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THE MEANING OF JEWISH HISTORY

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The Evolution of Jewish Thought

JACOB BERNARD AGUS

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THE
MEANING
OF JEWISH
HISTORY

Foreword by Salo W. Baron Professor Emeritus of Jewish History, Columbia University

Volume I

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It is impossible to list the names of all to whom I am indebted. They are legion. "Much have I learned from my teachers, more from my colleagues, but from my students most of all."

Among my teachers, Professors Wolfson and Hocking from Harvard University have left the strongest imprint upon my thinking.

Among my contemporaries, my colleagues on the Board of Editors of *Judaism - A Quarterly* encouraged me to write a series of articles on the theme "Toward a Philosophy of Jewish History." I am grateful to the members of the Conference on Ideology of the Rabbinical Assembly, at the sessions of which some of the ideas of this work were first propounded.

In response to the keen challenge of the critique of Professor Arnold J. Toynbee, with whom I had been in continuous correspondence about the meaning of Jewish history, I was impelled to undertake a basic re-examination of the fundamental assumptions of Jewish historiography. The need of bringing the philosophy of history into the scope of the expanding Jewish-Christian dialogue was brought home to me. While our views do not coincide, I am grateful for the stimulus which his wide-ranging erudition brought to me.

It is no longer possible to insulate the study of Judaism from the conflicting currents of universal thought and experience. We have to learn to see ourselves from without as well as from within.

To the good members of my congregation and to the many men and women who attended the B'nai B'rith Institutes and the numerous Adult Institutes of Jewish Studies, at which I spoke, I am deeply indebted.

Above all, to my dear wife, Miriam, to my children, Zalman and Sandra, Edna, Robert and Deborah, I am grateful for the inspiration of their love and affection.

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FOREWORD

Jewish scholarship has long suffered from the paucity of philosophies or theologies of Jewish history. For some three thousand years Jewish writers were satisfied to follow the basic outlook on history as formulated by the biblical prophets and historians. They believed in the divine guidance of history, determined by the inscrutable will of God, which only partially depended on man's conduct. Only in the nineteenth century, with the awakening of the scholarly researches into the Jewish past, there also was some new awareness of the deeper problems of Jewish history. However, even Nachman Krochmal's comprehensive effort to come to grips with the basic philosophy of the Jewish past, while widely admired, exerted little influence on the subsequent thinking of Jewish philosophers or historians. Perhaps its delayed publication made it somewhat "dated." Heinrich Graetz, the most popular Jewish historian of the nineteenth century, did formulate his general approach to history before he started writing his eleven-volume classic. But there is really little connection between that philosophic "construction" and its actual application in Graetz's *History*. The public accepted the latter with great acclaim, but almost totally ignored its philosophic underpinnings. In the case of Simon M. Dubnow, his *Letters on Ancient and Modern Judaism*, written over a decade at the turn of the century, had a more intimate connection with his subsequent ten-volume *World History*, but he made a greater impression on the political than on the historic thinking of his disciples. Most remarkably, the twentieth century contributed but little to the direct examination of the philosophic fundamentals underlying the Jewish historic evolution.

More recently, some antihistorical trends actually tried to turn the clock back on the entire scholarly investigation of the Jewish and human past. Some pragmatists fell back on the old bagatelization of "What was, was," as formulated already by the ancient rabbis. They saw no practical advantage in amassing

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more facts about the Jews' or all mankind's past, since they lost all confidence in the old Roman adage of *historia magistra vitae*. Even those who readily admitted that one could learn much from history, echoed the old witticism that, in fact, "no generation has ever learned from history." In the field of the history of religion serious objections were raised by fundamentalists who viewed all historic relativism as a genuine menace to their faith. This danger, to be sure, was considered greater in the history of Christianity than in that of Judaism. For one example, if historic research were to prove, as some scholars have tried to prove, though in my opinion in vain, that neither Moses nor Jesus ever lived, Judaism would be much less deeply affected than Christianity. Yet the danger to the accepted Jewish tradition, too, appeared sufficiently serious for extended discussions of the relationships between faith and history. Many theologically-minded historians of religion have, therefore, begun speaking of "metahistorical" truths, independent of and sometimes superseding the purely historical verities. Some less sophisticated scholars merely joined the general onslaught on "historicism," in action even more than in theory.

It is, hence, extremely refreshing to read Dr. Agus's reconstruction of the fundamental lines of the Jewish historic evolution. A long-time student of both the rabbinic tradition and modern Jewish philosophic thinking, the author has brought to bear on his subject an excellent familiarity with the primary sources of Judaism throughout the ages and a clear awareness of the needs of our present generation. In this lucid and attractive presentation, he has raised many fundamental problems and supplied answers which, even if they should not receive unanimous acceptance, will doubtless stimulate the thinking of both philosophers and historians for many years to come. At the same time Dr. Agus has addressed himself to the intelligent public at large, and I can merely hope that a great many educated laymen will immerse themselves in this guide to the philosophic penetration of the four millennia of Jewish historic development.

Yifat Shalom
Canaan, Connecticut
August 6, 1963

Salo W. Baron

Volume I
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*Dedicated to the Martyrs of our Past
and the Builders of our Future*

Remember the days of old,
Consider the years of ages past;
Ask your father, he will inform you,
Your elders, they will tell you:
When the Most High gave nations their homes
And set the divisions of man,
He fixed the boundaries of peoples
In relation to Israel's numbers.
But the Lord's portion is his people,
Jacob His own allotment.

