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AN ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN THE PHILOSOPHIES OF MAIMONIDES, BUBER, CRONBACH AND REINES

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for ordination

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TO BARBARA

"To love one maiden only, cleave to her
and worship her by years of golden
deeds."

Tennyson (1809-1892)

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Completion of a work such as this implies the attainment of a certain level of understanding and maturity. This attainment could not have been reached without the constant support and encouragement of a number of thoughtful and loving people.

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I owe most to my wife Barbara; loving companion, constant encourager in my moments of doubt, and friend. I dedicate this work to her.

DIGEST

Jewish religious language can be interpreted in one of two ways: 1) according to the literal, or plain meaning of its words, or 2) according to a non-literal, or figurative understanding. There has been considerable debate over the last two millenia as to which of these is the proper way in which to interpret the language used with respect to Scripture, God, religious services and religious symbolic practice.

This work analyzes the thought of four philosophers, three of whom offer figurative interpretations of Jewish religious language, one of whom eschews such interpretation. The philosophers to be examined are Moses Maimonides, Martin Buber, Abraham Cronbach, and Alvin Reines.

In our analysis, we will attempt to show the following: Maimonides' system of figurative interpretation is based on scientific and philosophic principles of Neo-Platonized Aristotelianism (hereafter: Neo-Platonic science). He considered his interpretation to reflect the genuine meaning of the language employed in the above topic areas. Buber similarly believed that his system of interpretation, based on his I-Thou philosophy, actually reflected the true intent of Jewish religious language. His conceptualization is based upon his conviction of there having taken place actual meetings between Jews (as individuals and as a people) and God as the Eternal Thou. Cronbach also viewed Jewish religious language through a figurative system of interpretation. His system understands such language in terms of both the differing semantic functions of religious language and his personal vision of ultimate social idealism.

We will also show that Reines discredits all such systems of figurative interpretation of Jewish religious language. He interprets the language of

both Scripture and the pharisaic tradition according to its plain meaning. This understanding results in the rejection of the concepts based upon this language because they contravene the evidence of both science and biblical scholarship. His theory of polydoxy and the finite response to the conflict of finitude will be examined insofar as they effectively serve as substitutes in plain language for any figurative system of interpretation of Jewish religious language.

After analyzing the positions of all four philosophers, brief critiques of each system of thought will be offered. In doing so, we will attempt to demonstrate that each position contains varying degrees of subjectivity, even those of Maimonides and Reines which are ostensibly based on philosophy and science. Since all epistemology involves some element of human doubt and choice, we will attempt to show the superiority of a plain approach to Jewish religious language; one based on the best, empirically verifiable knowledge that the individual human person can apprehend.

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INTRODUCTION

Language is a primary means by which human persons attempt to express that which is real. It is not, however, wholly effective in this endeavor. Language can never fully express reality as it actually is. It is, at best, a tool to describe certain aspects and conditions of reality as it has been refracted through human experience.

Religious language is a category of language that has a more specialized function. Religious language attempts to accurately describe aspects, conditions and the meaning of "Ultimate Reality," or the totality of both the external and internal worlds. A characteristic of most religious language, especially that employed by orthodoxies, is that it purports to yield a "true" picture of ultimate reality by virtue of a particular faith's religious outlook. This outlook has been formed based upon the historical experience and subjective insight of those people who established it. Consequently, in religious language, words (the component parts of language) become representations of the totality of the world because of the interpretations placed upon them by a given religion's viewpoint.

A problem, however, arises with respect to this usage due to the nature and limitations of language. It is the nature of words to partake of more than one meaning. They are not, for the most part, univocal. Words can have both plain and figurative meanings. Plain meanings yield clarity or concrete representation. Figurative meanings of words, however, indicate abstraction. Religious language claims to yield "truth" concerning that which is ultimately real. Is this so-called truth best conveyed through clarity and plainness of expression? Or perhaps the abstraction conveyed by figurative language is more suited for this expression of truth because of its ability to transcend the plain meaning of a particular word. This, then, is the problem. Words with solitary meanings are by their nature limited in what they can express; words

with figurative meanings run the risk of partaking of so many interpretations that they convey no information at all.

One thing is clear. All words admit of some figurative or metaphoric interpretation whether or not that satisfies any religious or secular purpose. Philosopher of language, Wilbur Urban, arrives at the heart of the matter when he writes:

> "According to Hobbes, we abuse words when we use them metaphorically--that is, in other senses than they are ordained for. It is, however, quite clear that if we do not use them metaphorically, we shall not use them at all. If there was any kind of ordaining, it was that they should be used metaphorically."[1]

Religion itself is a figurative expression of ultimate reality, regardless of its truth value. Consequently, the effectiveness of the language employed by a given religion is dependent upon the dramatic power and/or the objective accuracy of the figurative expressions it uses to interpret that reality.

This work is a study of the method and function of such figurative expression in Jewish religious language. It will attempt to examine both the persuasiveness and objective accuracy of several different systems of religious figurative expression. These figurative modes of expression will be analyzed with respect to four particular areas that have served as the basis for different types of Jewish belief and practice over the past two millenia. These areas include the religious language by which we understand:

1) Scripture
2) God
3) Religious Services, or Liturgy
4) Symbolic Practice, or Ritual

We will examine systems of figurative expression in order to determine whether or not they are successful in accurately describing the aspects,

conditions and the meaning of ultimate reality which is religion's ostensible purpose. Languge, however, especially when used figuratively, can obscure as easily as it can clarify. If religious figurative language is to convey an accurate view of ultimate reality, it cannot brush aside the issue of its objective accuracy in addition to its internal consistency. As Urban astutely perceives: "The problem of truth involves...the problem of language and its relation to reality."[2]

All figurative language is based upon the ability of words to symbolize ideas or acts which transcend their plain meaning. Yet it is possible for the metaphoric or inferred figurative meaning adduced from a word to outstrip the boundaries of its original meaning. Especially in the case of religious language, a figurative meaning can, in the end, replace the original and plain meaning of a word. This can result in a word's meaning being misrepresented due to the artificial meaning placed upon it by means of a figurative interpretation. Urban explains this problem, stating:

> "...the truth of such predications (implied by figurative expressions) rests upon the assumption that analogy is a genuine feature of 'things' and that between different contexts and universes of discourse there exist such relations that a name can be transferred from one mode to another and still have reference, and that the name thus transferred can in some way represent the object to which it is transferred."[3]

Or, as C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards bluntly state in their work, The Meaning of Meaning: "A true symbol = one which correctly records an adequate reference."[4] Thus, religious figurative language is justifiable only insofar as it adheres to proper "rules" of symbolic usage and clarifies, as opposed to obscures, its vision of ultimate reality.

The work of four philosophers will be examined in this work. For three of them, figurative expression represents the best means to understand the truth behind the four topic areas listed above. They find that the plain

meaning of the religious language generally connected with these areas is either inaccurate or inadequate. They therefore substitute a figurative or symbolic meaning for the plain meaning of the language that is associated with Scripture, God, religious services, and religious symbolic practice (namely, ritualism). The philosophers in this category to be examined are Moses Maimonides, Martin Buber, and Abraham Cronbach.

For one of the four philosophers to be examined, the use of religious figurative language to comprehend truth concerning the topic areas listed above is itself inadequate or inaccurate. This thinker claims that the figurative modes of expression devised by the other three philosophers do not yield objective truth concerning Scripture, God, religious services and religious symbolic practice. He claims that such truth-claims only be competently conveyed in plain, clear language. This philosopher is Alvin J. Reines.

What follows is a brief description of each thinker, his philosophic orientation, and his position, to be enlarged upon in this thesis, with respect to the use of figurative language as a means of interpreting Scripture, God, religious services and religious symbolic practice. These thumbnail sketches are designed to acquaint the reader with these thinkers and their views in general, without necessarily providing comprehensive detail about them.

Moses Maimonides (1135-1204) was the premier Jewish rationalist religious thinker in his day. Born in Spain, he absorbed the appreciation of philosophical discourse that was prevalent in the Muslim environment in which he lived. He was acquainted with the work of the Greek philosophers, especially Aristotle, and also his Neo-Platonic expositors Al-Farabi, Avicenna, and ibn Bajja as well. He was particularly fond of the philosophic thought of Aristotle as interpreted by Al-Farabi.[5] In addition, he was an expert in the

pharisaic Jewish legal tradition and wrote many works explaining and/or summarizing it. It is the contention of this analysis that Maimonides' religious writing can only be understood within the context of his philosophical writing. This viewpoint is essentially contained in his famous Guide of the Perplexed (Moreh Nebukim). This philosophical, as opposed to religious, understanding of Maimonides is controversial, even though it is certainly not new. The argument surrounding Maimonides' true orientation will be taken up in the course of analyzing his use of figurative religious language.

This analysis will attempt to demonstrate that Maimonides rejected the plain meaning of the religious language of both Scripture and the pharisaic tradition which produced the Talmud. In its place, he devised a system of figurative interpretation which he claimed to be the true meaning of this religious language. In our analysis, it will be seen that Maimonides claimed that Scripture was but a figurative means for expressing principles of Neo-Platonic philosophy, the truth of which he considered to be demonstrated. Consequently, the plain, literal meaning of Scriptural and pharisaic religious language is inaccurate, in his view. He did not think that he was merely rationalizing the beliefs and practice of the pharisaic tradition. He wrote with the conviction that Scripture is written figuratively, and not plainly, in order to teach and protect the masses of unthinking, uneducated Jews who, in his view, were incapable of receiving philosophic truth in any other form.

Martin Buber (1878-1965) was a pioneering Jewish existentialist philosopher of the 20th century. In the tradition of Kierkegaard, Buber rejected the strictures of objectivity and empirical verifiability which are the hallmarks of the Western philosophical tradition. As a Jewish thinker, he devised a novel theory of religion which required a totally new epistemology to support it. This, of course, is his famous "I-Thou" theory of relation.

Buber removed both logic and empirical testing as bases for religious discourse. In their place, he advocated an intuitive "knowing" which results from a "genuine relation" with another object or God.

This analysis will attempt to demonstrate that Buber not only rejected the plain meaning of the religious language of Scripture and the pharisaic tradition as inaccurate and inadequate. In addition, we shall attempt to demonstrate the manner in which he perceived such language figuratively. He saw such language as indicative of actual, historical meetings between Jews and God in an I-Thou relation. For example, in Buber's view, Scripture interpreted according to its plain meaning is inaccurate scientifically, and even according to his religious theory as well. Scripture records the necessarily faulty recollections of meetings between Jews as a people and individually with God. This view will be examined in detail in the chapters concerned with his work.

Like Maimonides, Buber did not think that his figurative I-Thou approach to religious language was an interpretation. We shall attempt to demonstrate that Buber actually conceived the figurative notion of the I-Thou to be the genuine and actual meaning of the language of Scripture, God religious services, and religious symbolic practice. We will try to show that he thought that this figurative expression of religious languague was "true" and that the language of the above topic areas is itself a symbolic working out of the I-Thou throughout Jewish national and religious history.

Abraham Cronbach (1882-1963) was a liberal Jewish thinker who was Professor of Social Studies at the Hebrew Union College. He was not a philosopher per se. Although talented as a semanticist and a linguist, he did not develop an entire philosophical system of thought as did Buber and Maimonides. He was, however, an empiricist in his epistemological orientation and rejected all unverifiable assertions about the supernatural in Judaism. Although not

really a philosopher, he did offer his own theory of religion. Cronbach claimed that religion was the enterprise by which human persons strove to make real their highest hopes and ideals. For him, religious language was a mere instrument in this endeavor. Its words can take on almost any meaning in order to speed the attainment of the goals of religion as he saw it. In Cronbach's view, as we shall see, God Himself is conceived of as an ideal. Because of this religious view, Cronbach was extremely concerned with issues of social justice (this included an absolute commitment to pacifism). Social idealism became the equivalent of the religious imperative for Cronbach. If, per chance, an aspect of religion impeded rather than aided the social causes for which he strove, he viewed that given aspect as irreligious and of no worth whatsoever.

This analysis will attempt to demonstrate that Cronbach rejected outright the plain meaning of the religious language of Scripture, God, religious services and religious symbolic practice. He viewed such language as viable only if taken in a figurative sense, one which espoused the cause of social idealism as he perceived it. Consequently, for Cronbach, the words of Scripture and the pharisaic tradition are nonsensical if taken according to their plain meaning. He shows semantically how Jewish religious language is more appropriately conceived of along the lines of his idealism. Therefore, the plain meaning of Scripture, in his view, could be altered or manipulated to serve the primary goal of achieving social justice. This was because, for Cronbach, the figurative meaning of Scripture as a document of social justice superseded in intent the plain meaning of the words found in it. The overriding value of the end of social justice justified the manipulation of Jewish religious language in such a way as to support Cronbach's ideals.

Alvin J. Reines (1926-) is a philosopher, teaching at the Hebrew

Union College. He is a phenomalist in his philosophic orientation. This means that he is an empiricist in the tradition of David Hume and that objective demonstration and empirical verifiability are the only bases upon which one can claim clear and certain knowledge (for a discussion of Phenomenalism and its critics, see: The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, vol. 6, pp. 130ff. under "Phenomenalism," New York: MacMillan Co., 1967).

As a religious thinker, he rejects both the claims of Orthodox Judaism for supernatural causation described in Scripture as well as all figurative systems of interpretation which change or obscure the plain meaning of the language found there. Since, in his view, the plain meaning of Scripture is empirically untrue and incapable of supporting a figurative system of interpretation, it has no authority over Jews (or anyone else for that matter). Consequently, he advocates the radical freedom of the individual from any religious system of authority which cannot be verified objectively and empirically. Reines finds that no such justifiable authority can be shown to exist. Therefore, he advances the notion that each person is his or her own ultimate authority with respect to matters of religious belief and practice.

This analysis will attempt to demonstrate that Reines rejects all systems of figurative religious language which claim to accurately and adequately describe Scripture, God, religious services, and religious symbolic practice. We shall see that he strongly asserts that even in religious discourse words must have plain and clear meanings which supersede their figurative interpretations in order for them to convey any meaning at all. Plain, not figurative religious language represents, in Reines' view, the most qualitatively superior manner in which to view the aspects, conditions and meaning of ultimate reality.

Reines offers his own system of interpreting religious language. His

approach, however, is not based upon a particular overriding metaphor as are the others. It is an approach based upon the strictures of objectivity and empirical verifiability. His system is offered as one alternative religious viewpoint, in contradistinction to the views of the other thinkers, who purport that the views of religious language they set forth are incontestably true.

After examining the philosophies of the thinkers introduced above concerning figurative interpretations of Jewish religious language, brief critiques of each of these positions will be offered. These critiques will serve as a conclusion to this analysis. This is due to the fact that the ideas of the philosophers are adequately summarized in the respective chapters concerning them.

The question remains: Does figurative expression in religious language serve to clarify or obscure in comparison to plain and clear expression? The answer to this dilemma may well provide the individual with the wherewithal to choose a satisfying response to the ultimate reality that religion ostensibly uncovers. A figurative, unprovable dreamworld may prove to be as meaningful to one person as an empirically verifiable, objective view of reality is to another. No claims to absolute truth concerning religious systems of thought have ever been compellingly demonstrated. Consequently, the individual must choose the religious language whose "references are adequate," in the words of Ogden and Richards. He or she must do so in order to find the religious response that most satisfactorily connects language with truth and reality.

Chapter IA

Maimonides:
Figurative Language
and Scripture

DEFINITIONS

Any discussion of the philosophic usage of language is bound to concern itself with the proper definition of the terminology upon which that usage is based. Although Maimonides uses several terms to express varying degrees of equivocality of scriptural language, in the Moreh Nevuchim each of these terms carries with it one crucial assumption: words used in Scripture connote more than one meaning. In other words, literal interpretation of Scripture (the notion that there is one accurate and permissible designative usage of each word of Scripture) is impossible. With this in mind, we will proceed to define the terms Maimonides uses to explain the equivocality of scriptural language.

1) Amphibolous -- An amphibolous term in the Moreh Nebukim is "... a term applied to two or more objects which, so far as esssential properties are concerned, are totally heterogeneous so that the term would be a homonym; but they have a mutual resemblance in unessential properties making the term a class name."[1] Maimonides scholar, Harry Wolfson, states that "amphibolous" is equivalent in meaning to "ambiguous," and that it denotes a state of clarity between univocality and equivocality.[2]

Leo Strauss, in his discussion of the Moreh, concurs with this usage of the term and elaborates further, quoting Wolfson who writes: "The expression "ambiguous word" is itself ambiguous. Used as a technical term, it means a word which is applied to 'two objects between which there is a similarity with regard to something which is accidental to both and which does not constitute the essence of either of them.'"[3] Strauss points out that for Maimonides, an ambiguous word in Scripture constitutes "a 'word fitly spoken' (Proverbs 25.11) ... a speech which has two faces ... an exterior and an 'inner

face'; an exterior useful ... for the proper condition of human societies and an inner useful for the knowledge of the truth."[4]

2) Equivocal -- For Maimonides, an equivocal term is one that has at least two definite meanings. This usually corresponds to a figurative and a literal meaning. Maimonides takes care to explain the figurative meaning of each term which has such usage, as will be elaborated in detail below.

In addition to a figurative versus literal meaning, Maimonides also uses the term equivocal to describe those terms whose meanings differ depending on the human or divine context of their usage.

Equivocal terms can have more than two meanings. For example, the word heaven in a Maimonidean analysis could be assumed to have at least three meanings.

1) heaven - a geographical location in which Deity resides
2) heaven - a metaphor for the infinite transcendence of the divine sovereignty according to generalized rabbinic thought
3) heaven - that part of the universe which lies beyond the sphere of the moon; that part of the universe which contains all of the divine Intelligences and planets according to basic Neo-platonized cosmology.[5]

In this analysis, it will be seen that Maimonides chooses the philosophic meaning for an equivocal term as superior to both the literal and rabbinically interpreted meanings of that term.

3) Figurative Language and Metaphor -- Figurative language denotes metaphoric use of language or language which conveys a figure of speech either in addition to, or instead of, literal linguistic usage. Figurative language and metaphor are equivalent in mean-

ing. A metaphor denotes a "figure of speech in which a term ... is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable, in order to suggest a resemblance.[6] The following is an example of Maimonides' explanation of Scripture in terms of figurative usage.

"Going Out" -- y'ṣee-a ... Every mention of going out with reference to Him (Deity) conforms to this figurative use."[7] (i.e., that which is unknown becoming manifest)

4) Parable-Allegory -- A maš̌al is the proper designation of a scriptural event which Maimonides views as not necessarily having occurred. Such an incident is allegorical, coming to teach a lesson that goes beyond the simple story offered in Scripture. By viewing incidents of Scripture as parable or allegory, Maimonides explains the "true" philosophic meaning of the given scriptural incident. Consequently, according to the Maimonidean view, scriptural incidents which contradict the laws of nature must be interpreted allegorically or as parables in order to understand their true meaning.

MAIMONIDES' WORLDVIEW

Why was such an elaborate system of scriptural interpretation necessary, in Maimonides' view? As we shall see, Maimonides is a scientist and a philosopher. The Scripture makes truth claims that contradict the truth claims of science and philosophy which Maimonides already accepts as demonstrated. Since Scripture does not express itself with scientific or philosophic clarity, Maimonides takes it upon himself to explain how there is in reality no contradiction between Scriptural and scientific truth claims. Scripture merely used a symbolic language system to express truths conforming

to Neo-Platonic science.*

What did Neo-Plantonized thought claim in regard to the order and function of the universe? Three features of this philosophical cosmology are vital for this analysis.[8]

1) The universe is composed of a system of divine spheres and Intelligences which reside in various concentric orbits around the earth. The outermost sphere is God, who is the source of all motion in the universe. This Deity causes other beings in existence to flow because of the emanation of divine substance which makes its way through the system of spheres and Intelligences toward Earth. Except for causing motion due to divine emanation, the sole activity of God is self-intellection.

2) The realm between the moon and the earth constitutes the area defined as the sub-lunar sphere. Coterminous with the moon's orbit lies the Active Intelligence, the divine Intelligence furthest from Deity and the only one accessible in any form to human persons.

3) The universe is static and unchanging. This postulate of Neo-Platonic philosophy was accepted without question by Maimonides, except with respect to the possibility of the creation of the universe. "A post parte" (post-creation), no change in the natural order is possible. Those phenomena which seem to contravene the natural order have been misperceived by humans.

The acceptance of these three postulates of Neo-Platonized philosophy by Maimonides creates a problem. Scripture, simply interpreted, does not speak of spheres or intelligence. It states expressly that the natural order of phenomena can be contravened at the whim of the Creator God. Scripture

*As will be explained, this was done in order to make truth accessible to those who were intellectually qualified. Scripture is written in parabolic form for the sake of the masses, who are unable to accept the consequences of the unveiled philosophic truth.

also states that Deity does far more than the mere self-intellection allowed for by Neo-Platonized philosophy. The disparity between the divine image in Scripture and in Neo-Platonized philosophy will be further examined below.

MAIMONIDES' RATIONAL ORIENTATION

Given a choice between a philosphic system which denies scriptural truth claims and a Scripture which describes non-rational or miraculous phenomena, Maimonides is confronted with a difficult choice: to deny one of the two sets of truth claims, or to harmonize the two systems. Although traditional Maimonidean scholarship asserts that he made such a harmonization, it is clear from reading the Moreh that he rejected Scriptural truth claims. Scripture, in his view, is in reality a philosphic work of truth expressed in figurative language. It is superior to the writings of the Greek-Arabic philosophers because it accomodates the reason of the individual human person while not upsetting the masses.

Maimonides admits that the human mind is not capable of apprehending truth in its totality. He says, however, that this is no excuse for faith which is not supported by the best evidence the mind can muster:

> "Do not think that what has been said with regard to the insufficiency of the human intellect and its having a limit ...is a statement made in order to conform to the law...it is something that has already been said and truly grasped by the philosophers without their having concern for a particular doctrine."[9]

Maimonides also says:

> "Man has love for, and the wish to defend, opinions to which he is habituated and in which he has been brought up and has a feeling of repulsion for opinions other than those...man is blind to the apprehension of the true realities and inclines toward the things to which he is habituated to texts that it is an established usage to regard as true, and whose external meaning is indicative of the corporeality of God and of other imaginings with no truth in them, for these have been set forth in parables and riddles." (emphasis added)[10]

While acknowledging the limits of the human intellect, Maimonides affirms the process of rational and empirical demonstration for attaining truth. There is no substitute for either empirical or logical demonstration for testing the truth of a proposition assuming that rational phenomena are under discussion.

> "...in all things whose reality is known through demonstration there is no tug of war and no refusal to accept a thing proven -- unless indeed such refusal comes from an ignorance who offers resistance that is called resistance to demonstration."[11]

Stating that a proposition is contained in Scripture or sacred literature (Pharisaic writings) is insufficient evidence for establishing the truth or validity of that proposition. For Maimonides, philosophic truth, not mere religious philosophic truth, is paramount among human intellectual concerns. As Shlomo Pines states in his introduction to the Moreh:

> "In spite of the convenient fiction which he (Maimonides) repeats, that the philosophic sciences flourished among the Jews of antiquity, he evidently considered that philosophy transcended religious or national distinction."[12]

Maimonides' position with respect to the superiority of philosophic/scientific truth claims over truth claims based on the revealed nature of Scripture can be summarized as follows:

> "Maimonides' rejection of the traditional view of providence is indicated throughout the Moreh...the view expressed by the literal meaning of Scripture and the writings of the Sages is no evidence of its truth. Scripture, the Talmud and Midrash...were not intended to communicate truth in any ordinary sense. They are works intended primarily for the religious education of the philosophically uneducated masses, whereas truth comes through knowledge of metaphysics and science. Hence, Scripture and the rabbinic writings are written in the form of parables. As such, they contain two entirely different sets of meanings: an external mythological sense appropriate to the masses' deficient misunderstanding and a secret, true sense intended for the qualified, intellectual elite."[13]

NON-LITERAL INTERPRETATION--NEED AND DANGERS

Maimonides believes that Scripture, through its figurative language system, was the best possible way to convey philosophic truth to the intellectually qualified while keeping that truth a secret from the ignorant masses. It is clear that Maimonides feels that knowledge of the actual philosophic state of affairs must be kept secret at all costs from the masses, lest moral chaos ensue. He specifically states that those who are capable of understanding should not teach the philosophic truth they have garnered from Scripture. Students who are capable of grasping philosophic truth intuitively should be allowed to do so while the masses are to be left in ignorance. Maimonides writes:

> "As I have explained several times in our commentary on the Mishna, none of those who know something of it (philosophic truth) should divulge it... As from the beginning of the book up to here, the glory of God (requires) to conceal the thing" (Genesis Rabba with reference to Proverbs 25.2) "... It is forbidden to be explicit about it. He (the teacher) must accordingly make the secret appear in flashes."[14]

Scripture teaches the masses about a world in which there is divine providence, inescapable reward and punishment for human actions, and a Deity who consciously and actively intervenes in history when Deity feels like it. These beliefs are not accurate philosophically, yet Maimonides feels that the goal of social control merits their teaching. He writes:

> "...it (the Torah) is presented in such a manner as to make it possible for the young, the women, and all people to begin with it and learn it...it is not within their power to understand these matters as they truly are. Hence they are confined to accepting tradition with regard to all sound opinions that are such sort that it is preferable that they should be pronounced true."[15] (Note--"sound" in this context does not mean true-ed.)

Maimonides believes that it is actually harmful to try to teach that which is philosophically true to the masses. He believes, rather, in teaching the tradition firmly and recognizing that those who aspire to philosophic

knowledge will necessarily struggle past the simple meaning of Scripture:

> "...It is...harmful to make clear the meaning of the parables of the prophets and to draw attention to the figurative senses of terms used in addressing people... It behooves rather to educate the young and to give firmness to the deficient according to the measure of their apprehension.[16] (emphasis added)

There is a danger, however, in teaching the masses the simple meaning (interpretation) of Scripture. Deity is talked about in very anthropomorphic terms. The masses may misapprehend that Deity is corporeal. This belief is very dangerous in Maimonides' eyes. Its apparent presence in Scripture is due solely to the lack of intellectual capability of the masses, not because of its truth.

> "'The Torah speaks in the language of the sons of men.' (Baba Meṣia 31b; Yevamoth 71a)...attributes indicating corporeality (of God in the Scripture) have been predicated of Him in order to indicate that He...exists, in as much as the multitude cannot conceive of any existence save that of a body alone; thus that which is neither a body nor existent in a body does not exist in their opinion."[17]

This opinion of the masses is wrong and must be actively refuted. Maimonides disputes the notion that the corporeality of Deity represents an accurate portrayal of Scripture with respect to divinity. He writes:

> "...He who believes in this doctrine (corporeality) was not led to it by intellectual speculation; he merely followed the external sense of the texts of the Scriptures.[18] (emphasis added)

This clearly implies the inaccuracy of the Scriptural notion of a corporeal God. So opposed was he to this notion of divine corporeality that Maimonides actively sought the day when this and other primitive notions concerning Deity would be universally rejected by Jews. Maimonides writes:

> "...when corporeality is abolished, all these predicates are likewise abolished (positive attributes with respect to Deity). I mean such terms as 'to descend, to ascend, to go, to stand erect, to go around, to sit, to dwell, to go out, to come, to pass'..."[19]

MAIMONIDES' METHODOLOGY OF INTERPRETATION

We have established Maimonides' true philosophic beliefs as opposed to traditional Jewish ones: the unalterable character of the natural world, the superiority of rational and empirically demonstrated truths to truth claims merely based upon sacred Scripture, the need to hide the truth from the masses and the need to combat the notion of corporeality. Consequently, it is incumbent upon Maimonides to interpret Scripture figuratively, in a manner which is accurate philosophically yet not dangerous to the ignorant believer. He accomplishes this by interpreting Scripture according to the principle of equivocality and figurative language.

Maimonides states his belief that Jews should accept beliefs re: Scripture and the natural world which are in accordance with their mental capabilities. For this reason, equivocality serves as an excellent principle by which to interpret Scirpture. In the beginning of the Moreh, Maimonides explains his intent; writing:

> "...with regard to every term whose equivocality we shall explain...our purpose in such an explanation is not only to draw attention to what we mention in that particular chapter. Rather do we...draw your attention to such meanings of that particular term as are useful for our purpose. Take every equivocal term in that one from among its various senses is suitable in that particular passage."[20] (emphasis added)

Maimonides, although committed to the discovery of truth through philosophic and scientific method, does not condemn those who are unable to aspire to such a level of intellectual apprehension. He says:

> "If...an individual of insufficient capacity should not wish to reach the rank to which we desire him to ascend, and consider that all the words (of the Bible) concerning this subject are indicative of sensual perception...why, there is no harm in thinking this."[21]

The superiority of Scripture over philosophic texts with regard to disseminating truth is this very equivocality. This quality allows for in-

dividuals to apprehend truth as they are able while not upsetting either their psychological balance or the social order. Maimonides comments:

> "You should not consider as blameworthy the fact that this profound subject, which is remote for our apprehension, should be subject to many different interpretations. For this does no harm with respect to that toward which we direct ourselves. And you are free to choose whatever belief you wish."[22]

There is a tension in the Moreh with respect to Maimonides' attitude toward educating the unenlightened masses. The Moreh itself is ambiguous as to whether or not the philosophic truths contained within Scripture should be explained. Even with respect to those truths which Maimonides is in favor of explaining there remains the issue of the extent of illumination desirable. We have seen how Maimonides virtually makes philosophic inquiry taboo for the masses. It is to be grasped by the intuition of the gifted individual. Yet at the same time, he admits the need for understanding this figurative use of language in order to relate the notion of divine corporeality. If the reader of the Moreh were to become confused as to what Maimonides did in fact espouse, this would not be surprising, as this is precisely Maimonides' intent.

Maimonides scholars have long sought to determine the exact methodology employed by Maimonides in concealing the true intent of his philosophical writing. Leo Strauss, among others, has determined that Maimonides succeeded in his purpose through conscious contradictions, outright lies, setting truthful statements in enigmatic formulations and writing in a proto-rabbinic style, one similar to that employed by other, more orthodox interpreters of Scripture.[23]

Maimonides interprets scriptural language rationally according to the philosophic science of his day, especially as it relates to the divine. What Maimonides cannot divulge openly is that his philosophic interpretations are part and parcel of a weltanschaung that is antithetical to Scripture. Maimon-

ides did not believe that neo-Platonized philosophy and Scripture were in conflict. He seemed to genuinely believe that Scripture was an ingenious method of hiding philosophic truths from those who might be harmed. The reason for the secrecy and deception employed by Maimonides is that the ambitious yet unqualified student might think that this was precisely Maimonides' view: that Neo-Plantonized philosophy was superior in its grasp and presentation of truth than Scripture.

Maimonides therefore believes strongly in the force of the Law to promote "right" thinking and maintain social order. He makes this point specifically in the fiftieth chapter of the third part of the Guide. He says:

> "...all the stories you will find mentioned in the Torah occur there for a necessary utility for the Law; either they give a correct notion of an opinion that is a pillar of the Law, or rectify some action so that mutual wrong doing should not occur between men."[24]

A. Reines describes how Maimonides uses his method of interpretation to support the equivocal nature of Scriptural language. He writes:

> "The method Maimonides employs to reconcile the contradictions between the Torah and philosophy is to show that the Torah was written largely as parable and contains, therefore, two basically different systems of meanings, one literal and the other figurative."[25]

Consequently, Maimonides explains the particular instances where figurative language is employed while omitting the general system from which he derives those explanations, i.e., Neo-Plantonized philosophy. In the Guide, he alludes to Greek philosophy so ambiguously that it is difficult to either derive a complete system of thought or determine his acceptance of its principles.[20]

SPECIFIC APPLICATIONS OF MAIMONIDEAN INTERPRETATION

The figurative explanations of Scripture by Maimonides can be derived into two classes: 1) those interpretations which serve to explain scriptural

language in terms of Neo-Platonized principles and 2) those interpretations which serve to decorporealize notions of Deity. This section will analyze specific examples of each usage.

Maimonides used Neo-Plantonized principles to explain biblical terms which had radically different meanings than their plain meaning in Scripture. For example, in his explanation of the Hebrew term ruah, Maimonides says:

> "Air (ruaḥ) is an equivocal term. It is a term denoting... the element that is one of the four elements. Thus 'and the air of God (ruaḥ e'lo-him) hovered.'" (Genesis 1.2)[26]

By use of this interpretation, Maimonides radically changes the meaning of the scriptural term. In the Genesis creation story, ruah denotes the actual spirit of Deity which hovered over the face of the primordial waters. According to Maimonides, however, ruah is not an aspect of divinity, but simply denotes one of the four known Aristotelian elements: Earth, Water, Fire, and Air. Since Air (ruah) is the lightest of the four, it is natural that it "hovered" over the waters. For Air to have been in any other position would have been unnatural.

Maimonides also interprets the creation of man in this Neo-Platonic fashion. Referring to the creation of man "in the image of Deity," Maimonides states:

> "...image (ṣelem) is an equivocal or amphibolous term applied to the specific form and also to the artificial form and to what is analogous to the two in the shapes and configurations of the natural bodies. That which was meant in the scriptural dictum 'let us make man in our image' (Genesis 1.26) was the specific form, which is intellectual apprehension, not the shape and configuration."[27] (emphasis added)

In other words, the similarity denoted by the phrase "our image" in Genesis refers to the human capacity to use intellect, just as the divine Intelligences and Deity use intellect. The word image is divorced by Maimonides from any consideration of physical form or shape.

One further explanation of this type of rationalization of Scripture should be sufficient for our analysis. In interpreting the phrase, "but my face shall not be seen" (Exodus 33.23), Maimonides states:

> "(this phrase) is understood by Onqelos, who translates: "And those in front of me shall not be seen." He indicates by this that there are likewise great created beings whom men cannot apprehend as they really are. These are the separate intellects."[28]

Maimonides uses this phrase by which Deity expresses His ultimate unknowability, as evidence to support the existence of the heavenly Intellects as postulated by Neo-Platonized philosophy. That this is a radical change from the plain meaning of this phrase in its Scriptural context hardly needs be stated.

The other class of terminological explanation of Maimonides involves the idealization of concrete picturings of Deity or divine attributes. Physical characteristics, such as heart,[29] back,[30] foot,[31] face,[32] have completely non-physical meanings when applied to Deity. Similarly, human actions such as coming,[33] seeing,[34] standing,[35] rising,[36] and presence[37] are explained as being figurative uses for the intellectual and emanative functions of God which result in human perceptions. Those human perceptions are described in terms which are accessible to and understandable by humans, i.e., the language of physical action and human nature.

To Maimonides, this system of interpretation is not merely a new alternative among the various rabbinic modes of interpretation offered during the previous one thousand years. To Maimonides, this system of interpretation allows the teaching of philosophic and scientific truths which have simply been placed in the figurative language of Scripture. For Maimonides, to take divine metaphors literally is blasphemous, as will be seen in detail below. To take figurative language literally, without allowing for interpretation in

the light of demonstrated scientific principles, is stupid and ignorant. Maimonides believes that he is offering the interpretation of Scripture with the highest possible degree of scientific accuracy and validity, without an understanding of which the human intellect cannot be realized. He makes this point strenuously in his explanation of the very word for life (hai):

> "The term (living-ḥai) is often used also in the sense of acquisition of knowledge...correct opinions are called life and false opinions death. God...say accordingly: 'See, I have set before you this day life and good, etc.'" (Deuteronomy 30.15)[38]

Maimonides' very notion of an after-life concerns the amount of the intellect that has been realized by the individual (i.e., the "acquired intellect"). Therefore, one's temporal and eternal existence is bound up in the issue of correct opinions about science and philosophy. As Strauss attests, Maimonides believed that the acquiring of properly demonstrated and defended opinions was vastly superior in worth to any good acts that a person might perform.[39]

It can be seen from this analysis that Maimonides believed that Scripture contained veiled philosophy, presented in parabolic form for the masses while containing hints of true philosophic principles for the intellectual elite. The figurative language of the Scripture was, in his opinion, an ingenious device by which both true belief and social order could be encouraged. Scripture is, therefore, not true as rabbinically understood, i.e., the product of supernatural revelation relating the will of a Creator God who is both provident and active in relation to the world. Scripture is only true when understood metaphorically, i.e., an exposition of the philosophic and scientific principles accepted in Maimonides' day. This includes acceptance of the Neo-Platonic cosmology and cosmogony, emanation theory and the unchanging nature of the universe.

Chapter IB

Maimonides:

Figurative Language

and God

DEFINITIONS

In discussing Maimonides' philosophy with respect to figurative language and God, it will be necessary to define three separate God concepts.

1) God, according to the Pentateuch

2) God, according to Pharasaism

3) God, according to Neo-Platonized philosophy

There are elements of all three theologies in Maimonides' thought, so it is not difficult to become confused about which concept Maimonides accepted. Before examining the issue of Maimonides' probable theology, however, it is necessary to define these three God concepts. The following definitions are based on a general understanding of the functions and attributes of that particular God concept and are not necessarily comprehensive with respect to all details.

1) God in the Pentateuch -- The God of the Pentateuch can be defined as that Deity which directly communicated with the Israelites as described by the revelation in Exodus 19-20. This Deity created the world, is capable of exerting both individual and national providence, and has chosen to establish a covenant with the Israelites, who have descended from the patriarchal line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Diety has issued a set of commands (miṣwoth) to the Israelites, most of which have to do with animal sacrifice and special worship requirements. In return for obedience, Deity grants special providence and protection. This covenant cannot be abrogated and disobedience to its particulars results in punishment on either an individual or a national scale. This Deity is the most powerful of all of the gods of the Mesopotamian world. This Deity is also capable of

emotion, of being swayed in its conviction by human pleading, and cares more about the Israelites than any other people.

2) God in Pharisaism -- The Pharisaic God concept is based upon the Pentateuchal Deity, but has a far greater scope of power and concern. This Deity is all-powerful, all-knowing, all-benevolent, and provident. No other entity with these attributes exists. This is the sole true Deity in the universe. This Deity has promised redemption of the Jewish people by miraculous means, through an appointed messenger (maŠiaḥ). The Pharisaic God also promised an eternal life for the individual's soul including resurrection and reunion with that individual's body. This God is highly accessible to human prayers and concerns but also is beyond them (being both immanent and transcendent). Like the God of the Pentateuch, the pharasaic God has given commands that Jews are duty-bound to uphold. An entire set of oral laws was given by God in addition to the written law. It is this oral law that is the basis for the rabbinic legal tradition. Laws of personal behavior supersede the laws of national worship in the pharasaic system. This Deity is capable of intervening in human affairs, changing nature and/or history as it sees fit. It is, however, all-benevolent, and would not capriciously bring harm to human beings. The pharasaic God "cares" about each individual living creature and has assured the possibility of the continued existence of the world.

