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# THE THEOLOGIES OF ISAAC MAYER WISE AND KAUFMANN KOHLER

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# DIGEST

"The Theologies of Isaac Mayer Wise and Kaufmann Kohler" attempts to present and provide a critique of the theological systems of the first two presidents of the Hebrew Union College. As important rabbis, theology professors at H.U.C., and leaders of the College and the C.C.A.R. these two men were in a unique position to influence the course of Reform Jewish thought in America.

The historical contexts within which these men developed their theologies are briefly discussed in the first chapter. Special note is taken of the influence which non-Jewish liberal theologians might have had upon Wise. Kohler, coming to America after Wise, had more of a foundation of liberal Jewish thinking both in Europe and America upon which to build. Major influences on Kohler are mentioned, in particular an influence which seems not to have been fully appreciated in the past, that of Moritz Lazarus.

The second chapter deals with Wise's theology, a theology based on an infallible revelation: the decalogue. The importance of that revelation for Wise is so great that nothing in his theological system, not even his God-concept, can be appreciated unless his view of revelation is first understood.

The third chapter presents Kohler's theological system, pointing out its strengths and its weaknesses. The essential thrust of Kohler's thinking is shown to be a moral one.

Judaism's teachings about God, man, the relationship between God and man, and Israel, as Kohler presents them, are all aimed primarily at fostering individual and social morality.

The final chapter discusses some major similarities and some crucial differences between the theologies of Wise and Kohler. Representing, as they do, successive steps in the development of Reform Jewish theology, the latter is found, not surprisingly, to have been the more sophisticated of the two.

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# Chapter I:

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

To what extent does the president of a rabbinic seminary influence the seminarians? To what extent does the instructor of the course on "Systematic Theology" influence his students? To such hypothetical questions no sure answers can be given. But when the president of a small seminary happens also to be its sole professor of systematic theology, chances are that his influence is considerable. Such a situation obtained during the tenure of both of the first two presidents of the Hebrew Union College, Isaac Mayer Wise and Kaufmann Kohler. Conceivably, what Wise and Kohler taught their students about Jewish theology was to a significant degree what H.U.C.-ordained rabbis preached to Reform congregations during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Moreover, these two men had a direct influence on the Central Conference of American Rabbis' formation of policy. And through their voluminous writings they reached a still wider audience. Their theologies are important elements in the development of Reform Jewish thought in America.

Wise's biography has been fully related elsewhere.[1] For our purposes it should be sufficient to note that he received a traditional Jewish education in Bohemia, where he was born in 1819. A governmental decree in 1837 required that no one could be ordained a rabbi who had not successfully completed gymnasium and university courses. Hence Wise also received a secular education before he assumed his first rabbinical post in Radnitz, Bohemia in 1843. Wise found

that both his political and his religious ideas were too liberal for him to be comfortable in such a pulpit. In 1846, therefore, he left for America, and soon found a pulpit in Albany, New York. By the time he left Albany for Cincinnati, Ohio in 1854 his liberal ideas and reforms had provoked much controversy and made him a major figure in American Judaism. In Cincinnati he continued his liberalizing efforts, increased his literary output greatly, and worked hard to realize a dream he had already begun fighting for in Albany: Wise wanted to unify the American Jewish community, both organizationally and theologically. His efforts finally led to the founding of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in 1873. In 1875 he founded the Hebrew Union College, and in 1889 the Central Conference of American Rabbis. He was the first president of both the College and the Conference, continuing as president of the College until his death in 1900. Wise's fame as the great organizer of Reform Judaism in America justly follows from these accomplishments. But he failed in his overall purpose of unifying American Jewry. As we shall see when we examine his theology, he never saw himself as a radical or a schismatic. But, in retrospect, we must view him as a specifically Reform thinker and organizer. American Jewry has never been unified organizationally, and has been increasingly disunified theologically.

Theological disunity in the community did not stop either Wise or Kohler from believing that, on a theoretical level, authentic Judaism has one theological system. As

each of them saw that system, so he preached, so he wrote, and so he taught Hebrew Union College students to preach and write. The earliest official listing of courses during the early years of the College still available in the H.U.C. library is the 1887 "Twelfth Annual Report of the President and Examiners of the Hebrew Union College."[2] In the section on faculty Wise is listed as "President and Professor of Theology and Philosophy." Under "The Subjects Taught Last Year" Wise is listed as having taught Maimonides and Albo to students, and as having lectured the most advanced classes on "The Elements of Rational Theology; The Form and Contents of Theology as a Science; The Scriptural Foundation of Ethics; The Significance of Covenant; Introduction to the Pentateuch." By the time of the publication of the earliest available catalogue, 1894-95, Wise is listed as "Professor of Theology and Holy Writ, President,"[3] and his courses are called "Philosophy of Judaism."[4] In the next catalogue Wise's title becomes "Professor of Systematic Theology and Holy Writ, President," and his courses include lectures on "Systematic Theology of Judaism."[5] The same plates were used for course listings in the 1900-1901 catalogue and in the 1901-1902 catalogue, though both have a page in memory of the late Rabbi Wise at the beginning of the catalogue, and in the latter catalogue the register of students lists "Unregistered Student: Isaac M. Wise."[6]

The new H.U.C. President, Kaufmann Kohler, took office in 1903. The 1905 catalogue's faculty list reads, "Rabbi

Kaufmann Kohler, Ph.D., President--Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology and Hellenistic Literature." Kohler taught "Systematic Theology" to Juniors and Seniors.[7] Catalogues indicate that he continued teaching systematic theology until his retirement in 1922.

Kohler's academic background was far more extensive than Wise's had been. Born in 1843 in Fürth, Bavaria, as a youth he received an Orthodox Jewish education under various rabbis. In 1862 he began his formal secular studies at the Gymnasium in Frankfort, simultaneously continuing his rabbinic studies under the famous Samson Raphael Hirsch. He remained in Frankfort for one and a half years, then moved on to university studies in Munich, Berlin, and Erlangen. His university studies undermined much of his Orthodox Jewish belief. Kohler went through a spiritual crisis (which shall be discussed further later in the chapter). He emerged as a liberal Jew and Wissenschaft des Judentums scholar with a Ph.D. granted by the University of Erlangen in 1867. His dissertation was an exercise in so-called "higher criticism" of the Bible. Though ordained in 1868, the furor that his critical approach to the Bible had raised in German Jewish circles rendered him unemployable as a rabbi. Discontent with further university studies, in 1869 he took Abraham Geiger's advice and came to America. His scholarly output continued as he served major pulpits in Detroit (1869-71), Chicago (1871-79) and New York (1879-1903). Even before assuming the presidency of the Hebrew Union College in 1903

Kohler had become a major voice in the maturing Reform movement. Most notably, Kohler summoned the Pittsburg Rabbinical Conference of 1885 and was the main architect of the famous "Pittsburg Platform." Kohler served as President of H.U.C. until retiring in 1922. He died in 1926.[8]

Like most thinkers, Isaac M. Wise and Kaufmann Kohler reflected their times at least as much as they influenced them. For example (as we shall see in the next two chapters), both allude to Kant, both allude to the scientific knowledge of their day, both thought that Judaism could be purified and modernized, both opposed Zionism, and both believed that society was moving rapidly toward a utopian order in which the truths of Judaism would be the religion of mankind. As exponents of so-called "classical Reform Judaism," both were shaped by, and helped to shape, the liberal religious thinking of their times.

The considerable differences between Wise and Kohler should not be overlooked, however, as we consider the intellectual climate out of which each one's thinking emerged. While their careers overlapped, Kohler was very much the younger contemporary, surviving Wise by a quarter of a century. When Wise came to America few liberal Jewish thinkers were present to influence him, and Wissenschaft des Judentums had not yet reached maturity in Europe. His rejection of miracles, his stated denial of a belief in a "personal" God, and even his belief that America would soon have a

single liberal religion--elements of his thought which we shall examine later--might best be viewed against the background of liberal Protestant thought in America.

Kohler, on the other hand, arriving several decades after Wise, came to America because he feared that his already developed radical views and Wissenschaft scholarship would make him unemployable as a rabbi in his native Germany. By the time he arrived there were many liberal rabbis, most of them European transplants, whom he could engage in dialogue in America. Hence, without minimizing the relatively greater freedom to innovate which America represented to both Wise and Kohler, we can follow statements in Kohler's autobiographical writings to a more exclusively European genesis of his rejection of miracles, of his view of the role of the Jewish people, indeed of his entire theological approach.

Determining influences on a man's thought is nearly always a hazardous and tentative undertaking. That Wise was more influenced by non-Jewish American thinking than was Kohler appears likely in light of the historical considerations just mentioned, and also in light of a statement in his memoirs. Before examining that statement, it should be emphasized that the purpose here is to place Wise in a context, not to accuse him of slavish imitation.

That Wise was aware of, and felt some kinship with, liberal Protestant thought seems likely from what James Heller reports of Wise's study habits in Albany. Wise stu-

died English with prominent non-Jews and made a point of attending two church services to listen to the sermon every Sunday.[9] More important, Wise reports in his Reminiscences that on two occasions when his writings were attacked for being too radical Theodore Parker, a prominent Unitarian minister, came to his defence.[10] If Parker was reading Wise's writings, does it not seem likely that Wise was reading Parker's--and very possibly other liberal ministers' as well? Certainly a remarkable passage in Wise's Reminiscences shows that he knew Parker's thought. Having discussed Unitarianism with the famous Daniel Webster on one previous occasion,[10] Wise reports the following incident when he was received in Secretary of State Webster's office in 1850:[11]

> Two strangers were there, to whom Webster introduced me as his excellent friend. One of them was Senator Benjamin, the other Lieutenant Maury, the famous scholar, whose book on the trade winds aroused so much attention. "Mr. Senator," said Webster to Benjamin, "my friend is of your race. I would have said your co-religionist, but I do not know how much or how little you believe; and in truth we four are all co-religionists, since we are all Unitarians." Maury objected to this, since he had never belonged to any Church organization, and had never made any public confession of faith; and Benjamin protested likewise, since in his opinion Judaism and Unitarianims were entirely different.[12]

The four decided to continue the conversation at dinner. Wise writes:

> Webster began the interrupted conversation at once, and wanted to know my opinions. I referred to Theodore Parker's conception of Unitarianism, and set over against this my conception of Judaism. This forced me to the conclusion that there was no essential difference in the matter of doctrine, but in historical

> development, which, however, did not enter into the question of doctrine.[13]

Webster was delighted, Maury agreed, and "Benjamin alone was not satisfied. He had a confused notion of Orthodox Portuguese Judaism" which, though he did not practice it, he still thought deprived him of any co-religionists other than Jews. Wise thought him ignorant.

For Wise, who many times during his career engaged in anti-Christian polemics, to have found Parker's Unitarianism identical in doctrine to Judaism is quite remarkable. What, then, did Parker believe? He rejected miracles and scriptural inerrancy. He believed Jesus to be the son of God in the sense that all men are sons of God. That is, Jesus' excellence was the greatest <u>human</u> excellence. He placed all church rituals and the hair-splittings of traditional theology in the inferior category of the transient and non-essential, declaring:

> Christianity is a simple thing, very simple. It is absolute, pure morality; absolute, pure religion, --the love of man; the love of God acting without let or hindrance. The only creed it lays down is the great truth which springs up spontaneous in the holy heart, --there is a God. Its watchword is, Be perfect as your Father in heaven. The only form it demands is a divine life, --doing the best things in the best way, from the highest motives; perfect obedience to the great law of God. Its sanction is the voice of God in your heart; the perpetual presence of him who made us and the stars over our head; Christ the Father abiding within us. . . . the whole extent of Christianity /<u>is</u>/ so well summed up in the command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."[14]

As we shall see when we examine Wise's theology in detail, Parker's theology is not identical to it (it is far closer to Kohler's theology!). Wise begins with infallible revelation, and cannot dismiss the fine points of philosophical theology as easily as does Parker. But it is easy to see how Wise would have been encouraged by the development in American Christian circles of transcendentalist/Unitarian thinking--encouraged, and very possibly influenced.

To have placed Kohler in the Wissenschaft des Judentums movement is already to have placed him in a well-known context. Nevertheless, a few men should be specifically noted as his theological mentors. As we shall see in the chapter on Kohler's theology, nothing is more central to Kohler's thinking than the idea of progress. That the history of Judaism has constituted progress, not merely successive developments, is an idea that Kohler got from Abraham Geiger. In an address on Geiger, Kohler credits him with having brought Judaism "to a new stage of its existence." Geiger, says Kohler, "was the prophet to whom God revealed the secret of the age for modern Israel." Geiger laid the foundation of Reform Judaism, says Kohler, emphasizing as he did "the threefold message of the age for the Jew: Evolution, Regeneration and Historic Continuity."[15]

It was Geiger who advised Kohler to come to America. It was David Einhorn whom Kohler first sought out when he arrived. Kohler, moreover, married Einhorn's daughter and

inherited Einhorn's pulpit in New York. In an address on Einhorn, Kohler called him "the Reform theologian par excellence," ranking him with Geiger and Samuel Holdheim.[16] The extreme emphasis in Kohler's theology on messianic expectations and on Israel as the "Messiah people," instrumental in bringing on the messianic age, can probably be attributed to the influence of Einhorn. When Kohler claims that "Reform Judaism has thus accepted the belief that Israel, the suffering Messiah of the centuries, shall at the end of days become the triumphant Messiah of the nations," his footnote begins, "See Einhorn . . ."[17]

Before Kohler could accept guidance from Geiger and Einhorn he had needed to make the jump from his Orthodox background into the liberal camp. As was mentioned above, Kohler, upon pursuing university studies, underwent a spiritual crisis. To Kohler's surprise and disillusionment the teachings of Samson Raphael Hirsch did not stand up against the batterings of the scientific study of Jewish texts and Jewish history. At this point one man for sure, and perhaps a second, exerted a profound influence on the course of Kohler's thinking and consequently on the course of Kohler's entire life. The discussion of this influence has been saved for last because it is difficult to determine just exactly how far the influence went. There is no doubt, however, as should soon be apparent, that this influence was <u>at least</u> as great as Geiger's or Einhorn's.

Kohler wrote that on finding S. R. Hirsch's thought

could not serve his needs as his historical knowledge grew, "I passed days and weeks of indescribable woe and despondency; the heavens seemed to fall down upon me and crush me."[18] As Kohler continues these "Personal Reminiscences" he explains that Hirsch could not help him with his doubts, nor could his professors offer much help, although "it was Prof. Steinthal's mythological and ethnological views which exerted the profoundest influence upon my whole thinking and feeling."[19] In another essay Kohler describes the same spiritual crisis, but credits Steinthal only with having disolved all of Biblical literature into myth and fable without causing Kohler to become a sceptic or agnostic. Significantly, he also adds that Geiger had been unable to help:

> In vain did I seek spiritual support, a firm and clear basis, from Geiger, the great historian and critic. None of the Reformers would fan the flame of enthusiasm for faith into full bloom again.[20]

Whence, then, did Kohler's help come? He reports that on July 4, 1869 he heard Professor Moritz Lazarus address the Jewish Synod at Leipzig. Immediately after saying that Hirsch, Geiger and Steinthal had not been able to resolve his doubts, Kohler adds:

> In my heart of hearts I had remained a Jew, a Jewish theologian of a positive faith. It was at this point that the whole individuality of Lazarus worked like a magic spell on me. He represented to me the harmony of mind and soul which I was in search of. His speech enkindled an unwonted fire in me. While others listened to him as if a prophet had spoken, I heard the voice of a new revelation. Like Elijah after he had tasted

> the angel's food, I awoke with regenerated vigor to turn to America as worker, under Dr. Einhorn's leadership, for enlightened, progressive Judaism.[21]

Samuel Cohon, a student of Kohler's and his successor as Professor of Systematic Theology at the Hebrew Union College, notes this passage in Kohler's writings and claims that "What fascinated Kohler and worked like a charm upon him was Lazarus's fusion of Judaism with German philosophic idealism."[22] Certainly, Lazarus' neo-Kantian approach to Judaism influenced Kohler. When, for example, Kohler emphasizes God's holiness, having distinguished between mere ritual holiness and the truly divine moral holiness of God, and adds that it is in the sense of God's moral holiness that man can imitate God, the influence of Lazarus' thinking is very strong. The second footnote in Kohler's chapter on "God's Holiness"[23] in Jewish Theology, Systematically and Historically Considered refers the reader to chapters IV and V of Lazarus' Ethics of Judaism. A detailed comparison of Kohler's chapter with chapter IV in Lazarus' work[24] would reveal what a tremendous debt Kohler owes to Lazarus.

But such a debt only makes Lazarus as important as Geiger and Einhorn in terms of influence of Kohler's thought. It appears to me that Lazarus contributed something else to Kohler, and that it was this something else which brought order to Kohler's mind and helped resolve his spiritual crisis. Certainly philosophic idealism alone could not have come as a revelation to an advanced German university student in the latter half of the nineteenth century! But

Lazarus was also working in another field, a field which he called Voelkerpsychologie, " ethnic psychology." He was working on it, and founded a magazine to promote its study, along with his brother-in-law Heyman Steinthal (which might explain why one article by Kohler praises Steinthal for helping during Kohler's crisis, not mentioning Lazarus, while another of Kohler's articles mentions Steinthal but gives the lion's share of the credit to Lazarus).

Cohon mentions Ethnic Psychology, but does not go into detail discussing it.[25] Joseph Gumbiner also mentions that Ethnic Psychology influenced Kohler, particularly in his view of revelation.[26] Gumbiner is correct, but he does not seem to be aware of just how significant his observation is. Ethnic Psychology, as we shall see in the passage to be quoted in a moment, maintained that the Jewish people--in this sense the Jewish race--had a unique capacity for receiving revelation, and that this Jewish genius can be seen unfolding in history. That is an absolutely crucial idea in Kohler's thinking. Picture the young scholar, extensively trained in Jewish literature both Biblical and rabbinic, but also trained to be a practitioner of the "scientific study of Judaism." He is loyal to his people and anxious not to deny the profundity and divinity of Jewish literature. Yet so much of that literature appears primitive to him! And he can believe neither that the entire written Torah was given at Sinai nor--how much the more so!--that the oral tradition comes from Sinai. Then he is presented

with a line of thought that maintains the divine origin of Jewish literature and the unique role of the Jews in history without claiming that a single, perfect, and eternally unchangeable revelation took place at Sinai. Moreover, the claim that Jews have a peculiar psychological ability to receive revelation does not appear to the young scholar to be mere apolegetics or ethnocentrism. Voelkerpsychologie claims to base itself not on theology, not on the authority of ancient texts, but, to the contrary, on the most modern theories of sociology, psychology, and anthropology. It is a science! Suddenly the young Kohler realizes that he can be both scientist and believer, indeed that the scientific investigation of history is a crucial undertaking if the true essence of Judaism is to be isolated, preached, and practiced! His spiritual crisis is resolved. His concept of "progressive revelation" begins to take shape. Science and faith, history and theology, come together.

Quite obviously, the foregoing is hypothesis. A full study of Lazarus' and Steinthal's Ethnic Psychology would be necessary to further demonstrate the validity of the hypothesis. Even if it were to be found that Ethnic Psychchology was not the crucial influence of the young Kohler, that it was at least a significant influence (and probably more than that) should be evident from the following paragraph of Kohler's essay entitled "Professor Moritz Lazarus":

> In his book, "Treu und Frei," Lazarus points out as a great and singular deficiency of the Jewish mind its lack of historical perception, which causes things

> and persons, forms and sayings of widely different ages to be put and kept together, without discrimination and without regard to their different origin and meaning. A fallacious conservatism is the consequence of this neglect. This striking remark has a profounder significance than is at first apparent. I venture to ask: Is Graetz a historian? If of the Jewish people, certainly not of Judaism. . . . What are most of our learned rabbis in Europe today but antiquarians, with scarcely a life-pulse in their writing or preaching? Ask Reformer or Radical whether the Jew represents a race or a religion, and both admit alike their perplexity and confusion. That Judaism, whether Mosaic or Rabbinical, product of Divine revelation, is organically related to the Jewish genius; in other words, that national psychology offers the key to unlock the mystery of both the history and the mission of the Jew, hardly dawned upon Jewish theologians, except, perhaps, upon Geiger and Joel. The science of ethnical psychology furnishes the solution of the Jewish question--the directive and norm of Jewish reform. The soul of the prophets and martyrs, the sages and philanthropists, the soul of Elijah and Akiba, of Philo and Mendelsohn, of Montefiore and Lassalle, the soul of righteousness, of truth and of humanity, is in the Jew, [sic.] Not until you study the Jews psychologically will you understand the Bible, the religion, the historical mission of Israel.27

So much for placing Wise and Kohler in context. Both men worked out theological systems, preached their ideas from important pulpits, taught them to future rabbis, debated them with colleagues, and wrote them down for any who might wish to read them. The next two chapters will present, analyze, and criticize Wise's and Kohler's respective theologies. Each will be dealt with on its own terms. The purpose is neither to destroy nor to recommend these systems, but only to understand them.