Deuteronomy, 32:7-9

"If the Past has been an obstacle and a burden,
Knowledge of the Past is the safest and the surest emancipation."

"History must be our deliverer not only from the undue influence
of other times, but from the undue influence of our own from the
tyranny of environment and the pressure of the air we breathe."

Lord Acton, *Renaissance to Revolution*

Introduction

CHAPTER ONE

THE TASK

It is in the light of the present that the memories and records of the past are recast and reinterpreted. Every generation requires a fresh understanding of the travail and experiences of its predecessors. Since the vantage point of every epoch is new and unprecedented, the same facts are seen in a new perspective, a host of new facts from related disciplines is brought into view, and a new texture of interpretations comes into being.

Our generation is strongly challenged to undertake a complete re-evaluation of the burden of Jewish history. This task is the concern of all scholars of Western civilization, since there is hardly an aspect of our culture which does not bear the traces of arguments concerning the nature and meaning of Jewish history. More than all previous generations, we who matured in the first half of the twentieth century have learned that the Jew is cast in a central role whenever nations feel the tug between rationality and emotionalism, between the call of the humanistic future and the charm of the nationalistic past, between a philosophy of compassion and a ruthless drive for power. The empirical, living Jewish people, not only its ideas and ideals, has long been at the center of affairs in Western lands.

But what is the meaning of Jewish history? Unfortunately, we have been given more answers than questions. To Christians as to Jews, the interpretation of Jewish destiny has been more a matter of faith and dogma than of inquiry and examination. To Fundamentalist Jews, the "chosen people" are the favored children of Providence, with a special meaning attaching to their sufferings and their joys. Their past is "unique," their destiny as heirs of the Promise is a Divine Mystery, their nature is incommensurate with that of all other peoples. Fundamentalist Christians sub-

scribe to the same axioms, save that they reverse the character of the sentiments involved and insist that, following the rejection of the Son of God, the Jews were condemned to bear "witness unto the Lord," by their misery and degradation.

Fundamentalism leaves a sticky sediment when it evaporates. Many a Jew retains the conviction of being "chosen," even when he no longer believes in a God Who chooses, and many a Christian retains the image of the Jew as "deicide," even when he no longer believes in the Incarnation. Sometimes, the sharp outlines of the old dogmas are blurred by the use of ambiguous terminology, for the heart lags far behind the head in matters of faith and feeling.

So subtle and modern a theologian as Jacques Maritain speaks of the "mystery" of the Jews:

"Thus from the first Israel appears to us as a mystery; of the same order as the mystery of the Church and of the world. Like them, it is a mystery lying at the very core of redemption. . . . Like an alien body, like an activity ferment . . . outsiders in a supernatural sense, it is because the world detests their passion for the absolute . . ."¹

The great existentialist theologian of modern Judaism, Franz Rosenzweig, explained the "metaphysical" core of antisemitism as follows:

"You know as well as I do that the realistic motivations of antisemitism are only stylish cloaks which hide the one true metaphysical cause, which, metaphysically formulated, is that we do not accept the world-conquering fiction of Christian dogma . . . and, formulated in 'cultural' language, it is that we do not accept the foundations of contemporary culture . . . and, formulated in the vulgar way, it is that we have crucified Jesus . . ."²

When the very existence of the Jewish people is deemed to be a "mystery," then antisemitism appears to have a "metaphysical" foundation. If so, how can the brutish Nazi be blamed for doing what was fated by an irresistible Power above? We recall that Dr. Servatius, attorney for Adolf Eichmann, in his cross-examination of Salo Baron, asked, "Don't you agree that there is a Divine mystery in the fate of the Jew and in the clouds of antisemitism that pursue him wherever he goes?"

The assumption of mystery is an arbitrary axiom barring the way to the understanding of Jewish experience. It amounts to a

shutting of the gates to rationality and research; it is understandable in dogmatists of the unusually naive or the overly subtle variety, but it is inexcusable in those who are trained to face reality.

A subtle variation of the axiom of Jewish uniqueness is the assumption that the motivating force of our history is a strange and peculiar impulse, imbedded in our racial heritage. This type of explanation transfers the dogma of uniqueness from metaphysics to psychology. In the course of our study, we shall encounter several examples of this approach. At this point, it is instructive to take note of a near-axiom that arose in Christian reactionary circles during the nineteenth century. The liberals argued in behalf of equal rights for Jews, on the ground that Judaism was a religion, which, in a modern state, should not be a bar to full national status. The reactionaries maintained that, while the facade of Judaism was religious, its inner core was a peculiar, all-powerful, self-segregating national impetus. The Jewish religion, they claimed, was designed to keep the Jewish people living in the Diaspora as "a nation within a nation." Later, with the growth of Jewish nationalism, a similar doctrine was affirmed by some Jewish ideologists.