3) God in Neo-Platonized Philosophy -- As described in the previous section, God in Neo-Platonic philosophy is defined as the outermost sphere in the system of heavenly bodies. This god is

> the cause of all motion through the overflow of divine essence, which travels through the heavenly spheres and Intelligences to the Active Intellect and eventually to Earth. Through this emanation, God is the ultimate and indirect cause of everything. This emanation has caused a natural order to exist, in which it is impossible for change to occur. This God exerts neither national nor individual providence. The only direct action this Deity is capable of is self-intellection, i.e., "thinking the thought that is itself."[2] The other heavenly bodies, the spheres and Intelligences, have free will, yet choose no other path or action than that which is perfect for them. This God is inaccessible to the human person, as human comprehension is bound by Active Intelligence, and that which lies within the sub-lunar sphere.[3]

WHICH GOD DID MAIMONIDES ACCEPT?

Ever since the time of Maimonides, there has been a controversy over what was Maimonides' true theological belief. Traditional Maimonides scholarship, emphasizing his halahic writings, claims that Maimonides accepted the God of the Pentateuch and the Pharisees. It claims that although Maimonides was highly interested in philosophy, he subordinated his philosophic quest to his religious faith. As Maimonides' scholar, David Hartman, writes, "...it is mistaken to presume that Maimonides separated his individual quest for God from communal forms of spirituality."[4] Hartman insists that Maimonides believed in a God capable of choosing a people for a special purpose. This belief is "inseparably linked with a mode of behavior because by accepting the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, one was led to accept the yoke of the divine command."[5] I. Twersky also attests that Maimonides believed in a more or less traditional

theological schema, claiming that:

> "...the religious philosopher operates on the assumption that the Torah--i.e., moral-ritual law created by God--is rational and intelligible. The same mode of thinking and feeling about the cosmic order carried over to the moral order; the same axiological-ontological postulates governed both realms."[6] (emphasis added)

In other words, God directly created both the world of nature and the world of morality; there is no disparity between the functioning of the two worlds. Twersky assumes that Maimonides was a priori a religious philosopher, i.e., one concerned with the discovery of divine truths as opposed to a philosopher whose primary commitment was to truth whatever its shape or form. One student of this school on Maimonides went so far as to purport that philosophy was virtually a sideline of Maimonides'. In her view, it was, so to speak, an avocation in contradistinction to his "real" work of explicating halakah.[7]

Non-traditional Maimonidean scholars have emphasized the deceptive nature of The Guide of the Perplexed and its contradictory teaching. They do so to demonstrate that Maimonides was at best on the fringe of pharisaic theology, and at the worst, virtually heterodox as regards traditional dogma. These scholars, including Alvin J. Reines, Leo Strauss, J. Haberman, and L. Kravitz have pointed out the immense care with which the Guide was written, emphasizing its intentional deceptions and contradictions.[8] They have averred that this type of writing is unjustifiable if Maimonides was presenting a theology that was acceptable to mainstream pharisaic-rabbinic Judaism. They also point out the gaping, irreconcilable inconsistancies between rabbinic theology and Neo-Platonized theology. They conclude that Maimonides really expounded a heterodox theology that he was obligated to cover-up to the best of his ability from the non-philosophic Jewish public.

It is our contention that the non-traditional school of Maimonidean thought represents a more likely possibility than its counterpart. This con-

clusion is derived primarily for two reasons: 1) the untenable, unbridgable, inconsistencies between Neo-Platonized theology and pharisaic-rabbinic theology 2) Maimonides' own theory of negative attributes, explicated below, which by itself clearly denies the possibility of much which is postulated by pharisaic-rabbinic theology.

The inconsistencies between the two theologies seem obvious. A Deity whose sole action is self-intellection cannot very well act in history, make covenants with people (as described in Genesis 15, Exodus 19-20) or exert providence on a national or individual level. God cannot exert providential control over the universe if all of the intervening spheres and Intelligences betwen it and the Earth exert their own free will. Traditional Maimonidean scholars fail to provide a rationale by which a philosophical God concept, presented as viable theology by Maimonides in the Guide, which admits of no relation to the human person (see below on negative attributes), can be reconciled with the miraculous God expounded upon by the Scripture, Talmud, and Midrash.

MAIMONIDES' THEORY OF NEGATIVE ATTRIBUTES

Maimonides' theory of negative attributes is based on the impossibility of dividing Deity into aspects or component parts, or adding anything at all to the divine essence. Two statements of his make this absolutely clear:

> 1) "...if He (God) has part of an essence, His essence must be composite. The absurdity of divine attributes belonging to this group is like the absurdity recognized with regard to the first group (attempts to define God)."[9]
> 2) "...He (God) has no essential attribute existing in true reality as would be superadded to His essence."[10]

These theological propositions specifically deny the possibility of 1) division of deity into aspects, such as the rabbinic concepts of "šekena" or "hamaqom" (immanence or transcendence) or 2) adding of qualities of the di-

vine essence as attributed by Scripture (for example, "Yahveh, the Deity is merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abounding in truthful loving kindness." Exodus 34.6)

Maimonides' theory also denies the very possibility of relation between Deity and the human person. He says:

> "How then can a relation be represented between Him and what is other than He (i.e., the human person) when there is no notion comprising in any respect both of the two, in as much as existence is, in our opinion, affirmed of Him, and of what is other than He (i.e., His existence) merely by way of equivocation. There is in truth, no relation in any respect between Him and any of his creatures."[11]

These "demonstrated" theological propositions place Maimonides in the peculiar position of requiring that all God-talk be first and foremost figurative or equivocal, as the absence of relation between God and the human person precludes the possibility of sure knowledge of God. Theological discussion must also be phrased in the form of the negative, because saying that God is not like someone or some attribute will always be more philosophically accurate than similar sentiments phrased positively. Maimonides' scholar, H. Wolfson, described the correct form of God-talk according to Maimonides as being categorizable under one of three rules:

1) Any affirmative proposition about God using qualitative terminology must be understood as being equivocal or figurative.
2) Negative propositions, which negate in God that which is inapplicable to God, are irrelevant (i.e., "the wall is not seeing.").
3) Any affirmative proposition about God which predicates a quality in negative terms is acceptable (i.e., God is immortal).[12]

Deity, in Maimonides' view, is even further limited in its scope and function beyond what has been described above. Not only is Deity lacking in

power and will, at least as those terms are understood by humans. Maimonides says specifically,

> "...neither power nor will exists in, and belongs to, the Creator in respect to His own essence; for He does not exercise His power on His own essence, nor can it be predicated of Him that He wills His own essence...these attributes are not to be considered in reference to His essence, but in reference to things that are created.[13] (i.e., things created via the causal chain of divine emanation, display characteristics that we judge positively or negatively. ed.)

For Maimonides, the human apprehension of natural phenomena can be described by humans as being divine. All natural phenomena is divine in origin, God being the starting point of the causal chain. God simply exists, overflows and self-intellects, yet the end result visible to us becomes attributable to God. Yet what we attribute to divine qualities merely represents our limited ability as human persons to comprehend the actions which occur in the world (natural phenomena) in any other way. Maimonides says:

> "...the apprehension of (these) actions is an apprehension of His attributes....with respect to which He is known...He performs actions resembling the actions that in us proceed from moral qualities."[14]

In other words, when we as human persons ascribe divine status to an act or quality, it is on the basis of our limited comprehension, not on the basis of objective, philosophic/scientific/reality.[15]

MAIMONIDES' USE OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE TO REFER TO DEITY

If, then, God is utterly transcendent, beyond any possible link or contact with the human person, how can accurate statements be made with respect to Deity at all? Maimonides realizes the inherent limitation of linguistic expression:

> "...the bounds of expression in all languages are very narrow ideed, so that we cannot represent this notion (the notion of divinity) except through a certain looseness of expression. Thus when we wish to indicate the deity is not many, the one who makes the statement cannot say anything

> but He is one, even though 'one' and 'many' are subdivisions of quantity."[16]

Before examining how one is to properly describe Deity, it is essential to note that Maimonides did not want to admit that he was propounding a new theology, or even one that varied substantially from Scriptural and pharisaic thought. Maimonides claims not to offer a Neo-Platonized theory of God as a departure from traditional rabbinic God concepts. He wants to claim that he was building on the basis of what the Pharisees had already established. Maimonides says:

> "Our sages laid down a general principle, by which the literal sense of the physical attributes of God mentioned by the prophets is rejected: a principle which evidently shows that our Sages were far from belief in the corporeality of God, and that they did not think that this was a matter that lent itself to imagination or confusion. For that reason, they employ in the Talmud and Midrashim phrases (with a literal sense) similar to those employed by the prophets, without any circumlocution. They knew that there could be no doubt about their metaphorical character."[17] (emphasis added)

For Maimonides, the sole reason for the use of poetic, physical imagery concerning Deity is the intellectual inability of the masses to conceive of Deity in any other way. Maimonides specifically states:

> "'The Torah speaks in the language of the sons of men.' (Babe mesia 31b, Yevamoth 71a)...attributes indicating corporeality (in Scripture) have been predicated of Him (Deity) in order to indicate that He...exists, in as much as the multitude cannot conceive of any existence serve that of a body alone: thus, that which is neither a body nor existent in a body does not exist in their opinion."[18]

Maimonides reckons, then, with a crucial problem of pharisaic theology: descriptions used by Scipture and Sage to demonstrate the existence of Deity are filled with anthropomorphic notions which denote the corporeality of God if taken literally. Maimonides argues that these descriptions are only an indulgence to the masses. They are necessary, but not desirable. He states that although such figurative language must be used to convince the masses

that God exists, the masses must also be taught that God is in no way corporeal. It is fascinating to note that Maimonides relies on traditional authority rather than philosophic demonstration to drive this point home. He writes:

> "...the negation of the doctrine of corporeality of God and the denial of His having a likeness to created things...are matters that ought to be inculcated in virtue of traditional authority upon children, women, stupid ones and those of a defective natural disposition."[19]

Maimonides feels that once the notion of corporeality of Deity is dispensed with, there will be no need of figurative, anthropomorphic God-talk. Yet this goal is far off because of the unthinking, unphilosophically-trained masses.

> "When corporeality is abolished, all those predicates are likewise abolished (predicates which attribute characteristics to Deity). I mean such terms as: 'to descend, to ascend, to stand erect, to stand, to go round, to sit, to dwell, to go out, to come, to pass,' and all terms similar to these. To speak at length of this matter would be superfluous, were it not for the notions to which the minds of the multitude are accustomed."[20]

THE DANGERS OF THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSION ACCORDING TO PHILOSOPHIC PRINCIPLES

There is, therefore, a tension that is fundamental to Jewish theology, as expounded by Maimonides. All figurative, anthropomorphic and equivocal descriptions of the Deity are objectively inaccurate as sure and certain data about God are impossible to obtain. Yet, the figurative expressions used in lieu of concrete information about Deity can lead the unsophisticated to a belief in divine corporeality; a belief which is a sin in Maimonides' opinion.[21]

This problem is compounded by Maimonides' concern with social control. Although he believes that qualified students should study philosophy and metaphysics in order to better apprehend the nature of things as they really are, he also realizes that the acceptance of the God of Neo-Platonic

philosophy could result in social anarchy in the masses. Without belief in a God who cares about their every act, who will faithfully reward their obedience and punish their misbehavior, the masses might believe that there is no single source of authority which compels their assent. The result would be a society in which the strong would victimize the weak with no fear of retribution. Maimonides understands the goal of social order to be a noble one, and worthy of deceit to uphold. Therefore, Maimonides, in his discussion of figurative language with respect to Deity, emphasizes the use of metaphoric language by the Scripture and the Sages. He also forthrightly attacks the notion of corporeality in Deity. His discussion of the true nature of God is veiled to a degree. There are simple statements which by themselves refute the veracity of the Scriptural and pharisaic God; yet these statements are not organized into a tightly-knit philosophical argument. The alert student must pick out these statements and synthesize them on his or her own.

MAIMONIDES' FIGURATIVE METHODOLOGY IN THEOLOGICAL DISCOURSE

Alvin Reines, writing about Maimonides' concept of prophecy, offers a concise and coherent description of the process by which acceptable parables are derived for use in proper theological discussion:

> "The intellect...employs the imagination to portray in symbolic form the rational, theological and scientific propositional truths at which it has arrived. Maimonides employs the general term "parable" to designate this symbolism. The parable is composed of ambiguous images, each of which represents more than one idea or object, and equivocal language whose words possess multiple significances. By means of this ambiguity and equivocality, the parable communicates a two-fold sense: one that is...literal, and the other internal or concealed."[22]

By this process, acceptable figurative language (via the parable) regarding the Deity is derived. A literal meaning for the parable does exist, yet it is merely the form by which the imagination interprets rational truths.

Maimonides is clear. God does not act; acts are ascribed to it. The

perfections symbolized by the ascribed act do exist in God as a matter of fact. The existence of that perfection has nothing to do with "acts" perceived as divine by humans. This point is further elaborated upon by Maimonides.

> "...His existence is identical with His essence and His true reality, and His essence is His existence... He exists, but not through an existence other than His essence; similarly He lives, but not through life; He is powerful, but not through power; He knows but not through knowledge."[25]

Concerning the above attributes, life, power and knowledge, Maimonides writes: "These notions are not ascribed to Him and to us in the same sense."[26] Even the term existence must be interpreted equivocally in order to avoid inaccuracy. These terms simply portray the form in which the imagination couches truths about Deity as have been discerned by the intellect. Maimonides contends that this inability to conceive Deity as it really is, is a function of the structure of the universe, in which the human person has an inferior part.

> "...we, the community of men, are in regard to place as well as degree of existence in a most lowly position if we are compared to the all-encompassing heavenly sphere (i.e., God); whereas He...is in respect of true existence, sublimity and greatness in the very highest position--an elevation which is not a spatial one."[27]

The human person can only grasp that which contains matter and form--he or she cannot apprehend even the separate heavenly intellects. Human persons, endowed with matter and form, are "the beings from which I (God) have turned my back, because of their remoteness from the existence of God."[28]

EXAMPLES OF THEOLOGICAL LANGUAGE INTERPRETED ACCORDING TO MAIMONIDES' METHOD

Given a Neo-Platonic understanding of the universe, proper philosophic interpretation of figurative descriptions of Deity in Scripture can take place. Maimonides, on this basis, says:

> "Every Hebrew knew that the term 'Elohim' is equivocal, designating the deity, the angels, and the rulers governing the cities."[28]

Commenting on the Biblical verse, "But My face shall not be seen" (Exodus 32.23), Maimonides says the meaning that is intended by Scripture is that "the true reality of My existence as it veriably is, cannot be grasped."[29]

Maimonides further explains terms of motion with respect to Deity in light of his philosophy. He says:

> As for approaching...the word is used to denote the act of letting somebody know a knowable thing...coming near (meaning with respect to Deity) in a state of inspiration and prophetic trance."[30] (emphasis added)

The philosophic interpretation of Scripture is made even clearer by Maimonides in his explanation of the term for heaven itself.

> "...The heaven is called a throne, as indicating to those who have knowledge of them (the spheres and Intellects) and reflect upon them the greatness of Him who caused them to exist and to move and who governs this lower world by means of their bounty. Accordingly, it says 'Thus says the Lord: The heaven is my throne, etc. (Isaiah 66.1) That is, He says: The heavens indicate my existence, grandeur, and power as a throne indicates the individual who is considered worthy of it."[31]

Maimonides explains three terms which have particular Neo-Platonic philosophic and theological meanings which supersede their plain meaning in Scripture.

> "To approach (garov), to touch (noga'), to come near (nagaš). These three terms sometimes signify to draw near and approach in space. Elsewhere they signify the union of cognition with what is cognized...The second signification of the three terms is union in knowledge, and drawing near through apprehension, not in space...Scripture (uses) the term "touching" in the sense of union in knowledge (Jeremiah 51.19)--'For her judgment touches heaven.'"[32]

The above interpretation explains just how heavenly matters are transmitted to the human person. There is the continual divine overflow and emana-

tion, which cause the motion of the other heavenly bodies. Human apprehension or understanding of (these) events is described figuratively--"as if" he approached, "as if" he touched, "as if" he came near--all of these expressions designate the coming together of knowledge and apprehension in a non-physical way.

In describing the concept of God's immanence, Maimonides says:

> "Šakon--...the verb is applied figuratively to...God, to the permanence of his Indwelling (s'kina) or His providence in whatever place they may subsist in permanent fashion."[33]

Although couched in rabbinic terminology, Maimonides used this explanation in support of philosophic theological concepts, not pharisaic theological concepts. The idea Maimonides emphasizes with this interpretation is that God's presence, (i.e., the emanation or overflow--sepha) is permanent just as the universe is permanent. The reference to divine providence refers to the permanence of nature with its natural providence which benefits the human person according to his/her capacity.

Similar to this is the correct figurative usage of the term qima, to stand, with reference to the Deity. Maimonides explains:

> "Standing is an equivocal term...it has the meaning to be stable and durable...permanent and enduring. Whenever the term standing occurs with reference to God...it is used in this last sense."[34] (emphasis added)

God does not "stand' in human terms, obviously, only people can do that. But Maimonides emphasizes through this interpretation that the universe is enduring and unchanging.

One last example of Maimonides' interpretive methodology will suffice for our purpose. In explaining the figurative use of the word 'heart,' Maimonides says:

> "It is in this sense--indicative of the Intellect--that the term is applied figuratively to God in all the passages in question...save certain exceptional ones where it sometimes

is used to indicate the will. Every passage should therefore be understood according to its context."[35]

CONCLUSION

There are several conclusions that can be derived from this discussion of Maimonides' use of figurative language with respect to Deity.

1) Maimonides simply rejected the pharisaic notion of the supernatural Deity described in Scripture and Rabbinic writings.

2) Maimonides held a highly sophisticated God concept that was generally in consonance with the scientific and philosophic ideas of his day.

3) He believed that Scriptural descriptions of Deity were factually incorrect; qualitative descriptions of Deity were permissible only if perceived metaphorically.

4) Maimonides believed that the parabolic style of Scripture did help to prevent the masses from comprehending the true nature of Deity. This ignornance of the true "impersonal" nature of Deity was necessary for the maintenance of social order.

5) Scripture, when properly interpreted, gives a coherent rendering of Neo-Platonic theological concepts. Because of the subtlety with which this theology is couched in Scripture, only the very astute and philosophically trained are capable of deriving true meaning from Scriptural language. This is an important safeguard that aids in social control, yet the exceptional student can, with effort, extract propositions which are in fact true from proper reading of Scripture.

CHAPTER IC

Maimonides:
Figurative Language
and Religious Services

DEFINITIONS

In order to analyze Maimonides' philosophy of figurative language with respect to the religious service, two differing modes of experience require definition: 1) the pharisaic religious service and 2) philosophic contemplation.

1) Pharisaic Religious Services -- The pharisaic religious service is comprised of an established Hebrew liturgy of prayers drawn from scriptural and rabbinic material. This liturgy purports to effect communication with the Deity. It is required to be recited three times daily in addition to various additional prayers on Sabbath and festival days. This liturgy may be recited privately or in public; however the stated preference of the Sages is that it be recited in public. The prayers of this liturgy express the individual's and the community's utter dependence on Deity for happiness and favor in everyday life. Consequently, the prayers employ praise, thanksgiving and petitioning of the Deity for improvement in the lot of the individual and the community in this life while hoping for redemption and salvation in a future life.[1]

2) Philosophic Contemplation -- Philosophic contemplation is a mode of being characterized by the individual concentrating on his/her thought process. This concentration is not merely idle thought. In it, the individual's thought is concentrated on a given object or idea (e.g., God). Such contemplation is designed to have two benefits: 1) the expanding of the individual's rational knowledge due to the concentrated thought on the given object or idea; and 2) the attainment of an intellectual

and emotional satisfaction by virtue of participation in the act of intellection (whereby the intellect goes from a potential to an actual state of being).

PRAYER--COMMUNICATION WITH DEITY OR NOT?

Maimonides writes about the liturgy extensively in the Mishneh Torah (his legal compendium).[2] He devotes some attention to its purpose and meaning in the third part of the Guide. Although he exhorts the individual Jew to be scrupulous in the matter of correct recital of prayers in the Mishneh Torah (and to a lesser extent, in the Guide), the rationale behind Maimonides' exhortation is not readily clear.

What is clear is that based upon his theory of negative attributes, Maimonides cannot have countenanced the pharisaic notion that during prayer, actual communication takes place with the Deity. This possibility is specifically ruled out by Maimonides in his denial of the relational capability between the human person and Deity. He states:

> "There is in truth, no relation in any respect between Him (God) and any of His creatures...relation is always found between two things under the same-necessarily proximate--species...How, then, could there subsist a relation between Him...and any of the things created by Him, given the immense difference between them and the true reality of their existence, than which is no greater difference?"[3]

The absence of relational ability nullifies the possibility that prayer is in any sense communication with the Deity. There has been a reticence by some major writers on Maimonides to accept this consequence of the theory of attributes. Historian of philosophy, I. Husik, confessed his inability to harmonize this notion of divine transcendence with his perception that Maimonides fully accepted the pharisaic tradition. He said:

> "The idea of making God transcendent appealed to Maimonides, and he carried it to the limit. How he could combine such transcendence with Jewish prayer and ceremony is hard to tell..."[4] (emphasis added)

D. Hartman glosses over this problem as if it did not exist. Maimonides' thought is anathema to him outside of a pharisaic world view. He proclaims, almost by caveat, that: "Maimonides' philosophy is significant only if one accepts the fact that philosophy can be practiced within a tradition."[5] (i.e., the Jewish pharisaic tradition)

Yet, there is no avoiding the fact that Maimonides' theology denies the entire pharisaic world view by a simple inability to have any relations at all with the human person. A. Reines sums up succinctly the consequences of this position with respect to prayer when he writes:

> "God...enters into no relations with any of His creatures so that He cannot be a "father" who provides for man and guides him (Isaiah 52)...God possesses no emotions (Isaiah 55) so that He is absolutely incapable of feeling love and mercy for mankind. They erroneously attribute to God providential emotions when they see certain actions they consider beneficient but these are actually produced by nature (Isaiah 54)."[6]

In addition to the inability to relate to Deity, the human person cannot even apprehend God in order to know anything at all about the Deity itself. Maimonides writes:

"...all men...affirm clearly that God...cannot be apprehended by the intellects and that none but He Himself can apprehend what He is."[7]

Lack of ability on the part of the human person to apprehend or even relate to Deity would seem to nullify the basis for observing a pharisaic religious service. Yet, Maimonides, as pointed out above, writes extensively and meticulously about the importance of observing the rites of the pharisaic prayer service. Obviously, this is for the benefit of the masses, who are incapable of accepting this fact about Deity.

OBLIGATORY NATURE OF PRAYER

The pharisaic prayer service, according to Maimonides, should be ob-

served and recited primarily because it is part of the underpinning of ritual law (halaḳa) by which order and control are maintained in the community. Maimonides, in the third part of the Guide, expressly states that social control is one of the important benefits of the law. This need for social order supersedes any imperative for dissemination of philosophical truth about God. In explaining the halakic basis for reciting the pharisaic prayer service, Maimonides says:

> "...the commandment given to us to call upon Him...in every calamity...likewise belongs to this class (miṣwot with manifest causes as opposed to those practices to be observed because they are true)...it is an action through which the correct opinion (note: not the truth) is firmly established that He...apprehends our situations and that it depends on Him to improve them if we obey, and to make them ruinous if we disobey; we should not believe that such things happen by chance."[8]

Maimonides is implying that natural phenomena do indeed happen by chance, if chance is defined as that which is natural to occur. It is Maimonides' theory of providence that the more an individual actualizes his/her intellect, the less that person will be susceptible to the whims of so-called chance. This is because the individual knows the natural possibilities of events so well that chance is virtually not a factor in their occurrence.[9] Maimonides, further on, makes this point more explicit. The purpose of divine service is to encourage uniformity of belief and to uphold the basis for the law. He writes:

> "The end of these actions pertaining to divine service is the constant commemoration of God, the love...and fear of Him, the obligatory observance of the commandments and the bringing about of such belief concerning Him...as is necessary for everyone professing the law."[10] (emphasis added)

The belief in scriptural attributes concerning God should be promoted for the sake of an orderly society, not because the beliefs are true. Especially for the masses, it is vital for social order that people fear God and

believe not only in the concept of divine reward and punishment,[11] but in the legitimate governing authority of the rabbis as well. Maimonides writes:

> "There is a certain manifest utility in honoring the bearers of the law, for if a great veneration is not accorded to them in their souls, their voice will not be listened to when they give guidance regarding opinions and actions."[12] (emphasis added)

The prayer service is to be recited, but not because it is literally true. The concept of communication with Deity and of divine attributes expressed in the prayers of the service cannot be justified in terms of Maimonides' theology. The pharisaic service is a form of worship to be observed for reasons of halakah and social control, due to the meager intellectual ability of the masses to participate in metaphysically accurate God-talk. Maimonides claims that the masses are philosophically immature. Their emotional well-being is served well by the service, even though it is scientifically inaccurate. Maimonides writes:

> "His (God's) wisdom...and His gracious ruse, which is manifest in regard to all His creatures, did not require that He give us a law prescribing abandonment and abolition of all these kinds of worship (sacrifices). At that time, it would have been similar to the appearance of a prophet in these times, who, calling upon the people to worship God would say: 'God has given you a law for bidding you to pray to Him, to fast, to call upon Him for help...your worship should consist solely in meditation without any works at all."[13] (emphasis added)

By means of this subtle "qal wa-ḥomer" argument (a fortiori), Maimonides has shown the perceptive reader the ideal form of worship: "...meditation without any works at all." If the prayer service was enacted by the Pharisees as a step removed from the gross materialism of animal sacrifice, meditation, in his view, serves to remove the people a step further from beliefs in corporealism and positive attributes of God. The only impediment to this scheme is that it would be too great a shock to the people, who are naive in terms of accurate theological discourse.

PERVERSE PIETY

Could it not be argued that a Jew could compensate for his/her lack of intellectual ability by means of an outpouring of feeling for God, even though that fervor is not based on an intellectual apprehension of Deity? Maimonides specifically denies this possibility in the Guide. He states emphatically:

> "...we do not like what is done by the truly ignorant who spoke at great length and spent great efforts on prayers they composed...through which they, in their opinion, came nearer to God...the utterances of some of them constitute an absolute denial of faith, while other utterances contain such rubbish...as to make them weep when they consider that these utterances are applied to God."[14]

These prosaic "utterances" which purport to praise God and tell of God's attributes and acts are ludicrous to Maimonides' thinking. They are the products of imaginations that are unrestrained and have no correspondence to reality whatsoever. At the risk of being repetitive, it is worth quoting Maimonides in full on this point, especially because so many have mistakenly conceived of Maimonides as a pillar of Orthodox Jewish reasoning and theology. Maimonides writes:

> "...someone who thinks and frequently mentions God, without knowledge, following a mere imagining or...a belief adopted because of his reliance on the authority of somebody else. ..is to my mind outside the habitation (of truth) and far away from it and does not in true reality mention or think about God...that thing which is in his imagination...does not correspond to any being at all and has merely been invented by his imagination..."[15] (emphasis added)

Still further on, Maimonides repeats: "...he who has no intellectual cognition at all of God is like one who is in darkness and has never seen light."[16]

Maimonides employs a parable to illustrate his contention that intellectual cognition is a necessary condition for any knowledge of the divine. He describes a royal castle (a favorite metaphor of the Sages) and places God in

the throne room. The proximity of the individual to God or the castle of God is based upon the degree to which his/her intellect has been actualized. There are seven levels of closeness to Deity in Maimonides' parable and they are ranked in the following manner:

1) outside the city walls--all persons who do not profess any belief whatsoever, be it based on tradition or upon speculation
2) within the city, with backs turned from the castle--all persons who hold incorrect opinions due to error in speculation or reliance on traditional authority
3) within the city, seeking the castle, but cannot see it--the multitude of adherents to halaka
4) walking around the castle--all persons who hold true opinions but base them on traditional authority
5) entered the antechamber of the castle--all persons who speculate and have achieved some level of demonstration with respect to the fundamental principles of religion
6) walking within the antechamber of the castle--all persons who display understanding (and perfection) with respect to natural science
7) in the inner court of the castle--all persons who have mastered natural science and demonstrated understanding of divine science[17]

What is immediately obvious is that traditional piety and observance of ritual law will not lead the individual toward God. In fact, the multitude who observe in this manner are incapable of even seeing the castle of God, much less enetering it. For Maimonides, there is no substitute for demonstrated

knowledge with respect to nature and God. Even good deeds cannot compare to the knowledge that comes from the actualizing of the intellect.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE AND THE RELIGIOUS SERVICE--LIMITATIONS

We would expect that Maimonides' approach to the religious service would be that of showing how all the divine epithets contained therein are merely figurative. We would expect that he would argue for a limitation on traditional prayer formulae which contain phrases that might be misconstrued as positive divine attributes. So Maimonides does argue. To him, the very notion of descriptive prayer, prayer which purports to describe God or the divine functioning is almost embarrassing. The service, according to Maimonides, is constructed the way it is solely for the benefit of the masses' naive level of religious thinking. Maimonides writes:

> "...if...left only to our intellects, we should never have mentioned these attributes (God is Great, Mighty and Exalted--ha-eil, hag-gad-dol, we-hag-gib-bor, we-han-no-rah)...yet the necessity to address men in such terms as would make them achieve some representation--... 'The Torah speaks in the language of people' (Baba Meṣia 31b)--obliged resort to predicating of God some of their (the rabbis) own perfections."[18]

The descriptive prayer of the pharisaic service is not only justified on the basis of the intellectual weakness of the masses. The halakic obligations, with their rationale of social control, also pertain. Additionally, Maimonides cannot deny the acceptability of using expressions in connection with Deity that are part of the Torah itself. Maimonides states:

> "...two necessary obligations determined our naming these attributes in our prayers: one of them is that they occur in the Torah, and the other is that the prophets...used them in the prayer they composed...we should not have mentioned these attributes at all but for the first necessary obligation (mention in the Torah) and but for the second necessity we...should not have had recourse to them in our prayers."[19] (emphasis added)

We state the above divine attributes in our prayers out of obligation,

not because of any connection with reality. Beyond this obligatory naming of attributes used in the Torah, Maimonides states that it is forbidden to use other attributes in prayer, even if they are found in other books of sacred Scripture Maimonides writes about this almost with a passion.

> "...we are not permitted in our prayers to use and cite all the attributes ascribed to God in the books of the prophets. For Rabbi Hanina not only says, 'If Moses our Master had not pronounced them, we could not have uttered them' (Berachoth 36b) but imposes a second condition: 'And if the men of the Great Synagogue had not established their use in prayer' (we would not say them)--whereupon we are permitted to use them in our prayers."[20]

Maimonides points out that this same Rabbi Hanina would have shrunk from utilizing even the description of Torah in our prayer--ha-eil, hag-ga-dol, hag-gib-bor, we-han-no-rah--except for the conditions discussed above.[21] Maimonides stresses the need to limit the use of expressions which describe the Deity whenever possible. To him, these expressions are only permissible to read aloud during the public reading of the law.[22]

Maimonides' purpose is clear. He wants to limit the scope and content of the pharisaic service with respect to statements about Deity. E. Lewis, in her study on Maimonides and liturgy, writes about Maimonides' tendency to limit prayer in the following way:

> "Maimonides carefully differentiates between prayers which are mandatory and prayers which are merely customary... If the custom changes the form established by the Sages... Maimonides makes his opposition known."[23]

As a consequence, Maimonides' prayerbook was smaller than the norm. Lewis compares his prayerbook to the other great compilation of prayer, Seder Rav 'Amram Gaon, saying:

> "Maimonides' prayerbook...follows 'Amram relatively closely...the Sephardic (Spanish/North African) prayerbook is similar to Maimonides' except for having accumulated many more prayers."[24]

ACCEPTABLE PRAYER--REQUIRED PRAYER THAT IS FIGURATIVELY INTERPRETED

What did Maimonides consider to be the essential prayers which comprise the divine service?

1) Prayer--'Amida
2) Recital of Sh'ma--Q'riyat Sh'ma
3) Blessing of Food--Birqat ham-mazon
4) Blessing of Priests--Birqat Qohannim
5) Phylacteries--Tephillin
6) Doorpost Inscriptions--Mez-zuza
7) Acquiring Book of the Law--Sepher Torah

Maimonides says that all of the above are actions "which bring about useful opinions" (de-ot mo'ee-lot).[25] In other words, even cutting the divine service to the minimum does not guarantee that God will be represented accurately. The divine service can do no more than to bring about "useful opinions," opinions which maintain community standards and social order.

Consequently, the words of the various prayers listed above must be interpreted figuratively, in order to equivocalize their meaning lest they be thought to be literally true.[26] Maimonides gives an example of the proper figurative interpretation in his explanation of the meaning of the "we'ahavta prayer." Maimonides writes:

> "'And thou shall love the Lord your God with all thy heart' (Deuteronomy 6.5)--in my opinion its interpretation is: with all the forces of your heart (i.e., the intellect!); I mean to say with all the forces of the body, for the principle of all of them derives from the heart (intellect). Accordingly, the intended meaning is...that you should make His apprehension the end of all your actions."[27]

Serving God, then, according to Maimonides, is to try to apprehend Deity (not to fulfill the rest of the miswot of the Torah). If the public, by virtue of their limited intellectual abilities falls short of the goal, by re-

citing the pharisaic service, they in the very lest will be temporarily rised from their concern with gross, material things. The pharisaic service, in addition to exerting social control elevates the masses by causing them to use their intellects to try to apprehend God. Maimonides contends that this is the sole purpose of the pharisaic service--not to actually communicate human desires to God but to elevate their daily concerns through the practice of intellection. Maimonides says specifically:

> "...all the practices of the worship...reading the Torah, prayer, and the performance of the other commandments, have only the end of training you to occupy yourself with His commandments...rather than with matters pertaining to this world."[28] (emphasis added)

Each individual Jew will get something different from the pharisaic service, in Maimonides' scheme. Each Jew will reach the level of intellectual illumination of which he is capable. The unsophisticated Jew may pray using the anthropomorphic imagery of the prayers. If these are interpreted properly, such prayers inculcate correct belief and proper respect for authority. They also provide emotional satisfaction among those who need to perceive Deity as a parent figure. The sophisticated, thinking Jew will look past the anthropomorphic imagery of the service while engaging in philosophical contemplation, a contemplation which Maimonides considers to be the truest form of prayer.

RATIONAL WORSHIP

This true prayer, for Maimonides, is none other than philosophical contemplation (defined above) through which the individual reaches progressively greater apprehension and appreciation of Deity's greatness and ultimate ineffability. This contemplation causes the individual to actualize his/her intellect to a progressively greater degree. For Maimonides, the higher the degree of intellectual actualization the individual has achieved, the higher

the level of salvation achieved. Therefore, philosophical contemplation is not only an important exercise for the intellectually capable, it is the vehicle by which an ultimately meaningful existence is attained. Good deeds and pious prayers cannot match philosophic contemplation for its salvific power. Therefore, Maimonides encourages this activity for all who are capable of engaging in it. He describes the procedure of philosophic contemplation specifically:

> "When...you are alone with yourself...you should take great care...not to set your thought to work on anything other than that intellectual worship consisting in nearness to God and in being in His presence in that true reality...and not by way of affectations of the imagination...(This end can be achieved by those men of knowledge who have rendered their souls worthy of it by training of this kind.)"[29]

A. Reines accurately points out that for Maimonides, this philosophic discipline was what gave more traditional theological concepts their true meaning.

> "The phrases 'worship of God' and 'love of God' for Maimonides are...figurative expressions. What they amount to is dedication to and passion for scientific and metaphysical truth."[30]

Unlike the pharisaic prayer service, whose preferred observance, according to the Sages, is in public, philosophic contemplation should be indulged in by the individual while in solitude. Maimonides comments that those truly concerned with the divine truth and science (even) resent the times during which they are not engaged in this philosophic contemplation.[31] He distinguishes between this state of contemplation and mere daydreaming, emphasizing that such contemplation is what is meant by divine service. He writes:

> "...'know you the God of your Father and serve Him...' (I Chronicles 28.9). The exhortation always refers to intellectual apprehensions, not to imagination...thought concerning imaginings is not called knowledge, but... 'that which comes into your mind' (Isaiah 20.32)...after apprehension, total devotion to Him and the employment of intellectual thought in...loving Him should be aimed at...

> This is achieved in solitude...every excellent man stays frequently in solitude and does not meet anyone else unless it is necessary."[32]

This type of contemplation, however, is not easily achievable. It represents the end of a process, the process of scientific and metaphysical inquiry. It is the final and truest form of worship which is the result of the arduous task of actualizing one's intellect. It can be practiced in its most complete form only after an intellectual apprehension of the Deity has been achieved. This is not in contradiction to Maimonides' earlier statements regarding God's ultimate unknowability. All that can be known of God consists of the process of actualizing the intellect. One's "knowledge" of God and one's access to natural providence is solely dependent on the level of participation in the "intellectual overflow" from the Active Intelligence.[33] Maimonides further elaborates this concept of rational worship as philosophic contemplation:

> "...this last worship (rational worship)...can only be achieved after apprehension has been achieved; it says: 'To love the Lord your God,' etc. (Deuteronomy 11.13)... that love is proportionate to apprehension. After love comes this worship (about which)...the Sages...said, 'This is the worship in the heart' (Ta'anith 2a). In my opinion, it consists of setting thought to work on the first intelligible and devoting oneself exclusively to this as far as this is within one's capacity."[34]

The final stage of this intellectual worship is achieved when the mind is virtually solely occupied with intellection, no matter what one's bodily needs may be.[35] As with respect to prophecy, for Maimonides this ideal is represented by Moses in the Torah. Maimonides writes:

> "...there may be a human individual who, through his apprehension of the true realities and his joy in what he has apprehended, achieves a state in which he talks with people and is occupied with his bodily necessities while his intellect is wholly turned toward Him...This is the rank of Moses our Master."[36]

CONCLUSION

For Maimonides, figurative interpretation is crucial to the understanding of the pharisaic religious service. As detailed above in his theology, no positive description of God is accurate in its literal meaning. Yet the service must be recited even though it is filled with such anthropomorphic descriptions. Maimonides teaches that such descriptions are equivocal in meaning. Of the various figurative descriptions of Deity in the pharisaic service, only one is truly legitimate to be used--ha'eil, hag gad-dol, hag-gib-bor we han-no-ra--The Lord is Great, Mighty and Awesome. The use of this phrase is justified only by the fact that it was used both by Moses and inserted in the service by the 'men of the Great Assembly.' Recital of the pharisaic religious service, however, is required by halakah. It is necessary because it inculcates useful and correct opinions in the masses, and aids in maintaining social order. The service teaches the doctrines of dependence upon Deity which results in obedience to authority. The pharisaic service is also good for the masses because it causes them to temporarily give up their concern with material things. It allows them to imaginatively picture Deity in a way that is not harmful to them and will keep them from idolatry and excessive notions of corporeality.