Chapter II:

# THE THEOLOGY OF ISAAC MAYER WISE

Isaac Mayer Wise had a lifelong preoccupation with theology. He believed that Judaism, while firmly grounded in revelation, was eminently rational. For the benefit both of the faithful and the doubtful, time and again he expounded Jewish theology as he understood it, developing it as a system and defending it against any current of thought which threatened its sure truth. In sermons and lectures, articles and catechisms, as well as in major volumes, a clear outline of Wise's system emerged.

In a monograph on The Theology of Isaac Mayer Wise, Andrew F. Key argues that "both Wise and the Judaism of his day were manifestly 'nontheological,' particularly if one lays a great deal of stress on the word 'systematic.'"[1] "Wise himself was rather suspicious of theology,"[2] we are told. Such statements clearly contradict an earlier writer, Maximillian Heller, who says of Wise that "he never shared the scorn for theology which was the fashion during a good part of his working years."[3] The contention here will be that Wise fancied himself a theologian, and a systematic one. This is particularly evident in his works, The Cosmic God,[4] An Introduction to the Theology of Judaism,[5] and in his two catechisms, The Essence of Judaism[6] and Judaism: Its Doctrines and Duties.[7] Maximillian Heller notes that Wise repeatedly urged the Central Conference of American Rabbis to prepare "a systematic theology of Judaism, . . . an authoritative statement of Jewish doctrine."[8] Significantly, when we turn to Heller's primary sources we find

that Wise thought his own work, An Introduction to the Theology of Judaism, would serve as a good starting point for the Conference's effort.[9] Wise was concerned with theology, wrote about theology, and taught "Philosophy of Judaism" and "Systematic Theology" at the Hebrew Union College.

It should be noted at the outset, however, that while Wise may have been an influential theologian, no one would claim that he was a great theologian. Instead of beginning with premises and proceeding to build a system--the method of a philosopher--Wise started with a system and proceeded to show why the system was logically compelling, defending it where he considered defence necessary. Wise's was the method of a man of faith, the method of a man dedicated to a tradition, albeit a tradition as he understood it. We might, in a technical sense, call Wise's system building apologetics. He was convinced, a fortiori, of the truth, logical consistency, and absolute certainty of a system. In the light of retrospective criticism we may consider that system to be Wise's own. Yet it is crucial to recognize that Wise considered it to be the Biblical system, the single authentic Jewish system, totally reconcilable with reason, but relying for its certainty not on reason but on revelation.

Though Wise's philosophizing in The Cosmic God occasionally becomes abstruse, his basic system is simple. His catechism, The Essence of Judaism, is only eighty pages long. It was not written solely for children. The sub-title says that it is "for Teachers and Pupils, and for Self-Instruction."[10]

Wise claims for these few pages that "the reader will find in them a complete abstract of Judaism."[11] When he revised the book, titling the revision Judaism: Its Doctrines and Duties, Wise also invited Gentiles to read it. Such a short abstract of Judaism would show:

> 1. There is a religion without mysteries or miracles, rational and self-evident.
> 2. This rational religion is taught in the Bible, called, in the Gentile phraseology, the old Testament.
> 3. This scriptural and rational religion is Judaism.
> 4. Judaism, in its doctrines and duties, is eminently humane, universal, liberal, and progressive; in perfect harmony with modern science, criticism, and philosophy, and in full sympathy with universal liberty, equality, justice, and charity.
> 5. Therefore Judaism is the religion of the future generations, as it was the teacher of the past ones.[12]

Two relatively recent works have dealt with Wise's theology. The monograph by Andrew F. Key, mentioned above, has several good insights which shall be utilized and properly credited here, but also contains several bits of analysis which, in this writer's opinion, are faulty (e.g. Key asserts that Wise has little to say about God[13] and that Wise's optimism for the immediate future should have precluded his extreme concern about assimilation[14]). The third section of James G. Heller's monumental biography, Isaac Mayer Wise, His Life, Work and Thought,[15] is better; it, too, will be cited in the coming pages. But Heller's work, as a biography, is quite properly less concerned with analyzing Wise's thought than with simply presenting it. The following pages, therefore, will attempt to provide more of an analysis and critique of Wise's theological views than has previously

been available.

The discussion will begin with Wise's idea of revelation. Though it might at first seem more logical to discuss God before discussing revelation, we will find that revelation is the touchstone of Wise's entire system, a necessary datum in assessing Wise's view of the God Who revealed and the religion which flows from the revelation.

Revelation

For Wise, the revelation of God to Moses at Sinai was an indisputable fact. Because a perfect God revealed His will at Sinai, by following the principles God has graciously provided man has a sure religion, Judaism. Man can know what he and society must do to reach perfection. The details of what was revealed will be examined later; for the moment what must be determined is what Wise meant by revelation. For Wise, "Judaism is inviolable as a revelation; it is Mosaic and Sinaitic, or it is nothing."[16] But what is "revelation?"

In this context, it will be useful to think of revelation in one of its most common usages, namely, the communication of a specific message by God to man. For philosophers and theologians--such as I. M. Wise--who consider God infinite and incorporeal, the question of how such a revelation is possible has always been a difficult one. The simplest "solution" is to say that revelation is a miracle, in the common sense of "an event or action that apparently contradicts known scientific laws and is hence thought to be due

to supernatural causes, especially to an act of God."[17] Such a "solution" does not really explain how revelation takes place. Rather, it amounts to saying that though man's intellect cannot explain revelation, for God nothing is impossible.

Isaac Mayer Wise, avowed rationalist, insisted again and again that he did not believe in miracles and that nothing whatsoever in Judaism depended upon the miraculous. The so-called miracles in the Bible could be explained rationally, or could be rejected altogether, for "nothing which reason rejects is to be accepted."[18]

For Wise, what many considered revelations to prophets other than Moses were not, in the strictest sense, revelations at all. The prophets were geniuses who developed their natural abilities to the fullest. What they called receiving "a message from on high," we, "in our modern phraseology," would call conceiving of "original ideas." Wise does add that God must will this natural process; but it is, indeed, a natural process.[19]

Can we say, then, that for Wise the human intellect is the instrument of revelation? He does say that God is self-conscious and becomes self-conscious again in man's consciousness.[20] But this is <u>not</u> what Wise refers to when he speaks of the Sinaitic revelation. He specifically states that he disagrees with the idea that "revelation is the intensified potency of the human mind."[21] "Divine inspiration," in that sense, will account for the prophets, but it

will not account for the revelation to Moses at Sinai.

The prophecy of Moses was entirely different from all other prophecy. Wise wrote that no one is considered by Jews an "organ of revelation," not even the great prophets. "There was only one revelation, which was that from Mount Sinai." /Italics mine--RM/ All the rest of the Bible merely expounds Sinai.[22]

The conclusion is inescapable, then, that in spite of Wise's protestations to the contrary, he did believe in one miracle. God did speak to Moses, but we have no way of explaining, within the framework of Wise's thought, how that could have happened. Wise writes:

> Why does the world ascribe so much importance to that collection of books called the Bible? Because one portion thereof is a direct revelation from on high, it is maintained . . . and another portion was written down by men, divinely inspired.[23]

The prophets conceived original ideas and called them "a message from on high." But Moses actually did receive "a direct revelation from on high."

"The idea of revelation is identical with that of authority."[24] Thus, for Wise, based on the revelation at Sinai Judaism is authoritative, true, and sure. And that revelation, since it cannot be accounted for in any other way, we must call a miracle. Significantly, though time and again Wise argues against the necessity of believing in any miracles at all, in one public lecture Wise does speak of the Sinaitic revelation as a miracle. As part of a series of apologetical

lectures published under the title Judaism and Christianity, Their Agreements and Disagreements, Wise spoke on "The Jewish and the Christian Evidences of Revelation Compared." The Christian revelation requires the belief in many miracles to establish the central miracle of a new revelation. No reasoning man can be expected to believe in so many miracles, but:

> We can more easily believe one than a dozen miracles, especially if any one suffices to prove the dominion of mind over matter, and the one, as is the case with the Sinaic revelation, conveys all the instruction to the human mind which it needs, to understand the relation between God and man, and affords him a valid standard of truth and righteousness.[25]

At one point, then, even Wise himself admitted that the Sinaitic revelation was a miracle. A problem remains, of course. How do we know that the miracle actually occured? In the same lecture we have just been examining Wise gives us three reasons for believing in the historical validity of the Sinaitic revelation. First, "a whole nation saw and heard the Sinaic revelation. This is one of the main points, for this never occured again, neither before nor after that memorable event." Second, the whole of Jewish tradition is based on it. All the subsequent Jewish literature and the subsequent life of the Jewish people attests to it. "Three thousand years of a nation's life and history are perhaps the most conclusive evidence to establish a fact." Third, Christianity and Islam also ackowledge the Sinaitic revelation; and to doubt what all men believe is to consider

people "fools and knaves."[26]

While there is no reason to doubt that Wise was convinced of the adequacy of these arguments, and particularly the third one,[27] they are not logically compelling. Ironically, shortly before offering them Wise himself had said that "miracles must be believed, they can never appeal to reason."[28] If we begin by asking why we should believe what the torah tells us, the first argument begs the question. The second argument, if it is anything more than a more limited variation of the third, amounts to saying "we believe because we have always believed," not taking into account the possibility that we have always been wrong. The third argument, which Wise labels an argumentum a consensu gentium [sic.], amounts to asserting that one man's reasoning can never adequately refute what all other men simply believe. By such "logic" we would still believe that the earth is flat and that the sun revolves around it. Parenthetically, we should note that this is a very old theological argument, but one rarely used by Jews because, if one can establish truth by taking a vote, then Christians or Buddhists can establish the truth of doctrines which Jews deny.

God

Isaac Mayer Wise devoted one entire volume and numerous less extended discussions to the question of the nature of deity. The vast majority, but not the entirety, of his writings assumed or developed what we shall call a philo-

sophical or non-personal God concept. Before this section concludes, therefore, it will be necessary to try to assess and, to the degree possible, account for the tension in his thinking between the non-personal and the personal God-conceptions. In either case, there is never the slightest doubt that Wise was a Theist. By "personal God" will here be meant a deity Who is conceived of as being conscious of, and in some way listening to or caring for, individuals. By non-personal God shall be meant a God Who is conceived of as constantly maintaining the universe and the people in the world via unchanging laws, and is thus unchanging, unaffected by the problems of individuals. The distinction is not quite as clear-cut as it may appear since the person who believes God cares for the entire world via unchanging laws may feel <u>as if</u> he is being cared for individually. If all men are governed beneficently, then each man is governed beneficently; and each man may therefore <u>feel</u> (subjectively) a personal sense of relation not just to divine laws, but to God Himself. The distinction, however, is still a real one. The believer in a "personal God," as we have been using the term, might feel that God could respond to his private need--showing him a special mercy not granted to others, for example. The believer in a "non-personal God" might or might not believe that God was aware of his private need, but would consider that his need could be met, if at all, only within the general order of things. If the desired end were achieved divine law was responsible,

and the individual might feel as if God had done it specifically for him. The "as if" is crucial, though, since the exact same thing would happen to anyone in an identical situation. God's beneficence helps individuals, but only because they are part of a beneficent order far larger than themselves.

Wise, in traditional Jewish fashion, thought that man could know quite a bit about God from His works (the world), from history, and from revelation, but could never hope to know God's essence.[29] His major work on God, The Cosmic God, attempts to use philosophy and science to prove the existence of, and describe the nature of, God.

Wise did not claim to be a philosopher in The Cosmic God, but he clearly thought himself an astute student of philosophy. He begins with epistemology, offering a correspondence theory of truth. Truth is reached by achieving harmony within our thoughts and between our thoughts and the external world.[30] The sensesand the intellect correct one another until harmony, truth, is reached. Therefore truth must be relative to our knowledge, while only the Omniscient Deity has absolute truth.[31]

Wise then claims to demonstrate that:

> Every natural object presents itself to human cognition by the ideas, inherent in the object represented. So there is ideality, or spirituality, if you please, in every natural object, or else man could not possibly conceive it.[32]

Having thus established, to his own satisfaction, intellect--

mind--both in man and in the physical world, he asserts that mere mechanical laws of matter could not explain everything in the world. Such phenomena as languages, literature, and the developments of history are only understandable as products of mind.[33]

To mind as operating in the universe, he adds force in his discussion of ontology.[34] And then from an examination of biology he reaches life.[35] As for matter, it may or may not exist (it probably does),[36] but its existence or non-existence makes no difference, for it only becomes and can remain what it is because mind exerts force on it. Without force, matter has none of its attributes, none of its activities. Matter is not a substance. "There is but one substance, and this one is psychical. This one psychical substance with the knowable attributes of life, will, intellect and extension is spirit, the Cosmic God."[37]

Hence God, Mind, exerts force to make and maintain the material world, and extends His life and intellect to give life to plants and animals, and self-consciousness to man. In a moment Wise's reasoning to establish the existence of God will be scrutinized, but it would take us too far afield in an analysis of Wise's theology to give a detailed analysis of the foregoing philosophy. Suffice it to say the philosophy is not terribly sophisticated in its working out of its details (it is particularly vague on the relationship between mind, force, and matter), but is at the core a reasonable philosophic position: mind is the substance

of the universe which constantly exerts force to make the universe what it is. Since mind is the basis of everything and man's mind is a part of God's (as mentioned above, God becomes self-conscious "again" in man[38]), mind is also purposefully at work in history.[39]

The main purpose of The Cosmic God is to prove the existence of God. Let us examine, in some detail, Wise's proofs. Though elsewhere Wise uses the argumentum de consensu gentium,[40] here he uses a form of the cosmological argument, a proof of his own, and a teleological argument.

His cosmological argument takes the following form. We have found that forces exist. Either each of the forces acts independently or they are all manifestations of, or caused by, one force. Modern chemistry and physics have found that "all physical forces are a unity." Thus there is one force which causes all the phenomena we call forces. "This first impulse could not have been the result of chance or casuality," for that violates all our experience; the human mind is incapable of thinking of a causeless effect. Hence there is a first cause: God.[41] Wise's recourse to the scientific understanding of his day makes this a rather unusual version of the cosmological proof, but it is certainly a form of the old argument that everything in the world must have a cause, and, as Wise puts it later in the book, "an endless regression of causes is itself absurd, as Aristotle already discovered." Numerous philosophers--before Wise's time--had already refuted this proof.[42] All that needs to

be pointed out here is that, even if Wise's scientific understanding was correct for his day (or ours), he was in error in thinking that Aristotle had "discovered" the impossibility of an infinite regression. That was Aristotle's (and Maimonides' and Aquinas') assumption.

Wise's next proof is more original. This is the argument [the numbering of premises and conclusions is mine--RM]:

Premise 1: We know in cogito ergo sum fashion of the existence of intellect.

Premise 2: We know cause and effect by "experience and experiment." It is "synthetic truth a priori" that all phenomena are effects of causes--else no philosopher or scientist can operate. "Intellect and the law of causality are inseparable." We know from Kant that causality is an a priori category of understanding.

Premise 3: That causality is universal outside our own minds we know from all that science has been able to discover.

Conclusion 1 (and Premise 4): Thus we have a universal outside which is also within it: causation.

Premise 5: As causation is inseparable from intellect inside the mind, so it must be outside the mind.

Conclusion 2: There is an intellect in nature.[43]

The first two premises of this argument are philosophically respectable. Wise's understanding of Kant, however, must have been superficial. From the standpoint of Premise 2,

Premise 3 is unacceptable. If the mind must see cause and effect in nature, then we do not know that cause and effect is really inherent in nature. That the scientist discovers cause and effect is irrelevant for establishing its existence outside the mind. Without Premise 3, Conclusion 1 does not follow. If we grant, for sake of argument, that Premise 3 is acceptable, then Conclusion 1 is acceptable. Premise 5, however, is a mere assumption, not logically compelling. How can we know the divine intellect operates the same way the human intellect operates? (We saw above that Wise thought the human intellect was part of the divine intellect, which may account for his assertion in Premise 5. But it would obviously beg the question to say that we know the nature of the divine intellect we are trying to establish the existence of because we know the nature of the human intellect which is part of it.) Premise 5 being spurious, Conclusion 2 cannot be established from Premises 4 and 5.

If, again, we assume for sake of argument that causality is a universal in nature (Premise 3 above), then we can follow one more proof which Wise offers:

> The law of causality being admitted, we all agree that nothing in this universe stands above or beyond the law. But as the forces and elements are heterogenous, and each follows its own law or laws, still the universe, as far as we know, is one in order and harmony, the forces of nature must either converge to the one single purpose of sustaining permanently this order and harmony, or one superior force must control all of them, or else there must be continual conflicts in nature among elements and forces, which we know not to be the case.[44]

Wise's third possibility he logically rejects. His second possibility would (granting the premise of universal harmony) be a proof of God's existence were it not for the fact that his first possibility is equally logical. Nevertheless, Wise goes on to assert, by analogy with people and machines, that if there is harmony among the parts of a whole, then some "superior force" must cause the harmony. "Here then is teleology," he tells us.[45] Here, to be sure, is a form of the traditional teleological proof. As in the case of the cosmological argument, philosophers such as Hume and Kant refuted this argument long before Wise used it.[46]

It is not surprising that a God discovered at the end of a chain of syllogisms is a non-personal one. This God is a conscious force which operates continually and with constancy. His operations have a direct and beneficial influence on the world and on man. His operations are the laws of nature and of history. Men come under, and are profoundly influenced by, those laws. But no individual could consider that God would suspend or alter a law for his personal benefit, for that would, from the philosopher's point of view, require change in the deity. When Wise finally enumerates what his philosophizing yields, he can quite appropriately call God a "substance":

> He, the substance, who had imparted this first impulse to the parallels of matter, of this and any other planet or solar system, the impulse from which all forces of nature have ensued, and by evolution and differentiation, constructed this great cosmos, triumphs over all matter in the self-conscious intelligence

> of man, remains in him and over him, preserving and governing all, shaping all destinies, guiding all and constantly from lower to higher conditions; He who is the Genius of nature and the Logos of history, fills all space and is the force of all forces; He is the Cosmic God, for He is the cause of all causes, the first principle of all things, the only substance whose attributes are life, will, and intellect. . . . He is almighty, for He is the force of all forces, the cause of all causes. . . . He is omnipresent, for He fills all space and penetrates all atomic matter. He is all-wise and omniscient, for He is the intellect of all intellect, its cause and substance.[47]

And if any doubt could still remain with the reader as to whether such a deity could have a special relationship with an individual, Wise goes on a few sentences later:

> He appears to none, because he continually and simultaneously appears to all and through all. He spoke to none, because He speaks eternally and simultaneously to all and through all. . . . He changes not, because all changes are effects, and He is the cause of all causes and no effect. . . .
>
> Scientists, here is your God and Lord, whom you seek, and whom to find is the highest wisdom. He is the God found by induction and felt by spontaneity. Philosophers, here is your God, whom to expound is the highest glory of the human mind--Kant, and other thinkers, have argued against the anthropomorphous God of theology; the cosmic God is philosophy's first and last substance.[48]

Wise's other statements on God do not differ from this substantially. His description of Mosaic monotheism[49] or his enumeration of divine attributes as indicated by the Biblical names for God[50] confirm that Wise the theologian did not argue for a personal God-concept. Even when he speaks of God's love,[51] it must be understood as love which leads God to order the universe in the way that He does.

A child might read in Wise's catechism that God "forgives sin, iniquity and transgression if the sinner corrected

himself, from no other motive than voluntary love,"[52] and think that God was affected by the repentance and moved to loving forgiveness. But the child's teacher could explain that love in terms of the way God has programmed man's mind to work:

> Does repentance work atonement? or, in other words, does God forgive sins because the sinner repents? . . . Repentance wipes out every guilt, it burns out every sin. . . . They [the ancient Jewish sages] prescribed various means to assist the efficacy of repentance, like confession, humiliation before God and man (no auricular confession), prayer, fasting [etc.] . . . but they are the means only to express and actualize the change of mind and to strengthen the will of the sinner. . . . Sin is subjective; God is not offended; man is lowered and disgraced by it. Repentance is self-punishment and self-elevation. . . . The penitent punishes and corrects himself. If he succeeds therein every other punishment or correction would be unjust and unnecessary, and must not be expected of the All-just God.[53]

Yet if it be admitted that the above statement from Wise's catechism could be interpreted as referring to a personal God, then we are on the horns of a dilemma. Does Wise contradict himself? The problem is much deeper. We examined Wise's idea of revelation before his idea of God in order to have it as a datum in assessing his idea of God. We found that while most "revelations" were explained in terms of natural causation, at Sinai God revealed Himself personally--miraculously, supernaturally--to Moses. Such a revelation, so crucial for Wise's entire view of Judaism, is not reconcilable with the non-personal God Wise always argues for in his theological works.