Now, note the reflection of this doctrine in an introduction to a serious work of scholarship of the mid-twentieth century:

"The significance of the Jews in history (aside from their contributions to culture) is primarily due to their unparalleled success in preserving a strong national feeling, based on literature and religion, after the loss of political independence. We may even say that after 586 B.C., the history of the Jews is primarily a process of trial and error aiming at national survival; at last, about 200 A.D. all other means for the preservation of the nation were discarded in favor of Rabbinic Judaism. Military uprisings, apocalyptic dreams of a future triumph over the Gentiles, avoidance of mixed marriages, punctilious performance of Temple rites, and other rites, eventually proved less effective than the study and observance of the Law, as prompted in school and synagogue. The Jews survived primarily as the 'people of the Book'; their history after A.D. is primarily the history of their literature. Their self-preservation as a people depended on the preservation of their national religion, the practice of which in-

cluded the observance of ancient customs which originally did not always have a direct connection with the worship; their dietary laws, sabbath and circumcision were ancient practices, the original significance of which had been forgotten for centuries; but by remaining faithful to such customs inherited from their ancestors the Jews incidentally separated themselves from the Gentiles and in turn were regarded with scorn or hostility by the other subjects of the Hellenistic and Roman rulers."³

The author assumes a utilitarian view of religion on the part of rabbinic leadership as an explanation of Jewish history. As he sees it, national survival or the collective will to live was for Jews the goal, while religion, or the collective will to be true to God, was the means. Since genuine religion is a faith, a hierarchy of values and a set of norms based upon it, this assumption implies that in Judaism, genuine faith was subordinated to, indeed suborned by the ethnic goal of survival. Again, since no such deliberate design is revealed in the literature, we can only assume that this perversion of values on the part of the second-century rabbis was an unconscious process. Surely, we must hesitate to psychoanalyze several remote generations of rabbis!

It remains only to add that the ethnic goal of survival is a modern ideal, arising out of the projection of national feelings onto the Darwinian canvas, which shows all the species of creation bitterly engaged in a "struggle for survival." Segregation from Gentiles was itself a Divine command to the Jews of antiquity, to be observed because God so willed, not because of "survival."⁴ In the rabbinic scale of values, the Torah was a supreme end, not a means of ethnic struggle for existence. As the rabbis saw it, God at one time contemplated the obliteration of the entire Jewish people and the fulfillment of His Purpose in Moses.⁵

A similar assumption of a unique Jewish concern with ethnic survival underlies the work of another great Christian scholar, noted for his studies of the conflict between the Church and the Synagogue. James Parkes describes rabbinic Judaism as a "religion of survival." Of the second-century rabbis who were faced with the task of repairing the ravages of the Bar Kochba rebellion (131-135 C.E.), he writes:

"To do this they set out to procure a new uniformity in religion as the necessary basis for a new unity. Not only was the

idea a new one among Jews, but the very thought of consciously creating and securing national unity by means of religious uniformity was without precedent in human history."

Of course, history shows numerous precedents of statesmen attempting to secure "national unity by means of religious uniformity." For this purpose, the Hellenistic Emperors established civic cults, the Roman senators forbade the importation of cults from the Orient; later, Ferdinand and Isabella expelled the Jews and the Moors; Queen Elizabeth of England, Louis XIV of France, even Count Bismarck with his "Kultur-kampf" are examples. But, in Parkes' view, the Jewish case was unique because rabbis, rather than statesmen, were motivated by the ideal of national unity. The religion was itself oriented to the cause of national unity, in his view. Recognizing that he postulates a peculiar psychology for Jewish people, he says, "In a way which would be strange to a modern man, the individual Semite identified himself with the history of his people . . ."⁶

Several gratuitous assumptions have been grouped together by Parkes: first, that the secret of Jewish life is to be sought in the racial character of Semites, long a popular axiom; second, that Semites are intensely nationalistic; third, that the nationalism of Semites is of such a high order of intensity as to be "strange" to "modern man."

Aside from the manifest untruth of all these assumptions, Parkes begs the question by explaining the "strangeness" of Jewish survival by the assumption of a "strange" ethnic ambition.

The rabbis were concerned with the preservation of the Torah-community, because they believed the Torah to be the Word of God. From the standpoint of planning a strategy of survival, they should have adopted a lenient policy toward all dissidents and toward new converts. Obviously, there is strength in numbers. But, they rejected the Hebrew-Christians and insisted on circumcision for converts, not because they wanted uniformity, but because they sought conformity to the Will of God. "All Israelites are responsible for one another," hence the "congregation of the Lord" was liable to be punished for the sins and errors of the sectarians in its midst.

The past century may well go down in Jewish history as the Age of Ideologies. For most people, the old theology was pushed

aside and replaced by some equally zealous Ideology, an all-consuming "pillar of flame" which purported to illumine the path through the wilderness. In their own ways these Ideologies became virtual theologies, "secular theologies," if you will, purporting to explain the whole of life, not merely to solve an immediate problem.

We need to take account of three Ideologies in particular, since they included the "meaning" of Jewish history among their principles. First in point of time was the Ideology of Integrationism. It arose *pari passu* with the spread of the Emancipation. Looking to the past, it affirmed that since the destruction of the Temple, the Jews constituted a religious community. Some ethnic elements were "locked" or "frozen" into the crystals of faith, but those elements were intrinsically unimportant. Antisemitism was due to prejudice and misunderstanding. Turning to the future, they believed that Jews would be "redeemed" by the progress of Enlightenment. Each Jewish community will be "integrated," becoming part of the host-nation in a cultural as well as a political sense. Judaism will continue to be that which it always was "in essence"; namely, a faith.

