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of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and Erich Fromm"

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PSYCHOANALYSIS, RELIGION, AND JUDAISM  
IN THE WRITINGS OF  
SIGMUND FREUD, CARL JUNG, AND ERICH FROMM

Jan Barton Bresky

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for ordination

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## DIGEST

This thesis presents a significant analysis of the writings of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and Erich Fromm on the subject of psychoanalysis and religion. It also examines the question of how these men viewed the Jewish enterprise, and in the case of Sigmund Freud, to what extent he was influenced and motivated by his "Jewishness."

Chapter one deals with Freud's definition and analysis of the term "religion." Freud defined religion as "belief in theistic absolutism," the dominant view of religion in his time. Freud's criticism and rejection of religion is of religion defined as "belief in theistic absolutism." Religion defined otherwise is not necessarily subject to Freud's criticism. Freud contends that theistic absolutistic religion developed as a psychological response to the inherent problems of civilized social organization, and the inhospitable forces of nature. This psychological response, however, had become increasingly unproductive with the advance of science and technology. Accordingly, civilization would be better served in the modern age by giving up the illusion of theistic absolutistic religion, and turning instead to such enterprises as the physical sciences and psychoanalysis, to bring about the happiness of the human person in society.

Chapter two analyzes Freud's notion of guilt. It

defines the term and shows how Freud connected the notion of guilt with a need in both ancient and modern religions for ritual. Included in this chapter is a Freudian analysis of selected Jewish rituals.

Chapter three discusses the question "Was Freud a 'good Jew'?" The conclusion is arrived at that by Orthodox Jewish standards, Freud unquestioningly would be considered a heretic. However, by the standards of a liberal, non-authoritarian Judaism, Freud could certainly be understood as a member in good standing. Chapter three also deals with Freud's work, Moses and Monotheism, and his motivation in writing it. We conclude that Moses and Monotheism sought to defend the Jews intellectually in view of the growth of anti-Semitism in general, and Freud's expulsion from Austria by the Nazis in particular.

The views of Carl Jung are dealt with throughout this thesis. Chapter three relates Jung's psychological and religious disagreements with Freud, and concludes that Jung was an anti-Semite. Jung's anti-Semitism is seen as the principal cause of Jung's rift with Sigmund Freud. Chapter four discusses Jung's view of dreams, symbols, and myths. According to Jung, religion consisted of messages received by the unconscious during dreams. These dreams emanated from a source that transcends human power. Jung said that all religions are true insofar as they are psychological realities produced by dreams and as long as they reflect and influence the behavior of the individual.

In chapter four an examination is also prepared of Erich Fromm's psychoanalytic theories. The conclusion is drawn that most of Fromm's psychological assertions were essentially the same as those of Freud. However, Fromm's work is useful insofar as he updates Freudian analysis of the importance of the Oedipal complex. Whereas Freud saw the Oedipal complex to be a symbol of the essential sexual conflict of the human person, Fromm revised Freud's theory to say that the Oedipal complex was the symbol of the difficult struggle of the human person to break away from authority structures, the parent being the first symbol of such authority. This struggle to break away from authority figures and accept the freedom and responsibility of non-authoritarian life is of course vital to the growth of liberal religion.

Chapter five examines Fromm's views concerning the relationship between religion and psychoanalysis. Fromm concludes that open and liberal forms of psychoanalysis enhance liberal religions, but conflict with authoritarian Orthodox religions. Chapter six contains Fromm's appraisal of the Bible and his analysis of the growth of the "God concept" in Jewish history.



## CHAPTER I

### FREUD'S CONCEPT OF RELIGION

#### A. Definition

It seems surprising that in all Freud's writing about religion he never defined the word religion itself. We cannot account this to any scientific or methodological lapse on Freud's part. No person would say of Freud (not even his most ardent critics) that he had the type of mind that would overlook the smallest detail, let alone an essential principle. It is more accurate to conclude that Freud never defined the word "religion" because it was not necessary to do so for his readers. They already possessed a common preconceived notion of the word. This notion was that "religion" is belief in theistic absolutism.<sup>1</sup>

Theistic absolutism is the theological position that maintains there is in existence a Deity who possesses certain attributes. We might list those attributes as follows:

1. Deity is a Person, that is a self-conscious living being.
2. Deity can properly be understood in anthropomorphic terms, as for example, an exalted Father.
3. Deity, out of graciousness, revealed his own nature and attributes, and his desires for humankind. These desires were expressed in commandments revealed,

as for example, at Mt. Sinai.

4. Deity is omnipresent and omniscient.
5. Deity can be approached and appeased through prayer.
6. Deity exercises supernatural providence.
7. There is reward and punishment both in this life and in an afterlife for keeping or disobeying Deity's commandments.

It is easy to understand why Freud viewed religion to be "belief in theistic absolutism." The traditional religious forms of the major Western religious communities, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim, all have theistic absolutism as an essential dogma of their structures.

This point, that Freud defined religion as theistic absolutism shall become increasingly important as this paper progresses. For religion may be defined in terms other than those of theistic absolutism. There are definitions of "religion" which would make "religion" something to which Freud would not object. In point of fact the definition of religion to which the author subscribes is that "religion is a human person's response to finitude."

According to the definition of the term "religion" as "response to finitude" the human person is viewed as possessing a pervasive conflict between his/her finity and his/her desire for infinite power and life. This conflict produces a meaningless state of existence called the asoterial state. Religion is the response of the human person to this conflict with the purpose of resolving it and thereby

moving from the asoterial to the soterial, that is, a state of intrinsically meaningful existence. The response to finitude may take many forms only one of which is belief in theistic absolutism.

It is one of the major points of this work to show Freud was not against all forms of religion, that is, he was not against all response to finitude, but rather he was opposed to what he considered illusory responses to finitude. Among the various illusory responses Freud was opposed to was belief in theistic absolutism, since belief in theistic absolutism was what most people in Freud's time viewed as religion and which Freud referred to primarily in his use of the term religion.

It is intriguing to raise the question how Freud would have reacted to such liberal, non-authoritarian forms of religion as are now emerging. These liberal religions allow for responses to finitude that Freud might not have considered illusory. We can only conjecture. Nonetheless we will attempt to demonstrate that nothing in Freud's writing is directed against such non-illusory responses to finitude. Quite the contrary there is evidence to suggest that Freud might have supported and even participated in a more liberal form of Judaism. (We shall take this matter up again in the third chapter which is devoted to Freud's Jewishness.) Suffice it here to say that Freud might have shown sympathy for a liberal religion which would allow non-illusory responses to finitude. From



his own writings we read:

. . . only religion can answer the question of the purpose of life. One can hardly be wrong in concluding the idea of life having a purpose stands and falls with the religious system . . . [therefore] let every man . . . find out for himself in what particular fashion he can be saved.<sup>2</sup>

### B. The Social Need for Theistic Religion<sup>3</sup>

One cannot speak about Freud's view of theistic religion without first pointing out that for Freud, civilization and theistic religions were intrinsically related. In the early stages of human history and indeed until the recent "scientific age," when some change is occurring, there could not be, according to Freud, civilization or an orderly society without a theistic religion that was believed in by the masses of people. This is probably the reason why all Freud's writings begin with an explanation as to how civilization and religion are interdependent. According to Freud the need of an orderly society for theistic religion arises from the following three factors.

First, there were the impersonal, inhospitable, and even hostile forces of nature: in the summer heat and drought, in the winter snow and cold. These forces made the obtaining of life's necessities like food very difficult. So too these hostile natural elements caused humankind to seek out the materials needed to build shelters.

A second factor is that orderly society was faced with the problem of human nature. The tendency of people, according to Freud, is to act like wild animals, seizing as much as they are able with little or no regard for their fellow creatures.

The element of truth behind all this [human nature] which people are so ready to disavow is that men are not gentle creatures who want to be loved, and who at most can defend themselves if they are attacked. They are: on the contrary creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness. As a result their neighbor is not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity for work without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture or to kill him. Homo homini lupus [Man is a wolf to man].<sup>4</sup>

A third attack individuals faced was the vicissitudes of nature. People lived in a world of unpredictable changes occurring in both life and fortune. Such unpredictability, which produces anxiety, occurred in the psychic as well as the physical world. For example, people's lives were open to the onslaught of sudden disaster like earthquake and tornados, and unexpected psychic disorders like mental breakdowns.

These three factors, Freud goes on to say, must have produced in people a constant state of uncertainty and apprehension. It may be assumed therefore, that the early humans came to realize that it was necessary for them to organize in order to survive. It must be mentioned however, that despite its positive aspects in terms of

survival, organized society also produced a negative: this negative was to take away from the individual the "absolute" freedom that a person possesses who lives without an organized society. The individual outside organized society is free. Free to do, free to think whatever he/she pleases without the fear of social coercion or internal guilt. Yet such individual freedom which brings diminished capacity for survival is a meaningless possession.

Yes, the early humans, according to Freud, must have arrived at the inevitable conclusion they would have to organize into cooperative social groups in order to endure, no matter the price in individual freedom that would have to be paid. In these organized groups they would be better suited to meet the challenges and obstacles that stood against them. In the summer they could build shade-producing devices against the intense sun, and dig irrigation ditches to prevent drought and insure adequate water supply. In the winter they could organize groups that would be capable of building dwellings that would provide warmth and some comfort. As far as attacks by individuals against one another, they could establish and enforce laws preventing robbery and violations of the strong over the weak. Against organized attacks by other groups they could raise armies and defend themselves.

Yet, the abridgement of "absolute" individual freedom was a very high price to pay for an organized

society. To be able to live together people would have to give up the right to do as they pleased. Laws, rules, mores, the skeleton of organized society, compromised and complicated the once autonomous existence of the human individual.

In addition another difficulty was inherent in civilization. Even when people organized they still could not prevent certain kinds of catastrophies such as natural disasters, physical and mental illness, and death. What possible way could civilization provide its members with a tool or instrument to help them cope with these catastrophies. Death in particular must have presented a powerful and overwhelming problem.

To deal with this variety of problems which would threaten the stability of any society Freud believed the theistic religious response was developed. The function of this religious response was to provide an ideology that would enable people to accept and live meaningfully in socialized groups. Thus theistic religion answered the variety of questions against accepting the restraints that civilization dictates.

Question: Why should a person accept the restrictive laws of civilization and not do as they please? Answer: Because according to theistic religion the laws and statutes of civilization are not man-made, rather they are the direct and infallible commands of Deity! Deity rewards those who follow the laws of civilization and punishes those who do not. The reward for obedience to Deity's commandments is



eternal life, the infinite desire of all people. The punishment for disobedience might come either in this world by being stricken with disease, natural disaster or death, or in the next world by having one's "soul" cut off from existence which is the fear of every person: namely that their existence will be finite.

Question: Why do the attacks of Fate occur indiscriminately despite civilization and an orderly society? Answer: Because these attacks are not indiscriminate. Rather as we said, Deity is showing disapproval for people's wrongdoing (or sin) by taking actions against these people in the form of natural disaster, disease, or death.

Question: Why death? Answer: There is no real death for those who follow the laws and statutes of religion and civilization. Rather, these people will attain eternal life in an afterworld.

The theistic system as an ideology that supported and protected civilization from the anti-social instincts and emotions inherent in its members worked, Freud says, for a long period of time. For countless centuries this particular view underlay Western civilization. However, according to Freud, people and civilizations are now entering a new and crucial stage of development. The scientific age is upon us and people are now beginning to ask for proof or convincing evidence that the claims of theistic religion are true. If there was no proof for the claims of this particular religious response, and its

beliefs were in fact fantasy, then the very foundation of Western civilization would be shaken. The pillars of our society would crumble. When the masses would discover these theistic beliefs were only fantasy, chaos would result and civilization threatened. Who could then predict the end result of such a process?

It was just this worrisome thought that primarily motivated Freud to search out whether theistic absolutism was true or false, and whether it could be maintained as a mass religion. If theistic absolutism could indeed be maintained then Freud's fears would be unfounded. If, however, theistic absolutism were false, and a fantasy or "illusion" it would only be a matter of time before the Western world would erupt with disorders.

If the sole reason you must not kill your neighbor is because God has forbidden it and will severely punish you for it in this or the next life--then, when you learn there is no God and that you need not fear His punishment, you will certainly kill your neighbor without hesitation.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, if theistic absolutism were false, some ideological alternative had to replace it in order to give civilization a sturdy foundation thereby preventing chaos, disorder, and destruction.

### C. Scientific Knowledge and Religious Knowledge

Over his entire life Freud maintained a scientific and rational attitude toward everything that he studied, including religion. In Freud's analytic system a crucial criteria for belief was evidence. And with religion playing such a significant role in the foundation of civilization, Freud believed it should have the most impeccable empirical evidence for establishing the validity of its doctrines. Further, religion should not only produce truth, it should establish the proper empirical criteria by which all truth could be discerned. To the contrary though, Freud believed that the criteria used by religions to establish their dogmas was scientifically and empirically void.

In Freud's view religion professed three ways for establishing the validity of its beliefs. First, "these [religious] teachings deserve to be believed because they were already believed by our ancestors."<sup>6</sup> Second, "we possess proofs [of religious doctrines] handed down to us from those same primeval times."<sup>7</sup> Third, "it is forbidden to raise the question of their [religious ideas] authentication at all."<sup>8</sup>

Freud lashed out against this third argument. He insisted it was nonsensical not to question the beliefs of religion as one would question the factuality of any other institution. Indeed each individual had the right and the obligation to determine for themselves whether religions professed truths or lies. Further, Freud argued that it was

the intellect which was the prime tool in this search for truth.

When a man has once brought himself to accept uncritically all the absurdities that religious doctrines put before him and even to overlook the contradictions between them we need not be surprised at the weakness of his intellect . . . We have no other means of controlling our instinctual [animal] natures but our intelligence. How can we expect people who are under the dominance of the prohibition of thought to attain the [truth].<sup>9</sup>

The first and second arguments for the validity of religious beliefs Freud found equally spurious. The antiquity of an idea or an impressive list of its past adherents do not necessarily make that idea true. So too the evidence produced by past generations cannot be deemed valid unless it can be reproduced for the current generation. When Freud found that none of the so-called "ancient proofs" of theistic absolutism could be empirically verified or reproduced in his own time, he declared them to be invalid.

Again, after an analysis of the evidence in favor of theistic absolutism Freud was obligated to come to the sobering conclusion that despite the widespread popularity of theistic absolutism, there was no scientific or empirical evidence to verify its doctrines, dogmas, or beliefs! The result of all this was:

He [Freud] went through his life from beginning to end as a natural atheist: that is to say, one who saw no reason for believing in the existence of a supernatural Being and who felt no emotional need for such a belief. The world of nature seemed all embracing and he could find no evidence for anything outside of it.<sup>10</sup>

Next Freud took up the claim of some of the supporters



of theistic religions that the doctrines and dogmas of religion were outside the realm of reason and logic. They agreed with Freud that theistic absolutism presented no absolute scientific or empirical proof for modern people. But they contended religious ideas did not have to conform to the strict criteria of belief laid down by science. For these people religious knowledge was qualitatively different than scientific knowledge.

Freud attacked this kind of thinking by saying it lead to a doctrine of "credo quia absurdum" which he defined as follows:

It maintains that religious doctrines are outside the jurisdiction of reason--are above reason. Their truth must be felt inwardly and they need not be comprehended.<sup>11</sup>

Freud refuted the doctrines of "credo quia absurdum" by saying it was implicitly invalid and so subjective that no proof for establishing proper moral authority could be derived from it.

As an authoritative statement [credo quia absurdum] has no binding force. Am I obligated to believe every absurdity?<sup>12</sup>

Note carefully that Freud combined the issue of religious knowledge with the issue of religious authority. Freud knew that if religious knowledge could be shown to be fallible, no person could derive any authority based on the statements of religion! Freud did not mind if individuals in a society were to pursue their own delusions. After all, Freud said anyone has "the right to be ignorant." But when one person attempted to seize control over another based on

subjective fallible religious doctrines, this was a serious issue, with dire consequences for the maintenance of an orderly civilization. Simply stated, one person cannot derive authority over another on the basis of a private subjective experience, the very kind of experience which modern theistic absolutism claims provides truth for its beliefs. According to Freud even if a person claimed to have spoken with Deity, unless they could produce valid empirical evidence for their claims, they were to be ignored.

If one man has gained an unshakable conviction of the true reality of religious doctrines from a state of ecstasy which deeply moved him, of what significance is that to others?<sup>13</sup>

None.

Next the defenders of theistic absolutism tried to criticize Freud on the following basis: Yes we know that the dogmas and doctrines of theistic absolutism cannot be proved, and in fact, some of them are outright fantasies. But should we not believe in them anyway "as if" they were true, in order to maintain the stability of civilization and not incite the masses of people by exposing theistic absolutism as illusory? To this Freud answered an emphatic, No! If religious ideas were false the great masses of people would eventually realize it anyway. They would quickly withdraw their support from religion and attempt to overthrow the civilization which tried to force them to accept erroneous beliefs. If religion and civilization were to endure they would have to pursue truth and expose that truth to all people. If

religion was untrue, it would have to be changed, and not cover up its falsehoods. "If religion is not true: it is fairy tales and no 'as if' philosophy will save it."<sup>14</sup>

Again by the end of his investigation, Freud came to the conclusion that the evidence for theistic absolutism was both null and void.

Criticism has whittled away the evidential value of religious doctrines, natural science has shown up the errors in them, and comparative research has been struck by the fatal resemblance between the religious ideas which we revere and the mental products of primitive people and times.<sup>15</sup>

But if this was the case how was civilization going to survive without theistic religion as its foundation?

For Freud the key for the survival of civilization was the acceptance of the superiority of scientific knowledge over religious knowledge based on the fact scientific knowledge presented superior criteria for belief. That superiority lay in the fact that scientific knowledge was empirical, demonstrable, and repeatable. As Freud wrote,

Scientific work is the only road which can lead us to a knowledge of reality outside of ourselves. It is mere illusion to expect anything from intuition and introspection.<sup>16</sup>

Freud also predicted the inevitable collapse of religion as an ultimate and infallible source of knowledge and the rise of scientific knowledge as the ultimate source of human knowledge.

The greater the number of men to whom the theories of scientific knowledge become accessible, the more widespread is the falling away from religious beliefs, at first only from its absolute and objectionable trappings but later from its fundamental postulates as well.<sup>17</sup>

We have but two more epistemological notes before we close this section of the chapter. The first point concerns the prospective from which a human person gains knowledge. The second point concerns itself with the role of psychoanalysis in the search for truth.

It was the assumption of Western religion for thousands of years that human knowledge was the result of a human being comprehending a phenomenon external from their being, then absorbing and integrating the processes of that phenomenon into the internal world of the psyche. For the believers in theistic absolutism this meant that Deity would explain the realities of the external world through revelation. Humans, for their part, would absorb this information into their psyches. Afterwards they would act in a way which they felt would be in line with Deity's prescriptions and information. They would in fact, try to follow as close as possible the commandments of Deity.

With the advent of psychoanalysis a whole new way of looking at the process of obtaining knowledge came into being. Rather than humans incorporating an external phenomenon into their internal psyches, it was now possible to propose the idea that there were pre-conceived human cognitions, both conscious and unconscious, which already dwelled within the psyche, and were then projected outward into the external world. In other words, the idea arose that a person's view of reality was greatly influenced by a pre-existing internal system within that person: and that



it was possible to project these internal factors onto the screen of the external world. So followed the startling idea of Freud that the Deity of theistic religion was in fact such a projection, an illusory father whose origin was in the unconscious and whose reality was merely a projection of that unconscious onto the screen of the heavens. This hypothesis was presented in Freud's book, The Psychotherapy of Everyday Life when he said,

I believe in fact that a great part of the mythological view of the world, which reaches into the most modern religions, is nothing more than the psychological processes projected into the outer world . . . thus transforming Metaphysics into Metapsychology.<sup>18</sup>

A second point, which closes our discussion of Freud's view of scientific knowledge and religious knowledge, is the role that psychoanalysis plays in discovering the truth. Freud claimed psychoanalysis was a neutral science. It was a method for discovering truth, not an ends by which truth could be measured. Despite the constant criticisms of believers in theistic religions that Freud wanted to replace religion with psychoanalysis, Freud maintained his attitude that the role of psychoanalysis was that of an accurate tool for discovering truth.

Psychoanalysis is a method of research, an impartial instrument, like an infinitesimal calculus as it were . . . If the application of the psychoanalytic method makes it possible to find a new argument against the truth of religion, tant pis for religion /so much the worse for religion/: but the defenders of religion will by the same right make use of psychoanalysis in order to give full value to the affective significance of religious doctrines.<sup>19</sup>

#### D. The Psychological Need for Religion Part I: The Totem Phase

As we have stated, peoples in ancient societies were most terrified by the thought that the capricious elements of Fate and Nature could overtake and destroy them without warning. But the ancients had a response to this fear. They reasoned that just as they had learned to cooperate with their fellow people to achieve some degree of physical security in the form of organized civilizations, so too they had to come to terms with, or at least appease Fate and Nature in order to bring serenity and peace to their inner psychic lives. This though, remained impossible as long as these two forces were non-personal and remote.

But what if people could posit Fate and Nature as rational Beings like themselves? Surely if that were true then people could have an adequate way to communicate with these forces. If Nature and Fate were Beings they could be placated, influenced and obeyed, resulting in these forces extending providence to selected individuals and groups. In this fashion, psychic peace would be achieved and the terror of a capricious attack from Fate and Nature would be relieved. Thus for Freud, the first necessary psychological step in the development of religion was the humanization of Nature and Fate.

The second necessary psychological step in the development of religion was omnipotence of thought. There are certain types of people who believe that by merely thinking something will happen, it will occur. They contend

all they need do is "wish" or "will" something to be true or real, and it will subsequently exist in reality. They feel their thoughts are all-powerful (omnipotent) and can control both other people and reality itself. The ancients who subscribed to omnipotence of thought believed that by wishing or by willing that Fate and Nature were Persons, these forces would actually become Persons in reality! Freud characterized this wishful thinking as "mistaking an ideal connection for a real one." For as we know, just because it would be ideal for something to exist or to happen, that does not in any way mean such a phenomenon will occur. I may wish all I like that I have a million dollars in my pocket but this "imaginary million" cannot be used in real life to buy anything. Yet, as we shall see, omnipotence of thought continues to play a vital role in modern religions, especially in modern theistic absolutism.

The first combination of the humanization of Nature and Fate with omnipotence of thought manifested itself in ancient totem religions. By using omnipotence of thought, the ancients could wish into existence the reality that certain animals were the earthly "representatives" of natural forces, and that by appeasing these earthly representatives, one could gain security from natural disaster. In this primitive stage Nature was turned from a capricious force into an earthly animal to be worshipped and given sacrifices.

Freud's definition of totem worship supplies us with important psychological insight into its essential character.

As a rule [the totem] is an animal, either edible and harmless, or dangerous and feared . . . The totem is first of all the tribal ancestor [exalted father] of the clan as well as its tutelary spirit and protector . . . The members of the totem are under a sacred obligation not to kill their totem and to abstain from eating its meat or any enjoyment of it.<sup>20</sup>

Freud also noted that wherever we find the totem, we find the existence of a law which forbids members of the same totem clan to have sexual intercourse with one another (exogamy).