So we turn to Wise's liturgical works, to which he

devoted considerable effort. Implicit in the traditional Jewish liturgy is the idea of a God Who hears the prayer of the individual and might conceivably respond to it. Though Wise did, in the various editions of Minhag America, change some traditional prayers which offended him theologically (as when he eliminates references to the resurrection of the dead)[54] his prayerbooks rarely make extensive changes in the wording of traditional prayers. The changes are more formal than substantial; he omits piyutim and repetitions.

It might be argued that Wise interpreted the traditional prayers in keeping with his idea of a non-personal God. Difficult though that might be, certainly others had done so before Wise and many have done so since Wise. But such argumentation falters when we look at passages which Wise himself composed. In a "silent devotion" we find:

> if the innermost voice of my soul is true . . .--then--my heart, my soul, my faith, my confidence, Thy words can not deceive me--then Thou hearest my humble supplications; . . . Thou hearest the child's humble prayer, my soul speaks with firm confidence.[55]

Similarly, in the book of readings and hymns which Wise compiled to supplement Minhag America many of his own compositions indicate his belief in a personal God. Consider:

> Thou, O God, knowest my hopes and my wishes, my fears and my apprehensions. As Thou alone art my Protector, my Rock and my Refuge in the hours of trial, danger or sorrow; so the realization of my hopes and the fulfillment of my wishes are in Thy paternal hands.[56]

Or either of the following two poems:

God redeems, the Lord protects,
God whose grace each fault corrects,
    Hears the sinner's pious word,
Showers joy on contrite hearts,
Loves, consoles, benignly guards,
    All who trust in Him, the Lord.[57]

    The Lord thy God enthroned on high,
        Beholds each tear and hears each sigh,
    The tear one weeps in silent night.
O bless the Lord, my soul, and pray
To Him whose hands the scepter sway
    O'er nature's realm with sovereign might.
        Behold He lives--
        The Father gives
To contrite hearts the richest store;
Confide, my soul, for evermore,
                Amen! Amen![58]

Such passages cannot be read without thinking that their author believed in a personal God. And yet they are by the same man who, as Lawrence A. Block reports it, was severely attacked by many of his colleagues (including Kaufmann Kohler) when he said that he did not believe in a personal God. Wise, thus attacked, did not back down.[59]

How might this discrepency in Wise's works be accounted for? A passage in Judaism and Christianity might suggest a hypothesis that would account for the problem in part. Wise, as we shall see later in its proper context, believed that one day all men would come to accept the basic principles of Judaism as he understood them. At one point in Judaism and Christianity he numbers and specifically states exactly what those principles are. They fit perfectly with his conception of a non-personal God. But immediately after the list he adds:

> I do not mean to say that you should believe this and no more, or that I do, for man is in many respects the product of history. No man can successfully deny his parents and their teachings, although he is in nowise exactly like them.[60]

The hypothesis which that statement suggests is this: Wise may have thought that all reason establishes is the philosophical God-concept. No man need believe more than that. In fact, when all men come to the pure Judaism which they will accept in the perfect society of the future, that is all that they will believe. But some men today, Wise himself included, as products of their backgrounds, cannot help believing more than reason establishes, believing, that is, in a personal God. Thus in Wise's theological writings he did not argue for more than he thought reason established. But when he prayed he still believed in a God Who heard his individual prayer.

That hypothesis can account for Wise's prayers to a personal God, even though in his theoretical writings he denied believing in a personal God. We might say that though Wise's mind could transcend his traditional background, his heart could not. But the question of how the "Cosmic God" could have spoken to Moses remains, for even the society of the future, Wise believed, would accept that fundamental fact. We must conclude that Wise was unaware of, or at least could not resolve, that dilemma. He sincerely thought he did not believe in a personal God. But he firmly believed that a non-personal God, once and once only in history, spoke to a person.

Judaism

The specific revelation which the non-personal God "personally" gave to Moses was the decalogue. God revealed to Moses the principles by which He governs the world, or, more accurately, all that man needs to know of those principles to achieve perfection and happiness. As we have seen, the direct source of the revelation was God, not just the "inspired" mind of the mortal Moses. God being perfect, the revelation is perfect. Thus nothing may be taken away from the revelation and, while the general principles must be applied to specific situations, nothing new need be or should be added. The decalogue, then, is the infallible and authoritative basis of Wise's system. His own words make this clear:

> The decalogue is the Torah, in letter and spirit, the eternal law and doctrine, the exclusive and adequate source of theology and ethics, the only intelligible categoric imperative. Therefore, it is called in the Pentateuch Had-dabar, the word or the substance, the only true logos by which the moral world was called into existence, and which, as the Talmud states, existed before the creation of this earth; or also, Had-debarim ha'eleh, "these words;" or Assereth Had-debarim, "the ten words," and not Asereth Ham-mitzvoth, "the ten commandments," which is a misnomer; for its laws are categories, its docrines are fundamental principles; in its logical order it is a unit, and in its totality it comprises the entire substance of theology and ethics; no new category of law can be added to it and none can be taken away without destroying its unity and perfection.[61]

Note that the decalogue is not said to consist of commandments which are superior or prior to other Biblical commandments. As its source is substantively different from the sources of the rest of the Bible, so its statements

are substantively different from mere "commandments." Some confusion might arise from Wise's statement that the decalogue's "laws are categories." What he means is that they are not laws at all. They are doctrines or principles. "Every law is based upon one or more doctrines which it generalizes."[62]

The body of Mosaic law in the Pentateuch, wrote Wise, "reduces to practice the fundamental concept of the Decalogue, provides the means to enforce it, and expounds and expands its doctrines." There are three types of laws, mitzvot, chukkim, and mishpatim. Mitzvot are commandments with a direct object. Chukkim are ritual ordinances. And mishpatim are judicial statutes. Chukkim and mishpatim have an indirect object.[63]

The distinction between mitzvot, on the one hand, and chukkim and mishpatim on the other hand, is not immediately clear. What it boils down to is that the decalogue and specific injunctions to behavior which flow from it are unchangeable, while other commandments are changeable. "The laws of Sacred Scripture which have a direct object in view are the moral law for all mankind."[64] [Italics Wise's--RM] Such laws are unchangeable mitzvot. Ritual and judicial laws did come from Moses, and from a divinely inspired Moses, but they only applied in the Palestine of Biblical times.[65] They did reflect the spirit of the decalogue, but later ages could change them in keeping with that spirit. They led to, and their modern counterparts

lead to, proper behavior. In that sense they are "indirect." The crucial point for an understanding of Wise's conception of Judaism is that the chukkim and mishpatim are changeable.

Wise's view of the theoretical foundations of Judaism should now be clear. Everything rests on the authority of the Sinaitic revelation--even the changeable chukkim and mishpatim, which were, and must still in their modern forms be, distillations of the principles set forth in the decalogue. The "laws of Moses" (as opposed to the decalogue) amount to a commentary on the decalogue, "eternal in spirit and subject to change in letter."[66]

When Wise said that "the God-cognition always preceeds the religious idea,"[67] or that "Judaism is the complex of Israel's religious sentiments ratiocinated to conceptions in harmony with its Jehovistic God-cognition,"[68] he was not being inconsistent in so far as his God-cognition included the attribute of "revealing." But we have seen that revelation did not fit comfortably with his recurrently stated philosophical God-concept. Hence revelation was the true basis of Wise's system, the fact upon which Judaism is founded, and in the light of which his God-concept must be viewed.

Likewise, when Wise said that "a sermon without a text is an argument without a proof,"[69] we must understand that the entire Bible was authoritative for him, but it was not all equally authoritative. It all reflected the spirit of, the principles inherent in, the decalogue. But Wise's ultimate authority is not the entire Bible, but only a few verses

in Exodus and Deuteronomy.

If the laws of Moses amount to commentary on the decalogue, and the rest of the Bible amounts to commentary on the decalogue, then future Jewish literature, and in particular the Talmud, can easily be seen as more of the same. Unlike many Reform rabbis of his day and ours, Wise had no need to attack the Talmud. The Talmud modified Biblical law. We may modify Talmudic law. When Wise called the Cleveland Conference of 1855, he astounded Isaac Leeser and other traditionalists by proposing these two points as a basis for a theological platform:

1. That all Israelites agree upon the divinity of the Bible, and
2. That the Talmud is acknowledged by all as the legal and obligatory commentary of the Bible.[70]

These points were accepted and incorporated in a platform. But no doubt Wise understood them differently than his more traditional co-religionists (and no doubt Wise was well aware of that fact!). The Bible was divine because its core was a divine revelation--but many of its laws could be changed. The Talmud is an "obligatory commentary." For Wise the key word there was "commentary." As commentary most talmudic laws were changeable. The word "obligatory" won over the Orthodox at the conference; but within the framework of Wise's thought an "obligatory commentary" obligates one to nothing except the "spirit" of the text upon which it comments. In slightly less equivocal mood, Wise wrote the following:

> The Talmud is advisory; it possesses historical importance and authority, and remains forever subject to Israel's reason and conscience. It is groundless folly to say we reject the Talmud . . . . It is not true that we are or ought to be governed by the Talmud.[71]

By differentiating between letter and spirit Wise did not need to reject any of the Bible or any of the time-honored volumes of rabbinic literature. Wise's Judaism, he was convinced, was the only Judaism, the true Judaism, identical with Biblical, Talmudic, and Spanish philosophic Judaism--or any other genuine form of Judaism.[72] Reform Judaism was not in any way a departure from traditional "Orthodox" Judaism.

But if Reform Judaism was nothing new, if, indeed, the adjective "Reform" was superfluous from a theological standpoint, what was distinctive about what Wise called Reform Judaism? The answer to that is two-fold. First, Wise knew that there had always been change in Judaism with regard to form, though the essence concretized in the various observances, he insisted, had never changed. Forms had been, could be, and should be modified in different ages. Re-forming, Wise thought, was necessary. Yet those who called themselves Orthodox refused to change anything. Their Judaism had become stagnated. Wise's Reform Judaism, he thought, changed nothing theologically, but did continue the age-old progress of forms:

> the development of Judaism signifies the liberation of its universal spirit from all the antiquated, meaningless, tribal, merely national and merely local

> paraphernalia . . . and (intends) to provide forms and institutions for the manifestations of the spirit, which are at least approximately universal.[73]

The second distinctive feature of Reform Judaism as Wise understood it was its rational, scientific approach to religion. Reform Jews go to philosophy and science, not just to hermeneutics, when they interpret scripture. Thus Reform Judaism began in the tenth century with Saadia![74]

Reform Judaism, then, is nothing new. It is Judaism, nothing more or less, for there is only one Judaism. Wise knew that the name "Reform Judaism" could be misleading. "Progressive Judaism," he wrote, would be a better name.[75]

Whatever it was to be called, Wise saw Judaism as needing to follow "Rabbi Meir, who said: 'I eat the kernel and throw away the shell.'"[76] But by what criteria can the shell be separated from the kernel? Here Wise is vague. He writes that "The principle of Reform is: All forms, to which no meaning is attached any longer, are an impediment to our religion and must be done away with." But who is to decide whether piyutim or mezuzot still have meaning? "Whatever makes us ridiculous before the world as it now is," Wise goes on, "may safely be and should be abolished." But if the world were to find it ridiculous that Jews do not eat pork, Wise still would not eat it. "Whatever tends to the elevation of the divine service, to inspire the heart of the worshiper and to attract him, should be done without any unnecessary delay." But who is to say whether the introduction of organ music exalts or degrades the worship service?

"Whenever religious observances and the just demands of civilized society exclude each other, the former have lost their power." But who is to determine whether the demands of society are "just?"[77]

For Wise, of course, the "spirit" of Jewish literature, the principles of the decalogue, are the ultimate authority: "Reform, therefore, has its limits, strictly marked by the Bible itself, beyond which the Jewish reformer can not and dare not go."[78] In theory that sounds good. But in practice it is very problematical. The Bible has been and can be interpreted in many ways. Since Wise accepts no legal code or commentary on scripture as authoritative, we must conclude that Wise's ultimate criterion for change is the individual's own judgement. In theory that judgement should not be arbitrary; but in practice it could be.

We may see Wise's life-long concern with conferences and synods as, in part, an attempt to limit the potentially anarchic potential for change. Wise wrote that "changes in the synagogue should be uniform and sanctioned by a conference or synod. But even without the possibility of these, each man must do his duty to the best of his knowledge."[79] In other words, Wise thought that changes could be made without a synod. And we would add that such conferences, even when they met and agreed, had no power to enforce their platforms.

It is to be doubted whether Wise thought that the lack of any authoritative interpretation of scripture could, in the long run, lead to chaos. He had great faith in his

own ability to reach the proper conclusions by the exercise of his reason. In the long run, no doubt, others would see the light as well. The danger that Wise saw was not that--given the authoritative revelation--reason would fail, but rather that faith in that revelation might be destroyed by modern Biblical criticism.

Wise used a lot of ink attacking what we today call "Higher Criticism" of the Bible. Andrew Key, very insightfully, points out that Wise stresses the Mosaic authorship of the entire Pentateuch "out of all proportion to its importance for his theology."[80] Since the ultimate source of authority is the decalogue, he could easily have granted the theoretical possibility that Wellhausen and his school were correct about the multiple authorship of the Pentateuch, saying that those authors were "inspired" in the same sense that the prophets were inspired. Wise does grant that not every line of the torah was written by Moses.[81] But he means by that only that such passages as the description of Moses' death must be the product of another author. He devotes an entire book, Pronaos to Holy Writ, to defending the Bible against higher criticism. When he summarizes his conclusions, we find that he is willing to admit that portions of the torah were edited after the death of Moses. But they are still composed of Mosaic fragments. Genesis and Deuteronomy, except for a couple of additions in Deuteronomy, are "the original works of Moses."[82]

Why, when critics today feel that Wise could have argued

that "the whole Thorah is of one and the same spirit in principle, doctrine, precept and law" without adding "which must necessarily come from one author, and not possibly from a number of authors,"[83] did Wise consider that latter assertion logically necessary for his theological system? The answer is to be found in Pronaos to Holy Writ's Preface. What bothered him is that the Bible claimed here Mosaic authorship, there Davidic or Solomonic authorship. If those claims are fraudulent, thought Wise, then we cast doubt on the veracity of the whole Bible. He wrote that:

> All so-called gems of truth buried under the quicksand of fiction and deception are problematic at best, if not supported by authoritative corroborants. None can speak conscientiously of Bible truth before he knows that the Bible is true, and especially in its historical data. The science commonly called Modern Biblical Criticism, actually Negative Criticism, which maintains, on the strength of unscientific methods, that the Pentateuch is not composed of original Mosaic material, no Psalms are Davidian, no Proverbs Solomonic . . . must also maintain that the Bible is a compendium of pious or even impious frauds, willful deceptions, unscrupulous misrepresentations; whence comes the Bible truth of which they speak?[84]

What bothered Wise, then, is that he did not believe he could have a sure decalogue in an unsure Bible. Even if we were to grant the validity of his logic, we would have to ask him a similar question. If all of the torah was not directly revealed by God, but depends for its authority on ten statements which allegedly were, how can we know that those ten statements were really products of revelation since they are not "supported by authoritative corroborants"? The point here is that--given faith in the decalogue--higher

criticism is no threat to Wise's system; but without that faith (and evidence will not establish the point) the system falls even without higher criticism.

Man and his future

The spectrum of Wise's thoughts on revelation, God and Judaism represent a system not highly original in its details, but unique in the way the details fit together into a system. In order to round out the system it is necessary to examine Wise's view of man and the messianic future. But it should be noted from the outset that we will find little more than argumentation here, and hence we shall deal with it as briefly as possible. Wise's views on God, the universe, and Judaism require--or presuppose--a certain view of man. For the most part Wise assumes the correctness of that view. Rarely does he work to develop that view. When he defends it against what he considers threats to it, his method is polemical: he attempts to show the superiority of his own view primarily by debunking opposing views.

In our discussion of Wise's understanding of God and the universe we saw that mind or spirit is "substance," and that matter, though it probably exists, is entirely subordinate to spirit. We may expect to find, then, that man consists of body and soul--matter and mind, and that the soul/mind, being part of the divine mind which becomes self-conscious in it, is the superior of the two. Thus we find, simply stated in a catechism:

> Man consists of body and soul. The body is an animal organism; the soul is the principle that thinks and wills, vivifies and governs the body.
>
> The soul of man is called in the Bible, the image of God, because it is gifted with Godlike capacities.[85]

In our discussion of Wise's view of Judaism we found that ethical mitzvot are incumbent upon man. We have also found throughout that man, by the exercise of his intellect, may reach both metaphysical truth and--in part by correct interpretation of scripture--an understanding of how he ought to behave. Thus we would expect to find that man has intellect and free will. That is exactly what Wise means in the catechism by "Godlike capacities." It continues:

> The capacities of the soul are of two kinds, the intellectual and moral.
>
> The intellectual capacities of the soul are perception, conception, memory, imagination, self-consciousness, and reason.
>
> The moral capacities of man are will, conscience, love, the power to attain happiness and perfection, and the desire to know God and His will, in order to worship him.
>
> The will of man may become entirely free in all moral points of view, to choose the good and shun wickedness.[86]

Man may gain happiness by obeying the mitzvot, or fall into misery by disobedience.[87] Worship is an innate urge in man by which he transcends his corporeal body to be a spiritual being as he "seeks an ideal perfection above himself."[88] Religion also leads to man's well-being in that, as we have seen, chukkim and mishpatim lead to proper behavior (thus

Wise calls them "indirect," more important for what they lead to than for what they are).

When man sins he may repent (this we discussed in passing while dealing with Wise's God-concept). Regardless of his behavior, man is immortal. This follows naturally from the fact that man has a soul, a spiritual entity not subject, like material things, to dissolution. Since immortality was and is often a disputed doctrine, Wise offers proof. First, we know immortality de consensu gentium.[89] Second, we know of immortality from the Sinaitic revelation. The fact that the eternal God revealed Himself to man proves man's immortality by proving he has a soul:

> Imperishable wisdom can not be addressed to perishable nature. . . . The spirit only can understand the spirit, and the spirit can not perish, since it is of God, and not of matter; it is simple and not organic, hence not subject to dissolution.[90]

Man, possessed of an intellect and moral nature, is basically good. Wise the apologeticist, therefore, attacked Christianity for its doctrine of original sin.[91] Also, he devotes three entire chapters of The Cosmic God to a refutation of Darwin's theories on the descent of man. He calls the Darwinian hypothesis "Homo-brutalism," charging that:

> In a moral point of view the Darwinian hypothesis on the descent of man is the most pernicious that could be possibly advanced, not only because it robs man of his dignity and the consciousness of his pre-eminence, which is the coffin to all virtue, but chiefly because it presents all nature as a battle ground . . .[92]

Wise even goes so far as to state, in reductio ad absurdum

fashion, that "it is much more scientific to maintain that those apes are deteriorated Ethiopians than to advance that the Australian aborigine is an improved ape."[93] Again, Wise's view of man is an assumption which he defends by attacking the opposition. He felt no need to logically develop his own view, presumably because he considered it implicit in scripture.

As we have seen it thus far, Wise's ideas on man cannot account for the righteous man who suffers due to the evils of the world. That will be dealt with as we examine his view of history and the messianic future. Wise strongly believed that one of the laws through which God governs the universe leads to the preservation of whatever man does that is good, and the eventual eradication of whatever man does that is evil. He calls this law (or this attribute of God) the "Logos of History." In The Cosmic God Wise argues that we see progress in history "from lower to higher conditions." Still, since human nature is a constant, man is no more intelligent than he ever was. Therefore:

> the principle of progress must be extra-human, and the first general principle of the Logos of History must be: It preserves, utilizes and promulgates all that is good, true, and useful, and neutralizes all that is wicked, false, and useless or nugatory.[94]

History also works so that evil nations are punished.[95] This accounts for the suffering of the righteous. They are, in effect, caught up in the collective guilt of their nations. Such a notion clashes with Wise's notion of the freedom and

nobility of the individual. It hardly solves the problem of theodicy; but it is as close as Wise comes to a solution.

