal and personal, clear and vague, simple and complex.

What is real and what is true?

(a) A distinction between "real" and "true."

Involved as one of the major problems of knowledge is something about which we hinted earlier. What is the essence of reality? If we do not understand this, how can we know whether what we seek to know is true? Here it is important to distinguish between the word "true" and the word "real." Truth refers to propositions to which we give our assent. Reality is what actually exists. One of the functions of knowledge is to find a correspondence between what is real or what actually

exists and what is true. If we say: "The earth revolves on its axis," the statement may be described as true or false by whether we assent to this proposition. In this case, we assent, so it is true. The fact that the earth really does revolve on its axis refers to an aspect of reality.

This discussion of reality and truth has been one of the fundamental problems of thought since the Greek thinkers began analyzing thought. We call such activity "philosophy." Through the ages, many different answers have been offered as solutions to our problem. We shall not endeavor to reconstruct the history of philosophy. However, we shall try to point to the problems and some of the answers which have been considered.

(b) Reality follows truth.

In any investigation of reality, our thoughts and beliefs about reality will be more important than reality itself. Suppose that there are men on Mars. If we do not believe or even have an inkling of an idea that such men exist or could possibly exist, what significance does such a reality have for us? Therefore, reality will be what we <u>think</u> it is. Recently,

we have witnessed many space flights. Undoubtedly, as we progress in our exploration of space, we shall become familiar with many facts about the universe which we did not know before, and which we never even considered. Such phenomena may have occurred for millions of years. As long as we did not know about it, it may have been a part of reality but it was not real for us. In fact, the absence of such phenomena was what was real for us. For the naive thinker, the people who once thought that the world was flat may appear to have been stupid or simply in error. While they believed in such a reality, it was the truest picture of reality they had. As a result, they experienced very "real" fears about falling off one of the sides of the earth. It is only in the retrospect of new belief that man can gain confidence and be blase about former views. If reality is dependent on what we think, it becomes all the more important to discover what knowledge is.

(c) Seeking the truth.

Knowledge constitutes all of our thoughts. We have already indicated that not all of our thoughts are of equal importance. Certainly, not everything which occurs

to the mind is true, significant or worthy. One of our tasks might be to try and discover which thoughts to hold and which ones to discard. Would that this were a simple task! In our discussion of "certainty" and "language," we got an indication of the depth and difficulty of our task. There is no one valid answer that will satisfy all of us. However, there are possible answers. Such answers will depend on the possible ways we acquire knowledge and the possible criteria we may apply for making such knowledge true.

Ways we acquire knowledge

(a) Authority

Did it ever occur to you that almost everything you know and believe came to you from some outside source? First, your parents were the ones who served as your authority. As time progressed, you depended on a variety of authorities. You have been willing to trust and rely on certain people to give you the best information for whatever you wanted to know. For example, when you become sick, you visit a doctor. As a result, most of your knowledge has come about because you have relied upon parents, teachers, books and specialists in different

aspects of life. Such reliability on these different sources of authority have been a good thing. Imagine if you would have had to learn and discover everything you know completely by yourself. It would have been a tremendous if not impossible task.

As you think about and experience the things you have been told through books and other people, you will change your ideas. You will not believe everything you are told. On the other hand, there are many things you will continue to believe in on the basis of authority - things which you are either incompetent to consider or which you are incapable of experiencing directly. You may respect some great person. You may rely on the information of a text. It is amazing to consider the number of acts we perform because we recognize some authority. How often we justify our knowledge on the basis that some recognized person has made a statement. For example, how do I know that a man called Christopher Columbus sailed from Spain to America in 1492? I must rely on historians for such information. But I can use a certain amount of judgment as well. There is nothing which appears to be unreasonable about such a statement.

It was certainly within the realm of possibility. On the other hand, supposing the statement had indicated that Columbus arrived on a jet airplane in 1492. This would seem unreasonable because I know that such a mode of travel was not discovered until recently. If you were told by an expert to believe this in any event - even though it seems quite impossible - you would have to make a decision. Either you would accept the expert's testimony because you believed that he was the most capable of knowing this and that he was telling the truth, or you would have to view his assertion as complete nonsense.

While we learn a great deal of information through authorities, it does not follow that it is all true or correct. There is no reason for believing something simply because someone has said it. In such instances, we shall need to use judgment very carefully. Propaganda, rumors and prejudice usually have their roots in authority which has been accepted without some form of judgment. We may have a great deal of respect for some authority which makes a prejudicial statement not based on evidence. It is important to examine every statement and idea with all the judgment we have.

(b) Intuition.

An intuition is knowledge without any reason for it. It is direct and immediate knowing. It represents feeling and insight - the vision of the thinking man. We use intuition in poetry, painting and foresight. It might be popularly described as "instant knowledge." No evidence or proof is required for this kind of knowledge for it is thought to be self-evident.

In mathematics, we know intuitively that "a whole is greater than the sum of its parts". We know the axioms of Euclidean geometry intuitively. Some people believe that no concept of morality and ethics can exist other than through intuition. Can we prove that "honesty is good" by some recourse to reason or experience? It might be possible. However, intuition might be the best justification for such views since its truth is guaranteed by the way we know it. We know it immediately, directly, and certainly.

In viewing the various forms of art, we may know that some picture or piece of architecture or music is aesthetically pleasing through intuition. We have no reason. We immediately know that we like something or we do not.

The problem with knowing things intuitively is that it is restricted to individuals. The intuitionist may say that we are not exercising our ratiocination properly if we do not intuit as he has. However, he cannot look into our minds. How can we ever know which intuition is the right one? There is no refutation of this way of knowing. It is simply difficult to apply. A person is certain of his intuition, but how does he go about making his intuition certain for the next person? Intuitions are not capable of definitions.

Even though we must face these problems, intuition should be seriously considered. It would be extremely difficult to begin any kind of investigation of thought without intuition. How would we know that there is such a thing as reason? One intuitionist maintains that concepts of time, space, matter, motion, and energy are impossible without intuition. Indeed, he may have an excellent point. While it cannot be proved, neither can it be disproved.

(c) Faith

(1) What is it?

Many people claim to have certain kinds of knowledge based on faith. Some would maintain that there

is a close relationship between faith and intuition. A person may adopt faith because he has had such intuitions. We have listed faith separately because there are certain distinctions which it has.

The simple act of faith is an act wherein you accept as real or true that which is not supported by scientific evidence and cannot be demonstrated through reason.

(2) Reactions against faith

The general attitude today is to say that if we have evidence for a belief, we should believe it. If we have evidence which is contrary to an opinion, then, we should disbelieve it. What do you do when you have no evidence? Some thinkers would insist that we should at least remain in doubt - neither believing nor disbelieving. But more than that, faith has come to be a term of low value. Many people believe that if it is necessary to accept some idea based on faith, one is better without it. The reason for this is that faith is generally conceived to be the tool of religion. Since the institutions of religion have not always lived up to the faith they have purported to represent, both the institutions and its faith have been discarded.

(3) Faith is needed for more than religion.

We suspect that the intellectual process of faith is not really as dangerous as the word itself. Do not the very people who protest that they cannot tolerate beliefs without some sort of evidence apply such beliefs in other areas? We have already indicated this. Let us review. Who has ever "proved" the objective reality of the physical world? Even if such a world exists, what evidence do we have for believing that it conforms to our impressions of it? Yet men behave as though the world were there and their senses altogether trustworthy. What is meant by a hypothesis or a theory if not a belief in an unproved proposition? The moment we assume the rationality of nature, its uniformity in time and space, not to mention more specific and limited hypotheses in special fields of research, we are engaged in acts of faith. Even in our everyday lives, we find this. We make plans for a whole series of tomorrows quite convinced that all of our tomorrows will come.

(4) Faith as "the will to believe."

There is a certain view of faith which is based on "the will to believe." Again, we are concerned

about propositions which have no evidence. Such beliefs are accepted as true because they fit in with religious cravings or ethical principles. It is argued that without such belief our moral standards, our hopes and our aspirations would fall apart. This might be regarded as a psychological response to faith.

(5) Faith with evidence.

Not every act of faith is without evidence or beyond reason. In affirming the event of the Sinaitic revelation, Orthodox Jews would maintain that this was witnessed by a large host of people. Such a view would be called faith with evidence. Or consider the argument of Maimonides who was a classical medieval theologian. For him, faith is an act of the mind. He maintains that belief about God is rationally compelled. He was using pure reason. Such a view allows nothing other than to say his process of reasoning is true.

(6) Faith as "ultimate concern."

Finally, there is a view of faith which has nothing to do with assenting to propositions. It does not require any evidence. This view is involved with an act of experience. In the analysis of a human being, there are a certain number of things about which he is concerned.

For example,we experience our own anxiety over our own death and existence. Those things which concern us ultimately involve faith.

Faith does involve a way of knowing. The problem is that it is not certain and it is difficult for people to share a knowledge of similar acts of faith.

(d) Reason

One of the ways in which we know is by the use of reason. One of the difficulties is that reason and thinking are practically synonymous terms. Often, we mean no more by the word "reason" than thought. However, here we will use reason in a special way - as a function that goes on strictly inside the mind and which is independent of the objects of the physical world.

Reason may indicate logical consistency. The value of this kind of reasoning or thinking is that it tests the connections between ideas we already have. Suppose we use this well-known syllogism:

All men are mortal.
Socrates is a man.
Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

The conclusion is drawn from the first two sentences, or premises, by understanding the relation of the meaning of each premise to the other. Reasoning or

thinking is going on in a person's mind as he deduces conclusions from premises. There is no attempt to discover any truth in this kind of thought. All we are doing is concentrating on the relations of our meanings to each other. This is called logical thinking. In our syllogism, the conclusion is certainly consistent with the premises. The logical relation is established. The problem is whether it is actually true. Are all men mortal? Is Socrates a man? Is Socrates in fact mortal? To establish this we will need to look at other ways of thinking. Suffice it to say, that this kind of thinking combined with intuition dominated all thought for many years. When we speak of a "rational demonstration," we usually mean some way of arranging and ordering ideas in the mind so that they fit a pattern. The chief criterion of the pattern is its consistency.

(e) Sense-experience

Experience is composed of ourselves and the world. We have already learned that, if we are to know the world outside of us, it can only be done through the senses. It is this type of thinking that is most common. Like other aspects of thought, it cannot be

completely certain. However, its great attraction is that it can be shared by people more easily. The doctrine which holds that all knowledge is a product of sense-experiences to which reason contributes nothing is empiricism. There are a variety of ways of thinking empirically.

Acquiring knowledge through the senses is difficult because of the possibility of confusion and because such knowledge is limited.

What is required for an experience to take place? Does a person have to be involved? Suppose a bell is sounded in a deserted forest. The bell rings and makes a sound. Does a person need to be present to hear the sound of the bell's ringing? We might say that if a person were present, he would hear the bell. Therefore, the bell would have the potentiality of being heard. Or must we say that a person must actually hear the bell?

It has been shown that when an object is seen, there is no assurance that the perception in the mind corresponds to the actual object. We may observe a brown sweater. We know it is brown because that is the way it appears to us through our eyes. Rays of light hit the sweater and

these rays plant an image on the retina of the eye. There is a problem. The physicist assures us that these rays are colorless. If so, how do we know that the sweater is brown? Therefore, can we equate the sensory experience of an object with the actual object itself? The mind reacts in a certain way to what it perceives. It receives special data which we call "sense-data." Such a view claims that all we can ever know are sense-data.

(f) The "ground" of experience.

There are a variety of views as to whether sense-data reflect the actual physical object itself, none of it, or part of it. Whatever view is accepted, the method of empiricism is incomplete. It does not take into account all of the data of experience. It is only fragmentary. For example, take a person. He is a unity of sorts. Reducing a person to the sifted sense-data of the sciences cannot answer questions as to the nature, laws and principles of this unity. As such, we overlook the concrete data of existence. We must have a concrete datum which is not reducible to sense-data nor simply a collection of sense-data. Therefore, it is necessary to have a description and analysis of experience itself.

The only way to arrive at the objective modes of existence is through subjective existence. This view tries to grab hold of the "stream of consciousness" of a person. It seeks to discover a person as both separate and part of existence.

Much earlier we commented that first there must be thought before we could arrive at reality. This view reverses that position. It goes directly to reality in order to achieve thought. We have come around in a full circle. The key difficulty of this view is in understanding its language and discovering reliable evidence.

Knowledge and the Jewish religious quest.

We have spent considerable time outlining the problem of knowledge and some of the major ways of knowing anything. True, we have selected only glimpses of each problem. Indeed, volumes have been written concerning these difficulties.

What we have desired to point out is that there is no kind of knowledge that is certain, that we must make assumptions even before our investigation, and that different theories of knowledge are rooted in specific contexts. It will be important to know which context

you prefer before making any judgements about truth.

It has often been erroneously stated that science discusses what is "known," and religion is concerned with what is "unknown." The fact is that both of them are trying to uncover the unknown. In so doing, there is a great deal of mystery. However, both make assumptions and both realize their limitations.

Knowledge, science and philosophy do not stand in opposition to the religious quest - certainly the Jewish religious quest. Judaism has never been dogmatic in its content. It has often been described as a "religion without a theology" in the sense of its being undogmatic. Judaism is a framework for living and thinking. It is an organism. It is an orientation. At the same time, it welcomes truth whether "hidden in the anals of ancient revelation" or in the discoveries of our own age. Judaism is represented in all these forms of thinking: in authority, in intuition, in faith, in reason, in tested experience and in searching the ground of existence.

Most men come only to Judaism's simple statements and simple ideas. But we should remember that a religion which has stood such a test of time, and in so many places,

has needed to be interpreted and re-interpreted. To date, its truths and its values have not been made less significant by the growth of science and philosophy. Rather, Judaism's stature has grown especially in the realm of ideas. One of its serious problems has been that too few have understood both the problems of knowledge and the framework of Judaism. Now that we have considered some of the "intellectual" problems, let us proceed to the framework of our religious perspective.

MAJOR JEWISH CONCEPTS

Introduction

Any thinker faced with the task of clearly defining "the religious idea" in Judaism immediately faces a magnificent challenge. Judaism's primary task has been the search for complete unity in the universe, and as such, the Jew always adopted a specific attitude toward life and the world. His stance was dynamic, creative, growing and inspired. He committed himself to his personal God. He deduced knowledge of his commitment through a historic sacred literature. As a member of a people, He devoted himself to a sacred mission. However, we should be careful in regarding these as separate categories. Ultimately, the Jew wants all of life to be significant and valuable.

To present some of the basic theological concepts which have flourished and flowered through thousands of years, one requires a starting point, a division, an analysis into component parts. The most popular scheme which Jewish writers have used includes God, Torah and Israel. A concept of man has been variously included as related to each of these categories. Without man, these major concepts become individual,

isolated and separate. This is not to make man the center of everything. Yet, who ultimately breathes the life of Judaism? Who must be dedicated to the passion of living in a certain way?

For the Jew, knowledge and truth are important. Jewish theological opinion has always ranged far and wide. Uniformity would have been unattainable had it been sought after. The Jewish religion is highly intellectualistic in the sense that it places understanding among its supreme purposes and that it recognizes knowledge to be a key to understanding. Yet, for all its intellectualism, Judaism sets morality above logic. The pursuit of justice and mercy are more important than possessing the correct idea. Where the Jew has great latitude to determine for himself exactly how and what he should think, his conduct and behavior in life are prescribed.

We shall attempt to present a few of the significant aspects of Jewish theology as they have been conceived. The treatment is far from comprehensive and does not include all of the concerns of Jewish theology.

CHAPTER III

GOD - REALITY AND IDEA

"The God of our Fathers"

One of the fundamental differences between philosophy and religion is the manner in which each approaches the concept of God. The god of the philosophers is conceived according to the principles of knowledge and metaphysics. At any point one can jump right in with his own views and set up propositions. Judaism permits great latitude for conceiving of God in many different ways. However, it is rooted in a context - the experience of the Jew as he has confronted and conceived of God throughout history. This framework of experiencing God is what roots Him to the earth.

To think of God only as an abstraction of experience without this framework is not sufficent. It does not move men to action nor does it cause men to understand

any better the nature of the universe. We may not accept every segment of past experience as significant. What we can do is to capture its mood and the feeling of our personal involvement. Once you have grasped this, you may intellectualize to your heart's content.

When we do become involved in abstract discussions about God without understanding the framework of Jewish experience, we often infer certain incorrect ideas about how Judaism views God. As we shall see later, many have misunderstood the seemingly anthropomorphic* representations of God found in Biblical and Rabbinic Judaism.

The Jew prays: "Our God, and the God of our fathers ...." "Our God" is interpreted to mean our conception of God. However, "the God of our Fathers" refers to the views we have had about God in our past history. We are surely not restricted by this past, but neither are we free to ignore it. This is the format for religious experience.

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*anthropomorphic - ascribing human characteristics to God.

Looking For Proof of God

(a) The use of reason

We often speak of reason almost in the sense of its being one eternal process. Indeed, the rabbis identified reason and mind as having its source in God. Nevertheless, our understanding of reason as a way of knowing has been limited to different times and places. The insights of Plato and Aristotle dominated thought for a thousand years before a significant change in thought took place. The main currents of thought have been developing ever since. But it has been a slow process. Many can engage in thought and can learn what has already been discovered. They can elaborate on it and they may even extend it into many spheres. But for a completely new way of thinking to emerge takes a great deal of time.