Further, Freud took great interest in totem worship because he found its practitioners behaved remarkably similar to modern day neurotics. One trait both these groups of people shared was omnipotence of thought. The other trait they shared was the setting up of a taboo object. For the worshipper of a totem animal god, the animal being worshipped was "taboo." This means that the animal evoked simultaneous feelings of danger, forbiddenness, filth, and yet maintained a tremendous attraction to the totem worshipper. For example, for the totem worshipper whose totem animal was a turtle, the thought of turtle soup would attract and repulse the person at the same time. Neurotics also set up taboo objects which share similar qualities to the taboo objects of totem worship. Thus, if a neurotic person considers a cigarette a taboo object, the thought of smoking would attract and disgust them at the same time.



Freud summed up these contrasting feelings toward the taboo object as ambivalence. As he wrote.

They [totem worshippers and neurotics] assume an ambivalent attitude toward their taboo [or neurotic] prohibitions, in their unconscious they would like nothing better than to transgress them but they also are afraid to do it: they are afraid just because they would like to transgress and the fear is stronger than the pleasure. But in every individual of the [totem] race the desire for it [the taboo object] is unconscious just as in the neurotic . . . [Thus] the basis of taboo is a forbidden action for which there is a strong inclination in the unconscious.<sup>21</sup>

If indeed ancient totem worshippers share omnipotence of thought and an ambivalent attitude like modern day neurotics, could there possibly be a link between these two groups? Could the behavior of both groups have a common origin? Freud believed he found this all-important link in the Oedipus Complex.<sup>22</sup> In the case of totem worshippers the Oedipal complex was projected from the unconscious outward onto the totem animal. In the case of the modern neurotic, the Oedipal Complex was projected either onto an animal or another taboo object.

Perhaps a clinical example will illustrate this crucial point. Freud reports the case of a young boy who, while urinating in a barnyard, had his penis bitten by a rooster. Immediately afterward the boy took careful care of the rooster, till one day the boy suddenly reported that he now loved chickens and hated the rooster. The next day to everyone's chagrin, the boy was found eating the raw flesh of the rooster he killed. After this grisly episode the boy refused to eat any poultry or eggs. The parallels

between this boy's behavior and the Oedipal Complex are explicit. The rooster symbolized the boy's father who in real life was aggressive and cruel. The chickens symbolized the boy's mother. The killing and eating of the rooster symbolized the killing of the father in order to marry the mother. The taboo the boy set up about eating eggs or chickens was the result of the remorse the boy felt at the symbolic murder of the father. Lest my readers find this far-fetched, I shall report that Freud was able to cure this boy's neurosis based on this interpretation.

Similarly Freud posited that the Oedipus Complex was the root of totem worship. We know that totem worshippers go through certain prescribed rites when they celebrate a "holiday." During these designated "holidays" the totem animal, which under normal circumstances is considered forbidden and taboo, is now killed, cooked, and eaten. Afterwards all the members of the tribe mourn the death of the animal that they just slaughtered and ate. Finally, at the end of the feast the tribal members redeem their pledge not to marry women in the same totem clan. If we remember Freud's definition of the word "totem" we remember it is an animal who is considered to be the ancestral father of the clan. Thus it is fair to say that during these designated totem holidays the totem animal or the "exalted father" of the clan is ceremonially murdered, and the tribe devours him. But remorse appears symbolized by the mourning of the dead taboo animal. Finally the mechanism

of guilt takes over and the men of the clan vow not to take wives of the same clan, the symbolic mothers of the tribe. By doing this they deny the incestuous fruit resulting from their murder of the father god.

Freud again concluded that just as the Oedipal Complex is the cause of modern day neurosis, especially in children, so too he insisted the Oedipal Complex is the reason why totem religion set up certain taboo prohibitions and worshipped a "father god."

It becomes clear that the two prohibitions of totem religion, namely not to kill the totem animal and not to use a woman belonging to the same totem clan for sexual purposes, agree in context to the two crimes of Oedipus who slew his father and took his mother to wife, and also the child's two primal wishes whose insufficient repression or whose reawakening forms the nucleus of perhaps all neurosis . . . 23

In fact, for Freud, the Oedipal Complex was seen as the primal problem in the human person and the reason why we have many of the institutions that we do.

I want to state the conclusion that the beginning of religion, ethics, society and art meet in the Oedipus Complex.<sup>24</sup>

### D. Part II: Modern Religion

The first step involved in seeing the growth of modern religion is the realization that the mechanisms of modern religion are essentially the same as those of ancient totem religions. Humans still face the same tensions as did their ancient counterparts. Earthquakes devastate large areas of our country and the world. Flood, drought, and weather factors overwhelm us with their power. Death still lurks in the dim future. Fear, anxiety and depression make our lives meaningless experiences. We are reminded everyday that we are finite. But another part of the human nature desires infinite status: to overcome anxiety, to escape natural disaster and death, to live forever. This, as we stated before, is the problem of finitude which religion attempts to answer.

Theistic absolutism is one religious response that claims to overcome the problem of finitude. It has been the dominant religious response of the Western World. So much so that Freud equated all religion with theistic absolutism. However, it was Freud who attempted to show the answers that theistic absolutism gave to the problem of finitude were scientifically and empirically unsound, unverifiable, in fact, they were illusions.

Theistic absolutism began not in fact, but with a wish. We have already discussed the meaning of omnipotence of thought and the way it manifested itself in ancient civilizations. But it is crucial to remember that the idea



of omnipotence of thought is still a very real force among many people today. They still believe that wishing or willing something will make it so. They still mistake "an ideal connection for a real one." Freud believed omnipotence of thought is particularly strong among the practitioners of theistic absolutism. For what would be more ideal than to wish or will that there is a Father in heaven who would care for us, his children: a Father who would prevent earthquakes, allay anxiety, and grant the individual eternal life. The fact Freud asserts that we have no evidence for such a Being is unimportant to these people. The wish, the desire, the will that such a Being exists and can communicate with us is psychologically dominant over the powers of reason and logic which tell us such a Being is a creation of the imagination, an illusion.

In ancient times people were helpless so they imagined a father god who was represented by an earthly animal, the totem. Today people are still helpless when faced with certain obstacles and again Freud says they wish into existence an exalted father who dwells in the heavens. "Man's helplessness remains and along with it his longing for his father and the gods [God]." <sup>25</sup>

If we are indeed projecting an image of a God from the internal world of the unconscious into the external world of reality, in order for Him to solve our problem of finitude, why would we specifically choose a Father Image? To answer this we must first understand some basic elements of the human personality.

Freud claimed that we have stored in our unconscious a prototype experience of helplessness before powerful external forces. This feeling of helplessness, as we said is a primary reason in imagining the existence of a father god. The prototype experience of helplessness to which Freud refers is our childhood. Some people might respond to this by saying, "Yes, but my childhood is over. I am an adult now." Freud would contend that whatever phase in development we have already passed through is not over, gone, or merely a memory. Rather all the various stages of growth of human persons are incorporated into a person's present psyche as a unique and individual "self." In other words, my childhood lives inside of me as a separate individual force along side my "teenage self," my "infant self," and my "adult self."

This is a crucial point. For at different times one of these "selves" can take power over the person and determine their thoughts and behavior patterns. Thus, a person may be an adult in numerical years and yet act and think like an infant or a child because that particular self is dominating their personality. When some people are faced with feelings of helplessness because of the forces of Fate their child or infant selves often take control of the personality. Freud further claimed the solution this infant self offers to the problem of finitude can also be considered an infant's response, namely, the response of theistic absolutism!

The infant self remembers a time when helplessness (the helplessness of the crib) was solved by having dependent relationships with more powerful adults. First came the relationship with the mother who fed the child and gave it security. But later the function of "protector" was taken over by the father. The infant self remembers those ambivalent feelings toward the father who was respected for his strength but feared and envied as a danger to itself and its mother. Hence, we see the dominance in the infant self of the Oedipal Complex.

Based on this knowledge Freud postulated the psychological processes involved with theistic absolutism. They are as follows. First when faced with the problem of Fate and finitude as adults, some persons revert to their infant self for a solution. This infant self, in turn, under the dominance of the Oedipal Complex projects outward from the unconscious onto the heavens the Father God of theistic absolutism. This father God is in fact a projection of the actual father this person experienced in infancy. As Freud wrote,

Psychoanalytic investigation of the individual teaches with special emphasis that gods /God/ is in every case modelled after the father and that our personal relation to god /God/ is dependent upon our relationship to our physical father, fluctuating and changing with him, and that god /God/ at bottom is nothing but an exalted father.<sup>26</sup>

As Freud said, this particular religious response, namely theistic absolutism as projected by an infant self managed to solve the problem of finitude for many thousands

of years. It answered both the question as to why we should follow civilization's laws (they were from God) and why we have the attacks of Fate (they are also part of God's plan). But Freud raised the question as to the future of theistic absolutism, seeing that from his perspective it was merely a psychological wish of an infant self, or in other words, it was an illusion. Indeed, Freud asks how long will people persist in this infantile belief knowing it has no solid empirical evidence?

Freud believed that both individuals and civilizations went through stages of growth. He was the first therefore, to propose the idea that both individuals and civilizations could "outgrow" the need for theistic absolutism. He envisioned a time when the adult self, not the infant self would attempt to answer the problem of the attacks of Fate and the general problem of finitude. Instead of using omnipotence of thought, or an infant self's projection of an Exalted Father, the adult self would be able to use tough empirically verifiable data and scientific reasoning to attempt an adult response to finitude in a modern age.

But Freud warned the price of moving from the infant self to the adult self will be high as far as psychic stability is concerned. Gone will be the Father God who cared for his children. People will be faced with the cruel world of natural causation and be forced to accept it. Indeed, for Freud the response of the adult self to the problem of finitude was acceptance. He wrote,



They will have to admit to themselves the full extent of their helplessness. They can no longer be under the tender care of a beneficent Providence. They will be in the same position as a child who has left the parental home where he was warm and comfortable. But sure infantilism is destined to be surmounted. Men cannot remain children forever: they must in the end go out into 'hostile life'. We call this 'education to reality'. Need I confess to you that the sole purpose of my book is to point out the necessity of this forward step.<sup>27</sup>

One final point. There are some who argue that Freud was not trying to destroy belief in theistic absolutism, but was merely trying to expose it as an illusion. They cite as evidence that in Freud's definition of the word "illusion," he makes it clear that an illusion is not equivalent to an error. "Illusions need not necessarily be false--that is unrealizable or in contradiction to reality."<sup>28</sup> Freud cites as an example of an illusion the dreams of a middle class girl that she will marry a handsome prince. After all a handsome prince might arrive and marry the girl. These people also cite as evidence of what they see as a neutral attitude on Freud's part toward theistic religion in this quote, "There is no danger of a devout believer's being overcome by my arguments and deprived of his faith."<sup>29</sup>

These people could not be more wrong! Freud, as I have attempted to show, had no such "neutral" attitude toward theistic absolutism. After careful study he found it completely false. Personally, he despised it! He despised it as a scientist, he despised it in his personal religious life.<sup>30</sup> Whenever discussing theistic religion,

he attacked the tenents of theistic absolutism in the most scathing and vicious terms possible. When he called it an illusion he did so not out of neutrality but out of contempt for its lack of empirically verifiable data. When he said he could not convince a devout theistic absolutist to accept his views he did so because he viewed these people as "ignorant" and he saw no way of communicating with them using arguments based on reason.

Perhaps then, if there is any doubt remaining as to Freud's real attitude toward theistic absolutism, I shall close this chapter with some of Freud's classic quotes on the subject. They will, I am sure, reflect Freud's harsh and antagonistic attitude toward this view. At one point he calls theistic absolutism a narcotic, "the effect of religious [theistic absolutist] consolations may be likened to that of a narcotic."<sup>31</sup>

Another time he equates theistic absolutism with surrender to life's problems.

Religion [theistic absolutism] restricts [the] play of choice and adaptation, since it imposes equally on everyone its own path to the aquisition of happiness and protection from suffering. Its technique consists in depressing the value of life and distorting the picture of the real world in a delusional manner--which presupposes an intimidation of the intelligence. At this price, by forcibly fixing them into a state of psychical infantilism and by drawing them into a mass delusion, religion [theistic absolutism] succeeds in sparing many people and individual neurosis. But hardly anything more. There are as we have said, many paths which may lead to such happiness as it is attainable by men, but there is none which does so for certain. Even religion [theistic absolutism] cannot keep its promise. If the believer finally sees himself obligated to speak of God's 'inscrutable decrees' he is admitting that all that is left to him as a last possible consolation and source of pleasure in his

suffering is an unconditional submission . . . if he is prepared for that, he could probably have spared himself the detour he has made.<sup>32</sup>

Finally, nothing could better sum up Freud's attitude toward theistic absolutism than his own words as spoken in Civilization and Its Discontents. This will, I am sure destroy any hope among those who thought Freud was not really opposed to theistic absolutism. He was not only against it, his views expressed the polar opposite opinion.

In my Future of an Illusion [1927] I was concerned much less with the deepest sources of the religious feeling than with what the common man understands by his religion--with the system of doctrines and promises which on the one hand explains to him the riddles of this world with enviable completeness, and, on the other, assures him that a careful Providence will watch over his life and will compensate him in a future existence for any frustrations he suffers here. The common man cannot imagine this Providence otherwise than in the figure of an enormously exalted father. Only such a being can understand the needs of the children of men and be softened by their prayers and placated by the signs of their remorse. The whole thing is so patently infantile, so foreign to reality, that to anyone with a friendly attitude to humanity it is painful to think that the great majority of mortals will never be able to rise above this view of life. It is still more humiliating to discover how large a number of people living to-day, who cannot but see that this religion is not tenable, nevertheless try to defend it piece by piece in a series of pitiful rearguard actions. One would like to mix among the ranks of the believers in order to meet these philosophers, who think they can rescue the God of religion by replacing him by an impersonal, shadowy and abstract principle, and to address them with the warning words: 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain!' And if some of the great men of the past acted in the same way, no appeal can be made to their example: we know why they were obliged to.<sup>33</sup>

## FOOTNOTES

1. For a discussion of the term theistic absolutism and other possible concepts of Deity see John Brightman, A Philosophy of Religion, (New Jersey Prentice Hall 1940), pp. 133-157, 305-340.
2. Freud, Sigmund, Civilization and Its Discontents, translated by James Strachey, (New York, W.W. Norton and Company 1962), originally published 1930), p. 30.
3. From this point on the term "theistic religion" will be employed to refer to religion understood as belief in theistic absolutism.
4. Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, p. 58.
5. Freud, Sigmund, The Future of an Illusion, trans. W.D. Robson Scott, (New York, Doubleday and Company 1961), p. 64.
6. Ibid. p. 39.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid. p. 40.
9. Ibid. pp. 77-78.
10. Ernst Jones, The Life and Works of Sigmund Freud, 3 Volumes (New York, Basic Books Inc. 1955), 3:351.
11. Freud, The Future of An Illusion, p. 43.
12. Ibid. p. 43.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid. p. 45.
15. Ibid. pp. 62-63.
16. Ibid. p. 50.
17. Ibid. p. 63.
18. Freud, The Psychotherapy of Everyday Life, quoted by Ernst Jones, The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, 3:352-353.
19. Freud, The Future of An Illusion, p. 60.
20. Freud, Totem and Taboo, Translated by A.A. Brill, (New York, Vintage Books, 1946), 1914, p. 5.



21. Ibid. p. 44.

22. OEDIPUS COMPLEX: A characteristic grouping of instinctual drives, aims, object relations and fears universally found at the height of the phallic phase (3-6 years). During this period the child strives in a limited way for sexual union with the parent of the opposite sex and the death or disappearance of the parent of the same sex. Co-existing with these strivings, but usually less prominent, is the negative form of the complex; in this case the child wishes for sexual union with the parent of the same sex, and the death of the parent of the opposite sex. The specific talion (retaliatory) fear for these forbidden incestuous and hostile wishes is that of castration in the male, and injury to the genital and procreative organs in the female. Genetically (see metapsychology), it is a nodal point crucial to the further growth and development of the immature psychic apparatus; through its resolution it contributes to the coalescence and definitive formation of the superego. Topographically, the complex is usually partly conscious and evident in speech, behavior and other modes of communication during childhood. In later life, it is most often unconscious, but dependent on the extent of resolution, it is more or less evident in behavior, attitudes and object choice, and has an important bearing on character structure, the nature of object relationships and sexual identity, fantasy formation and later sexual patterns and activities.

Together with the unconscious and infantile sexuality, the oedipus complex is one of Freud's greatest discoveries, made during his self-analysis in 1897. He was struggling with the inconsistencies of his earlier 'adult-seduction-of-children theory' or neurosis and with his doubts about the new science. Under the pressure of recognition of hysterical symptoms in his family and himself, he entered into a period of intensive introspection, including his dreams, which he called his self-analysis. In a famous letter to Wilhelm Fleiss, dated October 15, 1897, Freud stated his finding: "I have found love of mother and jealousy of the father in my case too, and now believe it to be a general phenomenon of early childhood. Every member . . . was once a budding Oedipus." He had discovered infantile sexuality and oedipus complex in himself, and tentatively assumed its universality. In presenting this thesis for the first time in The Interpretation of Dreams, Freud used his own dreams and those of others to correlate the myth of Oedipus with the unconscious wishes of every man. A Glossary of Psychoanalytic Terms and Concepts, Moore, Burness E. and Fine Bernard D. (The American Psychoanalytic Association

in 1968), p. 66. Also see Oedipus: Myth and Drama, Kallich, Martin and MacLeish, Andrew and Schoenhohn, Gertrude, (The Odyssey Press, New York 1968).

23. Freud, Totem and Taboo, p. 171.
24. Ibid. p. 202.
25. Freud, The Future of An Illusion, p. 24.
26. Freud, Totem and Taboo, p. 190.
27. Freud, The Future of An Illusion, p. 81.
28. Ibid. p. 49.
29. Ibid. p. 58.
30. See Chapter 3, "Freud's Jewishness."
31. Ibid. p. 12.
32. Ibid. pp. 31-32.
33. Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, p.21.

## CHAPTER II

### GUILT, RITUAL, AND OBSESSIVE NEUROSIS

#### A. Guilt and Its Origins

There are essentially two types of guilt; structural and actual. Actual guilt is conscious guilt. It occurs when one has done something that one considers wrong in reality or in fact. Actual guilt then is what you do. We will have further occasion to speak of the origins of actual guilt a little later on, when we discuss civilization and guilt. The other type of guilt is structural guilt. It has its roots in the unconscious. We may say it is experienced when a person feels guilty and never has done in reality or in fact, any action that could be said to produce the guilt. Structural guilt then is an intrinsic part of the person.

Freud sought to answer the question as to how structural guilt becomes imbedded in the unconscious. To this question he postulated the hypothesis that structural guilt was derived from the Oedipus Complex. Although we footnoted the nature of the Oedipal Complex in the last chapter, it would perhaps be beneficial to review this crucial juncture in human development. At a young age, Freud posits, (usually between three and six years) a child

becomes aware of his/her love and dependence upon the parent of the same sex. This emotion manifests itself in terms of a sexual desire and attraction for the parent of the opposite sex. The young person, Freud tells us, realizes that in order to achieve any sort of sexual fulfillment, the parent of the same sex must die. In the case of the male child the father must also be castrated so that his sexual prowess (his penis) could be used to attract the mother.

The result, according to Freud, of this unconscious process is the attitude of ambivalence in the child toward the parent of the same sex. The child loves and fears the parent of the same sex because of his/her dependence on them, but simultaneously the child feels aggression, envy, and even hate toward that same parent for being an obstacle to sexual fulfillment with the parent of the opposite sex.

This ambivalent attitude is expressed in the language of remorse, regret, sorrow, and atonement. The child constantly can be found apologizing toward the parent of the same sex. Thus, is developed the initial emotion of guilt. All future occurrences of structural guilt will be a remembrance of this "Sinai" guilt experience.



### B. Civilization and Guilt

The origins of actual guilt are social and are derived from the infrastructure of civilization. One of the basic needs in maintaining a civilization is the need to control the great masses of people, each one of whom is striving to execute his/her own will. As Freud saw it, every individual is endowed with an ego. That is, we all have a part of our psyche which desires, wills, lusts. Primal among these desires according to Freud is the libidinal urge, or the urge to have sex. The ego can be a positive force in the human being because it gives us a sense of selfhood and identity. But if the ego were allowed to function unchecked, if the desire structure and especially the libidinal urge manipulated our personalities, then laws and consequently civilizations could not exist!

There was therefore, the need for society to develop a counterpart to the ego, as harsh and powerful as the ego itself, but standing in direct opposition to it. This function is served by the super ego.

The function [of the super ego] consists in keeping a watch over the actions and intentions of the ego and in judging them, exercising a censorship.<sup>1</sup>

In this way civilization extends psychic control over the individual.

Civilization therefore obtains mastery over the individual's dangerous desire for aggression [ego] by weakening and disarming it [the ego] and by setting up an agency within him to watch over it like a garrison in a conquered city.<sup>2</sup>

Further, the monumental clash between the ego and

the super ego is the main source of actual guilt, and like structural guilt, it expresses itself as a need to atone and be punished. Those performing a "wrong deed" (in society's eyes) or even the consideration of performing a "wrong deed" will produce a melancholy black mood which is commonly called guilt feeling.

Let us take a look at an example of how this societal structure of actual guilt works in reality. For civilization to exist there must be a law that one person may not sexually assault another. Civilization, through education, indoctrinates this value into the super egos of young people. Yet when these young people reach puberty they are faced with a very difficult situation. Their super egos have been taught to avoid lewd sexual advances; yet that is exactly what their ego structure desires! There thus develops a monumental conflict in adolescence and those who have seen or experienced it do not doubt its fury. The resulting guilt from this struggle is equally as obvious and as difficult with which to deal.

The second cause of guilt in civilization is not actual, but rather organizational. It is a combination of the basic infrastructure of civilization combined with the effects of the Oedipal Complex. Freud pointed out the fact that we basically live in family units. The head of the family is the father. All relationships with the father are mitigated by the Oedipal Complex. Freud further claimed the Oedipal Complex could be the activating agent which

would arouse and energize the super ego. The super ego in turn, would clash with the ego to produce guilt. Freud concluded that as long as civilization has the structure it does and as long as it is forced to control the egos of the masses, guilt will be the primary problem of people residing within civilization.

My intention /is/ to represent the notion of guilt as the most important problem in the development of civilization.<sup>3</sup>

### C. Guilt and Ritual in Ancient Religions

In our previous chapter we discussed at length, totem religions. It is appropriate though, in discussing the topic of guilt to once again delve into this area. As we said at specific times the worshippers of totem religion held "holidays." During these celebrations, rituals would be held. The main ritual of the holiday was the killing, cooking, and eating of the totem animal which at all other times was considered taboo or prohibited. We noted that the origin of this ritual was rooted in the Oedipal Complex because the totem animal represented the ancestral father of the tribe. The result of this ritual killing of the ancestral father, albeit symbolically, activated the Oedipal Complex which in turn produced enormous guilt. This guilt surfaced sociologically as the legalistic prohibitions of exogamy. That is, sexual intercourse and marriage were forbidden with the symbolic "mothers," the

women of the same tribal clan.