Putting that problem in Wise's thought aside, the crucial point is that Wise believed progress in history to be inevitable. Furthermore, he believed that progress had come a long way toward the ultimate perfection of man and society--the messianic era. Progress could be seen in the fact that with the spread of Islam and Christianity "all civilized nations believed in the living God of Israel."[96]

Wise was convinced that the messianic age was just around the corner. Civilization and education had come a long way. It was just a matter of time before all men would come to live by the principles of the decalogue. He wrote that:

> it is a great mistake to believe, that mankind can retrograde again very considerably, when the very atmosphere is pregnant with progressive ideas . . . . The republic of letters and the domination of intelligence are mightier now than they ever were, and grow faster and more rapidly than they ever did.[97]

Wise certainly knew of the existence of backward nations. But the United States, he thought, was on the verge of perfecting itself. From here the perfection would spread elsewhere. From our point of view, that of an analysis of his theology, it is less important that Wise thought the messianic age was about to dawn than that he thought it would inevitably come because of the way God worked in history. It is worthy of note, however, that though his unbridled optimism for America appears naive to our hindsight,

the reason he gave for thinking America was going to be the first country to reach perfection was a reason entirely in keeping with his theological system. Moses had ordained a perfect system of government, though its laws only applied to its own time. The United States, thought Wise, had duplicated that system in a form appropriate for a new age. As Dena Wilansky puts it:

> he [Wise] considered the Constitution of the United States the practical fulfillment of Mosaic ethics, "Mosaism in action." In his own words, "What we claim is that this country, in its constitution and institutions, in its laws and the administration thereof, is Jewish. . . . We have here the very government which was delineated by Moses on the basis of the Sinaic revelation."[98]

But, we ask, was the government of Moses the same as our Republican form of government?! Wise thought it was:

> Theocracy is identical with democracy, and democracy means equality before the law and the sovereignty thereof. The law is divine, it is from God, who alone is King, i.e. it must emanate from unadulterated reason and the principle of absolute justice. Therefore it must exclude none and embrace and protect all who live among you and seek prosperity and happiness with you.[99]

Given his view of America and the final leap of progress that was about to occur, we can hardly be surprised to find that Wise was rarely sympathetic to Zionism, and usually was bitterly opposed to it. Soon world Jewry would not need Zion, for the Jews of each nation could be at home in a near-perfect society like America's. Certainly Jews in America not only would not need Zion, but did not need it in Wise's time. As he put it at one point:

> We American Jews have nothing to do with Zionism, or that nationality swindle, simply because we are Jews by religion only and exclusively, untouched by nationality humbug or race sophistry.[100]

Rather amusingly, Wise's prayerbook seems to carry his patriotism even farther. At least in terms of political redemption (or even farther?) American Jews were already redeemed. The 1857 edition of Minhag America retains the traditional wording of the goayl blessing in the morning amidah, "look on our affliction and plead our cause."[101] But the 1872 edition changes the wording to read, "look on the oppression of our brothers and redeem them."[102] Likewise, in the chatimah "Redeemer of Israel" is changed to "Redeemer of the oppressed."

Wise was concerned about the assimilation of American Jewry, as is most evident from the fact that he wrote Judaism and Christianity and A Defense of Judaism versus Proselytizing Christianity.[103] Key considers Wise's concern over assimilation an example of the tension in his thought between Universalism and Particularism, arguing that Wise should not have been worried about assimilation if the messianic age was just around the corner.[104] I believe Key is in error here, however, since for Wise progress was inevitable only in the long run; people and societies could still fail to progress significantly in the short run. If Wise was to see his vision of a messianic age quickly achieved, then he could not watch passively as people fell away from the ideal religion he thought would soon triumph. All men would inevitably come to Judaism,

but that hardly means that Wise should not have been concerned that some were going away from it. Assimilation, logically, would slow the progress.

The question of universalism and particularism will be further pursued in the final chapter of this study. For now it should be a fitting conclusion to this discussion of Wise's theological system to note that Wise was certainly a universalist in the sense that he believed Judaism, as he understood it, was the only true and perfect religion, the religion which all men would ultimately practice.

# Chapter III:

## THE THEOLOGY OF KAUFMANN KOHLER

Kohler the Theologian

A biographer of Kaufmann Kohler might conceivably trace two careers, that of Kohler the historical scholar and that of Kohler the rabbi. But in the finest traditions of the rabbinate, Kohler brought these two roles together in his ongoing efforts to apply his knowledge of the past to the needs of the present. Thus Kohler's first two roles coalesced into a third, that of Kohler the theologian. It is as a theologian that Kohler made his most significant contributions to the development of Reform Judaism. He believed that though Judaism constantly changed its forms, the ideas behind the forms were constantly present throughout history. He set himself the task of finding those ideas and presenting them to his contemporaries.

Kohler did not believe that the system of ideas he presented as Jewish theology was his own system. Rather, it was the system which had been developing throughout Jewish history. Without meaning to imply that all of it was original to Kohler, the modern student of theology must still speak of the system Kohler presented as "Kohler's system." Others, both before and after Kohler, have presented different and conflicting systems as the Jewish theology (we have seen that in the case of I. M. Wise). What each thinker, in fact, does, is to present his own eclectic synthesis. Kohler's, because of the influence he had on the development of Reform Jewish thought, is particularly worthy of study.

Kohler presented his theology in numerous articles,

sermons, and addresses. Three volumes of these have been collected, Hebrew Union College and Other Addresses,[1] Studies, Addresses and Personal Papers,[2] and A Living Faith.[3] Fortunately, he also prepared a more systematic exposition of his views. Though originally written and published in German,[4] the work was revised and enlarged when translated into English and published under the title Jewish Theology, Systematically and Historically Considered.[5] That work, Kohler's magnum opus, shall be the major source for our analysis of his thought, although references to his other works will be made where they may be helpful.[6]

In his Jewish Theology, Kohler's stated goal "is to single out the essential forces of the faith" and show their continuing vitality.[7] To this end, the results of the latest scientific methods of study, including Biblical criticism and natural science, must be utilized, "however much any of these may conflict with the Biblical view of the cosmos."[8] Kohler maintains that Judaism "denies the existence of any irreconcilable opposition between faith and reason."[9] The key word here is "irreconcilable," and the point is crucial. For Kohler was well aware of the doubts modern science and philosophy had raised in the minds of many of his contemporaries. In attempting to deal with Kohler on his own terms, we shall have to determine whether or not his theology fulfills his own dictum: reason and faith must never convlict.

In his introduction to a recent edition of Jewish Theology, Joseph Blau correctly summarizes Kohler's method as follows:

> No matter what topic comes under the author's scrutiny, the course of his argument is similar. His treatment of each topic begins with a résumé of biblical passages dealing with it, moves on to the rabbinic views, and then canvasses the ideas of the medieval philosophers and jurists. . . . He also establishes his wide familiarity with the secondary literature, of both Jewish and non-Jewish authors, and at least his acquaintance with other religious systems. We are left almost stupified by the erudition manifested in his text and his footnotes. As we come to the end of his discussion of each theme, the historical interest gives way to the systematic interest. Introduced by such a phrase as "According to the religious consciousness of modern Israel . . ." (p. 260), he presents the position of Reform Judaism as he sees it.[10]

We must remember that as Kohler sketched the evolution of ideas, his goal was to show that, in one form or another, certain basic ideas have always been present in Jewish theology. Thus the modern version of the idea is based on--and in fact is the essence of--the traditional idea. Here again Blau's analysis is cogent and helpful. Blau maintains that Kohler's idea of modernity comes from his view of the "modern" approach to history. Modern man can distinguish between objective truths about the past and subjective truths affirmed in the past. In contrast to this, people in the past did not recognize that there was a subjective element in their beliefs. Historical theology sorts out the subjective and objective truths. Systematic theology is the system of objective truths which remains.

> Kohler's problem is, then, one set by his own interpretation of modernity; he seeks to develop a [sytematic] theology (by nature absolute) while acknowledging the universality of historical relativity. As theologian he must deal with absolute, eternal truths. As historian, he must see these same statements as historically conditioned, and therefore relative. He must simulta-

> neously both assert and deny the finality of the truths of Jewish faith.

Kohler attempted to resolve the dilemma by extracting an "essence" of Judaism (as Baeck did at about the same time, and as Harnack had done for Christianity). By studying the development of doctrines, Kohler believed he could isolate the enduring principles upon which they were based.[11]

Blau is essentially correct, but a qualification should be added. Kohler is not so immodest as to claim absolute certainty for the system which he sets forth. He states that Judaism does not claim to have the ultimate truth, but rather it "points the way leading to the highest obtainable truth." Absolute truth will only be known at the end of history.[12] More succinctly, "Judaism lays claim, not to perfection, but to perfectability."[13]

In any case, Kohler did believe that modern Jewish theology, as he understood it, came as close as man had yet come to truth. That theology was a systematic theology. Kohler was a system-builder. The purpose of this study is to isolate Kohler's system, to divorce it, that is, from his historical analysis, and subject it to a critique. Kohler's historical views may or may not have been correct--that problem is left to historians. Kohler's goal as theologian was to articulate a logically consistent and believable systematic theology. The system he constructed was an influential one. It is quite reasonable, then, for the modern student of theology to examine the ideological blocks

and logical cement with which Kohler built.

Kohler divided his magnum opus into three main sections, dealing respectively with God, man, and Israel (a fact which in itself is significant, as it represents a conscious variation of the traditional Jewish trilogy of God, Torah, and Israel). Though a good deal of overlap is evident in the book and will be inevitable in this analysis, for the sake of slightly greater clarity we shall add a category, examining Kohler's views on God, man, the relationship between God and man, and Israel. Finally, a few comments on the system as a whole will be in order.

God

Kaufmann Kohler asserted that "there can be no disputing the fact that the central idea of Judaism and its life purpose is the doctrine of the One Only and Holy God, whose kingdom of truth, justice, and peace is to be established at the end of time."[14] He did not base his belief on philosophical proofs; for he knew that "metaphysical proofs for God's existence have been outlawed since Kant."[15] Man is epistomologically limited. Since, with regard to physical objects, man cannot know "the thing in itself," still less can he know the essence of deity, "whom we know through our minds alone and not at all through our five senses."[16]

Kant, says Kohler, has shown us:

> that we can know God's existence only through ethics, as a postulate of our moral nature. The inner consciousness of our moral obligation, or duty, implies a moral order of life, or moral law; and this, in turn,

> postulates the existence of God, the Ruler of life, who assigns to each of us his task and his destiny.[17]

Elsewhere Kohler offers similar arguments without referring to Kant.[18]

For Kohler, as will become increasingly evident, God is a Supreme Being Who can be "felt as a living power."[19] Kohler's seeming inconsistency here is not difficult to explain. Kohler himself never evidences the slightest doubt of God's existence. But both because he is writing a systematic theology and because he is conceivably writing for people who doubt the reasonableness of religion, he feels duty-bound to give a rationale for belief in God. For Kohler himself God is more than a reasonable possibility or even probability. God's existence is a truth. Kohler's purpose in speaking of God as "a postulate of our moral nature" is to show that it is reasonable to believe in God. Kohler's dictum that reason and faith must not conflict does not preclude faith carrying the believer beyond reason's limitations. Because faith must never conflict with reason Kohler shows his readers that it is reasonable to believe. Given that it is reasonable to believe, and that faith may carry us farther than reason, Kohler does believe. That Kohler thinks faith carries us beyond mere logic is evident when he says that consciousness of God can strengthen and become belief, and that belief in God grows into love and trust of God.[20]

What, then, does Kohler think we can know about God?

As has already been shown, he does not think we can know God's essence. Still, "our souls remain unsatisfied unless we can know what God is to us."[21] As we examine Kohler's beliefs about God, we will note that he consistently offers reasons for believing. Yet there are no pretensions about these beliefs being the result of iron-clad logic. Given two attributes, another may be derived by pure logic; but those first two may not have been so clearly derived from premises. In other words, what we shall find is a constellation of ideas which are logically connected though not logically inevitable. From this we may infer that the God-concept preceeds the arguments for the God-concept. The arguments, then, in a technical sense, are apologetics. Kohler's purpose is not to show that reason alone can establish a satisfying God-concept. Rather, he wants to show that his God-concept is reasonable.

"Through man's spiritual nature," Kohler tells us, "God is recognized as a spirit."[22] Perhaps what he means here is that man cannot account for the spiritual (as opposed to physical) side of his own being without positing a God Who is the source of spiritual reality. This is a possible inference when Kohler states that God "is the living fountain of all that knowledge and spirituality for which men long."[23] Being spiritual, God is non-corporeal. He transcends the physical world.

Another line of thought reaches the same conclusions more clearly. Man, who is confined by space and time, sees

God as infinite and eternal.[24] Eternity, Kohler explains, means nothing if God, Who exerts his powers continually "from everlasting to everlasting," is not immutable. That which is physical is subject to time; it is changeable and perishable. The real meaning of "eternal," thus, is "transcendence above all existence in time . . . supermundaneity."[25] The logic here is not as compelling as the conclusion is clear: God is spiritual, eternal, and transcendent. Kohler means to include all three of those attributes in the attribute of supermundaneity.

As man is confined by space and time and thus sees God as supermundane, so man is weak and helpless and thus sees God as omnipotent.[26] God is also "supreme self-consciousness." In the whole universe no other being except man, who is in God's image, is self-conscious.[27] Such a reasoning is more homiletical than philosophical. But, again, the conclusions are clear. God is self-conscious mind and self-conscious will. His mind and will are unlimited. In other words, God is omniscient and omnipotent.

God's omniscience and omnipotence are qualified in practice--though not in theory--by the fact that He exercises self-restraint. His will is immutable. He would not make the untrue true. He would not alter the laws of nature. He may have the power to do so, but He exercises self-restraint.[28] We can say, then, speaking in human terms, that God has wisdom.[29]

Supermundaneity, omniscience, and omnipotence are all

important aspects of Kohler's God concept. But the next attribute is the most important for our understanding of Kohler's entire system of theology. The doubtful, as we have seen, should believe in God as "a postulate of our moral nature." We can hardly be surprised, then, that the preeminent aspect of God for Kohler is His moral nature. In this regard, sometimes Kohler speaks of God as moral and sometimes as holy; but note that for Kohler the terms are almost synonymous. Kohler explains that various things have been meant by "holiness." Only Judaism fully recognized the moral nature of God. Jews gave the term "holiness" the meaning of "moral perfection." Holiness is "purity unsullied by any breath of evil."[30]

How do we derive God's holiness from our own sense of morality? We saw above that:

> The inner consciousness of our moral obligation, or duty, implies a moral order of life, or moral law; and this, in turn, postulates the existence of God.[17]

Another--similar--argument derives from the observation that on whatever plane of culture man is he has plans and aspirations. We have an ideal of perfection which we may never attain but which nevertheless is the standard for our actions. "Such an ideal can emanate only from the moral power ruling life, which we designate as the divine Holiness."[31]

Since God is <u>the</u> standard, <u>the</u> exemplar, of moral perfection, He is a unity. His unity "brings harmony into the intellectual and moral world."[32] Likewise, His unity brings

harmony into nature and history, which are united under one all-encompassing moral plan.[33] (We shall have more to say of this later.)

The attribute of holiness has the most awesome of implications for man. This holiness, this morality, has two "meanings" or "aspects." First, holiness means:

> spiritual loftiness transcending everything sensual, which works as a purging power of indignation at evil, rebuking injustice, impurity and falsehood, and punishing transgression until it is removed from the sight of God.[34]

Kohler, more succinctly, labels this "the overwhelming wrath of His justice."[35] In a moment of hyperbole which demonstrates the preeminent position which Kohler gives to morality among God's attributes, he declares that justice is the "essence of God."[36]

The second meaning of holiness is:

> the condescending mercy of God, which, having purged the soul of wrong, wins it for the right, and which endows man with the power of perfecting himself, and thus leads him to the gradual building up of the kingdom of goodness and purity on earth.[37]

Corresponding to "the overwhelming wrath of His justice," thus, is the "uplifting grace of His long-suffering."[38] In traditional Jewish style, Kohler declares that life is only possible because God's justice is balanced by God's mercy. Since man works toward perfection without attaining it, without mercy "only condemnation and perdition would remain."[39]

Several problems must be discussed at this point. As we shall see, Kohler himself was aware of most of them. First of all, if God unifies the world under His absolutely moral government, and if He is omniscient and omnipotent, how can we account for evil? Kohler's initial answer to this traditional question of theodicy is that evil does not exist. With detachment, man can see that what he calls evil actually works toward the good. Suffering purifies the soul and brings out the best in us. In this sense "evil exists only to be overcome by the good."[40] In a metaphysical sense, what man calls evil is actually a part of God's plan and must therefore really be good. "Outside of man Judaism seesno real contrast between good and evil, since both have emanated from God, the Spirit of Goodness."[41]

This does not actually solve Kohler's problem, however. As we have seen, he insists that God's justice is needed to purge evil. How can God's justice be necessary to purge the non-existent?! We could attempt to deny the contradiction by saying that, yes, the evil is good; but it is good because the experience of evil has pedagogic value for the human victim of evil, and the punishment of evil has pedagogic value for the human perpetrator of evil. That solves the problem practically. But it does not solve the problem metaphysically. Evil must have at least a qualified existence or God would be unjust for punishing it. In Kohler's system evil ultimately promotes the good. While some of what man calls evil is actually good in disguise, the fact remains

that some of what man calls evil really is evil. Man perpetrates it and must be punished for it. Evil exists--and we must take Kohler's statement that "outside of man Judaism sees no real contrast between good and evil" as an overly glib attempt to solve the problem of theodicy.

Another difficulty also relates to the theodicy problem. We have seen Kohler declare that God punishes evil. Elsewhere he adds that because God's justice punishes evil, and because no evil escapes that justice, history has moral significance. But Kohler immediately adds that sometimes experience shows the contrary. We sometimes see evil go unpunished. But we cling to the idea of divine justice anyway, because:

> the idea of divine justice is revealed, not in the world as it is, but in the world as it should be, the ideal cosmos which lives in the spirit.[42]

First we are told unequivocally that God punishes all evil. Then we are told that "in the world as it is" perhaps God does not punish all evil. Elsewhere in Jewish Theology we read on one page that retributive justice is necessary from God if the world is to be run morally and justly. Then we are told on the next page that reward and punishment is a primitive notion, and that superior minds can operate on a higher ethical plane where good is its own reward.[43] The contradiction is evident. Kohler claims that justice is a divine attribute, that God sees and punishes all evil. Then he admits that some evil goes unpunished. There is

no escaping the conclusion that Kohler equivocates on the question of divine justice.

Kohler himself points out a problem with the divine attribute of mercy. We have seen that Kohler believes God to be transcendent. But mercy is a special act of God directed at an individual. Moreover, as we shall examine in more detail later, the idea of mercy is connected with prayer and repentance. Judaism, Kohler maintains, while believing in divine transcendence, has never lost sight of the fact that there is a close relationship between God and man. God cares "for the greatest and the smallest beings of creation." Hence, "He is both immanent and transcendent."[44] What Kohler means by immanence is perhaps better expressed in his term "condescension." Kohler finds the idea of God condescending to notice individuals contrary to reason:

> The philosopher must reject as futile every attempt to bring the incomprehensible essence of the Deity within the compass of human understanding. The religious consciousness, however, demands that we accentuate precisely those attributes of God which bring Him nearest to us. If reason alone would have the decisive voice in this problem, every manifestation of God to man and every reaching out of the soul to Him in prayer would be idle fancy and self-deceit. . . . Judaism does not accept the cold and distant attitude of the philosopher; it teaches that God as a spiritual power does condescend to man.[45]

God even draws man to Him. We perceive His nearness "in the very depths of our intellectual and emotional life."[46]

Kohler also speaks of omnipresence as a divine attribute. And he is anxious that the reader understand that this does not merely mean immanence as the all-pervasiveness of God's

will and intellect. God is personally near to every individual. Here again Kohler finds that this defies reason:

> /God is/ a self-conscious Personality, ever nearer to man, ever scanning his acts, his thoughts, his motives. Here philosophy and religion part company. The former must abstain from the assumption of a divine personality; the latter cannot do without it. The God of religion must partake of the knowledge and the feelings of His worshiper. . . . God's omnipresence is in this sense a postulate of religion.[47]

What does it mean for an idea to be a "postulate of religion?" The question is even more important than it may appear at this point. For God's mercy/immanence/condescension/omnipresence also makes possible God's revelation, a divine action which we shall deal with in detail later. By "postulate of religion" Kohler does not mean that an idea so labeled is only possibly true, only an assumption which could be proven wrong. Kohler believes it with all his heart. It is absolutely crucial to his religious system.

What we must ask, then, is this: do we have here another case of faith going beyond reason without contradicting reason, or do we have a major violation of Kohler's self-imposed rule that faith and reason may never conflict? That God as a spiritual and moral force (remember that mercy is an aspect of holiness) could constantly influence the spiritual element in man involves no contradiction. God can transcend corporeal being yet influence non-corporeal being. The problem is not with God as a continuous and unchanging force. The philosophical problem of which Kohler is so painfully aware involves God's awareness of the changing

ideas and actions of individuals, for that implies change in Deity, which Kohler cannot accept. Kohler's above-quoted statements that philosophy must reject divine condescension leave him self-accused of a violation of his own rules. Strangely, we can still resolve the difficulty! Kohler's Kantian understanding of time solves the problem.[48] God does not exist in time, which is a category of human understanding. Man's changes of consciousness are serial in time. But God transcends time, knowing everything timelessly. God, then, may be aware of and respond to man's changes without Himself changing. (Unfortunately, all this wins for us is a respite from accusing Kohler of violating his method. This same understanding of deity will pose insurmountable problems when we get to the subject of human freedom.)