Jewish thinkers have long engaged in the task of trying to square reason and faith. Moses Maimonides was the champion of a whole host of such Jewish thinkers. He was deeply committed to reason and refused to believe anything which reason contradicted. As such, he utilized reason for illuminating his faith and his life.

Following Aristotle, Maimonides constructed an elaborate metaphysical system.

(b) Not everything is in the senses.

Metaphysics is composed of "the theories of reality" or "being as being" or "the science of all that is possible, so far as it is possible." The domain of metaphysics is not in the sensory experiencing of the world but tries to go beyond the senses to discover first principles and causes. Aristotle did not actually know the term "metaphysics" itself. He used the word "theology."

Theology has been used popularly as a term designating the ideology of a particular religion, i.e. its doctrines, beliefs, practices and institutions. Nevertheless, many theologians insist on using the term in the same way as Aristotle used it. Modern philosophers may use metaphysical speculation for a variety of concepts about the nature of "being." Theologians usually use metaphysical speculation regarding the nature of God as the source of "being." Broadly speaking, they often work in the same arena. One thing is certain. There is no reason for assessing the one discipline to be more

significant or more true than the other. For example, concepts of space and time cannot be demonstrated other than through reason. They are beyond the sensual world. Insofar as they are possible at all, these concepts have belonged to both the disciplines of metaphysics and theology. What do concepts like "finite," "infinite," "space," "time," "being as being" or even "nothing" really mean? How shall we define them? What concrete evidence shall we have for knowing precisely what they are? The fact is that we do not have such evidence. The most we can do is speculate about the possibilities for explaining them.

(c) Two aspects of one search

Jewish theology is concerned with the nature of God, the universe, man, revelation, immortality, and particularly, morality. To know this, there is a complete description of the Jewish religion. To speak of such concepts metaphysically involves speculation of their possibilities. Judaism has tried to conduct such speculation within a special context.

Jewish theology has been used in both of the ways described above. Most often, it has been interpreted to mean the <u>exposition</u> of the doctrines, beliefs, practices

and institutions of the Jewish people. At other times, it has been conceived as the process of reasoning which gives rational foundation to its doctrines and beliefs. However, Judaism never made the acceptance of belief in its creed a necessary condition for membership or for attaining salvation. Judaism never claimed to offer the final or absolute truth. What it does is to point out the ways leading to the highest obtainable truth. As a result, the specific conceptions of God, Torah and Israel have undergone considerable change and reformulation throughout Jewish history.

(d) "Proofs" for God's existence.

During the Middle Ages God became an object of widespread metaphysical inquiry among Jews. A vast literature developed which tried, by logical demonstration, to prove the existence and character of God. In any investigation one is limited by his particular theory of knowledge. The Jewish scholastics utilized four sources of knowledge: sense-perception, self-evident truths (intuition), logical inference (reason), and tradition (authority).

It would appear that such an endeavor was provoked by the currents and pressures of Christian and Moslem scholasticism. Let us examine their arguments which have come to be known as "the proofs for God's existence."

(1) The cosmological argument was based on the principle of causality. This view is derived from the assertion that every effect in the universe is seen to have a cause (or, that every cause can be traced to an earlier cause). When they looked at Nature, they realized that it could not be self-sufficient. No creation in nature could possibly occur without an earlier First cause or Creator. This First Cause must be a Being who exists without a cause, and this is God. The cosmological argument became the most popular Jewish argument for the existence of God. Why was this so? Because from the story of creation on, the Bible seemed to confirm such a view and because the argument could easily be couched in story and parable.

(2) The teleological argument was employed to establish God's goodness, mercy and knowledge. This view is sometimes called "the argument from design."

There is considerable evidence of design and purpose in the universe. We know about the patterns of the leaf, the structure of the human body, and the millions of cells knitted together and working in co-ordination in the growth of plant and animal life as well as in the workings of the human mind. There is apparent beauty, order and goodness operating in the world. Could all this have happened simply by chance? Not at all! There could not be such design without a mind. Evidence of design in the universe must imply that there is a Designer. This Designer was conceived to be God.

(3) The ontological argument was also popular among the thinkers of the age. Since the human mind has an idea of a Perfect Being, He must exist. Otherwise, how could the imperfect and finite minds of humans ever come to have such an idea of a Perfect Being? If He was not perfect and infinite, He would not exist. However, since we have such an idea; then God exists.

(e) The "proofs" are incomplete

Such speculative reasoning did not prove the existence of God completely nor did it establish His nature. Nevertheless, such reasoning captivated the

Scholastic Age and lasted a long time before being challenged. Notice, we say "challenged" and not disproved. It might be asked about the cosmological argument which posited God as the First Cause: "Who made God?" The teleological argument had this problem. If design is used as proof of the existence of a Supremely Good and Omnipotent Being, how shall we account for the faulty or even positively evil design in the universe? Finally, the ontological argument was debated. Just because we have ideas of unicorns and ghosts in the human mind, does that mean they exist?

(f) Shall we eliminate reason?

Even though these arguments could not be absolute proofs such speculative reasoning set the stage for the employment of our minds in trying to understand the universe and God. It served as a corrective. Belief in an ethical, conscious, personal God may rest ultimately on faith. Nevertheless, reason disciplines faith, refines it,holds it in bounds, and directs its efforts. As such, intellectualizing about Jewish religious ideas became quite appropriate and remains so to this day.

God in the Bible

(a) One God, Many God concepts.

God, The Reality Who is One, and our ideas of God may not necessarily be the same. Similarly, there is only One God in the Bible but there are many different conceptions of Him.

(b) God is taken for granted.

The Bible assumes that God is the foundation and pillar of everything in the universe. As such, Scripture does not argue or debate for God's existence. It asserts, declares and proclaims God as the foundation of all that is. This is what is meant by such verses as: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" and "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One."

(c) Earliest conceptions.

As among all primitive peoples, Israel's concept of God passed through the primitive stages of animism (the belief that regards all objects and beings as possessed by "spirits)," polytheism (the belief in many gods), and henotheism (the belief in one supreme god, though not to the exclusion of belief in other gods). The gods and spirits were local, tribal, and national before they attained the exalted development of the universal Lord.

(d) Israel's God is moral.

A unique power infused the Hebrew conception of God. He was a moral God, demanding justice, love and compassion. No longer the deification of power in nature, He became the Creator and Ruler of nature and humans. Out of such a view developed ethical monotheism - the idea of God at its highest point of development.

(e) Implications.

Consider the implications of discovering this living God who not only "is," "was" and "shall remain" but is One - unique incomparable, and absolute. The ancient Hebrews had discovered the unity of the world, the unity of human life, the unity of the human family and the unity of human destiny. Only such a view of the universe could have made scientific investigation a fruitful enterprise.

It is striking to note that out of such an early development came the view that man is unable to achieve any positive knowledge about God. Nevertheless, there are certain manifestations in human experience which can at least point to or intimate His existence. The majesty, beauty and orderliness of the physical world were used as evidence for making such inferences. But as to the essence of God - what He is in Himself - we can only guess. In fact, the Bible repeatedly reminds

us that our ignorance of God is much greater than our knowledge of him.

Even more was discovered than One God. God as conceived in The Bible automatically includes His witness, Israel, and His testimony, Torah. Israel made a covenant with this beneficent Supreme power. Not only did this people give structure to the universe, it accepted a responsibility for righteous conduct.

The Rabbis Speak of God

(a) Knowledge on the basis of authority.

The rabbis of the Talmud did not speculate on the existence or the nature of God. They found their knowledge in revelation, the supreme authority which demonstrated God's Will. The rabbis accepted the testimony of the Bible and made it a practical moral dynamic in the life of the individual.

(b) Choosing concepts.

It is evident to any reader of the Bible that it combines conceptions of incredible simplicity and primitiveness with ideas of a most exalted kind. The rabbis were not indiscriminate in drawing their ideas

out of the Bible. The basic emphasis of the rabbis was on the experience of God in daily life rather than on intellectual formulations. Once an idea of God had emerged out of personal experience within the social group, the Bible could be searched for texts that could be interpreted to suit this experience of God.

(c) One God.

The conception of God held by the rabbis was monotheistic in the strictest degree. From their constant stress on the idea of God's unity, the rabbis developed His attributes. One is not, strictly speaking, separate from the other. Rather they are related in an "organic" whole. One idea flows from another. What were these attributes of God?

(1) With the unity of God, the rabbis conceived of his incorporeality. Considering the degree to which the Bible as well as the rabbis utilized anthropomorphic terms, this would seem to be an amazing assertion. The rabbis answered: "We borrow terms from His creatures to apply to Him in order to assist the understanding." The rabbis recognized the problem of conceiving universal and infinite terms. Human, we must express

ourselves in human terms; but God is not man and our human terms do not fit His nature. As such, the rabbinic teachers warn us that words are symbols and should be used with imagination.

(2) If God is incorporeal; then, God is omnipresent. Wherever there is life there is God. Man is never beyond the presence of God. "His glory is over the earth and the heavens," says "the Psalmist. Keeping in mind the rabbinic conception of rooting God in human experience, they applied the above text: "With an earthly king, when he is in his bed-chamber he can not be in the reception hall; but the Holy One, blessed be He, fills the upper regions and the lower."

(3) As there is no limitation on God's presence, so nothing restricts His power. God is omnipotent.

(4) God is omniscient. His knowledge was declared to be limitless. The Biblical doctrine that God is all-knowing was developed to its utmost extent in the teachings of the rabbis. The special character of such knowledge was vividly taught: "Before even a creature is joined in his mother's womb his thought is already revealed to God."

(5) Time has no meaning in relation to God. He is eternal. In His capacity as Creator of the universe He must necessarily have been the first, and He will also be the last in time, continuing in existence when all else has passed away.

(6) Justice and mercy are attributes which may not be separated according to the rabbis. They are constantly in conflict with each other. For as the arbiter of justice who holds His creatures to account for the manner of their living, God also needed to utilize His mercy in order to allow them to live. There is psychological sensitivity in this view. It recognizes that while man might be expected to live in a righteous way, man also falters. Man is incapable of observing absolute justice even though he tries. If man is to exist at all in a world of justice, then God must give man "credit for trying" even when he falls short of the mark.

(7) To the rabbis, the crowning attribute of God was His holiness. He was the source of the sacred in human experience. Holiness implied apartness from everything that defiles as well as actual perfection.

Holiness was the root of morality, justice, mercy. It was the most spiritual, the most illuminating of the attributes of God.

d. Moral "practitioners"

You may very well be saying to yourself: "This is all very well, but these are bold assertions - there is no proof for them." Let us remember that the rabbis were not metaphysicians - seeking the principles of being. They were practical teachers. The attributes of God were posited as a moral basis for human life in terms of the moral endowment of the universe. Certainly these attributes were not attempts by the rabbis to prove the existence of God nor were they meant to identify the nature of the Eternal as He really exists. Theirs was essentially a "personal" God in the sense that He was a reality to those who acknowledged Him.

"Mystery of Hiddenness"

(a) Seeking Communion with God.

An interesting but difficult attempt to overcome the tension between the transcendent, absolutely unique God of philosophy and the vital, real and dynamic God of religious experience was found in mysticism. Here,

there is a metaphysical distinction between God, the reality and God, the idea.

The mystics seek direct communion with God and yearn for intimate fellowship with Him. They reach out toward Him with the non-rational elements of the human personality: apprehension, intuition, surmise and intense love. In prayer, song, meditation and ecstasy, they give expression to the piety of their intense faith. In Judaism, mysticism has been known by the term Kabbalah.

(b) One God: two aspects.

In all periods, Kabbalah was influenced by foreign spiritual currents. Nevertheless, it always preserved a basic Hebrew character. Its doctrine tries to show two aspects of the Godhead: the infinite inaccessible "Mystery of Hiddenness" and the realm of Divine manifestation. One aspect of God they called EN-SOPH. This is the completely transcendent God which remains forever beyond the grasp of the human mind. The other aspect of God was the manifestation of the Divine to which all the attributes of God were ascribed and with whom man could find communion. This was called SEPHIROT which were the ten divine potencies which emanated from the EN-SOPH, the hidden God. By concentrating

on prayer and meditating on the SEPHIROT, the soul could commune with God. Elaborate schemes were developed to show how this process might occur. Its ultimate goal was always to seek direct and intimate communion with God. A Hebrew character Kabbalah may have had but it has usually been under attack from the main currents of Jewish thought.

(c) The mystical influence of mystics.

Something of mysticism has been found in all the stages of Jewish religious experience from Biblical times to the present day. Not every religion has a God, but virtually every religious group has been possessed of its mystics. The initial impulse of the Western man is to dismiss mysticism completely as "overworked fantasy" propounded by an amazing use of reason. The more obstacles in its path the more brilliant its efforts. It has been described as "the waterfall seeking the eternal sea." Nevertheless, if man has had desires to capture the universal, to feel his full being, to identify with all that is, and to seek the beyond - it is because of the mystic within him. It is the essence of music, poetry, art and love.

God: "Calling All Men!"

(a) Simple and Sophisticated views of God.

Ethical monotheism is the Jew's supreme affirmation of the beneficent forces of nature and the goodness of human life. While sharing the elements of the historic vision of God, each man arrives at a very personal vision. Some understand with great simplicity; others with considerable subtlety.

Religion has fostered some of the best in man, but there have also been rudiments of the worst. Some men have so preoccupied themselves in asceticism as to have lost all perspective and value of the real world. Some men have been obsessed by terrible fears of God. Others have been totally dependent and passive waiting for the "supreme superman," or "the divine magician" to answer at their calling and to provide "miracles." Where belief reduces man to a frightened and incapacitated person, where man is prevented from utilizing all his creative powers for living - then such belief is dangerous and should be discarded.

The views of God are many, as we have said. Such differences are quite compatible with Judaism. Nevertheless, many of us are intolerant of healthy views (as

distinguished from above) with which we do not agree. We call these people religiously naive and immature. Yet our own maturity is not enhanced by decrying those who believe differently. Rather our own religious maturity, in a large sense, comes about when we can have respect for the people whose views differ from our own - even if we do not accept their particular ideas. The supreme test of religious wisdom is right conduct and creative contribution to the world and to other men - not on the depth of intellectual conceptions. In the end man makes of the common God of Judaism his own God - unique, intimate, personal, private. It is therefore warm and compelling. But such views of God as there are have implications for a view of man.

(b) Creature of heaven and earth.

In the Jewish conception of man, he is both <u>body and soul</u> - physical and spiritual. One complements the other. The human body is a marvelous instrument, a product of God's handiwork. Yet, man is spiritually endowed. He thinks brave thoughts delving into the mysteries of the universe. He is self-conscious and self-critical. He creates and he beholds his creations.

He has the power of memory. Man cherishes values and ideals and loyalties for which he is willing to surrender life than compromise the vision. Man has within himself powers that lift him out of the merely naturalistic. A spark of the divine is within him. Insofar as man possesses the spiritual likeness of God, he has the capacity to imitate God in his moral yearnings. Body and soul are together and require each other. Asceticism is discouraged. Man, the complete physical - spiritual being, rational animal is God's partner in the ongoing creation of the universe.

(c) The controlling instincts of man.

Man is not only a spiritual creature, he is morally endowed. Like the existence of God, man's moral nature is assumed axiomatically. In every man is the instinct for good and the instinct for evil. Are these distinct and separate? If so, whence do they come? The rabbis did not make the delineation absolutely clear. However, at birth man is possessed of human instincts which clamor for satisfaction. His instincts are disorganized and chaotic. This seems to be the evil instinct or the prime desire - the one which causes man to "build a house, marry and beget children." The good instinct is

organized and gives man control over himself. It establishes his perspective and solidarity as a human being. It causes him to scale the ladder of human excellence to a point where he may act as a "child of God" in the fulfillment of God's moral purpose.

(d) A fundamental problem.

To the degree that man is guided by either the good or the evil instinct, he possesses complete freedom of the will. Man has the capacity to bring himself in line with the will of God. The entire moral life rests on this premise. This view has been one of the most knotty problems for Jewish philosophers as well as for thinkers everywhere. How does human freedom square with God's providence? What about the contradictory experiences of life which come from heredity and environment? The rabbis' comforting answer was that the frustrations, defeats and miscarriages of justice from our human point of view, are incidents in the constantly continuing process of creation, and ultimate fulfillment of God's will.

The medieval Jewish philosophers suggested different answers. Saadia argued that the omnipotent sovereignty of God does not exclude freedom. God's foreknowledge of coming events is not the cause of their happening. In

fact, the manifestation of divine providence is that man is endowed with the power of mind to choose the right path. Maimonides maintained that freedom was rooted in reason. Man is morally free because he is a rational creature; this is his distinguishing characteristic, separating him from all creatures. Judah Halevi suggests that if a man is an object of absolute necessity he will merely submit and not do anything about the hunger he feels or the enemy who threatens him. Halevi speculates that man's decision precedes God's knowledge and that free will is an intermediary cause which traces itself back to the First Cause. The cause, however, is not compulsion; there is a contingency permitting the mind to waver and choose between differing opinions. It is therefore worthy of reward or punishment because of its chance.

Hasdai Crescas was the only philosopher to limit man's freedom in order to preserve God's absolute sovereignty. God's foreknowledge is in a different time sense than man's, and all the future is to God as present knowledge. There is an open possibility for man to choose because what is essential is man's will, not the act, and in this, man's freedom is primary.

(e) Man's best hope.