For all of its positive benefits, however, the pharisaic service is qualitatively inferior to philosophic contemplation as a means of salvation. Figurative interpretation of imaginary descriptions of Deity are helpful to the masses, but cannot substitute for philosophic inquiry as a means of apprehending Deity. Such inquiry is necessary for it is only through it that actualization of the intellect by participation in the overflow from the Active Intelligence takes place. It is only through such participation in the intellectual overflow that the individual is freed from the whim of chance and enjoys a truly meaningful existence.

Chapter ID

Maimonides:
Figurative Language
and Symbolic Religious Practice

DEFINITIONS

There are specific concepts which will be used in the discussion of Maimonides' use of figurative language with respect to religious symbolism.

1) Symbol -- A symbol is "something that stands for, represents, or denotes something else (not by exact resemblance, but by vague suggestion...or by conventional relation).[1]

2) Symboland -- A symboland is "...the state or thing pointed to..." by a symbol.[2]

3) Religious symbols and religious symbolic acts -- A religious symbol is an object or ritual of significance in a religious system of belief and practice which denotes more than simple object or the particular act in question. Included in this category are all objects and acts considered "sacred" or "special" by that religious system.

4) Ritual - miṣwah

A ritual can be termed an equivalent for the term rite which is defined as "a formal procedure or act in a religious or other solemn observance."[3] This meaning does not include (nor does it intend to for the purposes of this analysis) sociological or psychological meanings of this word. The word ritual will be discussed wholly within a context of pharisaic Jewish practice that are obligatory in nature.

A miṣwah can be defined as a ritual practice which has been either enjoined or prohibited by the first five books of the Bible (Genesis through Deuteronomy), known as the Torah. According to pharisaic tradition, there are 613 of these miswoth or commandments that are the result of direct, divine communication between God and Moses. In addition to these 613 divinely or-

dained miswoth (known in the pharisaic tradition either as Torah Sh'biktav or miṣwoth d'orai'ta) there are authoritative interpretations of these commandments as well. These additions to the 613 Toraitic miswoth are known collectively as Torah She' Ba'al Peh (oral law) or miṣwoth d'rab-ba-nan (commandments enjoined by the Sages). In pharisaic tradition, observance of all these miswoth or both the written and oral laws is considered equivalent to fulfilling the will of God. For the purpose of this analysis, the miṣwah will be examined as a symbolic religious act. Its symboland will depend upon the context in which it is placed (i.e., pharisaic Jewish practice or Maimonidean religious practice).

It should be noted from the outset that Maimonides' thought stands at variance with the pharisaic point of view. Especially in his parable of the castle, Maimonide claims that only the actualizing of the intellect brings an individual in harmony with God, and that the observance of rituals is totally inefficacious with respect to the fulfilling the so-called "will" of God.[4]

OBSERVANCE OF MISWOTH

Because Maimonides' thought is at such variance with the pharisaic tradition, it behooves the reader to question the purpose of observance of ritual law in the Maimonidean system. The purpose of observing rituals enjoined by halaka is the same as the purpose for praying a prayer service which is philosophically inaccurate according to its plain meaning. That purpose is the orderly functioning of society and the protection of the welfare of the individual. That this orderly functioning is a purpose distinct, inferior, and wholly unrelated to the salvific act of developing the intellect, is made clear in a series of quotes from the third part of the Guide, chapters 26 and 27. Quotation of a few of these statements should be sufficient for our purpose.

> "The law...aims at two things: the welfare of the soul and the welfare of the body...the welfare of the soul consists in the multitude's acquiring correct opinions corresponding to their respective (intellectual) capacity. Therefore, some of them (namely, the correct opinions) are set forth explicitly and some are set forth in parables...As for the welfare of the body, it comes about by the improvement of their (the multitude's ways of living one with another... between the two aims, one is indubitably greater in nobility...the procuring of correct opinions--while the second aim (welfare of the body) is prior in nature and time."[5]

Also:

> "...man has two perfections: a first perfection which is the perfection of the body, and an ultimate perfection, which is the perfection of the soul...to this ultimate perfection there do not belong either actions or moral qualities...it consists only of opinion toward which speculation has led and that investigation has rendered compulsory... the ultimate...(perfection) is the only cause of permanent preservation."[6] (emphasis added)

If the rituals prescribed by halaka are not in fact salvific, perhaps their observance is justifiable because of their supposed basis in divine revelation. Maimonides disagrees with this view. He asserts that there is a reason for each of the commandments as opposed to merely following divine decree.[7]

The laws have rational causes, yet it is not always in the power of the individual to discern them.[8] Since the laws come to either improve the welfare of the mind or the body, it is unwise to spend a great amount of time to determine their rationale (especially of the laws related to physical well-being). The activity of finding the so-called "proper" rationale for all of the particular commandments is an exercise without any benefit, according to Maimonides. He writes:

> "...all those who occupy themselves with finding cause for something of these particulars (of the commandment/sacrifical system) are stricken with a prolonged madness. Those who imagine that a cause may be found for such like things are as far from the truth as those who imagine the generalities (of the laws) are not designed with a view to some real utility."[9]

The ritual laws and even traditional beliefs enjoined by halaka serve a utilitarian purpose; they restrain the masses from acting on ruinous passions and provide for stability in the body politic. It again must be emphasized that for Maimonides, the truth value of such rituals and beliefs is secondary. An incomplete or inaccurate belief may be justifiably promulgated in the name of social welfare. For example, concerning the belief that God is capable of emotions, such as anger, Maimonides writes:

> "...the law also makes a call to adopt certain beliefs, belief in which is necessary for the sale of political welfare. Such for instance, is our belief that He...is violently angry with those who disobey Him and that it is necessary to fear Him...and take care not to disobey."[10]

This rationale is also employed to justify the belief in common ancestry entailing love and responsibility to another. Maimonides writes:

> "...a single tribe that is united through a common ancestor--even if he is remote--because of this, love one another, pity on one another; and the attainment of these things is the greatest purpose of the Law."[11]

The doctrine of social stability justifies the acceptance of a traditional belief system which is simply philosophically untrue. This same doctrine justifies the promulgation of religious ritual laws. These laws do not, as pharisaic tradition would claim, represent the will of Deity. They reprsent those symbolic religious acts which serve to restrain human behavior from the extremes while elevating its concern above crass materialism.[12] Maimonides goes so far as to claim that the laws needed for the social order do not even proceed from the human intellect, much less the Active Intellect. Laws needed for social stability are called "nomos" and originate from the human imaginative faculty, which represents the extreme in distance from the Active Intellect.[13]

The purpose of laws, then, is to regulate behavior within a religious context. All religious rituals are symbolic of the need to restrain passions

and not to over involve one's self with materialism. One might even suggest that Maimonides felt that the system of miswoth--the religious symbolic acts--was a figurative expression for what is commonly known as Aristotle's "Golden Mean": Moderation in all things, and nothing to excess.

APPLICATION OF THE "GOLDEN MEAN" TO PHARISAIC PRACTICE

Maimonides writes that "to the totality of the intentions of the Law there belong gentleness and docility; man should not be hard and rough but responsive, obedient, acquiescent and docile."[14] (emphasis added)

This is not a mere platitude for Maimonides. This attitude is to be inculcated in the human person through law and ceremony, symbolic though they may be. Im Maimonides' opinion, the entire group of laws concerning cleanliness serve no other purpose than to purify the heart from unclean thinking and lustful atttudes.[15] The laws of purity are symbolic of the renouncing (or at least limiting) of sexual intercourse if possible.[16]

"Repentance" is a concept which Maimonide explains in terms of social control and development of "proper" attitude of the individual. Maimonides writes with respect to this:

> "...Repentance also belongs to this class (of opinions) without which the existence of individuals professing a law cannot be well-ordered. For an individual cannot but sin and err...If then the individual believed that this fracture can never be remedied, he would persist in his error and sometimes perhaps disobey even more because...no strategen remains at his disposal. If, however, he believes in repentance, he can correct himself...Thus, the utility of all these things is become manifest."[17] (emphasis added)

SPECIFIC RITUALS AND CEREMONIALS--RATIONALE

Maimonides carries through arguments for the social utility of these symbolic rituals with respect to all major scriptural of pharisaically enjoined practices. These rationalistic explanations, as we have seen with Maimonides' other explanations of Jewish practice, stands at variance with pharisaic

thought. For example, in Scripture and rabbinic thought, circumcision is a sign of a covenant between Deity and the Jew, a covenant sealed in the flesh. It is a perpetual reminder of duties to Deity as elaborated by Scripture and Talmud. But for Maimonides, circumcision has a different meaning. Maimonides' explanation is far more in consonance with principles of Neo-Platonized philosophy than of pharisaic Judaism. Maimonides writes:

> "Circumcision...is to bring about a decrease in sexual intercourse and a weakening of the organ in question, so that this activity be diminished and the organ be in as quiet a state as possible."[18]

Circumcision, therefore, is not so much a sign of the Jewish covenant; it is a religious symbolic act designed to keep man's sexual passion under control and his temperament in a calm and stable state.

The festivals, whose observance is prescribed by Scripture and Talmud, purport to celebrate historical connections between Deity and the Israelites. For Maimonides, the historicity of supernatural revelatory incidents may be suspect, but the utility of the festivals is not. Maimonides writes:

> The festivals are all for rejoicings and pleasurable gatherings, which in most cases are indispensable for man; they are useful in the establishment of friendship, which exist among people living in political societies."[19]

Jewish festival observances, then, are symbolic acts which for Maimonides emphasize the social needs of the human person. Each religious festival, has its particular purpose in keeping the social order while representing a Neo-Platonized philosophical ideal as well.

For example, Yom Kippur becomes a service uniquely equipped to be considered "divine" service. Its emphasis on fasting points out the need to abstrain from corporeal thought with respect to Deity and corporeal pleasure as well.[20]

The festivals of Passover and Tabernacles have their own philosophic

justifications: memorials of the wilderness experience promote group identity while the memory of want and poverty will cause Jews to be generous themselves.[21]

What is crucial in these ceremonies for Maimonides is their perfect harmony with Nature (and natural phenomena), not their supposed Scriptural basis. Maimonides says specifically and repeatedly: "For the Law always tends to assimilate itself to nature, perfecting natural matters in a certain respect."[22] and "If you consider the divine actions--I mean to say the natural actions..."[23] (emphasis added)

For Maimonides, it is imperative that there be no variance between the religious opinion of the Jews (as he interprets it) and Neo-Platonized philosophy. He writes:

> "If you consider this opinion (the Jewish religious one) and the philosophic opinion...you will not find any difference between them regarding any of the particulars of everything that exists...(save concerning the doctrine of Creationism vs. eternality) understand this!"[24]

CONCLUSION

Maimonides' viewpiont is clear to those who will see it. Since philosophy demonstrates its principles to be true, it is irrefutable, except with respect to issues upon which no clear conclusion has been demonstrated. The Jewish religion, for Maimonides, is not a religion of myth and folkways, but a highly sophisticated thought-system which is equivalent in meaning to Neo-Platonized philosophy. In order for this to be the case, the Jewish religion (as interpreted by the Pharisees) must depend on a complex system of figurative language; one which takes into account the base level of the average person's intelligence and his/her reliance upon the imagination for making decisions about how the world operates. For Maimonides, what makes the Jewish religious practice justifiable is its capacity to foster social order and in-

dividual morality while undoing philosophic truth for which the individual might be unprepared. The Jewish religion, as determined by the Pharisees, comprises beliefs and practices which are true only in a figurative sense--a symbolic sense by which its particulars are seen as equivalent to principles of Neo-Platonized philosophy. This symbolic form of philosophic truths is vital because most people are not capable of psychologically accepting the world as it has been demonstrated to be, according to Maimonides. This complex system of symbols, symbolic acts and figurative language maintain the required social order while spurring the intellectually astute to search for the truth behind the symbolic expression to which he/she has been accustomed.

Chapter IIA

Buber:

Figurative Language and Scripture

DEFINITIONS--GENERAL

In discussing the philosophical work of Martin Buber, it is necessary to develop an understanding of his religious vocabulary. He invented not only a new terminology, but a new epistemology as well, based on a particular approach to Bible and to theology. The following is a brief list of terms used often by Buber with short working definitions to aid in our analysis.

1) I-Thou, I-It -- The I-Thou is a relation between living entities which is comprised of an internal "knowing" one of the other. This relation is referred to by Buber as a "dialogue." Knowledge gained via this dialogue is based on the ability of both the entities to not "objectify" the other (i.e., perceive the other entity as an object as opposed to a living entity capable of sustaining relations). It is this characteristic which distinguishes the I-It relation, or the everyday mode of relation between living entities. This relation can occur between differing species of living organisms. The highest form of this relation is between the human person and God, defined here as the ultimate personality in existence. According to Buber, God is part of nature yet transcends it (a panentheism),* maintaining the potential to appear in human history in proportion to the human person's ability to sustain relationships with the divine.

* Although Buber is generally regarded as a theist, this is due to the confusion and ambiguity with which he talks about God. In I-Thou, pp. 134-136, Buber admits of his panentheism which is in direct relation to Spinoza's pantheism. The reader must keep this in mind and not be fooled into thinking that Buber was a theist because of his poetic expression of theology.

2) Grace -- A divine quality bestowed upon the human person; the propensity or openness to relational encounter with the divine which is not the result of human will; according to Buber, both "grace" and "will" are required for the possibility of the I-Thou relation to occur.[1]

3) Will -- the capacity of both the human person and God to have a particular desire and act upon that desire; with respect to God, will represents the metaphysical striving of God for relational encounters with the human person. When used with respect to the human person, will represents both the person's decision-making and decision-executing capacities.

4) Encounter -- the mode of experience in which the actual I-Thou relation occurs; in the situation of encounter, the only experience is that of the other entity. There is no self-consciousness or realization of the self. Once such self-consciousness or realization takes place, the encounter ceases to continue in the realm of I-Thou and becomes an I-It relation instead.

5) Creation -- For Buber, creation is one of three primal religious events (the others being revelation and redemption). Creation is the beginning of the cosmos, which is the beginning of the possibility of I-Thou relation. In Buberian cosmogony, a divine need for relation led to creation of the cosmos and its continued existence as well.

6) Revelation -- This is the experience of God in the Thou encounter. According to Buber, such experience has no objective content whatsoever. All reports of the experience of revelation are merely human instruments of interpreting an experience which

is ineffable. For example, as will be explained below, Scripture does not contain the actual product of revelation, rather someone's memory of the experience of the divine encounter. The experience of revelation is contentless; it is mere experience of the divine in the context of the I-Thou relation.

7) Redemption -- the state in which the human person will renounce the world of objects and turn solely to God in an I-Thou relation; on a larger scale, redemption is achieved when all human persons, as a consequence of their will, give up the I-It mode of experiencing in favor of a continuing relation of dialogue with the divine in a relationship of I-Thou. According to Buber, it was for this ultimate purpose that the world was created.

DEFINITIONS--SCRIPTURE

In addition to his general terminology which he utilizes in explaining his I-Thou philosophy, Buber also uses some technical terminology with respect to Scripture.

1) myth -- "the expression of a world in which the divine and human live next to each other.

2) saga -- "the expression of a world in which they are no longer intertwined and man already begins to sense with a shudder what is over against him."

3) legend -- the expression of a world in which the separation between divine and human is completed; however, "...dialogue and interchange take place from sphere to sphere... "and it is of this experience that the myth tells.[2]

With the completion of the above definitions, we may proceed to examine how Buber perceived Scripture figuratively. Just as Maimonides claimed

that the plain meaning of the Bible was not equivalent to its real or true meaning, so Buber argues as well. Whereas Maimonides argued that Scripture contained a system of figurative language which described scientifically proven principles of Neo-Platonized philosophy, Buber interprets Scripture differently. Buber thinks that Scripture contains systems of figurative language, but the purpose of that system is to provide written illustration of the various divine encounters which took place in Israelite history.

WHAT THE BIBLE IS NOT IN BUBER'S VIEW

We can begin by examining what the Bible is not in Buber's opinion. Scripture is not the literal historical account which it purports to be in its most plain level of meaning. It is an account of revelation of the divine to the human person, yet not in the form in which it is presented by Scripture. Buber writes that if Scripture

> "...is the report of a 'supernatural' event, one that severs the intelligible sequence of happenings we call natural by interposing something unintelligible...man of today in deciding to accept the Bible would have to make a sacrifice of his intellect that would cut his life irreparably in two."[3]

Buber writes elsewhere that the Scripture is not only not true in its simple meaning, but that such a limited notion of revelation would have to be rejected almost categorically.

> "...no one who has ever been close to the secret of the becoming will think that it (the secret of becoming) could contain the belief in a one-time revelation transmitted in its entirety and binding for all time."[4]

To Buber, then, Scripture is not true in its literal sense and does not represent revelation as a unique phenomenon. The alternative, the perception of Scripture as a devotional religious literature, is equally repugnant to Buber. He says that the Bible cannot be studied as work of mere literature, but "as a bsaic document of the Absolute's (God's) impact upon the national

spirit of Israel."[5] If it is literary, then Scripture might be misconceived as fictional in some manner, or merely religious writing. Buber writes passionately against drawing such a conclusion. He says, "If we accept the Old Testament as merely religious writing, as subdivision of the detached spirit, it will fail us, and we must needs fail it."[6] Scripture's worth is diminished irreparably if it does not reflect "actual historical events" which are an integral part of an "authentic tradition."[7]

While rejecting the literal and fictional interpretation of Scripture, Buber also rejects the general metaphoric or symbolic approach as well. He specifically denies that Scripture is either "devotional literature" or "symbolic theology."[8] He goes so far as to claim that such metaphoric interpretation strips Scripture of any significant meaning for the modern thinking person. He writes that if Scripture:

> "...is figurative language used to express a 'spiritual' process; or if biblical history does not recall actual events, but is metaphor and allegory, then it is no longer Biblical, and deserves no better fate than to be surrendered to the approach of modern man, the historical, aesthetic and the like approaches."[9]

Scripture is not literature to be interpreted nor symbolic theology to be translated into supposedly meaningful form for the modern human person. It also is not merely a legislative handbook designed to govern the behavior of people.[10] In Buber's view, those who perceive Scripture in this manner, past or present represent the antithesis of the "real" Biblical message. Sadly, Buber notes, when Scripture was promulgated,

> "...it triumphed not only over other writings; it triumphed over life itself. Henceforth, Scripture was truth; one could only reach God by adhering to it in every detail...-(I)t was viewed as a statute, sum of prescriptions, formalistically circumscribed by the priest, dialectically spun out over by the scholar, and always directed toward the arrow, the rigid, the unfree--thwarting instead of promoting living religiosity."[11]

WHAT THE BIBLE IS: MYTH, MEMORY, DIVINE

Wht, then, is the Bible according to Buber? He makes many poetic and elliptical statements about the nature of the Bible which make it difficult to determine what he actually thgouht. Probably the most direct statement Buber makes in this regard is the following:

> "...the Bible is the encounter between a group of people and the Lord of the World in the course of History, the sequence of events occurring on earth. Either opening or by implication, the stories are reports of encounters."[12]

These "encounters" Buber alludes to are I-Thou encounters between the Israltie people and God. Since the actual encounters between Deity and the human person are comprised of pure experience, without any content at all, a form must be used to preserve the memory of the encounter and convey what that encounter meant to that person or people. According to Buber, the form the Bible uses to convey this memory of divine encounter is the myth. By use of this form, Buber shows his determination to accept the historicity of Biblical events while refusing to be limited by a narrow understanding of the scope and meaning of those events. As he explains, "Real myth is the expression, not an imaginative state of mind or of mere feeling, but of a meeting of two realities." (God and the human person)[13] Elsewhere, Buber elaborates upon this thought, saying, "...we must designate as myth every tale of a corporeally real event that is perceived and presented as a divine, an absolute event."[14]

The Bible is, therefore, a record of actual historical encounters with God presented in the form of myth. Scripture is presented mythically because the ancient Israelites had no other form in which to express their experience of divine encounter. The myth cannot bederogated or berated as a form of valid historical experience. This is because, according to Buber, true myths are self-validating. As he writes, "Jewish myth...replaces empirical causality with a methaphysical one, with a causal relationship between experienced events

and the divine being."[15] The Bible, consequently, is freed from philosophical or critical forms of evaluation. Its truth is not empirically verifiable but metaphysically true nonetheless. As such, Buber is highly critical of those who would critique the Bible's historicity or unique status as a document which in fact contains traces of the human-divine dialogue. Buber writes:

> "It is fundamental to Jewish religiosity, and central to Jewish monotheism--which is so widely misunderstood and so cruelly rationalized--to view all things as utterances of God and all events as manifestations of the absolute...to the Jew corporeal reality is a revelation of the divine spirit and will. Consequently, all myth is...for the Jew...a true account of God's manifestation on Earth. The Jew of antiquity cannot tell a story in any other way then mythically, for to him an event is only worth telling when it has been grasped in its divine significance. All story-telling books of the Bible have but one subject matter: the account of YHWH's encounters with His people. Even later, when...(God) passed into...the non-corporeal realm, the continuity of mythic story-telling is not broken; YHWH Himself can no longer be perceived, but all His manifestations in nature and in history can be so perceived."[16]

To repeat, the expression of an event in mythic form does not invalidate the event's historicity or significance as a memory of divine encounter. Buber argues that Plato understood that the truth contained in these events "can only be communicated in the form of myths."[17]

Buber argues that, far from invalidating its message, the mythic status of Biblical events actually enhances the message they contain and their universal meaning. He explains that:

> "...countless concrete meetings of I and Thou have attained symbolic expression in relatively abstract form. It is just this in fact which gives these myths their universality and profundity. Because these myths are products of actual human experience, they tell us something of the structure of human reality which nothing else can tell us."[18]

The myths of the Bible are compelling for two reasons. First, they are reflections of actual historical human experience.[19] Secondly, they are

reflections of divine encounters as opposed to other, more ordinary phenomena. According to Buber, the form of the myth takes the memory of the experience of encounter and gives it a shape that can be expressed to others. The subjective influence of memory does not diminish the myth's believability for Buber. In fact, memory is that which takes away what is valuable from the encounter, what is forgotten may as well be forgotten. In support of this notion, Buber writes:

> "It is not fantasy which is active here, but memory, that believing memory of the souls and generations of early times which works unarbitrarily out of the impulse of an extraordinary event. Even the myth which seems most fantastic of all is creation around the kernel of the organically shaping memory...History cannot be dissevered from the historical wonder; but the experience which has been transmitted to us, the experience of event as wonder, is itself great history and must be understood out of the element of history."[20] (emphasis added)

Buber realizes that this theory that claims every Biblical myth contains an essential truth at its core is not logically defensible. His argument then weighs from that of actuality of human experience to the uniqueness of experience which cannot, in his opinion, admit of any other explanation except God. Buber writes that:

> "What is preserved for us here is to be regarded not as the 'historization' of a myth or a cult drama nor is it to be explained as the transposition of something originally beyond time into historical time; a great history-faith does not come into the world through the interpretation of the extra-historical as historical, but by receiving an occurrence experienced as a 'wonder,' that is, as an event which cannot be grasped except as an act of God."[21] (emphasis added)

BUBER'S NATURALISM

Earlier, we alluded in passing to Buber's belief that the corporeal nature of events, their susceptibility to human sense perception, is what makes them divine. Because of this belief, Buber can extol the anthropomorphic mode in which the Bible is written. To him, it is this anthropomorphic quality of

the Hebrew Bible which preserves, "...the concrete quality of the encounter with the divine. In the encounter 'we are confronted by something compellingly anthropomorphic, something demanding reciprocity, a primary Thou.'"[22]

Buber offers no compelling evidence for this viewpoint. It is simply his understanding of the Biblical view and what is essentially Jewish about it. He states this view concerning corporeality specifically: "...to the Jew corporeal reality is a revelation of the divine spirit and will."[23] In his later writing, he expanded upon this concept saying:

> "Everything is, being and becoming, nature and history, is essentially a divine pronouncement, an infinite context of signs meant to be perceived and understood by perceiving and understanding creatures."[24]

(CONTINUE ON NEXT PAGE)

Because of this, Buber finds no difference between natural events and so-called miracles. The fact of phenomena existing to be perceived is evidence of God's wanting a relation. The human's ability or proclivity toward perceiving and appreciating such phenomena is evidence that such relation exists.[25]

SCRIPTURE--FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE FOR THE I-THOU

Buber's naturalism helps augment our appreciation of his view that Scripture is a figurative account of divine-human I-Thou encounters, and not true according to its plain meaning. This point is often obscured (as is Buber's naturalism) by his copious use of the terms "God," and "divine". Yet if, as Buber says, all events are divine if perceived in an encounter mode, we can see that the supernatural relationship posited by pharisaic Judaism as the basis for Scripture holds no meaning for Buber. He makes this clear when he comments on what exactly the Bible should be taken to be. He writes:

> "It (the Bible) could be the verbal trace of a natural event, i.e., of an event that took place in the world of senses common to all men and fitted into connections that the senses can perceive. But the assemblage...experienced its revelation vouch safed to them by God, and preserved it as such in the memory of the generations, an enthusiastic, spontaneously formative memory. Experience undergone in this way is not self-delusion...it is what they see, what they recognize and perceive with their reason, for natural events are carriers of revelation, and revelation occurs when he who witnesses the event and sustains it experiences revelation."[26] (emphasis added)

For Buber, the Bible is merely one glorious example of human persons choosing to take part in encounters with the events of nature and of history. The pharisaic and Scriptural notion that Mt. Sinai corresponds to the major event revelation of divinity in history is anathema to Buber. He specifically argues that Mt. Sinai was a revelation, just as other events of encounter represent revelation in their own right. Buber writes:

> "Creation is the origin, redemption the goal. But revelation is not a fixed, dated point between the two. The revelation at Sinai is not this midpoint itself, but

> the perceiving of it, and such perception is possible at any time. That is why a psalm or a prophecy is no less Torah, i.e., instruction, then the story of the Exodus from Egypt. This history of this people...points to the history of all mankind, but the secret dialogue expressed in the psalms and prophecies points to my own secret."[27] (emphasis added)

Buber's own "secret" here is that of encountering any and all natural and historical phenomena from the standpoint of the I-Thou. It should be noted that Buber has offered elements of three separate theologies, pantheism, panentheism, and theism in his explanations of the function and language of Scripture. This confusion makes difficult the task of clear exposition of his thought. Buber's theology, however, will be discussed in the next part of our analysis.

The revelation at Mt. Sinai is not the sole illustration of revelation in history. Yet, for Buber it is the most pointed and powerful example of divine-human encounter ever recorded. The results of that encounter, the words of the Decalogue, however, pale in importance when compared to the experience which took place at Mt. Sinai. Buber writes:

> "The soul of the Decalogue...is to be found in the word 'Thou.' Here nothing is stated or confused; but orders are given to the one addressed, to the listener. In distinction to all catechisms...everything here has reference to that specific hour in which words were spoken and heard. It is possible that only the man who wrote down the words had once had the experience of feeling himself addressed; possibly he transmitted that which he heard to his people not orally, taking 'I' of his own mouth as though it were his own, but only in written form, preserving the necessary distance. At all times, in any case, only those persons really grasped the Decalogue who literally felt it as having been addressed to themselves; only those...who experienced that state of being addressed as an address to themselves. Thanks to the 'thou,' the Decalogue means the preservation of the divine voice."[28] (emphasis added)

The Bible, especially the Decalogue, represents the height of I-Thou communication between the human and the divine, not its only occurrence. To ignore it or to deprecate its significance is to be unworthy of the Bible, to

be unworthy of the divine encounter. In Buber's view, the worthy individual is one who allows him or herself to accept the encounter itself and the consequences of that encounter. Buber explains:

> "Only that man who wills to do and hear what the mouth of the Unconditioned (God) commands him is worthy of the Bible. Only that man is a Hebrew man who lets himself be addressed by the voice that speaks to him in the Hebrew Bible and who responds to it with his life."[29]

The person who responds to the voice is the person most true to the world of Scripture.[30] For Buber, that is the link between the people in Biblical times and the modern person. If the Bible is merely the recollection of ancient historical events in the life of a people it is not truly significant for our time. The fact of response to divine encounter as recorded in Scripture points the way for us to do the same. The entire purpose of the Bible is to point out the possibility and reality of the link between divine and human spirit.[31]

This view of Scripture as being a figurative expression of the I-Thou relation is neither philosophic nor scientific. It is blatantly eisegetical. It is also, in several respects, the antithesis of what Maimonides propounded in his view of Scripture. Buber emphasizes that Scripture is an illustration of "...the terrible...and merciful fact of the immediacy betwen God and ourselves."[32] Buber stresses that the basis of reality resides in corporeality. Maimonides would reject these views categorically as lacking any compelling evidence whatsoever.

Buber, however, constructs his own reality and demands that others confront it. Since he has experienced the divine encounter of which he speaks, he assumes its objective reality. Yet lack of logical force is not a problem for Buber. The I-Thou, for him at least, is ontal in nature, it is a fact of being. This aspect of Buber's view of the world versus the Bible is

brought out by one of the expositors of his thought, Grete Schaeder. She writes:

> "The language in which Buber...expressed the experience of 'the Eternal Thou' as a world view is unsystematic and unphilosophic from a technical point of view, but highly appropriate for his conception of the Bible... The 'ontic' character of the I-Thou relation, which he emphasized from the very beginning, became for him a certainty through his meeting with the 'Eternal Thou'...The revelation of the voice Buber heard is the same as that attested to in the Bible, the great document of the dialogue between heaven and earth."[33] (emphasis added)

There is a problem, however, in that Buber argues for philosophic validity fo his view on the basis of his subjective experience. Although his argument for Scripture as a record of actual I-Thou encounters is seemingly based more on aesthetics and a certain poetic power, Buber tries to clothe his view in the garb of objective reason. Buber claims that:

> "...a faithful and unbiased reader of Scripture must endorse the view he has learned from it: what happened once (i.e., revelation) happens now and always, and the fact of its happening to us is a guarantee of its having happened. The Bible has, in the form of a glorified remembrance, given vivid, decisive expression to an ever recurrent happening."[34]

Logical or not, after establishing the reality of the I-Thou in his own life, Buber found in Scripture a more or less ideal vehicle of expression of this encounter. He, therefore, interpreted Scripture to be an deposition of divine-human I-Thou relationships which form the basis of the Jewish religion. On the basis of this assumption, Buber went on to espouse the view that Scripture is merely a part of the history of encounter, a history in which each person can participate. All of history becomes, in effect, "holy history."[35] We participate in that history to the extent that we perceive that we engage in this dialogic process. Buber claims:

> "If history is a dialogue between Deity and mankind, we can understand its meaning only when we are the ones addressed, and only to the degree to which we render ourselves recept-

ive."[36]

CONCLUSION

Scripture, then is a record of the historical memory of divine encounters. The form of expression in Scripture is mythical, yet the myth reflects actual divine-human events according to Buber. The revelatory encounters described in Scripture are examples of the past and paradigms for the modern person. Participation in divine-human I-Thou relationship is open to all who avail themselves of the constant flow of revelatory events which are manifested in the world.

Chapter IIB

Buber:

Figurative Language and God

GOD AS ETERNAL THOU--SYMBOL OF RELATION

Participation in encounters with the divine is a vital aspect of Buber religious thought. What, however, does Buber mean when using terms such as "God" and "divine" in his philosophy? It is obvious that he is not referring to the supernatural, miswah--commanding God of the Pharisees or the "outermost sphere" in Maimonidean thought. Our analysis proceeds with the problem of defining Buber's meaning for the word God and his application of that usage.

Buber primarily explains god as the "Eternal Thou" which is equivalent to what he calls the "Unconditioned." Therefore, God is 1) eternal, 2) always a Thou and 3) unbound by conditions which restrict human persons. On the existence of this God, Buber writes "...above man's conditionality there stands an Unconditioned whose desire is to form a living community with him and whose will he may realize in the world of men."[1]

This view of God does not require logical proof, according to Buber--his God simply exists, standing over against the human person, wishing for relation. Buber writes:

> "God cannot be inferred in anything...in nature...or in history...or in the subject as the self that is thought in it. God is the Being that is directly, most nearly and lastingly over against us, that may properly only be addressed, not expressed."[2]

God as the Eternal Thou is the source of all of the "Thou-ness" in the universe. So that, if two entities relate to each other in an I-Thou mode, the entities also experience the Eternal Thou of which they are a part. Buber explains that, "(E)very particular Thou is a glimpse through to the Eternal Thou; by means of every particular Thou the primary word addresses the Eternal Thou."[3]

We as human persons have no conclusively verified knowledge that God is the Eternal Thou, however. Buber admits that it is not possible to direct-

ly contemplate God.[4] Relation is possible, contemplation is not. The Eternal Thou, consequently is a symbol, a figurative expression for the possibility of relationship with the divine. Buber writes:

"...the Eternal Thou is not a symbol of God but of our relation to God. What is more, no real symbol of God is possible, for we do not know Him as He is in Himself."[6]

God cannot be known, only experienced. Even the experience of an I-Thou relation with God defies demonstration. For this reason, Buber claims that it is an act of daring and witnessing to participate in such a relation.

Through imagery and symbol, the human person can at least know of God. Buber considers authentic symbols of the divine to be just as revelatory in nature as is the encounter with the Eternal Thou.[7] Buber explains that God is unchanging, what changes is "...theophany--the manifestation of the divine in man's symbol-creating mind: until no symbol is adequate any longer and none is needed."[8]

Maurice Friedman, the primary expositor of Buber's thought, explains that this notion of symbolic representation of divine encounter is different than the ordinary explanation for religious symbols. He writes:

> "For Buber, the meaning of the symbol is found not in its universality but in the fact that it points to a concrete event which witnesses, just as it is, in all its concreteness, transitoriness, and uniqueness, to the relation with the Absolute."[9] (emphasis added)

As the symbolic Eternal Thou, God cannot be an It. People and entities may suffer objectification, but God is always a Thou. People may treat Deity as if it is an It, but that does not change the divine nature. Buber explains in I and Thou:

> "By its very nature the Eternal You (Thou) cannot become an It, because by its very nature it cannot be placed within measure and limit...and yet we reduce the Eternal You (Thou) ever again into an It, to something, turning God

into a thing, in accordance with our nature."[10]

We can speak of God as an It, however, this description is never accurate. It is at best a metaphor and at worst shows total ignorance of God. God as It can only be talked about as a theoretical counter point to the ever-present everlasting Eternal Thou. Buber writes:

> "Whether one speaks of God as He or It, this is never more than allegory. But when we say You (Thou) to him (God), the unbroken truth of the world has been made word by mortal sense."[11] (emphasis added)

Buber defends the notion of God as the Eternal Thou as actual, in contradistinction to being objective or subjective. He claims that any divine symbolic imagery without the actuality of divine-human encounters is "illusion and self-deception."[12] It is also vital in his opinion, not to fall into the trap of distinguishing the encounter as subjective or objective. Both views, according to him, are incomplete and misleading. He writes:

"Subjectivism is psychologization while objectivism is verification of God; one, a false fixation, the other a false liberation; both departures from the way of actuality; both attempts to find substitutes for it."[13]

NATURE OF THE "ETERNAL THOU"

To this point, Buber has referred to God simply as the "Unconditioned" or the "Eternal Thou." Except for relational ability, no essential attribute of Buber's God has been offered. Buber posits that God has an infinite number of attributes, yet the human person is limited in ability to grasp them. He concedes Baruch Spinoza's argument of two essential attributes of God (thought and extension), and adds another. This third knowable attribute is God's status as a "person." This is a term which we will examine here in order to determine the consequences it holds for Buber's God. Buber writes:

"...I should have to say that of God's infinitely many at-

> tributes, we human beings know not two, as Spinoza thought, but three: in addition to spiritlikeness, the source of what we call spirit-and naturalikeness, exemplified by what we know as nature, also thirdly, the attribute of personlikeness...only this third attribute, personlikeness, could then be said to be known directly in its quality as an attribute."[14]

God, therefore, is a person. As we have seen, it is this characteristic of "personlikeness" that make relation with the Eternal Thou possible and desirable, in contradistinction to the utterly transcendent God of Maimonides. This attribute, however, creates unsermountable logical difficulties for Buber's entire philosophy. This notion is confusing even for Buber's disciple, Friedman, who writes:

> "...particularly to the Whiteheadian metaphysician it cannot be comprehensible that Buber speaks of God as an Absolute Person, for a person is in relation and therefore is limited and in that sense relative."[15] (emphasis added)

Buber is aware of the problem. He knows that the concept of personhood for God is a contradiction, yet he cannot back off from it, lest his entire religious philosophy lapse into meaninglessness. He writes of the problem at the very end of I and Thou, explaining:

> "A person...is by definition an independent individual and yet also relativized by other independent individuals; and this, of course, could not be said about God. This contradiction is met by the paradoxical designation of God as the absolute person...one that cannot be relativized. It is as the absolute person that God enters into the direct relationship with us. The contradiction must give way to higher insight."[16] (emphasis added)

It is as if Buber knows that what he is saying is impossible and logically indefensible, yet he is compelled to say it anyway. Buber hints at an escape from this dilemma, however. He hints that the problem is one of language and that the appellations upon which he relies on so heavily are simply figurative expressions. Two statements by Buber display his absolute defense of the concept of God's personhood, his ambivalence about the logical contra-

diction involved, and his notion that the problem is linguistic in nature. In the Eclipse of God, Buber writes:

> "It is indeed legitimate to speak of the person of God within the religious relation and in its language; but in doing so, we are making no essential statement about the absolute which reduces it to the personal. We are rather saying that it enters into the relationship as Absolute Person we call God. One may understand the personality of God as this act--it is, indeed even permissible for the believer to believe that God became a person for love of him, because in our human mode of existence the only reciprocal relation that exists is a personal one."[12] (emphasis added)

Also, at the end of I and Thou, Buber argues for the necessity to posit God's personhood in spite of what we can claim logically about an unlimited Deity. Buber writes:

> "The designation of God as a person is indispensable for everyone who like myself means by "God" not a "principle" and like myself means by "God" not an idea...but who rather means by God...Him who...enters into a direct relation with us men in creative, revealing and redeeming acts, and thus makes it possible for us to have a direct relation with Him...(The concept of personal being is indeed incapable of declaring what God's essential being is, but it is both permitted and necessary to say that God is also a person.)"[18] (emphasis added)

Buber intimates that we claim personhood for God not because it is necessarily true or demonstrable in any way, but that it is a linguistic method by which we express our emotional need to relate to God as a person. In both of the above citations, Buber admits that personhood cannot be part of God's essential being. It is a human need, however, to perceive God in this way and, therefore, permissible to use linguistic constructions that fill this need. Buber does not specifically label his divine epithets "Eternal Thou," "Absolute Person," "The Unconditioned" as figurative language. If, however, Buber reluctantly admits that this claim of personhood for God is not defensible as being part of God's essential being, then not only his descriptions, but the very attribute of personhood itself, all become figurative expressions

which correspond to the need of the human person to relate to that which is beyond him or herself.