There are several crucial points which we must add to this basic framework. First, Freud posited the hypothesis that in many ancient tribal clans the killing of the father by a group of sons banded together was not symbolic at all. No, it was real custom actually performed at some point in the tribe's history. In other words, Freud claimed there was a time in the history of ancient religions when the sons would periodically band together, kill their father, castrate his corpse, eat the genital organs and then forcibly rape their mother! At some point Freud conjectured this procedure was halted and the totem animal was selected to take the father's place. Thus it is easy to imagine the deep psychological turmoil that ran through the clan when the appointed time of the "holiday" approached. Once again they would act out, albeit symbolically, the heinous crime of their past.

Now comes the second crucial point. It concerns itself with the efficaciousness of the holiday. It may seem amazing to our sophisticated minds that the acting out of the Oedipal drama with an animal as a symbolic stand-in for the father would really have any psychic effect upon the totem worshippers. Yet it did. In fact the catharsis of this ritual during the holiday managed to relieve some degree of guilt, both actual and structural, among the adherents of totem worship. This is because the ritual, by re-creating the Oedipal Complex, touched the



unconscious of the individual and by doing so lifted from him/her the heavy burden of guilt.

The ritual worked for two reasons. It worked because it was dramatic. It worked because the adherents of totem religions believed wholeheartedly in its power to heal the wounds of guilt. Without the belief among its adherents that the ritual would work, the ritual would have been merely the slaughter of an animal and a picnic. Instead it became a powerful rite that was the center of the clan's religious life. Yes, factually we might say that the ritual itself was an illusion. The animal was not the father. Certainly eating it could not be equated with the cannibalism of the past. But psychologically, it was a "necessary illusion" to its adherents. It was a ritual which was coherent, consistent and in rhythm with the needs of its followers. It was a ritual that symbolically met a basic human need because it arose organically from a basic human problem.

After reading this account, many readers might consider the rituals which occurred in totem religion as primitive practices and having no relationship with the sophisticated rituals which religions practice today. Freud would disagree. The modern system of religious ritual, by which Freud means theistic absolutism, still is attempting in part, to deal with the same Oedipal problem as our ancient counterparts.

In this connection some features were formed in totem religion which henceforth determined the character of

every religion. The totem religion had issued from the sense of guilt of the sons as an attempt to palliate this feeling and to conciliate the injured father through subsequent obedience. All later religions prove to be attempts to solve the same problem, varying only in accordance with the stage of culture in which they attempted and according to the paths which they take: they are all however, reactions aiming at the same great event with which culture began and which ever since has not let mankind come to rest.<sup>4</sup>

#### D. Guilt, Ritual, and Modern Religion

Before undertaking this discussion of guilt, ritual, and modern religion the author would like to emphasize again that when Freud used the term "religion" he meant by it theistic absolutism.<sup>5</sup> Thus, many of the statements and criticisms Freud levels at "religious rituals" do not pertain to all religious rituals per se, but only to those that still maintain the theistic absolutistic perspective.

We have seen how ancient religion copes with the idea of guilt and the ritual system it uses to relieve its burden, but how does modern theistic absolutism deal with the problem of guilt by using ritual?

To see this we must back up a step to review the role religion plays in civilization. As we stated in Chapter I, civilization or group living solves many of the problems faced by individuals. However, civilization is powerless in attempting to control the forces of Fate: death, natural disaster, and mental problems. Fate then, is seen by civilization as something religion must explain.

Theistic absolutism, the dominant religious response of the Western world, claims that Fate is suffered because of Divine will. In other words, death, diseases, and anxiety are all products of the will of Deity.

But this response in turn produces the problem of surd evil. That is, how can a benevolent God purposefully produce capricious evil? The answer of theistic absolutism is that evil is not capricious at all but rather it is a punishment from Deity for engaging in sin. Sin can be defined as an offense against Deity. If for example, the laws of civilization are considered Divine, then to trespass those laws would be to commit sins.

Freud pointed out that when viewed psychologically, there are tremendous flaws in the way theistic absolutism views guilt and sin, and the ritual it has created to deal with them. The first of these problems occurs when there is an instance of innocent suffering. Suppose a natural disaster, say a flood for instance, occurred in some place. Chaos of that magnitude could only be interpreted by a theistic absolutist community as being the punishment for sin. But if the individuals of that community were fairly decent people they would be forced to ask themselves of what sin they were guilty of committing. When unable to find that sin, rather than give up the entire theistic absolutist structure, they will instead be left with a sense of guilt; guilt for a sin which they could not even imagine, let alone commit. In this way, theistic absolutism

fails in relieving guilt and can even be said to be the cause of even more intense guilt feelings.

Second, Freud says it is the fallacious claim of theistic absolutism that the only cause of guilt can be sin. For theistic absolutism, black moods, anxiety and neurosis are seen not as maladies effecting all people, but rather as punishments for sins which have been committed. In direct opposition to this it was one of the major contributions of Freud that guilt need not be a product of wrong-doing, nor need it have any relationship with human actions. Certain types of guilt in fact, are structural and intrinsic with the make-up of the person. Indeed, in Freud's view, guilt and sin were not the same thing at all, nor necessarily causally related, they were in fact, in most cases, very different things, with very different origins. One could even question whether according to Freud there could even be such a concept as "sin."

To explain this point in depth and other criticisms of Freud against theistic absolutistic ritual, let us analyze the traditional Jewish celebration of Yom Kippur in Freudian terms. For the orthodox and traditionoid Jew the commands of Deity are found in the Pentateuch and the rabbinic literature, most notably the Talmud. As we said, anyone who trespasses these commands of Deity are said to have sinned. Sin, for the theistic absolutistic adherent, produces guilt. The day of Yom Kippur is set aside to



purge the individual's past sins, and thereby, alleviate the sense of guilt.

According to Freudian thinking the holiday of "Yom Kippur" has striking resemblances to the totem "holiday." On the totem holiday the symbolic eating of the father is the efficacious act which purges guilt. On Yom Kippur the refraining from eating is the symbolic act which appeases the Father God. The Father God in turn, absolves his children from sin which results in a relief from guilt. Secondly, both the adherents of totem worship and the adherents of Yom Kippur can find partial relief from guilt if they truly believe that the rituals of the holiday are in fact efficacious and achieve a release from guilt. In this way Freud would say both holidays can be "necessary illusions" to their followers.

Thirdly, Freud would claim the Oedipal element is manifest in both the totem holiday and the Yom Kippur celebration. The totem ritual is a reenactment of the Oedipal drama. On Yom Kippur we deal more with the end results of the Oedipal Complex; we mean by this the need to atone and be punished. On Yom Kippur Freud would claim we have disobeyed the Father and considered lewd relations with the mother.

If one has doubts about these Oedipal elements being present in the traditional ritual of Yom Kippur, he/she need only review the traditional liturgy for this holiday. Here are some excerpts, "Our Father our king we

have sinned against You;"<sup>6</sup> Our God and God of our Fathers forgive us, pardon us and grant us atonement for we are your children and You are our Father;"<sup>7</sup> "We are guilt laden;"<sup>8</sup> "For the sin which we have committed before You by spurning parents;"<sup>9</sup> Forgive us O our father for we have sinned."<sup>10</sup> Finally, and dramatically toward the end of the afternoon service, after worshippers have apologized to God, the Father, they read the Biblical portion which deals with naked relatives and incestuous relations!<sup>11</sup> This alone Freud would claim should dispell doubts about the strong Oedipal elements present in the Yom Kippur ritual.

In a Freudian evaluation of Yom Kippur three points should be kept in mind. The first is that a ritual or holiday can alleviate guilt only if its adherents believe it has the power to do so. This, as we said, is the reason why totem worship was so successful. But as Freud pointed out, problems occur when the adherents of the religion no longer have any reason to believe in that religion, nor in the efficaciousness of its ritual. This may be the case with Yom Kippur for some people. Because they no longer believe in God as Father, nor in the effectiveness of fasting as an efficacious means to relieve guilt, they are left without an effective ritual which speaks to their psychological needs.

Secondly, because Yom Kippur equates sin with guilt and claims that guilt can be relieved by Divine forgiveness, it fails to acknowledge and treat guilt which

is intrinsic in the person, namely structural guilt. So even at its best Freud would claim Yom Kippur can offer only a partial and temporary relief to the problem of guilt. Freud would further claim that true relief from guilt comes only with deep and detailed introspection, analagous to the work done by psychoanalysis.

Thirdly, Freud would say the ritual of Yom Kippur is not an adult ritual, it is a ritual of the "infant self." By this Freud means that the problem of guilt is dealt with on Yom Kippur in an infantile manner. Freud believed that humanity had reached a stage in development where people were able to face their problems as they were. In other words, according to Freud, people were ready to deal with guilt and the Oedipal Complex directly without the gloss provided by symbolic rituals. In a sense, Freud would say, rituals were only needed for a select few, as a "necessary illusion," so that their problems could be portrayed through drama and catharsis. But for people like himself, Freud viewed ritual as being an unnecessary response to life's problem. He believed that by facing the truth about one's personality, whether that truth be uplifting or abominable, there would ensue relief from guilt and most other problems. It is not surprising then that Freud himself personally detested all rituals and avoided performing them at all costs!<sup>12</sup>

Freud's attitude toward religious rituals is made most clear when he compared them to ceremonials or the

"ritualisms" of compulsive neurotics. Freud proposed the hypothesis that the rituals of religion, that is, theistic absolutism, have a one-to-one correspondence to the compulsive acts of certain types of neurotics. Some consider this hypothesis one of the weak links in Freud's theory of ritual. Many adherents of theistic absolutism argued with Freud that religious rituals have no obsessive qualities whatsoever. They saw three basic differences between neurotic behavior and religious ritual observances. A. There is greater individual variability of neurotic ceremonials in contrast to religious rites. B. Neurotic ceremonials are performed in private, religious observances are public. C. Neurotic ceremonials are meaningless, religious rites and rituals are full of meaning.

Freud anticipated these arguments and responded as follows, " . . . the sharpest distinction between neurotic and religious ceremonials disappears as soon as one penetrates by means of psychoanalytic investigation to [an] insight into obsessive actions."<sup>13</sup> In other words, according to Freud the superficial similarity between obsessive actions and religious rituals extended underneath the surface to the psyche itself. Indeed, Freud says both obsessive acts and religious rituals share the same psychic structure and origins!

Freud continued by saying that the purpose of both neurotic ceremonials and religious rituals was to express the conflict between the ego and super ego through catharsis.



As you remember the ego and its libidinal urge is in constant conflict with the super ego which provides the pain and conscience necessary to control individuals in societal situations. The result of this internal struggle is guilt.

The religious ritual and the obsessive act, Freud argued, are both procedures to alleviate a good deal of this guilt. They accomplish this task, Freud tells us, by allowing the individual to act out the prohibition over which the ego and super ego are struggling. In ancient totem rituals the Oedipus Complex was symbolically performed. In modern rituals, actions considered "anti-social" are performed. In this respect Freud says ritual serves as a compromise or cease fire in the internal conflict between ego and super ego. It appeases the ego's desire, while giving the individual a socially accepted forum to fulfill this desire. In doing this the ritual produces a degree of satisfaction, coming in part from a partially satisfied ego, and in part from a super ego that managed to stay within the bounds of civilization's laws and mores.

It is in the nature, moreover of the obsessional neurosis--as of all similar affections /like religious rituals to/ fulfill the conditions of a compromise between the opposing forces of the mind. Thus they always reproduce something of the identical pleasure they are designed to prevent: they serve the repressed impulse no less than the repressing element.<sup>14</sup>

Freud continues by saying that a second important

element shared in common between religious rituals and obsessional neurosis is the fear which accompanies the failure to perform a certain ceremonial at its "appointed time."

It is easy to see wherein lies the resemblance between neurotic ceremonials and religious rites: it is the fear of the pangs of conscience after their omission.<sup>15</sup>

It is not hard to find the elements of Freud's theory at work among obsessive neurotics. For example, we find people who have created for themselves the "ceremonial" of frequently washing their hands. When analyzed psychoanalytically we can trace this behavior to a need to eliminate certain guilt feelings concerning some traumatic incident in the past. In one of Freud's clinical cases a person missed the funeral of a parent and from that moment on felt the need to cleanse their hands. Obviously the connection is clear. The person wished to cleanse their psyche from the guilt of missing the funeral.

Of course accompanying the guilt which was the cause of the ceremonial was the fear and anguish that the ceremonial might not be kept properly. With this person the water had to be a certain temperature, the soap a certain color, etc. This person also reported to Freud that failure to comply with this ceremonial would result in dire consequences and even death. Thus it is clear that Freud's theory of the origins of "obsessive ceremonials" aptly explains the phenomenon of obsessive neurosis.

But what about religious ritual? At this point many readers might consider Freud's theory of ritual as completely alien to religious observances. But perhaps not. Let us take a look at a traditional Jewish ritual through the eyes of Freud. The example we will use is the traditional Jewish ritual of lighting candles on Friday evening to inaugurate the seventh day Shabbat.<sup>16</sup> If we were to select the prime prohibition of the Shabbat, that is, the prohibition par excellence of the seventh day Shabbat, it would certainly be the command of Deity to refrain from lighting a fire. This prohibition branches out to many more, like putting on electric lights, cooking food, starting a car, etc. Yet Freud would ask us: Is it not fascinating that the ceremony of lighting candles on the eve of the seventh day Shabbat is a reenactment of the principle prohibition of the holiday? Accordingly, Freud would argue this ceremony fits exactly into his hypothesis that the rituals of theistic absolutism serve as a compromise between that which the ego desires (to light fires all the time) and that which the super ego reports as wrong and sinful (the burning of any object on the Sabbath).

But, does candle lighting fit into the other category of obsessional behavior, that is, the fear that if candles are not lit, some dire consequences will result? Freud would argue it does. The Talmud for example, reports that a woman who does not light candles for the Sabbath

will suffer a miscarriage!<sup>17</sup> Further there is a law in the Shulchan Aruh that if a woman misses even one Sabbath candle lighting she must add a candle to the ceremony and light all the candles, including the additional one each and every week for the rest of her life.<sup>18</sup>

To review, Freud would say we find the two elements of neurotic ceremonials present in the theistic absolutistic observance of the seventh day Shabbat. First, Freud would say we find present the idea that the ritual is a compromise between the ego and super ego. Second, Freud would say we find present the idea that failure to perform the ritual will have dire personal consequences.

Freud concluded his theory of ritual as follows:

In view of the resemblances and analogies one might venture to regard the obsessional neurosis as a pathological counterpart to the formation of a religion, to describe this neurosis as a private religious system, and religion as a universal obsessional neurosis. The essential resemblance would lie in the fundamental renunciation of the satisfaction of inherent instincts, and the chief difference in the nature of these instincts, which in the neurosis are exclusively sexual, but in religion are of egoistic origin.<sup>19</sup>

In short, Freud is saying that theistic absolutistic ritual is a failure. It fails Freud says because it does not deal with the real problems of guilt. It fails, he argues, because it is in reality only a "universal obsessional neurosis." What then would Freud say about the future of ritual? Given his psychoanalytical perspective, he saw the inevitable demise of all theistic absolutist ritual. He predicted there would be a time when people knew



themselves well enough not to need what he called "necessary illusions."

Nonetheless, the destruction of theistic absolutism, either theologically or ritually need not mean the end of religion per se. The problem of finitude, existentially present in our lives, will always be with us. Religion and ritual shall always be our response. But given Freud's insights we are now challenged to find a religious response and a ritual system that is coherent, consistent, and rhythmic with our lives, our knowledge, and our psyches. We need a religious response and ritual structure which will placate our "infant self" while at the same time satisfy our "adult self." Judaism could be the name of such a religious response and ritual system. Whether Judaism will meet this challenge lies in the future growth of our religion and as Freud would say, in our "selves."

Footnotes

1. Sigmund Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, p. 83.
2. Ibid. p. 70-1.
3. Ibid. p. 8.
4. Freud, Totem and Taboo, p. 187.
5. See Chapter I, pp. 1-3 for a discussion of the nature of theistic absolutism.
6. High Holiday Prayerbook, United Synagogue of America, Prayerbook Press, 1966, Hartford, p. 303.
7. Ibid. p. 238.
8. Ibid. p. 239.
9. Ibid. p. 241.
10. Ibid. p. 290.
11. Lev. 18.
12. This topic will be discussed in depth in Chapter III.
13. John Riviere, Sigmund Freud Collected Papers, "Obsessive Acts and Religious Practices (1907)," Basic Books Inc. New York, 1959, p. 28.
14. Ibid. p. 32.
15. Ibid. p. 27.
16. As opposed to seventh day Shabbat is the concept of Shabbat as a state of being see Elements of Reform Judaism, Dr. Reines.
17. Mishnah Shabbat 2:6 or Talmud Shabbat 31b-32a.
18. Shulchan Aruh, Shabbat 75:14.
19. Freud, "Obsessive Neurosis . . ." p. 34.

### CHAPTER III

#### FREUD'S JEWISHNESS AND MOSES AND MONOTHEISM

##### PART I: FREUD'S JEWISHNESS

###### A. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss Freud's view of the evolutionary growth of Western religion, especially the Jewish continuum, and his own personal response to the fact he himself was a member of the Jewish enterprise. It is not the purpose of this chapter to review Freud's entire life. That can be done at my reader's leisure in any number of sources. Nor is it the purpose of this chapter to psychoanalyze Freud the man. This has become a popular pursuit for psychologists and psychiatrists, though its importance all but escapes me. We shall, in all cases, try to best use the evidence and the facts available to us when assessing the much debated issues surrounding the personal religious views of this complex man.

###### B. Origins

A clue to Freud's Jewishness comes from his mixed family background. Both his great-grandfather and his grandfather were rabbis. His mother also maintained a strong

orthodox belief in traditional Judaism and was a devout follower of theistic absolutistic principles. However, his father, Jacob Freud, had liberal religious views, with most of his associations with Jewishness being restricted to an ethnic level: speaking Yiddish, telling Jewish anecdotes, etc. Thus within Sigmund Freud's immediate family we see a diversity of opinions and outlooks toward being Jewish.

To further complicate the issue of Freud's childhood was the fact he was cared for by an Orthodox Catholic "nannie." She influenced young Freud with stories about heaven, hell and Divine retribution. On certain Sundays she would sneak the child off to Catholic mass. In the same vein, Freud's childhood room was located near a church and the sound of church bells would often startle the child out of his sleep. Many attribute the influence of these negative experiences in Freud's childhood to his later negative view of Christianity. There might be some merit to this theory. Suffice it to say it is clear many of the complex features which were the hallmark of Freud's personality did have their origins in his childhood.

### C. Freud the Jew

It is incumbent upon us here to take up the debate as to how Freud felt about his Jewish heritage. In the past, this question has been argued two ways. On one



side there are those that argue Freud was a self-hating Jew, an enemy of religion in general, and a heretic to his own. In contrast, some extol Freud as a positive contributor to the study of religion and a loyal follower of "Judaism."<sup>1</sup> It is therefore necessary to trace at length and in depth (with several quotations from documented sources) the case made for both sides of this debate, and come to our own conclusions about this issue.

First, let us present the evidence supporting the argument that Freud showed a strong identification and attachment to the Jewish enterprise. All his life Freud maintained a circle of mostly Jewish friends. He was a member of the B'nai B'rith and used this forum to introduce two of his most important papers, "Dreams" on December 7, 1897 and one concerning Zola's "La Fecondite" on April 27, 1900. It is fascinating that it was this membership in the B'nai B'rith which the Nazis called an "underground group" that was the pretext used to remove Freud from the editorship of the influential German psychiatric journal "Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag" in March 1938!

Another argument for those who said that Freud strongly identified with Judaism was that Freud never gave up the name Jew, though doing so would have made life much easier and more profitable (financially) for him. As we shall see, few suffered as much as Freud for maintaining the name Jew, yet the thought of conversion absolutely repulsed him! We see this most clearly in the

example of when Freud left Vienna and first went to Rome in 1897. Many speculated then that his motivation for this journey was to convert to Catholicism. Jones, Freud's biographer, relates the incident and answers this accusation.

There is the most astonishing explanation of all why Freud went to Rome: Freud is supposed to have had a secret longing which he concealed from himself an unconscious desire to join the Roman Catholic Church and thus further his worldly prospects! As Velikovsky puts it 'In order to get ahead he would have to conclude a Faust-like pact: he would sell his soul to the Church.' It is linked with the notion that Freud resented being a Jew and wished he were a Gentile. Both these ideas I find frankly absurd: they are not compatible with all we know of Freud. Worldly advancement meant little to him and it would never occur to him to sacrifice any principle for such a reason . . . . The picture of Freud accepting the ceremonies and beliefs of the Catholic Church provokes only risibility a sense of the ludicrous in anyone who knew him. Nor is there any justification for twisting his Freud's very natural resentment at the unjust treatment meted out to Jews into the notion that he resented 'being' a Jew: his whole personality was identified with the fact he 'was' one, and wholeheartedly so.<sup>2</sup>

Other strong evidence of Freud's strong attachment to being Jewish comes in his strong reaction against anti-Semitism. Europe, at the time Freud lived and worked, permeated with virulent anti-Semitic feelings. Throughout his lifetime Freud suffered severely because he was Jewish. He lost many professional positions and was never considered for countless others. He was even exiled by the Nazis from Austria.

The effects of anti-Semitism influenced the Freud's family life even before Sigmund's birth. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Freud's family was forced to flee

the Rhineland because of anti-Semitic persecutions. We have already mentioned Freud's childhood with his strong anti-Semitic nannie and the constant ringing of church bells outside of his window. Jones reflects on that childhood experience:

A child would observe that his family did not belong to the majority and never attended the church, so that the chimes rang out not brotherly love but hostility to the little circle of non-believers. Perhaps there was an echo of these chimes in that night long after when his Freud's sleep was disturbed by the church bells so that to put an end to this annoyance he Freud dreamed the Pope was dead.<sup>3</sup>

#### D. Freud and Jung

But anti-Semitic experiences were by no means confined to Freud's childhood, they would relentlessly pursue him throughout his life. Perhaps the damaging effect of anti-Semitism was most apparently seen in Freud's relationship with a fellow psychoanalyst, Carl Jung. Early in Jung's career as a psychiatrist, he became one of the most ardent supporters of Freud. But in time, Jung began to develop his own methodologies and ideas.