Ultimately, the sanctity of the human personality is the way to glorify God - to imitate Him. The attributes of God are the standards of virtue for man. Against all philosophies of fate or doom, Judaism stands firmly and unitedly. The perfectibility of human nature is not a problem to Jewish thought. For the human creature there is the assurance that his effort to change is supported by the reality of the world and the promise of God. It may be said with justice that the strength of Judaism rests on its belief in a realistic hope for man. If we began this chapter with a certain view of the problem of the reality of God as understood by the ideas men have of Him, we conclude by pointing to the problem of the reality of man and the idea of his potential. The two problems are linked together. This is man's best hope.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Can contemporary man believe in a supernatural God?
2. What is distinctive about the Jewish idea of God?
3. Is it still possible to believe in God after Auschwitz?
4. What does the phrase "a little lower than the angels" convey about man's place in the universe?

5. Explain what the following statement means to you.
"If we wish to speak of a power that permeates the cosmos and turns the wheel of life, it is far more correct to speak of God's creative goodness."
(Kaufmann Kohler. Jewish Theology. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1918, p. 132)

6. Why is Judaism considered an optimistic faith?

7. How would you reply to the following statements?
   (a) "Man is the incommeasurable idiot of the universe."
   (b) "With his knowledge of good and evil, man is but a helpless atom."
   (c) "Man is a sick fly, taking a dizzy ride on a gigantic flywheel."
   (d) "I see no reason for attributing to man a significance different in kind from that which belongs to a baboon or a grain of sand."

CHAPTER IV

TORAH AND ISRAEL - RECEPTACLES OF FAITH

Testimony and Witness

In order to profess a theology and in order for God to be known, there are two requirements. First, there must be a body of people to hear the message. Secondly, there must be a means of receiving the communique. In Judaism, the body of people was Israel and the line of communication was relevation. But why speak in the past tense? Israel is still the people addressed; revelation is still the way we know the message. Israel was God's witness to God and His testimony. Essentially, one cannot be separated from the other for one implies the other. Together, they have constituted the receptacles of the Jewish faith throughout the ages. In modern times Reform Judaism has reworked its conceptions of Israel and revelation to a considerable degree. For

the sake of understanding them, it will be necessary to separate these two views as we see how they have been regarded in the past and by Reform Judaism.

A. TORAH

Torah is God's Revelation to Moses

The Bible deals largely with communication between God and man, especially God's communication to man of His will and His commandments. God is represented as speaking to Adam, Noah and the patriarchs, occasionally through a messenger - more often directly. God summons Moses to be the liberator of His people, and directs his actions. Even before the people come to Sinai, Moses begins to receive God's instructions for their conduct.

At Mount Sinai, the entire people of Israel heard a divine voice proclaim the Ten Commandments. Thereafter, a large body of legislation was given to Moses for the people. It includes what we now call civil, criminal, and domestic law, as well as ethical injunctions and extensive ceremonial prescriptions. It offers a conception of the Jewish people as a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation," through whom all the families of the earth are blessed.

Torah is God Talking to Prophets

The general name in Hebrew for revelation of the divine will is Torah. It is the vehicle for transmitting an understanding of what God desires of us. It is a communication of what we ought to do. Torah is often translated by the word "Law." While this is not incorrect, it is inadequate. Torah includes law, but its basic meaning is divine guidance, direction and instruction for human living. Therefore, while the Five Books of Moses are referred to as the Torah, we must consider this term to have much wider application.

Moses is considered to have been the most supreme prophet ever. However, he was not the only prophet. Basically, the prophet was God's spokesman, he represented God's words to the group. He knew God's words as a result of visionary experiences of God's presence wherein they heard His voice. While Moses received the Torah and revealed it to the people, other prophets were also to receive special messages as well. Such were the efforts of men like Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Micah and the other prophets.

Torah is More than Bible

As time progressed, there was a need for interpreting this legal document as it had to meet new cases and circumstances. In addition, there were many widely accepted legal and religious procedures which the Bible had not mentioned. These popular traditions, together with the continuing interpretations of the earlier Written Torah, grew into a body of teaching called the Oral Torah.

It took time for the Oral Torah to gain the status of the Written Torah. However, in time, the Oral Torah was accepted to the point that it was declared to have been revealed to Moses at the same time as he had received the written document. By word of mouth, it had been transmitted from generation to generation. Since the Oral Torah had revealed the correct interpretation and application of the other Torah - it had a higher degree of authority. In time, the oral tradition was organized and also written down.

Direct Revelation Complete for Orthodox Jews

Direct prophetic inspiration, according to the rabbis, ended with the last prophets Haggai, Zechariah and

Malachi. Nothing new was needed or admissable. It was now sufficient that the sages study, interpret and apply what had already been revealed to us. No doubt, this view was partly emphasized because of the new Christian movement, which claimed to possess a new and more perfect revelation replacing the Torah at Sinai. Today, Orthodox Jews hold that the Torah is divine in origin and content. It is so in both the written and oral exposition, as embodied in the literature of the Talmud and later legal codes. Since the Torah is divine in origin, it possesses divine authority.

Two Avenues to Truth

According to the Bible and the rabbis, man comes to come to truth in two ways: one by virtue of his reason which is a gift of God and which man utilizes actively; the other is divine revelation, the supreme gift of God requiring no human effort. These two types of knowing were not always in agreement yet they tended to be used for supporting one another. The Biblical writers often appealed to the human intelligence by appealing to logic and experience. By the same token, the rabbis expounded

Scripture and debated legal questions by precisely formulated logical methods. However, it was never shown whether these two companions - revelation and reason - were related. There were two safety valves. If revelation appeared to conflict with reason, the Torah was the accepted view. Also, certain difficult questions like those concerning the Creation of the world and the manner of Elijah's ascent into heaven were considered to be beyond the realm of human competence. Therefore, speculation about them was prohibited.

What did the Jewish Philosophers say?

(a) Philo

Living in Alexandria during the first Christian century, Philo was widely read in Greek philosophy. As a devout Jew he was convinced that whatever was sound and true in Greek thought was no more than an elaboration of the teachings of Moses. In the Torah, Philo envisioned the embodiment of those universal religious and ethical principles which all men can discover by rational inquiry. Where the Bible discussed rituals and "myths," Philo offered allegorical and symbolic

explanations. Nevertheless, Philo claimed that these depictions were to be understood literally as well.

(b) Saadia

Saadia, living in Babylonia during the ninth and tenth centuries, declared that the Torah was completely rational. God, who is the Source of truth and wisdom, could never have taught anything which contradicted the laws of truth and reason. If we had wanted, we could have learned all the principles of the Torah by rational inquiry alone. But we would have found our task virtually impossible. Since logical structure is cumulative, any mistake we would have made would have destroyed all subsequent inferences. Moreover, only a few could ever achieve such a feat at best. Therefore, God revealed His truth and Law so that everyone might know the right way with certainty. For the ordinary man, it is direction. For the philosopher, it is the "master answer-machine" against which he can check his reasoning. For Saadia, reason and revelation were an equation.

(c) Maimonides

He tried to give a rational explanation of all the commandments and, at the same time, he tried to describe how revelation came about. The result was that

he confessed that God's purposes could only be understood in part. Maimonides conceived of the prophet as the "thinker par excellence." Therefore, man should strive to become like the prophet. The prequisites for this were only if man could perfect himself in the moral and intellectual disciplines, and if divine grace so willed it. In the final analysis, this great rationalist was forced to concede that there were limitations to reason.

(d) Judah Halevi

Halevi found it necessary to challenge reason primarily on two counts. First, speculative philosophy is always uncertain. Its usefulness is as an instrument of criticism so that we will not draw illogical inferences from Scripture. Furthermore, who could deny the actual experience of six hundred thousand persons who stood at Sinai and witnessed the revelation by hearing the divine voice? Who could deny the unbroken chain of tradition from that time to the present? Halevi liked utilizing reason but was not committed to making it the measure of all things.

(e) Karaism

In eighth century Babylonia and Persia, a sect appeared which completely rejected the Oral Torah and

authority of the rabbis. They called for a return to the uncorrupted truth of the Bible. The Karaites felt that the simple provisions of the Biblical Law had been made very complicated by the rabbis. Furthermore, the Talmudic masters often departed from the plain sense of the Biblical text. These views were not based on philosophical speculations. This group was primarily reactionary. Its movement did activate a new interest in Biblical studies and stirred up piety.

In examining the above views on the conflict between reason and revelation, there are attempts to hold on to both. But the task is extremely difficult. Reason stares you in the eyes one minute and God's revealed word confronts you the next.

Revolution Over Revelation - The Modern Period

(a) New discoveries

Several events occurred from the sixteenth up to the twentieth century which severely challenged the concept of what many called (and still call) the "essence" of Jewish theology - the Bible as revelation.

First, natural science gained prominence in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. The notion of the

world was conceived to be operating impersonally according to a law that can be formulated in mathematical terms. Contrasted to this view was the religious belief in the Biblical God who had wondrously revealed His commandments and singled out certain individuals and peoples for His service.

Formerly, ancient science had asserted this law. The early rationalists had countered attacks on the Bible by giving allegorical or symbolic meaning to statements in Scripture which appeared to conflict with reason. With the new developments in literary and historical criticism as well as in comparative religion, the old methods of solving the problems of Scripture could no longer be employed. It was discovered that the teachings of Jewish and Christian Scriptures had parallels in other literatures and that some doctrines had even preceded Biblical ones in time. There were even parallel rituals to the ones of the Torah.

(b) Changing conception of Bible

If we approach the Scriptural text without the prior assumption that the manuscripts are absolutely accurate and the documents divinely authoritative, a new conception of Bible emerges. According to higher

criticism the Torah text as we now have it is a composite of several documents done by diverse authors and put together by either an unknown editor or editors. The stories of Creation and the Flood as well as a number of laws and rituals had parallels in other earlier codes. These new discoveries did not serve necessarily to discredit the Bible. Instead scholars have been able to show that most of the Biblical records and histories are highly reliable and accurate. At the same time, there are certain passages which are regarded as mythical and legendary. The uniqueness of the Bible as a deposit of ethical monotheism is still acclaimed. Special emphasis was placed upon prophets as having marked one of liveliest peaks in the spiritual history of mankind.

(c) "Progressive Revelation"

Those who cannot in good conscience set limits to free inquiry, who cannot maintain an initial assumption that the Biblical documents are supernatural in origin and who accept the methods of historical criticism as valid, have been forced to change their concept of revelation.

During the nineteenth century, the teachers of Reform Judaism proclaimed the doctrine of "progressive

revelation." This view held that the result of divine illumination and guidance was man's constantly unfolding knowledge of the universe. In the gradual discovery by all men of what is right and true, God reveals Himself, His truth and His will. It is an experience that is shared by philosophers, scientists, poets, moralists, social reformers as well as by men of religion. Man's intellectual and moral striving together with God's grace lead to a partnership which reveals what is best in life.

Until this time, the character of revelation had been stamped with complete and final authority. Man had been the passive recipient of revelation. The whole of revelation had been the handiwork of the Almighty. Now men are considered to be involved actively in the process. The divine radiance is always mingled with earthly elements. Because ideas are conditioned by the limitations of the human mind and by the intellectual and cultural patterns of a specific time and place - no truth we obtain can claim <u>absolute</u> purity, perfection and finality. Our knowledge is incomplete. We need to keep on learning.

The Hebrew Scriptures should be judged on the basis of their ethical and religious grandeur insofar

as they may be relevant to modern life and not because of their having supernatural origin. Let the sacred books of Judaism be evaluated on the basis of the incalculable influence they have had on the world through Christianity and Islam which are deeply rooted in Hebrew sources. Who can deny the influence of the prophets in the adoption of moral attitudes? Even humanists, who claim to be secular, have been so motivated. Conceived in terms of these realities, the Bible appears pre-eminently as the word of God. No longer need we be troubled because of some historical and scientific errors in the Bible nor its legendary and mythological elements. Indeed, we notice progress in the spiritual advancement within the "testimony" itself.

A Supreme Diary

When you keep a diary, you usually write down a record of your experiences, some of your reactions to them and, very frequently, your hopes and aspirations for the future. But you do more than just express yourself in words. You read what you write in the present. You go back over it later. In so doing, you learn a lot about yourself - what you have been like in the past,

what you had hoped to become, and what in fact you are now.

The Torah is in many respects a supreme diary. It is a record of our historical events and ceremonies. It relates the reactions of our people to them. It voices our hopes and aspirations for the future in moral and ethical terms. Studying our diary is a compelling experience. It reminds us of what we have been and what we wanted to become. It forces us to realize where we stand in the adventure. Such an encounter is sobering and humbling, yet inspirational and uplifting.

B. ISRAEL

The primary conception in the Bible, in the Talmud, and in later authoritative literature is that Israel is a religious community having historic, psychological and sacred ties. Basic to the concept of Israel are three major ideas: Election, Covenant and Mission.

The "Election" of Israel

Few of Judaism's teachings have been so misunderstood as the concept of the "chosen people." Many non-Jews have argued that it represents a Jewish claim to racial superiority.

(a) "Merit of the Fathers"

According to Jewish tradition, the Jewish people is not merely one of many peoples; it was selected by God as His peculiar treasure. Israel's place and role in the world are part of a divine plan which manifested itself first in the early days of the world's existence. This occurred when the Creator of the Universe bestowed His blessings upon the patriarchs as reward for their faithfulness and love. At that time, God promised them that their children and all future generations would continue to receive His blessings because of "the merits of their fathers."

(b) Merit of the people or an act of grace?

Centuries later, God revealed Himself anew at Sinai when He made His will known to the entire Jewish people. In the Torah, Israel is revealed as the instrument which God chose to reveal His will to the world. Why should God have chosen Israel? There are two different answers. First, since the Jews were the first ones to proclaim God as the Supreme King, they merited election because of its special service. They were the only ones who were willing to accept the Torah when all other

nations refused. Such special faithfulness merits special relationship with God. The other view for Israel's election was based on an act of grace. It was not because of merit. The Jews were selected by God for reasons of His own.

(c) Special calling - not exclusiveness

Even though the Jews claimed a monopoly of God's revelation, they never claimed to be superior to the rest of mankind by reason of birth, blood or race. Anyone can become a Jew by embracing Judaism. Indeed, were not some of the great rabbis converts to Judaism? Further, Judaism acknowledged that salvation was not dependent upon being Jewish. All human beings are God's children and have an equal claim upon His care and solicitude. The ultimate divine test of a man's worth rested not on his theology, not on his descent - but on the way he conducted his life.

(d) Special purpose

The concept of "Election" designates that man should not be content simply to exist; he must live for something. Through "Election" the Jew becomes conscious and articulate about what he conceives to be his task

and role. "Election" is the living certainty of a special truth possessed by a religious community to be addressed to all of mankind.

The Concept of "Covenant"

(a) A partnership

An agreement was made between God and Israel by which Israel accepted the Torah. This contract was bilateral. If God chose Israel, Israel in turn, chose God.

The "Covenant" signified the consciousness as to the nature of the truth Israel possessed by "Election." The "Covenant" is Torah. It is the acceptance and affirmation of God's design for man's life - what man must do to make His truth alive? It is man's response to the voice that calls; it is the acceptance of the obligation inherent in election.

(b) Kinds of "covenant"

While the concept of covenant has a number of connotations in Jewish tradition, it gains its highest development as seen through the people Israel. God had made a covenant with mankind through Noah never again to destroy the world. In turn, man would keep the fundamental moral laws. There had been a covenant made

with Abraham. God would bless Abraham and his descendents and multiply their seed if Abraham would train his descendents to keep the ways of the Lord. With Hosea, the covenant was defined as an act of love between God and Israel.

(c) "A land to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation"

The basic covenant relationship was seen as follows. God had promised Israel's forefathers a certain land. He had liberated the people from Egyptian bondage and guided them through the perils of the wilderness until they reached that land. He had given it to the people in fulfillment of His part of the covenant. However, maintaining possession of it depended on Israel's faithfulness in keeping its part of the contract. What must Israel do? She must become "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." Thus, through the concept of convenant, we see that "Election" is not a divine favor granting perogatives - it is an ethical charge, a divine mandate for duties. People who are ignorant of God and His will may be forgiven impiety and sin. But Jews cannot be forgiven so easily - she has a special commitment to God. Failure to live up to the ideal will be punished.

(a) Suffering as part of the covenant

It was in terms of this covenant relationship that the historical experiences of the Jew were defined. The Jew lost the land, became an exile and experienced suffering as punishment for violating the covenant. Thus, the prophets had been able to envision such disaster because it was the formula of the divine plan. But if God loved His people, why should he treat them this way? Disaster was seen as the particular sign of God's love - it was the clarion call to "please return!" to His ways. It was a call to duty.

By accepting the punishment, the gate to redemption was opened and this would lead ultimately to a return to the land. Such suffering, in fact, might be necessary as a way of paying loyalty to ideals in an unredeemed world. The striking feature of this view was that the Jew remained loyal to God in the face of disaster. It was not only a judgment on himself for which the Jew suffered, but it was a judgment on the world. Evil was still rampant, God's community of peace and love were still unrealized and would continue to be so long as man rejected God. Suffering was not necessarily evidence of rejection by God, but chastisement. Nor were the apparent riches and successes of the powerful and the

mighty to be equated with righteousness. Their punishment would also come in history. But they were not bound by a covenant. Israel was! Only Israel's unbroken love for God together with the fulfillment of the Jew's responsibilities under the agreement could lead to redeeming man and the social order. Suffering was a reminder that man's work was not completed - the never-ending task to do God's will.