Kohler could not compromise on the issue of God's unchangability. Not only is that idea basic to earlier philosophy (which maintained that if God changed He could not be considered a unity and hence was less than perfect), but also Kohler built his idea of God's faithfulness and truth on His unchangability. The chapter in Jewish Theology devoted to "God's Truth and Faithfulness"[48] is logically diffuse. If we divorce the contemporary belief from the historical material what he seems to be saying--at least by implication ("The primitive age knew nothing of the laws of nature with which we have become familiar through modern science."[49])--is that the unchanging laws of nature demonstrate the unchangingness of the omnipotent ruler of the

world. Thus Kohler asserts that another divine attribute is faithfulness, by which he means God is constant and reliable, trustworthy.

That Kohler connects the idea of truth with the idea of constancy and trustworthiness is clear, though exactly how the connection is made is unclear. The reader is told that "He is the trustworthy God, whose essence is truth."[50] Shortly after we learn that the essence of truth is God.[51] As with the case of God's essence being justice, we can consider this hyperbole. In any case, we must infer the logical connection between the two ideas, since all Kohler offers is a Hebrew linguistic connection.[52] Kohler's idea of truth is evidently that we consider true that which is constantly found to be the same. (We should remember, though, that faith also reaches truth and revelation reaches truth. But these may only supplement what the human intellect finds true; they may not contradict science or logic.) Hence if God is the source of constancy He is the source of truth.

Revelation as an action of God has been mentioned and will be discussed fully later. One more divine action should be discussed before we leave the subject of Kohler's God-concept. Kohler obviously felt that a Jewish theology must speak of God as the creator. Yet he prided himself on his acceptance of modern science, which taught the eternality of matter and the evolution of the world. There is no reason to suspect that Kohler was exagerating when he said of the reconciling of evolution and creation that "this is the problem

which modern theology has set itself, perhaps the greatest which it must solve."[53]

Kohler's solution is that religion does not deny science, but it may supplement it. From our perspective, that is another case of faith going beyond reason without denying or contradicting reason. Science is correct that the world evolved over millions of years. The crucial point both for science and religion is that the universe operates according to unchanging laws. Science looks for the laws. But science is not competent to judge whether or not those laws have a cause behind them. At one point Kohler offers the constancy of these laws as proof that there must be a God.[54] We can dismiss this cosmological proof for the existence of God as over-zealousness on Kohler's part, since we have seen that Kohler knew that proof was not convincing after Kant. At another point he argues that we know through revelation that God is the source of nature's laws, the designer and active power in the universe, lending existence to all that is.[55] Kohler, in other words, freely admits that God did not create the universe at one point in time. Rather, God was and is the ongoing source of all existence Who has always been present in the eternally evolving universe. That is what Kohler means when he says God is the creator of the world. What is most important here is that God is the on-going source of existence as opposed to being the initial source. "For our religious consciousness the docrine of divine maintenance and government of the world is far more

important than that of creation."[56]

To sum up, Kohler's idea of God is clear even though the logic supporting it is not always clear. Kohler himself knew that he was going beyond logic into the realm of faith. But he was anxious to show that his God-concept was not contradicted by logic or science. Though not entirely based on reason, he thought his God-concept was entirely reasonable. Though man cannot know God's essence, he can know many things about God:

1) God is supermundane (spiritual, eternal, transcendent).
2) God is self-consciously omnipotent and omniscient.
3) God is holy (morally perfect), and therefore a unity, just and merciful. Thus he is immanent.
4) God is faithful (constant, unchanging, reliable, trustworthy).
5) God is the source of truth.
6) God is the source of all being.

Man

When Kohler states that "the mediator between God and the world is man, the son of God,"[57] the obvious implication is that there are two essential types of being, purely phsyical (the world, e.g. a rock) and purely spiritual (God). On an imaginary line between these two extremes are animals and man. Animals are at a fixed point closer to the purely physical. Man, even in his most primitive state, is slightly farther along the line toward spirituality, and is capable of moving closer and closer, though the fact of his physical being prevents him from becoming purely spiritual. The

spiritual element that enters into physical being to form animals and men is termed "soul." The human soul is stronger, it has a "richer endowment" of "manifold faculties" which account for the fact that man may move forward while the animals remain fixed on the physical-spiritual continuum.[58]

All spirit is divine and hence eternal. Physical being is perishable. Man, Kohler argues, has a dual nature. Thought puts him into the spiritual and eternal realm; body puts him into the earthly perishable realm.[59] But the dualism, as we might suspect from the above discussion of God, is not total. God, we discovered, is the source of all being, not just of spiritual being. All of man's self is permeated by God, the body as well as the soul.[60] It is the soul that "strives to unfold the divine in man until he attains the divine image."[61] But the body, too, evidently under the guiding influence of the soul, can be lifted into the realm of holiness (moral perfection).[62] In this regard Kohler says that man's body has a noble appearance and is his tool for reaching "a godlike mastery over the material world."[63]

Thus far the qualification of human dualism is not very significant, for the soul is clearly preeminent and superior. Body and soul remain separately identifiable entities. But Kohler's challenge to the dualistic notion goes deeper:

> In the light of modern science the whole theory separating body and soul falls to the ground, and the one connecting man more closely with the animal world is revived. . . . Physiology and psychology reveal the interaction and interdependence of body and soul in the lowest forms of animal life as well as in the higher forms, including man. The beginnings of the human mind must be sought once for all in the animal.[64]

At this point, Kohler's thinking about the soul ceases to be so clear, for he wishes body and soul to be in tension but not entirely distinct. Soul is not simply the divine element in man, not a part of God as opposed to a part of the physical world. Rather, the soul itself has a dual nature! It "mirrors both the spiritual and material worlds and holds them in mutual relation through its own power."[65] In this sense, soul may also be called "Ego." Ego's independent existence lifts man into the realm of "free action under higher motives, transcending nature's law of necessity."[66]

When Kohler speaks of the conflict between body and soul in man being a creative tension leading to man's greatness[67] he should not, in light of the above, be taken literally. What his ideas lead to--if we express it more precisely than does Kohler--is that body and spirit are inextricably connected and both reflected in man's soul (or Ego), the locus of conflict.

More important than the location of the conflict is the result of the conflict. The divine spirit reflected in the soul is potentially stronger than the physical being reflected in the soul. Since the soul's independent existence gives it free will, the individual--and by extension the human race--may make progress towards greater godliness (in the sense of spirituality and moral perfection).[68] This is the key to man's greatness, a greatness attributable to the divine element within him:

The highest and deepest in man, his mental, moral,

> and spiritual life, is the reflection of the divine nature implanted within him, a force capable of even greater development toward perfection.[69]

Why, then, does man progress towards greater perfection? Because divine spirituality, and hence divine holiness, is a part of him. The divine holiness is the source of all morality and gives "purpose and value to the whole of life."[70] As soon as man attains self-consciousness he becomes aware of this divine element in himself.[71] Kohler in this context calls the divine element "conscience." From our analysis we can see that conscience is a synonymn for the divine spirit which is part of man and is one of the two elements reflected in the soul. Conscience, as Kohler puts it, is "the voice of God calling to his /man's/ soul."[72]

Conscience influences man to do the good, to move toward greater godliness. But man has a body and can never become fully spiritual or fully holy. Only God is fully holy; man emulates God.[73] Man's destiny, his part in the plan of the one God Who's unity unifies the world under one moral plan, is to move ever closer to perfection. Man must move forward to fully correspond to his own nature. Corresponding to one's nature is Kohler's definition of being "good." For an animal to be good he need only exist. But for man, "not what he is, but what he ought to be gives value to his being."[74] Because of his nature, man strives to be good. Good, thus, is done for its own sake, not for the sake of reward. Since no individual fully succeeds, and since we are aware that we fall short, only a child or a primitive, only,

that is, those in whom conscience has yet to be awakened, could be free of some sense of guilt.[75]

Before we consider man's lack of success and his guilt, let us consider what, in more specific terms, it means to be good, and just how successful man can be. To do the good, to be ethical, requires of the individual 1)self-preservation and self-improvement;[76] 2) that he do his duty to others, recognizing the mutual dependence of all;[77] 3) that he live life to the fullest.[78] This latter principle means that man should enjoy himself as long as he does not violate the first two principles. Doing one's duty to others (2) includes being just. And justice also means the giving of charity.[79]

No single individual, in society with its division of labor and interdependence, can develop all his potential. Hence the ideal man is a composite idea. There has never been a perfect man.[80] Granted that it is the individual who is the object of direct divine attention, since all men are part of mankind and owe their condition to the society of which they are a part, only in concord is major progress made through history.[81] "The godlikeness of man develops more through the evolution of the human race."[82] Because we each get the benefits of other men's labor, we have an obligation to contribute our share.[83] All groups, races, societies, nations, etc., can achieve greater perfection only through group action. On the broadest possible scope, no individual will find his true value in relation to mankind until all men can regard themselves as members of a

common humanity. "Then only will the unity and harmony of the entire cosmic life" be reflected in human society.[84]

The age of perfection to which progress leads Kohler calls the Messianic Age. We will discuss it further when we come to the role of Israel. Meanwhile, we must attempt to determine whether or not Kohler believed progress was merely possible or whether he believed it was inevitable. First of all, the entire plan of Jewish Theology presupposes not only that there has been development in history in general and Jewish history in particular, but that the trend of that development has been from worse to better. Notwithstanding temporary setbacks, progress, Kohler believed, has been steady all through human history. Since for Kohler the drive for improvement is the result of man's very nature, we would expect that Kohler shared the belief of many in the nineteenth century, namely that progress is inevitable. Statements such as the following in Jewish Theology seem to confirm that expectation:

> All the social, political, and intellectual movements of our restless, heaven-storming age, notwithstanding temporary lapses into barbarism and hatred, point unerringly to the final goal, the unity of all human and cosmic life under the supreme leadership of God on high.[85]

Some of Kohler's sermons express moments of doubt about progress in the immediate future. In "Forward and Upward! is the New Year's Call" the reader is told that progress must be built on knowledge of the past, and that men are currently in danger of losing sight of the past.[86] Such

worries, however, can reasonably be interpreted as worries about temporary setbacks which history must eventually overcome. In the same sermon we find the following eloquent expression of faith:

> There are in midocean those tiny creatures, the coral that build up in the course of myriads of years amidst the ever tossing waves those gigantic reefs that form the wonders of earth and sea. So do the toiling generations of man successfully rear upon the fluctuating tides of mortal life a realm of goodness and holiness which towers above creation as heaven does above the earth.[87]

If Kohler had doubts, they were fleeting doubts. Indeed, in some of his sermons the Messianic Age seems to be just around the corner. In "The Mission of Israel" he reports that I. M. Wise may well have been right when he said that the teachings of Judaism might be "the common property of the American people" before fifty years have passed.[88] Kohler is even more ebulient in "Israel's Perennial Spring," where the Messianic Age, not just in America but in all the world, is heralded by the current state of civilization:

> Reform Judaism takes a wider and larger view of the working of God in history. It sees the Messianic age approaching in every forward stride of human knowledge and skill, in every triumph of right over wrong, of truth over falsehood, of love over hatred, of peace over strife, of humanity over inhumanity. What is this great age of ours in which truth is searched for in all the religions and literatures of the world, past and present, in which the welfare and happiness, the honor and dignity, the right and claim of every man, woman and child is made the object and care and solicitude of legislative and deliberative bodies of men throughout civilization, and all classes and races, nations and creeds, kingdoms and continents are being tied together by ever closer bonds of sympathy, of mutual interest, material, moral and spiritual? What

> is this but the approach of the Messianic time? Whatever hatred there still prevails, whatever wrong there still be perpetrated, the wintry frost is receding and the mild sun of spring is extending its reign over the earth. Is this not the knocking at the door of the friend and Redeemer for whom we have been waiting?[89]

We can safely conclude that even when Kohler had doubts for the immediate future he had no doubt of the ultimate triumph of civilization. The Messianic Age was an inevitability.

Having seen that an individual may only reach perfection if his society does, a condition which will inevitably be reached but has yet to be reached, we may return to the matter of individual guilt. Groups of men, and ultimately mankind as a whole, must make progress. But individuals, not groups, have souls. Sin, Kohler informs us, is only an individual matter , not a group matter.[90] Sin occurs because the flesh is weak, leading us to err in judgement.[91] When man gives in to his lower nature his higher nature, his conscience, condemns him. Sin has two aspects, a formal one and an essential one. Formally it is an offence against God; for the laws of morality have been broken. More important, sin is in essence "a severance of the soul's inner relations to God."[92] Sin, thus, leads to "a sense of self-condemnation, the consciousness of the divine anger."[93] Note here that the grammatical structure of the statement makes it clear that divine anger and self-condemnation are equated. This is logical in Kohler's thought because the divine is in man in the form of his spiritual being, his conscience.

A minor problem should be noted here, one of which Kohler was evidently unaware. And we are on the verge of facing a major problem of which Kohler was very aware.

Sin is "formally" an offence against God. Because of the element of the divine within man--spirit, conscience--man should know better, and presumably does know better, than to sin. Sin, in essence, is unfaithfulness "to our own god-like nature."[94] Kohler is anxious that the reader understand that no one is sinful by nature, by inner compulsion. That is why Kohler calls sin an error in judgement. But the reason such error can occur is that man's flesh inclines him to sin. At the same time Kohler tells us that no one is sinful by nature he tells us that everyone sins.[95] Body is just as much a part of man's dual nature as spirit. If flesh is part of every person's nature, and flesh prompts sin, and absolutely no one escapes sinning, then it is hard to escape the conclusion that man does sin by nature, Kohler's denials notwithstanding.

There is a way out of this problem, however. Progress occurs because the spirit is stronger than the flesh. We can hypothesize that Kohler would maintain that though all sin now, in the Messianic Age, when progress culminates in a morally perfect society, no one will sin. When that happens we will see that man is, indeed, capable of avoiding sin.

Though the problem can be avoided, the reason it seems to have arisen is significant, and leads us to a more profound problem. Kohler, just in passing, also mentions that sin "signifies an abuse of the freedom granted man as his most precious boon."[96] Kohler must insist that no one sins by nature if he is going to maintain that man has free will.

Otherwise man would be responsible neither for the sins he commits nor for the good he does and the progress he makes. "The dignity and greatness of man depends largely upon his freedom, his power of self-determination."[97]

More serious than the internal threat to man's free will (which we have just found resolvable) is an external threat. We have seen that God is omniscient and omnipotent and has a plan under which the momentary strivings of man and men are subsumed. Divine providence is a theoretical threat to human free will. Divine providence, Kohler says, implies two things. First, providence implies divine provision. There is no blind fate; God provides in advance for the world's operations. Second, providence implies divine predestination.[98] Judaism "knows of no event which is not foreordained by God."[99] To be sure, this is benevolent preordination. Kohler considers belief in benevolent preordination extremly important, for "God ceases to be God, if He has not included our every step in His plan of creation, thus surrounding us with paternal love."[100] .

We have here what seems to be a blunt contradiction. Kohler maintains absolute human freedom of will when he says that man:

> acts from free choice and conscious design, and is able to change his mind at any moment, at any new evidence or even through whim.[101]

But Kohler also maintains that "our every step" has been preordained by a benevolent God. Logically, the two abso-

lutes cannot coexist.

Kohler is certainly not so naive as to be unaware of the problem. Hence at one point he tries to mitigate the absoluteness which he has previously ascribed to free will. Man is not absolutely free because many things influence his decisions. But the decisions are still his own. Man's destiny is determined by providence, but his personality is not.[102] At another point he says that our idea of predestination "makes as much allowance as possible for the moral freedom of man."[103] This is a valiant effort on Kohler's part. But it does not solve the dilemma. If man's destiny is predestined, if, that is, the result of his actions, which must certainly include his further actions, is predetermined, then the freedom of his personality is of no consequence. "As much allowance as possible" for freedom is no freedom at all.

Even if we were able to say that man's predetermined destiny only refers to the ultimate progress of the race, but does not preclude temporary regression on the part of either the individual or the race, the problem would not be solved. Divine providence in that sense could leave some room for human freedom, albeit not absolute human freedom. But divine omniscience is an even more profound threat to human freedom. That Kohler was well-aware of this philosophical dilemma, but tried to evade it without actually solving it, should be evident from the following paragraph:

> The doctrine of man's free will presents another difficulty from the side of divine omniscience. For if God knows in advance what is going to happen, then man's acts are determined by this very foreknowledge; he is no longer free, and his moral responsibility becomes an idle dream. In order to escape this dilemma, the Mohammedan theologians were compelled to limit either the divine omniscience or human freedom, and most of them resorted to the latter method. It is characteristic of Judaism that its great thinkers, from Saadia to Maimonides and Gersonides, dared not alter the doctrine of man's free will and moral responsibility, but even preferred to limit the divine omniscience. Hisdai Crescas is the only one to restrict human freedom in favor of the foreknowledge of God.[104]

Basically, what Kohler says here is that 1)divine omniscience logically precludes human free will, and 2) therefore most Jewish philosophers have limited divine omniscience because the doctrine of free will is so important to Judaism. That would solve the problem if Kohler were willing to do the same thing. But he is **not!** We have seen that Kohler is willing to give a bit on the doctrine of free will. But he is emphatically not willing to go as far as Crescas, who gave up the concept altogether.[105] And logic will not allow half measures for coping with this philosophical dilemma.

Kohler does not delude himself. He knows he has not solved the philosophical problem. Basically, he has chosen to live with the paradox. He says that reason cannot establish preordination, but belief in preordination is nonetheless "ingrained in the human soul."[106] He says that he opposes determinism, but not on logical grounds, but rather because of "one incontestable fact, our inner <u>sense</u> of freedom which tells us at every moment that <u>we</u> have acted, and at every decision that <u>we</u> have decided."[107] (italics for "sense"

mine; for "we" Kohler's--RM) Early in his grapplings with the problem he admits that "the relation of man's free will and divine foresight cannot be solved by any process of reasoning."[108] And at the end of the discussion he states again:

> The fact is that this is only another of the problems insoluble to human reasoning; the freedom of the will must remain for all time a postulate of moral responsibility, and therefore of religion.[109]

We can wonder why all the discussion was necessary if Kohler from the start knew that he was going to accept both elements of the omniscience-preordination vs. free will paradox on faith. If we give Kohler the benefit of the doubt, we can say that he was trying to show his position was reasonable even though reason alone cannot establish it. If we do not give him the benefit of the doubt we can say that he did not wish the casual reader to realize he was accepting a contradiction, but wished him to think instead that this was another case of faith carrying the religionist beyond reason. In any case, the conclusion is inescapable that this issue constitutes a major violation of Kohler's dictum that reason and faith must never conflict. Kohler unequivocally accepts divine omniscience, though he was fully aware that divine omniscience precludes human freedom. Then he accepts human freedom anyway.

Kohler, as we have seen, felt that he had to affirm free will, else man's actions would have no significance, no moral value. Granting free will, and granting the indi-

vidual's potential to do good and reach higher and higher levels of holiness, even the best of individuals in pre-messianic times will not actually reach perfection. Kohler uses this to support his concept of immortality. God is good and desires human perfection. Man desires perfection also, but never reaches it in life. Does God deceive us by leading us to strive for the unatainable? That is unthinkable. Hence God must allow the soul to reach perfection after death, when it is no longer influenced by the flesh. Kohler knows that this belief requires faith. It does not follow of necessity from his logic. But neither does logic in any way contradict it. This is another belief which Kohler wishes to show is reasonable, though not established by reason alone.[110]

Another argument also leads to the belief in immortality. Man, like God, has self-consciousness, ego. "It appears certain that this ego cannot cease to be with the cessation of the bodily functions." We might reply that just because man has self-consciousness like God, that does not necessarily mean that his self-consciousness is deathless, like God. Anticipating this objection, Kohler immediately adds: "there is in us something divine, immortal, and the only question is wherein it may be found."[111] Analyzing this, we find that Kohler is equivocating. He has argued that the spiritual element in man (who is body and spirit) is immortal. But the reason man is self-conscious is that he has an ego--which we have found to be a synonymn of soul. Soul and spirit

are not the same. Soul is an independent entity which reflects both body and spirit. Kohler has no problem arguing that man has an immortal part (spirit). His problem is that he wishes to make ego, man's self-conscious part, immortal. That is why he equivocates in this context on the location of the divine part of man. But elsewhere he makes it clear that ego is not the divine part, but only reflects the divine part. This is a minor problem, however, for ego/soul is still immaterial and may therefore be conceived of as non-perishable. Kohler does not establish by this argument that ego must be immortal; he does establish that it may be immortal. Once again faith carries us beyond reason.