The second Ideology was Socialism. It turned attention away from the "Sabbath-Jew" and toward "the week-day Jew," as the young Karl Marx put it. As a historical society, the Jewish people were an economic "caste," assisting in and resulting from the emergence of capitalistic society in the modern world. The Jewish function in this society accounts for their survival as a people; the peculiar emphasis on law in their faith, the friendship of the nobility which they enjoyed, and the hostility of the "masses" which they aroused — all these factors are to be understood in terms of the economic role which was theirs. The Jewish religion was a function of Jewish economic activity. Hence, the commercial character of Jewish piety — so many *mizvoth* performed, so much of heaven gained. The "Sabbath-Jew" with his peculiar, legalistic religion grew out of the "week-day Jew," the agent of commerce and industry, the builder of a bourgeois society.

As to the future, the socialists differed. Some looked to the liquidation of Judaism along with capitalism, its fundamental cause. Others looked for an economic restratification of Jewish people and for their reorganization as an ethnic community either

in the Diaspora (the Bundists) or in Palestine (the Zionist-Socialists).

The third Ideology to undertake a reevaluation of the Jewish past and future was Zionism. For it, the core of Jewish loyalty was nationhood. The bonds of religion were temporary, intended to keep the dispersed communities from disintegration altogether. The motive power of Jewish life has ever been, consciously or unconsciously, the collective "will to live." The Jews were nationalists, long before the West discovered the national ideal. Antisemitism is the "natural" reaction of Gentile nations to the "strong" national character of the Jew (Klatzkin). As to the future, the nationalists differed. Some looked to the Diaspora as the periphery and to the state of Israel as the center of the Jewish nation (Ahad Ha'am). Others looked to a reconstituted State as the only possible home for a reborn Jewish nation (Theodor Herzl, David Ben Gurion).

Each of these philosophies of Jewish life will be discussed in detail when we come to analyze the factors of Jewish history in the modern world. For the present, we need only point out that these Ideologies no longer operate with self-evident axioms.

It appears that we are now living in the post-ideological age. For each of these Ideologies has reached the end of the road, each has been both fulfilled and frustrated. The Integrationists can point with pride to the contented Jewish communities of the Western world, particularly to the massive vigor of American Jewry. But, they cannot deny the terrible tragedy of the German Jews who tried so hard to "integrate." The Socialists can point to Soviet Russia, where Jews have been "redeemed" — officially. Yet, how hollow is the reality! One recalls the remark of some Jewish leaders in the Middle Ages. They were invited to join the dominant faith and enter heaven along with all good believers. Pointing to some Jewish converts, they replied, "If these *Meshummadim* (converts) go to heaven, we want to go to hell."

The Zionists can point with justified pride to the State of Israel as the realization of their dream. But, the very reality of Israel demonstrates that it cannot be the foundation for the life of all Jews. With all the grandeur of its achievements, the State of Israel cannot be the "homeland" of more than a fraction of world-Jewry. Neither in America nor in Israel does the Zionist ideal

now move men to dream or stir them to action. In an age when dozens of new "nations" have been catapulted into modern world history to bedevil mankind with the antics of "the Katzenjammer Kids," nationalism can hardly be regarded as a world-saving ideal. Representing only a transitory stage on the way to larger regional associations, its pretension to exclusive adoration has exacted more human sacrifices than any ancient idol. But, its hollowness is now manifest, as I shall show later in detail.

Thus, the constricting spell of modern Ideologies now lies broken along with the sundered chains of Fundamentalist theologies.

Three mighty events of our day have cast fresh light on the nature of Jewish experience — the extermination of Central European Jewry, the emergence of the State of Israel, and the growth of American Jewry. The deliberate brutality of the Nazi extermination was totally unprecedented in the whole range of Jewish martyrdom. Yet, it was but a concentration and refinement of the peculiar hatred that dogged the steps of the Jew from the beginning of the Dispersion. Its horror is a demonstration of the momentum of this mass-hate, its deep and widely ramified psychic roots, its profound resonance. In the case of Jewish history, the Past is still a living reality, which every generation must confront afresh. We cannot afford to ignore our history and to relegate its study to antiquarians.

The rise of the state of Israel demonstrates the range of freedom in Jewish history. Here is an exemplary country, built by the bare hands of thousands of pioneers and millions of helpers. Here is a non-governmental enterprise, achieved by the patient toil of little men and women, who were moved by a dream, a promise, and a prayer! While the State of Israel would not have taken its present form, were it not for the external pressures of the Nazis, hostility alone could not have brought it into being. The building of the Jewish homeland was a glorious example of practical idealism for two generations, even before the State came into being. It is proof of the power of little people in these days of big government. While the mighty, meshing gears of our day appear inexorable, they do leave some room for resistance and even reversal by free individuals, banded together in voluntary, non-governmental agencies.

Finally, the massive resurgence of American Judaism is a heartening demonstration of the enduring power of the Jewish religion. For several decades, Jewish thinkers had assumed that the age of religion had ended, so that fresh instruments other than the Synagogue were needed, if the Jewish group were to continue. Today the Synagogue is stronger than ever before, with the rising generation seeking to reclaim that which the preceding generation was content to ignore. Whether the "return to religion" be deep or superficial, the patterns of faith which are likely to predominate are quite different from those which the immigrants brought with them from Russia. The essence of religion is eternal, though its forms change.