The Mission of Israel

(a) Being on the job

Having conceived of the one God for one mankind, Israel had as its mission to be the bearer and guardian of this truth until it be accepted by all the nations of the earth. This is a projection of perfection in the future - the achievement of ethical monotheism in history. If Election was Israel's appointment by God and if Covenant is Israel's response to God; then Mission is actual living engagement in the task at hand. The end of this task was described in the concept of the Messiah. This concept was realized in two different ways in Jewish tradition - as man and as time.

(b) The Personal Messiah

The burden of the covenant was heavy in history. In ancient times, Israel had suffered initially with the loss of national independence. It was natural that a people with such a past and present would long for a future in which there would be an end to suffering. There would be a political redeemer who would unite the people and establish a strong nation able to withstand its enemies. David represented the prototype of the ideal Jewish king, the great national hero and redeemer as a result of his achievements in establishing a state of national glory. Therefore, the people conceived of a Messiah in terms of a national ideal in a David-like person. He would bring relief from oppression, end the nation's disunity and insecurity, and establish a stable national government.

The Messiah is not only a political liberator. He symbolizes the spiritual values and religious ideals to which the people of God should be dedicated. He is the perfect ruler who will establish a stable government based on righteousness and justice.

Such a view of the Messiah was particularistic.

Israel's God created mankind and the world. He demands righteousness from all. How could one universal God be merely the God of one people, Israel? The moral code of Israel was not limited to Israel. Righteousness and the eradication of evil was to take place wherever men lived. Moral law is universal law and God's demands are directed toward all men. If there is one God, one mankind, one truth, one justice and one religion to which all men are summoned, it cannot find its historic fulfillment until all men are united in it.

(c) The Messianic Age

Instead of an individual, personal Messiah of the house of David, who would become king and establish a reign of righteousness and peace for Zion, a new concept of Messiah was born. Deutero-Isaiah, Micah and other prophets spoke of a new life which was to arise upon earth. These would be the "days of the Messiah" in which universal peace and brotherhood will be established and all mankind will be united in the service of one God. This is called the Messianic Age. It is the mission of Israel to work for its realization. Israel's suffering is the symbol of protest against oppression, injustice, idolatry, darkness and evil.

It is the supreme effort to establish the new age. When that time comes, Israel's trials will be rewarded and Israel will be vindicated. "The Lord shall be king over all the earth, when the Lord shall be one and His name be one."
(Zechariah 14:9).

(d) What does the Messianic Age mean?

Certain implications derive out of Israel's conception of the Messianic Age.

(1) The concept of a universal God is inseparably associated with the concept of a universal religion. Does this mean universal religion in an ultimate sense - as the central kernel which all religions have in common? Or does this mean that Judaism must ultimately become the religion of all men? On these questions, there are a wide range of views. Judaism today generally acknowledges the validity and the necessity of other religions such as Christianity and Islam as products of its own efforts. Reform Judaism, particularly, seems committed to religious pluralism. At the same time, great achievements have been wrought through different religions working together - especially in the field of social action.

We leave it as a problem for you to answer.

(2) The Messianic Age requires the efforts of men. It will not come solely through the grace of God. It will have to be merited and earned by man.

(3) The Messianic Age is a historic task and possibility in this world - not of a world-to-come.

(4) The Messianic Age implies that man is a subject of history, capable of shaping and creating his own future. He is not a mere object of blind fate. The future need not be what will be, but is that which should be. There is a purpose and goal to man's efforts.

Israel as State and People

Much has been written about the concept of Israel as a peoplehood - sharing the religion of their fathers as well as the wide variety of folk customs which were accumulated through the years of history.

(a) National Memory

When the Jews left the land to go into exile, they took with them many of their national memories, national customs, national holidays and its historic language. For the most part, the Jews had religious autonomy in the countries of the diaspora. As such,

many of the national memories were translated into religious terms. The memory of an ancestral land became part of messianism. National holidays became religious holidays.

(b) Ancestry and Kinship

In their "wanderings," the Jew acquired a great sense of kinship with his fellow Jews out of his religious ideals of faith. The basic qualification for "being Jewish" was based, and is to this day, upon common descent. However, this did not imply that it was the only qualification nor did it have special status. Conversion to Judaism is an ancient and honored institution. The combination of kinship and common ancestry also became aspects of faith.

Ancestry, kinship and national origins combined with religious ideals developed the real meaning of the Jewish People as a religious community.

(c) Is the State religious?

In time, in response to the miserable social and political "terrors" faced in Eastern Europe by the Jew, it was felt that their future preservation and development required a return to the actual land. For

some, it became a hope of pure nationalism. The previously acquired religious overtones were dropped. Thus was born the Zionist movement. Among the various Zionist's conceptions, Israel, the State, has either nad religious connotations or been completely devoid of such religious aspirations.

At first, both the extreme separatist Jews and the extreme universalistic Reform Jews refused all sympathy with the Zionist movement. These religionists were committed as Jews to religious purposes and not nationalistic ideals. The Zionists maintained that the religion was basic to Jewry but it was only one factor in the life of Jewry. Religion and nationality were intermingled.

The tragedy experienced by the Jews under Nazism made the extreme religionists modify their point of view. Orthodoxy maintained that there should be a state with a religious basis. Reform offered sympathy with the Zionist enterprise but denied that nationalism was compatible with modern liberal religion. Today, with the State of Israel having been established, the argument continues: Does one have to live in Israel to

be religious? Should the State devote itself to religious aims? Pure examination of the existential situation reveals that the majority of Israeli's are not religious whereas religious Judaism flourishes in the diaspora. By contrast, Jewish culture thrives in Israel while it is almost lost outside of Israel. We leave it to the peculiar genius of the Jewish character for survival to answer the questions we have posed above.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. To what extent are reason and revelation compatible? To what extent incompatible?
2. What are the ways of defining Torah?
3. Is the Bible needed today for an encounter between God and man?
4. What is the appeal of "progressive revelation?" Where does it fall short?
5. How do you interpret the phrase, "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation?" Did this description fit Jews in the past? Does it fit today?

6. Is there a distinction of significance in the idea of a personal Messiah and the Messianic era?

7. What lacks in the Jewish content of Israeli life might be cited? In the American Jewish community?

8. Can you visualize a "dialogue" between the Jews of America and Israel? What issues would have to be included?

Books You Ought to Read

Bernard Bamberger. The Story of Judaism. New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1957.

The Rev. Dr. A. Cohen. Everyman's Talmud. New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1949.

Milton Steinberg. Basic Judaism. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1947.

THREE MODERN JEWISH THINKERS

Introduction

In the last section, we examined the development of basic Jewish ideas as reflected in the course of history. We noted the foundation of these ideas in the Bible, in rabbinic literature and in the rationale of the medieval Jewish philosophers.

An idea does not live in a vacuum. Rather its residence is in the mind - a mind which responds to everything it beholds and a mind which constantly examines its contents. This mind is always a person's particular mind. The historical situation of the Jew, the contemporary thought of the age, the amount of study and reflection one undergoes - all these have an important bearing upon the development of an idea in one's thoughts and attitudes. This has been true in all the traditional academic disciplines.

Reform Judaism did not just happen as a stage in the development of Judaism. It grew out of the deepest responses by certain Jews to their total life situation. It involved not only a critical examination of the past, but such ideas were reactions of the present moment as well. It was born in an age of gradual Jewish emancipation. It was a reaction to political, economic, and

scientific changes. It attempted to grapple with the current streams of thought. Yet, it was always a part of personal striving.

The concepts of God, Torah and Israel are universal and eternal in scope because they always point in the direction of the universal and eternal. However, their value lies in our being capable of rooting these concepts at a specific time and place and in particular ways. In this latter case, such concepts become varied and changing. To a large degree, this depends upon the particular mind and personality of a thinker. Even the most philosophical ideas are never totally detached from the subjective scrutiny of anyone. It is important to understand this in order to gain perspective of not only how people think but about what they think as well.

We have selected three Jewish thinkers who have had a great influence upon contemporary liberal thought. Each one is richly endowed with an understanding of the Jewish past in his religious quest. Each is skilled in an awareness of the different ways of reasoning and knowing. Each one's experiences, however, has been extremely unique unto himself. All of them represent a vibrant approach to Jewish life to which these are committed.

CHAPTER V

KAUFMANN KOHLER: REFORM JUDAISM

Background

Kaufmann Kohler was born in Fuerth, Bavaria in 1843. The product of a traditional orthodox upbringing, he studied for a time under Samson Raphael Hirsch who was the leading exponent of Orthodox Judaism in Germany. It was at the University of Munich and later at Berlin that Kohler went through a period of inner doubt and spiritual confusion until he finally arrived at a historical evolutionary approach to the Bible. As a result, he became quite radical in his attitude toward traditional rituals and the use of Hebrew and vehement in his opposition to political Zionism. Having antagonized some of his former teachers, he hindered his rabbinic career. Therefore, he decided to emigrate to America.

Kohler arrived in the United States in 1869 and immediately befriended Rabbi David Einhorn, a leading spokesman for Reform Judaism. The following year Kohler married Einhorn's daughter. He served congregations in Detroit and Chicago as a rabbi before succeeding Einhorn at Temple Beth El in New York in 1879. It was not long before he emerged as chief spokesman for Reform Judaism in the United States. In fact, he was the guiding spirit in drafting the "Pittsburgh Platform," Reform Judaism's first declaration of principles, in November, 1885.

In 1903, at the age of sixty, Kohler was elected president of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. He introduced a series of new courses and raised the academic standards of the institution which became the recognized center of Reform Judaism. In addition, he helped to launch the Jewish Encyclopedia and wrote a number of its major articles. He was a member of the Board of Editors which prepared the new translation of the Holy Scriptures for the Jewish Publication Society. His most important work is entitled Jewish Theology, Systematically and Historically Considered.

Influences on Kohler

(a) Darwin and Hegel

Kaufmann Kohler was born into an age of significant developments in philosophy and science. The nineteenth century had changed the image of the world significantly under the influence of Darwin.

Such was the influence of these two men Darwin and Hegel that whole concepts of truth, history, man's genesis, and reasoning became significantly altered. Kohler was similarly affected.

(b) Samson Raphael Hirsch

Initially, Kohler had been under the influence of Samson Raphael Hirsch's neo-Orthodoxy. He had respected Hirsch's universalism, optimism, and conception of Judaism as "a religion of joy, of hope, of faith in humanity and humanity's future." During his studies in Berlin, Kohler came under the influences of many streams of modern thought which caused him to have considerable doubts and scruples but he never became a skeptic. He threw himself into his Biblical, philosophical, and historical studies at the university.

(c) Hermann Steinthal

He came under the influence of Hermann Steinthal

whose mythological and ethnological ideas strongly affected Kohler, for they dissolved the life and the law of Moses, the Bible, and theology into myth and fable. Existing Reform pioneers did not satisfy him because he did not feel their efforts to make the synagogue more aesthetic in appearance and function could keep the entire structure of Jewish life from faltering.

(d) Abraham Geiger

The one man in whom Kohler found some encouragement was Abraham Geiger. Geiger had been the one to give Reform Judaism its scientific basis. He had been strongly influenced by the great figures of German philosophy: Kant and Hegel, Fichte and Schleiermacher. These philosophers had developed elaborate and difficult conceptions of man, history, process and morality. Geiger, as well as other Jewish thinkers of the period, applied these ideas to Judaism.

(e) The Prophets

Kohler was attracted by the rationalism of German "idealistic" thought and the experiments of the early Reformers. However, he argued in opposition to the apathy in some circles and the materialistic

nihilism of others that religion is not something that can be displaced by philosophical or ethical abstractions. He felt that religion "must try to adopt the forms in which it can best serve the struggle of the age toward truth and ethical freedom, and thus connect the traditions of the past with the ideals of the future." These ideals he identified with the prophetic dream of a future when men would be united by a love of peace and truth and would regard one another with love as children of one God.

He felt that prophetic religion must be presented as the product of history. By gradually reshaping the legal institutions and historical traditions, prophetism raised the ancestral religion to a higher level. "For the Alpha and the Omega of Judaism," wrote Kohler, "is not the Law, but the eternal moral idea." Kohler found the initial answer to his own anxieties and those of his age by viewing religion as an ethical discipline. Applying the principle of historical development to the Pentateuch itself, he found the key to the solution of the conflict between religion and science and the promise of a sounder and more satisfying religious life.

(f) New Sciences

Kohler's preaching and teaching were devoted to showing the positive relation of science and philosophy to religion in general and to Judaism in particular. He espoused the doctrine of evolution, which Darwin had demonstrated in the realm of biology, as the key to open the secrets of the spiritual world. With the aid of biblical criticism and the sciences of comparative religion and folklore, he unfolded the uninterrupted growth of Judaism, its independence of particular rites and ceremonies, in which it is embodied at any period of time, and its place among the religions of the world. Placing the Bible among the sacred books of other religions, he tried to show its true character as the great treasure of the spiritual life, uniting religion with morality.

(g) Samuel Holdheim

If Kohler was influenced in his theoretical speculations by Geiger, he was inspired by Samuel Holdheim in terms of practices. Holdheim had discarded all ceremonial laws as obsolete outside of Palestine and no longer obligatory in an age of Jewish naturalization among the nations of the world. This was done

as an affirmation of what was conceived to be "Israel's Messianic Mission to mankind." His ideas and his practices, taken together, made him a member of those who were called "radical Reform."

(h) Conservative Judaism

In May, 1885, a famous Talmudic lexicographer, Alexander Kohut, was appointed as rabbi to a Reform congregation in New York. He defined his religious position as "Mosaico-rabbinical Judaism" freshened with the spirit of progress. At the same time, he used the opportunity to attack the "radical Reformers" and read them out of Judaism. Kohler took up the challenge and levelled a strong attack on Orthodoxy. A battle ensued between the Conservatives and the Reformers.

It was in response to this that Kohler issued a call to the Reform rabbis of the country to meet in conference to discuss "the present state of American Judaism." Nineteen rabbis responded and met in November, 1885, in Pittsburgh, under the presidency of Rabbi Isaac M. Wise. Out of that meeting came a platform under Kohler's influence which called forth great protest from the Orthodox and Conservative groups. There were even many Reformers who thought it too

radical. As a result, it was not officially adopted by the Central Conference of American Rabbis when it convened at its first meeting in 1889. Fifty years later, that same body re-evaluated the platform and adopted its principles officially as the "Guiding Principles of Reform Judaism."

"Jewish Theology"

(a) Jewish Theology compared with philosophy and Christian theology.

Kohler distinguished between theology and philosophy. Theology begins with the premises and data of the specific religion, its "positive beliefs in divine revelation and in the continued working of the divine spirit." On the other hand, philosophy, while covering the same ground, submits the contents of religion in general to an impartial investigation, and recognizes no divine revelation nor the superior claims of any one religion above any other. Philosophy's concern is to see "how far the universal laws of human reason agree or disagree with the assertions of faith."

An important difference between Jewish and Christian theology is the fact that the latter rests on

a creed of faith, formulated by the founders of the Church as conditions of Salvation. Judaism knows no "salvation by faith." Its articles of faith were adopted voluntarily "as expressions of religious consciousness both without external compulsion and without doing violence to the disctates of reason."

(b) Religion and race: Twofold nature of Judaism.

"Judaism is nothing less than a message concerning the One and holy God and one undivided humanity with a world uniting messianic goal, a message entrusted by divine revelation to the Jewish people." It is twofold in that Judaism represents "a universal religious truth and at the same time a mission entrusted to a specially selected nation or race." These two apparently opposing forces - the separateness of the Jewish people and the universalism which reaches out of that group to the whole of humanity - combine into a perfect unity.

Judaism has manifested a wondrous ability to meet the demands of the time, initially under the influence of ancient Semitic civilizations and ultimately with contemporary powers. It was never fixed and closed for all time, but it molded its beliefs and customs

into ever new forms "but in consonance with its own genius."

Judaism's character is corporate and has its expression as the religion of the people. It is not the creation of a single person, prophet or man with a divine claim. As the religion of the people, it has kept in touch with life and does not condemn this earthly life as evil, but asserts its ethical faith in the ultimate triumph of good, truth and justice over the powers of evil, falsehood and wrong.

(c) "The Essence of God"

Kohler reacted negatively to philosophy in his treatment of God. "Where God is felt as a living power," he insisted, "all philosophical arguments about His existence seem to be strange fires on the altar of religion. The believer can do without them, and the unbeliever will hardly be convinced by them." Rather Kohler follows the medieval theologian, Judah Halevi, for making "the historical fact of the divine revelation the foundation of the Jewish religion and the chief testimony of the existence of God." God, as a mere abstraction, does not satisfy "the emotional craving of the heart." It is divine revelation, the basis of

religion, "which can teach man to find God, to whom he can appeal and he can trust in moments of woe, and whose will he can see in the dictates of conscience and the destinies of nature." Does reason have any function? Yes. Reason serves as a "corrective for the contents of revelation, scrutinizing ever anew the truths received through intuition." However, reason does not serve as the final source for truth.

How do we know God's existence? With this question, Kohler abandons Halevi and adopts the moral God of Kant. "God is a postulate of men's moral consciousness. The inner consciousness of our moral obligation, or duty, implies a moral order of life, or moral law; and this in turn, postulates the existence of God, The Ruler of life, who assigns to each of us his task of destiny."