Eventually, the two men differed on three basic issues concerning psychoanalysis and religion. First, Freud viewed the religion of his day as an illusion, unempirical "nonsense," and maintained a belief that science could solve people's problems. Jung, on the other hand,

"based his psychology on what Freud called illusions and argued that much of modern man's neurosis stemmed from his inability to believe in the sacred myths of religion [whether they were true or not]."<sup>4</sup> Second, Freud denied any evidence for a belief in a Divine Being. In fact, he declared such a belief a projection, produced by the unconscious, of a father figure onto the heavens. For Jung, not only did a God exist, but a Gnostic God existed, with equally powerful aspects of good and evil. This produced some very curious results in Jung's writings. For example, when Hitler came to power, Jung insisted people should not resist or protest, for Hitler was "God's chosen": the evil aspect of God that is.

Third, whereas Freud believed mysticism was linked to repressed sexuality and therefore a type of neurosis, Jung viewed mysticism "as rooted in the real demands of the collective unconscious and the darker spirits of the cosmic universe."<sup>5</sup> Jung's mysticism went to extremes and Freud constantly urged him that his "mystic visions" were not visions at all, but guilt feelings associated with Jung's strict Protestant pastor father. (As we shall see there is evidence Freud was correct.)

Perhaps my readers would be entertained by one of Jung's more vivid gnostic visions.

I saw before me the cathedral, the blue sky. God sits on his golden throne, high above the world--and from under the throne an enormous turd falls upon the sparkling new roof, shatters it, and breaks the walls of the cathedral asunder.<sup>6</sup>



This alone is almost enough to convince one of the validity of Freud's assessment of Jung's mental state.

But all these things aside, Freud was never the type of person who would allow a difference of opinion to effect a close relationship. Freud, the scientist, knew that criticism and revision of his ideas were not only inevitable, but necessary. Indeed it was not psychoanalysis that broke up this close friendship between Jung and Freud, it was the spiteful anti-Semitism of Jung that was the culprit.

Jung made no attempt to hide his malicious feelings against the Jews. In fact, at a time when anti-Semitism was coming to a peak in Germany (the 1930s) Jung published a series of articles extolling "Aryan superiority." Although Jung cannot be blamed for the Holocaust that followed, he can be held responsible for creating and fostering an atmosphere in which a Holocaust would not only be tolerated, but justified. For it was Jung's opinion that the main opposition to healthy Aryan growth was a parasitic Jewish minority. For Jung, the Jewish culture was "burnt out," because it was not rooted in "mother earth," whereas the Aryan culture was potent and vital because ownership of land and cultivation of earth was an integral part of the Aryan culture. The Jews' role could be only to impede the proper evolutionary growth of this mighty Aryan society. Hitler simply took Jung's thesis one step further and proposed a "final

solution" to this problem of Jewish parasites.

If this were not enough, Jung went on to argue that since Freud's psychoanalytic theories came from an inferior parasitic Jew, they had no bearing on the inner life of the pure Aryan individual. In fact, Jung argued, "Freudian Jewish psychology . . . ought to be abandoned for the more Aryan, racially conscious psychotherapy,"<sup>7</sup> which he (Jung) espoused. Thus, when the Nazis forced Freud to resign as editor of the influential German psychiatric journal "Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag," Jung took over for Freud immediately and heralded this event as being part of the inevitable "avalanche" of the Aryan spirit covering at last the parasitic Jewish culture.

What is perhaps the most noxious aspect of Jung's work was Jung's claim that he had nothing against Jews per se but he was simply doing "scientific research" into the growth of National Socialism in Germany. This thin veneer of science to cover anti-Semitism fooled no one, especially Freud. Yes, Freud the scientist would indeed entertain all opinions, even those that might in some way damage the image of the Jewish people. For Freud it was simple: one could go to any length in the name of science as long as truth and evidence were involved. But when the name of science was being abused to unjustly defame his people, Freud, the scientist and the Jew, responded against this with unleashed intellectual ferocity. (We shall see an example of this "intellectual ferocity" when we examine

Freud's book Moses and Monotheism.)

It thus became clear that Freud's once ardent supporter and personal friend, Jung, could no longer be considered either a scientific colleague, or an intimate confidant. After 1928 the two men never spoke to or contacted each other, either on a personal level nor a professional level.

### E. Freud's Jewishness

I think this is an opportune time to ask what it was that made Freud, the fervent critic of theistic absolutistic religion, the defender of the name Jew? Part of the answer to this is found in Freud's image of himself as the Jewish Hannibal. The first instance of the influence of this image occurred during Freud's adolescence. One day his father returned home and reported that a twelve year old Gentile boy "knocked off his new fur cap into the mud and shouted at him,

Jew, get off the pavement. To the indignant boy's Sigmund Freud's question 'And what did you do?' he Freud's father calmly replied: 'I stepped into the gutter and picked up my cap.' This lack of heroism on the part of his model man shocked the youngster who at once contrasted it in his mind with the behavior of Hamilcar when he made his son Hannibal swear on the household altar to take revenge on the Romans. Freud evidently identified himself with Hannibal, for he said that ever since then Hannibal had a place in his phantasies.<sup>8</sup>

But this was by no means the last time Freud experienced this "Hannibal-like" lashing out against anti-

Semitism. Jones relates another time when Freud was older.

His son Martin tells me [Jones] of an incident . . . which is worth recording. On returning from a walk they [Sigmund Freud and his son Martin] found their way home, which meant crossing the Thumsee [river] to get to their hotel, barricaded by a noisy crowd who were shouting anti-Semitic slogans at them. Swinging his walking stick Freud unhesitatingly charged into them with an expression on his face that made them give way before him. It was by no means his first experience of that kind. I recall a particularly unpleasant one where he cowed a hostile group [of anti-Semites] on a train . . .

Thus far we have tried to prove that Freud was in all ways Jewish. But what about the other side of the argument: that Freud did not care about the rituals and symbols of traditional Judaism and, in fact, was a heretic. How, after all the evidence supporting Freud's intimate identification with being Jewish, do we account for his fervent criticism of theistic absolutistic religion and ritual which we documented in the previous two chapters? Perhaps, we need only remind the readers what we said in Chapter I, namely, that Freud was not against religion per se, but only against theistic absolutism, the dominant religious response of his day. This assertion leaves room for Freud to support and foster some belief in a certain type of Judaism? But which type? Indeed what kind of Jew was Sigmund Freud? Should we say he was an Orthodox Jew? Was he a traditionoid Jew, that is a Jew who would follow certain Jewish customs irregardless of the fact he/she does or does not believe in them? What label or adjective shall we place before the name Jew in the case of Freud?



First let us repeat that it is the contention of this paper that Freud was undoubtedly, in some way, a Jew. This we must accept as an irrefutable fact. As Jones says,

One cannot describe the man Freud without laying stress on the fact he was a Jew . . . he held together with his people . . . and took an interest in all that concerned the fate of Jewry. The Nazi intolerance of this spared him no more than it had Einstein.<sup>10</sup>

Having said this we turn to the question: Was Freud an Orthodox Jew? To be an Orthodox Jew is to have an unshakable conviction in the existence of a Divine Being called Yahweh. Freud had an unshakable conviction no such Being existed. Perhaps the best example of Freud's reaction to Orthodox Judaism came when he married Martha Bernays.

Martha Bernays was a granddaughter of the famous Orthodox rabbi from Hamburg, Germany, Isaac Bernays. One would think that the opportunity to have a person of Freud's caliber in the family would have delighted Martha Bernay's family. It did not! Embroiled in the controversy over the birth of Liberal Judaism, the Bernays rejected Freud as a crass heretic and fought constantly with him because of Freud's "unorthodox" views. Besides, they had already arranged for Martha to marry a prominent schochet (butcher) in the orthodox community.

Freud became engaged and unengaged with Martha several times. Finally the issue came to a head when Martha's parents consented to allow Freud to marry their daughter on the condition he participate in an Orthodox

Jewish wedding. Need I relate that Freud, the man who saw theistic absolutistic ritual as an obsessive neurosis, was totally opposed to such an idea. Jones comments,

He [Freud] once went to an [Orthodox] Jewish wedding . . . He gazed at the scene with fascinated horror and then wrote a letter of sixteen pages describing the odious detail in a spirit of malign mockery.<sup>11</sup>

Freud's solution to this problem was to try to have a civil ceremony instead of an Orthodox wedding, and not invite Martha's parents. But he discovered that in Germany and Austria Jews were not allowed to have a civil marriage ceremony, that right was reserved for Protestants only. What a remarkable and bitterly ironic situation. There was Freud, the Jew who chased anti-Semites down the street with a cane being pressured by the orthodox community to relinquish the name Jew he so desperately wanted to defend. What should he do? Should he convert in order not to be put in the situation of mouthing words he viewed as delusional nonsense, but by converting, give up the name Jew he cared for so much? Or should he go through that Orthodox Jewish ceremony which he abhorred and in that way keep the name Jew but give up the dignity and freedom due every individual to participate only in religious ceremonies that they voluntarily accept for themselves?

The decision, Jones reports, took Freud five minutes to make. On September 13, 1886 Freud was married in an Orthodox Jewish ceremony. Two days before he was forced to memorize the Hebrew blessings necessary for the ceremony. Jones comments, "He probably bit his lip when

he stepped under the chuppe, but everything went off well."<sup>12</sup> ("Well" indeed, another Spinoza forced to publically recant.)

Having discussed how Freud rejected Orthodox Judaism, we have yet to solve our problem as to the proper adjective that should be placed before the name Jew in the case of Freud. Perhaps though, the answer to this question comes to us by chance in a letter Freud wrote to a Protestant clergyman, Okar Pfister. Commenting on the origins of psychoanalysis Freud wrote Pfister, "By the way, how comes [sic] it that none of the pious people discovered psychoanalysis, why did it have to wait for a quite godless Jew."<sup>13</sup> A "godless Jew." Yes this is exactly the adjective to describe the Jewishness of Sigmund Freud! To those who equate Judaism with a certain theistic absolutistic belief in Yahweh, it can be said Freud was not Jewish at all or at least an "apikoros." But to those with a less rigid view of the Jewish enterprise, who divorce the issue of theism with the issue of who is a member in good standing of the Jewish community, Freud could be said to be a committed Jew. Further for those who equate the criteria of truth and evidence with the name Jew it can be said that a more "Jewish" man was never born. Thus the question of whether Freud was a "good" Jew ultimately rests upon the reader's definition of what exactly makes a "good" Jew.

If a good Jew is a believer in Yahweh as God, a reciter of the Shema, an observer of the Torah's commandments, then Freud is at best a heretic, at worst, a Gentile. But

if Judaism has a wider meaning, if Torah for example, is equated to Truth, if identification with the Jewish community be the quality that makes a Jew "Jewish," then indeed Freud qualifies as a Jew, and a good one.

I would only express my concern to the readers of this paper that our religion not judge our own dissidents too harshly. Let us try to resist "exnomination," or the taking away of the name Jew, either by physical coercion or mental anguish. We can only imagine how much better off our religion would be if ideas, such as Freud's, were tolerated, if not embraced. A community can ill afford to turn away geniuses like Freud or to embarrass them publically by making them participate in ceremonies they deem meaningless. For Judaism to remain a growing and thriving concern, people like Freud are not just needed, they are necessities.

#### F. Psychoanalysis as a "Jewish Science"

Before we continue with Freud's analysis of religion in general and the Jewish enterprise in particular, we must deal with an issue that has been long debated: What is the relationship, if any, between psychoanalysis and the Jewish enterprise? Was it merely chance that the vast majority of those who established the science of psychoanalysis were Jews?

To answer this we must look at the conditions of



the Jews in Europe at the turn of the nineteenth century. With the walls of the ghetto fallen, Jews ventured out of their protected and sealed environment into the general flow of the Western world. No longer tied to a strictly religious education, Jews turned their genius and ingenuity into secular fields. Young Freud was one of the many Jews caught up in this whirlwind move into Western society. For Freud it was not religion, but science that would be the focus of his attention. "Like most adolescents Freud had the need 'to believe in something' and in his case it was Science with a capital."<sup>14</sup>

But even with the physical walls of the ghetto down, several walls of prejudice still existed. Thus when Freud went to choose a profession there were but three fields open to him. "For a Viennese Jew the choice [of professions] lay between industry or business, law, and medicine."<sup>15</sup> It was because Freud was a Jew that his interest in science in general, was turned to medicine in particular. Medicine was in fact, a field dominated by Jewish names. Thus the integral relationship between medicine and the Jewish community in early twentieth century Europe is one link between Jews and psychoanalysis.

But there is, according to Freud, even a stronger connection between psychoanalysis and Judaism than this case of historical circumstance. Freud himself hinted at it constantly but never stated it explicitly. For example, in 1908 during a feud between Freud and Jung, a colleague

of Freud's, Karl Abraham was under attack from Jung. When this was reported to Freud, he wrote a letter to Abraham in which he said,

Be tolerant and don't forget that really it is easier for you to follow my thoughts than for Jung, since to begin with you are completely independent, and the racial relationship brings you closer to my intellectual constitution whereas he, being a "Goi" (Gentile) and the son of a pastor, can only find his way to me against inner resistances.<sup>16</sup>

Indeed it was Freud's opinion that Jews were better suited psychologically to pursue the harsh truths exposed by psychoanalysis.

Further what Freud said about Jung's background effecting Jung's judgement has been documented elsewhere and does shed some light on the question of Jews being better suited for psychoanalysis than Christians. Jung's father was indeed a Protestant pastor. But, while Jung was still a young boy his father began to suffer from religious doubts which eventually lead his father to suffer from mental illness. "Much of his youth, Jung recalled, was spent in trying to come to grips with the religious beliefs of his father, a father whom he grew not only to disrespect, but to 'pity.'"<sup>17</sup>

Jung never recovered from this childhood syndrome. Thus, when he began to study with Freud he started to look at Freud, his teacher, as the father he had wished he had. But this relationship of father to son doomed Jung to repeat the trauma of his childhood. Just as he learned to disrespect and "pity" his biological father,

so he turned to fervent disrespect and perhaps even more violent hatred of his adopted father, Freud. This is no mere theory, it is quite well documented. Jung himself admits to Freud being his projected father, "he still meant to me a superior personality, upon whom I projected [as] a father."<sup>18</sup> And concerning his hatred of anyone who was associated as a father figure, Jung wrote, "I do not want to knuckle under any 'fathers' and never shall."<sup>19</sup>

I relate this incident only as proof perhaps to those who would argue with Freud that Jews were better able to take a healthier look at the human person because of their Jewish backgrounds. This idea is best and most explicitly stated by one of Freud's colleague's, Sandor Ferenczi. Commenting on Jung's background he said, "It has seldom been so clear to me as now what a psychological advantage it signifies to be born a Jew and to have been spared in one's childhood all the atavistic nonsense [atavistic--a reversion to a primitive type of behavior, or an ancestral custom]."<sup>20</sup>

Whether Freud and Ferenczi are correct or not in assuming a superior capability to deal with psychoanalysis because they are Jewish, cannot be scientifically determined. Again, it is up to the reader to determine whether such a theory is valid or not.

This author has no set opinion on this issue but was surprised to read the opinion of Jones, a non-Jew. About this volatile issue he wrote,

It is doubtful if without certain traits inherited from his Jewish ancestry Freud would have been able to accomplish the work he did. I think here of a peculiar native shrewdness, a skeptical attitude towards illusions and deception, and a determined courage that made him impervious to hostile public opinion and the contumely [rudeness or contempt] of his professional colleagues.<sup>21</sup>

What can be stated as an unimpeachable fact is that before the rise of Jung and the Scandanavian school of psychoanalysis, this science was exclusively the domain of Jews! So much so that Freud feared that psychoanalysis would become "a Jewish national affair." I quote again from Freud's letter to Karl Abraham concerning Jung,

His [Jung's] adherence [to psychoanalysis] is therefore all the more valuable. I was almost going to say it was his emergence on the scene that has removed from psychoanalysis the danger of becoming a Jewish national affair.<sup>22</sup>



## PART II: MOSES AND MONOTHEISM

### A. Introduction

No study of Freud's Jewishness would be complete without an examination of how Freud scientifically viewed the development of the Jewish enterprise. This study comes in Freud's most intriguing work, Moses and Monotheism. At the end of the chapter we shall discuss Freud's motivation in writing this work, but for now let us deal with the book itself.

In Moses and Monotheism Freud expands on issues discussed in Totem and Taboo and The Future of An Illusion. He uses the theories stated in these earlier works and applies them to the Jewish religious enterprise specifically. What emerges in the end is a grand blueprint describing both the evolution and growth of the entire Western religious enterprise. The basic underlying assumption in this grand plan is the notion that each phase of growth in religion directly parallels a certain stage in human growth.

What we intend to do now is to trace Freud's reconstruction of the growth of Western religion, and show how in each case Freud viewed a particular stage in religious growth as being directly related to a stage in human growth. For the time being, we will refrain from giving a critique on Freud's theory and will concentrate on simply understanding how Freud himself understood the growth of the Western religious enterprise.

### B. Stage I: Childhood and Totem Religion

As we discussed in Chapter I, according to Freud, the first phase of the growth of Western religion was the totem phase. This phase directly parallels the first phase in the growth of the human: that is the childhood trauma, or the Oedipal phase. To review, the Oedipal phase occurs in a child between the ages of two and six. This child begins to develop an attraction for the parent of the opposite sex. The child becomes aware that the parent of the same sex must die in order for the child to realize sexual fulfillment with the parent of the opposite sex. Consequently the child develops an ambivalence toward the parent of the same sex. The child loves and fears the parent of the same sex's power, and yet, at the same time, hates that parent for frustrating the child's sexual feelings for the parent of the opposite sex. This conflict emerges as guilt, that is the need to apologize, and as fear, fear the parent of the same sex will discover the child's feelings and injure the child as a punishment for those feelings. In the case of the male child the specific fear is castration.

In direct comparison to the Oedipal development is the totem phase of Western religion. To review, Freud posits a time when an absolute, tyrannic, "Father-leader" ruled over various tribes of people. The Father would keep all the women of the tribe for himself. Any male who challenged the rule of the father would be castrated.

Eventually, though, the sexual frustration of the sons became too great, and they killed the Father (acting out the Oedipal wish of all children), and consumed his genitals to receive extra sexual potency. The guilt for performing this action was overwhelming. So much so, that at some point in the history of the tribe the actual killing of the Father was abandoned and a Father-substitute, the totem took his place. For Freud, this explained the universal taboo prohibitions of totem societies: not to eat the totem animal (except on the designated "holiday") and not to marry the women of the same tribe (exogamy). Finally once a year, the heinous crime of the distant past was played out dramatically during the "holiday," when the totem animal was eaten (the symbolic eating of the primal Father) and vows of exogamy were exchanged among the males of the tribe.

Thus far we have simply reviewed material that is in no way new to the reader. Now, however, in Moses and Monotheism, Freud continues to explain the growth of Western religion filling in gaps he left out in previous works.

### C. Step II: Latency and Polytheism

Freud posited a time in human growth, following the childhood trauma known as the latency period.<sup>23</sup> During this time the trauma of childhood, the Oedipal complex, is "stored away" in a corner of the unconscious, only to surface at a later period of growth. This process can be compared to a computer programmer who takes some bit of information and puts it into the computer's memory bank. That information will lay in the "unconscious" of the computer until the situation arises when it will be needed again. Thus though it "seems" during this period as if the child has forgotten the Oedipal drama, he/she has not. The Oedipal complex will surface again as the dominant factor in the person's development.

According to Freud, religion also went through a latency period. During this time the trauma of the killing of the tribe's Father was "seemingly" forgotten. Again, we say "seemingly" because as we shall see, it will surface again in later phases of religious growth. During the latency phase the focus of religion was turned not to the one totem animal, a Father substitute, but to many totem symbols. From these many, less powerful demigods emerged a polytheistic system of worship with each individual god being assigned an earthly mission to fulfill.

But, some might argue, the development of polytheism took centuries. Did Freud actually think that entire centuries of human history were dominated by one psychological



phase? He did indeed! For Freud, whole civilizations, entire areas of the world, and whole periods of time could be placed under the dominance of one psychological phase of development.

D. Step III: Puberty/Monotheism: Egyptian and Hebrew

There occurs in the lifetime of a child (between 13 and 15 years) a period of puberty during which the body goes through a series of physical changes, which will eventuate in the physical formation of the adult person. Along with these tremendous physical changes there also occurs great psychological changes.

The main psychological change in puberty and adolescence is the attempt by the person to establish a solid identity, or a healthy ego. This is accomplished by the individual through learning more about themselves, their changing bodies, and the society in which they live. During the puberty phase all emotional knowledge, stored in the mind's computer is reorganized and rearranged in a way that will produce a new identity for the person. We mean by this that the mental organization that made for the "child self" now disappears and a new organization of thoughts and memories begins that will eventuate in the formation of an "adult self." Finally, a point we mentioned earlier, that is the newly formed very aggressive ego, dominated by the libidinal urge, begins to develop a

social counterpart which will control its actions. This social safeguard is the super ego. The resulting struggle between the forces of ego and super ego produces enormous guilt.

Religion too, Freud said, reached a stage of puberty. This was the advent of monotheism. It occurred, Freud tells us, when great "physical" changes occurred in the political makeup of the world. There came a point when one country was able to establish its own "potency" or hegemony over the other countries of the Middle East by establishing an empire. This country was Egypt about 1700 B.C.E.<sup>24</sup> This great change in political strength was accompanied by a great psychological change within Egypt itself. Rather than the narrow polytheistic gods (especially the Egyptian gods of the dead who ensured eternal life) what was needed now was one, singular god who could stand as a symbol of unity in an Egyptian Empire with extremely diverse cultures. Thus, according to Freud, only a single Father-god, who was the primal ancestor of all people would make it possible for the Egyptian Empire to have a single unifying religion.

During this period there came to power an Egyptian Pharoah, Iknaton, who established just such a monotheistic religion. The one god, who was to be worshipped exclusively was Aton. As a sign of loyalty to the one god, Aton, several ceremonies were adopted, the most famous of these being circumcision for males. But Aton worship was short lived. The Egyptians were too used to their myriad of

gods to give them up for a single god. They were especially fearful that without the gods of the dead, eternal life was impossible. Further the displaced priests of gods other than Aton were extremely distraught by their loss of power and influence. All these factors combined to lead to the overthrow or murder of Ikhnaton (we are not sure which).

There was, however, Freud claimed, in the land of Goshen, a governor, or a high priest who was an ardent supporter of Aton monotheism. The name of this Egyptian was Moses. When Ikhnaton died and the polytheistic ways were reinstated, Moses faced a fateful decision. Was he to change with the times and abandon the monotheistic ideals which he believed in so deeply, or was there a way to preserve Aton worship?

Further, Freud claims that in Goshen Moses was associated with a splinter group of the Habiru tribes, who originated in Canaan, known as the Hebrews. Moses decided to choose this group of Hebrews to be the future heirs of monotheistic Aton worship. The charismatic character of Moses was so great that he convinced the Hebrew people to wholeheartedly accept the ways of Aton monotheism. But Moses was shrewd enough to know that Aton worship had no future in an Egyptian province, so he gathered his followers together and peacefully left Egypt to go into the Sinai desert.