This human need for relationship to a divine person is what Buber is expressing when he claims that, "...a God who is not a living personality is an idol...if the idea of God is only that (an idea), then it is totally impossible to "believe" in God legitimately; that is...to stand in a personal relationship with Him."[19]

Buber allows what Maimonides condemned as idolatry--the human positing of divine attributes especially those which speak of relation to the human person. Persons are permitted to express their "belief" in this kind of Deity with no hint of demonstration. This is the very belief which Maimonides would dismiss as mere fantasy, the uncontrolled outpouring of the imagination.

BELIEF VIA DELUSION IN BUBER'S THOUGHT

Whereas Maimonides considered thought indispensble for proper belief, for Buber almost the opposite is the case. He repeatedly and insistently criticizes the "God of philosophy" (without bothering to specify which theological entity of which philosopher is invalid).[20] Since the I-Thou encounter is solely one of experience, all efforts to explain, categorize or express the divine partner of the encounter are failures and necessarily diminish the experience undergone.[21]

Buber's theology takes on an almost delusional nature due to this freedom from coherence or logical demonstration. He states specifically that:

> "It is not necessary to know something about God in order to believe in Him: many true beleivers know how to talk to God but not about Him. If one dares to go to meet Him, to call Him, reality is present."[22] (emphasis added)

This position is an abandonment to total subjectivity an all of the dangers therein. In Buber's system, the individual is allowed full freedom to believe in God conceived of and believed in out of a state of total delusion.

Belief conquers objective reality for Buber. More importantly, belief makes for the only reality which to him is meaningful and worthy of living. He writes in I and Thou:

> "...whoever pronounces the word God and really means you (Thou), addresses, no matter what his delusion (!), the true you (Thou) of his life that cannot be restricted by any other, and to whom he stands in a relationship that includes all others."[23]

Faith, attested to by experience of encounter with the Eternal Thou is self-justifying and qualitatively superior to empirically verified knowledge, in Buber's view. This is not faith supported by argument or demonstrated by objective evidence. It is faith based on the totally subjective experience of the believer, which admits of no objective reality testing. Buber goes so far as to claim this type of faith to be that type of faith to which all religion subscribes. He writes in Eclipse of God:

> "...it (religion) understands faith as the entrance into this reciprocity, as binding oneself in relationship with an undemonstrable and unpersonable, yet even so, in relationship, knowable Being from which all meaning comes."[24]

A problem arises for Buber at this juncture. He claims that by faith, by belief, by choosing to be in relationship with the Eternal Thou, encounter with God will be effected. Buber rhapsodizes the act of the free person who "chooses" God in direct proportion to his scorn for the one who does not. He writes:

> "God is an unknown Being beyond this world only for the indolent, the decisionless, the lethargic...for the one who chooses, who decides, who is aflame with his goal, who is unconditioned, God is the closest, the most familiar Being that man, through his action, realizes ever anew, experiencing thereby the mystery of mysteries. Whether God is "transcendent" or "immanent" does not depend on Him, it depends on man."[25]

Yet, according to Buber, the attainment of the I-Thou relationship is not dependent on human will alone. His requirement that will and grace must

be joined takes the possibility of encounter out of the hands of individual believers.[26] One can do all of the things that Buber propounds--choose, decide, risk, believe or dare--and yet the encounter might not be achieved. Buber writes specifically that God cannot be summoned, or conjured up as it were.[27] He writes that. "(T)he You (Thou) encounters me by grace--it cannot be found by seeking."[28]

Consequently, there is a contradiction in Buber's theological thought. One must "risk" being open to encounters with the Divine, but one may not achieve them. The human will alone is insufficient to effect the relationship. Yet, Buber hints that even this logical problem can be sidestepped.

BELIEVING IS REALITY

This dilemma can be avoided by the very subjectivity which validates and substantiates belief in the first place. In Buber's system of thought, only the individual can recognize whether or not she/he has participated in an "I-Thou" relationship with Deity. This knowledge is a personal one, and not subject to external critique. Therefore, if an individual believes that she/he has achieved relation with the Eternal Thou, that belief is valid, according to Buber's system of thought.

Consequently, with the divine as achievable, even without "grace," so long as one truly believes that the relation exists. This seems highly questionable, yet is irrefutable from the view of the subjectivism that Buber has laid out. If one believes the divine encounter has been achieved, there is no responsible manner in which this claim can be disputed.

There are, however, two conditions set by Buber that might impair one's ability to achieve the divine encounter. The first of these is to be the human tendency to objectify experience via intellectual reflection. The

other is the existentially quixotic notion that God is not speaking any longer; or at least God is more guarded and less accessible to the human person in the second half of the 20th century than previously was the case.

In discussing the first condition, Buber describes the human inability to sustain the divine encounter as pure experience without recourse to thinking. The act of intellection, trying to put in cognitive order the experience of encounter cause the encounter to cease, Buber writes:

> "Man cannot gain constancy of relation through directly concerning himself with God; for 'reflexion,' bending back towards God, makes Him into an object."[29]

Since God cannot be an object, since the Eternal Thou can never be an It, one who reflects upon God as an object is no longer reflecting upon God, but merely upon his or her own memory or thought process.

In addition, Buber introduced the notion of divine silence in his book, Eclipse of God. In it, he posits that the human person can become so depersonalized and unspiritual, the relation with God as the Eternal Thou become impossible. He viewed this problem very seriously and not as merely a temporary disruption in divine-human communication. He considered this divine silence to be an objective phenomena affecting the entire world, and not as a problem of human psychological reaction to secularism, modernism and the like. In the words of one commentator, "The silence of God is real and indicates that something has taken place nor or not 'merely in human subjectivity but in Being itself.'"[30]

GOD'S "NEED"

Such silence can only be temporary in nature, Buber informs us, because the very purpose of creation was to give God creatures with which it could relate. This lack in the godhead, fillable only by the human person, is spelled out by Buber in I and Thou.

> "...that you need God more than anything, you know at all times in your heart. But don't you know also that God needs you--in the fullness of His eternity, you? How would man exist if God did not need him, and how would you exist? You need God in order to be, and God needs you--for that which is the meaning of your life. Teachings and poems try to say more...but the emergence of the living God we know unswervingly in our hearts."[31]

CONTRADICTIONS

This introduces more logical inconsistency in Buber's thought. He does not posit a limited God concept, yet this God suffers from lack of human encounter. This God is both transcendent and immanent, beyond human experience as He is in Himself and yet near enough to the human person to admit the closest of relations. On one hand, Buber says, "The God in whom we believe, to whom we are pledged, does not unite with human substance on earth."[32] Yet he also writes, "He (God) is also the mystery of the self-evident, nearer to me than my I."[33] There also remains the problem of reconciling Buber's panentheism with his ostensible theism.[34]

Such a plethora of logical contradictions might cause one to dismiss Buber's thought entirely, at least as far as philosophical discourse is concerned. But a closer look at Buber indicates that his primary interest is in aiding the human person to reach beyond the self in the search for primary meaning in existence. He believes that, even riddled within consistencies, the theory of the I-Thou relation is one that is salvific (soteric) in that it gives life and religion meaning and value. The God concept may change over years and cultures but the fact and need of the human person to relate is constant. Buber writes:

> "(This)...does not mean that a given concept of God... necessarily impairs the concrete religious relationship. Everything depends on the extent to which this concept of God can do justice to the reality it denotes, do justice to it as a reality. The more abstract the concept, the more does it need to be balanced by the evidence of living experience... The further removed a concept seems from an-

> thropomorphism, the more it must be organically completed by an expression of that immediacy and, as it were, bodily nearness which overwhelm man in his encounters with the divine."[35] (emphasis added)

It is the function of religion to provide this possibility of relation, in Buber's view. The divine-human encounter is the sine qua non, not the promulgation of a coherent religious system of thought. For Buber, contradictions about the nature of Deity are less crucial than the fact of experiencing the relationship and deriving the salvific benefits therefrom. He points to this logical contradiction specifically when he writes:

> "We mean by the religious...the relation of the human person to the Absolute, when and insofar as the person enters and remains in this relation as a whole being. This presupposes the existence of a Being who, though in Himself unlimited and unconditional, lets other beings, limited and conditional indeed, exist outside Himself. He even allows them to enter into a relation with Him such as seemingly can only exist between limited and conditional beings."[36] (emphasis added)

Buber sees the contradiction, yet he makes it subservient to the human need for relation. It is not just the human need to relate Buber is concerned with; meaningful existence is attained by participation in I-Thou encounters, especially those which take place with the Eternal Thou. A. Reines, in his analysis of Buber's theology, make this point:

> "For Buber, soteria (ultimately meaningful existence) was obtained through I-Thou encounters, which could take place with objects, such as trees or persons. For inasmuch as all things are in the godhead, every authentic meeting with another being brings one into special relationship with God or the Eternal Thou... Such encounters also take place directly with the Eternal Thou."[37]

CONCLUSION

At a simple level of understanding Buber believes that God exists and is a person with both will and desire. God's desire is to relate with the human person in a divine-human encounter. This is the purpose of the creation of the human person and the world. God is described by Buber as the Absolute,

the Unconditioned, and the Eternal Thou.

The simple understanding of God, as an Eternal Thou, however, is figurative for Buber. Buber the philosopher knows that for all of the poetry and attractiveness of this god concept, relational ability and personality cannot logically be posited as essential divine attributes (characteristics of God as He is in Himself). Buber writes that, "Although we on earth never behold God without the world, but only the world in God, by beholding we externally form God's form.[38] Yet Buber the existentialist needs the concept of the Eternal Thou sufficiently to ignore the many significant contradictions in herent in this theology. For him the actuality of the I-Thou relation (which he came to believe in objectively, on the basis of his personal experience) overwhelms and sweeps away the logical inconsistencies of his thought.

Buber's God wants to encounter the human person. It takes, however, an act of decision on the part of the human person to effect this encounter.[39] The encounter is one of pure experience and cannot be translated into organized thought or words. Speaking of the encounter between the human person and the Eternal Thou is necessarily inaccurate and misleading. As Buber writes:

> "...the question is not about God, but only about of relation to Him. And yet in order to be able to answer, I have to speak about him. For our relation to Him is as supra-contradictory as it is because he is as supra-contradictory as he is."[40] (emphasis added)

This view of God is illogical, inconsistent, and wholly subjective. Buber, however, may simply not have had the linguistic tools to clearly state his message. Perhaps there is no linguistic means for Buber to give his readers the benefits of his insight. For this reason, Buber's God will be accessible only to those who feel they attain the encounters that he did. For others, Buber's God will remain an elusive wisp of air, unrecognizable to

those who do not understand his poetry, unreachable to those who cannot accept such a confused figurative language for Deity.

Chapter IIC

Buber:

Figurative Language and Religious Services

PROBLEM WITH A PRE-SET LITURGY

It would be plausible to surmise that Buber would endorse the idea of participation by the human person in the act of religious worship. As stated above, Maimonides perceived the pharisaic religious service to serve two functions: social control and the teaching of figurative non-philosophic notions about Deity which are not harmful to the masses. Thus, the worship service serves as a weak substitute for the act of philosophic contemplation which is soteric, according to Maimonides. For Maimonides, the piety which is expressed by the individual in the pharisaic religious service in and of itself is no virtue at all. On the basis of what we have already encountered with respect to Buber, we might expect encouragement of the type of emotional piety and feeling that the pharisaic service often seems to engender among Orthodox Jews. This, however, is not the case.

Buber wrote very little about organized worship except to condemn it. Typical of his thought in this vein, Buber writes in his work, Hasidism, that, "(N)o traditional formulae and rhythms of any kind...are of any use to the man of sacramental existence."[1]

Jakob J. Petuchowski, world-renowned specialist in the field of Jewish liturgy has made the following points concerning Buber and the pharisaic religious service.

1) Buber did not write specifically about liturgy.
2) He consciously dissociated himself from religious services.
3) Although friendly with Rabbi Kurt Wilhelm of Synagogue 'Emet W^{e} 'emunah in Jerusalem, he would not attend services there during the time he resided in Jerusalem.
4) He would speak at the synagogue, but refused to enter it until the formal worship service had concluded.[2]

Buber repeatedly denounces the form and content of the organized worship service (not the pharisaic service alone) as being representative of the world of the "It" as opposed to the "Thou." He mentions in several different places how cult and rite actually come to impede attainment of the I-Thou relation. The objectification of God through liturgical formulation leads away from the Eternal Thou. Buber writes:

> "A liturgical or a sacramental occurrence, with its tech-tonic place...can represent and thus make a home for that There (the Eternal Thou); when it displaces it, it destructs it."[3]

Traditional rites and formulae are "external ties" to the Eternal Thou which are poor substitutes for the achievement of a true I-Thou relation.[4] For Buber, liturgical rites are not only external, they border on being obstacles to the true experience of relation. They smack of conjuring and of magic. Buber explains this process in I and Thou:

> "...God becomes a cult object. The cult, too, originally supplements the acts of relation, by fitting the living prayer, the immediate Thou-saying into a spatial context of great plastic power and connecting it with the life of the senses. And the cult, too, gradually becomes a substitute, as personal prayer is no longer supported but rather pushed aside by communal prayer; and as the essential deed (relation with the Eternal Thou) simply does not permit any rules; it is supplanted by devotions that follow rules."[5]

Buber believes that religious services in their original forms are concrete manifestations of actual I-Thou encounters. These forms gain acceptance because of their initial vibrancy and spontaneity. Yet these forms decay and degenerate as people come to use them as substitutes for seeking out their own divine-human encounters with the Eternal Thou. These decayed and degenerated forms then become obstacles to the true seeker of God, who has no relation to the encounter which sparked the inception of those liturgical forms. This process can be compared to the manufacture of a radioactive drug which is good when first processed but has a very short half-life. It decays rapidly

and eventually becomes poisonous. Friedman explains how Buber viewed this process and its implication for the individual:

> "The form that is created as a result of this theophany is a fusion of Thou and It. God remains near this form so long as belief and cult are united through true prayer. With the degeneration of prayer, the power to enter into relation is buried under increasing objectification, and '...it becomes increasingly difficult...to say Thou with the whole individual being.' In order to be able to say it, man must finally come out of the false security of community into the final solitude of the venture of the infinite."[6]

For Buber, the form of the rite or prayer is incidental; the attitude of the person is what is crucial.[7] Buber says specifically that. "(T)he rite is a work of man and it is accepted or rejected by God, according to the feelings of the man performing it."[8]

Buber believes that all liturgical formation and communal worship are ultimately injurious to the life of the individual seeking relation to the Eternal Thou. Any form, in order to have relational efficacy in Buber's view, must have the whole-hearted, undivided and almost unconscious commitment of the individual. If the individual does not perceive the liturgical form in this manner, the form impedes his or her quest to achieve a bona fide relation to the Eternal Thou. Buber explains:

> "...the sacrament...misleads the faithful into feeling secure in mere "objective" consummation without any personal participation...and to evade the fact that they themselves in the whole of their being are laid hold of and claimed by the sacrament, it loses in depth, in three-dimensionality..."[9] (emphasis added)

Buber, therefore, finds the communal religious service per se, (be it pharisaic of any other type) to be only partially beneficial to the believer seeking a relation with the Eternal Thou. In its worst utilization, the communal religious service is totally unhelpful to the individual, leading away from genuine encounter with the Eternal Thou and flirting with incorrect,

magical thinking about God.

BUBER AND PRAYER

For Buber, the communal religious service in most cases leads away from the Eternal Thou. The service is not genuinely metaphoric in its language for God as the Eternal Thou. The service has a set purpose and is not designed for the genuine encountering of God. It is merely the linguistic remnant of an earlier encounter with the Eternal Thou. As explained earlier, all linguistic expressions of the I-Thou encounter are necessarily inaccurate. Such expressions may be symbolic of the fact that an encounter has taken place but they cannot either reflect either the content of the previous encounter or act as a catalyst for a future encounter. Buber writes that:

> "Every religious utterance is a vain attempt to do justice to the meaning which has been attained. All religious expression is only an intimation of its attainment."[10] (emphasis added)

Buber does, however, apparently believe in the power of individual prayer. The term "prayer" has several meanings for Buber. These figurative meanings include speech with God, union with God and particular states of conscious being. Friedman attempts to explain prayer in Buberian terms as follows:

> "Prayer...is not spiritually floating above concrete reality, but lived concreteness. Prayer is the very essence of immediacy between man and God, and praying is, above all words the action of turning directly to God. In the prayer... 'he (the individual) ultimately asks for the manifestation of the divine Presence, for this Presence's becoming dialogically perceivable.' The presupposition of a genuine state of prayer is not religious words, pious feelings, or techniques of spiritual concentration, but 'the readiness of the whole man for this Presence, simple turned-towardness, unreserved spontaneity.'"[11]

Buber explains that this state of prayer is subject to various manifestations. It is not merely a psychological state, as implied above. It includes idiosyncratic behavioral aspects that are efficacious for some indi-

viduals and not for others, depending on their relation to the Eternal Thou. Buber writes:

> "Prayer is the most important way to union with God and is the highest means of self-redemption. Hasidic prayer, however, was not always prayer in its most ordinary sense. Sometimes it took the form of traditional prayer, sometimes of mystical meditation in preparation for the prescribed prayers, and sometimes of "hit-lahabut," or an ecstatic intuition into the true nature of things. Even the Hasidic singing and dancing might be justifiably conceived, at its highest, as a way of praying."[12]

True prayer then, is nothing other than expression of the desire for relation with the Eternal Thou. It is not necessarily indicative of the relation itself, and is also not a necessary prelude to the divine-human encounter. Prayer is desirable, because in its truest form, it leads the individual away from self-conscious thought which is one of the major obstacles to the achievement of genuine relation. In commenting on this problem, Buber notes:

> "...in...our stage of subjectivized reflection, not only the concentration of the one who pays, but his spontaneity is assailed. The assailant is consciousness, the overconsciousness of this man here that he is praying, that he is praying, that he is praying. And the assailant appears to be invincible."[13] (emphasis added)

True prayer, however, vanquishes the assailant of self-consciousness. Stripped of intellectual consciousness, the human person relates on an emotional level to the Eternal Thou in genuine encounter. Buber claims that in this form of prayer:

> "...man pours himself out, dependent without reservation, knowing that, incomprehensibly, he acts on God, albeit without exacting anything for himself, he beholds his effective activity burning in the supreme flame."[14]

In this instance, Buber describes this relation of prayer figuratively. Philosophically, the above statement borders on pure gibberish, given what has already been presented of Buber's theology. He claims that the human

act of un-selfconscious commitment "affects," as it were, the divine, because it represents for him the pure experience of relation. Since the relation cannot be expressed verbally or intellectually, Buber uses poetic hyperbole in order to demonstrate his belief in the power of this state of relation. Prayer is useful conceptually for Buber only insofar as it is capable as a figurative expression of showing the relation he perceives to be possible between the human person and Deity as the Eternal Thou. It is for this reason that "true" prayer must be distinguished from "ordinary" prayer, in Buber's thought.

Buber believes that prayer mitigates the aspects of cult that objectify, or depersonalize God. Prayer is the thread which binds together rite and belief. Buber writes:

> "In true prayer, cult and faith are unified and purified into living relation. That true prayer lives in relation testifies to their true life; as long as it lives in them (cult and faith) they live. Degeneration of religions means the degeneration of prayer in them: the relational power in them is buried more and more by objecthood; they find it ever more difficult to say Thou with their whole undivided being..."[15]

THE ACTUAL IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER IN BUBER'S THOUGHT

For all of Buber's rhetoric about the value and meaning of prayer, a problem remains. It is similar to the problem raised earlier with resepct to Buber theology of divine-human encounter. If I-Thou encounters with God as the Eternal Thou are not solely dependent upon the will of the human person (but dependent upon the presence of divine grace as well) the encounter may not be achieved despite all efforts employed. These efforts include both communal worship and individual prayer, no matter how "true" or "genuine" they are. Neither individual prayer nor communal worship can effect an encounter with the Eternal Thou and they do not represent salvific substitutes for that encounter.

To be more specific, it is helpful to review the understanding of

just what the I-Thou relation is and how it functions with respect to the human person. M. Friedman explains:

> "The I-Thou relation is a direct knowing which gives one neither knowledge about the Thou over against one nor about oneself as an objective entity apart from this relationship. It is 'the genuinely reciprocal meeting in the fullness of life between one active existence and another.' Although this dialogical knowing is direct, it is not entirely unmediated. The directness of the relationship is established not only through the mediation of the senses...but also through the mediation of the 'word,' i.e., the mediation of those technical means and those fields of symbolic communication such as language, music, art, and ritual which enable men ever again to enter into relation with that which is over against them."[16]

Prayer is a mediation of the encounter and not a prelude or a prescription for it. Prayer is not qualitatively superior to any of the modes of mediation listed above. Prayer cannot serve or aid the human person, only relation can. Prayer cannot cause that relation to be effected. As Buber writes:

> "(N)o prescription can lead us to the encounter and one leads from it. Only the acceptance of the presence is required to come to it...As we have nothing but a Thou on our lips when we enter the encounter, it is with this on our lips that we are released from it into the world."[17]

Prayer is only a state of readiness in anticipation of an encounter with the Eternal Thou. This state is in and of itself useless if not accompanied by relation to the Eternal Thou. Buber writes specifically:

> "...it is...only the relation I-Thou in which we can meet God at all, because of Him, in absolute contrast to all other existing beings, no objective aspect can be attained."[18]

CONCLUSION

We may conclude, therefore, that not only are communal religious services without value to the human endeavor to relate to the Eternal Thou; individual prayer is meaningless for Buber as well. True prayer is only that prayer which anticipates an encounter. The words of prayer are meaningless.

The attitude of the individual is what is important. It is the attitude or emotional fervor of the individual that can cause the loss of self-consciousness which allows for the possibility of a divine-human encounter.

The communal religious service (including the pharisaic religious service) serves no salvific or soteric purpose in Buber's thought. All liturgical formulations fade in immediacy in comparison with the encounters that spawned them. This results in rigid statements of dogma which become literally untrue by virtue of their inflexibility in Buber's thought."[19]

Prayer is important only insofar as it anticipates an act of encounter with the Eternal Thou. Yet prayer brings it about; it cannot "conjure up" these encounters. I-Thou relations subsist very well on their own without prayer as a prelude. Consequently, prayer that does not result in I-Thou encounters is useless and devoid of meaning. If one can achieve an I-Thou relation with the Eternal Thou on one's own (without prayer), the act of prayer becomes irrelevant. A. Reines succinctly summarizes this conclusion when he writes:

> "Prayer, then, as theistically understood is meaningless for Buber. Only if the words of prayer, no matter how heartfelt, are accompanied by an I-Thou relation is there any value to the experience; but then, it is not necessary to have the words of prayer at all, for it is the I-Thou happening alone that gives the words efficacy."[20]

Individual prayer and communal services are optionally forms of mediation of the I-Thou relation. They do not effect the relation, they are merely part of the "symbolic communication" which figuratively represents the encounter with the Eternal Thou. That Buber believes this is attested to by his low personal regard for religious services. This is evidenced by the fact that he refused to attend services in Jerusalem, as mentioned above. For all his subjective encouragement concerning individual prayers, Buber readily concedes that they are mere words outside of the context of the divine-human en-

counter. Liturgical rites and prayers are merely partially helpful tools toward the goal of relation. Use of them is neither necessary, good, nor efficacious.

Buber sees the idea of prayer and the idea of a formal liturgical rite to be worthwhile insofar as they carry the human person past concern with the ordinary. They are linguistic expressions of the desire to relate to the Eternal Thou; they have no value in and of themselves.

Since, for Buber, pure prayer does not express concern for the benefit of the human person, petitionary prayer is explicitly excluded from the confines of the relation with the Eternal Thou. Since no intelligible communication takes place in the experience of the I-Thou relation, all words of praise and thanksgiving lose their salvific meanings as well.

Buber did not accept the idea that communal religious services were figurative expressions of I-Thou encounters, only as forms of remembrance of past ones. He saw them as obstacles to the achievement of those encounters. Buber did not perceive prayer to be the figurative expression of communication with the Eternal Thou. Prayer is a stance, an expression of longing and openness for such an I-Thou encounter to take place. To make more of it is to risk countenancing the notion that the human person can conjure up God at will, using the so-called proper words and formulae. This is, of course, the antithesis of Buber's philosophy of spontaneous I-Thou encounters caused by a joining of human will and divine grace.[21]

Chapter IID

Buber:

Figurative and Symbolic Religious Practice

DEFINITIONS

In order to properly discuss Buber's thought with regard to figurative language and the religious symbol, several of his technical terms require definition within the specific context of his I-Thou philosophy.

1) Symbol -- A form (liturgical, linguistic, ritual, artistic and the like) whose existence is directly attributable to a concrete I-Thou encounter.[1] "It is...the product of the real meeting in the actual present of two separate beings..."[2]

2) Symbolization -- A "...sensory presentation of a manifested truth, a perceptive reality which...always reminds the people again of that truth."[3]

3) Sign -- A symbol "...which does not speak to everybody but just to the one who sees that it 'says' something to him."[4]

4) Deed -- The "...religiously relevant act," chosen freely by the human person.[5] The deed is the act which is consequent to the divine encounter.

5) Sacrament -- An authentic activity in which "...the divine and human join themselves to each other, a lived beyond transcendence and immanence."[6] This stands in opposition to a cultic sacrament which merely fills legal prescriptions.

6) Religiosity -- "...the unmediated personal relation to the Unconditioned, the desire for a living participation with it, the will to realize it in the world through action."[7] This is equivalent in meaning and usage to the term "religiousness."[8]

7) Religion -- That which "...adopts the religiosity of a definite period with its precepts and dogmas, and gives it final form... in accordance with...an organizational principle."[9] It is "...

the sum of customs and teachings in which the religiousness of a certain epoch of people has been expressed and formed...and handed down to all future generations as binding. Religion is true as long as it is fruitful, and it is fruitful only as long as religiousness is able to fill precept and dogma with new meaning and transform them to meet the need of each new generation."[10] (emphasis added)

8) Gnosis -- "...the attempt to raise the veil which divids the revealed from the hidden and to lead forth the divine mystery. Gnosis, like magic, stands as the great threat to dialogical life and to the turning to God. Gnosis attempts to see through the contradiction of existence and free itself from it, rather than endure the contradiction and redeem it."[11] This Gnosis, for Buber, is roughly equivalent to the rationalist trend in western philosophy.

9) Hasidism -- A pietistic, Jewish, Orthodox sect, originating in Eastern Europe. Although fragmented into manys schools, mainstream Hasidism taught its followers that joy and experience in life were as important as fulfillment of the law for salvation. Buber identified strongly with this sect and idealized them as expositors of the type of I-Thou relation he was promoting.

CULTIC SACRAMENTALISM AS INAUTHENTIC SYMBOLISM

For Buber, all symbolism can be divided into two primary types. Inauthentic symbolism is the manifestation and use of symbols that are neither the direct result of nor point to the encounter with the Eternal Thou. Authentic symbolism is the human attempt to give form to the pure experience of this I-Thou relation. Also, a symbol or set of symbols, in Buber's view, can

originate in an authentic manner, then degenerate into inauthenticity through repetition and distance from the event of encounter, whereupon new symbols are created.[12]

Buber speaks of two systems of symbolic thought which he considers to be inauthentic. The first of these is termed "cultic sacramentalism," in which the symbols of the encounter have been stratified and do not admit creative change. The second inauthentic symbolism is the view which rationalizes and divorces the religious symbol away from its tie with the divine relation.

Buber claims that the symbolism represented by cultic sacramentalism is inauthentic because adherence to the laws of the cult supersedes the individual's imperative to seek out God for relation. Buber claims that this symbolism is cut off from God and is dangerous because it leads the human person to rely on forms rather than on the divine encounter for salvation. Buber writes:

> "This separated relation (living in the world as opposed to living in God) is man's greatest danger whether it manifests itself in the form of a cult in which sacramental forms are independent of everyday life or of a soul detached from life in devotional rapture and solitary relation with God. 'The sacrament...misleads the faithful into feeling secure in a merely objective consummation without any personal participation.' In such a service, the real partner of the communion (God) is no longer present."[13] (emphasis added)

Ritual observance has no salvific meaning in and of itself for Buber. If the human person's participation in a ritual is due to legal prescription or social convention, there is no symbolic meaning in that act for that individual. Performance of ritual must be a freely chosen "deed," not a requirement. Buber writes that:

> "Through ossification of the sacrifical cult, of Scripture and tradition, man's free decision has been suppressed. It is no longer the deed, born of decision and drawing breath in unconditionality that is viewed as the way to God, but compliance with rules and regulation."[14]

If there is no relation of the symbol to the possibility of further relation to the Eternal Thou, it is of no worth. Observing the Law for the sake of the Law is a meaningless sanctivity, in Buber's view. In the words of the commentator on Buber's work and its relationship to Jewish religious practice, D. Breslauer writes:

> "Buber finds the identification of deed with the authentic performance of the law a fatal error, while the law can become a source for deeds, deeds naturally expand beyond the province of the law. If such expansion is not allowed...-the way is open for stagnation. Legalism has an easy time establishing control over the deed-tendency and reducing a spontaneous response to God to a superficial and I-It type of manipulative action."[15]

Breslauer later writes that "...all ritual...can only be a human reflection of that relationship" (of encounter) between the human person and the Eternal Thou.[16] The law removes the aspect of relationship from the religious act. It "...requires no risk. The meaning of each legislated act is fully determined."[17]

What comprises the saving grace of any system of cult and ritual for Buber is the intense personal commitment of the individual. Without this commitment, there is no legitimate cult, there is no "inherited tradition" as it were. Buber makes this clear as Freidman explains:

> "...many thinkers (tend) to identify the inheritance of tradition with the forms into which tradition has cast itself...they think of society, the family, the church, or the law as a living organism and of the individuals of the past, present and future as cells in this organism. This ...is a distortion of the true way in which tradition is actually inherited, namely through each individual's making that part of the tradition his own which comes alive for him as Thou."[18]

Breslauer emphasizes this point in Buber's thought as well, saying:

> "...without a personal engagement in the ritual process symbolism is impossible. 'No symbol has authentic existence in the spirit if it has no authentic existence in the body.'"[19]

Consequently, religious symbolism viewed as either received tradition or divine law is inauthentic symbolism unless the individual chooses to make that practice an act of choice, a "deed" in Buber's terms.

Another inauthentic view of religious symbolism is the detached intellectual view, be it historical, metaphysical or philosophical. Buber calls this approach "Gnosis." Being analytical in nature, it is the opposite of the unpremeditation Buber requires for relation to occur. As thought and cognition reside in the world of It, they are in opposition to the unconditional, unreserved nature of relation with Thou. Buber comments that part of the history of Judaism has been the struggle over which symbolic view will be dominant. He writes:

> "The history of the development of Jewish religion is really the history of the struggles between the natural structure of a mythical-monotheistic folk-religion and the intellectual structure of a rational-monotheistic rabbinic religion."[20]

Judaism, for Buber, fails as a historically viable religion if it is viewed from this intellectual stance.[21] It is anathema to Buber, for whom it stands as an opposition to the "reality" of faith and the "reality" of encounter with the Eternal Thou. Buber claims:

> "The psychological doctrine which deals with mysteries without the knowing attitude of faith toward mystery is the modern manifestation of Gnosis...It--and not atheism...is the real antagonist of the reality of faith."[22] (emphasis added)

The intellectual stance vis-a-vis religious symbolism is a denial of religiosity, in Buber's view. For Buber, religiosity has nothing to do with morals, aesthetics or sentimentality; it is concerned with encountering the primary power of the universe, namely, God. Buber, writing forcefully in this vein, states that:

> "Religiosity is...man's urge to establish a living communion with the unconditioned;...Genuine religiosity...

> has nothing in common with the self-pleasure of aestheticizing souls, or with the clever mental exercises of practiced intellectuality. Genuine religiosity is doing. It wants to sculpt the unconditioned out of the matter of this world...to be engaged in this work is to be religious--nothing else."[23] (emphasis added)

Buber went so far as to denigrate any intellectual approach to religious experience. To view the religious experience as psychological or ethical as opposed to stemming from God is blatantly false, in his view.[24] For one claim greater spirituality because faith was alloyed with rationalism is even greater blasphemy. Looking back on the attempts to reform Judaism over the past century, Buber finds nothing of value, nothing of God, nothing of encounter in comparison with the so-called ignorant orthodoxy. Buber passionately writes:

> "What was preached here was not...a renewal of Judaism, but its perpetuation in an easier, more elegant, Westernized socially acceptable form. Truly I prefer a thousandfold the gauche dullards who, in their simple-mindedness, observe day after day and without any shortcuts every detail of what they believe to be the command of their God..."[25]

This fury on Buber's part is a reaction to the attempt to disavow the present reality of the divine-human encounter because it was not demonstrable according to the structures of empirical verifiability. For Buber, the immediacy of divine experience supersedes any philosophic analysis of that experience.[26] Friedman makes this same point in discussing the concept of the I-Thou in opposition to philosophic thought. He writes:

> "The presentness of the I-Thou relation is...fatal to the attempt of logical positivism to relegate ethics, religion and poetry to subjective emotion without real knowledge value. Seen in the light of Buber's dialogical philosophy, this is...the attempt of...I-It knowledge ot dismiss the ontological reality of the I-Thou knowledge from which it derives its own existence."[27] (emphasis added)

Consequently, it is invalid to view religious symbols and sacraments from the standpoint of either legal prescription or intellectual under-

standing. The former denies the freedom of the individual to act, to perform "deeds" on the basis of his or her own encounters with the Eternal Thou. The latter is an attempt to trivialize the actuality of divine-human communication by viewing its symbolic representation as nothing more than a cultural, psychological or ethical manifestation. Neither approach to religious symbolism is warranted, from Buber's point of view.

AUTHENTIC SYMBOLISM

There is, however, an approach to religious symbolism which is legitimate and authentic for Buber. This approach takes into account the birth and decay of symbols. It also affirms the freedom and responsibility of the human person to choose to accept those symbolic representations which are meaningful to him or her on the basis of their personal encounters with the Eternal Thou. Out of their actual encounters are born new symbols and signs, some of which will be accepted by the community as a while, while others remain significant only to the individual. This stance, for Buber, with respect to religious symbolism can be termed "creative actualism."

AUTHENTIC SYMBOLS: THE NEED

Buber understands that there is a legitimate need for religious symbolic forms. This need, in fact, is the primary reason which warrants the existence of set religious belief and practice. It is worthwhile to quote Buber in full in this regard:

> "Dogmas and rules are merely the result, subject to change, of the human mind's attempt to make comprehensible, by a symbolic order of the knowable and do-able, the working of the unconditional it experiences within itself. Primary reality is constituted by the effect of the unconditional upon the human mind which, sustained by the force of its own vision, unflinchingly faces the supreme power. Man's mind thus experiences the unconditional as that great something which is set over against it, as the Thou as such. By creating symbols, the mind comprehends what is in itself incomprehensible: this in symbol and adage, the illimitable God reveals himself to the human mind, which

> gathers the flowing universal currents into the receptacle of an affirmation that declares the Lord reigns. Neither religious symbol nor adage makes man unworthy or untrue, they are forms the unconditioned creates within man's mind, which at this particular time, has not developed into a more effective tool."[28]

Symbolic forms of expression and remembrance of the meeting with the Eternal Thou are necessary because they are the only tools available to the mind. Intellectual expression of the meeting misrepresents the relation; authentic symbolic expression, although necessarily limited, is legitimate in Buber's view.

Symbolic forms are also necessary for their concreteness, their ability to be served empirically as opposed to the non-empirical experience which occurs in meetings with the Eternal Thou. Buber suggests that without such concrete forms there would have been no link at all between the purely spiritualized world of I-Thou meetings and the concrete reality in which the human person lives.[29] Buber says that symbolic forms are necessary for the community to exist as a community, for communities are bound together in the world of the concrete. He writes that, "(T)o be sure, to manifest itself in a community of men, to establish and maintain a community, indeed to exist as a religion, religiosity needs forms."[30]

These symbolic forms, however, must not be immutable. They must respond to change because the human person's relation with the Eternal Thou is subject to change and development. The symbol must even be capable of being discarded when it is no longer evocative of the divine-human meeting it is supposed to represent. This dynamic quality to symbols is emphasized repeatedly in Buber's work. Buber writes that:

> "Symbols come into being, some which allow themselves to be fixed...even in earthly material, and some which tolerate no other sanctuary than that of the soul. Symbols supplement one another, they merge, they are set before the community of believers in plastic or theological forms."[31]

Ideally, a time will come when no symbolic forms for the I-Thou relation will be either adequate or necessary. This is why symbols must be plastic, capable of change. They represent the relation with the Eternal Thou at a particular time, and no more. Friedman explains Buber's thought in this regard, saying that:

> "Man experiences the Absolute...as Thou in itself. He grasps the ineffable through the creation of symbols, in signs and speech which reveal God to men for this age. But...these symbols are outgrown and new ones bloom in their place until no symbol performs what is needful and life itself becomes a symbol."[32] (emphasis added)

The human person, therefore, needs to be careful not to become too attached to any one religious symbol or set of religious symbols. Once symbols become incapable of change, they have outlived their usefulness, their capacity to evoke the meeting with the Eternal Thou. The symbol which was born of the meetings with God then becomes an obstacle to the future attainment of such meetings. This is because the symbol has no intrinsic worth in and of itself as it is not from the world of Thou but of It. Friedman states that "...the very symbols which man used to address God often stand in the way of that address."[33] Buber makes the same point himself, emphasizing that symbols are not and cannot be truly representative of God or relation with God. The experience of "...meeting with the Meeter...knows only the presence of the Present One. Symbols of Him, whether images or ideas, always exist first when and in so far as Thou becomes He and that means It.[34]

AUTHENTIC SYMBOLS: THE DEED

In view of this process of symbol creation and degeneration, the act of the individual in choosing relevant symbolic forms becomes crucial. It is what Buber calls "deed." Breslauer explains the function of this concept of deed in Buber's thought. He writes in his The Chrysalis of Religion:

> "Deed performance is composed of both decision itself and

> deciding based upon an acknowledgement of God's unconditional address. The ear of man, however, needs to be sensitized to that voice."[35]

It is not just the act of deciding which turns mere symbol into deed. It is the act of deciding with the whole of one's being, an unconditional and unreserved response to the Unconditioned. This is what Buber calls "...the presence of the whole man who wholly gives himself..."[36]

Consequently, it is the person that gives the ritual meaning and not vice versa. It is the person's commitment, in Buber's view, that makes a symbolic practice a genuine figurative expression of the meeting with the Eternal Thou. Even in a religious system of absolutes, such as Orthodox Judaism, Buber says that a rite "...must be reforged in the fire of the truth of his (the individual's) personal essential relation to the absolute if it is to win true validity."[37]

Buber refers to the end of this act of decision or deed as the reaching of "God's I," through the individual's unconditionality.[38] In this way, the very act of <u>being</u> becomes symbolic in a manner no rite or ceremony ever can. As Buber writes, "(T)he factual existence of a human being can itself be a symbol or a sacrament."[39] Friedman explains that Buber actually means much more, that his real intent is to say that not only <u>can</u> the life of the human be a true symbol--it is the ideal symbol: "The highest manifestation of the symbol <u>is</u>, in fact, a human life lived in relation to the Absolute."[40]

The human person who lives his or her life in this state neither "performs" nor "observes" rituals, but according to Buber's words: "...is laid hold of and demanded in the core of his wholeness, and needs nothing less than his wholeness if he is to sustain it."[41]

CONCLUSION

True symbols constitute genuine figurative expressions of the actual

I-Thou encounter. Since the encounter is nothing other than pure experience, symbols can only point to, and never accurately reflect the I-Thou encounter. As Buber writes, even the term "Eternal Thou" does not accurately symbolize God. It symbolizes, rather the relation to God for which the human person strives.[42]

Buber recognizes that there is a human need for religious symbolic forms, yet most of those forms are inauthentic. Their inauthenticity stems from either of two factors: Their inflexibility and unresponsiveness to change required by further meetings with the Eternal Thou; or their simplistic functionality which causes the symbols to serve as unspiritual, intellectual and inaccurate explanations of the divine-human encounter.