God, to Kohler, rules over all as one completely self-conscious Mind and Will. God's absolutely free personality, moral and spiritual, allots to everything into existence, form and purpose. This is His manifestation in both the visible and invisible realms. In the words of Scripture, He is "the living God and the everlasting King."

Kohler is constantly in inner conflict. At one point, he is the romantic, warmhearted pious believer; at the next point, he becomes the rational, radical critic. Kohler exemplifies for us a problem which anyone who considers theology thoughtfully must consider - the dilemma of how to see God universally and particularly at the same time. Usually, a universal description is more reasonable, more abstract and more distant. The particular image of God, on the other hand, is likely to be imaginative, lively and very near to the person. If God is to be a moral force who exercises His moral influence on mankind, a relationship with Him would seem to have to be intimate, and therefore, less universal and abstract. If our relationship to Him is to be healthy, productive, reasonable and critical; then, our perspective must be cautious in viewing Him as particularly close to us.

Both philosophy and religion struggle with this problem. Where the former seems to have its genesis more frequently in experience and its goal in universal truths, the latter usually asserts universal truths and tries to inculcate them in the experience of man. While we act for the moment, we act also for

the future although we may not be aware of it. By the same token, as we try to plan the future, there are important implications for us right now. This problem lies at the root of every moral decision and in every attempt either to affirm belief in God or to deny belief in Him altogether. Earlier, in discussing knowledge, we found that this was part of the problem of certainty. It faces us every day in our work, in our personal relationships, in our laws and in our family living. We are constantly swinging back and forth on the pendulum between these two poles. Our attempt, though difficult, is to find equilibrium.

(d) What makes God "my partner?"

The soul of Judaism is ethics. God's kingdom for which the Jew prays rests in a "complete moral order on earth, the reign of truth, righteousness and holiness among all men and all nations." Jewish ethics derive from God and strive to hallow all of life, individual and social. This view of Kohler's is close to the Rabbinic view that "Man is a co-worker of God in the work of creation. Kohler makes moral striving rest on the conviction that man, with his finite ends, is linked to the infinite God with His infinite ends."

(e) "Escalators" between God and man

The gap between God and man is bridged by two escalators - the "down" escalator is revelation and the "up" one is prayer.

Kohler conceives of revelation as composed of naturalistic and supernaturalistic elements with an element of mystery underlying the phenomenon. It is the flash of religious genius which gives energy to all the forces of the age and sets them in motion to burst forth into a new religious consciousness. The flash of genius is manifested in the select individual or nation and brings them into contact with the divine. The appearance of the divine upon the background of the prophetic soul is revelation. It is not in his ability to receive a revelation that characterizes the prophet but rather the intrinsic nature of the revelation which he receives.

> "His vision comes from a moral God. The form expressed by Abraham, Moses, Elijah, or by the literary prophets... In speaking through them, God appeared actually to have stepped into the sphere of human life as its moral ruler. This self-revelation of God as the Ruler of man is righteousness, which must be viewed in the life of a prophet as a

> providential act, forms the great sequence in the history of Israel, upon which rests the Jewish religion."
>
> (Kaufmann Kohler. Jewish Theology. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1928, pp. 35-36.)

While prophecy in the Bible is associated with dreams and visions, it is not the imagery but the divine truth itself which seized the prophet with irresistible force, "so that he is carried away by the divine power and speaks as the mouthpiece of God, using lofty poetic diction while in a state of ecstasy. He speaks of God in the first person. The highest stage of all is that where the prophet receives the divine truth in the form of pure thought and with complete self-consciousness." Thus, revelation and prophecy are reduced to reason in much the same way as Moses Maimonides, the medieval scholar, had conceived them. But revelation and prophecy are not limited to the Bible. The Jewish people was predestined to be the people of revelation and to become a nation of prophets and priests throughout history.

The "up" escalator, we referred to as prayer. Kohler says that prayer is the communion of the human soul and the creator, the expression of man's longing

and yearning for God in times of dire need and of overflowing joy, an outflow of the emotions of man in his dependence upon the eternal source of his being. Nevertheless, modern thought rules out the possible influence of finite man upon the infinite God by means of any words which he may utter. "Prayer can exert power only over the relation of man to God, not over God Himself."

(f) God's word and His people

The Bible has served as the source of instruction concerning God and the world. Through new methods of interpretation, it has grown even richer as a fountain of religious and ethical knowledge. In this sense, it is the repository of divine revelation to Israel. Kohler found the true genius of Judaism in the doctrinal side of the Torah, which impresses ethical and human idealism upon people, lifting them far above the narrow confines of nationality, and making them a nation of thinkers.

Such a heritage of truth must be preserved till it becomes the light of the world. This is the task of the Jew, this is why Jews should continue to maintain a separateness. Traditional Judaism had taught that a Davidic Messiah would come and return the

Jewish People to the Holy Land. Now, according to Kohler, it is through their dispersion that the Jews are able to give witness to God and ultimately win the entire Gentile world to the recognition of God as the Father of all men and to the establishment of His kingdom of universal justice and truth, the Messianic Age.

(g) Forms of religious expression

The maintenance of religion for Kohler does not rest upon its doctrines because these are constantly changing. What is important for its stability are the forms and institutions which have stamped Judaism with its peculiar character and which express symbolically or otherwise, definite ideas, religious, ethical and historical. The synagogue and its institutions of worship, study, and benevolence, the Sabbath and the holy days, and the rites and symbols of personal and communal expression have served throughout history as forces that have preserved Jewish life and shaped it in patterns of holiness. However, these time-honored institutions and ceremonies must be freed from the elements of orientalism and formalism. Kohler tells us that we must adjust them to the climate in which we live.

In terms of developing a "Reform point of view" on questions of liturgy, marriage laws, burial rites and mourning customs, Kohler carefully examined the teachings of the Bible and rabbinic literature in these areas. Then, he arrived at decisions for modern practice. "We should enlighten our people, working for a gradual advancement, following evolutionary not revolutionary methods." The aim of such effort is to build, not to destroy.

(h) Zionism is opposed

Kohler's hope for Jewish unity based on an evolutionary process conflicted greatly with the rising tide of secular nationalism and political Zionism which swept Jewry at the end of the nineteenth century. He agreed that Jewry should unite its social and religious forces but not political. This would be dangerous on two counts. First, political Zionism was a tacit admission to the world that wherever the Jew lived, he was in effect a foreigner and an alien as was charged by the enemies of the Jewish people. Secondly, he feared that the religious character of Judaism would be lost. Judaism's historical mission was to interlink all nations and sects, classes and

races of men by the greatness of its own religious truth. Kohler felt that this religious mission would never be fulfilled by the creation of a Jewish State.

Significance of Kohler

Kaufmann Kohler was a man of Jewish learning, inspired by the possibilities of evolutionary thought and achievement and a great leader and organizer in giving shape to his views. He stands in the forefront of the creative scholars and thinkers who have shaped and directed the development of American Judaism. He enriched the religious thinking of his time, bequeathing a rich legacy, which, despite the changing cultural and intellectural climate, has remained significant for Jewish religious life today.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Considering the influences upon Kohler, what do we learn about the development of a man's thought?
2. Is it possible to have articles of faith "as expressions of religious consciousness both without external compulsion and without doing violence to the dictates of reason?" How?

3. What are some of the dangers involved in "Judaism meeting the demands of the time?" How would Kohler try to offset such dangers?
4. What does Kohler mean by "divine revelation?" Is it really divine?
5. What distinction does Kohler make between the aspirations of the Jewish People and the Zionists?
6. With your knowledge of the State of Israel, was Kohler correct or not in his fear that the religious mission of the Jews would collapse under Zionist influence?
7. How is Reform Judaism different today from Kohler's view?

Books You Ought to Read

Kaufmann Kohler, Jewish Theology, Systematically and Historically Considered. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922.)

Kaufmann Kohler. Studies, Addresses and Personal Papers. (New York: The Alumni Association of the Hebrew Union College, 1931.)

Samuel S. Cohon, editor. A Living Faith. (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1948.) - This volume contains selected sermons and addresses from the literary remains of Kaufmann Kohler.

CHAPTER VI

MARTIN BUBER: EXISTENTIAL DIALOGUE

Background

Martin Buber was born in Vienna in 1878. When he was a child Buber went to live in Lemberg, Galicia, with his grandfather, a Midrachic scholar and a successful merchant. At fourteen years of age he returned to Vienna, graduated from the local gymnasium, entered the University of Vienna, where he received his doctorate in philosophy and the history of art.

As a student he was actively engaged in the Zionist movement. Though imbued with a sense of the Jewish national spirit, he withdrew from Zionist political activity because it lacked interest in cultural and religious matters. For a time Buber struggled inwardly without any clear direction. When

he was twenty-six, he visited his grandfather in Lemberg where he discovered a booklet, The Testament of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem. He was so excited by having experienced the Hasidic soul that he spent the next five years in an intensive investigation of Hasidic sources. However, he himself did not become a Hasid.

During the following years Buber wrote many important works interpreting the teachings of Hasidism.* For a time he served as editor of Der Jude, a leading periodical of German-speaking Jewry. From 1923 to 1933 he held the post of professor of Jewish thought and comparative religion at the University of Frankfurt. For the next five years he was responsible for the teacher training program for new Jewish schools.

In 1938 Buber emigrated to Palestine where he was appointed professor of social philosophy at the Hebrew University. At the same time he founded and became

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*HASIDISM: Mystical religious social movement founded by Israel Baal Shem Tov (1700-1760). Preached the equality of all men, pantheism of God, central role of the zaddik (Hasidic rabbi regarded as the intermediary between God and man, the spiritual leader and advisor on all matters) or rebbe who through his connection with God brings life to the world.

head of the Institute for Adult Education which trained teachers for the new immigrant settlements. It is interesting to note that Buber developed a theory of education in line with his philosophy of dialogue. Buber retired in 1951. Since then he has visited the United States on three occasions, when he has lectured at various universities.

Behind Buber's Methodology

Martin Buber is difficult to understand because he is not a systematic thinker and because he rebels at the "scientific" methods utilized for understanding. He has been described most frequently as an existentialist. Yet, most existentialists view "man as trapped in a meaningless world which is unintelligible." On the other hand, Buber is very optimistic about the world and finds great meaning in it. This optimism is virtually a sine qua non in most Jewish thought. How, then, is he classified as an existentialist? The existentialist seeks to discover that which is common to all existence; namely, the nature of "being" itself or "being qua being." Existentialists differ widely in their conceptions. Little agreement is found concerning what they postulate, but they do share a common rejection

of empirical philosophy and methodology. Therefore, it is important that we have some idea of empiricism and its existentialist rejection.

The empiricists had shown that all we could know about the world was through our senses. Therefore, when you look at a desk you think you know there is a real desk in your presence because you see it. But what do you <u>really</u> see? Do you <u>really</u> see the whole desk? No, you see only its size, its shape, its colors, etc., and what appears to you is a desk. These constituent elements which make up the appearance are called a collection of "sense-data." These sense-data are equated with the desk itself. But are the sense-data, which give us the <u>appearance</u> of the desk, and the desk itself, to be considered one and the same thing? No! Our cognition through the senses distorts the original data of the desk. If you look at a desk do you see all its sides? Do you see all four legs? If you put a straight stick in water does it not <u>appear</u> bent to the eye? Therefore the empiricists conclude there is no way to know the world as it really is. All man can know is a world of appearances. The sense-data do not reside in the object itself, but are products of the mind. If this is so, how can man ever come into contact with the real world?

What the empiricists had completely disqualified as a way of knowing the real world was subjective experience. Only objective experience is considered by the scientific method. As such, persons or things are known only if they can be analyzed into objective experience, i.e., if they can be measured quantitatively. Such considerations as feelings, attitudes and moods are considered subjective and not legitimate criteria for knowledge. Subjective experience is open to falsehood and illusion.

The empiricists in their scientific procedure given priority to "brute data" over theory. The existentialists rebel because they claim that the empiricists do not take all data into account. Can man be so objective as to totally free himself of his own personal experience? They feel that man needs subjective experience in order to experience the real world. It is as necessary to account for it to understand reality as it is to account for objective experience.

Objective experience is important for having theoretical awareness, i.e., when the subject is totally separate from its object. There is no sense of personal mood and feeling. But the existentialist

emphasizes practical awareness. This kind of knowledge gives us reality about ourselves by the "self-data" of mood and feeling. The problem is that these "self-data" are much more difficult and complex with which to work. Feeling becomes a mode of apprehension for the existentialist. Feelings are important because they give "the self" to the person. That which feels is "the self." The feeling is not external to the person in the same way that sense-data are experienced. Remember, with sense-data the mind requires some kind of external stimulus. It is important to note that objective experience is not substituted for subjective experience. The latter is simply taken into account for the first time and given a certain priority. Now what do existentialists mean by "feeling?" Buber would say that the reality of another person is given us by the act of love. What if I have an illusion of another person? The distinction between loving a real girl and an illusionary girl is that, in the former case love is returned, while in the latter instance it is not.

Buber rejects any attempt to find the "essence" of things in abstraction from the concrete reality of personal existence. For him philosophy arises out of thinking done from the personal point of view of the

thinker. This background has been sketched to show that Buber is a serious and careful thinker. As a religious thinker and an interpreter of the Jewish tradition he represents a synthesis of diverse streams of influence —Hasidism, Haskalah,* the Bible, mythology and Western culture. His insights into Judaism would not have come about unless he had devoted himself carefully into each of these aspects. Buber should be read and understood very carefully for he tackles very significant problems of God, existence, man, ethics and nature, and their relations to thought.

The Philosophy of Dialogue: I-Thou

(a) What is the dialogue?

The thought of Martin Buber is formulated in dialogue: it uses the method of speech. Its classic expression is found in Buber's book, I and Thou, a poetic treatment of the dialogue between man and man

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*HASKALAH (Hebrew, "enlightenment"): Movement that took place from about 1750 to 1880 for the enlightenment of the Jews through knowledge of the sciences, European languages and culture. The movement stressed knowledge, the value of manual labor, faith in human nature and social progress as well as aesthetics. Its hope was that the Jews would be emancipated.

and between man and God. Man's two primary attitudes are "I-Thou" and "I-It." Buber is concerned with the relations a person has in his life experience. Man's "I" comes into being as he says "Thou," as he enters into a direct, reciprocal relation with another human being. This corresponds with the notion of subjective awareness described above. A man loves and is loved in return. Later man also relates to other people as objects to be experienced by him and used by him. In the last section we referred to this as theoretical or scientific awareness. This relationship is always indirect. It may enable you to comprehend and give order to the world. However, it takes place within you and not between you and the world. Just like a pendulum, man's awareness of existence alternates between these two kinds of relating.

> "I know three kinds of dialogue. There is genuine dialogue - no matter whether spoken as silent - where each of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation between himself and them. There is technical dialogue, which is prompted solely by the need of objective understanding. And there is monologue disguised as dialogue, ... A debate in which the thoughts are not expressed in the way in which they existed in the mind but in the speaking are so pointed that they may strike home in the sharpest way, and moreover without the men that are spoken

> to being regarded in any way present as persons; a conversation characterized by the need neither to communicate something, nor to learn something, nor to influence someone, nor to come into connection with someone, but solely by the desire to have one's own self-reliance confirmed by marking the impression that is made, or if it has become unsteady to have it strengthened; a lover's talk in which both partners alike enjoy their own glorious soul and their precious experience - what an underworld of faceless spectres of dialogue!"
>
> (Martin Buber. Between Man and Man, translated by Ronald Gregor Smith. London: Kegan Paul, 1947, pp. 19-20.)

(b) What is the I-Thou Relation Between Man and Men?

This is an essential element of genuine dialogue. It is "making the other present" (within you) and "experiencing the other side." The dialogue can be spoken or silent. To meet the "other," you must be concerned with him as someone truly different from yourself, but at the same time as someone with whom you can enter into relation. Buber believes that the basis of genuine ethical responsibility lies in this action of experiencing the other side. You are not governed by your own subjective interest. You are not bound to a moral code. Rather, you respond to the person you meet. If my purpose is to establish a living, mutual relation between myself and you, in which I as a participant and you as a participant have each other in

mind as particular beings, how can I lie to you, cheat you, rob you? The relation would be breached. By the same token, how could you do these things to me?

The "I-Thou" relation is also the essence of friendship and love. In these instances each member of the relation is made present by the other in his concrete wholeness and uniqueness. There is a mutual reality which exists between the partners and which cannot be reduced to what goes on within each of them. As your real friend I care about you for your own sake and not just for my own sake. I will not try to exploit you or make you into my likeness. The best example of this is the way in which two lovers, a husband and a wife, behave. We often try to express it in terms like "give and take," "fifty-fifty." Buber would deny such descriptions. Our concern is not for one or for the other, nor even both, but in the relation they have together. We do not become real persons through being concerned with ourselves. On the contrary, in order that each person may realize his unique potentialities, he must be confirmed by others as to what he is and what he is meant to become. If we overlook the real "otherness" of the other person,

we shall not be able to help him, for we shall see him in our own image -- not as he really is. But if we allow him to be different and still accept and confirm him, then we shall have helped him realize himself as he could not have done without us. We do not merely confront each other, we need each other.