What do we know about man's immortality? Kohler firmly believes that man has it. But all anyone could do is to speculate on its nature.[112] Kohler's speculation is that in some way the soul progresses to perfection. Note, then, that in Kohler's thought reward and punishment does not take place after death.

This brings us to our final point. We have seen that God exercises justice and mercy. Since man has free will it is just that God should do so. How, then, does man experience reward and punishment? How so, indeed, particularly since we have been told that doing the good is its own reward? There is no contradiction here. Spirit is a divine element in man which, reflected in the soul, influences him to do good and makes him feel guilty when he does not. Hence reward and punishment may be divine and yet be entirely

internal phenomena. "Modern man knows he bears heaven and hell within his own bosom," Kohler says. Reward simply means "happiness through harmony with God." Punishment simply means "the soul's distress at its inner discord with the primal Source and the divine Ideal of all morality."[113]

To sum up Kohler's view of man as we have seen it so far, man is a mixture of perishable body and immortal spirit, both of which are reflected in an immortal, self-conscious soul. Man's dual nature produces a creative tension in the soul, which may also be called the Ego, leading the individual to progress toward greater godlikeness or holiness. Man has free will, which gives this striving moral significance. While individuals may regress, mankind as a whole, due to divine preordination, must eventually reach moral perfection--the Messianic Age. The bodily part of man's dual nature, as well as his position in interdependent society, sometimes lead him to err in judgement and not progress, or even to retrogress. This is sin, and leads to a feeling of guilt.

Between God and Man

We have not been able to discuss Kohler's view of God without learning much about man at the same time. And we have not been able to discuss Kohler's view of man without learning still more about God. The subjects to be discussed under the topic "Between God and Man" could therefore have been discussed under either of the previous two headings, as Kohler does in Jewish Theology. Hopefully, greater clarity

can be fostered by the present division, however artificial. Kohler's concepts of revelation, prayer, and repentance each intimately involve both God and man, and can best be understood in light of our previous understanding of his concepts of God and man.

In our discussion of Kohler's views on God, we found that God is the source of all truth. Throughout our discussion we have found that man knows by faith more than logic or science establish. Moreover, Kohler finds that philosophy and science have come to be able to demonstrate things which previous generations had accepted on faith alone. Clearly men have known and do know truths which they have not been able to reach by themselves. As God is the source of truth, He must be the source of these truths. Hence a crucial part of Kohler's theological system is the concept of revelation, of communication of God to man.

Divine revelation, says Kohler, has meant belief that God reveals Himself and His will to man. Kohler does not believe that God reveals Himself to man, though earlier, more "child-like" generations believed that He did. Rather, God reveals and always has revealed His will to man. This view of revelation is "more acceptable to those of more advanced religious views."[114]

If God reveals His will but not Himself, then the instrument of revelation is not God as self-conscious personality (Himself), but "the spirit of God."[115] In our discussion of Kohler's view of man we found that man's spirit

is a divine element within him. Revelation requires "a special act of God;"[116] but God works through man's spirit (which includes all the non-physical aspects of man except man's soul, and hence includes intellect and imagination). Revelation, thus, takes place within man. Man does not, therefore, see or hear "supernatural" revelations. It can as well be called--and we may add by way of analysis that it can better be called--inspiration.[117]

Past and present revelation, or inspiration, is thus the divine source of the truths which men know. It is the source of what man knows by logic to be true; and it is the source of what man knows by faith to be true. Yet certainly men have often believed things which are untrue. How can man correct his knowledge? He tries to determine what is actually true by the exercise of his reason:

> Reason must serve as a <u>corrective</u> for the contents of revelation, scrutinizing and purifying, deepening and spiritualizing ever anew the truths received through intuition, but it can never be the final source of truth.[118]

This is the genesis of Kohler's dictum that reason and faith must not conflict. Implicitly, this puts reason above revelation, for things once believed to be revealed truth must be rejected if they prove unreasonable. But revelation is still absolutely crucial, since man's reason is limited. As we have seen, many of the most important truths we proclaim cannot be established by reason.

There are three very important consequences of this

view of revelation. First of all, since revelation is not a single or even a series of supernatural events (e.g. Sinai), no religion has a monopoly on revealed truth. All men are related to God, and God relates to all men, in the same way:

> Whenever the paternal love of God is truly felt and understood it must include all the classes and all souls of men who enter into the relationship of children to God.[119]

Still, revelation does require "a special act of God." So God might give more revelation, or more of a certain type of revelation, to one individual or one group of individuals. Kohler believes that many non-Jews have received revelation. But in this respect the Jewish people remains a special group. Jews have received a great deal of <u>moral</u> revelation.[120]

The second important consequence of Kohler's view of revelation is related to the first. If all men may receive revelation, then revelation can occur in any generation. It may even occur in every generation. As revelation continues through history, man learns more and more. We have seen that Kohler believed in human progress. Not surprisingly, therefore, he does not merely assert that revelation is ongoing. He asserts that revelation is progressive. "Progressive Revelation," a term which Kohler made famous, means that revelation is ongoing and that therefore successive generations of men come closer and closer to perfection of knowledge. More sophisticated generations can understand

more sophisticated revelations:

> The divine revelation in Israel was by no means a single act, but a process of development, and its various stages correspond to the degrees of culture of the people.[121]

The idea of progressive revelation leads to the third major consequence of Kohler's view of revelation. No book of revealed knowledge can be perfect and absolutely authoritative. This is the case first because all revelation is mediated by imperfect human intellect, and second because later generations will know more than the authors of earlier books. This has far-reaching implications when applied to Jewish literature. So-called "higher criticism" of the Bible and of rabbinic literature posed no threat to Kohler's concept of revelation. Indeed, it is quite conceivable that Kohler worked out his concept of revelation because he himself was both a follower of Wissenschaft des Jutentums and a sincere Jew who was bothered by higher criticism's claim that neither the Pentateuch nor the "oral law" was revealed at Sinai, but that both had evolved over centuries. Kohler's theory of revelation "saves" the Torah. The Torah was not revealed at Sinai. It is not the product of a single revelation. But it may still be regarded as the product of many inspired men. The Torah represents but one step in man's groping towards God.[122] As such it has had and continues to have great value. As law it contributed to Jewish survival (though it also led to "casuistry and caused the petrification of religion in the codified Halakah"). As

doctrine it made the Jewish people a nation of thinkers devoted to a righteous way of life.[123] For the people of Israel the Torah was and is a "storehouse of divine truth, from which it constantly derives new life and new youth."[124]

For Kohler, then, the Torah is extremely important. It should be read and venerated. In this sense he has "saved" it from the threat of higher criticism. But the Torah has ceased to be an infallible revelation. The divine moral ideas which inspired the Torah's authors are perfect. But the Torah is not. Using "Torah" in the sense of authoritative revelation, Kohler writes that the modern view of Torah is not that of Orthodox Judaism, but that of the prophets:

> To them and to us the real Torah is the unwritten moral law which underlies the precepts of both the written law and its oral interpretation.[125]

Kohler's view of the Torah extends to include all of the Bible and, though his enthusiasm is less, all of rabbinic literature. Jewish Theology constantly quotes both Biblical and rabbinic literature. Such literature is genuinely the product of revelation. But ideas and commandments in such literature may be rejected or added to; for both men and revelation have progressed since that literature was written.

So much for the communication of God to man. Just as God can communicate with all men, so all men may attempt to communicate with God. Kohler believed that all men yearned for God and could come to an appreciation of God. The result

is that men pray. There is a "kernel of true piety" even in pagan worship.[126] "Prayer is the expression of man's longing and yearning for God . . . , an outflow of the emotions of the soul in its dependence on God." In this sense prayer grows out of human weakness. But it culminates not in longing but in adoration and trust.[127]

In our discussion of Kohler's God-concept we found that he believed God to be personally near to every individual (even though he also believed that to defy reason). For an omniscient God to know the thoughts and prayers of an individual is no problem if God may know them without Himself changing. But it would create a major philosophical problem if prayer influenced God, if, that is, prayer could lead God to do something which He would not otherwise have done. For that would impute change to the deity. This is necessary background for Kohler's idea of prayer. Because of man's nature he yearns for greater moral and spiritual perfection; hence he prays. Because of God's nature He may hear prayer but may not be moved to change because of it. Paradoxically, therefore, we will find that Kohler considers prayer very important for man but not very important for God.

Kohler's discussion of prayer begins as follows. 1) Prayer is an expression, out of man's weakness, of his yearning for God. 2) Prayer "is offered on the presumption that it will be heard by God on high." 3) <u>Man must change himself</u> before his prayer can bring him God's justice or mercy.

4) Prayer has no influence on God, Who is "exalted above space, omniscient, unchangeable in will and action."[128] The fourth point here means that the third point is partially misleading. Prayer does not actually invoke divine mercy or justice at all. Man must change himself.

The logical question thus becomes: why pray at all? The continuation of Kohler's discussion answers the question: 5) "Prayer can exert power only over the relationship of man to God, not over God Himself. This indicates the nature and purpose of prayer." 6) We are genuinely uplifted toward God in prayer. It gives us strength and courage. 7) Prayer, in sum, strengthens faith and inspires purer living.[129] What this amounts to saying is that prayer has a very important psychological influence on man. God does hear prayer; but it influences Him not at all.

Joseph Blau correctly notes that for Kohler "prayer is a psychological need of man, not an effective agent in the cosmos," adding that there was "too much of a genuinely religious spirit" in Kohler to allow him to go as far as some of the rationalists of his day did when they called prayer self-deception.[130] That is correct as far as it goes. But we should note that Kohler and such rationalists essentially agreed on what prayer does. It is addressed to God but only influences man. The difference between Kohler and such rationalists is less one of philosophy than one of temperament.

Kohler argues that community prayer is more effective

than private prayer. Again, this is more for psychological reasons than for theological ones. Private prayer helps the individual to some degree, but only in groups is "the pure atmosphere of heavenly freedom and bliss" fully attainable.[131]

When Kohler deals with atonement he goes beyond this purely psychological view of man's communication with deity. We found in our discussion of Kohler's idea of sin that it is "a severance of the soul's inner relations to God," that it is unfaithfulness "to our own god-like nature." Kohler argues that man would be in a terrible predicament if he could not escape his sense of guilt. He may do so by repentance. The first step is psychological in the sense that prayer is psychological. Repentance means inner transformation.[132] Man feels guilty and resolves to do better. But guilt is not so easily assuaged. God's mercy must supplement man's sincerity:

> The chief stress is always laid on the feeling of remorse and on the change of heart which contrition and self-accusation bring. Yet even these would not be sufficient to cast off the oppressive consciousness of guilt, unless the contrite heart were reassured by God that He forgives the penitent son of man with paternal grace and love.[133]

Are we to conclude that God does not respond to prayer but that he does respond to repentance? That seems to be Kohler's implication. Still, it remains theoretically possible that, since mercy is part of God's nature which supplements justice (justice alone would not always leave

room for mercy), divine grace operates independently. Grace, then, need not be a direct response to repentance--which, as with prayer, would impute change to the deity. While that idea of grace is theoretically possible, it appears far more likely that Kohler is inconsistent here, that he does indeed believe that God is not influenced by prayer but that He is influenced by repentance.

Israel

The God Kaufmann Kohler speaks of is the God of all men. The nature of man is universal. The Messianic Age must be achieved by all. And the religion through which men shall achieve it--the system we have been dealing with--should be, and will inevitably become, the religion of all men. What then, in Kohler's thought, is the place of Israel, the Jewish people?

The key to that question is to be sought in the fact that Kohler believed the system he was setting forth to be the most modern Jewish system, the essence of Jewish teaching as it evolved throughout history. All men should believe it. But not all men have and not all men do. Israel has learned truth. Israel's place is to teach that truth to others so that it will be in practice the universal truth that it is in theory. This is the "Mission of Israel." We must examine how Kohler arrives at such a concept and what its ramifications include.

As we have seen, God gives revelation to many people. Kohler believes that God has given certain varieties of

revelation to certain peoples. Certain peoples at various times in history have a great deal to teach others about one particular subject. If a group has such knowledge, it should teach it. That is its "mission." Christians, for example, have had a special mission in art and music. Islam's mission was the cultivation of philosophy and science.[134] The Jewish people has had (and continues to have ) a similar mission. It must bring religious truth to the world. Significantly, Israel has been the only people which has been self-conscious of the fact that it has a special mission.[135]

Israel, thus, is a distinct and distinctive people. This does not necessarily mean that Jews are better than others. But that is what it does mean in so far as they live "a higher and more God-like life."[136] The Jewish people discovered that God is a unity, and that the world is therefore unified under one moral government and plan. The Mission of Israel, Kohler tells us, is so closely tied to the doctrine of God's unity that the two doctrines are inseparable.[137]

Israel, Kohler tells us, is a "chosen people." Since God gives revelation to many peoples, but has singled out Israel for one type of revelation, Kohler can logically assert that God "has chosen Israel freely of His own accord."[138] What Israel has been chosen for is the mission to bring truth to the world. This is the central point for understanding Judaism. It "forms the basis and chief condition of revelation."[139] That is, Jews have received the revelations out of which Judaism has grown in order that they would carry

out their mission. Conversely, they carry out their mission because they have received the revelations.

The point of Israel's existence is that it must bring the truth to other nations. This amounts to having a "covenant" with God. The Jewish people is "an instrument for His plan of salvation" for the whole world.[140] The chosing, or covenant, or election, was not a one-time event, but rather, in keeping with the idea of progressive revelation, was and is a continuous process.[141]

Bringing "salvation" to the world by teaching it truth means teaching ethics in order to bring the Messianic Age. "The soul of the Jewish religion is its ethics. Its God is the Fountainhead and Ideal of morality."[142] By definition, then, when the Messianic Age arrives the Mission will have been accomplished.

Clearly this amounts to a major redefinition of the traditional idea of the Messiah. Rather than waiting for the Messiah, Kohler is waiting for the Messianic Age. If we still look for a precursor of that age, it is not an individual but the whole Jewish people.[143] As Kohler put it in a sermon:

> If ever there was a lamb of God brought to slaughter by cruel executors, if there ever was a crucified Messiah suffering for the sins of man with no guilt of his own, it was the Jew. The Jew is the Passover lamb whose blood God saw and said: "By this blood the world shall be saved.[144]

Kohler's idea of the Mission of Israel does not in theory require that Israel be different from other peoples

except in the revelations it has received and, perhaps, in the dedication it has shown. But in point of fact Kohler believed that Jews constitute a special race. He tells us that the mission idea presupposes "a special capacity of soul and tendency of intellect." The Jews are "the religious people par excellance."[145] While individual Jews have contributed to many fields, the Jews as a people have a special genius specifically and exclusively for religion.[146]

In spite of the fact that Kohler is primarily interested as a theologian in Judaism, it follows from what we have just said that he believed a person is a Jew not because that person accepts or refuses to accept the doctrines of Judaism, but by birth. Only converts need to state specifically that they accept doctrine. The Mission of Israel is obligatory on all Jews by birth.[147]

David Philipson asks what, for Kohler, was the source of Jewish authority? How, that is, was Kohler so sure his system was correct and other religious systems were wrong? Traditional Judaism has an infallible revelation, the Torah. Kohler thought it fallible and changeable. Philipson's answer is that the Jewish people's special genius for religion gives certainty, authority, to Judaism. Nothing in Jewish Theology explicitly states or denies such a consequence of the Jewish people's racial uniqueness. But Philipson may be correct. He quotes an article by Kohler in the July 9, 1866 issue of American Hebrew as stating:

I do not believe in the divine origin of the Mosaic

> law and tradition as our Orthodox brethren do, but I do believe in the divine mission of the Jewish people.[148]

At any rate, Kohler certainly did believe that Jews have "hereditary virtues."[149] Kohler was very much a universalist in that he thought Judaism was a religion for all men and that all men must reach salvation (the Messianic Age, holiness--moral perfection) for any man to reach salvation. But at the same time he was a particularist, a racist. Different peoples have genius for different things. And the Jew has the genius for discovering the way of life which all men should adopt.

The Jewish genius has certainly had a tremendous influence on the world, Kohler thought. Israel has constantly rejuvenated itself by assimilating things from other cultures.[150] At the same time Israel's truths have been partially assimilated by others. Christianity and Islam, as daughter religions, have consciously or unconsciously spread the Jewish belief in one God, the Jewish messianic hope, and Jewish morality.[151] Christianity, in fact, as it grew into a "world-conquering Church," spread these truths farther than the Jews alone could ever have done. The problem with Christianity is that it compromised and misunderstood some Jewish teachings. It overemphasizes love; justice is more important. It has a pessimistic otherworldliness.[152] While Kohler happily gives the church credit for overcoming a tremendous amount of paganism, Judaism remains the superior religion which the Christian, like others, needs to adopt so that all may reach the Messianic Age:

> The Church in her efforts to conquer the heathen world was to a large extent conquered herself by the heathen view. Having started in the name of Israel's God, she had, in order to win the nations for her faith, to enter into all kinds of compromise, whether in regard to the unity and spirituality of God or in regard to the unity of mankind and of the cosmos.[153]

In spite of all mankind's problems, progress had been made; and certainly that meant that Jewish morality was having its effect. As we have already seen, Kohler even believed that the climax of progress was close at hand. Other monotheistic peoples will eventually find union through Israel.[154] The Messianic Age is an inevitability.

Israel has a universal message for the world, and it is Israel's particular task, its Mission, to make that message known. The Mission is Israel's raison d'être. Kohler believed that merely being the vessel which contained universal ideas was not sufficient to insure the continued particular existence necessary for the propagation of those ideas. Hence Judaism has developed "forms" and institutions, such things as bar mitzvah, Passover, and the synagogue. Theologically these things are secondary. Doctrines are primary. But from a practical standpoint forms and institutions are absolutely crucial. All Jews are not equally capable of understanding and propagating doctrine. But they may all maintain their allegiance to Judaism by adhering to its forms and institutions. In other words, doctrine is the reason for continuing Jewish existence; but forms and institutions are the vehicle for continuing Jewish existence.[155]

Forms and institutions give stability to Judaism, as

they do for all religions. While they certainly express ideas, either directly or symbolically, their primary appeal is to the emotions, "the ultimate source of religion."[156] Since forms and institutions are means to an end and not ends in themselves, they may be and have been changed to meet the needs of different Jewish communities and different historical periods. Indeed, Judaism's "ever youthful mind has constantly created new forms to express the ideas of the time, or has invested old ones with new meanings."[157]

The point Kohler is establishing in this argument, and which he devotes much of Jewish Theology to delineating, is that the forms and institutions of Judaism, important though they are, have always changed. This fact gives modern Jews the right to continue making changes. Modern Jews may certainly accept any traditional forms they wish to accept. But they are not bound to do so. Kohler is able to assert this because, as we have seen, traditional Jewish literature (e.g. Bible and Talmud) is not authoritative. For Kohler, therefore, the Jewish law--halachah--which relies on that literature for authority is not authoritative either. Kohler was well aware of the fact that the halachic structure left some room for change. But it did not leave enough room for change. Kohler's rejection of halachah as binding is unequivocal: "Modern Judaism, quickened anew with the spirit of the ancient seers of Israel, cannot remain bound by a later and altogether too rigid Halakah."[158]

Talmudic Judaism, Kohler thought, had led to casuistry

and over-intellectualism. Jewish mysticism had led to over-emotionalism. The forms of modern Judaism, he felt, must speak to "the whole of man," balancing intellect and emotion.[159] In fairness to Kohler, it should be noted here that while he felt he must justify his deviation from Orthodoxy, which he thought encouraged "adherence to the mere form,"[160] his idea of the function of religious forms implicitly gives a great deal of credit to Biblical and talmudic forms. Time and again Kohler points out how various forms have contributed to Jewish survival and piety. The following passage from one of Kohler's sermons exemplifies his view of Orthodox Judaism:

> I am the very last to deprecate Orthodoxy. It is the soil out of which we have drawn sap and marrow. Orthodox Judaism is the mother that has nursed us with her life-blood, and even if she shows the wrinkles of old age, we will never forget to pay her homage and reverence in due humility.[161]

Kohler's dissatisfaction with Orthodox Judaism was not due solely to its rigidity or over-intellectualism. He felt that many traditional forms were ill-suited to modern Western society. "The weakness of the synagogue was its Orientalism,"[162] Kohler declared. Its forms have therefore lost their hold on the Occidental Jew. Tallis, tzitzis, phyllacteries, and mezuzah, for example, are "meaningless forms."[163] Overcoming Orientalism has also meant making women equal[164] and introducing vernacular liturgy and sermons.[165]

We would probably not be too far from the truth if we said, in light of these examples, that by "Orientalism"

Kohler was referring to anything in Jewish practice which appeared odd or eccentric to non-Jews. We would be wrong, however, if we accused Kohler of urging the change of forms merely because they embarrassed him (though that may well have been a factor). We have seen that Kohler believed the world was ripe for the onset of the Messianic Age, and that the role of the Jew in the world was to spread the doctrines necessary to bring that age. Logically, therefore, Kohler thought it imperative that forms which served to keep Jews from mixing freely with their neighbors were an obstacle to progress. In this context Kohler's view of the dietary laws is significant. The dietary laws disciplined the medieval Jew and contributed to his survival. Like many laws, they contributed to the Jew's "spirit of holiness." They could do the same for modern Jews. But their observance keeps Jews from mixing freely with their neighbors. They are an obstacle to the Mission of Israel. To give them up is problematical because they have been so effective in contributing to Jewish survival. As Kohler puts it:

> Reform Judaism . . . sees in the humanitarianism of the present a mode of realizing the Messianic hope of Israel. Therefore it cannot afford to encourage the separation of the Jew from his environment in any way except through the maintenance of his religion, and cannot encourage the dietary laws as a means of separation. Its great problem is to find other methods to inculcate the spirit of holiness in the modern Jew, to render him conscious of his priestly mission, while he lives in unison and fellowship with all his fellow-citizens.[166]

Kohler, clearly, was willing and sometimes anxious to do away with old forms. And his theory leaves him free to

innovate entirely new forms. Several passages indicate that what he thought necessary was the revivifying of old forms to make them more appealing in the modern age. In one sermon he says that "I for one feel that true progress lies not in abolishing but in improving the ceremonies of religion, and in making such innovations as tend to strengthen the reverential piety of the people."[167] In another sermon he says that while in the Ghetto Succot was a relief from the monotony of daily life, the modern Jew experiences a monotony of prosperity. "Can the synagogue wake up to this deficiency?" asks Kohler. "Yes," he answers, "if you succeed in making the old symbols echo forth new ideas in harmony with our age."[168]

Exactly what are Kohler's criteria for change? The foregoing examples hint at criteria, but they are far from explicit. Orientalism--that which hinders the Jew in fulfilling his mission--must be eliminated. But on what basis should forms be retained? And how may innovations be evaluated? Kohler gives no direct answers to such questions, but his criteria seem to be these: forms and institutions must appeal to both the mind and the heart, thus inspiring the Jew to work at his mission; they must encourage group loyalty without going so far as to keep the Jew from mixing with non-Jews. Forms and institutions, says Kohler, must be "attractive and impressive."[169]

Such criteria are highly subjective. Who is to judge what is attractive? Who is to judge what goes too far?