Authentic religious symbolism is made up of forms from the world of It fused with the intentionality of the human person's commitment to Thou. Formal religions are based on accretions of such symbols. As Buber writes, "(A)ll historical religion is selection of sacramental material and sacramental acts."[43] These acts are not fixed or frozen for eternity. Neither are they ethereal or momentary in their existence or meaning. Buber writes that:

> "All symbols are ever in danger of becoming spiritual, and not binding images, instead of remaining real signs sent into life; all sacraments are ever in danger of becoming plain experiences...instead of remaining the incarnate connection between what is above and what is below."[44]

Since symbols (be they rites, rituals, or objects) can only point to the fact that an actual encounter with the Eternal Thou has occurred, they serve no purpose in and of themselves. Divorced from the immediacy of the encounter, acts remain acts, words merely words. Consequently, in Buber's view, we cannot commit ourselves to the perpetuation of systems of symbolism which may carry no meaning in the age to come. In Buber's words:

> "We can commit ourselves only to the primal forces, to the living religious forces which, though active and manifest in all of Jewish religion, in its teaching and law, have not been fully expressed by either...They are the eternal forces that do not permit one's relationship to the unconditional even to wholly congeal into something merely accepted and executed on faith, the forces that out of the total of doctrines and regulations, consistently appeal for freedom in God."[45]

The religious symbol, then, has no intrinsic importance for Buber. What remain crucial are God, the human person and their capability to relate. For the person who is in this state of relation, external symbols from the world of It draws into insignificance. Only the human person's life, his or her being, remains as the highest manifestation a symbol can take. The actualized life of the human person, because of the possibility of relation to God, becomes the only true and adequate symbolic expression of the encounter which make for life's ultimate meaning according to Buber.

Chapter IIIA

Cronbach:

Figurative Language and Scripture

DEFINITIONS

As was the case with the previous thinkers considered, Abraham Cronbach's work contains technical terminology. There are four terms whose meaning must be made clear before entering into discussion of Cronbach's view of figurative language with respect to Scripture. These definitions are semantic in nature. They explain the function a word serves with respect to both Scriptural and religious discussion.

1) Designation -- the function of language in supplying objects or actions with their names; Cronbach writes: "The designative function of language coincides with its informational function."[1] This does not mean that the information conveyed by a word or expression conveys accurate information. Designation simply describes the informational intent of a word or phrase.

2) Evaluation -- the function of language in assigning an object or an action value, whether that value is positive or negative; for example, language used in ethical judgments is evaluative. In Cronbach's view, much semantic usage with respect to religion which purports to be designative is in actual usage evaluative.[2]

3) Dramatization -- the function of language in serving to picture "something abstruse, complicated, far-reaching and difficult to understand."[3] This category includes figurative and symbolic use of language. This usage dramatizes an aspect of word or concept which might not otherwise be understood.

4) Impressiveness -- the capacity of language to elicit emotional reaction. This function goes beyond evaluation, in that it reflects usage whose function it is to influence the emotions of others with regard to a given word, concept or object. Impress-

iveness in language extends beyond the meaning of a particular word. Words can impress by their very sound or even appearance.

Cronbach explains that the usage of a word often and easily transcends a single category. Words that are impressive, in his view, exercise that function partially because they evaluate strongly as well. Words that properly are assigned to one category with regard to a particular usage, are just as properly assigned to another category given a change in context. Cronbach makes this point specifically when he writes that:

> "...a word which is designative when used literally becomes evaluative when used metaphorically. In the Bible, the word angel is designative, but if one lauds a man or a woman of today as being an angel, one evaluates."[4]

With respect to religion, Cronbach believes that this capacity of words to serve multiple functions is a major cause for confusion and misunderstanding. We will return to this point in our discussion of Cronbach with respect to religious services and religious symbolic practice.

PRINCIPLE OF GOOD AND TRUTH

Before entering into Cronbach's evaluation of Scripture and its figurative meaning, it is crucial to examine the major principle by which Cronbach evaluated religious terminology and concepts. Cronbach, as we shall see, rejected the literal approach to Scripture in its entirety, preferring instead to base his religious philosophical outlook upon an admittedly subjective principle.[5] This principle can be termed Cronbach's "principle of good and truth." It is stated in its quintissential form as follows:

> "Social justice is Jewish. Even if it were not Jewish, it would behoove us to expouse social justice. For social justice is right and the right must be done whether it is Jewish or not.
>
> Better yet, it would behoove us to make it Jewish. Many things which were not Jewish originally, came in the course

> of history, to be made Jewish--for isntance, the Sabbath, the immortality doctrine and the lovely rite of confirmation. Best of all, why not say that whatever is good and true is, ipso facto, Jewish? Why must Judaism be a tradition only?"[6] (emphasis added)

By the establishment of this principle, Cronbach gives the standard by which all practice and ideology, religious or no, are to be judged, i.e., according to their goodness and truth value. Conversely, it is implicit (if not explicit) in this principle that any thing or idea that can be shown to be not good or untrue is disqualified from categorization as being Jewish. This will undergird Cronbach's unique system of interpretation of Scripture, as we shall see. Historical association with Jews and Judaism is insufficient, in Cronbach's view, to warrant designation of a concept or action as Jewish. If something is not true, if it is not good; if it does not highlight what Cronbach calls the "redemptive aspects of experience," it loses its designation as being legitimately Jewish.[7]

REJECTION OF LITERALISM

Given this adherence to truth over dogma or tradition, Cronbach utterly rejects a literal approach to Scripture. In his view, it contains incorrect information with regard to both history and religious ideology. In addition, it contains incidents which, although chronicled as part of sacred history, support that which Cronbach would deem unethical. Why, then, is the belief in the literal view of Scripture still widespread?

Cronbach gives two reasons for the continuing acceptance of literalism. One reason stems from a misunderstanding of different cultures. The other is based on the child-like psychological needs of most human persons.

In discussing the problem from a cultural viewpoint, Cronbach claims that different cultures have created differing modes of expression. The problem in accepting Scripture literally is that it ignores these cultural

distinctions. Cronbach writes that:

> "We must remember that the Bible, being an oriental book, uses oriental modes of speech. Orientals are not found of abstractions. Orientals prefer the concrete. When an Oriental wishes to convey the thought that some object is beautiful or valuable...he declares that the object originated with God... (I)f he wishes to affirm that some act is noble...he predicts that God will reward the act; just as God will punish an act which the speaker deems opprobrious .. He utilized those beliefs to bring out sentiments for which the Western world possesses other modes of expression."[8]

It should be noted that Cronbach's evaluation of the so-called "Oriental mode of expression" is both arbitrary and subjective. It could be objected to by any number of scholars in a variety of fields. It is nonetheless employed by him as a factor in the Western misunderstanding of Scriptural expression, which, to his mind, has caused misinformed belief in the literal truth of the Scripture.

The other basis for literal belief, according to Cronbach, is the child-like psychological need for both myth and an absolute standard of morality and excellence. Cronbach expresses amazement at the capacity of the human person to simply accept myths and stories without any evidence as to their truth, except that they appear in the Bible. He attributes this to the base psychological need level of most people.[9] Beyond myth and story, the attitude of uninformed, widespread reverance for the Bible is also attributed to the child-like need of the human person to be told what is right versus wrong, and real versus unreal. Cronbach writes:

> "Something of the childlike obtains perhaps in various attitudes toward the Bible. Not a few passages in the Bible are unintelligible...the real intent may forever remain unknown. Moreover, much set forth in the Bible contravenes the ideals...and the interests of the present day reader. The Bible is nonetheless superlatively extolled. Its contradictions and its sentiments, obnoxious to our own age and land, are explained away by the ingenuities of interpretation. This uncritical adoration of the Bible--does it not also partake of the childlike?"[10]

The literal interpretation of Scripture is not rejected, however, because it is childlike. It is rejected because there are many Scriptural passages which "...contravene the ideals...and the interests of the present-day reader." There is, therefore, an element of subjective selection in what from the Bible is still acceptable today and what must be rejected. Such choice, admits Cronbach, is always subjective and not subject to logical or empirical validation. Even believers in the literal nature of Scripture make subjective choices concerning that of the Bible which is acceptable to them personally. He comments that, "...selectiveness always occurs. A believer in authority (i.e., the traditional authority of the Bible) invokes the authority for views which he advocates and ignores or distorts the authority for the views which he disdains.[11]

With this selective subjectivity in mind, Cronbach asserts the right to reject or interpret the Bible accordingly when "...it conflicts too violently with other convictions."[12] For Cronbach, this matter is relatively simple. The Bible must be either rejected or thoroughly reinterpreted when it is in conflict with the "principle of good and truth" as set forth above. With this in mind, we will now examine some of those parts of Scripture which Cronbach felt were not "Jewish" according to this principle. Later, we will see how radically he re-interprets other sections of Scripture in order to find contemporary value in them, according to his principles.

SCRIPTURE THAT IS NOT JEWISH

Although one might question how any part of Scripture can be dismissed from being "Jewish," Cronbach indeed makes such judgments. His judgments are not, however, capricious. His objections to canonized material are based upon fidelity to his principle of good and truth. A few examples will suffice. By placing this principle higher than that of fidelity to uninter-

preted Scripture, Cronbach attacks the books of Esther and Judges as being not Jewish.

Cronbach's biographer, R. Seigel, relates why Cronbach objected to the Book of Esther. He writes:

> "The Book of Esther comes under major attack... 'The real objection to the story lies in the relation of the story to our ideals.' (Listed as follows): Mordecai was obstinate and violated a law, Esther also violated a law and concealed her Jewishness, the killing of the Persians in revenge, and the execution of Hamon (is) without a trial."[13]

The book of Esther violates both conditions of the principle of good and truth. The factual objections include the impossibility of Esther being a young girl according to the story's given information; and the impossibility of the people actually fasting for three days. Consequently, in its plain sense, the book of Esther cannot be "Jewish." It is factually untrue and violates our notion of what is good, according to Cronbach.[14]

The book of Judges has similar judgment rendered upon it by Cronbach. In his work, Stories Made of Bible Stories, Cronbach attacks the book of Judges through the mouth of the Rabbi Yoḥanan ben Zaqai. This rabbi was an important pharisaic figure at the time of the fall of the second temple to the Romans. Cronbach levels the same two charges against the book of Judges that he did against the book of Esther. First, the book is legendary. Its non-factual nature means that it should not be taken literally or too seriously. Second, the book is anti-Jewish because it violates the ideals of tolerance and pacifism.[15]

Within the book of Judges itself, Cronbach makes specific objection to the story of Gideon. He cites the intolerance of the Baal religion and the glorification of war as the reasons behind the story's unacceptability. With respect to the religious intolerance of the story, Cronbach writes:

"The Baal religion is not my religion and not your religion,

> and not the religion of Gideon. But it was the religion of some. Can we expect other people to revere the religion which we profess, if we treat with disdain the religion which they profess? To our own religion, we should be true; but all religions should have our respect."[16]

As a counterpoint to Gideon's un-Jewish "intolerance" of Baal, which is lauded by the pharisaic tradition, we turn to Cronbach's view of Solomon. Although traditionally perceived as wise, the pharisaic view of Solomon contains reservations about his behavior toward other cults in that they flourished under his reign. It is precisely upon this point of pharisaic disapproval that Cronbach esteems that Solomon was most laudable. In his version of the story of Solomon, Cronbach puts the following words in King Solomon's mouth:

> "There was one thing about my reign which I regarded as exceedingly good and noble. I refer to the freedom of religion which existed under my government. During my reign, everyone was free to follow whatever religion he or she might choose. People came to Jerusalem from all parts of the world... (where) they would set up shrines for the religions of their respective countries. Under my rule those shrines operated without interference...yet...there was nothing for which I received severer condemnation. People-...have called me 'apostate,' 'renegade,' 'turncoat.' They accused me of forsaking my own religion when they saw that I was respectful toward other religions."[17]

That which official Judaism came to regard as treasonous, Cronbach viewed as truly Jewish, according to the principle of good and truth. Although Cronbach rejected some parts of Scripture outright because of their falsity and non-compliance with modern ethical ideals, other parts of Scripture called for reinterpretation in his eyes.

NECESSARY REINTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE

Cronbach believes that Biblical stories contain power and drama. He thinks that this is because of their form--legendary hero tales in which obstacles are overcome in order to emphasize a message. The form is something which Cronbach would like to maintain. It is the message of Biblical stories

that requires revision, sometimes radical revision. Using his semantic distinctions, Cronbach argues that many of the Scriptural narratives serve to dramatize and impress, not to inform. The miracle stories of Elijah (I Kings) are in his words, "...folk yarns--stories not for the purpose of informing but for the purpose of astonishing."[18] This, in Cronbach's view, is a legitimate function of Scripture--to amaze and impress. That which is considered the message behind the amazement, however, should change to meet progressively higher standards of ethics and scientific validation. That this impressive character of Scriptural narrative is at odds with its message for us today is specifically pointed out by Cronbach. He writes:

> "The tenth chapter of Leviticus tells how two young priests, because they erred with regard to some incense used at the shrine, were speedily and cruelly burnt to death by an enraged Yahweh. The sixth chapter of I Samuel narrates how 50,070 men were killed by Yahweh, though their only dereliction was their having gazed upon the sacred ark. The second book of Samuel, chapter six, relates how Yahweh slew a young man for laying his hand upon the ark...(S)tories of this type embody primitive ideas. If the incidents themselves are not mythical, myth surely invests the theological explanations. And yet, behind these tales with all their crudeness, we catch glimpses of an indubitable reality. Is it not a daily occurrence that small mistakes bring about dreadful consequences?...(W)hat calamities ensue from trivial and innocent mistakes! The Biblical stories may not provide scientific history, but they do reflect actualities... (W)hat these stories report may be untrue, but what they dramatize is incontestable."[19] (emphasis added)

Consequently, because of their dramatic power, Cronbach, in his Stories Made of Bible Stories, is satisfied to preserve the names and purported acts of biblical heroes and even the form of commandments, as long as the messages they convey are reinterpreted. In other examples of his interpretive method, Isaac is portrayed as an atheist who comes to find God in the brotherhood of men.[20] Solomon regrets that he ever opposed Hedad, Rezon, and Jereboam, feeling that he might have governed better with the benefit of their

gentle remonstrance.[21] Balaam the pagan seer is portrayed as a sad, but wise man who has tried to leave the prophetic business because he knows it to be a sham. He fails to leave because people believed in him so much. In Cronbach's words:

> "...(B)alaam's mind was in a state of turmoil. His soul was torn between his wish, on the one hand, not to appear eccentric (for not cursing the Israelites) and, on the other hand, his unwillingness to become involved in the Moabite stupidity. Because of this, he became cruel to an animal (by beating his donkey). For that cruelty, his conscience troubled him the rest of his life."[22]

The story of Balaam is tranformed by the principle of good and truth into a homily which teaches kindness to animals. Balaam is used further by Cronbach to illustrate the capacity for divinity in the human person, having the pagan prophet say, "Wherever there is love in a human heart, God's kingdom is born."[23]

There are other examples of this Biblical reinterpretation. His favorite themes of social justice, pacifism, and religious tolerance are cleverly woven into the pre-existing fabric of Biblical narrative. Cronbach does not limit himself to the reinterpretation of Biblical myths. He reinterprets laws as well in the light of the 20th century etnical themes listed above. For Cronbach, the biblical commandments, not being of divine origin, are irrelevant if left in their original context. Consequently, he undertakes to interpret them according to the principle of good and truth. His interpretations of four of the ten commandments are especially illustrative of this technique. With reference to the first commandment, Cronbach writes:

> "The central thought of the first Commandment is that of liberation. God is the source of freedom... There is such a thing as economic slavery, the slavery of the overworked and underpaid toilers in mines, mills, factories and sweatshops. This slavery cries up to God as much as ever did any servitude under which Israel of old may have languished."[24]

With respect to the prohibition of murder, Cronbach goes far beyond the notion of simply taking the life of another person. He writes:

> "There are many ways of killing people. We can kill them by vexing them to death, working them to death or letting them starve to death. Through coldness or neglect, we can render people so unhappy that they will wish for death, lose their health or...take their own lives...(O)verworking and underpaying those whom we employ is not the least of the ways the Sixth Commandment is violated."[25]

For Cronbach, the prohibition against stealing extends far beyond the unlawful taking of property. It includes theft of time and effort as well. He writes:

> "...there (are) forms of stealing we do not suspect. Oppression of the laborer and exploitation of the poor are forms of stealing. Overcharging in business and underpaying those who work for us are forms of stealing...(I)t is possible to steal people's time...(D)o we not often steal from our mothers and fathers? Not money, to be sure, but the time and strength that are more important than money."[26]

The commandment against bearing false witness, in Cronbach's view, applies equally to notions of racial or religious prejudice as well. He writes:

> "The Ninth Commandment...refers to the law court; but this does not prevent our giving the Commandment a wider meaning. Lying in any form is the bearing of false witness... One common form lying takes is that of making statements about entire classes or nations of people, like the remark, 'The Jews are crafty.' 'The Irish are quarrelsome.' 'The Negroes are lazy.'...Where there is lack of kindness there will be lack of truth."[27]

SCRIPTURE AS FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Cronbach is not willing to concede the utter subjectivity of his position. Thus, the Bible becomes important for him as an authority; not as an immutable divine authority, but one which underpins the ethical progress of humankind. This is the actual meaning of "divinity" for him. R. Seigel, in his biography of Cronbach, explains:

> "Equating ideals with the presence of God, Abraham Cronbach reads the Bible in order to see whether the ideals of the Bible are the same as his own ideals; it is in this sense that the Bible is divine for him..."[28]

In his Realities of Religion, Cronbach emphasizes that "divine" for him must include both the vision of social justice and the notion that the words of the Bible are powerful instruments for its effectuation. Simultaneously, he denies that "divine" implies any simple, literal notions of literal anthropomorphism. He writes:

> "We may decline to call the Bible 'the word of God' in the sense that an anthropomorphic deity once wrote or dictated a book. But that does not preclude our viewing the Bible as the word of God in the sense that it supplies words which opt for speaking about God; because those words satisfactorily dramatize and evaluate the redemptive aspects of experience and, at the same time, produce redemptive effects upon the mind."[29]

Cronbach realizes that the dramatic power of the Bible can be used for other purposes as well, many of which are opposed to his own. He refuses, however, to abandon the Bible to those with conflicting viewpoints merely because he recognizes the subjectiveness of his viewpoint while others do not see it in their own. The positive and progressive nature of social justice is self-validating for Cronbach. It legitimizes for him the use of the Bible, not as text, but as pretext. Cronbach makes his intention quite clear. He writes:

> "From the study we are contemplating, the socially minded should derive aid. Our study should secure for their convictions the biblical confirmation they may have been awaiting. We would thus be enlisting the Bible in the cause of progress. Why should the Bible be abandoned to the interests of social backwardness when its possibilities of functioning in the other direction are so pronounced?"[30] (emphasis added)

Cronbach ultimately justifies the enlistment of the Bible in buttressing the cause of social justice by categorically claiming that social justice is Jewish not only due to the principle of good and truth, but it represents

the contents and historical message of the Bible itself. Cronbach substantiates this claim via an argument that is as subjective as it is tautological.

> "...social vision is undoubtedly Jewish. Social vision appears in the Bible and the Bible is a Jewish book...the social vision of the Bible is Jewish because it is one of the contents of the Bible that we commend."[31] (emphasis added)

Cronbach perceives social justice to be the prime concern of the Bible. This, in his view, justifies the downplaying or ignoring of Biblical passages which contradict this concern. He is concerned that if people are going to rely upon Biblical authority as a motivation for their attitudes and actions, they should make reference to the "correct" passages of Scripture--those which advocate social and ethical goals. Cronbach writes specifically, in this regard, linking Scriptural passages to contemporary social problems to serve as Biblical justification for their amelioration. Cronbach writes:

> "While many of us deem social ideals compelling for their own sake, independently of the Bible, there are still many who are ifluenced by what is called Biblical authority. A verse like Zechariah 8:4 or a verse like that in Psalms 71:9 might win them to the cause of old age pensions. A verse like Zechariah 8:5 might stimulate interest in public playgrounds. The story of Cain, Genesis 4:1-7, or the story of Joseph, Genesis 39, 40, 41 might prompt some advocacy of prison reform. The persecutions suffered by the prophets might awaken a revitalization of the need for freedom of speech."[32]

CONCLUSION

It is clear that Cronbach believes that the Bible in its plain literal meaning is inaccurate and does not fulfill the ethical expectations of the modern human person set forth in the principle of good and truth. He perceives the Bible as being a book of tremendous dramatic and impressive power, yet not "true" in the designative sense of the word.

Cronbach seems to vacillate with regard to his admission of the extent of his subjectivity. That he realized his view was subjective, and, in being

so, was in competition with other subjective approaches to Scripture, we know from his own words cited above. Yet, Cronbach actually believed, in some sense, that he was following "true" intent of Scripture, what he calls the "literal approach" as opposed to the "homiletical."[33]

He is concerned with establishing that social justice is Jewish. Toward that end, he uses the technique of prooftexting which is an essential facet of the homiletical approach he scorns. Despite, Cronbach's nebulous claim to expressing to "true intent" of Scripture, he perforce must concede that his approach is but a subjective interpretation. Otherwise, there would be no need to deplore some aspects of Scripture as un-Jewish and radically re-interpret others to get them to conform with his principle of good and truth. Cronbach, then, believes that the language of Scripture is symbolic and figurative; its symboland is an unshakeable commitment to social justice and social progress.

Chapter IIIB

Cronbach:

Figurative Language and God

REJECTION OF TRADITIONAL GOD CONCEPTS

Given what has been established concerning Cronbach's view of Scripture, it is obvious that he rejected traditional theological notions as well.[1] We will examine that rejection combined with Cronbach's effort to conserve meaning for the term God by employing his semantic analysis.

Traditional understanding of the term God in its designative sense is clearly unacceptable to Cronbach. This understanding is both unsupportable and unscientific. It belongs to an area of inquiry in which science is unchallengeable. Cronbach writes:

> "...the designative use of the word 'God' belongs to that aspect of religion which brings religion into conflict with science. When religion purveys information, it competes with science, and, in that competition, religion has invariably come out the loser."[2]

Not only is the designative use of the term God unsupportable by science, it merely encourages the preservation of childlike religious viewpoints which inhibit the attainment of religious maturity. Indeed, Cronbach views the historical task of religion to be the encouragement of such maturity. This attempt, however, has been foiled by the childlike theological and psychological needs of the masses. Cronbach writes:

> "To this trend (of childlike religious attitudes) also might be assigned the persistance of anthropomorphic conceptions of Deity, despite the age-old struggle of religion against such trends. Anthropomorphism brings the Deity within the scope of the familiar and obvious, again something which the child readily welcomes."[3]

Anthropomorphism with resepct to Deity is immature when God is referred to in a designative sense. Once, however, the word God is removed from the realm of imparting information, Cronbach believes that anthropomorphisms with respect to God can be legitimately employed. It is only the designative function of the term's usage which invalidates it. Cronbach writes:

> "In religious devotion, the word 'God'...is non-designative.

> It is evaluative and dramatistic...The anthropomorphism of one age becomes the dramatization of a later age. All of the anthropomorphisms...in our devotional vocabulary (are) employed not as anthropomorphisms but as a means of dramatizing the redemptive aspects of experience."[4] (emphasis added)

REJECTION OF PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTIONS OF DEITY

If, however, Cronbach argues that an anthropomorphic conception of Deity is inaccurate and childlike, more sophisticated theological notions are not necessarily superior. He finds no value in philosophical concepts of Deity subject to logical proof. He claims, in agreement with Buber, that "(A) God whose existence is so uncertain that it has to be proved, cannot...be the same God in whom people place their hope and trust."[5] He stresses this point elsewhere, saying that:

> "We cannot de-anthropomorphize and, at the same time, theologize. One precludes the other. To de-anthropomorphize is virtually to abolish the informational potency of the word 'God.'"[6]

It should be noted that this represents an inconsistency in Cronbach's thought. The word "God," according to Cronbach's thought, should not have "informational potency." Its potency is in its ability, as Cronbach also writes with resepct to Scripture to "dramatize the redemptive aspects of experience."[7]

"BELIEF IN GOD" -- IRRELEVANT

Since the meaning of the term "God" is so bound up in its semantic usage, the question of belief in God becomes quite vexing for Cronbach. He finds the very issue bound up in assumptions which are not clear, and which are probably false. To him, to ask about whether one believes in God is truly a case of mixing "apples and oranges," as it were. It asks for a monolithic response to an issue that has many different levels. Cronbach gives vent to his frustration on this issue in an essay called "The Linguistics of Theism,"

in which he writes:

> "Especially deplorable is the question: 'Do you believe in God?'...(I)rrespective of how one answers any question whatsoever, the very act of answering constitutes acquiescence in the assumption behind the question. When the underlying assumption is false, every answer must be false... (N)o less entangling is 'Do you believe in God?' The question presupposes that 'God' is informational only. Were a devout person to reply 'yes' his answer would be as untrue as if his reply were 'no'...(T)hus, indispensable is the semantic approach for the understanding of religion, and above all, for the understanding of theism. Ignore the semantic factors, and confusion becomes inescapable."[8] (emphasis added)

Cronbach reduces the question of God's existence to two criteria, both of them subjective. One criterion for Cronbach is that belief in God, or belief that God exists simply "signifies that the proposition 'God exists' yields valid information" to the individual making the propositions.[9] The other criterion is the emotional reaction elicited from the individual when faced with the question of God's existence. If the word "God" brings to an individual unpleasant associations, Cronbach asserts that the person is probably an atheist. Pleasurable associations with the term "God," however, would denote a person who is a theist or a "believer." Cronbach explicitly asserts that this issue is totally subjective. He writes:

> "Forbear to argue about the existence or the non-existence of God when the real issue is not whether God exists, but whether, for a given arguer, the experiences which the word 'God' brings to mind are pleasant ones or disagreeable ones."[10]

CRONBACH'S GOD--INHERENT CONTRADICTIONS

We have seen that Cronbach rejected both traditional and philosophical notions of Deity. He found that these ideas, for the most part, were either factually incorrect or incomplete with regard to the varied usages of the term God. Belief in God, or the issue of God's existence, remains a subjective issue for Cronbach. We are confronted, then, with the dilemma--what

Cronbach does mean when he used the term "God?" Does he think that there is a competent definition of Deity, or is the meaning of the term God always dependent on its subjective contextual usage?

R. Seigel, Cronbach's biographer, notes that although Cronbach perceptively analyzes the difficulties that semantics brings to theological discussion, he is not particularly adept when it comes to the meaningful definition of Deity. Seigel writes:

> "God, not being an entity but a force for Abraham Cronbach, the entire concept of monotheism boils down to mere semantics... Characteristically, Dr. Cronbach describes God in glowing words which say little. 'God is the exaltation of spirit which comes to us when some wisdom has been achieved.'"[11]

It is curious that so adriot a critic of incorrect semantic usage with respect to Deity would himself fall into the same trap. He spares no criticism of those who, in the wake of Buber, attempt to describe Deity poetically and designatively at the same time. He realizes the confusion that ensues when differing semantic funtions are fused together in one form. In dismissing the Buberian school of theology, he writes:

> "Contemporary writings on the philosophy of religion utilize such expressions as 'Absolute Person,' 'the idea of the absolute,' 'invisible divine object,' 'ineffable reality,' 'the unconditional'--terms which purport to designate although it is extremely difficult to ferret out <u>what</u> they designate. This happens when words which are not informational are handled as if they were informational."[12] (emphasis added)

Even with this understanding, Cronbach cannot evade the pitfalls in trying to explain just what he is talking about when referring to the term "God." He claims that God is a force and a person, even though he realizes that he can give no evidence to support his claim.[13] He identifies God's presence with the manifestation of human ideals, but claims that God is not the objective source of those ideals.[14] He opposes viewing God as an objec-

tive entity even though it would seem to be a necessary concomitant of the attribute of personhood which he ascribes to Deity. Lacking a formal definition for the term God, Cronbach writes about God in terms of human experience, which is, of course, subjective. In lieu of a comprehensive definition he writes:

> "God is not an object of belief or doubt, of proof or disproof, nor is He a way of 'explaining the Universe'...(G)od is to be approached, attained, sought, found, not proved...not believed in...and not used as an explanation. Proving, disproving, believing, disbelieving and explaining are the affair of science, not that of religion. These are concerned with facts, that is, with certain partially truncated aspects of experience, and not with the supreme ideal that transfuses all experience."[15]

Here, Cronbach seems to identify God as "the supreme ideal that transfuses all experience." Yet he makes a crucial distinction that would seem to nullify the force of this description. He distinguishes between that which is experienced of God and that which is reported. He claims that the experience of God (which he expresses semantically in the quote below, but cannot define) gives valid impressions of Deity (as opposed to information). This experience is contrasted to the reporting of the divine, which, in Cronbach's view, always implies the giving of information. He explains:

> "...there are times when the experienced rather than the reported comes within the term's purview (i.e., the term God). Devoutness cherishes such phrases as...'seeking God'... 'knowing God,' 'God within the heart'... (which) always (denote) something experienced... (W)hile 'God' as reported calls for informational usage, 'God' as experience distinctly entails a non-informational bearing of the term."[16]

Cronbach, like Buber, finds the experience of God to be legitimate and valid. He disagrees, however, with Buber insofar as any real "knowing" or imparting of information takes place as a result of such experience.

Cronbach, however, comes no nearer to telling us what he means by "God" in making this distinction between divine attributes of personhood and

relational ability on one hand, and the non-objective character of Deity on the other. As stated above, Cronbach demonstrates an acute ability to semantically dissect the confused intricacies of theological discussion. He seemingly has, however, little that is clear to say on the subject himself.

GOD AS GOAL

Cronbach does propound, however, a particular understanding of God based on the his view of the needs and ideals of the human person. In his system of thought, God can only be characterized as a goal as opposed to a cause, an aim based upon the ideals and aspirations of people. People, in effect, make Deity what Deity is. Seigel, in explaining Cronbach's theology, writes:

> "God is viewed then, not as the Beginning, the Cause, but the End, the Aim. He is the inspirational goal toward which men move in their sublimest moments of social consecration, in the precious instants of personal exaltation."[17]

The God-as-Goal is distinctly different from either the anthropomorphic Deity of Scripture or any of the God concepts which may result from philosophical inquiry. Just as only that which is good and true can be considered Jewish and legitimate in Scripture, only that which represents the highest ideals of the human person can be associated with Deity or considered divine. In this way, Cronbach links the very notion of Diety with the concerns of social justice: pacifism, peace of mind, cessation of strife over material well-being, an end to human contentiousness and competitiveness.[18] God is, therefore, equivalent to the social ideals of peace among humanity (what Cronbach calls "mutualism") and inner harmony. God becomes a figurative term which best expresses these human longings and aspirations. Cronbach spells this notion out in his essay "The Social Implications of Prayer," in which he writes:

> "Gods...are beings identified with the worshipper's most earnest problems. The essential thing about a god is the seriousness, the earnestness, the importance of the interests with which the goals is connected...(G)ods are to be understood only in terms of the human purpose in behalf of which gods are manufactured and utilized...human purpose is a phase of that organization...of experience which is the ultimate of all discovery and effort...(T)he all-embracing purpose...the supreme ideal involves in superlative measure that profundity, earnestness, seriousness, and importance which is the essence of godhead."[19]

The traditional God who is the ultimate in power, knowledge and beneficience is replaced by Cronbach with a notion of God which embodies the ultimate in human concerts. For Maimonides, the more intellectual the notion of Deity, the more accurate it is. For Cronbach, the more "exalted" the notion of Deity in relation to social ideals, the more accurate it is. God is, therefore, a figurative expression for the ultimate in social ideals for Cronbach. He describes this notion of the divine in the following manner:

> "...the God whom the worshipper approaches approximates the true God in proportion to the exaltedness of the worshipper's social ideals and endeavors..."[20] (emphasis added)

Cronbach offers this theological position based not upon reason, but reasonableness. For him, it is reasonable to assume that God is a goal representing the ultimate in social ideal, even as his reason forces him to concede that God is not an entity or objective body of any sort. His arguments for this God concept are not logically convincing. They are, however, not difficult to accept if one assumes that it is reasonable for God to represent the best to that which we as human persons aspire. An example of Cronbach's argument for this God concept is the following analogy:

> "People--so we are admonished--should be treated not merely as means towards ends but as ends in themselves. May not the conception of God as a goal reflect that mutualistic ideal?...(M)ay not the thought of God as an end bespeak the thought of man as an end? Reverence for deity--may it not be an upshot of reverence for humanity?"[21]

The analogy sounds reasonable, yet it remains for the individual to

accept or reject. There is no logical force behind the argument, a fact which Cronbach concedes. What his notion of God-as-Goal does, though, is to try to save the entire language and form of theological discourse from lapsing into scientific inaccuracy and social irrelevance. A God that is not a cause is not responsible for its effects. A God which is posited as the ultimate in social ideal need not be associated with the negative elements of religion.[22] A God-as-Goal which is dramatic and impressive can motivate people towards effecting social justice without being responsible for people's failure to act.

Siegel points out that for Cronbach, formal religion will eventually cease to exist, while social striving for justice will continue.[23] In the future, the acceptance of God-as-Goal will negate the need for impressive and dramatic trappings to motivate people to work for social justice. The ideal will be sufficient in and of itself.

Cronbach explains how this notion of God-as-Goal even resolves the nagging problem of evil. Since God is not a cause, God is not responsible for it. Since God is not even a real entity, it can serve as the unshakeable goal of good without suffering from a mixture with the results of evil acts. Cronbach writes:

> "We noted...how, already in Biblical antiquity, the conception of Deity as a cause of things yields to the conception of Deity as a goal of things. If God ceases to be a causal agent..the need for theodicy terminates. The assumptions which evoke theodicies lapse. God does not cause the good, God is the good. God does not permit the evil, the word 'God' heralds the human struggle against the evil."[24] (emphasis added)

CONCLUSION

Cronbach rejects the traditional designative notion of God and is unable to offer a logically coherent definition in its place. This is due to the fact that it is the function of a definition to designate, while God has no designative meaning for Cronbach. Cronbach's idea of God seems not to be

an entity or causal agent. God is instead a figurative expression for the most exalted human ideals. Any concept which is base or does not motivate the human person toward the attainment of the ideal society is ipso facto not attributable to the godhead. The godhead is not a thing but a goal; an aim which embodies the best hopes of the human spirit. Just as no religious practice or piece of religious writing qualifies as being Jewish if it does not represent good and truth as Cronbach sees them, nothing can be part of the God-as-Goal unless it represents the highest in personal and social ideals, as Cronbach sees them.

Cronbach uses reasonableness as opposed to logic to support this notion. At the same time, through his semantic analysis, he is able to point out modes of theological discourse which are inaccurate and confused. For Cronbach, the term God can have no designative meaning as there is no informational content in the term which to convey.

The term God serves as a human mode of evaluation and dramatization. It highlights and increases value when associated with those things people consider good. Its usage can also denote disapproval or not living up to the highest human standards. Due to the nature of the evaluative and dramatic functions of the term God, it remains a subjective notion in Cronbach's system. There is no objective entity that is the Deity--only the sum total of subjective human ideals and aspirations to guide human society toward progress. Without such human enterprise, there is no God, even in the evaluative sense. The relevance of the term God depends on the amount humans are willing to use it as a repository for the highest hopes and ideals. Only then is God real.[25]

Chapter IIIC

Cronbach:

Figurative Language and Religious Services

EFFICACY OF PRAYER AND RELIGIOUS SERVICES

Having established that Cronbach believes in no designative meaning or objective referent for the term "God," the accepted practices of individual prayer and communal worship become problematic. In Maimonides' system, we saw that although prayer did not effect communication between God and the worshipper, it served as an opportunity for philosophic contemplation and as a means for social control. In Buber's system, prayer served as a potential prelude to an encounter between the Eternal Thou and the human person. For Buber, however, the communal religious service has virtually nothing to do with God, as God is only experienced in individual I-Thou settings. How does Cronbach confront the twin problems of prayer's efficacy and the purpose of the religious service?