(c) The I-Thou Relation Exists Between Man and Things

For Buber, the I-Thou exists, in modified form, in man's relation with nature and art. The relation is not fully reciprocal, of course, since neither a tree or a painting can move to meet us and address us, as one person can meet another. Nevertheless, they can and do "say" something to us, and in that sense we have a dialogue with them. All things address us and speak to us of themselves if we receive them in their uniqueness and not merely in terms of their relations to other things — how they fit into our categories of knowledge and how we make use of them. Nothing may be perceived passively. Every thing becomes a "Thou" when the thing actively enters into the perceiving.

Buber tells of an experience he once had when as a boy of eleven he spent a summer on the farm of his grandparents:

> "As often as I could do it unobserved, I used to steal into the stable and gently stroke the neck of my favorite, a broad dapple-gray horse. It was not a casual delight but a great, certainly friendly, yet also deeply stirring happening ... when I stroked the mighty mane ... and felt the life beneath my hand, it was as though the element of vitality itself bordered on my skin — something that was not I, was certainly akin to me, palpably the other, not just another, really the Other itself; and yet it let me approach, confided itself to me, placed itself elementally in the relation of Thou and Thou with me. The horse, even when I had not begun by pouring oats for him into the manger, very gently raised his massive head, ears twitching, then snorted quietly, as a conspirator gives a signal meant to be recognizable only by his fellow-conspirator; and I was approved."
>
> (Martin Buber. Between Man and Man, pp. 22-23.)

Thus we see that the "I-Thou" relationship with things differs from the "I-Thou" relationship with persons, since I do not answer with my personal existence of the thing which addresses me as in a genuine dialogue. However, it does mean a genuine response to the thing which retains the betweeness, the presentness, and the uniqueness of the "I-Thou" relation.

(d) What is Meant by I-It Relations?

The "I-It" relation indicates the relation of a subject to an object. This is our contemporary stance in relation to the world. It is the world of "experience." It is the objective world of science

and empiricism. I may treat the other person as merely an object. This is where we place things in their spatial, temporal and causal contexts according to set and invariable rules. In fact, the other fellow is no person any longer. I have "I-Itified" him. I have made him an object, an It. Now he is to be observed and put into categories according to his capacities, race, religion, or social position. Buber says that when we know a man in this way we inevitably regard him as there for our use. We are just like the propagandist, who wishes to mold and influence someone for the sake of his own cause, but who does not actually care about him as a person of unique value in himself. Not only do we use other people as means to our ends, but our lives are such that we must do so. This is the way in which we relate to the waitress in the restaurant, the ticket-taker at the movie, the milkman, and the engineer. The danger lies in the fact that this will become the only way in which we relate to others in terms of how we may know and use them. We are no longer really human, no matter what our power, wealth, or prestige. It is simple enough to see that in relations to things "I-It" refers to a subject detached from an

object — the way in which we usually view hammers, tables, chairs — as utensils for "my utilization."

While twentieth century America would seem to live completely with an "I-It" attitude toward things, there is some resistance on our part to this total objectivity. Witness the fact that electronic computors are not simply machines or scientific objects to those who use them. We give names to the computors; we endow them with personalities. They even have days when they are "sick." Many people respond to their cars in similar fashion. Or observe the accomplished musician's response to his instrument. Is the instrument merely an instrument or tool or does its owner have a special relationship to it? Consider other occupations where one requires some sort of implement — the surgeon, the cabinet-maker, the diamond-cutter, the lens-grinder, and perhaps even the ditch-digger. Surely these people approach their tasks with special and close friends — their instruments. Many would admit that there is a total relation where it cannot be determined, where human skill stops and the instrument's precision begins.

Finally, let us note that at present there are attempts to "I-Itify" man even more in our society.

However, instinctively, we resist. Recently many people have rebelled against the telephone company because it inaugurated a new system of telephone numbers. This eliminated the former name of a "telephone exchange." Why is it we feel so silly and upset about leaving a message on a telephone recording device? Do we not miss the real person on the other end of the line? Or, remember our reaction to the post office's announcement about using "zip-code" numerals. A part of our identity is stripped away; i.e., my name, my address, and my community become less important. We are simply concrete numbers devoid of human personality and spirit. Who can deny that these innovations result in experience and efficiency at less cost? As our society grows larger in number, as machines increasingly do our work, as our technology improves, man will have to consider the degree to which he will allow himself to become an "It" -- an object to be used rather thana person who meets and is met, who confronts his experience and is confronted by experience.

(e) From Relation to Experience and Back Again

Buber seeks to have us enjoy a world of genuine mutual relationship -- the world of "I-Thou." However,

Buber is essentially a realist. He points out that there is a constant alternating between "I-Thou" and "I-It" relations. For him reality might be described as a magnetic field, pulling first one way and then another way. He points out that this is a universal human experience. No sooner have we experienced an "I-Thou" relation when we fall back into the world of "I-It" relation.

An example should suffice to make this clear. A social worker was entrusted with the care of a human being in need. The social worker experienced the Thou in this person through the mutuality of their trust and interaction. Naturally there was a difference in function which persisted between the one who was caring and the one who was being looked after. As the social worker's case load increased, the power of the relationship declined. What was previously a "person" became a "case." The Thou degenerated into an It. Instead of a genuine "relationship," a routine one based on experience was developed. Each new case was also regarded as an It that was never to become a Thou. Such expediency had its advantages — less time, effort and involvement were required. If one can use a technique or system of dealing with a person's symptoms rather

than with the person himself, a heavy workload can be handled more smoothly and efficiently. Buber might understand why this situation was handled this way, but would bemoan the fact that no genuine mutual relationships can possibly evolve from such a condition. The tragedy is that we only experience parts of the world.

It is important to notice in the above example that the I-Thou relation precedes the I-It. This priority of I-Thou over I-It is central to Buber's thought. The relational attitude historically precedes the experiential attitude. "In the beginning is relation" (I and Thou, p. 18). With the progress of civilization the "It" world grows. Things are multiplied and consequently so does our power to use reality for human ends. As we develop our power for concrete experiencing our power for relation decreases. Buber sees this I-Thou relational priority as being the condition found in small children as well as in contemporary primitive tribes. What Buber tells us is that the "I-It" world is a mediated and discursive world, construed as falling away from a "Thou" which is dimly felt on the horizon of consciousness. Buber

desires to regenerate society by means of this Thou.

(f) "The Eternal Thou"

Above we noted that the Thou is doomed to recede into an It because it lacks the power of relation. However, there is one "Thou" which remains Thou to us by its very nature and never becomes an "It." This is the "Eternal Thou," God. Every man who calls God encounters this Thou regardless of the name by which he may address him. Further, the Eternal Thou may be confronted by one who does not believe in God, yet "gives his whole being to addressing the Thou of his life, as a Thou," as something that commands his unconditional loyalty, an absolute "that cannot be limited by another." This man also addresses God.

The fullness of dialogue into which all other dialogue enters is that between man and God. It is generally believed that monotheism is the major contribution of Judaism to the religions of the world. However, Buber regards the dialogue with God as the center and significance of the Jewish religion; and he sees the real meaning of monotheism as bringing every aspect of life into this dialogue.

Buber says something that has been stated before by religious thinkers and rejected too often by

the religious sceptic with a mere shrug of the shoulders. He tells us that many people know how to speak to God but do not know how to speak about Him. Why is this so? Because believing in God means to stand in a "personal relationship to God." God is the External Thou who is met through the meeting with man and nature.

Yet how can we be certain that there is such a Thou that can be addressed and is externally present? From earliest times men of faith have complained that God has hidden his face, that an integral part of human existence is to experience God's absence. Buber disagrees. God never hides his face. He is never other than Thou to us. We are the ones who are frequently absent, who block the channels leading from God to us. God is always present. The most beloved person must again and again become an "It" for us, but God is always "Thou." If a man has a preconceived notion of how God is present as a Thou, he will fail to recognize or acknowledge God's presence.

God is present in every relationship, in all dialogue, and through it, He speaks to us. We do not meet God in the extra-ordinary event, the unusual moment, the so-called mystical experience. Rather,

every moment, every day, every tning and event which may appear trivial to the superficial observer, has the capacity of becoming the mediator of the External Thou. Man must remain open to the address of God in everything man encounters. Man must be ready to respond with his whole being. God wants to come into the world through our relation with the people with whom we live and meet, the animals with whom we are associated, the soil we till, the materials we shape, the tools we use. The true God can never be an object of our thought. In order to meet God we must meet the world with the fullness of our being.

(g) The Nature of the I-Eternal Thou Relation

If we are to believe, then we must <u>love</u>. We discover that love accompanies the "I-Thou" relation. Buber defines love as the "responsibility of an I for a Thou," the feeling that they are needed by each other. Here love is not simply an act of <u>feeling</u> in love, but of <u>being</u> in love. It is of the essence of love to feel that one's entire individuality is caught up in the sway of a larger relationship. We approach all things and persons in love and in humble readiness to serve. The man who has been in relation refuses to turn his back on the world in order to cultivate the purity of

his soul in splendid isolation. All things and phenomena are but signs through which God addresses a man — asking for his aid in advancing the course of history. God does not want to be described or to be contemplated. He wants only to be obeyed by men. But men are not imprisioned by a God who utterly controls them. They are free agents. In the relation they become partners of God and are assured of the ultimate value of their devoted labors in love and humility. The rewards of heaven and the punishments of hell are not seen in a distant future. These are seen in the living, immediate present, in the respective forms of success and failure in the adventure of being real.

The perfection of the life of dialogue lies in the relation between man and God who is the "Eternal Thou." For many religious thinkers the word "God" presents a problem because not everyone means the same thing by this word. Indeed, some men would have us eliminate the word from our vocabulary. Buber is also concerned about this word but refuses to eliminate it. Since its meaning as a word is beyond human comprehension, it is difficult. Nevertheless, Buber's response to the problem of the word "God" gives us an excellent sense of what he has been discussing.

"'Yes,' I said, 'it (God) is the most heavy-laden of all human words. None has become so soiled, so mutilated. Just for this reason I may not abandon it. Generations of men have laid the burden of their anxious lives upon this word and weighed it to the ground; it lies in the dust and bears their whole burden. The races of man with their religious factions have torn the word to pieces; they have killed for it and died for it, and it bears their fingermarks and their blood. Where might I find a word like it to describe the highest! If I took the purest, most sparkling concept from the inner treasure-chamber of the philosophers, I could only capture thereby an unbinding product of thought. I could not capture the presence of Him whom the generations of men have honored and degraded with their awesome living and dying. I do indeed mean Him whom the hell-tormented and heaven-storming generations of men mean. Certainly, they draw caricatures and write "God" underneath; they murder one another and say "in God's name." But when all madness and delusion fall to dust, when they stand over against Him in the loneliest darkness and no longer say "He, He" but rather sigh "Thou," shout "Thou," all of them the one word, and when they then add "God," is it not the real God whom they all implore, the One Living God, the God of the children of man? Is it not He who hears them? And just for this reason is not the word "God," the word of appeal, the word which has become a name (sic), consecrated in all human tongues for all times .... We cannot cleanse the word "God" and we cannot make it whole; but, defiled and mutilated as it is, we can raise it from the ground and set it over an hour of great care.'"

(Martin Buber. Eclipse of God: Studies in the Relation between Religion and Philosophy. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952, pp. 16-17.)

Thus we see that the Eternal Thou has no attributes and cannot be described or verified. When a man can relate to the whole structure of Being, he attains his Salvation. Why? Because he has eliminated the anxiety of having only partial Being -- of objective existence. Now he has full Being. He is Hasid-like.

Interpreting Judaism As I-Thou Dialogue

While Buber never became a Hasid, it was to Hasidism that he went for his image of what modern man can and ought to become. Hasidism is a mysticism which follows community and everyday life rather than withdraws from it, "for men cannot love God in truth without loving the world." Hasidism rejects asceticism and the denial of the life of the senses. Cultivating joy is one of its greatest commandments, for only joy can drive out the "alien thoughts" or fantasies that distract man from the love of God. Despair is worse than sin, for it leads one to believe oneself in the power of sin and hence to give in to it. One must overcome the pride that leads one to compare himself with others, but he must not forget that in himself,

as in all men, is a unique value which must be realized if the world is to be brought to perfection. According to Buber's interpretation of Hasidism, everything is waiting to be hallowed by man, for there is nothing so crass or base that it cannot become material for sanctification.

(a) Special Role of the Jewish People: Relation with God.

For Buber, the role of the Jewish people in world history is their peculiar genius for religion. The Jewish soul is particularly sensitive to the tension between the spirit and the flesh, the claims of the "ideal" and the temptations of the "real." Since the characteristic Jewish trait is to be inwardly divided, the urge to attain inner unity becomes the chief drive of the Jewish soul. The Jew of the past, the Jew of the present and the Jew of the future all teach Buber to understand himself and to will his own self. In this context, he acquires an "I." Since the Jew has been impelled to strive for unity in all stages of the past and present, he, as a Jew, is that much closer to it. The Jew can only find peace with himself by accepting in complete earnestness his task as a "servant of God." He must study the history, life and

ideals of his people, feeling himself to be but a speck in the eternal current of his people's life. Then he will hear the call of God and become spiritually creative.

Unity is meant to be between the self and the world and between thought and action. Because of this, the Jewish spirit is attuned to the essential message of religion: human life is to be dominated by the consciousness of the presence of the Deity. To live in this spirit of piety does not mean that you turn your back on the world; on the contrary, you infuse the light of God into the actual living world. While it is possible to realize the Divine in you by yourself, it is fully manifested only in the relation between individuals. Therefore, the true place of the realization of the Divine is in the community.

He interprets the Jewish longing for God as the yearning for the Kingdom of God. The Jew has this responsibility because of Israel's "election." Our task is to redeem the universe. Therefore, the Jewish soul looks for God in the processes that make for the perfection of existence. Judaism's uniqueness is the bridging of the religious and the ethical elements. To be religious means to bring about the perfection of human society, the attainment of the Messianic Age.

Throughout the greater part of Jewish history, official Judaism, being no more than the crystalized institutions of earlier institutions, damned the stream of Jewish consciousness. Official Judaism was overly concerned with the Law, with the words of revelation. Thus the Essenes, Jesus and the early Christians, and the Hassidim are described as exponents of the authentic expressions of the Jewish soul. You don't have to study the Law in order to know the commands of God. It is imperative; however, to live with a constant awareness of our duty to God. Then, in every situation, the nature of our duty will come to us with an inner necessity. Buber calls this "underground Judaism."

(b) Revelation: "The Power of Presence"

Buber sees revelation as the effect of having relation with the External Thou. It is the creative energy that such a person brings back with him from the meeting. He is a new man because something happens to him. He has the "Power of Presence." Such a person feels life to be laden "heavy with meaning." He feels more assured of the values he has previously entertained even though his certainty is inexpressible and is not logical. What that person feels and that of which he is assured does not refer to another life, but to this life.

When we think of dynamic or natural revelation, we usually think of God speaking to man either in history or through the universe. Buber's view of revelation is interesting because it does not emphasize the encounter, but the effect of the encounter. Moses, Isaiah, and Jeremiah were men, according to Buber, who had I-Eternal Thou relations. The revelations which they creatively demonstrated were the effects of such relation. Today, we are also potentially capable of having such revelation if we make ourselves accessible.

(c) Biblical History: "Tradition Criticism"

Traditional Judaism insists on the literal truth of the Biblical narrative by regarding the events of the Bible as supernatural miracles. It discounts any possibility of our having any comparable experience of reality. There is only one "literal truth." Modern critics regard the Bible as having merely literary or symbolic significance. The miracles are considered to be naturally possible events, impressive fantasies or fictions.

Buber maintains that the Bible is not primarily devotional literature, nor is it symbolic theology which tells us of the nature of God as He is Himself. What Buber calls "tradition criticism" is an attempt to

penetrate beneath the layers of different interpretations of tradition to a central unity. This unity was already present in the original, and developed, restored, or distorted in the later editions. The Bible is the record of the concrete meetings between a group of people and the divine, the historical account of God's relation to man seen through man's eyes. This history, Buber maintains, is composed of legendary myth. However, the original seeting of the myth is the form in which an active memory recalls an extraordinary event, the experience of event as wonder.

(d) Is the Law God's Law?

The Torah is part of the dialogue between man and God, but cannot be considered as a separate objective reality. To accept the Torah as such would be opposed to emunah - that unconditional trust in the relation with God which Buber feels to be the essence of Judaism. The Torah includes laws, yet it is not essentially law but God's instruction in His way. If we regard the Law as an objective possession of Israel, we miss vital contact with the ever-living relation and instruction. The struggle against this tendency runs through the whole history of Israelite-Jewish faith -

from the prophet's protest against sacrifice without inner intention to its peculiarly modern form in Hasidism, in which every act gains validity only by a specific devotion of the whole man turning immediately to God.

(e) Why Zionism?

Buber held the conviction that in the work of redemption Israel is called upon to play the special part of beginning the kingdom of God by itself becoming a holy people. This election is not an occasion for particularist pride but a commission which must be carried out in all humility. Buber attaches to his concept of Zionism a view of holiness.

> "In the tribes which united to form "Israel" this concept (of holiness) developed and became transformed in a special way: holiness is no longer a sign of power, a magic fluid that can dwell in places and regions as well as in people and groups of people, but a quality bestowed on this particular people and this particular land because God "elects" both in order to lead His chosen people into His chosen land and to join them to each other. It is His election that sanctifies the chosen people as His immediate attendance and the land as His royal throne and which makes them dependent on each other."
>
> (Martin Buber. Israel and Palestine: The History of an Idea, translated by Stanley Goodman. London: East and West Library, 1952, p. x.)