Our task is to study the range of freedom in Jewish history. It was William James who pointed out that human experience consists of two orders of reality, a "hard" or inflexible order that is the physical universe, and a "soft" or plastic order that is the pattern of ideas. Similarly, in the history of any people, there is the "hard" order of economic circumstance and external aggression, as well as the "soft" order of ideas, ideals, sentiments and beliefs. Within the "soft" mental world, there are also inflexible patterns, consisting of intellectual judgments, ethical principles, and esthetic categories. But these norms are expressions of man's search for the true, the good, the harmonious. Hence, they articulate his free vitality. Religious dogmas, social prejudices and primitive superstitions may acquire the quality of harsh inflexibility and function in history as if they were part of the "hard" order of reality. To the extent to which people are driven by such blind assumptions, they are not free. The range of freedom in any one age consists in the mastery that people achieve over the "hard" order of physical reality and over the multiple "hard" patterns within the "soft" cultural realm.

Our task belongs in this second category. We shall seek to probe the degree to which the Jews of any one era succeeded in confronting and mastering their heritage. To distinguish between the truly valid elements of tradition and their fortuitous association with diverse myths and rites, limiting flexibility and readjustment, is by no means as easy as is suggested by James' designation of the ideal order as being "soft." But, difficult as this enterprise may be, we cannot shirk it, without forfeiting the measure of freedom that our age affords.

In our search for the meaning of Jewish history, we shall focus attention on the intellectual and cultural reactions of Jewish people to the various challenges which confronted them. We will establish neither fixed schemes, nor definite periodizations, nor the formula of an unfolding dialectic, such as one expects to find in a traditional work on the "philosophy of history." Ours is not a metaphysical or meta-historical undertaking, but a purely analytic and empirical task.

How did the "burden of tradition" impel the Jews and their leaders to interpret the events of their day and to react to these events?

To what extent were they victims of the inertia of their past, as it was enshrined in their hearts and minds, and to what degree were they heirs of the prophets, self-critical, visionary, and pioneering?

Historical phenomena are brought into being by the conjunction of many different forces, some of which have been gathering strength for a long time, some of which are purely fortuitous, and only few of which result from conscious choice.

Each of the three great modern revolutions — the American, the French, and the Russian — was the product of many diverse economic, sociological, and idealistic factors. The ideological component of each of these revolutions can be studied as an outgrowth of the respective traditions of the British, the French, and the Russian peoples. Ideas shape and structure the events of history even if they do not determine them exclusively. And ideas are changed by the very process of reflecting upon them.

Amidst the meshing gears of history, there is a certain latitude for the operation of reflecting, interpreting, and choosing. To the examination of the shifting perspectives within this latitude, this work is dedicated.

CHAPTER TWO

RELIGION AND NATIONALISM

Anyone who sets out to study the history of the Jew concludes very soon that at all times the factors of both nationalism and religion were involved in the makeup of the Jewish community. Whether the unity of descent or the unity of faith was more dominant at any period is frequently a matter of judgment and controversy. But that both factors were involved in the structure of the Jewish mentality, the historian can hardly doubt. The point that students of the subject, however, are most prone to overlook is not the potency of either one of these factors but the paradoxical character of both of them, in human nature generally, and particularly in the historic consciousness of the Jew.

Manifestly, religion and nationalism cannot ever be separated completely. *Those who have to fight for their religious beliefs, or to suffer for them, come to think of themselves as a people.* Adolf Harnack points out that the Christians in the Roman Empire of the third century called themselves a "third race," *tertium genus*.¹ Many of the sectarian movements in the Christian world reflected ethnic rivalries. Pure nationalism, without any tincture of religious faith, is a characteristically modern phenomenon. Our secular, democratic society is the result of developments in Western Europe, where people recoiled in disgust from the horrors of a previous all too tight union between "organized" religion and government. It is the Church and State as organizations that the modern West seeks to keep apart. But the church is only a temporal, inadequate instrument of religion, and the State as a political institution reflects only partially the complex dynamism of a living people. The two vital ideals subsisting behind their respective organizational facades cannot but be mutually related. For the human mind is one,

and the goal of both ideals is the good life. Both ideals concern themselves with the character and destiny of a certain community; both appeal to the desire of individuals to merge their personal identity with that of a large entity, which stands above the vicissitudes of time; both are products of an inner tension and polarity.

To study the forces operative in Jewish history, we need to take account of the tensions within both of these ideals. As we shall see, both ideals are in themselves bi-polar. In addition, both nationalism and religion serve as organizing instruments, confirming society's structure which is vertical, rather than horizontal. The ideas and ideals of an elite or a dominant group become the cement of a pyramid, with the people at the base repeating the same formulae and slogans, as if they were myths and rites, without necessarily understanding them.

In the writing of Jewish history, we need to guard against a pervasive theological bias, since the character and destiny of the people of Israel form part of the Jewish, Christian, and Moslem faiths. Western liberals, cognizant of the long battle of progressive men and women against the oppression of the Church, are likely to introduce an anti-religious bias into the interpretation of Jewish history. All too often the resultant histories are inverted theologies or ideologies.

We do not expect the reader to credit us with supreme objectivity, but we can minimize the degree of distortion by revealing the weights and measures that we intend to employ. The reader will then be able to check the cogency of our discussion, step by step.

Our concept of religion is devoid of fixed dogmas. Religion is to us an ongoing quest, not a finished possession. We do not assume a certain number of true ideas or a body of revealed truths. As we see it, man's confrontation with the mystery of existence is the living core of faith. But this central event grows in meaning and scope with the expansion of man's knowledge and the refinement of his feelings.