Kohler does not say. His silence allows us to conclude that anyone with the power to persuade others of the value of his judgements may judge. Certainly Kohler believed that he himself had the right to judge, a fact which leads us to suspect that Kohler would have given priority to the opinions of rabbis over laymen.

A final example may help to clarify Kohler's approach to change. Kohler believed that "the most important institution of the synagogue, and the one most frought with blessing for all mankind, is the Sabbath."[170] He thought that, due to economic conditions, more Jews would be able to attend weekly services if they were held on Sunday rather than Saturday. His judgement was that it was more important to inspire larger numbers of people than to staunchly defend a mere institution. Hence Sunday services are not "treason to Judaism." His theory would have allowed him to change the day of shabbat (which is only an institution, secondary to doctrine). But he would not go as far as his theory would permit. He insisted that Sunday services may supplement the real shabbat as a temporary expedient only. Ideally, Saturday services would be re-introduced when the times changed.[171] On this issue, Samuel Cohon's observation is an apt one: "As on other occasions in his career, his radicalism was checked by his native piety."[172]

Kohler's thought developed further on the subject of Sunday services; here we may see specifically how he applies criteria to judge the value of innovations. A sermon in

1888 gives the above reasons for allowing Sunday services.[173] But in 1891 another sermon proclaims that the innovation has been a failure. By what criteria did it fail? In theory Sunday services were justifiable. And they had "the charm of novelty." But they did not "render Judaism stronger and firmer in the hearts of the people and in the estimate of the world." They did not "deepen religious sentiment and conviction and create a real zeal and enthusiasm in the audiences for our ancestral faith." To the contrary, Sunday had a "colorless cosmopolitanism." It created "forms of devotion void of the positive Jewish character." Sunday services had contributed to a rise in skepticism and agnosticism. A form which does not deepen religious conviction should be done away with. Hence Sunday services should be eliminated, "for this alone is the test of their actual merit."[174]

As the point of Jewish existence is the fulfillment of the Jewish mission, the criterion for judging forms and institutions is simply how well they promote that end. If they are ineffective they should be improved. If they are counter-productive they should be radically changed or dropped. Not surprisingly, Kohler applies the same criterion to Zionism that he applies to liturgy or shabbat. The Zionists "would lock us off in a corner of the world," says Kohler.[175] To be consistent with his universalistic theology, Kohler had no choice but to oppose the Zionists of his day, who, he was convinced:

> regard the Jewish people as a nation like any other, denying to it the specific character of a priest-people . . . with a religious mission. . . . On this account Zionism, whether political or cultural, can have no place in Jewish theology.[176]

We have seen, then, that Kohler's view of Israel was that it has a mission. Both its actions relative to the rest of the world and its internal structure should promote that mission. To fulfill its mission, Israel must remain a separate group. Particularism is an essential means to an end. But the end is universalist, albeit universalist in a somewhat limited sense--Judaism as Kohler understood it must become the universal religion. The mission idea led to a paradox in Kohler's thinking: Jews must remain separate--but not too separate.

The System as a Whole

A major strength in Kohler's writing which, though it is a strength, still prompts some critical reservations, is his desire to ask people to take as little as possible on faith alone. Beliefs, we have found, should be reasonable; though faith may carry us beyond the conclusions of reason alone. Harmonizing contemporary thought and traditional piety has always been the strength, indeed the raison d'être, of theology. However, reading Jewish Theology critically, one is bound to note that some things are taken on faith while others, which could be, are not. For instance, why do we take it on faith that God responds to repentance but not that he responds to prayer? Why do we take it on

on faith that moral principles have been revealed and are immutable, but not take it on faith that ritual practices have been revealed and are immutable? Such questions strike at the core of Kohler's essence-extracting method. In choosing what is of the essence and what is not, what may not be believed without evidence and what must be believed without evidence, it is possible, even probable, that Kohler was often subjective or arbitrary.

Looking at Kaufmann Kohler's theological system as a whole we can discern a pervading element, a single idea which draws together his multifaceted thought. At the risk of slightly oversimplifying, we can say that Kohler's watchword is morality. Morality--albeit a sparsely defined morality--is his goal. All of his concepts are intended to promote that goal. God has many attributes; but His preeminent feature is His morality. God's morality accounts for His actions. Man has a very complex nature; but what gives significance to his life is his potential for moral action. As for the relationship between God and man, it, too, has various aspects. But its major significance derives from its fostering of morality. While God reveals many things to man, by far the most significant thing He reveals is His moral will. While man may ask for many things in prayer, the prime function of prayer and repentance is to strengthen man to continue striving for perfection--moral perfection. This morality-centered theology is the essence of the Jewish religion, Kohler tells us. The reason for Israel's existence

is that it has a Mission to teach Judaism to all mankind.

If connecting all of Kohler's system with one generating idea, the persuance of moral perfection, oversimplifies, it does so only slightly. Significantly, Kohler himself made similar statements. In one of his addresses he said:

> Judaism is the only religion which made humanity, the moral upbuilding and perfection of man, the ethical structure of society, its starting point and its end.[177]

In another address he claimed that Mathew Arnold's definition of God, "The power, not ourselves, that maketh for righteousness," [sic] summed up the whole of the Jewish religion.[178]

There is a messianic thrust to Kohler's theology. Man could--indeed, he inevitably would--reach moral perfection, the Messianic Age. Man was already close to perfect truth in knowing how he should live in order to reach perfection. He should live according to the teachings of Judaism. And the growing level of sophistication and humanitarianism indicated that mankind might soon accept the lessons of Judaism <u>in toto</u>. Man's intellectual powers, his mind--which was the vehicle of divine revelation--gave him the capacity to leave falsehood and evil behind. Reason could even correct the doctrines of religion.

In its time the main strength of Kohler's system was probably its appeal to reason and its concomitant optimism. Kohler said that it was reasonable to believe that God wanted the Messianic Age. And it was reasonable to believe that

man could reach it. And the way to do so was to follow all the ways of an ancient religion, with the exception of those ways which made it difficult to consider oneself fully modern and Western.

In retrospect, we can see that the strength of Kohler's system in its own time was its weakness a couple of generations later. Kohler, in his day, saw justification for unbridled optimism. As the twentieth century unfolded, man in general, and Jews in particular, saw less and less justification for optimism. Joseph Blau points out that under the influence of Freud, and seeing the mixed blessings of scientific and technological development, twentieth century thinkers discarded the notion than man's mind could lead him to a perfect society.[179] They also discarded the notion that evolution was synonymous with progress. Optimists, moreover, were profoundly disillusioned by two world wars in the twentieth century. Writing in 1948, shortly after the holocaust, Emil Fackenheim argued that the "religion of reason," by which he meant such systems as Kohler's:

> can be satisfying only where it is believed that the gap between the envisaged ideal and the lived reality is not crucial; that it is a matter of degree only, and that it will be progressively bridged. . . . But what religiously sensitive persons of the 20th century have come to realize is that moral progress in degree, important though it be, does not span the gap. . . . As Kristol puts it: "The horror that breathes into our faces is the realization that evil may come by doing good--not merely <u>intending</u> to do good, but <u>doing</u> it." This the "religion of reason" cannot understand. Nor is it equipped to face the fact that in the 20th century, men--all of us--find themselves compelled to commit or condone evil for the sake of preventing an evil believed to be greater.[180]

As Fackenheim can account for Kohler's idea of progress without allowing that such progress is as significant as Kohler believed it to be, so Kohler could account for Fackenheim's moral dilemmas merely as situations caused by temporary setbacks in history. Such criticism, therefore, does not amount to a logical refutation of Kohler. But precisely because Kohler's faith in the power of mind and his optimism are not established by logic, the modern critique of his nineteenth century optimism hits Kohler's system hard. It challenges assumptions which Kohler's logic needs in order to be appealing.

# Chapter IV:

# CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Wise and Kohler have thus far been dealt with individually and on their own terms. Since they represent successive phases in the development of American Reform Judaism, some comparison and retrospective criticism may help to bring them into final focus.

As fellow "Classical Reform" theologians they quite naturally had much in common. If we examine them from the perspective of the traditional God, Torah, and Israel trilogy in Jewish theology, we find that they each had essentially the same view of Israel. The Jewish people has the truth and has a special mission to propagate that truth so that all men will know it and the Messianic Age will come. Their respective views of God seem far apart if we take Wise literally in his denial of belief in a personal God. But, as we have seen, there is room for doubt there. Wise seems regularly to have prayed to a personal God. In any case, both agreed that God is the orderer and ruler of the universe and the source of all truth. Man's highest good is to imitate deity by thinking, and by acting morally. Only when we come to the subject of Torah--revelation--is the difference between Wise and Kohler irreconcilable. Wise believed mankind to be in possession of an infallible revelation, the decalogue. For Kohler, on the other hand, revelation was an ongoing process <u>always</u> mediated by finite human minds.

Neither Wise nor Kohler saw Reform Judaism as anything other than <u>the</u> true Judaism; so in that respect also the two thinkers are similar. Each thought his own theology

captured the essence of Judaism. Each believed himself to be purifying far more than innovating, and innovating only in matters of form, rarely in matters of fasic doctrine. Both justified change by pointing out that Judaism had always changed. We must note, however, that neither articulates and consistently applies a theory of change which might be considered safe from the subjective whim of the Reform Jewish rabbinate and community. Moreover, while we must certainly grant that Judaism has changed again and again in the course of its history, we must at the same time note that Wise's and Kohler's theologies do represent a significant departure from traditional Judaism as it has been evolving since the advent and triumph of Pharisaism. By denying the Sinaitic origin of the "Oral Law" both men--Wise's hedging and Kohler's "progressive revelation" notwithstanding--theoretically and in their practice abrogated halachah and the halachah's internal provisions for change. Hence they did break with Orthodox Jewish doctrine. Pharisaic Judaism itself could be viewed as precedent for such a radical shift. But Wise's and Kohler's denial that any radical shift had occured will not withstand critical scrutiny.

Wise and Kohler are also similar in that they both emphasize morality as the most important aspect of religion. Here, though, Kohler goes farther than Wise, virtually equating Judaism and the pursuit of moral ends. Such a change in emphasis signals that Kohler is a generation beyond Wise in the development of Reform Judaism. He was willing to

leave more of Orthodoxy behind. Kohler's thought, particularly since he was the architect of the Pittsburg Platform, might be considered the apex in the development of classical Reform Judaism. In that sense, Wise's thought a generation earlier cannot be criticized for being less sophisticated than Kohler's. But their differences should not be minimized.

Kohler viewed people in antiquity and the books which they wrote, even the divinely inspired books which they wrote, as primitive by comparison with more modern people and more modern works, some of which were also divinely inspired. Wise believed, on the other hand, that God had revealed to Moses truths which have yet to be surpassed and never will be. Men, thought Wise, have the same intellectual endowments which they have always had. Progress did not occur because man improves, but because God, the "Logos of History," sees to it that man's best efforts survive while all else perishes. The keystone of Wise's religion was the decalogue. No modern thought could equal the decalogue; and no modern generation surpass in sophistication the generations of Biblical writers. Still less could modern writers hope to equal in profundity the writings of Moses, who received a direct revelation from God.

The benefit which Wise's theology gains by having an unquestionably perfect revelation as a basis is not to be scoffed at. He could offer the believer ten statements of unquestionable divinity and validity. His version of Judaism was on as firm a foundation--if not as broad a foundation--

as Orthodoxy. To have such certainty, however, he believed he had to oppose so-called "Higher Criticism." Also, he directed some of his strongest diatribes at Darwinism. For Darwin's theory of the descent of man threatened the Biblical creation accounts and--as Wise viewed the situation--threatened the Biblical idea that man was created in God's image. Moreover, Darwin's theory, as interpreted by some, meant that man continues to improve over the centuries, an idea which could justify considering modern man smarter than Biblical authors.

What all of this boils down to is that Wise maintained the sure foundation of his theology by opposing some of the most significant scientific thinking of his day. Kohler totally reversed this. He accepted the documentary hypothesis and declared that, under God's guidance, man has made progress and become more sophisticated than his forebears. Where Wise was appalled by developmentalism, Kohler made it an article of faith. He sacralized it. God has caused man to steadily improve. God did not give one sure revelation, but consistently inspired people throughout history. Infallible revelation might not stand up to science, but progressive revelation could not be denied by science. Kohler saved revelation from the threats of "Higher Criticism" and evolutionism by affirming all three. But in the process he had to sacrifice the single sure revelation, the revelation unmediated by fallible human minds. Ancient literature might therefore have to be considered "primitive" in many respects. But even that had its positive side: ancient literature

was still great; but modern thinking was even greater!

In another respect Kohler gave up sureness which Wise claimed. Wise thought he could prove the existence of God. Kohler argued that it was reasonable to believe, but knew that philosophers had demolished the classical proofs for the existence of God. Kohler can neither be praised nor blamed here; Wise should have known better. And Kohler's faith was just as firm as Wise's.

That there was a major shift in thinking between Wise's theologizing and Kohler's should now be evident. A negatively inclined critic might speak of a decay in sureness. Wise gave up all but the decalogue as infallible revelation. Kohler gave up even that. Wise believed God's existence provable. Kohler did not. A positively inclined critic might see Wise and Kohler as successive steps toward greater theological maturity. I would opt for the latter view. Apodictic certainty was desirable. But it became untenable. Wise's effort to save it was a noble failure. Kohler's ability to make strengths out of the weaknesses of earlier systems was brilliant. Kohler, with a better education than Wise's, and with a broader base of liberal thinking (including Wise's) to build on, worked out a system in keeping with modern scientific thinking, yet still based on traditional Jewish literature.

For all their significant differences, the theologies of Wise and Kohler share a mood. Like most theologies, they are apologetical. They are responses to the challenge

of an age. Judaism needed to be harmonized with modern thinking and modern life styles so that Jews would not forsake it. While most theologians who undertake such a task conclude--not surprisingly--that their religion remains vital, the justification process is often considered a holding action, a necessary evil. Wise and Kohler take up the cudgels with great gusto. They face the future with ebullience. The tradition, to be sure, had to be defended. But portions of it were, indeed, outmoded. Jews must persist as a distinct religious group. But for Wise and Kohler it was Judaism as it ought to be practiced, the Judaism perceived as the essence of the tradition, not Judaism as it had been practiced or presently was being practiced, that Jews needed to affirm. Judaism thus purified was the religion which not only modern Jews needed, but which all of mankind needed and would inevitably accept.

Perhaps Wise's and Kohler's ebullience resulted precisely from the universal thrust of their thinking. Theirs was the religion, they believed, which all the world needed. And theirs was the noble task of creating a Jewish community which could be the exemplar for all the world.

Wise and Kohler, then, address their thinking to the situation of mankind, not just to the situation of Israel. But they retain a unique position for Israel in the divine scheme. The age-old tension in Jewish thinking between universalism and particularism is evident here. Both men considered themselves universalists. All men should accept

their faith. Israel was the particular vehicle whose function it was to convert the world to the one true religion. Without meaning to be derogatory, we must conclude in retrospect that such thinking is a very narrow form of universalism. For Wise Jews had a unique revelation. For Kohler Jews had a unique capacity for revelation. Other peoples, potentially, were able to know the truth. But at the moment others were not on an equal footing with Jews, who already knew it. Neither Wise nor Kohler would have been willing to say that other faiths or other ways of life were, by comparison with Judaism, equally valid.

The basis of Kohler's particularism is open, if not to refutation logically (it is never established logically), at least to grave doubt. What evidence could be mustered to show that Jews today are the religious people <u>par excellence</u>, that they are racially gifted to receive revelations of God's moral will? Gumbiner's critique is cogent on this point:

> Those who cannot accept the "racial" element in connection with revelation will point to the fact that many Jews--perhaps most Jews in the sociological sense of the term--have no talent for or interest in religion. They will raise the question about converts to Judaism. Do the converts, who come from a different ethnic background, share in the Jewish genius for revelation, or are they excluded? If the alledged "genius for religion" is in the germ plasm of the Jew, then it should be disclosed with much greater regularity and clarity than it is. If it is an acquired characteristic, a product of Jewish historical experience, then the question about inheritance of acquired characteristics will be asked.[1]

The step from Kohler's particularism, or from Wise's,

to the mission--the universalist thrust of their thinking--is not a difficult one. It is quite reasonable that a people in possession of unique truth should feel obligated to spread that truth. But particularly since Wise and Kohler do not advocate active proselytizing, but desire primarily that Jews be an example for others to emulate, their opposition to Jewish nationalism of all varieties may have been a more extreme position than their own universalist notions required. The point here is not that their particularist thinking ought to preclude their universalist thinking, but only that it might have mitigated the extremes of their universalism.

An analogy may help to clarify the point. Achad Ha'am (Asher Ginzberg, 1856-1927) believed that there is a Hebrew spirit which is responsible for the Jews being the sort of people they are. That spirit is religious and moral, leading Jews to be concerned with God and the fulfilling of God's will in human society. Prophets and prophecy are the highest expressions of the Hebrew spirit.[2] To the degree that Jews fully realize, fully embody, the prophetic spirit, they become an example to others, a force in the world making for greater righteousness.[3] Now there is nothing here at which either Wise or Kohler could take offense. To the contrary, Achad Ha'am's view here bears an uncanny resemblance to Kohler's view of Jewish racial attributes! But where Kohler concludes that Jews must assimilate to the general society to spread their message, Achad Ha'am comes up with "Cultural Zionism." The Hebrew spirit, he says,

cannot be manifested in its purest and highest forms unless Jews live apart, uncontaminated by the influence of other cultures.[4] Kohler's and Achad Ha'am's conclusions are both logical extensions of essentially the same view of the nature of the Jewish people. But Kohler attacked Achad Ha'am's version of Zionism[5] and Achad Ha'am attacked the Reform Jewish idea of the Mission of Israel.[6] We can reasonably conclude that factors of temperament and of background (German vs. East European) have as much to do with these men's outlooks vis a vis universalism and particularism as theological factors do. Here Gumbiner's observations are again insightful: "On the basis of in-born capacities of a people, there would seem to be at least as much support for cultural nationalism as for ethical monotheism."[7]

Anti-Zionism is increasingly rare in modern American Jewish circles. In other areas there may be more continuity. In this student's personal experience there are many Reform Jews today who believe, as Isaac Mayer Wise taught, that God revealed the decalogue, and only the decalogue, to Moses at Sinai, and that that event and those statements constitute the eternal basis of Judaism. There are also many who accept as dogma Kohler's idea of progressive revelation, his view of prayer and repentance, and especially his view of the Mission of Israel. The ideas of these two theologians clearly met a need in their own times. And as authors, rabbis, and teachers of rabbis these two men have had a substantial influence on American Judaism extending far beyond their

own times. The theologies of Wise and Kohler are not without their difficulties. Neither are they adaptable *in toto* to the needs and realities of Reform Jews today. But their substantial strengths stand with their weaknesses to inspire new generations. Wise's and Kohler's theologies, major steps in the development of Reform Judaism in America, remain as part of our inheritance as modern Jews.