As Moses and his followers wandered the Sinai,

living conditions worsened and tensions mounted. Some members of the group even proposed returning to Goshen and the Egyptian polytheistic ways. Moses was forced to respond to this threat by creating and enforcing a strict code of discipline. Among these laws passed and enforced by Moses was compelled circumcision for all males (as a sign of allegiance to Aton), the observance of the seventh day in honor of Aton, plus several taboo prohibitions such as eating wild boar.

Eventually the harsh conditions of the desert proved too much for the Hebrews to bear. They killed their leader Moses in an untold rebellion somewhere in the Sinai. But like the killing of the primal Father in totem religions, the death of Moses produced a great deal of guilt among the Hebrews. They had, in fact, killed the Father of the Jewish religion. To appease their guilt Freud says, the Hebrews continued to follow the laws of Moses and venerated his name.

Leaderless, the Hebrews wandered in the desert for a long period of time. Finally they came across the Eastern part of the Sinai desert and met there a group of Semitic tribes. These tribes worshipped Yahweh, a demonic and vicious volcano god from a local geologically active area. While in contact with this Eastern Semitic tribe one of the mountains attributed to Yahweh's domain had a volcanic eruption. This event, according to Freud, so awed the Hebrews that they adopted Yahweh as their god. Jethro,



a local high priest of Yahweh, became their leader.

Ultimately, this group of Hebrews, lead by their new leader Jethro journeyed north to Canaan. There they were reunited with the remainder of the Habiru tribes they had left behind centuries before. Together the Habiru of Canaan and their desert counterparts, the Hebrews, conquered and ruled the land of Canaan. They attributed their success and accomplishments to the powerful demon god of the desert, Yahweh.

But the success of the Habiru also provoked feelings of guilt: guilt they had prematurely killed their founding Father, Moses. Guilt that they did not have the patience to follow Moses through their troubled time in the desert. How could they atone for such guilt? Further, another problem developed. Now that they were settled in Canaan, and no longer at war, what was to be done with the fierce demon god Yahweh? Surely while at war a fierce god was needed, but now, as farmers, a god of agriculture was needed.

Freud claims at a place called Qades these problems were resolved by a compromise solution. The monotheism of Moses was to be reinstated, but instead of it being called Aton worship, the name of the new God who was to be worshipped exclusively was Yahweh. As far as Yahweh being a fierce demonic volcano god, this was to be forgotten, but Yahweh's characteristics of jealousy and revenge were to remain with the religion. In order to atone for the

guilt of killing Moses, new even more rigorous prohibitions were instated regarding monotheistic worship: prohibitions far more rigid than those instituted by Moses in the desert. These were known as the Priestly Laws. Further, the name and personality of Moses was to be associated with all events of the desert period, and especially the awe inspiring volcano of Sinai. Also Moses was to be related to Jethro, the Hebrew's second leader, by becoming his nephew when all stories of the desert were told. As for Jethro, his leadership was to be ignored and only the name of the founding father, Moses was to be recognized.

Finally, Freud says, a document, the Pentateuch, was to be written to record only the results of this compromise at Qades and to conceal with the use of stories and deceptions the actual events in the history of the Hebrews. This document was also to record the prohibitions of the new monotheistic cult and attribute them to Yahweh, the One God, and his "prophet" Moses. But, Freud claims in reality we know that Yahweh the demon god, and Moses, the worshipper of Aton had no relationship whatsoever with each other, let alone the intimate relationship they shared according to the fallacious claims of the Pentateuch.

#### E. Step IV: Latent Neurosis and the Backsliding Israelites

We come now to a very intricate development of the human person known as the latent neurotic period. During this period traumas that occurred in childhood are remembered. The probable reason that this occurs is that the great physical and psychological changes, brought about by puberty, dredge up from the unconscious memories of past traumatic events which the mind, up to now, has been able to suppress. In other words, we can say that childhood traumas sometimes lay dormant or latent in the unconscious for a long period of time until the shock of puberty reawakens them. Note, and it was one of the main contributions of Freud to psychoanalysis, that events that occurred years past in one's childhood, can still have a devastating effect on the individual in the present. Latent neurosis usually appears in the final stages of puberty. Adulthood cannot be achieved unless the latent neurosis of the person can be resolved.<sup>25</sup>

Corresponding to this latent neurotic period in the human person is a latent neurotic period in religion. This occurred between the writing of the Pentateuch (puberty stage) and the emergence of the Israelite prophets (adult stage). The Hebrews, known then as Israelites, were no longer under the pressures of war and famine that had threatened them over the years. Rather, the world of the Israelite in this period was filled with agricultural abundance. More and more they sought to turn away from

the strict prohibitions of Yahweh worship to the more enjoyable fertility cults of their polytheistic Canaanite neighbors.

Freud said that the "shock of abundance" revived memories of an earlier stage of religious growth in Goshen, where polytheistic fertility gods were worshipped. So strong were these associations that the Israelites increasingly strayed away from monotheism and returned back to polytheistic fertility worship which was the hallmark of their Egyptian period. Analagous to the psychology of the person, note how historical events that occurred centuries earlier had a profound effect on the Israelite people later in their development. This "backsliding" of the Israelites in returning to polytheism continued for several generations and might have destroyed all the progress of Yahweh worship had it not been for the rise of the Israelite prophets who psychologically cured this latent neurosis of the Israelite people, allowing them to develop an adult stage to their religion.

#### F. Stage V: Adulthood and the Prophets

The last normal stage in human growth is adulthood. In this stage the individual, who was a child, now is an adult. This is accomplished by following a social pattern observed in the example set by the parents: that is just as mother and father satisfied their libidinal urge by



marriage, intercourse, and raising children, so the child now begins to seek a partner of the opposite sex to repeat this pattern. Further having been through puberty the body of the person is indeed ready for reproduction. Thus the individual passes through the childhood phase and becomes themselves adults.

Along with this stage of growth comes certain awarenesses. First there is the awareness that a person may not do or take whatever they please. This awareness is nurtured by the parents and the education of civilization teaching the person to balance the desires of the ego with the conscience of the super ego. Second, there is the awareness that the person harbors within themselves vestiges of all past stages of growth. Thus we find in all adult persons an "adult self," a "puberty self," and a "child self." In the normal, well adjusted person, the "adult self" maintains hegemony over the other selves, and because of this the behavior of the person is that of an adult.

Religion too reached a stage of adulthood with the rise of the Israelite prophets. They attempted to convince the Israelite people to turn away from the less mature, neurotic attraction of polytheistic worship, and return to the more mature universal, One God, Yahweh. But how could this be done? How did the prophets turn the Israelite people away from the libidinal pleasures associated with fertility worship back to the strict laws

and precepts associated with the religious teachings of Yahweh? Surely Freud thought, there must have been a psychological dimension to the success of the prophets.

Now comes a crucial point in Freud's theory. There was indeed Freud claimed, a psychological element in the work of the prophets: that of "genetic memory." In Freud's opinion a historic event is recorded in a person's mind and becomes part of that person through their memory. Memories, in turn, are passed down genetically from one generation to another. Thus just as the adult person is made up of all the selves of the past, so do we all carry within our minds the memories of events our ancestors witnessed ages ago, memories passed down to us through our genes.

This idea can be favorably compared to the Jewish concept of masoret or kabbalah. The masoret for an Orthodox Jew, is an unbroken chain of unimpeachable witnesses testifying to the truth of a revelation at Mt. Sinai. For Freud "genetic remembering" is an unbroken chain of reliable memories passed down to us through the genes of our ancestors.

Here now is the crux. Because the prophets aroused such a great deal of emotions in the Israelite people, the Israelites suddenly and as a group experienced genetic remembering. Those events which were dormant or latent in their ancestral memories became real for them and had a great psychological impact. In other words,

the Israelites intimately experienced in their minds all the past events of religious development. They felt the guilt of the sons for killing the primal Father as their own guilt. They experienced the guilt of killing Moses in the desert as though they themselves did it. They remembered the covenant of Qades as though they themselves were there and swore to it. After this overwhelming experience, tremendous guilt arose. The Israelites must have thought the prophets spoke true words: the Israelites had indeed shunned the Father: the Father God and Moses, the Father of their religion! There was only one way they could soothe their psyches: that was to return to that Father God that Moses, their ancestral Father, had taught them. The prophets then cured the latent neurosis of the backsliding Israelites, allowing them to pass into an adult form of religion.

From that point on it was to be the precept monotheism, the "adult self" of religion, which would determine the Israelites behavior. Polytheism and fertility cults were to be abandoned and Yahweh, the One God, was again to be worshipped exclusively. For Freud this was the zenith of Western religion.

### G. Stage VI: Regression and Christianity

There are times in some people's adult lives, when under a great deal of stress, a person wishes no longer to be an adult, but rather to revert back to a past, less mature stage of development. This occurs by allowing one of the past selves other than the "adult self" (i.e. child self) to express hegemony over the person.

According to Freud, religion too suffered a period of regression. During the Roman Empire, a period of stressful guilt feelings swept across the entire European and Mediterranean area. This guilt persisted until Paul, a Jew, proposed its source and solution. According to Paul, the source of guilt feeling was original sin. (As we have already seen theistic absolutistic religions equate guilt feelings with a sense of sin.) The original sin was the disobedience to the Father God shown by Adam and Eve. (Note how skillfully Paul's religion plays upon the Oedipal Complex.) Death, according to Paul was the only expiation from original sin. Because of the strong Oedipal elements of Paul's religion we can say that it was a reversion, in a sense, to the earliest stage of religion, the totem stage.

However, Paul's religion, as it stood, did not gain popularity. Thus Freud claimed that under the influence of Oriental and Greek mystery religions, Paul added a new element to his religion, namely, that guilt feelings were not only a product of original sin but that the Father God



sent his only begotten Son to earth in the body of Jesus to redeem humankind from guilt feelings. But humankind responded to this action by killing this Savior. Thus the guilt of humankind according to Christianity is two-fold. There is guilt because of original sin and there is guilt because of the murder of God's only begotten son, humankind's Savior, Jesus. Christians believe they not only shunned the Father, but they even killed his Son.

Freud had nothing but contempt for this religious view and he did not disguise it. He accused Christianity of being a regression back to one of the earliest stages in the growth of religion.

In certain respects the new religion [Christianity] was a cultural regression as compared with the older Jewish religion: this happens regularly when a new mass of people of a lower cultural level effects an invasion or is admitted into an older culture. The Christian religion did not keep to the lofty heights of spirituality to which the Jewish religion had soared. The former was no longer strictly monotheistic: it took over from the surrounding peoples numerous symbolic rites, re-established the great mother goddess [Mary], and found room for many deities of polytheism in an easily recognizable disguise [Saints]. Above all it was not inaccessible, as Aton religion and the subsequent Mosaic religion had been, to the penetration of superstition, magical and mystical elements which proved a great hinderance to the spiritual development of two following millennia.

The triumph of Christianity was a renewed victory of the Amman priests [those who killed Ikhnaton] over the God of Ikhnaton after an interval of a millennium and a half and over a larger region.<sup>26</sup>

Nor does Freud's contempt for Christianity stop with its religious ideas alone, it extends to all of its institutions. Note what Freud says about the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church, which so far has been the implacable enemy of all freedom of thought has resolutely opposed any idea of this world being governed by [the] advance towards the recognition of truth.<sup>27</sup>

Freud's ultimate accusation against Christianity is when he blames it for being a main contributing factor in anti-Semitism. Freud sees four basic causes of anti-Semitism. First he believed, as many did in his era, that there were racial differences between Jews and other peoples. These differences provoked suspicion and mistrust. Second, Freud viewed the fact that Jews had a tradition of "holding their own in practical life" as a source of jealousy and envy against this group of people.<sup>28</sup> Third, Freud viewed the fact that so many Jews of that time were making "valuable contributions to surrounding civilizations" as a source of envy and hatred against the Jews.<sup>29</sup>

But primary to all the causes of anti-Semitism was the psychological cause, directly related to Christianity. Let us trace its development. The Old Testament claimed that the Jews were God's first born "chosen" children. God, in fact, gave the Jews a ceremony (circumcision) to be the Jew's "coat of many colors," our "brand" of superiority. Not only were Christians jealous of this status of the Jews as God's "chosen," but the ceremony of circumcision provoked in non-Jews a fear that God would castrate them,

Finally, Freud believed that most Christians were physically coerced into converting to that religion. They resented this fact and instead of taking their resentment

out against the Catholic Church, they projected it on to the Jews in the form of violent anti-Semitism. Freud writes,

We must not forget that all the peoples who now excel in the practice of anti-Semitism became Christians only in relatively recent times, sometimes forced to it by bloody compulsion. One might say they are 'badly christened': under the thin veneer of Christianity they have remained what their ancestors were, barbarically polytheistic. They have not yet overcome their grudge against the new religion which was forced upon them, and they projected it on to the source from which Christianity came to them . . . .  
The hatred for Judaism is at bottom hatred for Christianity.<sup>30</sup>

### PART III: MOSES AND MONOTHEISM

#### Freud's Motivation

##### A. Accomplishments of the Jews

Toward the end of Moses and Monotheism, Freud poses the question as to how the Jews were able to survive countless persecutions and adversaries. He attributed this ability to a feeling of self confidence. The ancient Hebrews were convinced that God had singled them out, had in fact, "chosen" them for preferential treatment over and against the other nations of the world. The truth or falsehood of this claim in reality was irrelevant as long as the Jews, as a group, believed it was true in their minds. For it was this belief that fostered the self confidence the Jews needed to survive all their enemies.

Another contribution of the Jews was the concept of the dignity of humankind. In other cultures peoples chose their own gods, and if the gods did not function to the people's approval, they would abandon these gods and accept others. But, according to the Jewish prospective, God chose people as co-partners in the operations of the world. This raised the destiny of people to the lofty heights attributed in the past only to gods. In other words, for the Jews, people were noble because God, the Ultimate and most noble Being, chose people to be His



co-workers.

Their religion also gave the Jews a much more grandiose idea of their God or, to express it more soberly, the idea of a more august God. Whoever believed in this God took part in his greatness, so to speak, might feel uplifted himself.<sup>31</sup>

The Jews were also responsible for another accomplishment, namely, the stressing of the spiritual over the physical. This concept was rooted deep in the Hebraic past. While surrounded by polytheistic cultures who worshipped gods made of wood and stone, the Hebrews worshipped a God who was pure spirit. This spiritual God was far stronger than the material gods of polytheistic worship. Thus it was deduced that spiritual qualities such as wisdom and knowledge were superior to material values such as wealth or physical strength. This is why, for example, the Jewish culture stood in direct conflict with the Greek culture (and with the Nazis!).

The preference which through two thousand years the Jews have given to spiritual endeavor has, of course, had its effect; it has helped to build a dike against brutality and the inclination to violence which are usually found where athletic development becomes the ideal of the people. The harmonious development of spiritual and bodily activity, as achieved by the Greeks, was denied to the Jews. In this conflict their decision was at least made in favor of what is culturally the more important.

### B. Freud's Motivation in Writing Moses and Monotheism

An eighty year old man, in a foreign country, bed-ridden, his jaw infested with cancer so that it was malformed and swollen: a man in constant agonizing pain. This was the Sigmund Freud who wrote Moses and Monotheism. Why would a man in such pain and with knowledge of his imminent death write such a complex volume about a subject which some years earlier he called "patently infinitile" and "foreign to reality."<sup>32</sup> This question has been the center of stormy debate since Freud's death.

To further complicate this problem, Freud himself admits throughout this book that his theories about Moses and the growth of monotheism lack any absolute and irrefragable evidence to support them. With this being true how could Freud, the scientist who set up the strictest empirical and scientific standards over all the rest of his work lapse into what can be called "educated guesswork" in this particular volume? What was Freud's motivation?

To answer this question, I believe there can be cited three basic motivations behind Freud's writing of Moses and Monotheism. First and perhaps least known was the fact that Freud strongly identified himself with the historical figure of Moses. In the summer of 1912, while in Rome, he went to see the statue of Moses, sculptured by Michelangelo. Freud was so impressed by the work that he returned and stared at that statue of Moses every day for

months! Finally, he published a paper entitled "The Moses of Michelangelo." (1914) Jones comments on the significance of this paper.

There is every reason to suppose that the grand figure of Moses himself, from Freud's early Biblical studies to the last book he ever wrote was one of tremendous significance to him. Did he [Moses] represent the formidable Father-Image or did Freud identify himself with him? Apparently both, at different periods.<sup>34</sup>

Freud's second and most important motivation in writing Moses and Monotheism was to respond intellectually to the rise of venomous anti-Semitism in Europe, and especially the fatal persecution of the Jews in Nazi Germany. The actual writing and publishing of this work itself bespeaks of this troubled period of time. Freud wrote most of this book in Vienna years before it was published but refrained from having it printed because he was afraid it would further incite the Nazis against the Jews. But when Austria was annexed by Hitler and Freud was forced to flee to England, he saw no reason to withhold his ideas any longer. He finished Moses and Monotheism and it was published in 1939, at the height of Nazi power and influence.

There are many though, who would disagree that Freud wrote Moses and Monotheism specifically to counter the rise of the Nazis. Most notable among those who see another motivation for Freud's work was Jones, Freud's biographer.

The bitter experiences of anti-Semitism were hardly needed to awaken in Freud such questions as 'how did I come to be a Jew? What exactly is a Jew? How did

the Jews come to be what they are?' Indeed Freud's deep conviction of his Jewishness, and his wholehearted acceptance of the fact, must inevitably have forced such questions on someone burning as he did with intellectual curiosity and throughout concerned with the problems of mankind rather than those of a material nature. We know how greatly he admired the great Semitic leaders of the past from Hannibal onward, and how gladly in his early years he would have been willing to sacrifice his life to emulate their heroic deeds on behalf of their people.

The leader who kindled his imagination above all others was inevitably Moses, the great man who did more than anyone to build the Jewish nation, to create the religion that has since borne his name and in Freud's opinion, even to stamp on the Jewish people some of their most prominent character traits.<sup>35</sup>

Thus it was clear for Jones, and several others, that it was not anti-Semitism that drove Freud to write Moses and Monotheism but rather it was the motivation that drove Freud to write anything that he did, that is, the search for intellectual truth. To be fair to Jones there is some evidence that he is correct. Freud himself in the first page of the book, commenting on the uproar he expected when he proposed Moses was an Egyptian, expresses this thought: "No consideration however, will move me to set aside truth in favor of supposed national interests."<sup>36</sup>

But as far as this author is concerned, we must conclude that it was more than the intellectual search for truth that lead this old, pain-ridden, dying man to scratch out a book in defense of the accomplishments of the Jews, it was passion. The passion of a man doing what he could to defend a doomed people. Freud, the Jewish Hannibal, knew he could never stop the Nazis physically, but what he could do was strike back against the Nazis



with his most formidable weapon, his intellect. And a formidable weapon it was.

Freud could and did expose the Nazis as the brutal anti-social movement that they were, while praising the Jews as exemplars of a people who treasured spirituality, rather than force. It is ironic how this "godless Jew" who was perhaps the greatest and most effective critic of theistic absolutistic religion in the twentieth century, spent his dying days defending a people who, for the most part, considered him a heretic!

Yet what appears to emerge in Moses and Monotheism more than any other work Freud ever wrote, is this strange mixture of Freud, the scientist who renounced the Father God of theistic absolutism, and Freud, the Jewish Hannibal and ardent defender of the Jews of Europe. It is this mixture that makes Moses and Monotheism one of Freud's greatest achievements. Surely, not for the theories about Moses and the Bible it claims: these have long since been discredited by more modern findings in Biblical scholarship. But rather the greatness of Moses and Monotheism is because, at its core, it is a look into the fascinating personality that was Sigmund Freud.<sup>37</sup>

## Chapter III

Footnotes

1. There does not exist "Judaism" per se. Each Jewish system of the past needs some type of adjective which distinguishes it from all other Jewish systems, i.e. Orthodox Judaism, Hassidic Judaism, Reform Judaism. When we use the term "Judaism" without an adjective we do so only when referring to the erroneous assumption of others that there is only one unbroken chain of Jewish development rather than the fact that each Jewish system of the past is essentially a unique enterprise.
2. Jones, Ernest, The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, 3 vols. (New York: Basic Books Inc. 1957) 2:17-18.
3. Ibid. 1:12.
4. Clarence J. Karrier, "The Ethics of a Therapeutic Man: C.G. Jung," The Psychoanalytic Review 63 (Spring 1976): 122.
5. Ibid. 124.
6. Ibid. 122.
7. Ibid. 131.
8. Jones, The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, 1:22-23.
9. Ibid. 2:15.
10. Ibid. 2:427.
11. Ibid. 1:140.
12. Ibid. 1:150.
13. Ibid. 2:199.
14. Ibid. 1:31.
15. Ibid. 1:23.
16. Ibid. 2:48.
17. Karrier, "The Ethics of a Therapeutic Man: C.G. Jung" 122.
18. Ibid. 140.

19. Ibid. 141.
20. Jones, The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, 2:153.
21. Ibid. 2:427.
22. Ibid. 2:48.
23. "Latency: The state of relative inactivity of sexual drive during the period from the resolution of the Oedipus complex to pubescence." A Glossary of Psychoanalytic Terms and Concepts. (New York: The American Psychoanalytic Association 1968) 58.
24. The borders of this empire are indeed impressive: as far north as present day Turkey, as far south as present day Ethiopia, as far east as the Indus valley and as far west as present day Libya.
25. For a discussion on this see Sigmund Freud's Moses and Monotheism, trans. Katherine Jones, (New York: Vintage Books: Random House 1939) 97.
26. Freud, Moses and Monotheism: 112-113.
27. Ibid. 67.
28. Ibid. 116.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid. 116-117.
31. Ibid. 143.
32. Freud, Sigmund, Civilization and Its Discontents, trans, and ed. by James Strachey, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc. 1961, original 1930) 21.
33. Freud, Moses and Monotheism, 147.
34. Jones, The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, 2:364-365.
35. Ibid. 3:367.
36. Freud, Moses and Monotheism, 1.
37. For a different approach to the question of Freud's Jewishness, see Ernst Simon, "Sigmund Freud: the Jew," Yearbook II, Publication of the Leo Baeck Institute (1957) 270-305.  
A short analysis of this article is in Appendix to Chapter III, Ernst Simon's Freud.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER III: ERNST SIMON'S FREUD

Another view of Freud's Jewishness comes from Ernst Simon of the Leo Baeck Institute.<sup>1</sup> Generally speaking, both Simon and this author share the same information, and rely upon the same sources, yet we have derived differing conclusions. Consequently, one can say the differences between Simon's interpretation of Freud's Jewishness and the one we profess is a difference in interpretation and methodology, not in fact. We would strongly recommend that anyone who reads the third chapter of this thesis also read Simon's article. For those who do not or cannot, the following is a brief summary and comparison between Simon's view of Freud's Jewishness and the one presented by this author in the contents of Chapter III.

Simon agrees with this author on several points. First and foremost, Simon's article shares an essential theme with this author: namely, that being Jewish was significant to Sigmund Freud while the ceremonies and rituals of Orthodox Judaism (i.e. Freud wedding) were shunned and detested by him. Simon cites as evidence for Freud's attachment to Jewishness basically the same evidence as this author: Freud's association with the B'nai B'rith, his intimate circle of almost only Jewish friends and colleagues, and even Freud's mild support for



the blossoming Zionist movement in Europe.