Essentially, religion is a wave-like movement, a polar tension between the abiding Reality without and the ultimate self within. Since man is unable either to envisage the cosmos as a whole or to contemplate his own self, he is compelled to follow

one or both of the following procedures. Either he understands the world in terms of images of the self — ghosts, demons, angels, gods. Or he understands his own being in terms of the events of the outside world — stones, winds, material particles. Most commonly, the two alternatives interact and modify one another.

As the consciousness of religion deepens, these two orientations become philosophic alternatives. It is possible to see the entire universe in terms derived from the self contemplating itself. The entire universe is then interpreted either as the work of an Infinite Self, or as the reflection of that Infinite Being. The Cosmos is, then, a "macroanthropos." On the other hand, man may see his own being in terms of what he conceives to be the components of the external world, so many atoms and electrons obeying universal and inexorable laws. Man is then a "microcosmos."

These subjective and objective views have many ramifications, since they are essentially ways of thinking and feeling. In the objective orientation, man reduces the role of feeling to a minimum, though he cannot eliminate it altogether. He strives to reason; that is, to let his mind reflect the principles and the order that exist in reality. Rationality is a readiness to observe, to learn; ideas are employed as a kind of shorthand with which to describe experience. In this mood, man is able to see himself from the outside, as it were; hence, to criticize and to analyze the ideas in his own mind and in the group to which he belongs.

In his subjective orientation, man retreats from the world in the endeavor to be true to his own self. Rationality and criticism are then reduced to a minimum, while feeling, as fear, as generalized anxiety, or as a specific concern, as love or as hope, is steadily deepened and intensified. Since man cannot put his finger on the core of his own being, he tries to find his self either in an ideal "self-image," or in the collective self of a historic group, or in the image of an envisioned Supreme Being. Usually, these three alternatives are followed at the same time. In this mood, man delights to surrender to God, insisting that the ordered world of rationality is somehow in a "fallen" state. Generally also, subjective pietists extol all that is associated with their group, its past, its metaphysical character, and its ultimate destiny.

Most people are familiar with these two basic approaches as mutually exclusive alternatives. In our generation, the Existentialists preempt the subjective way of thinking, in keeping with Kierkegaard's slogan, "subjectivity is truth." On the other hand, the champions of objectivity in philosophy generally describe themselves as Positivists, though few would follow Auguste Comte, founder of French positivism, in adopting the entire panoply of organized religion in behalf of their worldview. As is well known, Comte sought to organize a ritual, build a priesthood, ordain sacraments and write a catechism, embodying the principles of his positivistic philosophy.

In our view, religion is the life of the soul; *i.e.*, it is man's effort to orient himself to Reality. Hence, it necessarily contains both orientations of heart and mind. It follows that religion is a dynamic phenomenon; its life is the yearning of man to reach for firm anchorage; it is expressed in the hunger for truth, the longing for the sublime, the passion for righteousness, the outreaching for permanence and genuine worth. As a vital phenomenon, religion is never complete, never at rest, never finished. Progress in any one direction provides the challenge for adjustment and growth in all other phases of human life. Man seeks for the fullness of his life, by means of this rhythm, which brings all his powers into focus.

What is it then that we take to be the marks of growth in a living faith?

First, a living faith is one which is repeatedly and deeply *internalized*; *i.e.*, it is a powerful subjective reality. Its practices and its dogmas are not merely external rituals and uninspiring formulae, but they bite deep into the souls of their worshipers. What is subjective cannot be fully susceptible of expression; it can only be characterized as a unique realm of experience, radically different from the faith of others. Internalization is essentially the standard of faith that the existentialists offer. In Jewish thought, it was Bahya who gave the classic formulation to the thought that the dimension of inwardness is infinite in depth.² The "commandments of the heart," reverence and love of God, trust in Him and utter devotion to His cause in the world, are indeed susceptible of numberless gradations. In the last two centuries of Jewish life, the Hasidic movement

concentrated its mighty genius on this aspect of the faith, bringing fresh life and vitality to the Jewish religion.

Internalization is not easily captured in the official formulations of a faith. The extent to which it occurs at any one time and in the hearts of any people is always uncertain, for nothing happens more frequently in religion than the substitution of formulae for feelings. It is not possible to draw exact comparisons among different faiths, at least within those of the Judeo-Christian tradition, in respect to the intensity of religious feelings they arouse. In every tradition, there will be found those for whom their faith is an empty formula or rite, and some for whom it is a powerful, inspiring reality. Even the persistent hammering away of some sects about the virtues of humility and genuine piety can itself degenerate into a pious posture. Such is the paradox of human nature that the ideal of humility is itself at times the slogan of the narrow-hearted, arrogant dogmatists. For to embrace an ideal is to take pride in it and to assume the inferiority of all who do not see the light. All whose faith is basically subjective assume that "others" are religious only in external forms. The usual Christian image of the Pharisee, and by implication, of the Jew is that his faith is only an empty shell, a matter of "do's" and don'ts," of laws and actions, not principles and feelings. Scheiermacher, in his classic discussion of "religious feeling," disparages the faith of the French, the Russians, and the English as well as the faith of the Jews. Each of these groups has returned the compliment at one time or another.