## Notes: Chapter 1

1 c.f. James G. Heller, Isaac M. Wise, His Life, Work and Thought (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1965) for an exhaustive and fully documented biography. Philipson and Grossman, the editors of Selected Writings of Isaac M. Wise (Cincinnati: The Robert Clarke Company, 1900), preface the selections with a shorter biography. For a brief sketch, see Alex J. Goldman's chapter on Wise in Giants of Faith (New York: The Citadel Press, 1964), pgs. 64-84.

2 "Twelfth Annual Report of the President and Examiners of the Hebrew Union College," (Cincinnati, publisher unlisted, 1887), (no page numbers).

3 Programme of the Hebrew Union College, 1894-95, p. 6.

4 Ibid., pgs. 18-19.

5 Programme of the Hebrew Union College, 1896-1897 (Cincinnati), p. 5 and p. 19.

6 Catalog and Program of the Hebrew Union College, 1901-1902 (Cincinnati), p. 13.

7 Prospectus of the Hebrew Union College, January, 1905 (Cincinnati), p. 8 and p. 24.

8 Data in this paragraph primarily from Samuel Schulman, "Kaufmann Kohler," The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia. No lengthy biographies of Kohler have appeared; but several short sketches, adequate at best, have appeared. See the chapter on Kohler in Giants of Faith, the Blau introduction to Kohler's Jewish Theology, Cohon's articles on Kohler in the Mordecai M. Kaplan Jubillee Volume and in Great Jewish Thinkers of the 20th Century, ed. Simon Novek, or Enelow's article on Kohler in The American Jewish Yearbook, volume XXVIII, 1926-27.

9 Heller, p. 136.

10 c.f. Isaac M. Wise, Reminiscences, trans. David Philipson (Cincinnati: Leo Wise and Company, 1901), p. 138.

11 The date 1850 is provided by Heller, p. 208.

12 Wise, Reminiscences, p. 184.

13 Ibid., pgs. 187-188.

14 The summary of Parker's thought is based primarily on "A Discourse on the Transient and Permanent in Christianity," pgs. 289-325 in Theodore Parker, Views of Religion (Boston:

American Unitarian Association, 1890). The quotation is from pgs. 315-316 of that work. That Parker was in the mainstream of developing Unitarian thought, along with such men as William Channing and Ralph Waldo Emerson, can be seen in J.E. Carpenter's article on "Unitarianism" in Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922), vol. XII, p. 326.

15 Kaufmann Kohler, "Abraham Geiger, The Master Builder of Modern Judaism," Hebrew Union College and Other Addresses (Cincinnati: Ark Publishing Company, 1916), pgs. 83 and 85.

16 Kaufmann Kohler, "A Pioneer of Reform Judaism, David Einhorn and his place in American Jewish Life," Studies, Addresses and Personal Papers (New York: The Alumni Association of the Hebrew Union College, 1931), p. 522.

17 Kaufmann Kohler, Jewish Theology, Systematically and Historically Considered (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1918), p. 389.

18 Kaufmann Kohler, Studies, Addresses and Personal Papers, p. 476.

19 Ibid., pgs. 476-477.

20 Kaufmann Kohler, "Professor Moritz Lazarus," A Living Faith, ed. Samuel Cohon (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1948), p. 200.

21 Ibid.

22 Samuel Cohon, "Kaufmann Kohler the Reformer," Mordecai M. Kaplan Jubillee Volume, ed. Moshe Davis (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1953), p. 140.

23 Kohler, Jewish Theology, pgs. 101-106.

24 Moritz Lazarus, The Ethics of Judaism, trans. Henrietta Szold (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1900), pgs. 1-44 of Vol. II.

25 c.f. note 22.

26 Joseph H. Gumbiner, "Kaufmann Kohler's Approach to the Problem of Revelation," CCAR Journal, VIII:3, October, 1960, p. 16.

27 Kohler, A Living Faith, p. 210.

Notes: Chapter 2

1 Andrew F. Key, The Theology of Isaac Mayer Wise (Cincinnati: Monographs of the American Jewish Archives, Number V, 1962), p. 1.

2 Key, p. 2.

3 Maximillian Heller, "Wise as Theologian," (Cincinnati: CCAR Yearbook, 1919), p. 201.

4 Isaac Mayer Wise, The Cosmic God (Cincinnati: Office of the American Israelite and Deborah, 1876).

5 Wise, An Introduction to the Theology of Judaism (no publisher, no date).

6 Wise, The Essence of Judaism (Cincinnati: Bloch & Co., 1868).

7 Wise, Judaism: Its Doctrines and Duties (Cincinnati: Office of the Israelite, 1872).

8 M. Heller, p. 201.

9 Wise, "President's Annual Message" (Cincinnati: CCAR Yearbook, 1895), pgs. 28-29.

10 Wise, The Essence of Judaism, p. 1.

11 Ibid., p. 3.

12 Wise, Judaism: Its Doctrines and Duties, pgs. 3-4.

13 Key, p. 4.

14 Key, p. 59.

15 James G. Heller, Isaac M. Wise (New York: The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1965).

16 Ibid., p. 476.

17 Webster's New World Dictionary, College Edition (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1959), p. 939.

18 J. Heller, p. 535. Heller fully documents Wise's often repeated rejection of miracles in his section "On Miracles," pgs. 533-535.

19 Wise, Judaism and Christianity (Cincinnati: Bloch & Co., 1883), pgs. 18-19.

20 Wise, The Cosmic God, p. 173.

21 David Philipson, "Some Unpublished Letters of Theological Importance" (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Annual, vol. 2, 1925), p. 421.

22 Wise, Judaism and Christianity, p. 20.

23 Ibid., p. 10.

24 Ibid., p. 23.

25 Ibid., p. 24.

26 Ibid., pgs. 25-27.

27 In An Introduction to the Theology of Judaism Wise states that there are four points which are universally agreed upon by men, and thus self-evident. These are: 1. Existence of God; 2. Revelation and Worship; 3. The good, true and beautiful are desirable and their opposites repugnant to God; 4. Immortality--reward and punishment. (p. 4)

28 Wise, Judaism and Christianity, p. 24.

29 c.f. Key, pgs. 9-10.

30 Wise, The Cosmic God, p. 10.

31 Ibid., p. 14.

32 Ibid., p. 23.

33 Ibid., pgs. 32-39.

34 Ibid., pgs. 85-92.

35 Ibid., pgs. 63-107.

36 Wise, in the following passage from The Cosmic God, seems to grant the existence of matter unequivocally, and clearly believes that both mind and matter may be known by man. We should note, parenthetically, that there is reason to wonder whether Wise meant the same thing by das Ding an Sich as Kant did. Wise writes: "This refutes Emanuel Kant's supposition that we can not know the thing per se (das Ding an Sich). We do know it as soon as we are sufficiently self-conscious. Man is the thing per se, matter and force, cause and effect, inorganic matter, solid, liquid, gas, vegetable, animal, spirit, unconscious, conscious, and self-conscious. He is nature's complete index, the microcosm in the macrocosm. He is matter's last gradations and the spirit's final triumph over it. Whenever man will have knowledge enough of himself and nature, he will easily discover in himself das Ding an sich." (p. 177)

37 Ibid., pgs. 166-167.

38 Ibid., p. 173.

39 Ibid., pgs. 133-148.

40 c.f. note 27.

41 Wise, The Cosmic God, pgs. 149-156.

42 c.f. Donald A. Wells, God, Man, and the Thinker (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1967), pgs. 97-103.

43 Wise, The Cosmic God, pgs. 122-125.

44 Ibid., p. 125.

45 Ibid., p. 126.

46 c.f. Wells, pgs. 91-96.

47 Wise, The Cosmic God, pgs. 162-163.

48 Ibid., p. 163.

49 Wise, "Moses, The Man and Statesman," Selected Writings of Isaac M. Wise, David Philipson and Louise Grossman (editors) (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke Company, 1900), p. 171.

50 Wise, An Introduction to the Theology of Judaism, p. 18.

51 Ibid., pgs. 18-22.

52 Wise, The Essence of Judaism, pgs. 21-22.

53 Wise, Judaism and Christianity, p. 100.

54 Wise, Minhag America (Cincinnati: Bloch & Co., various editions). In the earliest edition of Minhag America, that of 1857, the gevurot prayer in the morning Amidah retains the traditional wording. But in the 1872 edition Wise dropped "You resurrect the dead" and changed "and keeps faith with those who sleep (lishaynay) in the dust" to "and keeps faith with those who return (leshavay) to the dust." The chatimah is likewise changed in order to deny bodily resurrection, reading "Blessed are You, O Lord, who revives the souls of the dead" in Hebrew and "Praised be Thou, O God, who keepest alive the souls of dying mortals" in English. (pgs. 23-24 in 1857 edition, 44-46 in 1870 edition, and p. 40 in 1872 edition.)

55 Ibid., (1872 edition), p. 8 opening from the left or "English" side of the book.

56 Wise, Hymns and Prayers (Cincinnati: Block Publishing and Printing Company, 1890), p. 18.

57 Ibid., p. 38.

58 Ibid., p. 150.

59 Lawrence A. Block, "A Significant Controversy in the Life of Isaac M. Wise" (CCAR Journal IX:2, June, 1961), pgs. 29-36.

60 Wise, Judaism and Christianity, p. 103.

61 Wise, "The Law," Selected Writings, pgs. 134-135.

62 Ibid., p. 125.

63 Ibid., p. 134.

64 Wise, The Essence of Judaism, p. 32.

65 Ibid., p. 58.

66 Wise, "Sources of the Theology of Judaism," Selected Writings, p. 208.

67 Wise, An Introduction to the Theology of Judaism, p. 6.

68 Ibid., p. 5.

69 J. Heller, p. 485.

70 Ibid., p. 289.

71 Ibid., pgs. 542-543.

72 The bulk of Wise's essay "The Law" in Selected Writings is devoted to demonstrating that his decalogue-based view of Judaism and Jewish literature is the view of the entire Jewish tradition. Hence it includes sections on "Proofs from the Pentateuch" (pgs. 135-140), "Proofs from Ezra and Nehemiah" (pgs. 140-143), "Proofs from the Talmud" (pgs. 143-149), and "Proofs from the Metaphysicians" (pgs. 149-152).

73 Wise, (President's Message) (Cincinnati: CCAR Yearbook, 1891), p. 19.

74 Wise, "Reformed Judaism," Selected Writings, p. 265.

75 Ibid., p. 561.

76 J. Heller, p. 561.

77 Ibid., p. 559. For Wise on kashrut, c.f. J. Heller pgs. 527-528. Dietary laws could be discared theoretically, but Moses happened to have been scientifically--hygenically--correct in banning certain foods.

78 Ibid., p. 560.

79 Ibid., p. 561.

80 Key, p. 16.

81 Wise, "Moses, the Man and Statesman," Selected Writings, p. 157.

82 Wise, Pronaos to Holy Writ (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke & Co., 1891), pgs. 182-183.

83 Ibid., p. 183.

84 Ibid., pgs. 1-2.

85 Wise, Judaism: Its Doctrines and Duties, p. 26.

86 Ibid., pgs. 26-27.

87 Ibid., p. 19.

88 Wise, Judaism and Christianity, p. 95.

89 c.f. note 27.

90 Wise, Judaism and Christianity, p. 79.

91 c.f. Key, pgs. 54-55.

92 Wise, The Cosmic God, p. 51.

93 Ibid., p. 56.

94 Ibid., pgs. 137-138.

95 Ibid., pgs. 141-144.

96 Wise, Judaism and Christianity, p. 7.

97 Quoted in Dena Wilansky, Sinai to Cincinnati (New York: Renaisance Book Company, 1937), p. 34.

98 Ibid., p. 28.

99 Wise, "Moses, the Man and Statesman," Selected Writings, p. 173.

100 Wilansky, p. 110.

101 Wise, Minhag America (1857), p. 25.

102 Wise, Minhag America (1872), p. 70.

103 Wise, A Defense of Judaism versus Proselytizing Christianity (Cincinnati: American Israelite, 1889).

104 Key, p. 59.

## Notes: Chapter 3

1 Kaufmann Kohler, Hebrew Union College and Other Addresses (Cincinnati: Ark Publishing Company, 1916).

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

3 Kaufmann Kohler, A Living Faith, ed. Samuel S. Cohon (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1948).

4 Kaufmann Kohler, Grundriss einer systematischen Theolgie des Judentums auf geschichtlicher Grundlage (Leipzig: G. Fock, 1910).

5 Kaufmann Kohler, Jewish Theology, Systematically and Historically Considered (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1918). Reprinted by Ktav in 1968, with an introduction by Joseph H. Blau. All references herein are to the Ktav edition.

6 Another systematic presentation of Kohler's thought should be noted. Kohler wrote a "catechism" entitled Guide for Instruction in Judaism (New York: Philip Cowen, Publisher, 1898). It largely agrees with his Jewish Theology, though due to the nature of the work it avoids complicated problems and simplifies ideas which are dealt with more fully in Jewish Theology. Hence it may safely be ignored.

7 Kohler, Jewish Theology, p. 4.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., p. 5.

10 Ibid., p. xxxv.

11 Ibid., pgs. xxxiii-xxxiv.

12 Ibid., p. 6.

13 Ibid., p. 18.

14 Ibid., p. 15.

15 Ibid., p. 65.

16 Ibid., p. 69.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., pgs. 30 and 204.

19 Ibid., p. 66.

20 Ibid., p. 31.

21 Ibid., p. 72. c.f. also page 138.

22 Ibid., p. 188.

23 Ibid., p. 73.

24 Ibid., p. 98.

25 Ibid., p. 99.

26 Ibid., p. 91.

27 Ibid., p. 73.

28 Ibid., pgs. 93-94.

29 Ibid., p. 139.

30 Ibid., p. 101.

31 Ibid., p. 102.

32 Ibid., p. 56.

33 Ibid., p. 83.

34 Ibid., p. 103.

35 Ibid., p. 116.

36 Ibid., p. 120.

37 Ibid., p. 103.

38 Ibid., p. 116.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid., pgs. 177-178.

41 Ibid., p. 189.

42 Ibid., p. 119.

43 Ibid., pgs. 123-124.

44 Ibid., pgs. 78-79.

45 Ibid., p. 143.

46 Ibid., p. 144.

47 Ibid., p. 98.

48 Ibid., pgs. 134-137.

49 Ibid., p. 135.

50 Ibid., p. 134.

51 Ibid., p. 136.

52 Ibid., p. 134: "In the Hebrew language truth and faithfulness are both derived from the same root; aman, 'firmness,' is the root idea of emeth, 'truth,' and emunah, 'faithfulness.'"

53 Ibid., p. 154.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid., pgs. 148-149.

56 Ibid., p. 156.

57 Ibid., p. 205.

58 Ibid., p. 213.

59 Ibid., p. 208.

60 Ibid., p. 213.

61 Ibid., p. 212.

62 Ibid., p. 209.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid., pgs. 215-216.

65 Ibid., p. 217.

66 Ibid., p. 216.

67 Ibid., p. 208.

68 Ibid., pgs. 210-211.

69 Ibid., p. 206.

70 Ibid., p. 105.

71 Ibid., p. 64.

73 Ibid., p. 104.

74 Ibid., p. 218.

75 Ibid., p. 219.

76 Ibid., p. 482.

77 Ibid., pgs. 484-485.

78 Ibid., pgs. 489-490.

79 Ibid., pgs. 486-489.

80 Ibid., p. 312.

81 Ibid., p. 310.

82 Ibid., p. 312.

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid., p. 314.

85 Ibid., p. 476.

86 A Living Faith, p. 46.

87 Ibid., p. 44.

88 Studies, Addresses and Personal Papers, p. 192.

89 A Living Faith, p. 107.

90 Jewish Theology, p. 243.

91 Ibid., p. 239.

92 Ibid., p. 238.

93 Ibid., pgs 242-243.

94 Ibid., p. 242.

95 Ibid., pgs. 239-240.

96 Ibid., p. 238.

97 Ibid., p. 231.

98 Ibid., pgs. 167-168.

99 Ibid., p. 168.

100 Ibid., p. 172.

101 Ibid., p. 231.

102 Ibid., pgs. 234-235.

103 Ibid., p. 170.

104 Ibid., pgs. 235-236.

105 Guttmann explains that Crescas tried to work out a compromise which left some room, though not much, for free will. However, "This compromise was really a complete capitulation to determinism." (Julius Guttmann, Philosophies of Judaism, trans. Silverman (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), p. 238.)

106 Jewish Theology, p. 172.

107 Ibid., pgs. 234-235.

108 Ibid., p. 174.

109 Ibid., p. 237.

110 Ibid., p. 295.

111 Ibid., pgs. 286-287.

112 Ibid., p. 296.

113 Ibid., p. 309.

114 Ibid., p. 34.

115 Ibid., p. 39.

116 Ibid., p. 34.

117 Ibid., p. 39.

118 Ibid., p. 70.

119 Ibid., p. 30.

120 Ibid., pgs. 35-36.

121 Ibid., p. 36.

122 Ibid., pgs. 43-44 and 205.

123 Ibid., pgs. 46-47.

124 Ibid., p. 361.

125 Ibid., p. 46.

126 Ibid., p. 57.

127 Ibid., p. 271.

128 Ibid., pgs. 271-274.

129 Ibid., p. 274.

130 Ibid., p. xxxvi.

131 Ibid., p. 276.

132 Ibid., pgs. 246-247.

133 Ibid., p. 254.

134 Ibid., p. 440.

135 Ibid., p. 325.

136 Ibid., p. 260.

137 Ibid., p. 15.

138 Ibid., p. 324.

139 Ibid., p. 323.

140 Ibid., pgs. 324-325.

141 Ibid., p. 326.

142 Ibid., p. 477.

143 Ibid., p. 389.

144 Ibid., p. 104.

145 Ibid., pgs. 326-327.

146 Ibid., p. 330.

147 Ibid., p. 448.

148 David Philipson, "Kaufmann Kohler as Reformer," Studies in Jewish Literature (issued in honor of Kohler on his seventieth birthday), eds. Philipson, Neumark, Morgenstern (Berlin: George Reimer, Publisher and Printer, 1913), p. 16.

149 Jewish Theology, p. 328.

150 Ibid., p. 396.

151 Ibid., p. 426.

152 Ibid., p. 440.

153 Ibid., p. 188.

154 Ibid., p. 445.

155 Ibid., p. 447.

156 Ibid., p. 474.

157 Ibid., p. 447.

158 Ibid., p. 422.

159 Ibid., p. 474.

160 Ibid., p. 351.

161 A Living Faith, p. 10.

162 Jewish Theology, pgs. 470-471.

163 Ibid., p. 455.

164 Ibid., pgs. 472-473.

165 Ibid., pgs. 470-471.

166 Ibid., pgs 452-453 (quotation from p. 453).

167 A Living Faith, p. 40.

168 Ibid., p. 72.

169 Ibid., p. 95.

170 Jewish Theology, p. 455.

171 Ibid., pgs. 458-459.

172 Samuel Cohon, "Kaufmann Kohler the Reformer," Mordecai M. Kaplan Jubilee Volume, ed. Moshe Davis (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1953), p. 143.

173 "Are Sunday Lectures Treason to Judaism," A Living Faith, pgs. 19-30.

174 "The Sabbath Day of the Jew," Ibid., pgs. 35-36.

175 Jewish Theology, p. 396.

176 Ibid., p. 390.

177 "The Ethical Basis of Judaism," Hebrew Union College and Other Addresses, p. 148.

178 "Israel's Mission in the World," Ibid., pgs. 168-169. /Correct Quotation: "the enduring power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness." From Arnold's Literature and Dogma/

179 Jewish Theology, p. xii.

180 Emil L. Fackenheim, "In Praise of Abraham, Our Father," Quest for Past and Future (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), p. 58.

## Notes: Chapter 4

1 Joseph Gumbiner, "Kaufmann Kohler's Approach to the Problem of Revelation," CCAR Journal VIII:3, October, 1960, pgs. 16-17.

2 Selected Essays of Ahad Ha-'am, ed. Leon Simon (Cleveland and New York: Meridian Books, 1962), pgs. 14-15.

3 Ibid., p. 18 or 135.

4 Ibid., p. 137.

5 c.f. chapter 2, note 176.

6 Selected Essays of Ahad Ha-'am, p. 137.

7 Gumbiner, p. 17.

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