Second, Simon also agrees with this author that it was indeed Freud's contention that psychoanalysis was easier for Jews to study and learn than for Gentiles. He cites the reason for this as a healthy attitude in past Jewish systems toward sex. Sex of course, was the central focus of Freud's psychoanalytic theories.

Third, Simon agrees with this author that Freud had a tenacious response against anti-Semitism. He cites, as this author does, the "Hannibal image" Freud maintained of himself and Freud's almost mystic approach to Michelangelo's Moses. Further he agrees with this author that one of the main reasons Freud wrote Moses and Monotheism was because of the rise of pernicious anti-Semitism in Germany.

But one should not get the impression that Simon and this author share essentially the same opinions concerning Freud's Jewishness, we do not! In fact, Simon's interpretation of Freud is essentially different than the one posed by this author in Chapter III.

First, Simon believes that Freud's father, Jacob had a strong traditional Jewish background in texts and ideas, and passed this tradition down to his son. Simon cannot document this in any convincing fashion. Besides Ernest Jones, Freud's biographer par excellence, discredits this assertion by Simon when Jones declares that Jacob Freud was, in fact, the source of Sigmund Freud's liberal outlook.

From his father Freud inherited his sense of humor, his shrewd skepticism about the uncertain vicissitude of life, his custom of pointing a moral by quoting a Jewish anecdote [not necessarily from a sacred text], his liberalism and free thinking and perhaps his uxoriousness [excessive or irrational submission or devotion to one's wife].<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps Simon cannot distinguish the difference between being taught Orthodox Judaism and believing in the same.

Second, and most crucial, Simon makes a severe methodological mistake in attempting to psychoanalyze Sigmund Freud years after Freud's death and using only Freud's written materials. This could not be done by a trained, experienced psychoanalyst, let alone by Simon who has no such credentials. This methodological factor reduces much of Simon's article to mere guesswork.

For example, Simon reports, as we did, the incident related by Jones where Freud's father's cap was knocked off by a Gentile boy shouting anti-Semitic slogans, which in turn influenced Freud to look at himself as the Jewish Hannibal. But without any documentation whatsoever Simon adds to this incident that the hat was "probably" a strummel Jacob Freud was wearing in honor of the traditional Jewish Shabbat. Further, Simon conjectures that because of this incident Freud developed an "unconscious" disdain for the ritual side of Judaism. Not only is this poor psychoanalysis, it is totally unacceptable scholarship. Unfortunately, Simon sees fit to lapse many times into these psychoanalytic excursions usually in order to "expose personality trends, and teachings of which Freud himself

was only partially conscious."<sup>3</sup> Again we find it extremely disconcerting that Simon criticizes Freud for writing about religion, a field, which according to Simon, Freud was not properly trained. While he, Simon finds nothing wrong with exposing, through analysis, Freud's unconscious personality though he, Simon, has no formal training in psychoanalysis!

There is more. Simon contends that Freud's theories about humor and some of his other works have a direct relationship with Freud having a "Jewish soul." We contend the idea of a "Jewish soul" is arbitrary and completely meaningless without being defined. As far as we are concerned, there simply does not exist any empirical scientific data as to what constitutes a "Jewish soul" or how a "Jewish soul," if indeed one exists in reality, may or may not influence an individual.

Fourth, Simon finds it difficult to understand how Freud could take a positive view of the accomplishments of the Jews in Moses and Monotheism while maintaining a negative view toward "religion" in The Future of an Illusion. The problem is that Simon's article about Freud is one in which "religion" is equated with theistic absolutism. We can only repeat again what we have stated many times before. Namely, in The Future of An Illusion Freud was not criticizing religion per se, he was only attacking theistic absolutism, the dominant religious response of his day. We personally find it especially curious that Simon, a faculty

member of the Leo Baeck Institute, which is a liberal Jewish school, would have such a narrow, closed, and orthodox view as to what constitutes "religion."

Finally we are greatly disturbed by Simon's interpretation of Moses and Monotheism. According to Simon, Moses and Monotheism was an unconscious apology by Freud toward aspects of the traditional Jewish past which he abandoned. In other words, Freud was troubled greatly in his unconscious about leaving behind many traditional Jewish customs and ideas taught to him by his father. This is why, according to Simon, though Freud does criticize some aspects of traditional Judaism in Moses and Monotheism, he does not give an all out negative view of the Jews and their religion as he does toward many other religions in Totem and Taboo. Not only does this interpretation of Moses and Monotheism depend on Simon's ability to understand Freud's unconscious through reading Freud's works, which is a difficult if not an impossible task, it raises many serious questions as to whether Simon even understood Moses and Monotheism at its most basic level.

We have clearly outlined the major themes of Moses and Monotheism, and our approach shares no similarity to Simon's analysis of this work. Simply stated, this author feels Moses and Monotheism is a record of the growth of Western religion in general, and the Jewish enterprise in particular. Freud wrote this work to intellectually defend



the accomplishments of the Jews, a group with whom he identified his whole life. En route though, Freud discovered what he felt was the truth about the origins of the monotheistic tradition (that Moses was an Egyptian and a follower of Aton monotheism). Now if readers of this thesis have learned anything about Freud, we hope it is that Freud never strayed from what he saw as the truth, no matter what the consequences. No unconscious identification with Jewish tradition, or some nebulous concept of a "Jewish soul" would ever keep Freud from speaking the truth according to all the empirical facts available to him. As Freud himself said, "No consideration however will move me to set aside truth in favor of supposed national interests."<sup>4</sup>

Simon's article is important for three reasons. First, it gives the reader an approach to Freud's Jewishness from the eyes of a more traditional Jewish author. Second, as we will discover in the next Chapter, Erich Fromm uses Simon's article about Freud as a main source of Fromm's own views about Freud's Jewishness. Further, Fromm allowed Simon to preview and offer critical comments to Fromm's work, Sigmund Freud's Mission: An Analysis of his Personality and Influence even before its publication. Therefore, we may properly conclude that Fromm's work on Freud's Jewishness will greatly reflect the strengths and weaknesses of Simon's theories. Finally, by reading this critique of Simon's article one can see firsthand all the problems in reconstructing essentially the same information about

Freud into a coherent, consistent pattern. This then, is perhaps a fault which is shared by Simon and this author. Namely, both of us look for patterned consistency in Freud's personality that possibly was never there. So that, in the end, perhaps Simon's article about Freud reflects more of Simon than it does of Freud, and alas, someone in the future will take this author to task with the same criticism. As for Sigmund Freud, his life and his ties to being Jewish, will we are afraid, remain in part, an enigma.

Footnotes to Appendix

1. Simon, Ernst, "Sigmund Freud, the Jew," Yearbook II.  
Publication of the Leo Baeck Institute (1957) 270-305.
2. Jones, Ernest, The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud,  
1:3-4.
3. Simon, Ernst, "Sigmund Freud: The Jew" 270.
4. Freud, Sigmund, Moses and Monotheism, tr. Katherine  
Jones, p. 1.

## CHAPTER IV

### ERICH FROMM'S APPRAISAL OF THE WORK OF SIGMUND FREUD AND CARL JUNG

#### A. Freud and Jung

Erich Fromm was aware that the works of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, the early pioneers of psychoanalysis, exposed the essential problems, if not all the solutions, with which this science would have to deal. Interspersed throughout Fromm's writings are his agreements and differences with the ideas of Freud and Jung. In the first section of this chapter we will combine these dispersed references to Jung and Freud, attempting to knit them together so that we might discern Fromm's attitude toward these past masters of psychoanalysis.

Throughout Fromm's work there is a tremendous emphasis on tracing the problems and solutions of current day psychoanalysis back to its founder, Sigmund Freud. Firstly we can say that Fromm understood explicitly the psychological basis of Freud's analysis of theistic absolutism, and realized also its far reaching consequences.

He [Freud] sees in the belief in God a fixation to the longing for an all protecting father figure, an expression of a wish to be helped and saved, when in reality man can, if not save himself, at least help himself, only by waking up from childish illusions, and by using his own strength, his reason, and skills.<sup>1</sup>



Secondly, Fromm extols Freud's liberal political attitude and his courage to speak out for social change. He attributes this liberalism to the liberal political beliefs which permeated the Jewish community of Vienna during the Victorian era.

. . . he [Freud] was . . . a liberal. He was a social critic. Society was not doing enough to satisfy the needs of human nature . . . he [Freud] advanced the<sup>2</sup> theory that society should be more tolerant of sex.

But perhaps what most impresses Fromm about Freud's work is Freud's dedication to truth and total faith in reason.

The most striking and probably the strongest force in Freud's personality was his passion for truth and his uncompromising faith in reason: for him reason was the only human capacity which could help to solve the problem of existence or, at least, ameliorate the suffering which is inherent in human life.<sup>3</sup>

What is most fascinating is that Fromm again ascribes Freud's dedication to truth, and his faith in reason to the fact Freud was a Jew, and thereby came from a tradition where reason and evidence were of the utmost importance in establishing true doctrine:

Freud's Jewish background, if anything added to his embrace of the enlightenment spirit. The Jewish tradition itself was one of reason and intellectual discipline . . . .<sup>4</sup>

But, according to Fromm, Freud took his passion for reason to extremes, so much so that Fromm accuses Freud of not leaving enough room in his philosophy for love and emotion. According to Fromm, Freud considered emotions, such as love, to be inferior to reason. As a result of

this Fromm claims we find an absence of both love and passion in Freud the scientist, and the man. This author would seriously disagree with this point. The whole episode of Freud's marriage to Martha Bernays demonstrates clearly that Freud was a man capable of intense love and fiery passion.

Despite the criticism that Freud placed too much stress on reason and truth, Fromm still finds Freud's attitude toward truth far superior to that of Freud's rival Carl Jung for whom truth was relative, and need not be considered as a factor in determining religious beliefs. As we said earlier, as far as Freud was concerned, religion, as any other field of human endeavor had to consist of true beliefs and reasonable doctrines which could be empirically proved. But for Jung religion did not have to be empirically demonstrated. For Jung every religion, no matter how absurd or conflicting its beliefs was true. This falls back on Jung's understanding of the essential nature of religion. According to Jung religion consisted of messages (or revelations) received by the unconscious from a source which transcends human powers. In other words, transcendent mental images and messages received by the unconscious constitute the religion of the individual. All religions can be said to be true in so far as they are psychological realities effecting and influencing the behavior of the individual.

Fromm sarcastically remarks on Jung's fallacious

ideas "needless to say, in the logic of Jung's thinking insanity would have to be called an eminently religious phenomenon."<sup>5</sup> In addition, Fromm attacks Jung by exposing the consequences of his ideas. A person might kill their neighbor or burn his house, or his church, based solely on a private message he/she received in their unconscious from a transcendent source:

Now logically speaking this is complete nonsense. If a paranoid patient has a paranoid idea, there is no truth about it: it is a fact that he has this idea: that is all that can be said about it.<sup>6</sup>

Fromm further stresses other differences between Jung and Freud, the most significant of which being in the way each man viewed dreams, myths, and symbols. For Freud, dreams were unconscious yearnings or desires to fulfill fantasies which reflect the base instinctual urges of childhood. For Freud there were three main elements to dreams. First, dreams reflected only irrational and instinctual desires. Second, dreams were the hallucinatory fulfillment of the irrational wishes which people repress during the daytime. Third, dreams express irrational and base desires which are rooted in a person's childhood. (i.e. the desire to kill one's father)

Further for Freud, dreams spoke in symbolic language: that is in a language which hides or censors from the individual its underlying meaning. For example, rather than dreaming you wish to murder your mother (a repressed wish of childhood) you might dream you are picking a flower

which is your mother's favorite flower. Dream interpretation then, is the art of deciphering the symbolic codes presented to us in our dreams. Finally, Freud's interpretation of myth follows along similar lines as the views he expressed about dreams:

The symbolism as we find it in myth is regarded by Freud as a regression to earlier stages of human development where certain activities like plowing and the creation of fire were invested with sexual libido. In the myth this early and now repressed libidinous satisfaction of instinctive desires [is relegated] to the realm of fantasies.<sup>7</sup>

Fromm bases part of his own theory of dreams and myth upon the ideas of Freud, but differs in that he believes "dreams can be the expression of both the lowest and most irrational and the highest and most valuable functions of our minds."<sup>8</sup> Freud, as we said, believed dreams, symbols, and myths reflect only our most sordid and vile thoughts.

In direct contrast to Freud's view of dreams, symbols, and myths are those of Carl Jung. For Jung, as we said, the unconscious could be compared to a "television" which received messages from a transcendent source. Dreams can be likened to television programs which convey the ideas of the revelation received by the unconscious. For Jung dreams are not symbolic, rather they express their message directly. Jung claims the interpretations of dreams makes for the religion of the individual. Public interpretation of individual dreams, accepted by the civilization as a whole as guiding lessons are called



myths. Religious myths then according to Jung, can be said to be "gifts from the gods."<sup>9</sup> Jung concludes:

Basic religious phenomenon and that voice which speaks to us in our dreams is not our own but comes from a source transcending us. Man is never helped by what he thinks for himself but by revelations of wisdom greater than his own.<sup>10</sup>

In evaluating Jung's views, Fromm points out the vast similarities between the views that Jung espoused and those of the philosopher Schliermacher. Both believed religion originated with a person's powerlessness and impotence before forces greater than themselves. Similarly, both believed that the essential nature of religious experience was being seized by a power greater than oneself and being held victim by this power for the duration of the religious encounter.

Because of Fromm's humanistic views he rejects this lowly position which Jung and Schliermacher relegate to people. For Fromm, the role played by the individual in the religious experience was critical, overshadowing any influence from forces which transcend human abilities and powers.

There is agreement [with Jung] that we often are wiser and more decent in our sleep than our waking life. Jung explains this phenomenon with the assumption of a source of revelation transcending us, while I believe that what we think in our sleep is our thinking, and that are [sic] good reasons for the fact that the influences we are submitted to in our waking life have in many respects a stultifying effect on our intellect and moral accomplishments.<sup>11</sup>

To review we can say that Fromm combined aspects of both Freud and Jung's theories to express his own views

concerning dream, symbol, and myth. He agreed with Freud that dreams and myths express unconscious feelings but disagreed that these feelings need all be negative ones. He agreed with Jung that dreams and myths may represent the highest ideals of people but disagreed that these ideals have a transcendent source. They are, Fromm says, from ourselves.

We would be remiss in our chapter about Fromm's evaluation of Freud and Jung if we did not include Fromm's perception of Sigmund Freud's "mission." This "mission" was to provide humankind with a trustworthy guide to better living: psychoanalysis.

Freud's mission was to bring a new knowledge which was the last word in man's understanding of himself and of the world. Not naturalism, not socialism, not religion could be trusted as the guides to a better life: the full understanding of man's mind could show all the irrationality of all these answers and could lead man as far as he was destined to go: to a sober, skeptical, rational appraisal of his past and present and to the acceptance of the fundamental tragic nature of his existence.

Freud saw himself as the leader in this intellectual revolution which made the last step rationalism could make. Only if one understands this aspiration of Freud to bring a new message to mankind can one understand his creation: the psychoanalytic movement.<sup>12</sup>

. . . the ideal man for Freud was self contained, and self controlled, high above the rabble, renouncing the joys of life, but enjoying the security of the feeling nobody and nothing can hurt him.<sup>13</sup>

One final point should be mentioned before we move on. Fromm takes up the debate as to the relationship between the psychoanalytic movement and religion. It is Fromm's contention that for the early followers of Freud,

the science of psychoanalysis itself became a religious movement, and an orthodox, dogmatic one at that. "Their religion was the [psychoanalytic] Movement."<sup>14</sup> It is important to note that Fromm does not direct his criticism of making psychoanalysis a religion against Freud, but only against his followers. We have already pointed out Freud's view as to the nature and scope of psychoanalysis in chapter one. To summarize it again Freud himself said, "Psychoanalysis is [merely] a method of research, an impartial instrument, like an infinitesimal calculus."<sup>15</sup>

However, Fromm's criticism that Freud's followers made psychoanalysis a fanatical religion can be considered valid. Freud's theories became the dogma from which only "heretical" psychoanalysts strayed. Those who refused to follow Freud were essentially "excommunicated" from his "circle of friends" and various psychoanalytic societies. The couch, the chair, and the silent analyst became the movement's orthodox ritual, as compulsive as perhaps any ritual Freud ever criticized. The humming to signify a yes, done by Freud, (probably because the cancer of the jaw he suffered with made it too painful for him to speak), became the official "holy language" from analyst to patient. In short, Freud's early followers deified Freud, the man, and canonized his writings and techniques.

According to Fromm the same trend to make psychoanalysis a religion continues today.

Quite aside from anything else psychoanalysis has lent itself very much as a substitute for a religion or a kind of philosophy. Actually you find people in these days for whom psychoanalysis becomes such a fad, these people have no other convictions . . . . I am concerned with the problem and I believe that the future of psychoanalysis, of a great discovery which Freud made, will depend on whether, as I hope, counter tendencies will eventually be stronger and more fruitful.

I would say that psychoanalysis should not be used for such purposes of adjustment or as a substitute for religion.<sup>16</sup>

#### B. Fromm: Freud's Revisionist

From the outset Fromm makes it crystal clear that his own theories about psychoanalysis are based on those of Sigmund Freud. "My own thinking is based on the essential and fundamental discoveries of Freud."<sup>17</sup> This is critical. For it is the contention of this paper whereas Freud can be considered the "founding father" of psychoanalysis, Fromm can be viewed as a "revisional son." Freud gave the world all the basic psychoanalytic tools. Fromm merely honed those tools into fine instruments and used them to interpret contemporary problems.<sup>18</sup>

Let us look at some of the essential principles Fromm borrowed from Freud and how in some cases he revised them. First, Fromm acknowledges that one of Freud's main contributions was the uncovering of the human unconscious. Freud found that:



A great deal of what matters goes [on] behind one's back [in the unconscious] and that people's conscious ideas are only one datum which has no greater relevancy than any other behavior datum: in fact often less.<sup>19</sup>

A second contribution Freud made which was adopted by Fromm is the idea that the childhood of the human being has a profound and lasting effect on a person's behavior even into their adult life. Childhood is retained, in fact, as an individual "self" within the person:

Every individual retains in himself, in his unconscious as Freud has shown all the stages of the helpless infant on.<sup>20</sup>

Third, it was Freud who pointed out to the world the importance of symbolic language and dream interpretation:

Religion . . . as well as . . . its rituals speaks in a language different from the one we use in daily life, that is, in symbolic language . . . It was Freud who made this forgotten language accessible to us. By his efforts to understand the language of dreams he has opened the road to an understanding of the peculiarities of symbolic language and has shown its structure and meaning.<sup>21</sup>

Now we come to the central point of this section of chapter four: that is, the significance of Fromm's revision of Freud's theories about the Oedipus myth, the Oedipal complex and the incest taboo. Freud, as we have said, viewed the Oedipus myth as a tale reflecting the central crisis of the human person: namely, the Oedipal complex. That is, this myth represents a desire of childhood to kill the parent of the same sex and marry the parent of the opposite sex. The trauma of this Oedipal wish is the "kernel of neurosis" and the essential concept involved in the development of guilt, religion, and

civilization.<sup>22</sup>

For Fromm the Oedipus myth did indeed reflect the central concern and principle topic of psychoanalysis. However, by interpreting this myth in a different way Fromm significantly revised the importance and consequences of its theme. Fromm states,

[the Oedipus myth] can be understood as a symbol not of incestuous love between mother and son but of rebellion of the son against the authority of the father in the patriarchal family; that the marriage of Oedipus and Jocasta [his mother] is only a secondary element, only one of the symbols of the victory of the son, who takes his father's place and with it all his privileges.<sup>23</sup>

This transvaluation of the Oedipal myth became the core of Fromm's entire work.

Further, Fromm claims Freud did not fully understand the significance of the incest taboo in the Oedipal myth because he failed to reduce it to the level of interpersonal relations between people. The significance of incest was not sexual as Freud had claimed but social and psychological. According to Fromm the incest taboo, when put in its proper perspective, is not so much a prohibition against sex with one's mother but rather an exhortation that one must make the difficult but necessary step of breaking dependent psychological ties with one's mother.

The essence of incest is not the sexual craving for members of the same family. This craving, in so far as it is found, is only one expression of the much more profound and fundamental desire to remain a child attached to those protecting figures of whom mother is the earliest and most influential. The foetus lives with and from the mother and the act of birth is only one step in the direction of freedom and independence.

The infant after birth is still in many ways part and parcel of the mother and its birth as an independent person is a process which takes many years--which in fact takes a whole life. To cut the navel string, not in the physical but in the psychological sense is the greatest challenge to human development and also its most difficult task.<sup>24</sup>

The consequences of Fromm's incest theory are far reaching. For Fromm continues by saying that when parents disappear as sources of authority, people tend to seek out "parental type authority figures" to take their place. These figures, Fromm claims, may vary: they may be the State, God, a club, or a fraternal organization. What they all share in common is that they fulfill a childhood need to have an authority figure who provides security and assurance and that they prevent the individual from developing the necessary skills and ideas so that they might achieve psychological independence.

The attachment to parents is only one, though the most fundamental form of incest; in the process of social evolution other attachments in part replace it. The tribe, the nation, the race, the state, the social class, political parties and many other forms of institutions and organizations became home and family. Here are the roots of nationalism and racism, which in turn are symptoms of man's inability to experience himself and others as full human beings. It may be said that the development of mankind is the development from incest to freedom.<sup>25</sup>

To review, it is Fromm's contention that the greatest challenge we face as human beings is to shed dependent fixations based on the incestuous needs to attain security by submitting ourselves to parental or "parental type" authority; and to adapt instead a position of psychological independence, individuality and autocracy.

"Man must break incestuous ties and become free in order to become human."<sup>26</sup>

Next Fromm takes up the issue of how specifically we maintain incestuous ties, how we avoid freedom, and even as one of his books claims, how we "escape from freedom." In other words it is Fromm's contention that when faced with the choice of freedom and individuality with a loss of security: or conforming to an authority with the promise of increased security, we choose the latter. We are in fact, Fromm says, afraid to accept freedom. Submitting to an authority, though superficially difficult to accept, does indeed satisfy the individual's primal need for safety and assuredness. Freedom and individuality, on the other hand, means isolation, self reliance, and aloneness.

Fromm cites three methods people use to "escape from freedom." First is authoritarianism. This is:

The tendency to give up the independence of one's own individual self and to fuse one's self with somebody or something outside of oneself to acquire strength which the individual self is lacking.<sup>27</sup>

By ridding oneself of the decision making process one rids themselves of the burden of responsibility that goes hand and hand with freedom. There is a certain amount of masochism involved with this approach. One cannot help but feel disappointment at one's self for allowing an outside authority to control one's decisions. This in turn, reduces the feeling of self worth, which in turn



makes the individual crave the security of an outside authority even more. It is a vicious and self-effacing circle.