Students of religion are not apt to overlook the significance of emotional intensity in the life of religion, but they are quite likely to ignore the importance of the swing of the spiritual pendulum toward the pole of objectivity. The quest of rationality and objective truth is often regarded as a denial of faith or as a flight from God. The usual policy of scholars is to restrict the meaning of faith to the subjective moods of piety, when the soul retreats from the glare of the day to seek the calm of Divine communion in the comforting shadows of a revered tradition. But this very policy of confining religion to one phase of the soul's activity leads inevitably to the dissolution of the bonds of meaning and relevance between faith and life. A one-sided religion is a meaningless one, for meaning *is* relatedness, the absence of a gulf; the undammed stream of thought in a rhythmic

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current flowing from the universal to particulars and then back again. To erect barriers within the soul is to invite frustration and futility.

Actually, the quest of religion is for the maximum of relatedness with the ultimate ground of reality. We could define religion as the quest for unity with God; but as a matter of psychological fact, God is not always envisioned as present at the goal, and unity with Him is unattainable. We speak then of a ground of reality and of a maximum of relatedness. Two ways present themselves to us, both together leading to this goal though separately they lead in opposite directions. In the one, we attain relatedness by *looking at* the universe; in the other, by letting our minds drift away from surface facts in order to *feel part of* its inner substance. And we know that we are *part of* reality, while we *look at* any portion of it.

If we could know all about ourselves we would know the heart of the universe; yet, if we cannot know ourselves we can *be ourselves*, and to be *part of* reality is also somehow to know it.

In the objective as in the subjective orientation of the mind, we find ourselves at first submitting to an outer reality and then asserting that reality within us. Both self-surrender and self-assertion mark the posture of the soul as it seeks the maximum of relatedness, either by way of reason or by way of feeling. In the fervor of faith, man begins by surrendering to God. Tired of pushing elbows against the crowd, man acclaims God as the kindly shepherd, all-loving and all-knowing. Man sees himself as a lamb, willing to be led wheresoever the Shepherd wills. Yet, somehow, nearly every psalm that begins with the trustful mood of total surrender ends on a note of triumphant participation in the Divine Being. He accepts us as a part of Himself, and we accept Him as part of ourselves. As we yield in trust, we rise in strength. Thus, the twenty-third psalm, which sounds the note of total resignation in its opening lines, goes on to speak of being led in righteous paths "for His Name's sake," of "being anointed" for a high sacred purpose, and it ends with the confident assertion of being part of the Divine household, dwelling "in the house of the Lord forever."

In most psalms, the submissive and the assertive aspects of

the soul are placed side by side, without any particular sequence. Now the psalmist sings of the Lord as his strength, his light, his invincible protector; now he submits to Divine guidance in perfect trust. Erich Fromm points out that healthy love is of a double nature, containing both submissiveness and assertion.³ In faith as in love, self-surrender and self-realization are blended, as the bright flame and its dark underside. When we love, we are held in love.

"How shall we love the Divine Presence?" asks a sixteenth-century mystic. His answer; "To the point of finding it impossible to separate from it."⁴

It is this paradoxical unity of submission and assertion that we find also in the objective orientation. The quest of "clear and adequate ideas" is a heroic undertaking. The thinker subordinates all that is dear to him to the austere judgment of implacable reason. He can hide nothing that is precious from the cutting knife of reason; he cannot ask for favors; he can expect no personal consideration. Submission to the rational process in all its ruthless impartiality is by no means easy. Yet those who like Spinoza follow this pathway of utter submission, find that they are realizing their inmost selves in joy. For the light of reason, like the love of God is within us as surely as it is beyond us. It was not the understandable bias of a philosopher but an indubitable truth of human nature that led Aristotle to assert that rationality is the essence of humanity. This truth is evident, however, only at certain times. Spinoza writes of an intuitive kind of reasoning, in which thought proceeds automatically.⁵ A point is reached when we no longer think our thoughts, but the process of thought, like a mighty stream carries us along. Who has not experienced this dual unity of rational contemplation? In thought as in faith and love, we win our self as we lose our self.

The rational quest is thus as much a part of religion as the pietistic-mystical yearning for the "nearness of God." A rabbinic legend tells of an angel in heaven that in the daytime carries the word *Emeth*, truth, on its forehead and at night carries the word *Emunah*, faith. Both day and night form part of the cycle of the soul. The essential unity of man's need for love and his quest of truth is reflected in the prayer of Socrates, "Be-

loved Pan, and all ye other gods who haunt this place, give me beauty in the inward soul, and may the outward and the inward man be at one."¹⁶

In his search for truth, man puts all that is subjective to the test. He criticizes the things that are so precious because they are "his own," his own cultural tradition, his own religious heritage, his own people, his own convictions and prejudices. In the faculty of pure reason, he rises above himself as the empirical man of a specific time and place. Long and arduous is the path of self-criticism. Many are the idols to be demolished, many are the defenses to be shattered, many are the disguises of the naked soul, and agonizing beyond comparison is the task of penetrating them. But the rational quest for self-knowledge is as endless as that for knowledge of the world. And it is man's destiny to be forever caught in the oscillation of the spirit from subjective faith to objective reason, from the nighttime quest for faith and peace to the daytime quest for clarity and action. The man of reason cannot and ought not escape his involvements in life. He needs to feel his unity within an ongoing tradition, to join with others in celebrating the mystery of life and its great values. He needs to use the "language" of faith, which consists of symbols and myths and rites, articulating the unspeakable wonders of life. He will interpret and transform the creed and the ritual of his community, but he remains part of it, for reason is but one of the facets of man's spirit. Religion is to reason as the mind is to the senses, not as the senses are to one another.