Israel's special vocation is not just another nationalism which makes the nation an end in itself. The people need the land and freedom to organize their own life in order to realize the goal of community. Zion must be built be-mishpat, with justice.

Zionism represents the opportunity of the people to continue its ancient existence on the land, an existence interrupted by the generations of exile. Israel is not to be a nation like all other nations. It is the only nation in the world which from its earliest beginnings has been both a nation and a religious community, the carrier of revelation and a covenant with God. As such, the Jew is charged with a mission.

> "The story of Abraham, which connects the gift of Canaan with the command to be a blessing, is a most concise resume of the fact that the association of this people with this land signifies a mission. The people came to the land to fulfil the mission, even by each new revolt against it they recognized its continuing validity; the prophets were appointed to interpret the past and future destiny of the people on the basis of its failure as yet to establish the righteous city of God for the establishment of which it had been led into the land. This land was at no time in the history of Israel simply the property of the people; it was always at the same time a challenge to make of it what God intended to have made of it.
>
> (Martin Buber. Israel and Palestine p. xii.)

As such, we see that Buber takes a historical conception of the Jewish people and tries to endow it with religious purpose by joining the people together with the land. It is the basis for establishing "the righteous society."

Reflections on Buber

Buber's philosophy of dialogue is a new and profound view of human existence whose decisive implications for psychology, education, ethics and social thought are already widely recognized, as are its implications for religious philosophy. There are those who would question whether Buber is fair in his interpretation of Judaism. Has Buber simply used the Jewish framework on which to "peg" his philosophy?

There is no doubt that Buber utilizes the Jewish conceptualization of the past and reshapes its particular interpretation. We see how he relates his thought to religious purposes. Yet Buber would probably deny a "separateness" between the two. This is what he has been preaching against. We should not distinguish between "spiritual" values and everyday life. For in doing so, we devaluate both. The oneness

of God stands at the center of all Judaism. It is Buber's way of dealing with the problem of the universal and the particular. By overcoming "distinctions," by entering into relation with God and with life, by expressing ourselves in dialogue, by building humanity into a community - we affirm that unity with all our being.

Buber constantly strives for the ineffable. One can never be "certain" that he has fully comprehended what Buber is saying. The "word" does not carry very much weight with Buber who prefers "to point toward meaningfulness." As such, many thinkers would suggest that Buber's "dialogue and relating" is in itself a phantasy. In such "meeting," can we really conceive of a <u>oneness</u>? Do we not think of "two coming close together?" On the other hand, who has not suffered frustration in trying to convey the full significance of existential experience? Is it not in being aware of the "wholeness" of experiences that we experience the greatest amount of joy, sorrow and significant meaning? For illustration, let us consider the experience of marriage. How can such an experience by adequately described in terms of capturing its full value? Marriage is a living situation between

a man and a woman. Yet, what is its purpose, what is its basis? Companionship? Love? Sex? Bearing children? Social condition? Common interests in life? Surely, we would not limit marriage to simply one of these.

Value is in itself a difficult word to describe. Nevertheless, we are capable of experiencing life with a fullness of being and meaning which goes beyond our ability to express in words. We have a certain kind of knowing. In such a way, the whole of life does become greater than its parts. On the other hand, we must be conscious of every part of our life as well. What we do at one moment may not be significant to us beyond that moment. Or, it may be part of what has been in the past and what will be in the future. Sometimes, we live totally in a particular time and place. At other times, we live in such a way as to share eternity and every place. In a similar way, God, according to Buber and Rabbinic Judaism, is both very remote from us and at the same time very near to us.

In a similar fashion do we live our lives. What we call morals and ethics can be seen to be attempts to give man a sense of full being whereby he "meets" all of life. If he is just by himself for the moment,

why should he be concerned about anyone or anything other than himself? He is his whole world, albeit a very tiny insignificant world. But when a man strives to capture all of life and breathe it into himself, everything has a certain meaning and a certain value. Then, morals and ethics become important. Then, you or "Thou" becomes important. It is the traditional Jewish denial of materialism and particularism. It is the affirmation of unity and holiness.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What technique would you use to describe the "subjective experience?" Do you think Buber is raising a real problem about scientific method?
2. What does the following statement about relation between men mean?

   "But if we allow him to be different and still accept and confirm him, then we shall have helped him to realize himself as he could not have done without us."

3. What insight about life do you understand by acknowledging "I-Thou" relation with things?
4. (a) Has man made man too much of an object, a tool to be used? Consider this question in terms of your personal relationships?

(b) What implications do you see regarding marriage, vocation and parenthood in terms of Buber's thought?

5. Why should a Jew study about Biblical figures like Abraham, Moses, Isaiah and Jeremiah according to Buber?
6. Can you accept Buber's concept of mission "to build a holy kingdom of God?" What is involved?
7. What do you think of Buber's attitude toward Zionism?
8. Buber wrote: "Any natural act, if hallowed, leads to God. ... Hallowing transforms the urges by confronting them with holiness and making them responsible towards what is holy." Why should anyone want to live this way?

Books you Ought to Read By Buber

Martin Buber. I and Thou. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958.)

_____, Hasidism and Modern Man, edited and translated by Maurice Friedman. (New York: Horizon Press, 1958.)

_____, Israel and Palestine: The History of an Idea. (London: East and West Library, 1952.)

_____, Tales of the Hasidim: The Early Masters. (New York: Schocken Books, 1961.)

_____, Tales of the Hasidim: The Later Masters. (New York: Schocken Books, 1961.)

On Buber

Maurice Friedman. Martin Buber, The Life of Dialogue. (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960.)

Will Herberg, The Writings of Martin Buber. (New York: Meridian Books, 1956.)

CHAPTER VII

MORDECAI M. KAPLAN: RECONSTRUCTIONIST SOCIOLOGY

Background

Mordecai M. Kaplan was born in 1881, the son of a rabbi, in a small town in the Pale of Settlement (a system instituted in 1791 of restricted Jewish residence in twenty-five provinces of Czarist Russia). He arrived in the United States at the age of eight. When he was twelve, he entered the Jewish Theological Seminary and was graduated in 1902. At first, he served as rabbi of a large Orthodox congregation on New York's upper East Side. In 1909, he was appointed dean of the Teacher's Institute of the Seminary. In the following year, he accepted the post of professor of homiletics in the Rabbinical School where he had continued to teach for a half a century.

He organized the first synagogue center in American Jewry during the First World War. A controversy developed in time over some of his religious and social views which forced him and a small group of followers to secede. Thereafter they formed the Society for the Advancement of Judaism (popularly referred to as "Reconstructionism"). His bold, new concept of Judaism appeared in his first major work in 1934; entitled, Judaism as a Civilization. In 1935, he launched the Reconstructionist magazine which became a depository for launching his ideas. Today it is one of the leading journals of Jewish religious thought. Aside from other major writings, he is responsible for the New Haggadah, Sabbath Prayerbook, High Holyday Prayerbook and the Festival Prayerbook. These prayer books are the official ones of the Reconstructionist movement.

Behind Kaplan's Approach

Mordecai Kaplan, like Buber, was an anti-rationalist. Yet, he is not interested in the metaphysics of a Buber in an attempt to come into contact with pure being or existence. Kaplan departs from European thought

and concerns insofar as he is a product of the American emphasis on pragmatism or instrumentalism. In this respect, Kaplan seems to have been greatly influenced by John Dewey and George Herbert Mead in his orientation to philosophy, and by the social principles of Emil Durkheim in his sociological application.

Traditional philosophy had thought that experience could be known. As such, it set out to find absolute truth concerning it. What was sought was some fixed property of an idea which could be uncovered. In this way we would come to know Truth. This view was based on the notion that there existed absolute truths and absolute objects of experience.

The pagmatists tried to show that truth was something that happened to an idea, rather than being a fixed property. Experience is not an object we examine; rather, it is an action performed. All there is is a "humming-buzzing confusion" out of which we differentiate various aspects. As such, truth is determined by the way it affects us, by how significant its practical consequences are to us. At one time some idea will be very significant, and at another time its significance will be unimportant. The only reason we have for asserting any truth is whether it

works well for us in our experience. Often we are tempted to ask upon learning some information, "Who cares? Is it important? Can I use it? Does it have some significant purpose?" Truth is not something static and unchangeable. Instead, it grows and develops with time. It evolves and presents new problems, which in turn, may amplify it as truth, may lead it to new truth or may show it now to be false. Pragmatism shows the great impact that Darwinian evolution had on it. As new ways of organizing and selecting aspects of our experience are tried, new features of the universe emerge.

According to the pragmatists, our brute experience is constituted of the interaction between a biological organism (ourselves) and our environment. In the course of the organism's activities it encounters situations in which it can no longer act. Here, thinking arises as a means of dealing with these disturbing situations by means of trying to work out a hypothesis or a guide to future actions. If the organism can function satisfactorily again, its hypothesis has been correct. If not, a new hypothesis is required. Therefore, thought is primarily instrumental in problem-solving. Intelligent activity

does not seek to know the world, but undertakes to tell us what we may expect to happen when we act in certain ways. Instead of our attention being directed at what causes our experience, we should be concerned about the effects of our experience. Everything, then, is simply part of a total, on-going process. The crucial question to be asked in determining the meaning of an ethical idea is: "What difference does it make in human conduct?" Stealing is bad, not because it is morally wrong, but because the consequences of such an action are unpleasant and unsatisfactory such as imprisonment.

What many students fail to understand about pragmatism is that it is a method and not a philosophy of life to excuse total self-centredness and personal greed. When a person performs an action of expediency, he is apt to claim "I'm being prgamatic!" The pragmatist would ask him if he had really considered all the possible consequences of his action. Did he decide to act in a certain way because such action had the best possible consequences? Such a decision takes into account not only a person's personal consequences but also the consequences of the total

environment. He is not only working out his problem for himself but his problem for himself in interaction with his environment. Therefore, if I need money, it might seem "pragmatic" to rob a bank. But if I consider the aspect of interaction with my environment (in this case society), this solution could never be admitted. Pragmatism, then, is a method of looking at experience.

Basically, Kaplan operates out of a sociological framework compatible with pragmatism. While Buber would claim "In the beginning is relation;" Kaplan would maintain, "In the beginning was society." Society has an all-pervading influence. No phase of human life can be understood apart from it. No human experience is so intimate as to be wholly individual.

Durkheim held the view that primitive people lack a clear consciousness of individual personality. It is a "collective consciousness" which is apparent in all spheres of primitive life. Such thinking as may be done by the individual is done as a member of a particular group. Religion for the primitive man also pervades every expression of group activity. There is no social life which is not also an integral part of the religious life. There is no secular culture

apart from religion. The aspirations of the tribe are inextricably woven into its body of religious practices and so-called doctrines. Therefore, religion is nothing but the manner in which the group consciousness of the tribe is expressed. What is important to the tribe is "sacred" to it. The primitive man feels the "collective consciousness" of his group as an irresistible pressure from outside. He "projects" this group voice first in the figure of a totem animal or plant, later in the other figures and myths which constitute primitive ritual. All such "projections" are embodiments of collective emotion, desire and hope. Thus group emotion is the essence of religion. According to Durkheim it is not man versus the universe that gives rise to religion, but man as part of society, versus nature as seen by society, that is the basis for religion.

Kaplan's concept of Judaism is that is is an evolving religious civilization. Like Kohler, he believes in evolution. Unlike Kohler, he insists that the Jewish religion cannot be separated from Jewish peoplehood. He envisions an organic Jewish community. The emancipation of the Jew during the past century has led to a breakdown in Jewish communal solidarity.

To retrieve this solidarity and to build a strong Jewish community without the existing diviseness, there is needed an organic, comprehensive social structure. It is to be organized on a regional basis to which every Jew can feel he belongs. Such a structure, Kaplan tries to reveal in his Reconstructionism. Durkheim provides the concept behind such a civilization. The pragmatists give Kaplan a basis for interpreting such a community as relevant in the evolutionary process.

In addition to sociology and philosophy, a third strain of influence felt by Kaplan is nationalism. In this connection his ideas derive from Ahad Ha-am (Asher Ginzberg), who was a Russian Jewish exponent of Jewish nationalism and of cultural Zionism. The ultimate fulfillment of Zionism involves the regeneration of the Jewish people from disintegration. The State of Israel, having been established, should become the nucleus of an international fellowship for world Jewry.

"The Essence of Reconstructionism"

Kaplan believes that if Judaism is to survive it must reconstructed. It must adapt itself to the new

conditions resulting from political, economic, cultural, and social changes that have taken place in the world since the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Such "reconstructions" have taken place in the past at the great turning points in Jewish history. The difference between the past and the present is that, since people did not have a sense of history, they were unaware that they were introducing anything new. They thought they were just "interpreting," yet unconsciously they were reconstructing Judaism.

An example of such reconstruction is given. When the Israelite tribes settled in Canaan, they transformed themselves from a nomadic to an agricultural community. Later a united monarchy was constituted from the transformation of a loose confederation of tribes. Once again, when they were conquered by Nebuchadnezzar and their leaders were led away captive to Babylon, they were compelled to reconstruct their form of organization, their theology and their way of life. Thus has been the process of Jewish historical development.

In modern times, the Jewish people have had to face new challenges. Emancipation offered Jews the

opportunity, for the first time, to become citizens on an equal, legal basis with non-Jews. This meant that they were to be not only in the various lands of the diaspora, but part of new nations. As they became exposed to the intellectual currents of the modern world, many of their long-cherished beliefs about God and themselves as a people were shaken. The scientific approach to the study of the past particularly rocked the foundations of their inherited notions regarding the authenticity of the Biblical account of their origins and of the origins of the Torah.

Analysis of Contemporary Religious Movements

(a) Reform

Kaplan made a thorough study of the three major religious movements in Jewish life as well as the secular movement of Zionism. He felt that Reform Judaism was basically correct in realizing that Judaism had evolved and changed and needed to continue to progress. Also, Reform emphasized the ethical message of the prophets. We noted this view in the theology of Kaufmann Kohler. However, Kaplan maintains Reform erred in its assumption that religion could be

detached from the culture that gave rise to it. Jewish peoplehood had been repudiated. All ties to the land of Israel, to distinctive rituals and folkways making Jews ethnically different were cut off. Reform made Judaism exclusively a religion composed of a communion of believers united by a common conception of God.

(b) Orthodox

Modern or neo-Orthodoxy, according to Kaplan, stresses an adherence to a full program of Judaism permeating every aspect of the life of its followers. They have insisted on an "intensive" education for their children. In these respects, Kaplan sees the strength of Orthodoxy. On the other hand, they have failed to reckon with the intellectual challenges of modern times. In the face of modern science, they stoutly maintain their belief in the existence of a supernatural order beyond the natural. They believe in the literal revelation of the Torah at Mount Sinai as well as in the miracles of the Bible. Halakhah or Jewish Law is considered to be of divine authority and not subject to change. Kaplan feels that this shunning of the natural for the supernatural creates an obstacle in making their religion and civilization "a force for freedom, justice, and peace."

(c) Conservativism

The Conservative movement also failed to meet the modern challenge. Solomon Schechter had developed the idea of "Catholic Israel," that it was the Jewish people which established, in every age, what Judaism should mean to that age. This means that there was a recognition of Judaism as the evolving religious civilization of the Jewish people. Kaplan feels that Conservatism was correct in its wholehearted support of Zionism. They saw the opportunity to revive the Jewish people, Jewish religion and culture. However, they followed either Reform or Orthodoxy in other respects. The Conservative movement adopted Reform practices and ceremonies which added dignity and decorum to the service. They followed the Orthodox by emphasizing Halakhah. Kaplan believes that neither in theory nor in practice were they able to accept genuine innovation and this is its main defect.

Kaplan's Religion of an Evolving Civilization

For Kaplan, religion is the highest expression of a civilization, the beliefs, institutions and forms which grow out of an attempt to give expression to its idea of salvation. By "salvation," Kaplan means "the highest

good, fulfillment, the ultimate purpose of life." Every people develops its own unique idea of the highest good "when it translates that idea into sacred literature, sacred commemorations, or identifies the idea with revered heroes and sanctified places - these become the religion of the group." For that people, God is the power that makes for salvation. He is its source and the assurance that it is attainable, provided the people live up to His requirements, or His "law" or "will." Different groups have distinctive conceptions of salvation and God. These conceptions are represented by their sancta or its books, its holidays, its heroes and its special places. Judaism's sancta include the Bible, Yom Kippur and Pesach, Moses and Jerusalem. Organically, religion is bound up with civilization, which in turn is given its highest expression through religion.

Formerly, the Jew had to choose either his religion or citizenship in the land in which he lived. This was because Judaism and Christianity were mutually exclusive. In America, one can be an American and a Jew at the same time living in two civilizations. He ought to share to the fullest the culture and the religion of both.

God as a "Principle"

(a) Does God interfere in the affairs of the world?

Why does disease strike? Why do droughts occur? Is it God's punishment for sins? According to Kaplan, this was the thought of men in former times. However, today the sciences can explain why these things occur. In the realm of physical nature, laws operate which are not subject to suspension or interference. Even when certain phenomena cannot be understood, as in medical science - they are not to be considered punishment for sins.

(b) God = Moral law

Kaplan believes that God is to be found in the moral law which is as integral a part of the cosmos as any physical law. God is that force in the universe that makes for goodness, justice, mercy, and truth. Wherever men display moral responsibility and moral courage, they are manifesting the presence of God. When men strive to know the moral law and live up to it, they achieve salvation.