Obviously, Cronbach must deny the efficacy of individual petitionary prayer. Not only does this phenomenon seem childlike and magical to him, it does not square with his God-concept; i.e., God-as-Goal as opposed to God-as-Cause. Good reasons exist for prayer, according to Cronbach. Efficacy, however, is not one of them. He writes:

> "If prayers were efficacious, no one would ever die, no one would suffer illness, wars would have ceased long ago, and strife among men would, long ago, have abated. The fact that people continue to pray despite overwhelming evidence against efficacy, proves that considerations other than efficacy are operative."[1]

Prayer should not, as it has in the past, be perceived as unrealistic individual petition for miraculous intervention in nature. Such prayer is incompatible with scientific fact, and is, moreover, stiffling to scientific inquiry. Cronbach bemoans this historical usage of prayer as he writes:

> "Prayer has lived in the world of special creations and miracles, of virgin births and bodily resurrections, of improbable and impossible gods and saints, of dogmas that frown on facts and authority that manacles inquiry."[2]

Prayer, then, that asks for supernatural intervention on behalf of individuals cannot be efficacious in Cronbach's view. As there is no objective entity which can hear prayer and dispense such personal providence, prayer is merely a human outcry which calls for fulfillment of a particular desire. It is unrealistic to expect that desire to be filled by supernatural means. What does constitute legitimate prayer for Cronbach is as yet unclear.

IS THERE VALUE IN PRAYER OR THE RELIGIOUS SERVICE?

One type of prayer does, however, have value in Cronbach's system. Seigel states that for Cronbach: "Prayer articulates our ideals, it is a part of one's strivings, it is a form of literary art, and it nurtures the feelings that prompt prayers."[3]

True prayer, then, is a figurative expression of the articulation of human ideals which are directed toward God, the ultimate repository of those ideals. Cronbach, although acknowledging that much of prayer can and does fall short of the mark, nevertheless supports this subjective, idealistic view of prayer. He writes:

> "...there are prayers and prayers. Some prayers are meaningless. Some prayers are hateful. But prayers need not be that. Prayers can be an expression of love. They can voice our ideals. They can be beautiful--beautiful in their language and, taking the form of hymns, beautiful in their music. And that is the kind of prayer of which we should think when we read, 'Then began men to call upon the name of (Yahveh).' (Genesis 4:26)"[4] (emphasis added)

This outpouring of ideals, however, cannot be contained in a prescribed liturgy. As Cronbach writes, "Prayer must be completely optional to possess value."[5] Consequently, Cronbach dismisses established liturgies, (including the pharisaic religious service) from having intrinsic value. He writes harshly about those who would make the service equivalent to the religion.[6] He writes with vehemence against outmoded, inflexible liturgy, attributing its practice to mere habit. In his work, Realities of Religion, he

writes:

> "...how shall we interpret the force of habit in religion, with its routine church going...its repetitious prayers, its mumbled formulae? How shall we characterize the urge which underlies the singing of hymns, the reciting of liturgies and the performance of ceremonies in mechanical fashion? Sacred utterances can be chanted or quoted in a manner listless and unintelligent, with little if any awareness of what the words signify. Often these words belong to a language which the worshipper does not understand...(H)ow shall we name the impulsions producing that order of phenomena?"[7]

Because of his own life's experience, especially as a congregational rabbi, Cronbach comes to question the value of <u>any</u> particular temple worship ritual.[8] Cronbach, who wanted to excite and motivate people to the cause of social justice, perceives the temple as a vehicle of stasis, not change, especially as far as the young are concerned. Cronbach writes:

> "There is something static about Temple worship while the mind of a student must needs be dynamic. Temple may be doing excellent work; but with the growing mind of a learner, the rigidity and uniformity of Temple worship cannot well accord. In fact, do not most of us feel we have outgrown Temple? While we are obligated to attend services for the sake of popular opinion, the place of public worship has ceased to furnish for us the living waters that satisfy the soul's thirst."[9] (emphasis added)

Unprescribed prayer, in Cronbach's view, can have value in that it articulates human hopes and aspirations. Prescribed liturgical rites for Cronbach are neither edifying nor efficacious.

<u>DEFINITION OF PRAYER BY FUNCTION</u>

To this point, we have referred to prayer as either denoting prescribed liturgy or some vague articulation of human hope. Cronbach does, however, provide a more detailed description of what prayer is for him in terms of the functions it serves. He lists eight defining functions of prayer as follows:

> "1. Prayer can be the token of attachment to a given social group.

2. The God of prayer is a confidant, a socius...His significance... is derived from the social nature of man.

3. God is the leader of the group, that is, the aggregate of society.

4. Prayer is...an instrument of social control.

5. Prayer can, through social indirection, influence both the suppliant's circumstances and his state of mind.

6. Prayer has a direct influence on individuals besides the suppliant.

7. Prayer has an indirect influence upon individuals besides the suppliant due to the social consequences of the suppliant's attitude and conduct.

8. Prayer is not only a social cause but a social effect. It has psychological antecedents and concomitants in the worshipper's entire milieu."[10]

These functions of prayer can be divided into three types, all of which Cronbach deems important: 1) group allegiance; 2) personal comfort or solace; and 3) motivation for dedication to social causes. We will examine each of these functions briefly.

Cronbach feels that because so much social strife is the result of intra-group disharmony, prayer can serve as a unifying force, one which helps to patch over differences. He feels that even a prayer service whose words are inaccurate and meaningless in their plain sense can serve the function of furthering group identification.[11] He includes in this category those prayers which are said in a language unintelligible to the worshipper. In this way, the prescribed service serves as an identification symbol, about which Cronbach writes:

> "...prayer can serve as a symbol of group loyalty or conformity. Herein lies the effectiveness of prayers that have, from time immemorial, been condemned as 'lip service,' 'dead forms,' etc. Herein is also the effectiveness and usually the admitted purpose of non-vernacular prayers, or by vernacular prayers that have become rote, or that embody thoughts and words beyond the comprehension of the worshippers. The value of such prayer ...is that of a flag or a status--unimportant in itself yet tremendously impor-

tant as an indication of group attachment."[12]

The second group of prayer functions includes the concerns of the individual human person and solicitude for the concerns of others as well. Cronbach denotes this phenomenon and its outward expression, "mutualism."[13] Mutualism, in Cronbach's view, is that tendency in human persons to seek the betterment of the condition of others and themselves as well. This desire is often expressed through prayer and requests for prayer.

Cronbach rightfully points out that it is far too literal to interpret many prayers as actual attempts at communicating with Deity in order to effect a supernatural intervention for personal benefit. Prayers of the "mutualistic" type can simply dramatize one's sense of frustration, fear or loneliness. Requests for prayer on one's behalf may simply be requests for encouragement and sympathy. Cronbach makes this clear, writing:

> "Related to this (phenomenon of religious mutualism) are requests for prayer. Such requests are quests for the mutualistic relationship. The implication of 'Pray for me' is 'Help me with your sympathy, your encouragement, your support.'"[14]

Prayer is not only an expression of mutualistic concern, in Cronbach's view. It can be the spark or the catalyst which spurs one person to help another, or work for an ideal. This third category of prayer is crucial for Cronbach because it takes the feeling of concern an individual may have and brings it into the social arena, where action can lead to social improvement.

Cronbach notes that the impulse to pray for another, is a mutualistic impulse which desires the betterment of others. In his eyes, this psychological impulse is both the effect of social causes and can be the cause of social effects. He posits a symbiotic relationship between the mutualistic concerns of the individual and of those around him or her. Cronbach explains that:

> "Your desire to pray for another had to be generated somehow. That desire in your mind can be the precipitate of

> forces at work not only in your own mind but also in many other minds. That desire in your mind corresponds to intentions, purposes, and wishes in the minds of others, including that of the person prayed for and deposited in your mind by the interplay of influences active among many persons in your social milieu."[15]

That this "interplay" Cronbach presupposes can have positive external effects, he has no doubt. The depth of mutualistic concern that an individual has, according to Cronbach, results in action for the betterment of others. He states this position unequivocally in his work, Religion and its Social Setting, in which he writes that:

> "...prayer can have an effect upon external material objects. There is nothing occult in this. It simply means that praying for the success of a venture has some connection with the zeal where with the worshipper toils for and ultimately approximates or achieves success..."[16]

We have seen that for Cronbach, prayer and religious services have value because of their human functions: unifying group loyalty, expression mutualistic concern, and spurring individuals to act upon their concern. Prayer and religious services are valueless if divorced from these functions as they neither serve as communication with Deity nor fulfill divine commandment. We are led to inquire as to what forms of prayer will fulfill the functions listed above. What prayers, especially within a formal liturgical setting, are "legitimate" for Cronbach? What forms of prayer actually articulate human hopes and ideals in coordination with the God-as-Goal, the ultimate aggregate or expression of those ideals?

PROPER PRAYERS ACCORDING TO CRONBACH

We have seen that Cronbach felt free to reinterpret Scripture, radically, if necessary, in order to keep it in conformance with his principle of good and truth. He reinterprets prayers and religious services with the same sense of freedom in order that they accord with his notions of God-as-Goal (or Ultimate Ideal) and prayer as the human articulation of an ideal. Traditional

practice with respect to prayer is deemed irrelevant, unless the recitation of a prayer serves as a symbol of group identification.

Because of this, religious services put together by Cronbach were by their nature non-traditional and eclectic. He stressed that which was aesthetically pleasing and socially just in the services he edited. Seigel relates that he felt free to do this when in attendance at the summer institutes of the National Federation of Temple Youth. He describes the elements which composed a "Cronbach service" as follows:

> "It...became an Institute tradition to attend what was known as a 'Cronbach service.' This was non-liturgic and consisted mainly of hymns, English poems, memorized quotations from Jewish and other literature, climaxed by an extensive original prayer composed largely on the basis of thoughts, petitions, and thank offerings written out and handed to Dr. Cronbach a day before the service."[17]

He did not restrict his sentiments regarding prayer to experimental youth services alone. Cronbach felt that the Temple itself must mature as an institution, recognizing the fact that while prescribed worship assemblies had some value, that "...our finest inspirations do not take place in such assemblies...(O)ur heavenly moment can emerge at some sight of human fortitude or affection or helpfulness or beauty."[18]

Cronbach tried to set some of these so-called "heavenly moments" in prose for synagogue use in his work, Prayers of the Jewish Advance. Our analysis will not require a thorough examination of all of Cronbach's creative liturgical efforts. It would, however, be appropriate to examine one or two of his original prayers to see the ideals they express.

His prayers are mostly pleas for the betterment of society and the improvement of those whose lot it is to do strenuous physical labor. In one prayer for the Sabbath, he prays fervently for deliverance for; "...all who are ill paid, overworked or placed amid unfitting or humiliating conditions of

work..."[19] Simultaneously, he bemoans "...economic slavery, the slavery of the overworked and underpaid toilers in mines, mills, factories and sweatshops."[20]

For Cronbach, these sentiments not only serve to uphold the cause of social justice, but become true prayer when linked to the traditional Jewish imperative for rest on Sabbath. His Sabbath prayer continues, a litany of suffering bound by the hope for a better future. Cronbach prays:

> "Help those who are unsuited, unhappy or unwilling at their work and lead into happier hours those upon whom the blight of unemployment hath fallen. May ampler wisdom, growing within our economic life, soon find a way to end its woes."[21]

The above prayer is a dramatic prayerful plea. It does not call for supernatural redemption or intervention to relieve the burdens of workers. It embodies the ideal of worker progress and dramatizes it so that it can be felt by the worshipper who reads these words. It articulates a human hope in terms of what would be ideal (i.e., the cessation of unfair labor practice).

In another Cronbach prayer, we see an appeal to the ideal in nature. During the section of the liturgy where adoration of Deity traditionally takes place, we find woven into it a panegyric to the impressive and dramatic ideal of nature. In his "Adoration," Cronbach writes:

> "O Lord, Our God!...(T)hine are the heights and depths of space...(T)hou art present in the glittering stars that spangle the heavens at night; and in the winds that breathe through the tree tops is Thy blessed voice to be heard. Every dewdrop, every grassblade, and the soul of every living thing gloweth with they presence. We are powerless to find words of our own."[22]

One should not, in reading the prayer, be confused by its use of theological language. Since, in Cronbach's thought, God is not an entity, but merely represents an ultimate ideal, we can see that the prayer is actually an extollation of the dramatic power and beauty of nature.

Prayer is a form for Cronbach by which impressive and dramatic thoughts can be imparted to the worshipper in order to elicit emotional reaction. Perhaps no prayer that Cronbach wrote expresses this impressiveness, sense of drama and pathos on one hand, while holding out the hope of human redemption on the other than the closing prayer for his Confirmation Service in his Prayers of the Jewish Advance. It promotes human mutualism, social justice and group identification simultaneously in the name of the "ultimate ideal," or God-as-Goal. For this reason this prayer is given here in full:

> "Heavenly Father! The hour of communion with Thee is drawing to a close. We thank Thee for the blessings that Thou hast brought into our souls. Sweet and comforting is the thought of Thee and of the great love in which Thou dost enfold us. Hevenly Father, in any hour of sorror or temptation to which the future may bring us, may this thought be our strength and our support.
>
> Before departing from this holy place, we again lift our hearts in mindfulness of our parents and our homes. Help us, Lord, that we may never forget how mother and father have suffered and toiled for us. O how unselfishly have they loved us! How fondly they have placed in us our hopes! Do Thou help us to become worthy of all the goodness and affection that dwell within their hearts.
>
> And not only upon the families sheltered by our homes do we ask Thy blessing, but also upon the larger family whose home is the entire earth, the family of mankind whereof Thou, O God, art the Father and in which all men art brothers. In behalf of all these, Thy sons and daughters, we would earnestly pray.
>
> Our hearts go out especially toward those that are in trouble and distress. Of all that are suffering in body and soul, we would, at this hour, be mindful. Toward the poor and the downtrodden, toward those that toil and drudge at tasks that are hard and hopeless, toward those that grown beneath burdens too heavy for them to bear, we would be full of love and compassion.
>
> May we earnestly work for the spreading of justice and righteousness among men. May we help in the task of hastening the day when poverty and oppression of all kinds will cease from the earth. Yea, with all the house of Israel 'we fervently pray...' (continuing with the end of the Adoration in the Union Prayer Book)."[23]

Cronbach masterfully weaves the concerns of humankind into the concerns of the House of Israel. He never prays to God as a Savior, only as the Goal by which all will see the need for amity and peace. His figurative usage is at once evaluative, dramatic and impressive, yet never designative. His prayer is a masterpiece of figurative expression.

CONCLUSION

As seen above, Cronbach wrote some very creative and impressive prayers. A problem arises, however, in that prayers are indeed merely forms for Cronbach. They are figurative expressions of human ideals. Yet, if all they do is sit on the printed page, they are valueless. A prayer cannot save in Cronbach's system of thought. It only serves as a meaningful (or unmeaningful) expression of hopes and ideals. It may or may not ever lead to constructive action. Cronbach concedes this point when he writes:

> "...whatever the literary or dramatistic attribute of prayer, the thought of prayer can be more impressive than the prayer itself. The mere discussion of prayer can be more inspiring than the actual supplication."[24]

Even if a person is inspired by a prayer and motivated to action, this may not save the prayer's figurative form from lapsing into meaninglessness. For although Cronbach knows full well for himself that his use of the term "God" is not designative, this is not apparent to the worshipper.

Cronbach's view of prayer as a figurative expression of mutualistic concern within the context of God-as-Goal may seem satisfying, but there is no evidence for it. It metaphorizes the words of established liturgy into meaninglessness, because, for Cronbach, there is no objective entity called Deity to undergird that liturgy. One is either left with prayers that are dramatic metaphors given Cronbach's theology, or prayers that are not amenable to metaphorization due to their traditional context. This last problem has caused one critic of Cronbach, Rami Shapiro, to write:

> "The problem with such a position (as Cronbach's) is that it leads to the assertion of the essential meaninglessness of a liturgical text. The words have no objective referent, and are simply tools with which the worshipper plumbs the depths of his or her own soul."[25] (emphasis added)

Consequently, Orthodox Jewish prayer and religious services are meaningless in their original context. Creative prayers which dramatize impulses toward group identification, strivings toward social justice or mutualistic impules are powerful figurative expressions. They can claim, however, no meaning outside of what subjective listener grants them. Prayer for Cronbach is ideally an expression of the longing for world and human redemption and perfection. Yet, because there is no objective Deity, because there is division among people as to what constitutes this redemption and perfection, we are left with Cronbach's own subjective hope as the ultimate guarantor of his type of prayer.

Chapter IIID

Cronbach:

Figurative Language and Religious Symbolic Practice

PURPOSE OF RELIGION

Before examining Cronbach's view of religious symbolic practice, it is important to analyze the purpose he feels that religion serves. That he believes that religious symbols serve as figurative expression which represent human mutualistic needs is obvious and will be brought out in this analysis. Yet we will see that the entire religious enterprise is of questionable value for Cronbach. The questions that religions raise may prove to be, in his view, merely exercises in semantic problem-solving. If so, a formal system of figurative religious interpretation may simply be irrelevant. Before arriving at this conclusion, however, we will take a look at what Cronbach ostensibly believes are the purposes of, and the symbolic practices which undergird, the religious endeavor.

Seigel writes that a formal list of goals for religion was promulgated by Cronbach. This list included seven "principal aims":

1) securing entrance into heaven
2) teaching of ethics
3) strengthening of the state
4) striving for tangible material advantages
5) seeking social justice for the underprivileged
6) attaining emotional gratification
7) acquiring of respectable social standing through church membership[1]

All of the above concerns, save one, are concerned with the satisfaction of the needs of the individual and society. The first aim on the list can be ignored because Cronbach offers no evidence in his writings that he believes in any concept of heaven. If he does believe in "heaven," it is not an entity or a place, rather a state of affairs in which human needs and ideals

are fulfilled. "Heaven" then is a figurative expression of the goal of human persons to achieve meaning and satisfaction. Because of his semantic interpretation of religious issues, it is most probable that Cronbach's usage of the term "heaven" is for purposes of drama or impressiveness.

This overwhelming concern with the condition of the individual and society as opposed to more metaphysical concerns is made specific by Cronbach. It is evident that his passion is not with Judaism as an eternal source of value. He is concerned about the welfare and condition of human persons, many of whom happen to be Jews. He writes:

> "My principal concern is not Judaism, but people--the utilization of Judaism is what counts, not its mere survival. Not important is what Jews can do to serve Judaism, but how Judaism can serve people."[2]

Cronbach says furthermore, that "...the best in religion lies not with its rituals and not in its dogmas, but in its recognition of human personality."[3] The human personality and its concerns, in Cronbach's view, replaces any theological or metaphysical notions as the purpose of the religious enterprise. He deems the Jewish response to the human personality to be "a Judaism of maturity." In his words:

> "A Judaism of maturity would be one in which the dominant emphasis rests not on rituals and not on doctrines but on felicitous human relationships...(W)e can make our reverence for human personality the nucleus of our religion..."[4]

This view is in perfect consonance with Cronbach's principle of good and truth as well as his theology of God-as-Goal or ultimate ideal. In order to be "Jewish," some concept or act must be good and true. In order to be "divine," a concept or act must articulate a striving toward the ultimate in human ideals. To be religious at all, a concept or act must be fundamentally concerned with the welfare of the human personality. In one of his original prayers, Cronbach hammers away at this theme:

> "...(J)udaism stands for our duty to seek the good, the beautiful, and the true. Judaism it is that summons us to love our neighbor as ourself. Judaism it is that admonishes us to be holy as...God (God-as-Goal, etc.) is holy."[5]

At risk of belaboring the point, Cronbach sees the religious endeavor as a figurative expression for ultimate concern with the human person. It is on that basis, and on that basis only, that any religion or Judaism possesses value.

THE PROBLEM OF RELIGIOUS SYMBOLIC PRACTICE

A problem arises for Cronbach's religious system of thought. If the entire religious endeavor is in reality nothing more than social work (even if it is exalted social work), how is one to understand religious symbolic practices and ceremonies, and the important role they play in established religions, especially Judaism? Cronbach saw an unhealthy psychological impulsion which resulted in preoccupation with observance of certain rituals. He saw this unreasonable impulsion as the basis for ritual selectivity and inconsistency in observance. For him, it is the cause of ritual tenacity, especially with respect to weddings and funerals, and for continued observance of rites which had long outlived their historical framework or intent.[6] In noting the unhealthy nature of this impulsion, he wrote, "Ritual addictions, especially when intense, bear some resemblance to the obsessions studied in psychiatry."[7] He also noted, when confronted with seemingly mindless commitment to ceremony in homes of disbelieving Jews, that, "When the theological reasons go, the psychological reasons remain."[8]

What is the justification for religious symbolic practice, in Cronbach's view? He wrestles with the problem before offering an answer. He categorically rejects any theological basis for religious ceremony.[9] Cronbach feels that it can be justified in some sense because of the emotions elicited by its observance. These emotions might serve to ease the pain of an individ-

ual or impel him or her to work for social causes. Without this effect, however, religious symbolic practice loses any meaning whatsoever. This is what Cronbach means when he writes:

> "Sacraments may not stem from the supernatural. But sacraments can have an effect--at least the expectation of them can have an effect--on people's emotions. That effect may or may not win our approval. But that effect, and not some occult theory of transubstantiation, is the subject at issue."[10]

Religious rituals, then, are without intrinsic value in Cronbach's thought. They have no supernatural basis, they do not have meaning in and of themselves, they only have value as dramatic, not informational forms. Seigel echoes Cronbach's caution against rituals. He writes:

> "Calling rituals devices of art, not information, he advocates the setting up of new traditions and rituals, new forms of Jewish worship...(But) Abraham Cronbach continually warns against overuse of rituals."[11]

Since symbolic practices have no intrinsic meaning and their value is proportional to their social effect, Cronbach has no difficulty proposing ceremonial change in much the same way as he did with respect to prayer. Just as prayer serves certain functions, so religious symbolic practice serves those same functions.[12]

It should be noted again that Cronbach thinks that much ritual observance is marked by unhealthy, childlike psychological thinking that often favors that which is unknown in the face of scientific fact. He writes that:

> "...the question can...be asked: 'may not the emotions characteristic of childhood lurk in the religious sanctification of the unknown?' How often are we told that religion behins where knowledge ends...(R)eligion is often 'defended' by reference to the limitations of our knowledge and the weightiness of the unfathomed."[13]

Cronbach clearly rejects this reasoning. For him, religion starts with the human person's needs and ends with the human person's ideals. All prayer, ritual and theology must be subordinated under those two rubrics. For

to Cronbach, God, prayer, and religious symbolic practice are totally irrelevant in and of themselves. He writes:

> "If you long for the rituals, indulge in the rituals, but whatever you so, adhere to social justice and upright conduct. If you are adverse to the rituals, discard the rituals; only adhere to social justice and to upright conduct."[14]

He is even more vehement with respect to theological discourse. He writes, "What difference does it make what name you give God?...(L)ead an upright life. Lead a godly life. Call God by whatever name you choose."[15]

This holds for all religions. Cronbach writes that, "Social vision is the destiny of every religion...(R)eligion is forever finding its way, amidst cermonials and creeds, into the domain of social purpose."[16] This social view of the religious endeavor caused him to say that, "Saintliness is social realism."[17] Social concern is the glue that binds Scripture, God, prayer and cermony. For Cronbach, they are all inseparably and ultimately concerned with the human person as an individual and in social intercourse.

It is this phenomenon that Cronbach denotes as "mutualism"--the combination of all of these forces in the service of people, who are themselves the purpose of all religious theory and practice. Mutualism for Cronbach involves the "...friendship, good will and reciprocal helpfulness (which) prevail within a religious society."[18]

The very language of religion, whose usage is so confused in its different function, is intended to further the mutualistic ideal. Cronbach makes this point specifically: people may use the language of theology in their conversation, but their underlying concern is for people. Cronbach explains:

> "When religion speaks of the yearning of the soul for God, its language mentions no human relationships yet is that yearning comprehensible without our sensing beneath it a profound mutualism?...(T)he prayer may be addressed to God, but the deeper meaning of the prayer lies embedded in the mutualistic undercurrent. The sense of security conferred by mutualistic human relationships may very well ac-

> count for the consolation imparted by many a religious outpouring."[19]

Cronbach claims that the entire religious enterprise is a figurative expression of mutualism. Unfortunately, this leaves an entire area of semantic problems that are open to widely differing interpretations.

SEMANTIC PROBLEMS

We have tried to show that Cronbach believes that religion, in all its forms of expression is meaningless unless interpreted in the light of its function for the human person. The complexities involved in these functions, in Cronbach's view, are best explained semantically, according to the categories of designation, evaluation, dramatization and impressiveness. It is in light of these categories that we can best understand the complex issues religions raise in Cronbach's view. In the introduction to his Realities of Religion, he writes:

> "Religion asserts itself in rituals and celebrations. It expresses itself in music, painting, sculpture and architecture. It manifests itself in benevolences and sometimes in persecutions. But the problems of religion arise chiefly with its language. The disputes centering in religion pertain to religious beliefs, and beliefs are couched in words."[20] (emphasis added)

Given that religious concepts contain "a multiplicity of meanings," Cronbach feels it is vital to determine which meaning of a word or concept is being used in a given context and only then to judge it according to its semantic function.[21] In writing about the confusion evident in religious discourse, Cronbach tries to set fair rules governing judgments of religious concepts. He writes:

> "Fairness of appraisal requires that we judge evaluation as evaluation, dramatization as dramatization, and impressiveness as impressiveness, and that we avoid judging them as items of information...(W)e must ask not 'Are these valid statements of fact?' but 'Are these acceptable as evaluations? Are they admissible for the impressions they confer?'"[22]

Cronbach effectively removes either informational validity or empirical verifiability as a basis for religious discourse because of their inability to produce designata, the actual things upon which beliefs and practices are based.[23] In lieu of such designata, religious problems and their solutions must, in Cronbach's view, be judged according to the structures of their properly assigned categories. We want to know how well a cermony dramatizes a particular ideal and how impressive a belief is in uplifting the human spirit. Cronbach feels that religious issues, lacking objective designata, are liable for judgment in what are purely subjective terms. He writes that:

> "We may have to include under dramatization such metaphysical puzzles as matter, consciousness, times, space, mind, force, reality. These words, being nouns, appear to supply certain things with their names. But the appearance is deceptive. There is no such 'thing' as matter and no such 'thing' as consciousness...' (M)atter' is but a convenient term covering a complex of happenings, ill-defined, varying...and determined only by the purpose which, in any given case, the word 'matter' happens to 'serve.'"[24]

Cronbach arrives at the bottom line at last: For all his statements regarding good, truth and social ideals, all is merely a human attempt to impose order upon and categorize a chaotic world that seems to defy explanation. This is why for Cronbach, all religious concepts, be they God, ritual, sanctity and the like, must be linked to human concerns and ideals. Lacking objective designata, the above concepts are bereft of meaning. They require semantic interpretation as to their function to give them meaning.

Consequently, Cronbach sees religious symbolic practice as a figurative expression of articulations of human ideals and concerns whose value is determined solely by their ability to evaluate, dramatize or impress. The ability to impress may not even lie in the specific ritual itself; that which gives meaning may reside in the psychological expectation of the individual religionist performing it. As Cronbach writes; "...it can be the expectations

regarding the ritual that edify...(A)ctualities may disappoint, but idealizations remain potent."[25] The Mourner's Qaddis may be meaningful to an individual, not in its recitation, but in the mere thought of reciting it and the feelings which that thought elicits in the individuals.

CONCLUSION

Religious symbolic practices are figurative expressions which are meaningful for Cronbach only insofar as they: 1) link religious cermony to human needs and ideals; 2) serve as symbolic acts to evaluate, dramatize and impress upon the individual what Cronbach calls "the redemptive aspects of experience."[26]

Religious debate for Cronbach is a matter of semantics. Without existing objective designata for referral, religious belief and practice are removed from the realm of that which can be prescribed or commanded. They slip into the realm of relative meaning in which individuals assign value to beliefs and practices. These are valued on the basis of how well they fulfill their semantic function.

With this in mind, Cronbach dismisses from serious religious discussion virtually all arguments concerning belief, "proper practice," or even the survival of Judaism as a religious endeavor. He writes, with utter seriousness:

> "Semantically speaking, Judaism will survive as long as there exist, anywhere in the world, a group of people for whom 'Jewish' will happen to be the designation, and for whose doctrines and practices, whatever form they may take, 'Judaism' will chance to be the appellative."[27]

As radical as this statement sounds, it is in perfect consonance with all Cronbach has said earlier. To designate without designata is a meaningless activity. Religious expressions, such as Scripture, God, and religious services, have no such objective referents. They, therefore, reside solely

within the purview of human interpretation. It is, therefore, in this realm that Cronbach posits his principle of good and truth, his God-as-Goal, and linking of the human ideal to that which he considers divine. For Cronbach, all of the above religious concerns represent figurative expression of human needs and ideals; needs and ideals which Cronbach believes are best met through the means of social justice.

Chapter IVA

Reines:

Figurative Language and Scripture

DEFINITIONS

Just as the previous philosophers' taught had to be examined in light of the unique vocabulary used by each, the same is the case with respect to the thought of Dr. Alvin J. Reines. He uses seeming commonplace words and phrases according to a precise usage. Consequently, that usage must be defined if we are to ascertain what Reines is trying to say. Strict definition of terms, then, will be set out before each of the four topic areas to be discussed. What follows is a short list of definitions whose meanings are integral to understanding Reines' view of Scripture.

1) Verbal revelation -- the infallible transmission of the will of a perfect, infallible deity to human person(s) in words (i.e., literal);[1] The Pentateuch or Torah, in Orthodox Judaism, claims to be the product of such a revelation. A human person having access to such type of revelation is considered a prophet, one who is authorized on the basis of such revelation to speak in the name of Deity.

2) Dynamic revelation -- the fallible transmission of divine influence on the human person through human reason or imagination, or the report of human persons purporting to witness some supernatural phenomena; in this view, Scripture would be conceived of as the product of both divine and human agency.[2]

3) Natural revelation -- the discovery of the so-called divine will by the human person by wholly natural (as opposed to supernatural) means; this form of revelation is empirically apprehended and fallible due to its reliance upon imperfect sense perception. Consequently, revelation is the product of finite human apprehension.[3]

4) Miswah -- Literally "commandment," miswah denotes an act that has been prescribed by the creator God to the Israelite people by means of a verbal revelation as written down in the Pentateuch.

5) Liberal religion -- a religion or religious system of thought that accepts the results of Biblical scholarship and does not rely solely on the Pentateuch or Scripture for this determination of ultimate truth.[4]

6) Biblical scholarship -- the academic discipline that holds that the Pentateuch does not represent the transmission of the divine will through (perfect) verbal revelation; Biblical scholarship maintains that the Pentateuch and the rest of Scripture are composite works, written by various human persons in different ages of history.

7) Birth dogma -- this concept, according to Reines, "...asserts that a person born into an authoritarian religious community by birth, so that without his ever confessing its dogmas, they are nevertheless obligatory upon him and he is deemed a heretic should he ever reject them."[5]

INTRODUCTION

From our analysis of the thought of Maimonides, Buber and Cronbach we have learned that each of them rejected the idea that the Pentateuch was literally true according to its plain meaning. Each of them interpreted Scripture figuratively asserting that the metaphor by which they interpreted Scripture represented the actual meaning of the Scripture. We have seen that Maimonides felt that the Scripture was in actuality, a figurative expression of the principles of Neo-Platonic philosophy. Similarly, Buber held that Scrip-

ture was nothing other than the figurative expression of the human recollection of actual historical encounters between the human person and God as the Eternal Thou. Cronbach, too, thought that Scripture could not be accepted in its plain sense; in reality it was a figurative expression of the ideals of social justice. According to him, in order to be properly understood, Scripture had to be interpreted according to his principle of good and truth.

Reines' thought stands in contradistinction to all of these positions. Rejecting all claims for figurative interpretations of Scripture, Reines thinks that the claims of Scripture, especially the Pentateuch, are to be understood according to their plain meanings. In other words, the Scripture, "...says what it means and means what it says."[6]

CLAIMS OF THE PENTATEUCH AS A MICROCOSM OF SCRIPTURE

In discussing the validity of Pentateuch and its truth claims, Reines emphasizes the vital importance of close reading of the Pentateuch to understand what it says without resorting to any superimposed system of interpretation. He writes:

> "...knowledge of the Pentateuch is generally vague and inaccurate, based upon childhood memories of Bible stories and similar inadequate sources. Moreover, this knowledge is often colored by emotionalism and bias, both positive and negative. Clearly the only way to acquire the knowledge necessary to make a decision regarding pentateuchal religion is to go to the Bible itself."[7]

For Reines, the overriding concern in understanding the Pentateuch according to its plain meaning lies in its claim to being the infallible record of a verbal (as opposed to dynamic or natural) revelation of the divine will to a group of human persons. He therefore scrutinizes with special care the instances in the Pentateuch where a claim for such revelation exists and what is demanded of the human person on the basis of that claim. He concludes that due to its public and empirical nature, the theophany at Mt. Sinai as

described in Exodus, chapters 19 and 20, is the locus classicus for verbal revelation and is, in fact, the authoritative basis for the demands which are consequent to it. Whereas Buber would claim that the experience at Mt. Sinai is a reconstituted memory of an I-Thou encounter, Reines accepts the plain meaning of the text: The Pentateuch is transmitting, via verbal means, the authority base for and the contents of, the will of the Creator God, a perfect Deity who owns the Israelites because of his creation and redemption of them. He writes:

> "The public character of the revelation (at Sinai) will prove conclusively that Moses has been given the right to speak for Yahveh (God) and to exercise absolute authority in his name. Having themselves heard Yahveh speak to Moses, the Israelites cannot doubt their own senses. Thus, Yahveh, the creator and owner of the world, who has redeemed Israel from Egypt, possesses absolute authority over the Jews, and this authority is now held on earth by Moses."[8]

In other words, the demands of God, transmitted to Moses, empirically apprehended by the people, expressed in writing in the Pentateuch, are not "guidelines" for ethical behavior according to Aristotle's Golden Mean as Maimonides would have it. The commands of God in the Pentateuch mean exactly what they say.

A problem arises with respect to exactly what the Pentateuch does demand because of the ambiguous and undetermined nature of some of the commandments. Yet Reines points out that given the authority structure the Pentateuch claims for itself, even ambiguous laws are not open to figurative interpretation. A classic case in point is the Pentateuch's commandment to "love Deity" (Deuteronomy 6:5). Reines writes:

> "...'love of God' in the Pentateuch must express itself objectively in the observance of Yahweh's commands. Any other love of God, no matter how well intentioned, is idolatrous and vain."[9]

Reines takes care to point out that this is not merely his personal

interpretation of Scripture. This is what the Pentateuch in fact demands. Moreover there is no evidence for the proposition that any other kind of "love" of God would be acceptable within the Pentateuchal context. The same argument is made by Reines with respect to the requirement to believe in, or accept the authority of God or Yahveh. For Reines, the Pentateuch is not merely enunciating a vague theology (i.e., ethical monotheism) subject to figurative interpretation. The Pentateuch, according to Reines, has a definite ideology in mind, and categorically rejects any attempt to redefine the commandment of belief in God. Reines explains that for the Pentateuch, belief equals obedience to commandments. He writes:

> "The teaching of the Pentateuch is not monotheism per se; it is rather a particular kind of monotheism: a monotheism in which a particular god, Yahveh, has issued specific commands that must be obeyed exactly as laid down. No other gods may be believed in, and no other commands obeyed. It makes no difference to Pentateuchal religion whether or not a person is a monotheist who happens to call his god Yahveh (or Adonai). If the person fails to believe in the Pentateuchal commands, he violates or rejects the religion of the Pentateuch, Yahveh's covenant with the Jews."[10]

Yahveh's commands as expressed in the Pentateuch are true expressions of the divine will. They are not, in Reines' view, ambiguous "suggestions" for belief and practice, rather specific divine mandates.[11] The Pentateuch is a covenant that is made with Moses and Israelites on Mt. Sinai. This relationship is legal in nature, and the Pentateuch claims that it is eternally binding for all who are born into the Israelite community, thus constituting a "birth dogma."[12] Nowhere in the Pentateuch, Reines points out, is there even a hint of the notion that people are free to accept or reject Pentateuchal demands on the basis of personal priorities. Reines writes that, "No one has the right to keep only those commands he himself arbitrarily selects. The obligation to keep Yahweh's commands is...absolute, permitting no exceptions."[13]

Reines brings forth many examples which support his view that the

Pentateuch claims divine and specific authority for its dictates. The person that the Pentateuch says to kill, the Israelite is bound to kill, whatever the personal predilection of the individual.[14] Any notion that individuals are free to accept or reject the truth of the Pentateuch as they see it, or to interpret it figuratively as they see fit, violates both the spirit and the letter of the Pentateuch.[15]

PROBLEMS WITH THE IMPLICATIONS THE PENTATEUCH CLAIMS

If the Pentateuch, as Reines claims, "says what it means and means what it says," then problems indeed arise for those who would like to participate in aspects of the Pentateuchal religion but are not in complete agreement with all of its dictates and premises. We have seen that Cronbach dismisses any aspect of the Pentateuch not in conformance with his principle of good and truth. Buber's thought as well demands a figurative view of the Pentateuch that allows for the validity of the results of new and present I-Thou encounters with the Eternal Thou. If accepting the Pentateuch meant that reports of supernatural phenomena must be accepted without figurative interpretation, Maimonides could not have accepted the Torah. Reines points out that this is precisely what the Pentateuch demands and that all interpretive systems of thought necessarily violate the plain intent of the Pentateuch. Because of his sympathy for and appreciation of the consequences of this problem, it is worthwhile to quote Reines in full as he discusses it:

> "Considerable confusion exists regarding this point (the demands of the Pentateuchal covenant). Some maintain that the Pentateuchal covenant only imposes upon the Jews an obligation to observe the 10 Commandments...(O)thers have gone so far as to say that the Pentateuchal covenant is fulfilled by anyone who makes his own private pact with a personal god he calls Yahveh. Unfortunately, neither of these opinions is correct. In point of fact, so far as the Pentateuch is concerned, these opinions are not only false, they are sinful and blasphemous as well...(N)o one denies that a person can maintain, on his own say-so, that there is a covenant between Yahveh and the Jews requiring only

> that they keep the 10 Commandments. But this is not the Pentateuchal covenant. It...contradicts what the Pentateuch commands. Similarly, a person can maintain that he has made a private covenant with a god called Yahveh, but this, too, is not the Pentateuchal covenant. It is, in fact, a repudiation and complete violation of the Pentateuchal covenant...the Jews' covenantal obligation is to accept every one of the beliefs, and observe every one of the practices that the Pentateuchal states Yahveh commanded Moses...at Sinai...(and) all those revealed to Moses after Sinai until the time of his death."[16] (emphasis added)

It is also vital to re-emphasize that these Pentateuchal demands claim to be transgenerational and unchangeable, and thus constitute a birth dogma.