A second way to "escape from freedom" is to take the frustrations experienced in subjecting oneself to an outside authority and turn it outwards to hurt and destroy others. An example of this is racial prejudice where self deficient qualities of the bigot are projected onto the person the bigot claims to hate. The bigot in fact, hates himself. Thus for the uneducated white bigot, all blacks become stupid.

A third way people try to "escape from freedom" is through "automoton conformity."

The individual ceases to be himself: he adopts entirely the kind of personality offered to him by cultural patterns and he therefore becomes exactly as all others are and as they expect him to be.<sup>28</sup>

The real danger of automoton conformity is that it suppresses critical thinking so that what is good, beautiful, and true becomes what is supposed to be good, beautiful and true. It is a great challenge indeed, to be us, in a civilization which tells us to be them. People, as Fromm says, must find the courage to be themselves and be for themselves.<sup>29</sup>

There is another way to look at the idea of breaking incestuous ties. We might say that there exists two types of will or desire in the human person: the relational will and the substanative will. Satisfaction of that

which is willed is said to produce happiness and intrinsically meaningful existence which we designated in chapter one by the term "soteria." The relational will is defined as a wanting and needing relations with some outside entity (mother, God, the State) in order to find soteria. When the relational will is dominant in a person, that person must have relations with others outside of themselves to achieve soteria. Fromm had just such relations in mind when he spoke of the significance of the incest taboo.

The opposite of the relational will is the substantative will. This is defined as the desire to live and exist in and through oneself, using one's own resources to satisfy one's own needs. Soteria is achieved by living and existing through oneself. This does not mean that a person may not have relations with other outside entities, but these relations are secondary as compared with the primary desire to live within oneself, depending on one's own resources.<sup>30</sup> Fromm's message in his revision of the incest taboo is that soteria can only be achieved by the attainment of the substantative will.

The ideas that Fromm presents concerning freedom and the substantative will have great consequences for liberal religions.<sup>31</sup> With the advent of Biblical criticism, the discrediting of the proofs of God, and the general philosophic thrust toward doubt we live in an age where the scholarship of liberal religion is increasingly pushing us away from the omniscient, orthodox, and relational

religions of the past. But simultaneously, we feel that leaving the security of these orthodox systems will be too much for us to bear. Fromm articulately states this tension between total religious freedom with its accompanying aloneness and insecurity as opposed with authoritarian orthodoxies with the accompanying security that they offer. Implicitly Fromm tells us we must give up our incestuous ties to past orthodox systems and develop totally new religious systems where individuality and freedom will be emphasized.

The movement from stress upon the relational will to stress upon the substantive will which was rooted in Freud's work, flowers and blossoms in the works of Fromm. It is one of the great lessons that psychoanalysis has to teach religion: namely society despite many psychological obstacles is moving toward a time when the substantive will shall dominate persons and that religion in an era of people with substantive wills must reflect values of human growth, freedom, and independence. All other forms of religion as Freud and Fromm would say, will simply be outgrown as societies and individuals mature, leaving behind parents, and all similar types of parental authorities.

## Chapter IV

Footnotes

1. Erich Fromm, Sigmund Freud's Mission: An Analysis of His Personality and Influence (New York, Harper and Brothers 1959), p. 95.
2. Erich Fromm, "The Philosophy Basic to Freud's Psychoanalysis," C.C.A.R. Journal 16 (January 1957), p. 2.
3. Erich Fromm, Sigmund Freud's Mission, p. 2.
4. Ibid. p. 3.
5. Erich Fromm, Psychoanalysis and Religion (New York, Bantam Books 1950), p. 18.
6. Erich Fromm, "The Philosophy Basic to Freud's Psychoanalysis," p. 5.
7. Erich Fromm, The Forgotten Language, (New York Grove Press Inc. 1951), pp. 93-94.
8. Ibid., p. 47.
9. Ibid., pp. 96-97.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., p. 97.
12. Erich Fromm, Sigmund Freud's Mission, p. 81.
13. Ibid., p. 119.
14. Ibid., p. 105.
15. Sigmund Freud, The Future of an Illusion, trans. W.D. Robson Scott (New York Anchor Books 1964 original 1927), p. 60.
16. Erich Fromm, "The Philosophy Basic to Freud's Psychoanalysis," p. 7.
17. Ibid.
18. Freud and Fromm did have their differences, but their basic assumptions about analysis, can be said to be essentially the same. For a good summary of the differences between Freud and Fromm see Erich Fromm, Escape From Freedom, (Canada, Holt Rinehart and Winston 1941), pp. 279-290.
19. Erich Fromm, Psychoanalysis and Religion, p. 55.



20. Erich Fromm, The Art of Loving, (New York, Harper and Row, 1956), p. 69.
21. Erich Fromm, Psychoanalysis and Religion, pp. 108-109.
22. See Chapter II, "Guilt, Ritual and Obsessive Neurosis."
23. Erich Fromm, The Forgotten Language, p. 202.
24. Erich Fromm, Psychoanalysis and Religion, p. 77.
25. Ibid., pp. 78-79.
26. Ibid., p. 78.
27. Erich Fromm, Escape From Freedom, p. 141.
28. Ibid., p. 186.
29. "Man needs the courage to be himself and to be for himself," see Erich Fromm, Man For Himself, (New York, Rinehold and Company, 1947), p. 250.
30. See Jan Bresky, "The Internal and External World," an unpublished paper.
31. See Alvin J. Reines, "Reform Judaism: The Shock of Freedom," Elements in a Philosophy of Reform Judaism, (Cincinnati, Institute of Creative Judaism, 1976), pp. 53-71.

## CHAPTER V

### AUTHORITARIAN RELIGION/PSYCHOLOGY

VS

### HUMANISTIC RELIGION/PSYCHOLOGY

#### A. Fromm's Definition of Religion

Before we begin with the central issues of this chapter, we should inform the reader of Fromm's definition of religion. It is "any system of thought and action shared by a group which gives the individual a frame of orientation and an object of devotion."<sup>1</sup> On the surface it would seem that Fromm's use of the term religion is far less rigid than that of Sigmund Freud, who equated the term religion with theistic absolutism. Fromm's definition of religion is liberal enough to encompass both theistic and non-theistic religions. In fact, according to Fromm, a "religious" person need not be concerned with "religion" at all. One can make the "object of one's devotion" the State, or some leader, or some cause. For example, Fromm considered Nazism the "religion" of Germany in the 1930s. As a result of Fromm's open definition of the term "religion," he can carefully distinguish between certain types of religion which he objects to (i.e. Nazism) and other types which he feels are completely legitimate and totally

fulfilling for the person.

In addition we find elements of Fromm's definition of the term "religion" which are very similar to the definition of religion we posed in chapter one. We defined religion as the response to finitude, which is an existential problem caused by our desire to be infinite as opposed to our realization that we are finite. Fromm concurs with our definition of religion by saying the need for religion does arise "existentially" and is "deeply rooted in the conditions of human existence."<sup>2</sup> Along the same lines Fromm seems to echo the concern for a solution to the problem of finitude when he declares:

Being aware of himself, he [man] realizes his powerlessness and the limitations of his existence. He visualizes his own end: death. Never is he free from the dichotomy of his existence: he cannot rid himself of his body as long as he is alive and his body makes him want to be alive.<sup>3</sup>

#### B. Religion: Authoritarian and Humanistic

According to Fromm there are basically two types of religion: authoritarian and humanistic. Authoritarian religion can be defined as the "recognition on the part of man of some higher unseen power as having control of his destiny, and as being entitled to obedience, reverence, and worship."<sup>4</sup> Note that authority is the central issue in authoritarian religion. We might say that in authoritarian

religion we surrender our decision making right over to what is seen as a higher authority (either human or non-human). This higher authority is entitled to full obedience by virtue of its immense power and superior morality. Thus the authority has both the power to enforce its rulings, and the moral perfection to expect nothing other than full cooperation with its edicts.

The opposite of authoritarian religion is humanistic religion. "Humanistic religion, on the contrary, is centered around man and his strength."<sup>6</sup> The development of fully independent human beings is the goal of humanistic religions. The individual himself/herself is seen as the ultimate authority in all decision making. No other entity is entitled to authority unless the individual willingly consents to transfer from themselves that power.

To better understand the differences between authoritarian religion and humanistic religions we return to a point discussed in the last chapter, namely the difference between the relational will and the substantiative will. The relational will is characterized by a desire or need to have relations with others. Man cannot live without others: being alone is considered too much to bear. Soteria is achieved by relations with others. The substantiative will, on the other hand, is characterized by the individual's self sufficiency. Where the substantiative will is dominant the theme of life is "If I am all that there is, it is sufficient." Soteria can only be attained



in and through oneself, by one's own means.

Freud and Fromm both pointed out that different stages of human growth emphasize different wills. In childhood the relational will is all we have. We need our parents in order to survive both physically and spiritually. In adolescence the substantiative will begins to surface in the individual but comes into direct conflict with vestiges of the childhood self dominated by the relational will. Finally in adulthood the substantiative will is hopefully dominant in the person, though far less powerful vestigial effects of childhood and the relational will are still felt.

Religious responses to finitude also reflect, in varying degrees the dominance of either the relational will or the substantiative will. Let us call these responses A, B, C, and D, and the religions they represent "A religions," "B religions," "C religions," and "D religions."

The first response we find are "A religions." These religions are dominant in the Far East, among mystics, and pantheists (most notably in the Jewish enterprise by Spinoza).<sup>7</sup> In this system there is an attempt to eliminate the differences between the relational will and the substantiative will by declaring that all reality is One. This response claims that there is, in fact, no categories in life. All is encompassed by Oneness. Soteria can be attained only by recognizing that there is no difference between things: that the "I" and everything "not I" are all one and the same. Distinction is illusion.

In "B religions" the relational will is totally and completely dominant. Deity is the Being with which one has relations. Meaningful existence can only be achieved by having relations with Deity. The worshipper in B religions views himself as being so finite, so dependent, that he cannot cope alone.

In "C religions" the relational will is dominant but the substantative will is also present in a subordinate position. Note carefully the tension that arises because the substantative will or the desire to live in and through oneself comes in direct conflict with the strong desire of the relational will to live in and through others. The result of this conflict is overwhelming guilt. In this system the substantative will is seen as hubris, the Devil or false pride which must be purged away so that the relational will can dominate. Soteria is achieved only when the relational will has mastered and controlled the desires of the substantative will. But as Freud so accurately demonstrated, the repression of instincts as fundamental as the substantative will can only lead to deeper guilt and neurosis. Orthodox Judaism, Roman Catholicism and fundamentalist Christianity are examples of B/C religions.

Finally there are "D religions." In these religions the substantative will is dominant and the relational will has been reduced to a relatively insignificant force. Meaningful existence is achieved by bringing human development to its fullest, helping people to become all

they can and want to be. People live in and through themselves. We have the courage to be ourselves and for ourselves. We realize that we can never successfully live through another Being (human or non-human). Successful living calls for us to do it on our own with our own resources. In D religions the individual is seen as the ultimate authority. Individuals are both "the commanders" of their own laws, and the ones who are "commanded" by themselves to follow these laws.

We have taken this lengthy detour for a purpose. Namely, when Fromm speaks about authoritarian religions he means by this the same thing we describe as B/C religions! When he is speaking about humanistic religions he means by this the same thing which we described as D religions! In addition it is Fromm's belief that D religions or humanistic religions are more adult forms of religion and that they will eventually prevail over less mature B/C authoritarian religions.

Let us analyze certain religious issues so that our readers can fully understand the differences between authoritarian B/C religions and humanistic D religions. First what is their basic difference in their outlook toward humankind? In authoritarian B/C religions man is seen as an insignificant and weak force. His role is to be obedient and subservient to the authority: be it Deity or His worldly tribunal, "the life of the individual becomes insignificant and man's worth consists in the very denial

of his worthiness and strength."<sup>8</sup> The feeling is that only through surrender to Deity can one gain soteria. As we mentioned in the last chapter there is even an element of masochism and self-degradation in this religious response. On the other hand, in humanistic D religions man's aim becomes "to achieve the greatest strength, not the greatest powerlessness: virtue is self-realization, not obedience."<sup>9</sup>

Let us consider the issue of ethics. Ethics in authoritarian B/C religion follows along the premise that "an authority states what is good for man and lays down the laws and norms of conduct."<sup>10</sup> Authoritarian ethics "denies man's capacity to know what is good and bad." The giver of the law is a power transcending the individual.<sup>11</sup> The good is equated to the law of the authority. The good person is the one who obeys. Evil or sin is equated with questioning or disobeying the authority. "Good conscience is conscience that is pleasing to the authority: guilty conscience is the consciencesness of displeasing it."<sup>12</sup>

Ethics in humanistic D religions begin with the assumption that only humans can determine for themselves the criteria for virtue and sin, not any authority outside of them. The good is seen as what is good for humans and evil is seen as what is detrimental to humans "the sole criteria of ethical value being man's welfare."<sup>13</sup>

To sum up good in humanistic ethics is the affirmation of life, the unfolding of man's power. Virtue is responsibility toward his own existence. Evil constitutes the crippling powers: vice is irresponsibility toward himself.<sup>14</sup>



Along similar lines humanistic conscience is:  
 a reaction of ourselves to ourselves . . . to become  
 what we potentially are . . . the voice of loving care  
 for ourselves.<sup>15</sup>

Happiness in humanistic D religions is:  
 brought about by man's inner productiveness and is not  
 a gift of the gods.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, according to Fromm, there is a great deal  
 of difference between the way authoritarian B/C religions  
 and humanistic D religions view God. In authoritarian B/C  
 religions God "is a symbol of power and force, He is  
 supreme because He is supreme power and man in juxtaposition  
 is utterly powerless."<sup>17</sup> In humanistic religions, if they  
are theistic, "God is a symbol of man's own power which he  
[man] tries to realize in life, and is not a symbol of force  
 and domination having power over man."<sup>18</sup>

We shall have more to say in the following chapter  
 about Fromm's view of God. Suffice it here to mention that  
 Fromm failed to grasp what was obvious to Freud. That is  
the valid existence of authoritarian B/C religions hinges  
on the existence of a God who is a Being, not a symbol. This  
 Being supposedly revealed both Himself and His Law to humankind.  
 If this description of God is indeed accurate then authoritarian  
 religions are morally justified to demand that we be obedient  
 to "Divine Laws."

But there are several circumstances which would  
 invalidate and undermine the authoritarian B/C religions  
 view. These circumstances are:

1. No such Being, commonly referred to as God, exists.
2. There is no absolute proof for the existence of such a Being.
3. Such a Being exists, but does not communicate with humankind.

If any of these circumstances are true then we cannot morally justify compulsive assent to laws and dogmas which bear the name of Deity in authoritarian B/C religions. If any of the above circumstances are true we are morally justified in establishing only non-authoritarian, humanistic D religions.

### C. Psychoanalysis: Adjustment vs "Cure of the Soul"

We now come to the second part of Fromm's thesis. That is directly paralleling the two types of religion, authoritarian B/C religions and humanistic D religions, are two types of psychoanalysis: "adjustment to authority" psychoanalysis and "cure of the soul" humanistic psychoanalysis. In "adjustment to authority" psychoanalysis the goal of therapy is to increase

a person's ability to act like the majority of people in his culture. In this view those existing patterns of behavior which society and culture approve provide the criteria for mental health. These criteria are not critically examined from the standpoint of universal norms but rather express a social relativism which takes this rightness for granted and considers behavior deviate from them to be wrong hence unhealthy.<sup>19</sup>

In direct conflict with adjustment analysis is "cure of the soul" humanistic psychoanalysis.

In this second view the aim of therapy is not primarily adjustment but optimal development of a person's potentialities and the realization of his individuality. Here the psychoanalyst is not an "adjustment counselor" but to use Plato's expression the "physician of the soul."<sup>20</sup>

The role of the therapist in this latter type of psychoanalysis is to aid the individual in his/her search for self-fulfillment and personal realization of potentialities. It is not for example, to help a man adjust to a job he does not like, it is to help him realize the negative role of his job in his total mental outlook. The thrust of "cure of the soul" analysis is not to produce automaton human robots, all reacting to certain stimuli in the same manner, but rather to produce individual human beings, each with his/her's own distinct set of values and norms.

With all the categories Fromm has set up in our minds, let us look at the relationship between psychoanalysis and religion. Fromm states that authoritarian B/C religions and adjustment analysis have no conflict, in fact, they complement one another. Both are aimed at making the individual accept the status quo without questioning. For example, suppose we lived in a society where an orthodox religious government asserted authoritarian rule. Part of the system of law in this country was to imprison homosexuals. Homosexuality in fact, was seen as a crime against God and civilization. What would happen if a man, in this cultural

setting, went to an "adjustment analyst" and explained that he had a desire to have sexual relations with another man? The therapist would see his role as helping this man rid himself of his homosexuality so that he might better adjust into the mainstream of the culture. No attention whatsoever would be paid to the issue of whether homosexuality was or was not a healthy form of human behavior. In this case "healthy" would be any behavior which the culture demands.

Let us look now at an example which demonstrates the other side: that is how humanistic D religions and "cure of the soul" psychoanalysis might cooperate. Suppose we lived in a culture where freedom, independence, and individuality were stressed. Also in this culture humanistic D religions were dominant. Now suppose a man in this cultural setting went to a "cure of the soul" analyst complaining of compulsive neurotic symptoms; for example, he felt the need to wash his hands every few minutes. If he failed to do so he was afraid dire consequences would ensue. The "cure of the soul" analyst would attempt to convince this individual that his behavior was improper, not because it did or did not fit patterns laid down by society but rather because such neurotic actions keep individuals from reaching their greatest potential. The main goal of analysis then, would be to help persons be totally free from compulsion so that they might live their lives to the fullest. In this case the analyst might well



tell this man to go to the humanistic D religion clergyperson who could assure the patient that "religion" demands no such compulsive actions. The analyst might even set up a joint program with the clergyperson. Their goal would be the same: to help the individual become all that they could be; to create in the individual a dominant substantive will.

In short the pattern is crystal clear. According to Fromm authoritarian B/C religions go hand and hand with adjustment analysis while both conflict with humanistic D religions and "cure of the soul" analysis. While to state the same thing in opposite terms, Fromm would say humanistic D religions and "cure of the soul" analysis share the same goals while both conflict with authoritarian B/C religions and adjustment analysis.

Thanks to Fromm's interpretation we need no longer return to the simplistic attitude that all religions conflict with all forms of psychoanalysis. Some forms of religion conflict with some forms of psychoanalysis. Other forms of religion complement other forms of psychoanalysis.

Further, Fromm feels that psychoanalysis can be an aid to religion by helping us to differentiate between true religious ideas and rationalizations.

[Some] psychoanalytic approaches to religion then aim at the understanding of the human reality behind the thought systems. It enquires whether a thought is an expression of the feeling which it portrays or whether it is a rationalization hiding opposite attitudes. Furthermore it asks whether the thought system grows from a strong emotional matrix or whether it is an empty opinion.<sup>21</sup>

Psychoanalysis then can help us to determine whether a ritual is performed for magical or neurotic purposes to ward off danger or whether it comes to us to enhance our religious experience. Psychoanalysis can help use determine the difference between "ritual" and "ritualism," between compulsion and belief. It can help us to determine the difference between authentic religious experience and delusional neurosis: between an authentic feeling of a transcendent Being and a fearful neurotic vision; between hearing a voice from God, or a cry from our psyche.

## Chapter V

Footnotes

1. Erich Fromm, Psychoanalysis and Religion, p. 22.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 34.
5. In the previous chapter we pointed out that giving the individual's decision making process over to an authority is one of the methods one might "escape from freedom." For an excellent discussion of the topic of authority in Reform Judaism see Alvin Reines, "Authority in Reform Judaism," Elements in a Philosophy of Reform Judaism, (Cincinnati, Institute of Creative Judaism 1976), pp. 1-9.
6. Erich Fromm, Psychoanalysis and Religion, p. 36.
7. As we shall see in the next chapter Fromm personally is a follower of an A type religion.
8. Erich Fromm, Psychoanalysis and Religion, p. 36.
9. Ibid. pp. 36-37.
10. Erich Fromm, Man For Himself, p. 8.
11. Ibid. p. 10.
12. Ibid. p. 146.
13. Ibid. pp. 12-13.
14. Ibid. p. 20.
15. Ibid. p. 146.
16. Ibid. p. 189.
17. Erich Fromm, Psychoanalysis and Religion, pp. 35-36.
18. Ibid. p. 37.
19. Ibid. pp. 71-72.
20. Ibid. p. 72.
21. Ibid. p. 60.

## CHAPTER VI

### FROMM'S VIEW OF THE BIBLE AND GOD

#### A. Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is two-fold. First, it is to explain Fromm's views concerning the evolutionary growth of the God concepts in the Bible and subsequent Jewish literature, and to elucidate Fromm's personal idea of God.

The second purpose of this chapter is to expose Fromm's ideas as intrinsically valuable in themselves, but having no relationship whatsoever with any Jewish system of the past, save Spinozism. It is our belief that Fromm distorts and misrepresents the Biblical text and other Jewish sources in order to prove that his philosophy not only concurs with the Bible, but is rooted in it. Since Fromm was at one time a rabbinical student we must come to the sobering conclusion that he purposefully distorts the meaning of these Jewish texts to meet his own ends.



## Part I: Fromm's View of the Growth of the God Concept

### A. Phase I: Tribal Stage: God as Absolute Monarch

The first stage in the growth of the God concept is the tribal stage. In this period God is seen as the heavenly counterpart of the highest human authority. For example, if the highest human authority is the tribal chief, God becomes the "Tribal Chief of Heaven." If the highest human authority is the king, God becomes the "Heavenly Monarch."

As Fromm says:

I believe that the concept 'God' was conditioned by the presence of a socio-political structure in which tribal chiefs or kings have supreme power. The supreme value is conceptualized as analagous to the supreme power in society.<sup>1</sup>

This phase of the God concept according to Fromm, is reflected in the early stories in the Biblical book of Genesis, especially in the story of the Garden of Eden. God, Fromm says, is the Absolute Monarch of the Garden, a Being who created and controlled the world. The human species, for their part, are ensured total and complete security and the promise of eternal life if they will follow God's commandments and show total and absolute obedience to God.

According to Fromm, during this period God fears human beings, for He is afraid they may attempt to usurp some of His power. Man could be as powerful as God if he were to eat from the tree of knowledge. It is for this reason Fromm says, God forbids such eating. But Adam does

indeed attempt to eat from this tree, in direct disobedience of God's commands. God, the jealous master of the garden, expells Adam and Eve from His all protective care and casts them into a world of dangers, problems, and the perpetual anxiety of knowing that their existence will not last forever, but will instead be finite. Fromm writes,

Man's first act is rebellion, and God punishes him because he has rebelled,<sup>2</sup> and because God wants to preserve his supremacy.