(c) How do we know the moral law?

The moral law is discovered from experience, intuition, and reason. When all three achieve a

consensus, men know they have come upon a truth. Therefore, truth becomes available to men from discovery rather than from revelation. Yet, man must be humble and honest enough to admit that the glimpse of truth which he discovers at any moment is only a part of what there is to be known. As each generation strives to expand the knowledge of truth, it refines what it has inherited from the past and transmits it to future generations. Such a view that man's highest duty is to "seek God," and dedicate himself to the striving after truth for the purpose of knowing how best to live with himself and with his fellow man, to find the divine within nature as making man truly and fully human - is called "religious naturalism."

Prayer - To whom? For What Reason?

How does one achieve dialogue, as Buber describes it, with that which is not personal? How does one address a prayer to an impersonal force or process? Kaplan answers that this is done by "reification" or the assigning of personality to that which is abstract or non-personal. Man has a human impulse to pray which cannot be discarded. Why? Because man needs to give

vent to his thoughts, feelings, hopes and fears. When man conceives of that which he needs to fulfill in himself, man expresses through all of his prayers his conception of salvation. It is akin to the task of the poet who ascribes "personality" to concepts of "justice," "death," and "duty." While these are not persons, the limitations of our minds causes us to resort to the dialogue form. Therefore, prayer affects the praying person by giving him faith, courage, hope, or merely relieves the pressure of his mood. Prayer does not change the weather or any other external condition. It does not have objective value, according to Kaplan - only subjective efficaciousness.

Vocation vs. Chosenness

(a) Chosenness considered

Kaplan rejects the concept of the "chosen people" in the sense that Jews are people with a supernatural status. Orthodoxy claims that Israel is chosen by virtue of the revelation at Sinai, the acceptance of the responsibility to live by the entire Torah (written and oral). Reform changed the interpretation but retained the idea in its concept of the "mission of

Israel," meaning that God has selected Israel to teach the world the idea of ethical monotheism.

(b) Kaplan's objections to chosenness

Kaplan states four objections as to why he rejects the concept of the chosen people. Firstly, if Jews maintain that they are "superior to the rest of the world in the realm of the religious and the ethical," then they are advocating a view of racial heredity. Secondly, for Jews to claim to have given the world religious and ethical concepts pointing toward a better world - then they are arrogant. The third objection is that for Jews to state that they possses the truest form of truth is only realistic if they continue to believe that their teachings are immutable and infallible. But such a belief has been rejected. Finally, if Jews interpret this concept as referring to the fact "that the western world is indebted to Israel for its fundamental religious ideas and institutions" is to confuse the historical fact with theological doctrine. Is it not true, however, that the Jew's concept of "choseness" reflects the idea that he cannot live for himself alone but that he must dedicate himself to a cause beyond himself? Has it not always been our aim

to perform some great service for the welfare of humanity, for the advancement of the kingdom of God?

(c) Vocation

Kaplan feels that it is in the interests of truth and enlightened religion to omit all reference to chosenness. He substitutes the "doctrine of vocation." This is the divine calling in which all peoples can have a share. "The vocation of each society, or people, is to enable all who belong to it to foster their freedom and responsibility in such a way as to become as fully human as their potentialities warrant." Kaplan issues a call to Jewry to take some dramatic and symbolic step to renew the "covenant." He desires us to restate, in terms of modern experiences, the ideals which Jews must add to their desire for mere survival.

"Amending the Constitution"

(a) Law as law

Kaplan feels the real need of law for Jewish life. The law is one of Judaism's most distinctive contributions to civilization. The ethical idea, exhortation or maxim only acquires effective existence when it is translated into legislation. However, if

we accept the values of democracy, the law cannot be authoritatively thrust upon the people. The past has a vote - not a veto. People must give their consent to the law if they are to follow it. However, no basic changes are possible unless the "constitution can be amended" to fit the needs and the wishes of the people. Those who amend it must be limited but they must act responsibly if it is to have status and meaning.

(b) Law as ritual

Kaplan distinguishes between the law and ritual practice which the tradition does not do. Ritual should be conceived as symbols of the basic values of Jewish life. If a particular ritual symbolizes a value no longer held sacred by Jews, it should either be revised or set aside. Since new values are constantly emerging, new rituals should be devised to symbolize them. This involves an ongoing process of creativity in ritual. Important to this is trial and error. Jews must have faith that in time the beautiful and meaningful rituals will persist, while irrelevant or unaesthetic ones will fall by the way. With such a purpose in mind, no one need fear that the continuity with the past will be lost, or that Jews will no longer be able to recognize

one another. Kaplan stresses that rituals growing out of ancient sancta will always be identified as Jewish but he objects to any fixed set of rules being handed down. Mature people should participate in thinking through some of the ritual problems that have arisen as a result of modern living and the changed attitude toward the authority of the past.

Need for a Community

In order for law to function, it presupposes the existence of a community in which it can operate. Formerly, Jews had to belong to the community because it had legal recognition and they were physically segregated. Such a community in the United States has no legal status nor is it geographically determined. It must be entirely voluntary having cohesion, mutal responsibility, and a sense of Jewish peoplehood. Kaplan is critical of the contemporary situation where people belong to organizations and institutions but not to the community. There is no organic unity, and without such unity, we can have no law.

Greater Zionism

(a) The base of a Jewish civilization

Kaplan came to realize how important the land

of Israel's role had been in the life and consciousness of the Jews. If Judaism was to flourish once again, it would have to be rooted in a land, where Jewish civilization would be a majority civilization, where the language would be that of the masses of people, where the calendar would be Jewish, and the schools, the courts and theatres would be conducted in Hebrew and in the spirit of the tradition.

(b) Zionism

With Zionism, Judaism reentered the state of history as a modern civilization. It carried the Jewish people over the threshold from medievalism to modernism. Now the ancient yearning of Jews to "return" was understood in naturalist instead of supernaturalist terms. Rather than wait for the Messiah to redeem them from exile, they undertook the task themselves. It was a drive for the renaissance of the spirit and culture of the Jewish people. With the establishment of the State of Israel, Jewish culture took on a new lease on life. However, new problems and confusions were also created. Why must all Jews go to live in Israel? Could Judaism really not survive outside the land? With Israel as the core, says Kaplan, the Diaspora

can be inspired and replenished. With free nations offering Jews equality, "exile" no longer carries the same connotation for the complete ingathering of exiles.

(c) Unity explored

Kaplan seeks a common Jewish unity so that Israelis and Jews elsewhere will not grow separate from one another. He feels that the Jews of the world need to be called together, through their representatives, to adopt a formed "covenant" similar to that which Jews adopted on previous occasions at momentous turning points in their history. Kaplan proposes the concept of the "trans-national Jewish community, through the expansion of the Zionist ideal into a 'Greater Zionism'." Its purposes would be to reinstate the spiritual unity of the Jewish people through the reclamation of Israel as the homeland of its tradition, culture and religion. Not only should we preserve the State of Israel, but all Jews should recognize in their peoplehood the indispensable source of their religious or spiritual unity and personal salvation. Therefore, while the core of the Jewish people is in Israel, and the rest of the Jews in the Diaspora pay allegiance to the countries of their citizenship, it is necessary for these latter communities to be organically correlated.

Jews should unite upon the spiritual interests which they share as a result of their being members of the same culture or civilization.

Kaplan believes nationhood (referring to common cultures and not political states) generates its own spiritual values through a consensus which arises out of a common history and civilization. "The religion of a group is conveyed through **sancta** which it creates, and the feelings of reverence the sancta arouse, and the common ethical and spiritual values which they symbolize."

Summary

The three poles of Jewish thought had traditionally been God, Torah and Israel as we indicated in the last section of this book. Kaplan's philosophy is a basically functional, or pragmatic interpretation of God and Torah. His understanding of the nature of the Jewish people, he worked out after a careful study of the cultural Zionism of Ahad Ha-am (Asher Ginzberg). Kaplan sees that "throughout Judaism's universe of discourse, the people of Israel was the central reality, and that the meaning of God and of Torah can be properly understood only in relation to that central reality."

Pragmatism insists that the meaning of any idea is to be found in the differences it makes in human conduct. Kaplan's pragmatic Judaism asserts that this religion "uses the belief in God to make Jews aware of the natural conditions that have to be maintained for the Jewish people, if it is to achieve salvation collectively and individually."

Religion, in Kaplan's view, is a group affair to a far greater extent then it is an individual triumph. In this point, his antithesis to Kohler and Buber is clear. "The feeling of togetherness is indispensable to the realization of God, for without it we cannot experience God at all." To be an individual is to be the product of the social environment. Interaction with one's fellow members in a social group is the source and origin of the human qualities we call mind and personality. But it is also the case that to be an individual is to be responsible in one's role as a member of the social group; because of the factor of individual responsibility, the social group is dependent on individuals. Neither group nor individual can be conceived as existing independently of one another. It is in these terms that Kaplan sees the organic unity evolving from sancta through a civilization toward the ethical ideal.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. In what ways are each of the following traditional Jewish interpretations threatened in our modern age?
   (a) God created the world and man directly.
   (b) God intervenes in the course of history.
   (c) Israel is the Lord's peculiar treasure.
   (d) History is the chronicle of divine reward and punishment.
2. Emancipation and Enlightenment broke down the ghetto walls and liquidated the segregated Jewish community. Was this a mixed blessing? Should Jews have better stayed in the ghettos? Why?
3. How does Kaplan "reconstruct" views on revelation? The chosen people? The Messiah?
4. Can American Jewish life be nurtured by cultural creativity in Israel? How?
5. Does American Jewry have anything to offer Israel besides financial and moral support? Is there anything spiritual we have to offer?
6. Is Kaplan's criticism of Reform, Conservative and Orthodoxy (originally expounded in 1937) still applicable today? Why?
7. Are you able to accept Kaplan's view of prayer?
8. Is there any <u>real</u> difference between Kaplan's view of vocation and the traditional notion of chosenness? And Reform's interpretation of chosenness?

9. Are rituals still relevant? What do you think of Kaplan's ideas on ritual?

Books you Ought to Read

Mordecai M. Kaplan. Judaism as a Civilization. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1934.)

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_____. The Future of the American Jew. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948.)

_____. Questions Jews Ask. (New York: Reconstructionist Press, 1955.)

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CHAPTER VIII

"A WORLD TO BE INHABITED"

In the preceding pages, we have tried to give you some insight into the problems of formulating knowledge as such, of the major concepts of Judaism and of the variety of thought and approach one may bring to this task. In essence, we have tried to point to the vast scope of Judaism and to indicate the range of problems which exist. As we said in the first chapter, "There are no easy answers!"

In examing Judaism, in its basic concepts and in three of its major thinkers in the twentieth century, we learn several things. First, we often do not account for the time-factor in our investigation of religion. No Biblical idea may be viewed as contemporaneous with our ideas today. Rather, we ought to regard the ideas of the Bible as constantly

developing and as a part of different ages of different places, and most important, of different people. We must be able to view religion in its dynamic sense and never allow it to be static. If the Torah has been handed down from generation to generation, it has not been merely for survival. It has been in order to expand and illuminate ideas, attitudes and feelings and the lives of people. We live in a different world then our Biblical ancestors. While we share even today some of the problems which they encountered, our ways of solving them must of necessity be in response to the world in which we live.

We noticed the fact that our three major Jewish religious thinkers have quite different schemes of Jewish thought, and yet all of them share basic Jewish ideas such as God, Torah, and Israel. We took notice not only of their thought but of the distinctive influences by which they developed their religious conceptions.

While all three men account for the same elements of Judaism, there is an additional implicit element of extreme importance - the element of <u>value</u>. Kohler, Buber and Kaplan are trying to approach reality in a

thoroughly honest manner. They are students passionately engaged in the search for truth. Each man asks us to adopt a particular stance. For Kohler, "God is a postulate of man's moral consciousness." For Buber, our relationship of "I-Eternal Thou" has moral implications. Kaplan insists that God is manifested in the moral law.

If one were to examine the whole history of Jewish religious thought, one would discover the importance of "morality" and "goodness" as an integral part of the Jewish psyche. Even secular Zionism places its faith in this supreme value. The Jew is constantly in search of ways to ennoble life, to make it fuller, to make it more meaningful. In so doing, the stress has always been on man's behavior. At times, the Jew has been bold enough even to challenge God's behavior.

We do not exclusively hold the answers to the problems mentioned earlier. In fact, the problems only lead to other questions. But suppose we had the answers! Would we be more moral, more ethical, more human? Probably not. Our religion has to be grounded inside us. It has to be the way we look at life. When we go through the tasks of living, we do more than simply think out propositions. Long before we think,

we are blessed with life's spirit causing us to function. Now, we are confronted with religious problems as necessary for our moral maturity. While we reflect upon these problems, we must make the assumption that life is good, that it should be preserved, and that it is within our power to make it better.

You may be wondering, "But what did you prove? How have you convinced me?" Beyond anything we might say, your very living is testimony to the fact that you consider it worthwhile. Reason also plays a role. It is good to doubt and to be skeptical - but caution must be issued.

From a logical standpoint, complete skepticism is possible. We may sit down in an easy chair, pass all the data of our mind in review and demand incontrovertible proof from them that they are not all part of one grand illusion. To an aggressively skeptical state of mind, all "proofs" must be further substantiated through "proof of proofs" and so on, ad infinitum. In the light of skepticism, all facts and values assume of necessity the ghostly aspect of unreality.

Nevertheless, away from the easy chair and within the seething cauldron of life's actual problems, no one but the insane will question the reality of existence of the world or of man.

Again, by strict logic, when we try to discover the question of the ultimate foundation and purpose of existence, we may be plagued by doubt. Perhaps, there is no Reality behind the flow of phenomena. Even if there be such a Reality, can it be comprehensible to us? Perhaps all we can say is that it is Unknowable. But do not human life and human ideals continue to demand that we orient our lives to some valid goals? The spirit of man impels us never to give up the search for God, for truth and goodness. In spite of the failures of the past, it is our spiritual duty to employ our best effort in the attempt to know the Unknowable. Moreover, when we come to the presentation of a positive answer concerning the essence of all things, we are compelled to fall back upon our own deepest convictions. These find their source in intuition.

An intuition is a fluid state of mind which cannot as a whole be imprisoned in some hard formula. Every

statement in which this intuition has traditionally been phrased necessarily reflected the background and bias of those who have experienced it. Beneath all of the apparently opposing philosophies of Judaism, there is hidden one group of insights, pointing to the divine origin of ethical values.

Our concern is to discover whether there is indeed an intuition of the eternal validity and of the extra-human source of human values. Through the long line of Hebrew prophets, who taught that God, the Creator of the world, to Whom alone true Being can be imputed, we have asserted that He is also the Source of morality. It was through an intense moral enthusiasm that mono-theistic faith was reached by our teachers. This intuition was in the absolute authority of the moral law.

Ultimately, it is in this sense that Judaism makes the greatest sense. Our religious confrontation does not require that we believe this way or that way. Our Jewish orientation is that we are impelled to live - to live righteously "with all our heart, with all our mind and with all our soul." We cannot simply assert to such a notion. Contrary to public opinion, moral decision is demanding, exacting and difficult. All of us may be

prepared to make the minimum commitment. Jewish experience has ever sought for the maximum.

Worship is the exercise whereby the attempt is made to keep moral fervor at a high level. In reminding ourselves of our relation to the Supreme Being, we strengthen the ties of ethics which are common to man and to God. Here, we wish to experience reality of the good on its most exalted level.

If God, Torah, and Israel can be seen as the Source of morality, the revelation or declaration or exaltation that goodness exists and that a certain people have been charged to incorporate it and share it with the world, our basis for understanding the traditional theology takes on great meaning. Morality becomes equated with the universe and our ultimate striving. However, there is this problem: how shall we know that what we do and what we think is not based on sheer ignorance or phantasy? That is the real purpose of reflective thought. It serves as a check. It serves as a corrective for unhealthy and harmful views. It serves as a means of making our experience of the world coherent with our ideals and with the Source of those qualities of truth, goodness and justice. It roots us closer to the Godhead.

In our presentation, we have only made a beginning - a search into Jewish ideas, an investigation of the three most influential thinkers of our age. More than ever do we, as an educated society, need to concern ourselves with proper perspective and balance in our religious yearning. We need to understand that it is a yearning and it will continue to be so. It is not simple nor final nor absolute. It is part of the growth of mankind. Not only is the Jewish past a matter for study and concern; not only is the development of thought important for us in order to grow; but it must ultimately encompass life itself. It is the basis of our habitation on this earth and it gives order and significance to all life.

We ask you to continue the search through reading and discussion. This is the most profound expression of God's unity. "For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens, who formed the earth and made it; He did not create it a chaos, He formed it to be inhabited." (Isaiah 45:18). In learning to inhabit this earth, we will need to know more and more about how to preserve it. None of us will have the same answers. Not all the questions will be answered. Yet, who can

accept the universe as without order and purpose? Who can believe fully in the nothingness of man and in his lack of relationship one to the other? There are MANY POSSIBILITIES of viewing God - in intuition, as a Person, in Nature, etc. So long as He continues to be Our God and the God of our fathers, we can have a thriving, challenging, intellectually appealing search for Him.

Most of the writing in this field which has occurred in recent years derives the source of its ideas from one of these three major thinkers. We believe that the young Jewish college student would be wise to familiarize himself with such books. Such opportunities should prove challenging and exciting not to mention the greater perspective students will have.

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