Reines shows that although some religious systems of thought contain aspects of Pentateuchal religion, they are not legitimate in terms of the Pentateuch's own standards. What a figurative interpretation of Scripture does, however, is to replace those Pentateuchal standards with the standards of the metaphor being employed. The metaphor's claims regarding the truth and meaning of Pentateuchal sayings and incidents thus supersede the claims of the Pentateuch for itself. Reines says that there is no objective evidence that would compel the unbiased reader to admit that this is the case.

PENTATEUCHAL RELIGION VERSUS LIBERAL RELIGION

There is a strong motivation behind Reines' logical dismantling of figurative interpretation of Scripture. He defends the integrity of Pentateuchal religion without interpretation because he believes that the claims of the Pentateuch are in fact false. All figurative systems of interpretation, in Reines' view, simply serve to obscure what for him is a basic incontrovertible fact based on the discipline of Biblical scholarship. This fact is that the Pentateuch contains falsehoods. It does not represent the results of infallible, verbal revelation by a Creator/Redeemer God. It is a product of the human search for value and ideals. It has, therefore, no divine standing at

all. The conclusion that the Pentateuch is not divine in its plain meaning is the result of 200 years of scientific inquiry into this question. This acceptance of the results of Biblical criticism is itself an original tenet of Reform Judaism.[17]

Reines argues that the Pentateuchal system is one which is internally consistent and based on the best possible evidence: a direct, public empirical revelation. Its claims are, in point of fact, false. Consequently, it is objectively impossible to find a figurative expression by which to interpret the Pentateuch's essential meaning whose quality of evidence is equal or superior to the Pentateuch itself. Reines writes:

> "...the results of scientific inquiry by scholars have been informly that the Scriptures of both the Jews and Christians are not, in fact, literally true. There have been efforts to demythologize Scripture, and discover an essential truth that ostensibly lies behind its untrue literal meaning. Unfortunately, the effort to establish such an essential truth must be judged a pragmatic failure. Equally able scholars, citing equally inconclusive evidence have come to opposing conclusions regarding almost every significant point in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures... (T)he unbiased observer cannot help conclude that an objectively convincing determination of what is true in Scriptures and what is not simply does not exist."[18] (emphasis added)

This conclusion has specific consequences for those who would base Reform Judaism as a liberal religion on the authority of the Pentateuch. Every statement of Reform principles has categorically denied that Scripture is the product of verbal revelation.[19] If, then, all Reform Jewish systems of thought deny the literalness, infallibility and authority of the Pentateuch, Reform Jews have certain rights, based on this understanding. They have the right to:

1) interpret Scriptural messages in conformance with individual, subjective, figurative interpretations;

2) reject Scriptural theology outright;

3) change the ritual and legal prescriptions present in Scripture;

In support of this point, Reines specifically states that:

> "Once having decided that a creedal or ritual regulation prescribed in the Pentateuch is untrue or irrelevant, and that no Creator God has commanded its acceptance, there is simply no reason for Reform Jews not to change or reject such a regulation at will."[20] (emphasis added)

CONCLUSION

Reines makes a strict, logical case for a Pentateuchal religion free of interferring figurative systems of interpretation. Afterwards, using the discipline of higher criticism in Biblical scholarship, he shows that the Pentateuchal religion is untrue being based on a false premise; that of an infallible verbal revelation from a Creator God to Moses which ostensibly resulted in the Pentateuch. Biblical scholarship shows the human and composite nature of the Pentateuch. The evidence which supports the Pentateuchal claim for its own authority is thereby refuted.

Reines shows that once the claims of the Pentateuchal system are scientifically refuted, no subjective metaphor can adequately serve as a replacement. This view of Scripture, in Reform or liberal Judaism yields three irrefutable conclusions, according to Reines:

1) The value of Scriptural dicta, ethical or ritual, stand or fall on their own merit.
2) Pentateuchal prescriptions are specifically non-binding on Reform Jews, who, as Reform Jews, have committed themselves to a liberal, as opposed to an orthodox religion.
3) Figurative systems of interpretation for Scripture are subservient to objective, verifiable truth insofar as it can be determined, and consequently cannot save the meaning or truth of the literal language of Scripture.

Finally, Reform Judaism, in the past has seen itself as a "prophetic religion" as opposed to devoted to Pentateuchal laws. It has assumed, however, that all parts of Scripture being equal in value and divinity, the message of the prophets supersedes that of the Pentateuch. Reines vigorously attacks this assumption, not because the message of the prophets may not be more appealing in our day, but because 1) as stated above, the Pentateuch forbids personal selectivity as an aspect of Pentateuchal religion; and 2) the Pentateuch clearly and unequivocally states that Mosaic prophecy is superior to any other kind. Reines writes that:

> "It is absurd to think that the inferior prophecy of a secondary prophet could in any way supersede or abrogate the perfect revelation of the supreme prophet, Moses. Consequently, no prophecy can or ever will alter the Pentateuch."[21] (cf. Deuteronomy 34:10-12, 4:1-8)

The Pentateuch must be evaluated on its own merit, according to its own internal spirit and consistency. Reines argues that fidelity to Pentateuchal religion by Reform Judaism cannot be justified objectively, neither can its avowed preference for prophetic dicta. He argues that Reform Judaism, having accepted the results of Biblical scholarship as one of its basic tenents, cannot legitimately construct and promulgate subjective figurative systems of interpretation which are designed to exploit the dramatic power of the Pentateuch while ignoring its less palatable aspects. There simply is no objective evidence for the truth of such systems and no justifiable authority in Reform Judaism as a liberal religion to enforce such figurative interpretations of Scripture as doctrine.

Chapter IVB

Reines:

Figurative Language and God

DEFINITIONS

There are several terms which require precise definition in order to examine Reines' view of God with respect to figurative language. Although these definitions are not idiosyncratic, they might not be accepted universally in terms of their function in theological discussion.

1) Theology -- "the science or study which treats the meaning of the word God."[1] This implies that there is no univocal understanding of the word God which can be the object of thought or study.

2) God -- In Reines' terms, as will be explained, the word God denotes "the enduring possibility of being, which is the permanent ongoing potentiality from which the actual universe is continually being realized."[2]

3) Hylotheism -- the study of the concept of God ennunciated above. The prefix "hylo" in this usage refers in part to matter as having potentiality.

4) Reform Jewish theology -- This term denotes one of the following:

   a) "...the aggregate of particular Reform Jewish theologies all consistent with the essence of Reform Judaism" or

   b) "...the general discussion that lays down the conditions which a theology must meet to be appropriate to Reform Judaism..."[3]

5) Polydoxy -- the view of religion which asserts that "...all opinions on the great themes of religion...are equally valid so far as the religious institution is concerned."[4]

6) Freedom Covenant -- the agreement by which all persons in a

> polydox religious community affirm that each individual has the freedom to his or her opinions and ritual practice except insofar as the execution of that freedom infringes on the ability of other individuals in the polydox community to exercise their freedom.[5]

PHILOSOPHICALLY OBJECTIVE VERSUS TRADITIONALLY ORTHODOX THEOLOGY

There are words in theological discourse that have suffered from imprecise usage for a very long time. A word, such as "God," in one particular system of religious thought may not have the same meaning in a different religious system of thought. Yet, it would be safe to assume that the average individual is unmindful or cares little about what might be considered philosophical niceties. Reines points out, however, that the differences between various usages of theological terms can be vast. He emphasizes this point at length in his examination of Reform Jewish theology, in which he writes:

> "...it is...(a) false premise that such terms as 'God,' 'Jewish,' and 'theology' have a univocal meaning...more importantly, we have here an instance of what may be called the fallacy of orthodox expectations...(T)he objection (to redefinition of theological terminology) fully stated takes this form: There are certain obligatory beliefs or dogmas; certain words have signified these beliefs; one must accept these beliefs in a new sense; and the fact that one does not accept these beliefs is furtively disguised by employing the words which have ordinarily signified these words in a new sense. The answer to this objection is given by the philosophy of Reform, it is that Reform Judaism has no dogmas of any kind. Reform Judaism is a polydoxy, and persons who come to Reform with the expectation of dogmatic definition labor under a misconception -- the fallacy of orthodox expectation in a polydox situation."[6]

Given that theological terms, including the very notion of God, are neither univocal in meaning nor universal in their acceptance, a problem arises. It is the problem of how to discuss theology so that usage of terms is understood by all parties, so that individuals know to what they are referring. To achieve this end, Reines proposes that theological discourse should

be based on concepts and evidence which are objective and empirically verifiable. In response to the charge that this call for philosophical rigor de-spiritualizes theology, Reines responds that exactly opposite is the case. He writes:

> "The objectivist employs a strict standard of evidence precisely because he is aware of man's infinite strivings and the screen they place between him and reality...(T)hus, far from being that which religion should avoid, reality objectively determined provides the basis of the religion and the source of salvation. For authentic response to finitude, which constitutes true religion, must be based upon reality, and salvation is nothing other than the state such response produces."[7]

Consequently, objectivity and empirical verifiability will constitute the yardsticks of truth by which Reines will judge theological claims. Although he admits that (as we shall see below) this type of knowledge is itself not compelling or conclusive, it offers the best change for comprehensible theological discourse in his view. In this manner, Reines sets out the basis for testing the truth of theological notions and statements. He writes:

> "I accept empirical verifiability as the arbiter of truth concerning the external world, and seeing that God as a real being is a fact of the external world, our theory of truth must be one that pertains to knowledge of this world...stated thusly: 'A proposition or series of propositions concerning the external world will be true if there are predictable and observable consequences of such a proposition or propositions.' Hence the test that a reality defintion of God must meet is empirical verifiability. If there are empirical consequences of the definition, then the proposition 'God exists' will be true, and if there are not, the propositions will be meaningless and false."[8] (emphasis added)

With Reines' claim for the superiority of empirical verifiability established, he goes on to list five bases for theological discourse and their reliability in determining truth regarding theological notions:

1) authentic revelation -- that is, actual literal, communication which has taken place between a perfect God and the human

person;

2) certain and irrefragable natural knowledge which produces theological truth;

3) combination of numbers 1 and 2;

4) subjective, private experience which produces notions of God and divine attributes;

5) objective evidence which is publicly apprehendable that results in notions of God and divine attributes.[9]

In discussing these five bases, Reines quickly dismisses the claim of the first three to produce true theological notions. No compelling evidence exists for authentic revelation given the non-divine nature of Scripture (the only document to claim to give this type of knowledge). No comprehensive system of certain, irrefragable, natural knowledge exists either (despite the efforts of Spinoza and Maimonides). This rules out the third basis, which is the combination of the first two theological bases.

The fourth basis, theological knowledge based upon subjective evidence or private experience, has had many adherents, especially over the last 150 years (notably Kierkegaard, Buber, Rosenzweig and the like). Reines points out, however, that no matter how "real" an experience may be to an individual personally, the evidence based on that experience cannot be deemed authoritative.[10] It carries no authority because others may not participate or recreate the experience which led to a particular theological conclusion. There simply is no reason for an intelligent thinking individual to accept a version of theological truth (which, after all, purports to express ultimate reality) on the weight of the mere opinion of another. Consequently, while the subjective mode may yield an experience which the individual believes to express theological truth, that private experience or opinion can in no way yield an

authoritative answer for another human person, especially in Reform Judaism, which is a polydoxy.

The mode of objective empirical evidence is not without its limitations, as well. Reines is well aware of this, and in connection with it he writes:

> "Theology based upon the evidence of repeatable, objective experience, like all natural knowledge, critically considered, is uncertain or probable. Since this theology is open to error, it is not authoritative so far as the community as a totality is concerned. Such methods of determining truth as pragmatism, coherence, and empirical verifiability are employed in this type of theology."[11]

It is safe to conclude that, according to Reines, absolute theological truth is not possible to attain (or at least has not yet been demonstrated). Consequently, there can be no single, authoritative meaning to the word "God," or other theological notions.[12]

THEOLOGICAL SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE

Symbolic or figurative expression of unproven theological concepts is legitimate as long as those expressions are not promulgated as being authoritative. Reines admits that theological principles, expressed figuratively, have the power to impress or dramatize aspects of human experience regardless of their truth value. Reines conveys this thought in a passage that could have just as easily been written by Cronbach. He writes:

> "Words have uses other than as signs conveying references. Among such uses are the expression and evocation of attitudes. Hence, the word 'God,' for example, apart from its capacity to refer to a reality, has the power as well to direct a positive attitude toward this reality. Some, who entirely deny a reality reference to the term 'God'...argue for its retention on the basis of its power to command human feelings."[13]

Reines calls this approach to theological discourse "atheonomatism."[14] He concedes that figurative language, which does not yield valid, accurate, compelling descriptions of theological reality, may be necessary

tools for dealing with an endeavor that transcends the power of the human mind to make compelling demonstrations.

The commitment of Reform Judaism to scientific rationalism, however, may require that the thinking Jew react to metaphor solely as metaphor and not as a representation of some truth which cannot be demonstrated. Reines, therefore, would eschew the endeavor of figurative description of Deity in favor of using human faculties to determine the truth value of what is claimed about Deity. He would forego the attempt to establish a competent figurative expression for God, in the manner of Maimonides, Buber, and Cronbach, and rather search for evidence for Deity and divine attributes that are objective, empirical and verifiable. He does not reject the usage of poetry qua poetry but poetry qua philosophy, as we will see in our discussion of religious services.

POLYDOXY -- THE IDEAL ARENA FOR UNHINDERED THEOLOGICAL SEARCH

Reines stakes out the claim for the theology of the modern Reform Jew within the confines of scientific rationalism, a claim which he feels can best be based within a polydox situation, where no pretense is made to solitary authoritative answers to theological questions. Undergirding this claim, Reines writes:

> "The ultimate commitment of the modern Jew, as was the commmitment of the Jew of the past, is to rationalism; the rationalism that requires objective evidence for the faith of orthodoxy, the rationalism that turns to polydoxy when the faith of orthodoxy is gone."[15]

Even with its commitment to rationalism, a Reform Judaism that is a polydoxy still protects the right of the individual Jew to explore theological notions on his/her own. Rationalism is an ideal; it cannot be turned into an authority. That varying individuals in a polydox community will have differing approaches to theology based on individual needs is assumed from the outset

by Reines. With reference to this fact, he writes:

> "In the polydox community, the individual member is the ultimate authority to determine what his/her own view of the word God will be...(T)here does not exist...objective and compelling evidence for some one particular view of the word God...persons have no conscious control over what they believe about the word God. The belief is fashioned subjectively out of the person: total psychic being, a complex of differing modes of awareness and attitudes, conscious and unconscious."[16]

The only problem in a polydoxy with respect to theology is for those individuals "...who reject the traditional evidence (for God) and wish to retain theistic absolutism (dogmatic authoritarianism based on the traditional notion of God)..." Reines says that they must, "...resort to subjective evidence...since no theology of the fifth form (objective, empirically verifiable evidence) makes a case for this concept."[17] All theologies, however, which make no pretense to authority are acceptable in a polydox religious community.[18]

This avoidance of authority in the polydox religious community not only makes it the most likely context in which to carry out an unfettered search for Deity. In addition, it saves the community from unnecessary bouts with totally subjective theologies ranging from post-Holocaust and neo-orthodox theologies to the just as subjective "Death-of-God' movements, and the like.[19] The incontrovertible freedom of the individual to exert self-authority in the areas of religion in general and theology in particular aid in the individual search for ultimate meaning while creating his or her own future and destiny.[20]

HYLOTHEISM: A COHERENT THEOLOGY WITHIN A POLYDOX FRAMEWORK

Reines has considered the classic issues of theology and sought an answer that would be true to the principles of objectivity and be coherent with scientific knowledge whose results he has accepted. The question

remains--how does Reines theologize without lapsing into the metaphorizing of the three thinkers we have previously discussed? Reines' answer is to theologize within the confines of scientific truth and see what theological notions can be legitimately drawn from it. Consequently, his definition of God concerns observable phenomena, about which he writes:

> The definition of God I propose...is the following, 'God is the enduring possibility of being.' Inasmuch as being is analyzable without remainder into sense-data and self-data, the existence of God is verified whenever sense-data and self-data are experienced, and the existence of God is disproved when, under equivalent conditions of personal normalcy, self-data are experienced and sense-data are not. God is the enduring possibility of being rather than of sense experience alone because the person, (that is, the continuing self-consciousness that is constructed out of self-data) is evidently dependent upon the external world (sense-data and the unobservables reducible to sense-data) and with the annihilation of the external world, the annihilation of the person can be inferred by induction."[21]

This god concept is not in concert with traditional theology. It is also dissimilar to the traditional philosophical arguments for God's existence, namely, the ontological, cosmological, or teleological, which are either unempirical or ultimately more subjective than objective. Reines' god concept rests on the idea that <u>being</u> is an empirical fact, one that can be examined by the senses. In addition, by dividing all of the world's phenomena into sense-data or self-data, the individual (at least) has the capability to judge for him or herself the actuality of any phenomenon's being or non-being.

Reines' god has attributes: It is <u>enduring</u>, as opposed to the actual world, which is finite and actual. It is <u>imperfect</u> by virtue of the fact that it is cut off from the world. It is <u>potential</u> in contradistinction to the actuality of the world. It can never become actual, being only possibility; it is therefore <u>limited</u>. God is enduring insofar that a world or universe of actuality exists to be a counterpart to the godhead's potentiality.[22]

Reines explains some of the details of this theory of divinity in which he asserts as a postulate that there is no being without meaning and vice versa. On this God's relation to the world, he writes:

> "God (as defined by Reines--the enduring possibility of Being--ed.) cannot exist without the world. God has no meaning without being; being has no endurance without God. God's existence is not absolute; the enduring possibility of being exists as a correlative of being. The world was not created by an absolute God who willed it so; rather the world exists because divine existence is unconditionally dependent upon it...(I)n experience, God co-exists with finities in a process of continuous interaction. In this process, as we are justified in concluding from the regular and orderly nature of causal sequence, the possibility of future being is derived from present being. So to speak, the existence of God is derived from every present moment of being and realized in every future moment."[23]

Two things should be noted. As stated above, this theory stands on the assumption that being is an empirical, verifiable fact. This implies the testability of that assumption. In addition, even though this notion of God is in the realm of empirical, objective theological discourse (method #5 in above list), this means that it is inherently inconclusive, as mistakes are possible in any system of empirical testing.

DIVINE RELATION TO THE HUMAN PERSON

Does Reines' God have any relation to the human person? Is this God a "personality," the way Buber's God is? Reines claims that the separateness involved in being potential (as opposed to human actuality) negates any notion of relation. Also, since actuality is an inseparable characteristic of personhood, Reines would disclaim the notion of divine personality, God being only a possibility. The relationship between Reines' God and the human person is based on mutal exclusion, a symbiotic relationship where one party compensates for the inadequacies of the other. Reines explains:

> "In this view of God, where the divine is subject to the conditions of existence, it is the nature of actual entities, by virtue of the finity or encompassing

> boundary that gives them their existence, to be cut off from the ground of being. To be actual is to be alone. To be finite is to be severed from the infinite. Hence, the relation between God and man is one of "muted communication." (quotes added) Accordingly, as Reform Judaism teaches, there exists no infallible or verbal revelation, because man, necessarily and substantially separated from the ground of being, has no sure relation to this ground. Equally...perfect providence...messiahs, and magical exchatologies have no place in a world where the infinite exists only as a possibility and the actual world is always finite."[24] (emphasis added)

DIVINE IMPERFECTION AND THEODICY

The perceptive reader has ascertained that God in Reines' thought is not a perfect entity. Perfection, obviously, would assume the characteristic of both potentiality and actuality. Reines' God is, by definition, limited to the sphere of possibility. There are profound implications in the assertion of imperfection as part and parcel of the godhead. Reines is aware of this and explains the rationale behind its necessity, writing:

> "God is infinite in duration, but possesses only possible existence, whereas being is finite in duration but possesses actual existence. Metaphorically speaking, existence, the act of overcoming nothingness, lays down conditions on all who would possess it. As a consequence, nothingness is never entirely overcome. Actual existents temporarily overcome nothingness at the cost of future and total annihilation. God overcomes nothingness by incorporating it into the divine existence, and, in so doing, is emptied of actuality and must forever remain possibility. The divine existence...is a compromise between being and nothingness to exist as the enduring possibility of being, but in the uneasy victory, defect is assimilated into the godhead."[25] (emphasis added)

This theology, although partly pessimistic for the human person as an actual existent, nevertheless offers some reason for hope. The two most important of these are 1) actual existents (i.e., human persons) can, through their acts, actually increase the power and scope of the godhead by creating possibilities for the future as Reines writes, "The possibilities that constitute the godhead can be influenced and even altered by man;"[26] 2) The

problems of evil and theodicy are resolved more completely than is possible in more traditional theological systems.

The problem of relating divinity and the existence of evil has bedeviled the theological endeavor for a long time. Reines thinks that, given his theological understanding, that this no longer need be the case. He writes:

> "In the theology of the divine possibility there is...a coherent explanation of evil. It is the inevitable result of the nature of God and the nature of man. Evil is not willed into existence, it is a necessary concomitant of existence. The choice, figuratively stated, is not between a world with evil and a world without it, but between a world with evil and no world at all."[27] (emphasis added)

Evil is, or was not created. It is a necessary fact given the finite nature of actual existence. Reines avers that this should not be a cause for despair or gnashing of teeth, rather it should bring us "...to the meaningful awareness that the divine possibility reacts to acts of value and conserves all possible good."[28] The future is created out of possibilities which the human person as an actual existent can influence. Reines' view is that by creating more and more possibilities for good and value, the actual occurrence of good will increase and be conserved by the godhead. Conversely, the necessary existence of evil will necessarily diminish as the possibilities for its actualization are diminished through the striving of the human person.[29]

LEGITIMATE FIGURATIVE REPRESENTATION OF REINES' GOD

Reines has originated a god concept which is the product of the objective mode of theological discourse. Although neither compelling nor conclusive, Reines' god concept does not demand blind "leaps of faith" or acceptance of subjective and/or unverifiable claims to revelation. Expression of this god concept in figurative language is legitimate when it reflects the divine attributes Reines argues for above. This type of figurative expression will appear prominently in the next section which concerns the language of re-

ligious services. We may, however, appropriately examine the legitimacy of figurative divine expressions intended to convey the sense of God as the enduring possibility of being.

Since God, for Reines, is the source and ground of all being, poetic expressions which emphasize this attribute are permissible. Expressions like "Fountainhead of creation," "Source of all existence," and "Source of life" all serve to reflect what God in fact is, according to Reines' theology.[30]

The crucial point here is that in contradistinction to the other philosophers examined, the figurative language Reines employs for God is rooted in empirical reality. Conversely, the figurative language for God that the others employ reflects their overriding subjective metaphors. Without the figurative theological meanings inherent in their systems, the Gods of Maimonides, Buber and Cronbach have no meaning at all. This is not the case with Reines' god. There has been no attempt to invent a coherent, all-encompassing figurative system of interpretation in which both God and so-called traditional Jewish concepts may reside. Reines has proposed a god concept based on a philosophic and scientific view of reality. The figurative epithets used to describe this God are then symbolic representations of an objective view of reality as opposed to a poetic or metaphoric view.

CONCLUSION

This substitution of a plain, empirically based concept of God for a figurative one is a radical change from the wild post-Kierkegaardian theologies of the past century. This God concept lives in harmony with both science and philosophy, and is not diminished in importance by the latter two. In Reines' words:

> "The search for the meaning of the term God is as much a pursuit of reality as the search for the meaning of essence or atom...(P)hilosophy and science blend into religion as they blend into one another. In the quest for reality, the

> complete man is at once the philosopher, scientist, and religionist."[31]

The acceptance of objective reality over subjective figurative expression reunites religion with philosophy and science as truth-seeking endeavors. For Reines, figurative theological language can only be used legitimately to describe reality in poetic, meaningful ways. It may not be used to obscure reality or cover the harsh and painful truths of existence through subjective poetic metaphor. Reines writes of his hope, one that his "theology of the possible" undergirds, of the acceptance of religious teaching on the basis of its ability to represent empirical reality and transmit objective truth. He writes:

> "In a world from which poverty is banished, in which sickness of mind and body is diminished, and man is politically free, a religion will be accepted not because men are afraid, not in the extreme need of consolation, but because it is true."[32]

Chapter IVC

Reines:

Figurative Language and the Religious Service

DEFINITIONS

Several terms require definition before analyzing how Reines views the use of figurative language in a liturgical setting for which the object of worship is not the traditional God of Creation and providence.

1) Conversation theism -- This is the belief that "prayer is direct conversation with God. Such conversation is not only possible, but is the primary means of salvation...such conversation brings special favor in this world and immortal expectation for the next."[1]

2) Common service -- Reines defines this as "...the acknowledged public liturgy of a religious community...it represents in its language and formulas the basic beliefs and values subscribed to by the religious community...a common service is a service in which every member of a religious community can participate in common with all other members."[2]

3) Individual service -- This is a liturgy which serves "...the viewpoint of some individual person or group within the Reform Jewish community."[3] Reines, notably, views the individual service as very limited in its practical usage.

4) Principle of free ritual -- For Reines, this is a corollary of the Freedom Covenant, protecting "...one's right to make decisions concerning one's own ritual practices."[4]

5) Technique of multivalent ritual and service -- This refers to "services and ceremonies that employ language that has many meanings, values, and uses, and whose literal meaning is undogmatic...being open and undogmatic, (this) permit(s) those who participate in them to mold and shape the language of the serv-

ices and ceremonies according to the participant's own beliefs and convictions, and within the privacy of their own psyches."[5]

REFORM LITURGY--PURPOSES AND PROBLEMS

The ostensible purpose of any liturgy is two-fold: 1) to bring the individual worshipper into "relation with the ultimate aspects of existence;"[6] 2) to bring the religious community together to observe significant life cycle events and calendar occasion.

The present liturgies of the Reform Jewish movement (Gates of Prayer and the Union Prayerbook) are, in Reines' view, inadequate for the intellectually honest fulfilling of these purposes. Although this problem is complex, it is essentially semantic. It results from the Reform Jewish liturgy "hiding," as it were, Orthodox Jewish concepts in Reform Jewish "clothing."[7]

The structure and language of the established Reform liturgies is still based on the conceptual framework of both conversation theism and Orthodox Judaism, although it is safe to assume that most, if not all of Reform Jewish worshippers, reject those frameworks of belief.[8] This has the effect of nullifying the meaningful content of the liturgy and removing it from the realm of a common service, which embodies beliefs and values subscribed to by all. Focusing on this problem, R. Shapiro, a commentator on Reines' work, has stated that, "If the purpose of a ritual event is to bring a person into 'relation with the ultimate aspects of existence' the liturgy of that event must be in line with those aspects."[9]

It has been argued, most notably by Cronbach, that since the words of the public liturgy do not partake in a designative function anyway, the retention of outmoded formulae and untrue wording is not a relevant issue. Reines vigorously attacks this notion, and considers it both manipulative and thoroughly unconvincing. He rejects the idea that liturgical language, being

bereft of meaning, can simply be "interpreted" to mean something different or even wholly opposite from what its words say.[10] Shapiro, in commenting on the undisciplined use of liturgical language, draws Reines' position out clearly, writing that:

> "...Dr. Reines is affirming, in opposition to Abraham Cronbach, for instance, that the language of any given liturgy does indeed partake of a designative function. There is a referent for which the text is a symbol, and if that referent is obsolete, the text is no longer operational as a vehicle for the uncovering of reality which is the prime goal of each person."[11]

The meaning of language is significant. It is vital to the efficacy of the liturgical enterprise. Shapiro notes that language is "...the symbol tool of the liturgist," while reality "...is the 'object' which the symbol is supposed to reflect."[12] Thus, Reines' objective view of liturgy parallels his objective theology. Shapiro elucidates this objective function in liturgy, writing:

> "...it should be clear that if the liturgy is to be successful, it must celebrate reality as understood by the best of human science and philosophy. No poetic dodging of the issues, the ritual text must compel assent on behalf of the reader 'by its intrinsic value alone.'"[13] (emphasis added)

Consequently, it can be assumed that in Reines' view, the act of participating in a common service has meaning precisely because the service affirms by its words the beliefs of the individual worshipper. For Maimonides, Buber and Cronbach, the actual language employed in the service is of secondary import. Identification with the figurative meaning they give to the services outweighs the inconsistencies and inaccuracies of the particular language employed in worship. Reines disputes these notions. He questions both the objective truth and the overall coherence of the figurative interpretations that the worship service supposedly represents according to these other thinkers.

POLYDOX LITURGICAL FORMATION--PROBLEMS

Given Reines' orientation, we may expect that he favors the creation of liturgies which contain objective statements about belief and the world which all who participate in the common service can agree to in principle.[14] This task is difficult. To create liturgies which are objectively true and which in addition bring the human person into contact with the "ultimate aspects of experience," requires the binding of the disciplined mind of the philosopher to the unbounded artistry of the poet.

The problems in creating such liturgy are not limited to the rendering of truth into poetic form. Other problems include:

1) newness and unfamiliarity with the liturgy as opposed to the familiarity embedded in the recital of traditional orthodox liturgical formulae.
2) difficulty in creating a liturgy in which people of differing theological beliefs may honestly participate. This requires a liturgical formulation that is multivalent, as defined above.
3) difficulty in creating a common service in which all will feel free to participate without feeling that they have violated their own freedom of ritual expression.[15]

These intertwined goals and problems inherent in the creation of an acceptable polydox liturgy have been summarized by Reines in the following manner:

> "The language of the (free and future) ritual will preclude no Reform Jewish liberal religionist from participation, whatever his personal creed. Such language will evoke moods of intrinsic meaningfulness without provoking theological dissent. Thus will the essential spirit of Reform Judaism as freedom be concretized in the ritualism that constitutes its body."[16] (emphasis added)

POLYDOX LITURGICAL FORMATION--GUIDELINES

Reines outlines the purpose of participation in a common service in terms of the objective religious values established above with respect to Scripture and God. Unlike participation in a service based on a figurative interpretation of the set pharisaic prayer rite, Reines calls for radical changes in the liturgy itself. The intent of these changes is to not only make the liturgy consonant with objective facts of reality, but to allow the worshipper to achieve his or her own spiritual goals in a community of similarly minded seekers. The multitude of purposes served by such an objective, changed liturgy have been listed by Reines. The purposes of such a ritual are:

"a) to bring a person, with full being, into relation with the ultimate aspects of existence;

b) to evoke meaningful moods and positive attitudes;

c) to enrich our perception and sense of wonder of reality by focusing attention on cosmic events such as the solstices and equinoxes, or earthly processes such as growth and maturation;

d) to quicken our sense of history and of shared views of the past by commemorating significant past events;

e) to provide a productive celebration of significant life-history events;

f) to provide a family, through home ceremonies, with enriched moments of shared experience;

g) to enable members of a community to communicate to one another their joy on happy occasions and their compassion on sad ones;

h) to provide, by its distinctive nature, a sense of common identity and shared purpose to the members of a religious community

who participate in the common ritual;

i) to provide children with an elementary knowledge of their religious community, since, at first, a true and full comprehension of the beliefs of religion are beyond their capacities."[17]

POLYDOX LITURGICAL FORMATION--EXAMPLES

As previously stated, the previously examined understandings of the religious service have been based on figurative interpretations of the essential pharisaic rite. Reines, on the other hand, bases the formation of the liturgical rite itself on the Freedom Covenant, the principle of free ritual, and the technique of multivalent language. How exactly does this work? For Reines, the application of the principles listed above yields both prayers which are reformulations of old established ones, and prayers which do not have any basis in the traditional pharisaic rite.

Reformulation of old prayers for Reines is not as difficult as it may seem. Most of the effort in rewriting centers primarily on the removal of Yahveh as the central object of worship since neither the existence nor power of a deity named Yahveh is objectively verifiable. But, as we have seen in the explication of Reines' god concept, God as a source of possibility and of being (given Reines' definition of God) are objectively verifiable theological concepts. Consequently, many traditional prayers found in the Polydox Common Service Book retain their form. Epithets for divinity which are in consonance with God as the enduring possibility of being are, however, inserted in these prayers where the invocation of Yahveh would normally be found. These epithets include:

רוּחַ רַחֲמָנִי, מְקוֹר הַחַיִּים, אֲבִיר כֹּחַ, מְקוֹר הַהֲוָיָה

(compassionate spirit, wellspring of life, strength of existence and source of existence).[18]

Other changes in traditional prayers include the reshaping of the prayers' outlook or intent. Instead of invoking the power of an Almighty in thanksgiving or in petition, the inherent power of the human person to respond both individually and in community to the reality of the world with awe and wonder is emphasized. Examples of this include revisions of traditional pharisaic blessings over Torah, over candles, over wine, and the call to worship.[19] Also included in this category are revisions of Scriptural passages which have had liturgical usage in the pharisaic rite. They have been revised so as to emphasize human love over so-called divine love, human unity over so-called divine unity, and the human quest for natural truth over the attempt to fulfill that which has been purported to be divine commandment.[20]

There are prayers that have been included in the polydox common ritual that have no basis in the pharisaic rite. These prayers simply echo the desire of the human person to respond to the order and harmony of nature, life's finitude, or some other important event which elicits basic human response. These prayers attempt to articulate human needs and goals, not in conformance with the pre-established figurative ideal of a Cronbach, for instance, but in terms of the actualities of human experience. A moving example of this type of prayer is one which celebrates the Sabbath as a human resting point amid the harmonious motion of nature:

> "Our hearts exult at the splendor of heaven and earth. Majestic skies and brilliant stars tell of cosmic harmony and order. We turn from toil, from life's difficulties and conflicts, from its clamor and weariness, to meditate on the serene calm of the Sabbath whose harmony and order hallow our lives with the blessings of peace."[21]

Another impressive example of liturgical reformation in concordance with polydox principles is found in the funeral service. This service posits no God as Almighty Judge to be taken on blind faith, and no future rewards which are unverifiable. It does, however, relate with poignancy the reality

which is the end of human existence. The prayers are true to the notions we know objectively concerning death. Their form, however, relates with vivid poetic imagery the actual struggling between the individual's infinite desires and his/her finite existence that is part of the life of each human person. One such prayer reads as follows:

> "The eye is never satisfied with seeing; endless are the desires of the heart. When death comes, no mortal has ever had enough of riches, honor, and wisdom. We devise new schemes on the grave of a thousand disappointed hopes. Discontent abides in the palace and in the hut, rankling alike in the breast of prince and pauper. Death finally terminates the combat, and grief and joy, success and failure, all are ended. Like children falling asleep over their toys, we loosen our grip on earthly possessions only when death overtakes us. The rich and the poor, the feeble and the strong, all are equal in death the grave levels all distinctions and makes the whole world kin."[22]

Other examples of prayers which reformulate orthodox Jewish ideas into forms acceptable to the polydox religious community abound. The Institute of Creative Judaism (ICJ), the research organization started by Reines, has published an impressive range of liturgical materials for use in commemorating both calendrical and life cycle events.[23] These materials conform to an objective view of the world (and a polydox view of religion) by either changing the wording of previously established liturgies or creating new ones.

Two further examples will suffice to demonstrate this liturgical reformulation according to polydox principles. In the ceremony of conversion, there is what may be considered a revision of the three-fold, priestly blessing (Numbers 6:24-26), which asks for direct blessing and favorable providence from Yahveh and is used in the pharisaic rite. This request for blessing by Yahveh is replaced by the authentic search for truth and meaning. It is such a search that has ostensibly motivated the convert to affiliate with the polydox religious community. Consequently, the wording of the blessing is changed to reflect that search as well as negate the traditional public appeal to the

supernatural for blessing. The linguistic differences are set along side each other below. In the priestly blessing we find:

> "May Yahveh bless you and keep you
> May Yahveh cause His face to shine upon you and also grant you grace
> May Yahveh lift His face to you, grant you grace and peace."
>
> (Numbers 6:24-26)

In the three-fold blessing of the convert, we find a statement of blessing without worshipful acknowledgment of a divine source. We also find that the dedication to the search for truth and meaning is itself a blessing. In this revised benediction, we read:

> "Blessed are you who have come in dedication to the pursuit of truth.
> Blessed are you who have come in dedication to the search of meaning.
> Blessed are you who have come in dedication to the life of authenticity.
> Amen."[24]

Another instructive example which shows the revision of traditional pharisaic liturgical notions according to the previously established polydox principles concerns the marking of the end of the Sabbath. The end of the Sabbath in Orthodox Judaism is marked by a rite which laments the departing of the divine presence until the following Sabbath. This rite is marked by light, wine, and sweet spices as final remembrances of the divine presence which is about to depart from the Sabbath-observant community. A polydox prayer, acknowledging the same event (the end of the Sabbath), radically changes the focus of the liturgy from lamenting the departure of Deity to the departure of meaning from the life of the human person, whenever it may occur. In the polydox rite for the end of the Sabbath, we read:

> "The Havdalah (separation) cup is full and its taste is sweet. It speaks of the fulness and sweetness of life. Yet, as the Havdalah follows Shabbat, so does the life of man ever change. Emptiness follows meaning, and despair pursues hope. Life's pleasures are never sure, and its tomorrows are uncertain. Still, at the heart of existence lies the divine possibility for good."[25] (emphasis added)

We can see in all of these revisions of liturgy an attempt to make the rite conform to human experience and not the opposite. Reines consistently bases his liturgical reformation on his theology, which is itself the result of both his rejection of Scriptural authority and his acceptance of objective, empirical demonstrability as the basis for theological discourse. What results is a liturgy which is scientifically accurate yet poetic in its description of human struggles with finity, despair and meaninglessness. The purpose of the liturgy is, through the common service, for the polydox religious community to express its acceptance of the challenges, the triumphs and the despair contained in human experience.

CONCLUSION

Reines believes that no figurative interpretation of pharisaic liturgical forms is adequate to redeem their from their factual inaccuracies and empirically unjustifiable belief statements. He feels that liturgy must, then, not be severed from the designative function of its language. Liturgy must, rather, reflect accurately the realities of both the external world and the human person.

Established Reform Jewish liturgy has shown itself inadequate to this task either through its reliance on orthodox formulations or its own confused philosophy and theology. A common service, while serving many individual and communal purposes, must not compromise with the demands of scientific accuracy and philosophic coherence.

Reformation of liturgy, then, takes one of three forms: 1) It may keep traditional formulae while substituting God as "enduring Possibility of Being" for Yahveh; 2) It may keep traditional forms of liturgical observance while revising the intent and wording of those prayers to conform to human needs rather than purported divine commands; 3) Original prayers, without any

basis in the traditional pharisaic rite are welcome additions to the common service. Such original prayers may better capture the spirit of human needs and ideals in a finite world than simple reformulation of old prayers.