But Fromm claims the exile from Eden is not portrayed in the Bible as a bad thing, it is in no way as the Christians claim "the fall of humankind." Just the opposite, Fromm says, the expulsion from Eden means that man is free and independent to choose his own way. Leaving Eden marks the beginning of human history because it is the beginning of human freedom. From this point on:

Man makes his own history and . . . God does not interfere by an act of grace or by coercion; he does not change the nature of man, nor his heart.<sup>3</sup>

But Fromm immediately contradicts himself by saying that God does not mind this new found independence of human beings, in fact, He encourages it. This of course, is exactly the opposite of saying that God is jealous of man. Now Fromm claims God's whole purpose in creating human beings with free will is so that someday they might develop the courage to break away from God and be themselves. God is seen as a loving but stern Father, who prepares His children for the day when they will become adults themselves. Thus, according to Fromm, God, though Absolute Ruler, looks

forward to the day when man will rule.

Further Fromm claims, the entire tract of history recorded in the Bible after the Garden of Eden story is presented to trace human growth from dependent offsprings of God to a self-sufficient moral being, from, if you like followers of a B/C religion to adherents of a D religion. It is the story of how humans shed relational and incestuous ties and became substantive beings. It is a history where God's role in human affairs diminishes, with God's approval. In fact, according to Fromm, the meaning of the Biblical statement "God created man in His image" (Genesis 1:27) is that man will develop himself to be more and more like a god, until the point where man, save his mortality, will be as God Himself. All this Fromm continues, will be done with God's approval, for God created man to be free.

Although he is supreme ruler, God has created a creature which is his own potential challenger; from the beginning of his existence, man is the rebel and carries potential Godhood within himself. As we shall see, the more man unfolds, the more he frees himself from God's supremacy and the more can be become like God. The whole further evolution of the concept of God diminishes God's role as man's owner.<sup>4</sup>

If this is God's purpose, why does He have to portray Himself as an Absolute Monarch at all? The reason for this according to Fromm, is to prevent humankind from falling into the grip of idolatry. Fromm defines idolatry as "an object of man's central passion" which fosters dependent, relational, and incestuous ties. That means for Fromm an idol is anything (state, parents, religion, God) that keeps

a person from growing and expanding their potentialities. Idolatry is anything which prevents a person from becoming a free independent, substantive human being. Thus Fromm claims, before a person can worship a true God, before a person can in fact become like God, they must abandon all relational, incestuous, idolatrous types of relations!

God commanded people not to worship "idols" so that people could become completely free and self-sufficient. God, in Fromm's view, serves as the guarantee that this freedom can be achieved. God, in this early tribal stage, is the ground by which freedom, independence, and self sufficiency for humankind is assured.

God in the Bible and the later traditions allows man to be free; he reveals to him the goal of human life, the road by which he can reach this goal . . . [it is] a religious system in which . . . the highest norm for man's development is freedom. Idolatry, by its very nature demands submission--the worship of God, on the other hand independence.<sup>5</sup>

As a corollary to this God must also portray Himself as a Supreme Ruler in order to ensure political freedom. If God is the King of heaven and earth, and He wishes freedom for humankind, what small earthly ruler dare oppose Him. Fromm claims that the message of the Prophets is: "God's authority thus guarantees man's independence from human authority."<sup>6</sup>



## B. Phase II: "Brit," or Covenant

According to Fromm a very important change occurred in human history following the Noachite floods. God, repenting the destruction he inflicted on the earth and its people concluded a "brit" or a covenant with Noah. This covenant was a legal, binding agreement in which God promised that He will never again destroy humanity. Fromm calls this central Biblical precept "the reverence for life."<sup>7</sup> Humans, for their part of the covenant, promised to keep God's laws, known at that time as the Noachite laws.

Fromm claims that with the establishment of the brit, the relationships between humans and God underwent a fundamental change. God, instead of being an Absolute Monarch was considered to be a Constitutional Monarch. The brit was the constitution which both humans and God were bound to follow. God in fact, as far as Fromm was concerned, could no longer do whatever He wished, He had to according to the stipulations of the brit.

God is no longer an absolute ruler who can act at his pleasure but is bound by a constitution to which both he and man must adhere . . . he is bound by a principle which<sup>8</sup> he cannot violate, the principle of respect for life.

Fromm goes even further than this. He claims that this stage of a brit between God and people was only a preparatory stage which laid the foundation for the final stage in the development of a God concept, namely no God at all! Fromm writes,

The idea of the covenant constitutes indeed, one of the

most decisive steps in the religious development of Judaism, a step which prepares the way to the concept of freedom of man, even freedom from God.<sup>9</sup>

The initial covenant between God and Noah was followed by a second one between Abraham and God. For Fromm the best example in Abraham's time of how the brit or covenant worked was the incident at Sodom and Gommorah. Abraham, on hearing that God planned to totally destroy both cities and all their inhabitants, challenges God to keep His promise of "reverence for life." Abraham says, "Shall not the Judge of the earth do right." (Genesis 18:33) Because, according to Fromm, God and man are equals in the covenant agreement, either may justifiably challenge the other when conditions of the brit have been trespassed.

Abraham is not a rebellious Prometheus: he is a free man who has the right to demand, and God has no right to refuse!<sup>10</sup>

### C. Phase III: Mosaic Revelation

The third important stage in the development of the God concept occurred during Moses' time. Up to this point God has been described in the Biblical text in strictly anthropomorphic terms. God "walks," He "speaks," He "breathes." In the Mosaic revelation some of these anthropomorphic qualities are retained, but the vast majority of them are discarded. The reason for this Fromm says, is that the Biblical authors wished to report that the essential

character of God has changed. God, who was considered a "God of nature" in the book of Genesis is now, according to the Mosaic revelation, a "God of history."

The idea of God changing His essential nature is expressed Fromm says, in the story of the burning bush. God revealed Himself to Moses so that he might convey His plan to free the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage. When Moses asked God for His Name so that he might inform the Hebrews who sent him, God replies: "I am that I am (eheyeh asher eheyeh) . . . Thou shalt say . . . I am hath sent me unto you." (Exodus 3:14-15). There are many translations of "eheyeh asher eheyeh," but Fromm translates this verse to say "My name is Nameless, tell them Nameless has sent you."

How does interpreting this passage so as to call God "Nameless," change the essential nature of God? Fromm answers this by saying that the view that God is Nameless is crucial because it moves humankind away from thinking about God in terms of a Being, and closer to the idea that the essential nature of God is a concept! In this case the concept of God that is being presented is that God is history. Thus Fromm claims the real significance of the Mosaic revelation is not the laws it introduced but rather that Moses helped the Hebrews to break away from the idea of God as a Being with anthropomorphic qualities, and grasp the more subtle and important idea that God is a symbol, a value, a truth: in short God is a concept. Rather than the anthropomorphic expressions such as God "loves," God

"redeems," God "saves," Moses wanted to stress that God is love, God is redemption, God is salvation.

Further Fromm says that this idea, presented by Moses, was carried through the period of the Prophets. The Prophets Fromm says, used the term God as the concept of the opposite of idolatry. That is, whereas idolatry represented the concept of incestuous relational ties, God represented the concept of freedom. Fromm claims, that for the Prophets, God is freedom.

The Talmud Fromm says, continues this trend of discussing God as a concept, not a Being. Fromm concludes that the Talmud, because it does not discuss God as a Being, is neither theological, dogmatic or orthodox in any way. In fact, says Fromm, the Talmud claims that any one God concept is no better or worse than any other.

. . . little is found in the Talmud that could be described as "theology" and orthodoxy. What the Talmudic sages mainly argue about are interpretation of the law, the principles governing the conduct of life, but not beliefs about God.<sup>12</sup>

According to Fromm the movement to emphasize God as a concept rather than a Being reaches its zenith with the Jewish philosopher Maimonides. Maimonides claims that we can make absolutely no positive statements about God at all. The only knowledge of God possible, according to Maimonides, is negative theology. This means that human language can never express what God is, only what God is not. For example, according to negative theology it would not be proper to say "God is powerful" for it would rob God of the quality of "powerlessness," making God finite in



character. But according to negative theology it is proper to make the statement "God is not not powerful." The more we can say what God is not, the more we know of God.

The consequences of negative theology are very significant. For Fromm claims it is but a small step from negative theology to no theology at all. Fromm writes:

The negative theology of Maimonides leads in its ultimate consequence--though one not contemplated by Maimonides--to the end of theology. How can there be a science of God when there is nothing one can say or think about God? When God himself is the unthinkable, the 'hidden', the 'silent' God, the Nothing?<sup>13</sup>

#### D. Phase IV: No God

According to Fromm the last stage in the evolution of a God concept is no God at all. Fromm means by this that the word "God" ceases to mean in any way a Being, rather it designates an ultimate concept, value, or symbol. When we speak of God we are no longer speaking of a Being who "walks," "sees," or "speaks," rather what we mean is an ultimate guiding principle in our lives. For example, we may say God is love, or God is truth and reason. What we mean by this is that in our point of view love, truth, and reason are our ultimate goals.

This idea of God as a concept fits well into the rest of Fromm's humanistic philosophy. Fromm realized that

as long as God was considered a Supreme Being, man would remain His insignificant servant. But when God is reinterpreted and relegated to a human value, it is clear that humans are the center of the universe, and God is a concept to be manipulated by people! It is Fromm's contention that all of Jewish literature, from the Bible onward, worked toward this goal of removing the idea of God as a Being, and instituting the idea that God is the ultimate guiding concept devised by humankind.

In this development God ceases to become a person, a man, a father: he becomes a symbol of the principle of unity behind the manifoldness of phenomena, of the flower which will grow from the spiritual seed within man . . . God becomes truth, love, justice. God is I, inasmuch as I am human.<sup>14</sup>

#### E. Fromm's Personal View of God

Before we conclude this chapter it is important we discuss Fromm's own personal view of God. Fromm is a mystic, and in all ways a follower of an "A religion." He believes people's central problem is one of natural and social alienation. People are strangers to other people, and to themselves. Above all, people need to remove this alienation from their lives and seek unity and oneness in order to attain soteria. Thus man's ultimate concern, according to Fromm is to achieve oneness with the universe. God, for Fromm, is the concept of oneness and unity with the world

around us, the people in it, and ourselves.

In defining God this way Fromm separates himself from all Western theistic conceptions of God save the pantheism of a Spinoza. Fromm himself says:

God is one of the many poetic expressions of the highest value in humanism, not a reality in itself. It is unavoidable however that in talking about the thought of monotheistic system I use the word 'God' often, and it would be awkward to add my qualifications each time. Hence I wish to make my position clear at the outset. If I could define my position approximately I would call it that of nontheistic mysticism.<sup>15</sup>

Further, according to Fromm, mysticism is the highest form of humanistic religion because it emphasizes human's power and relegates the term God to a symbol of human unity. In mysticism "God is not a symbol of power over man but of man's own power."<sup>16</sup>

Fromm's personal mystic views become apparent when he describes the essential nature of religious experience. Fromm argues that for too long in the Western world religious experience was equated with an experience with a God who was a Being. Fromm points out that in Eastern (A) religions and some Western religious systems (most notably that of Spinozism) religious experiences can be of a non-theistic nature. Fromm calls these the "X experience."

The "X experience" has five essential elements. First, the "X experience is to experience life as a problem as a question that requires an answer."<sup>17</sup> Second "for the X experience there exists a definitive hierarchy of values. The highest value is the optimal development of one's own

powers of reason, love, compassion, courage. All worldly achievements are subordinate to these human values."<sup>18</sup> Third, people are seen as being in the world for their own self-transformation and improvement. "For the X person man alone is an end and never a means."<sup>19</sup> Fourthly, the X experience is characterized, as all mysticism, by a feeling of "letting go" and "oneness." Fromm describes this sense of oneness as "making oneself empty in order to be able to fill oneself with the world, to respond to it, to become one with it, to love it."<sup>20</sup> Finally, the "X experience" is characterized by its "transcendence," though Fromm never clarifies what he means by this term.

## Part II: Critique of Fromm's Work

Let us begin with praise for what Fromm says. Fromm has given us two ingenious classifications of religions, humanistic and authoritarian. He has demonstrated how two people who both call themselves Jews or two people who both call themselves Christians might have essentially different religions. We mean by this that the Orthodox Jew with his authoritarian religion shares few, or no essential principles with the liberal Jew and his humanistic religion. So too the Roman Catholic and his authoritarian religion is essentially different from the liberal Protestant and his humanistic religious system.



Second, Fromm raises a crucial issue for liberal religion: namely the issue of political and psychological freedom. As he points out people feel more secure and at ease with authoritarian religious systems. Freedom is a challenge to sacrifice this security in order to gain the right to make one's own decisions, for the right to be oneself. Many people attempt to escape from the responsibility that comes with freedom. Certain types of religions, namely authoritarian religions, are one method people use to "escape from freedom." Authoritarian religions claim to supply Divine infallible books and errorless leaders that will make the decisions with which a person is faced. The challenge of liberal religion is to leave the security of these so-called infallible books and errorless leaders behind, and accept instead the psychologically difficult position where each person is given to be their own authority, their own decision makers. This can only happen if each person in a liberal religion establishes a substantive will. Indeed, the development of such a substantive will must become the objective of a liberal religious education.

But Fromm makes a crucial mistake. He attempts to root his ideas in the Bible and subsequent Jewish literature. He attempts to show that his ideas are not really new or different, rather they were in traditional Jewish literature all the time. In trying to prove this point he twists and distorts these past systems of Judaism and their texts.

Does he do this out of ignorance? As we said

earlier, Fromm was at one time a rabbinical student. He indeed knows all the past systems of Judaism and what they really represent. Thus we come to the sobering conclusion that Fromm purposefully misrepresents traditional Jewish texts, such as the Bible, in order to enhance his own humanistic philosophy!

Let us, for example, take a look at Fromm's view of the Bible. The story of Adam and Eve is not one of freedom from God as Fromm claims: just the opposite, it is a story of total dependence on God. It tells us that there is no security, no good life, no paradise without God's "Fatherly" care. Further, the punishment of Adam and Eve is not "rebellion" but disobedience. God warned Adam not to eat from the tree of knowledge. He ate. He disobeyed. He was punished. The story is more simple than the conflicting homiletical nightmare that Fromm dreams it to be.

Second, it is totally fallacious to ever think of God in the Bible or the Talmud as anything other than an Absolute Ruler! It is nonsense to think that because God agreed to a covenant with man, that man and God are equals in that covenant. The Biblical "brit" is one between the Absolute Monarch of heaven and earth and his puny feudal servants, humankind. The Book of Job should be ample proof that the Biblical God does as He wishes and that no explanation to humankind is ever necessary.

Further, in the Biblical system the only hope for

humankind for salvation or soteria is to follow without question the laws and commandments laid down by God. The paradigm for this absolute obedience is Abraham who is praised for his readiness to sacrifice his only son without so much as a minor complaint. In the Biblical system a deed is followed not because it is intrinsically praiseworthy or abominable, rather it is followed because it was commanded by God!

Thirdly, the Biblical system is one where people do not grow more free but instead it is one where people are born into perpetual servitude. We mean by this that according to the Biblical/Pharasaic system people are born with the responsibility and obligation, accepted by their ancestors, to observe the precepts laid down in the Bible. In essence their freedom to decide for themselves whether they wish to accept upon themselves these laws or not has been taken away from them at birth. One is born into the covenant. Further, to declare oneself free of the covenant and its laws, that is, to make one's own personal decisions based on one's own conscience is absolute and complete heresy in the Biblical/Pharasaic religious system!<sup>21</sup>

Our most important criticism of Fromm's view of the Bible is his contention that the Bible lays down the foundation for the consideration of God as a concept, not a Being. This is simply not true! The Bible at all times demands and gives proof for the fact God is a Being, whose name is Yahweh. Public, empirical and direct evidence (the

best evidence possible) is given to prove this very fact. At Sinai the Israelites "hear" God, Moses sees God "face to face."<sup>22</sup> There are numerous references one could cite to prove this point. Suffice it to say though, that Fromm purposefully distorts the central Biblical principle that God is a Being called Yahweh and humankind must obey His commands. Anything which attempts to prove anything other than this is heresy in the Biblical system. Therefore, Fromm's own personal idea of God as a concept, or God as a mystic unity is absolute and complete heresy according to the Bible! If Fromm presented his personal views in a place where the Biblical system was strictly enforced, he would be declared a heretic and put to death.

Equally absurd is Fromm's statement that the Talmud is neither "dogmatic" nor "orthodox." The sages do indeed argue the law, but it is crucial to remember they considered it all times as God's Law. The Talmud does not politely request adherence, it demands it! If this is not "orthodoxy," what is? Those who question the Talmudic system are excommunicated. If this is not dogmatism, what is?

There are further serious misrepresentations in which Fromm engages. They occur when Fromm attempts to explain the terms "halacha" and Shabbat. Fromm defines halacha as "the way in which one walks. This way leads to an ever increasing approximation of God's action."<sup>23</sup> He equates halocha with the Chinese term "Tao" which means "The Way." Fromm goes on to define Torah as "a law which



directs man to imitate God by instructing him in right actions."<sup>24</sup> Finally, he describes "mitzvoth" as moral predictions of the doom which will occur if individuals do not perform the right actions. Fromm claims that the Bible never threatens humankind with retribution. Rather it simply explains to people that if certain laws are not kept, doom will occur. Therefore, mitzvoth, Torah and halacha cannot be considered stern laws, they are beneficent predictions given to help people to grow and develop.

These are beautiful homiletical thoughts but they have nothing to do with the Biblical and subsequent Orthodox view of halacha and Torah. Halacha is God's law.

The word "halacha . . . the legal side of Judaism embraces personal social and international relationships and all other practices and observances in Judaism . . . it is a generic term for the whole legal system of Judaism, embracing all the detailed laws and observances. For instance, the Talmud (Shabbot 138 b) comments on the "word of the Lord" (Amos 8:12) that this means halacha.<sup>25</sup>

Mitzvoth are those laws or commandments given by God to control every facet of human behavior; from the proper foods to eat, to marriage and sexual intercourse. People are to follow the halacha and keep the Mitzvoth not because they are beneficent predictions, but because God Himself commanded them and one may never disobey God! Failure to keep the Mitzvoth in the Biblical system meets with the sternest retribution (i.e. Sodom and Gommorah). No homiletical interpretations can change these cold facts.

Fromm also completely distorts the Biblical idea of the Shabbat. According to Fromm one must understand the

Biblical concept of work before one understands the meaning of Shabbat. The Bible and Talmud consider work "any interference by man be it constructive or destructive with the physical world. Rest is a state of peace between man and nature."<sup>26</sup> The "day of rest" or the Shabbat then becomes "the day of peace, between man and nature."<sup>27</sup> The purpose of the Shabbat is not a social-hygenic day when one ceases from labor but "the Shabbat symbolizes complete harmony between man and nature and between man and man. By not working, that is to say, by not participating in the process of natural and social change man is free from the chains of time, although only one day a week."<sup>28</sup>

Further, Fromm claims the Shabbat has its historical roots in the Babylonian holy day of "Shapatu" which occurred approximately every seventh day. However, wherein Shapatu has a day of sadness, mourning, and self-castigation, the Hebrew "Shabbat" is a day of joy and pleasure. The Hebrew reinterpretation of Shapatu "symbolized man's victory over time. Time is suspended . . ."<sup>29</sup> On the Shabbat people are victorious over time because they can use time to their own ends, that is, for their own personal pleasure.

Fromm's ideas are interesting but again they have no relationship whatsoever to the Biblical/Pharasaic idea of the Shabbat. First of all, Fromm is wrong about the Biblical and Talmudic concept of work. If one consults the Mishnah in Shabbat 7:2 one would see that there are thirty-nine classifications of work forbidden on the Shabbat. All

of them are physical labors. Clearly what the Bible and Talmud forbid on Shabbat is not some abstract idea of disturbance of the "man-nature equilibrium" but rather concrete physical labors.

Further, Fromm completely distorts the essential character of the Shabbat. The Shabbat is a day which God, a Being and Creator of the World ordained in which humankind must desist from all physical labor. Work is forbidden for one reason only: God, the Creator of the world commanded it! No further explanation is needed. Finally, to use Biblical scholarship and declare that the Shabbat has Babylonian origins is absolute and complete heresy in the Biblical/Pharasaic system for it denies Divine authorship of this "holy day."

Remember the Shabbat day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work but the seventh day is a shabbat unto the Lord thy God, in it thou shalt not do any manner of work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested on the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and hallowed it. (Exodus 20:8-11)

One could go on and on exposing Fromm's distortions of traditional Jewish principles. He equates faith in the Bible with firmness toward one's personal belief. It means no such thing. Or he attempts to say that traditional Judaism never believed in a personal messiah: though denial of a personal messiah is one of the great heresies of Orthodox Judaism.<sup>30</sup>

Why does Fromm do this? Why does he feel the need to root his ideas in past Jewish systems which bear no relationship to them? Perhaps we can accurately say that Fromm was guilty of the crime he himself made central in his philosophy: the fear of freedom and our attempt to "escape from freedom" whenever possible. Fromm knows that his beliefs share no essential principles with any past Jewish system save Spinozism. And his system would have the same status to an Orthodox Jew as did Spinoza's centuries ago: outright heresy!

Fromm is afraid of breaking away from the security of telling the world that what he believes was in the Bible anyway. He is afraid to tell the truth. The truth being that his beliefs are completely new and revolutionary. For when Fromm denied that God is Yahweh, a Being, he denied both the idea of Divine revelation in the Torah, and the concepts of "halacha" and "mitzvoth": Divine Laws. Based on this, Fromm can be considered either a sinning Orthodox Jew or a revolutionary liberal Jewish thinker, depending on the reader's perspective.

In the end though, perhaps it is too harsh of us to expect the man who pointed out the difficulty of accepting freedom and giving up the security of authoritarian systems to overcome this problem himself, to have in his own words, the courage to be himself.



## Chapter VI

Footnotes

1. Erich Fromm, You Shall Be As Gods, (U.S.A. Holt Rinehart and Winston Inc. 1966): p. 18.
2. Ibid. p. 21.
3. Ibid. p. 92.
4. Ibid. p. 22.
5. Ibid. p. 39.
6. Ibid. pp. 60-61.
7. Ibid. p. 23.
8. Erich Fromm, Psychoanalysis and Religion, pp. 44-45.
9. Erich Fromm, You Shall Be As Gods, p. 23.
10. Ibid. p. 25.
11. Ibid. p. 27.
12. Ibid. p. 34.
13. Ibid. p. 32.
14. Ibid. pp. 58-59.
15. Ibid. p. 18.
16. Erich Fromm, Psychoanalysis and Religion, p. 48.
17. Erich Fromm, You Shall Be As Gods, p. 47.
18. Ibid. p. 48.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid. p. 49.
21. See Alvin Reines, "Birth Dogma and Philosophic Religious Faith" Hebrew Union College Annual, Vol. XLVI (1975): pp. 297-329.
22. See Exodus 19:10-11, Exodus 20:19, Exodus 24:9-11, and Deuteronomy 34:10.

23. Fromm, You Shall Be As Gods, p. 141.
24. Ibid. p. 148.
25. Encyclopedia Judaica, "Shabbat."
26. Fromm, The Forgotten Language, p. 244.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid. p. 247.
29. Ibid. p. 249.
30. See Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1.

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