It should be emphasized that Reines is not dictating what liturgical rite is proper for the polydox religious community. More importantly is not he merely attempting to have traditional liturgical practice conform to his theological viewpoint. The other philosophers we have examined attempted to make the language of the liturgy and established prayers say what their figurative interpretations demanded of them. Reines, on the other hand, offers reformulated liturgies which are consistent with science and philosophy. His view of Deity is not propounded as demonstrated truth in the liturgies of the ICJ. It and the prayers spawned by it are philosophically coherent alternatives. These creative liturgies respond to the problem of meaningful existence, fully aware that they merely represent alternative responses for the human person as opposed to a solitary, unequivocal response of an orthodoxy.

This emphasis on the individual's freedom and imperative to seek meaning in his or her own way is paramount in Reines' thought. It permeates the entire philosophy of polydoxy. This notion is encapsulated in Reines' liturgy for the Jewish New Year, in which he writes:

> "In different times and different places, the Jews have understood the beginning of the world in many different ways. Each of us in his own time, must seek to discover the meaning of Creation for himself."[26] (emphasis added)

As Reines has written concerning cosmology so he feels with respect to religion and liturgy. It is incumbent upon the individual to discover meaning in life for him or herself. The individual is the ultimate arbiter of his or her own personal truth. The liturgy, consequently, must be a vehicle for the exploration of truth and the uncovering of reality for the individual

person, even as it serves the social needs of the polydox religious community, according to Reines.

Chapter IVD

Reines:

Figurative Language and Religious Symbolic Practice

DEFINITIONS

As was required in our previous analyses, definitions of crucial technical terminology employed by Reines precedes our examination of his thought in relation to figurative language and symbolism. Some of this terminology has been defined previously. Those terms appear here for easier reference for the reader:

1) Symbol -- A symbol is "...that which refers or points to some state or thing."[1]

2) Symboland -- A symboland is "...the state or thing pointed to; or the state or thing realized or produced."[2]

3) Vehicle symbol -- This "...not only refers or points to some state or thing; it is a vehicle or direct means of realizing the state or producing the thing as well."[3] (e.g., a common service, a home ritual, etc.)

4) Ontal symbol -- This is "...a symbol that points to the problem structure of man's being (ontos) and summons him to respond to finitude with authenticity. The ontal symbol has the power of calling to being; it directs man to constitutive decision and genuine religion."[4]

5) Religion -- "Religion is the human person's response to the conflict of finitude."[5] The conflict referred to is the one between the infinite desire of the human person (for wealth, knowledge, immortality, and the like) and the fact of finite existence on earth for that person. The disparity between these two conditions calls for a response; it is this response that Reines labels "religion."

6) Soteria -- This represents "...the state of ultimate meaningful

existence that is attained when the conflict of finitude has been resolved...the function of a religion is to produce soteria."[6]

THE PLACE OF SYMBOLISM IN THE POLYDOX RELIGIOUS SCHEME

In the previous systems of thought we have analyzed, symbolism has played a crucial role in explaining religious practice and teaching. For Maimonides, the miswoth symbolize the life led according to the Aristotelian "Golden Mean." For Buber, symbols were the concrete remainders of actual I-Thou encounters with the Eternal Thou. For Cronbach, symbols were indicative of the means by which human social ideals (those which he called "divine") were to be attained. In all of these systems, symbolism per se plays a vital role in the working out of a figurative interpretation of religious language.

For Reines, religious symbolism is important, yet secondary in his overall view of religion. Symbols are illustrative of a religion's basic principles. Consequently, they are beholden to the accuracy and efficacy of those principles for them to have any meaning whatsoever. Reines writes:

> "The fundamental part of a religion consists of its factual beliefs. The value beliefs and symbolism are secondary; they derive from and are dependent upon the truth of the factual beliefs. That is, if no God who speaks to man exists (factual belief), then it cannot be true that He has revealed to man that a war can be just (value belief), or commanded that matzos be eaten on the Passover (symbolism)."[7]

So that, if a person bases his/her religious practice upon value or symbolic beliefs that directly contravene factual beliefs, that person observes an illegitimate, incoherent form of religious practice. It is illegitimate because such observance elevates value and symbolic beliefs and practices over factual beliefs which are, as stated above, "...the fundamental part of a religion" in Reines' view.

Such practice is incoherent as well as illegitimate because of Reines' view of the human psyche and the search for authenticity in religion.

Reines writes that:

> "The human mind cannot authentically affirm at the same time that two contradictory statements are true. And it would be rather incoherent...to accept membership in a group whose basic belief (i.e., factual belief) and fundamental commitment seem to us to be false."[8]

Consequently, the bifurcation of the human person into two parts, one of which accepts the values and symbols of a religion, and one of which rejects its basic principles, would be rejected as inauthentic by Reines.

The issue is not this easily analyzable and this is recognized by Reines. This is because there are people for whom traditional, yet undefined "Jewish" values and symbolic practice are important, yet who reject an orthodox Jewish view of revelation and theology. The ability of these people to authentically seek out a religion (particularly a form of Judaism whose factual beliefs they can acknowledge as true), is mitigated by the effect of the conflict between living as a Jew ontally and living as a Jew ethnically or culturally on their psychic structures. The word "Jew" and the fact of being a Jew have tremendous emotional consequences upon the individual human person's psychic structure. There is a conflict in the individual between the functioning of the word "Jew" as an ontal symbol and its functioning as an aesthetic, ethnic, cultural and political symbol as well.[9] It is this confusion between various symbolic functionings that result in incoherent religious responses masquerading as authentic Judaisms. For Reines, it is specifically this notion of Jew as an ontal symbol which creates the strong desire for authentic religious response in the human person. Reines writes:

> "...the meaning of the word Jew as ontal symbol is dynamic; it is not bound to the past as the static meaning is; it is heuristic, furthering investigation into the nature of man and the universe...(A)n ontal symbol, <u>the word Jew creates theology</u>...(T)he ontal symbol creates theology by inducing the one over whom it has power to search for an authentic response to finitude."[10] (emphasis added)

Reines goes so far as to state that a symbolic view of the word "Jew" which ignores "...the meaning of ontal symbol collapses into comparative triviality."[11]

Thus, it is the "Jew" as an ontal symbol that calls upon the individual who holds that label to respond authentically to the conflict of finitude; to hold value and symbolic beliefs which are in consonance with the factual beliefs of a particular Judaism. The Jew as ontal symbol recognizes what the past has been and what possibilities are inherent in an authentic response to both the conflict of finitude and to the power of Jew as an ontal symbol. About this need and possibility for authentic response to the symbol of the Jew as ontal symbol, Reines writes:

> "The symbol Jew brings before man past and present possibilities of response. The possibilities produced by the past are evoked by the intrinsic association of Jew with the history that produced it--shall it be decided with the Jew Job that no Infinite disrupts the structure of finite being, and that human existence is radically bound by the limit of death; or shall it be decided with the Jew who is Pharisee that relation to an Infinite breaks the limits of finity. The possibilities of the present are evoked by Jew as the name of a 'now existent' takes place in a concrete present reality, to which, if the response is authentic, it must be true."[12]

Authentic responses to the existential problem of limited existence as a Jew must be in consonance with established fact, according to Reines. This imperative to authentic response, combined with the de-authorization of Scripture as a vehicle of infallible revelation, free the individual to accept, reject or create symbolic ritual in concordance with what he perceives to be true. Each individual is covered by the principle of free ritual in attempting to achieve an authentic response.[13] The past can serve as a guide but not as the final arbiter of proper religious response. As Reines writes:

> "Ritual regulations are not to be observed simply because the Pentateuch commands them in the names of Yahveh and Moses, but only if they are spiritually meaningful to the

Reform Jew in the age in which he lives."[14]

To summarize briefly, symbolic religious responses which contravene factual beliefs are inauthentic religious responses. This is due to 1) the primacy of fact over symbol in any religious thought system, according to Reines; 2) the fact that a symbolic response which contravenes factual beliefs also contravenes the notion of Jew as ontal symbol which by its very nature calls for a response in conformance with facts as we know them. These two understandings open the field of symbol and ritual to the individual Reform Jew. S/he is free to experiment and explore in search of an authentic response to the problems of finite and "Jewish" existence. This freedom is safeguarded by not only the Freedom Covenant, the basis for the polydox religious community, but the principles of free ritual and of multivalency as well, as defined in the previous chapter on Reines' thought with respect to religious services.

WITHERING SYMBOLS

Reines, while affirming the centrality of factual beliefs in a given religious system, does not derogate the realm of the symbolic, but merely puts it into perspective vis-a-vis factual beliefs as the fundamental part of a religion.

Religious symbols and symbolic observances can be vital in maintaining the cohesiveness of the polydox religious community. This is why the symbols that already exist in differing forms of Judaism must be examined. They must be examined to see whether or not they may be used in making an authentic response, as discussed above. Many so-called "Jewish" symbols have indeed lost the power and meaning they once exerted. Reines feels it is important to examine why some religious symbols fade into disuse while others retain their ability to elicit positive feelings and emotions. Reines examines the withering away of symbols that had acted as vehicles for an essence, that essence

being comprised of the authentic religious response. With reference to the traditional Jewish observance of Shabbat, Reines writes:

> "It is important that it is not the essence of the Shabbat that has lost value, but a particular vehicle that has for many become an impotent symbol for realizing this essence. It is not polydox Reform Judiasm that is rejected when temples are empty on a Friday night, nor the Shabbat as a sate of being, but a particular vehicle symbolism. Conversation theism rituals, 'seventh-days' that do not fit real-life calendars, other traditional vehicle symbols, no longer serve for many to realize the state of Shabbat being."[15] (emphasis added)

The essence of Shabbat, the notion of rest and respite from worldly cares--these are what the present-day practices of Reform Judaism has failed to serve as a vehicle for. But the problem of traditional vehicle symbolism withering away into meaninglessness is not restricted to the observance of Shabbat. Reines states:

> "...nothing is more evident than that Reform Jews, regardless of the Pentateuch and its commands, only keep those rituals they find personally meaningful...Moreover, the rituals Reform Jews do keep are generally novel, bearing almost no resemblance to biblical rituals other than a similarity of names."[16]

Consequently, Reines shows how the major festivals commanded in the Pentateuch (the Passover, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Booths) have all become virtually irrelevant to modern urban Reform Jews except as teaching modes for children (the Seder, confirmation, the building of the Temple Sukka).[17] In confronting the question of why these festival observances have fallen into disuse, their symbols laid bare as virtually impotent, Reines offers a simple, direct rationale, writing:

> "Jewish festivals in their origins were always organically related to their general environment, that is, to the natural, economic, ideological and cultural context in which they were celebrated. The reason for this is evident. Without the environment to nourish a festival, it is cut off from its lifespring. Existing in a vacuum, the festival becomes insignificant and dies...(F)estivals, by themselves, without the cooperation of the environment, are

> by their nature unsuited to originate the sentiments required for significant observance. For the basic function of festivals is not to originate feelings and emotions, but to give form to feelings and emotions, environmentally induced by providing them with expression, values and ultimate meaning."[18] (emphasis added)

Vehicle symbols that gave form to values and feelings in the past have dissipated in force and meaning, withering in the face of American, urban existence. In Reines' view, any system of religious symbolic practice must prove itself to be in consonance with the economic and cultural rhythms of the society it inhabits. No overarching figurative interpretation can give meaning to religious symbolic practices that are out of synch with their present environment. It is the attempt to insist on such symbolic meaning that explains, for Reines, the great decline in observance of so-called "Jewish" customs in the United States. Specifically with respect to this phenomenon, he writes:

> There seems little reason to doubt that one of the fundamental reasons for the American Jewish decline is that the dates of Jewish festivals are seriously out of harmony with the basic rhythms of the American Jewish experience...(I)t is difficult...to conceive of a workable solution to the current crisis...that does not involve to some degree changing the dates of the Jewish festivals so that they are brought into harmony with the natural, ideological, economic and cultural rhythms of the American environment."[19]

Reines strongly believes that religious symbolic practice is important. It must, however, not be totally out of synch with the concerns of the society in which it is set.

THEORETICAL BASIS FOR A NEW REFORM JEWISH SYMBOLIC PRACTICE

The basis for any polydox Reform Jewish symbolism must be its unshakeable adherence to rationalism; to factual beliefs about the natural world, especially those which have been empirically and scientifically demonstrated.[20] Genuine religious symbolism must grow out of each impetus listed above--natural, ideological, economic and cultural--in its particular setting.

Consequently, the system of religious symbolic practice appropriate for a liberal Judaism in Israel, or even France, will not be necessarily the same as the system required by the American Reform Jewish community. Environmental coherence will determine the viability of any reformulation or adoption of new religious symbols, and practices.

It is vital to point out that Reines, here as in other places, strongly disagrees with the figurative interpretations of religious symbolic practice offered by Maimonides, Buber and Cronbach. Religious symbolic practice, in Reines' view, will grow naturally out of a given religious and intellectual environment, not in resposne to the dictates of what a metaphor already assumes.

With respect to the need for and certainly of development of new religious rituals, Reines is quite clear, writing:

> "New rituals will be created to realize the spiritual possibilities of an industrial and scientific society. The religious value of such great cosmic events as solstices and seasons, whose power and significance lie buried in the present ritual by an overlay of supernaturalism and anthropocentrism will be uncovered and revealed."[21] (emphasis added)

Reines is certain that such religious symbolic practice can evolve in such a way as to complement the "basic rhythms" of the society in which a particular religion resides, rather than to cause conflict with those trends. The polydox Jewish Sabbath observance does not have to conflict with the major activity night of the secular week. The polydox Jewish festivals and holidays can be held in consonance with secular observances. As Reines sees the evolution of a newer, reformulated polydox Jewish symbolic practice:

> "The basis rhythms of the economic and social substratum, as reflected in the civil calendar, will be made an instrument of Jewish religious life rather than its implacable foe. The Shabbat will be conceived of as a state of being and freed of its necessary connection with the 'seventh day.' Thus the Shabbat will enjoy multiple

> causation: for some the 'seventh day' will bring about 'Shabbat'; for others, a deeply personal measurement of time."[22]

In addition to a commitment to rationalism and harmonization with secular considerations of a given environment, truly polydox Jewish symbolic practices must be multivalent; that is, capable of possessing a number of different meanings. Since the goal of religion, as Reines conceives it, is the attainment of soteria by the individual, the symbols employed in a communal religious response must not intrude upon the individual's search for his or her authentic personal response. Reines stresses that the primary loyalty of the individual religionist is to his or her own personal authentic response to the conflict of finitude.[23] This imperative is a right protected by the Freedom Covenant.[24] Consequently, multivalency must be a prime consideration in the development of both liturgy and symbolic practice. In emphasizing this need for multivalency, Reines writes:

> "For some Reform Jews, the symbolism of the (common) service will constitute a relation with the infinite; for others, an occasion for ethical commitment; still others will engage in acts of self-realization; and others will find in it ultimate existential relation. All will find the beginning realization of 'full being' in the concrete, public, and mutual affirmation of their freedom and existence."[25]

In sum, it is on the theoretical bases of rationalism, harmonization with the secular environment and multivalency that genuine polydox Jewish symbolic practice must reside. We now move to a brief examination of how this symbolism works in actual practice, analyzing the functioning of the religious symbolic practice of Shabbat, Pesach and Chanuka in a polydox Jewish setting.

SYMBOLISM IN ACTION: SHABBAT, PESACH, CHANUKA

For Reines, the Shabbat, or "day of rest," is fraught with symbolic implications. In contradistinction to the philosophers we have previously examined, Reines perceives no need to subordinate the meaning of a day of rest

under the figurative headings of either "social antidote" (Maimonides), "recollection of divine encounter" (Buber), or "actualization of social ideal" (Cronbach). The Shabbat can serve any or all of these symbolic functions, depending upon the acceptance of that rationale by the individual. The Shabbat, however, is not equivalent to the figurative expression of those symbolic ideals, according to Reines. The individual, obviously, chooses the meaning of Shabbat most suitable for him or her. Reines does, however, offer a different symbolic approach to Shabbat, an existential one, that is in consonance with a polydox approach. In explaining the totality of Shabbat symbolism existentially, Reines writes:

> "Shabbat as symbol refers both to the Shabbat as a vehicle symbol and Shabbat as a state of being. I take the former to be a means of realizing the latter, which is the essence of the Shabbat.
>
> The Shabbat as a vehicle symbol can refer to a day; sacrifices; prayers; or other ritual procedures.
>
> The Shabbat as a symboland refers to the essence of Shabbat, a state of being that may be characterized as soteria, a state of intrinsically meaningful personal being. Phenomenologically, this state is experienced as 'full' being; the state in which the self cannot ask as though it does not know--'why do I exist?; why being, why not nothingness?'--since the meaningful state of the self at the moment of question is itself the reason and the answer."[26]

In other words, Reines interprets the symbolic meaning of Shabbat as a vehicle by which the individual experiences unselfconscious enjoyment and fulfillment in the mere act of existence. Perforce, other interpretations of Shabbat are not only permissible but encouraged as aids to the attainment of soteria by the individual. Reines' view of Shabbat is one among many symbolic interpretations. It is, however, not only true to his view of Scripture, the Deity, and the human person, it is true to the theoretical basis, described above, which are required for a genuine polydox symbolic interpretation of

religious practice.

Passover for Reines is viewed as the religious symbolic expression of 1) the season of renewal and rebirth which is Spring; and 2) the seizing of the opportunity to be free and putting it to use for the fulfillment of the human person. In his Haggada for celebrating Passover, Reines takes the traditional orthodox Jewish symbols of this holiday and rigorously matches each to a new symboland. Each new symboland is an expression of human potential and freedom in the midst of a finite world. For example, with respect to what are considered the three major symbols of Passover, Reines makes the following substitution of referents:

> Pesach -- (paschal offering) -- "The lamb of Passover points to the power of Creation and brings grateful awareness of the goodness we have received."
>
> Matza -- (unleavened bread) -- "Matza points to freedom's challenge and the abiding power of valiant response."
>
> Maror -- (bitter herbs) -- "Maror is a bitter vegetable. Yet dipped in charoset, its bitterness brings pleasure. So is the struggle for freedom turned to joy by the community of those everywhere who have joined together to celebrate Passover."[27]

What is remarkable about Reines' effort at religious symbolic interpretation is its thoroughness and fidelity to polydox principles. There is no absolutely "true" meaning to these Passover symbols. Reines, however, does an excellent job in interpreting the language of the holiday practices symbolically, according to his own philosophy and to polydox principles. Every symbol of the holiday observance is given a referent, a symboland.[28] The individual, as always, is free to accept or reject the symbolic interpretation. From Reines' point of view, however, the crucial point is that a thorough non-orthodox symbolic view of Passover and its symbols be offered to the liberal Jewish (i.e., polydox) religionist.

With respect to Chanuka, a similar thoroughgoing symbolic substitu-

tion is made. What is in orthodox Judaism a celebration of an historical victory over religious persecution becomes in polydox Judaism a celebration of the courage and power of the individual to face the change of seasons which ultimately denotes his or her finity. Reines writes about Chanuka that it is:

> "...a festival that celebrates the power of the human person to triumph over the existential meaninglessness that threatens the individual owing to the finite condition of human life...Chanuka is a Festival of Affirmation, a festival that affirms the human potential to attain soteria, and a festival that affirms the essential role of the individual in realizing that potential."[29]

Since the existential meaning of Chanuka is bound up in the change of seasons and the advent of winter, Reines proposes changing the traditional date of Chanuka in the Orthodox Jewish calendar to the winter solstice, when the change in seasons actually takes place. This change, in Reines' view, is justifiable on historical,[30] cultural, economic[31] and existential grounds.[32] Reines also rejects the criticism that the change of Chanuka's date to the solstice enmeshes its celebration too closely with Christmas. He feels that even as Christmas was elevated by society in importance over Epiphany because of social, natural and economic factors, so Chanuka should be treated and its date changed to the solstice.[33, 34]

As with Passover, Reines undertakes a thorough religious symbol substitution of practices, making sure that each symbolic practice of Chanuka, be it the Menorah or candle lighting, has a referent consistent with his polydox existential view of the holiday.[35] He even offers a new vegetative symbol, the cactus, which symbolizes the "indomitable human spirit...which has the power to triumph over the limitations of life and find pleasure in existence."[36]

CONCLUSION

Reines is painfully aware that these symbolic interpretations are alternatives, and not conclusively demonstrable aspects of each holiday. He has offered, however, one complete alternative system of symbolic practice to that of orthodox Judaism. He has carefully given symbolands for symbols and not left rituals prone to poetic or figurative interpretations which are either incoherent or incomplete. Yet even these polydox interpretations are admittedly alternatives and suffer from the same lack of conclusivity that orthodox Jewish symbolic interpretation does. Reines, however, unlike orthodox Judaism or even the philosophers discussed in previous chapters is aware of this necessary aspect of doubt. About this doubt, Reines writes that:

> "...no human can of himself know for sure whether the object of his belief is real or the action he takes is right. He cannot know with certainty what the future will bring, or whether his morality will ultimately prove to be immorality. Yet the autarchic person, limited though his knowledge is, must ultimately base his life decisions upon that which he judges reality and goodness to be. To surrender such ultimate determination to any other entity is to abandon freedom."[37]

Religious symbolic interpretation, then, is not to be based on any figurative expression. It is to be the result of the human person's response to the conflicts brought on by existence and finitude. It is also a result of the human person's choice to meet those conflicts within a community.

Reines affirms the right of the individual to meet these challenges according to his or her need. The goal of religion being the attainment of soteria through the uncovering of reality, however, precludes abandoning one's fate to any subjective orthodoxy as an inauthentic response to life itself. For Reines, it is indeed permissible, yet inauthentic to ignore reality to achieve soteria. This, in his view, is exactly what many orthodox and even supposedly non-orthodox systems of religious thought do. A religion cannot

purport to teach ultimate truth while ignoring reality. Consequently, in the words of one of Reines' commentators:

> "Reality having been determined...the task falls upon religion to provide man with responses appropriate to its saving and fundamental responses of being, that finite man... must take to meet a pressing and demanding existence."[38]

Religious symbolic expression for Reines is an expression of reality itself and the response made to it by the human person. As long as the response is authentic, as long as it confronts and does not deny the conflicts inherent in existence, all religious symbolic systems of practice are permissible. Reines' system carries with it, however, a unique claim--a claim to serve as a means of attaining soteria using every tool the modern individual has available, whether it be rationalism, creativity, nature, or the human person's very being.

CRITIQUE

MAIMONIDES: CRITIQUE

Maimonides offers an ingenious system of interpretation for understanding Jewish religious language as a figurative expression of the philosophic truths of Neo-Platonic science. His approach is not only clever, but one might say centuries ahead of its time. His interpretations of the religious language of Scripture, God, religious services and religious symbolic practice allow for those who have the intellectual capacity to study Neo-Platonic scientific principles while utilizing the language of Scriptural and pharisaic discourse. The equivocal nature of his interpretation also permits the use of the Talmud and Scripture to restrict the thinking and the behavior of the uneducated masses for their own good without giving in to their excessive material desire. It even gives them the basis for "proper" theological belief within their limited intellectual capacity. His approach, however, is open to several criticisms.

The most serious flaw in his figurative interpretation (especially concerning Scripture) is that although it is ostensibly scientific and philosophical, it is inherently unverifiable. It is, in point of fact, eisegetical. Although there is a reasonableness, a plausibility to Maimonides' claims, they are not wholly supportable by the evidence given in Scripture. Maimonides' rationalistic interpretations are incomplete and not fully coherent with and reconcilable with the plain meaning of the religious language of Scripture and the pharisaic tradition. His view is, in fact, a scientific "midrash," taking the principles of Neo-Platonic science and supporting them with appropriate passages from Scripture. Maimonides uses prooftexts for his scientific view in the same manner as the Sages did in the writing of their halakic and aggadic works, resulting in a form of philosophical eisegesis. This is the major criticism of Abrabanel with respect to Maimonidean interpretation:

the words of Scripture simply cannot be made to mean what Maimonides needs for them to mean.[1]

Another fault with Maimonides' scientific approach is that the masses are excluded from attaining soteria (ultimately meaningful existence), which is gained only through the attainment of the Acquired Intellect. He makes it quite clear in his parable of the castle that the great mass of humanity is divorced from any intellectual apprehension of God or even the world as it actually is. Without such apprehension, soteria is inaccessible, in Maimonides' view. Maimonides actually shows quite a contempt for the masses who will never achieve the intellectual apprehension necessary for soteria. He writes that all of their obedience to traditional authority carries absolutely no salvific power whatsoever. The masses are, however, required to maintain an orderly society so that those who can apprehend truth with their minds will have the unhindered opportunity to do so.

This leads to a broader criticism of Maimonidean figurative interpretation: elitism. It is an open moral question as to whether or not it is right to condemn those who are not intellectually capable of apprehending truth to ultimately meaningless existence. Other philosophers, notably in our time since the rise of political democracy and the social consciousness it evokes, have openly assumed that every individual human person is worthy and capable of attaining soteria. Maimonides flatly states that this is not the case, that the only part of the person that is ultimately worthwhile is the actualized part of his or her intellect, i.e., the Acquired Intellect. Maimonides realizes that only a very few people are capable of attaining any measure of the Acquired Intellect, which, as previously stated, is the only saving grace in human existence in his system of thought.

Maimonides' scientific and philosophical outlooks are themselves

open to criticism. Although he interpreted Jewish religious language brilliantly within the framework of Neo-Platonized Aristotelian thought, that world view has since been scientifically superseded. Maimondes' figurative interpretation of Jewish religious language cannot stand if the very basis for such an interpretation, namely, the validity of the science of his day, has proven to be inadequate.

Ultimately, Maimonides uses objective tools to support a subjective viewpoint. There is merit and ingenuity in his interpretation. We cannot, however, agree with his contention that the religious language with respect to employed Scripture, God, religious services, and religious symbolic practice is in reality a figurative expression of Neo-Platonic science. It is an intellectually persuasive metaphor, persuasive for its reliance upon rationalism over unsubstantiated faith. Yet its relationship to Jewish religious language is not convincing, either philosophically or logically. It is a subjective view despite its ostensible objective basis in science and philosophy.

BUBER: CRITIQUE

Buber's figurative interpretation of Jewish religious language is attractive in a different way from Maimonides: It is attractive emotionally, allowing each individual human person to feel as though God is accessible to him or her in an I-Thou relation. As has been mentioned above, however, much of the I-Thou philosophy which Buber employs to underpin this figurative interpretation of Jewish religious language is philosophically incoherent.

Since some of Buber's ideas were criticized in the chapters on his work, we will try not to belabor points already made, but merely restate them. Buber's philosophy is inconsistent and illogical in that it cannot define God as a personality; yet it cannot <u>not</u> define God as so. He apparently tried to resolve this dilemma with an appeal to the "superlogical," but there is no

evidence to support this claim.[2]

There is also a serious logical difficulty inherent in Buber's requirement that grace and will be joined in order for an I-Thou encounter to take place. This requirement excludes from meaningful existence the entire class of people to whom grace is denied for whatever reason. Theoretically, one could be as open and sincere as possible in seeking God and still not achieve an encounter. These encounters cannot be arranged by will alone, yet without them the human person is denied an ultimately meaningful existence. Consequently, Buber's view is just as exclusionary as Maimonides' in that these unpredictable encounters comprise the sole salvific vehicle for Buber. Anyone can be denied access to encounter with the Eternal Thou by a mere whim of divine grace.

Elsewhere it is pointed out that since no information is conveyed during the course of an encounter, Buber cannot know or claim any valid information about God at all.[3]

The crux, however, of all substantive criticism of Buber's I-Thou figurative interpretation of Jewish religious language is its pure subjectivity. Professor of philosophy, Paul Edwards, states this criticism succinctly:

> "Without questioning his sincerity, we cannot simply take it on Buber's word that certain of his glances are 'wholly unillusory' and that he (has)...had real encounters with the divine. Presumably, the same claim would have been made by those, who by Buber's acknowledgments, have had illusory glances and merely apparent encounters."[4]

Reines, in reviewing Buber's work, makes the same point even more starkly. He writes:

> "...Buber based what he proposed as truth on what were essentially his private experiences and apprehensions. Substantially little more than his say-so is offered in support of the assertions he makes."[5]

Consequently, we cannot accept his figurative interpretations of the language of Scripture, God, religious services, and religious symbolic practice as demonstrated. His figurative interpretation is inconsistent, contradictory, and incomplete. It is also totally subjective, despite the protestations of Buber's later disciples.[6] To perceive Jewish religious language as a manifestation of encounters with the Eternal Thou is entirely up to the individual, depending on the amount of emotional satisfaction one derives from this belief. Caveat Credens, the believer should beware, however, that there is not a single shred of objective, empirically verifiable evidence to substantiate Buber's claims about Judaism and religion in general.

CRONBACH: CRITIQUE

The major criticism that can be offered against Cronbach's figurative interpretation of Jewish religious language is also that of subjectivism. Cronbach, however, would defend the consciously subjective manipulation of the meaning of Jewish religious language on the basis that it serves the ideal of social justice. There is, however, no objective evidence to support or justify this manipulation.

Cronbach's semantic analysis successfully cuts through the mass of confusion that surrounds much of religious discourse. His figurative interpretation, however, remains out one personal response to the challenge brought on by his claim for a lack of objective designata for religious terminology (Reines, of course, vigorously attacks this notion). Cronbach tries to soften the force of the criticism of subjectivity, anticipating it in advance. He writes that: "'Subjective'...means socially unshared as 'objective' means socially shared."[7] Yet the concept of socially determined epistemology is philosophically questionable.

Ultimately, no matter how attractive the beauty of Cronbach's social

idealism, it has no objective basis in the meaning of the religious language of Scripture, God, religious services, or religious symbolic practice. There is no demonstrated evidence that the language of any of these areas is in fact a figurative expression for the highest in human social ideals, or mutualism. That this notion seems to be a reasonable basis upon which to conduct a religious enterprise is no verification of its validity. Other figurative views of Scripture and the other areas of our inquiry (such as Buber's I-Thou) are equally as subjective, if not as plausible or socially attractive.

Cronbach does take the challenges presented by Jewish religious language very seriously. His answer to these challenges is to perceive them a human context which demands social progress even if it calls for the manipulation of Jewish religious language to substantiate it. In this way, he promotes what is in his view "divine," or ideal for humanity. Unfortunately, there are conflicting views of ultimate human ideals, just as there are differing views of the language of Scripture, God, religious services, and religious symbolic practice. Cronbach's figurative view will retain its potency (if indeed it does) solely because of its ability to elicit strong emotional responses via dramatization and impressiveness in favor of the causes he represents, not because it is true.

Although his view is subjective, it must be noted that Cronbach was willing to promote rationalism and reject supernaturalism as a basis for modern Judaism. The fact that he was unable to devise a convincing social figurative interpretation for Jewish religious language reflects more upon the impossibility of the task than it does on the sincerity of his commitment. Cronbach stood for social and intellectual progress, even if it involved the conscious manipulation of religious language to further that end. His semantic analysis of religious terminology merits study for its own sake, even if

his overall figurative interpretation of Jewish religious language is subjective and lacks substantial evidence to support it.

REINES: CRITIQUE

It seems obvious that no single figurative interpretation, be it Neo-Platonic, I-Thou existentialist, or socially idealistic, can give the genuine and accurate meaning of the religious language involved in Scripture, God, religious services and religious symbolic practice. This supports Reines' claim that no such figurative interpretation exists. Especially in relation to Scripture, Reines seems undeniably correct in asserting that it "says what it means, and means what it says." He finds no figurative interpretation to be adequate for accurately describing the function and purpose of Jewish religious language. This view is no different from that of the Sages, who insisted that Scripture especially had to be interpreted according to its plain meaning.

Reines' view is superior to Maimonides' in that it is based on scientific evidence which is qualitatively better than that available to Maimonides. His view is philosophically superior to those of Buber and Cronbach in that it is based on the principles of objectivity and empirical verifiability, while Buber's and Cronbach's views are subjectively based.

There are, however, flaws in his system of thought as well. Reines' entire theological standpoint is built upon the assumption that a possibility is an empirically verifiable event. This is an assumption of the philosophic school of Phenomenalism, and is open to attack.[8]

Polydoxy as a system of religious thought, however, has no intrinsic relation to Reines' particular theology. Reines would simply admit that other theologies have their adherents and their doubtful aspects as well. Polydoxy leaves it to the individual to choose a theology based upon the best evidence

at hand.

It can also be argued that Reines does in fact view the language of Scripture, God, religious services and religious symbolic practice by means of a figurative interpretation, despite his disavowal. It could be said that rationalistic empiricism as a philosophic position is itself merely metaphoric; it is a figurative manner in which to view a world whose phenomena are in and of themselves not orderly. We have established that Reines' commitment to rationalistic empiricism, is unwavering.[9]

If, however, rationalistic empiricism is itself a figurative expression of reality, it may not be the objective method by which to interpret Jewish religious language that it claims to be. Rationalistic empiricism may itself be a subjective stand with respect to epistemology and reality. It may be a symbol, the symboland of which is the human desire or motivation to order the phenomena of the internal and external worlds.

Again, however, since rationalistic empiricism is but one philosophic and epistemological viewpoint available within a polydoxy, this criticism would not undermine Reines' essential principles of religious philosophy: The Freedom Covenant, the principle of free ritual, and the principle of discreditation of orthodox interpretation. If, however, rationalistic empiricism is indeed a subjective viewpoint, it denotes a stance that is just as liable to attack for subjectivism as those of Buber and Cronbach. As stated above in the conclusion to the chapter of Reines and religious symbolic practice, however, Reines concedes the element of uncertainty involved in all human seeking for absolute knowledge.

Perhaps the most serious criticism of Reines' religio-philosophical viewpoint with respect to Jewish religious language is that acceptance of this view will not necessarily lead the individual to soteria. From the standpoint

of the other philosophers, acceptance of a particular view holds out the promise for an ultimately meaningful existence, whether it be through the Acquired Intellect, encountering the Eternal Thou, or working for the realization of the highest human hopes and ideals. For Reines, however, acceptance of a polydox view of religion and religious language will only give the individual an opportunity to attain soteria. Since, however, Reines concedes that the function of a religion is to give its adherents a feeling of soteria, one could conclude that Reines does not offer a path to soteria. This would, indeed, constitute a serious flaw in his religious philosophy.

Reines, of course, is aware of this problem. He, however, has stated his belief that it is up to the individual to attain soteria; that nothing outside the individual can cause him or her to attain ultimately meaningful existence. It is not the purpose of a polydox to yield soteria, according to Reines. A polydox religious approach is designed to give the human person all the information and support required for him or her to attain soteria on his or her own. A polydoxy removes the interference of competing authoritarian religious systems which claim that they represent the sole route to soteria. Since Reines refutes all claims to absolute knowledge in the realm of religion, the individual is allowed to seek, and perhaps find, soteria. For Reines, being given the opportunity to attain soteria is superior to belief in a religious system which promises soteria at the cost of freedom of inquiry.

It would be mistaken, though, to think that Reines does not offer a path to soteria. It is not enough to simply leave the individual religionist afloat in a vast sea of unlimited religious responses. He offers the finite response to the conflict of finitude, which Reines claims can yield ultimately meaningful existence. This claim is based upon the acceptance of rationalistic empiricism as a system which yields essentially correct information with

respect to the world in general and to religion in particular. By rejecting figurative interpretations of Jewish religious language, Reines asserts the need for the creation of responses to Scripture, God, religious services, and religious symbolic practice which are in consonance with the acceptance of one's finitude and the renunciation of infinite desire. This path to soteria is not easy; acceptance of personal finitude is a heroic act in Reines' view. It is, however, a response that does not call for mental gymnastics or denial of human intelligence in favor of unsubstantiated faith.

Reines may well be right in claiming that no religion can guarantee soteria to its adherents. All religions are intended to be highways, whose destination is an ultimately meaningful existence. Yet there is no assurance that every human person will travel that road safely without mishap or reach the intended destination. Reines' approach to God and religious language and practice allows individual religionists to keep all of their intellectual freedom, while yet providing philosophical guidelines and moral limits. This is done in the hope that religionists will attain soteria through autonomous action, in contradistinction to those who would impose a single route to soteria in their systems.

In the absence of such a single viable route to soteria, individuals respond to the conflict of finitude, fully conscious of the options and limitations involved. It is to be firmly hoped that this knowledge will impel individuals to boldly reject figurative, subjective interpretations of religious language which strain credulity. They will, rather, demand and participate in the creation of rituals and liturgy whose plain meanings aid in best comprehending the world and responding to it in the most satisfying way.

FOOTNOTES

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13) Kagan, Critique, p. 55.

14) Reines, Introduction to RJ, p. 124.

15) Reines, Elements, p. 115.

16) Reines, Introduction to RJ, p. 126.

17) Ibid., p. 126ff.

18) Alvin J. Reines, A Concise Guide to the Celebration and Understanding of Chanukah--The Festival of Freedom (hereafter: Concise Guide), (Cincinnati: ICJ, 1980), pp. 16-17.

19) Ibid., pp. 17-19.

20) Reines, Elements, p. 19.

21) Ibid., p. 126.

22) Ibid.

23) Reines, "Religious Education," p. 13.

24) Reines, Concise Guide, p. 6.

25) Reines, Elements, p. 114.

26) Ibid., Elements, pp. 113ff.

27) Alvin J. Reines, Haggadah: A Passover Service for the Family (hereafter: Haggadah), (Cincinnati: ICJ, 1976), pp. 10-12.

28) Ibid., pp. 19ff.

29) Reines, Concise Guide, pp. 3-4.

30) Ibid., p. 12ff.

31) Ibid., pp. 20-21.

32) Ibid., pp. 8-9.

33) Ibid., pp. 20-21.

34) Ibid., p. 5.

35) Ibid., p. 9.

36) Ibid., p. 11.

37) Reines, Elements, p. 64.

38) Shapiro, Cosmologies, p. 100.

NOTES TO CRITIQUE

1) Alvin J. Reines, Maimonides and Abrabanel on Prophecy, (Cincinnati: HUC Press, 1970), pp. lxxvi-lxxviii.

2) Edwards, Buber and Buberism, p. 32.

3) Ibid., p. 37.

4) Ibid., p. 41.

5) Alvin J. Reines, "Review of the M. Buber's The Knowledge of Man, and The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism" in Jewish Social Studies, vol. 30, #2, 1968, p. 123.

6) Edwards, Buber and Buberism, p. 35.

7) Cronbach, Realities, p. 7.

8) "Phenomenalism" in Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, ed. Paul Edwards, (New York: MacMillan and Co. and The Free Press, 1967), pp. 132-34.

9) Shapiro, Cosmologies, p. 104.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY--ABBREVIATIONS

HTR -- HARVARD THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

HUCA -- HEBREW UNION COLLEGE ANNUAL

JQR -- JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW

PAAJR -- PROCEEDINGS OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY FOR JEWISH RESEARCH

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