Our second criterion in the study of religions, then, is the extent to which they incorporate the objective, rational factor. More specifically, we need to inquire whether the quest for wisdom is recognized as a Divine commandment, whether the domain of objective thinking is uncircumscribed, whether the rites and dogmas of the tradition are subjected consistently to the rigorous examination of reason.

Finally, as our third criterion, we shall ask whether the extension of the objective approach is translated into a universal, non-parochial ethic.

An ethical philosophy of life is the creation of both subjective piety and objective thinking. Neither the feelings of empathy nor the critical acumen of logic can by themselves generate a

truly ethical approach to the problems of life. For ethics is more than a complex of gentle feelings like piety, love, sympathy, courage, and loyalty. These feelings are as native to humanity as their opposites—cruelty, ruthlessness, callousness, and brutality. The instinctive equipment of man includes both sets of feelings. The predominance of either set of feelings in any phase of life depends on the structure of ideas in a given culture more than on any other factor. So soon as the curtain opens on the drama of human history, we encounter the gentle feelings of humanity, but they are limited in application to narrow circles—the family, the clan, the tribe, the social caste, the city, or the nation. And every forward step in the extension of the boundaries of ethical obligation and responsibility is achieved by means of rational criticism, which pushes forward the boundary stones set up by tradition. Every wall dividing the “in” group from the “out” group, with one set of morals for the former and another for the latter, is breached by the thrust of the soul toward greater objectivity. Romantic faith, on the other hand, cautions against the removal of any fences; it tends to draw the veil of sanctification over all that is traditional and characteristic of the “in” group.

By the same token, rational thought in itself cannot generate an ethical faith. From the summit of rationality, philosophers like Plato and Aristotle can devise ideal constitutions, which make for efficiency and justice. But the philosophers cannot plan the reactions of the individuals composing their utopian state. Constitutions may be set up, laws may be laid down; compliance may be efficiently assured. But the quality of ethics is found not in law and administration as such, but in the motives and attitudes of the men and women in the state. Thus, the Greek philosophers already assigned to religion the task of educating the people for life in the ideal state.

The domain of ethics is the product of a dynamic synthesis of reflection and feeling. The ardor and zeal of generosity and self-denial derive from subjective faith, while reason imposes the universality of principle upon these protean feelings. In the search for objective knowledge, man eliminates himself altogether from the equation; in the sphere of ethics, a man inquires how he can best utilize the powers of his self for the overarching community. Hence, both a deep concern for self and per-

sonal destiny as well as the awareness of a series of concentric circles of society are the poles of the ethical ideal.

Hermann Cohen suggested that the ethical ideal could be employed as the sole index of maturity in the study of religions. From the vantage point of our analysis, we can agree that the ethical ideal depends upon the equilibrium between the two orientations of the soul and their intensities. Hence, it is an excellent index of maturity. But the ethics of any faith or culture is itself a dynamic, restless quality, bi-directional, multi-faceted, susceptible of a thousand subterfuges.

In the analysis of an ethical ideal, we must be prepared to recognize the diverse compromises between subjective bias and objective reflection. Beyond the level of the legendary and the primitive, no religion arises on the horizon of mankind which does not teach some form of love of neighbor. And the command of the Torah, "love thy neighbor as thyself," is a sublime synthesis of subjective feeling and the objective view of a community of neighbors. But the growth and maturation of faith will be manifested in the manner whereby limitations of the meaning of the term neighbor are progressively overcome. Limitations of clan and caste, of tribe and nationality, of sectarian orthodoxy and deviation, of collective prejudice and stereotype are more frequently obstacles to ethical progress than flaws in the formulation of ethical principles.

In sum, we have arrived at three criteria of the growth of religion: the intensity and depth of internalization of rites and dogmas, the consistency and extent of objective criticism embraced in the tradition, and the balance between the subjective and objective factors as it is demonstrated in the ethical standards of the community.

We need to indicate at this time why these criteria are more useful than those employed by other historians and philosophers. Without undertaking to survey all the philosophies in world literature we shall easily recognize the alternative criteria of growth as: first, dogmatic standards; second, either universality of concept alone or intensity of religious experience alone; third, philosophical ideas; fourth, orientations toward the future rather than the past.⁷

Dogmas of any kind we disavow as being of subjective and

symbolic worth exclusively. Our analysis of faith ignores altogether the notion of preternatural revelation, because we assume that God reveals Himself to us in all ways. It would be arbitrary and arrogant to set aside only selected books, or certain experiences of certain people as being the sole content of revelation. We can see things only from the human point of view. Poets and mythologists may write from the standpoint of God. And the language of poetry and the symbols of mythology are indispensable to prayer. But they are useless to the sober task of exposition. On the other hand, Olympian impartiality and boundless universalism is a relatively easy stance for those whose inner life is pale and thin. Witness the Sophists of Greece. They could speak of humanity in general with great ease, because loyalties, private or universal, mattered very little in their lives. Philosophical ideas are by their very nature common to the thinking fraternities of any one age or culture. They are easily transferable to different contexts. Thus, the Medieval philosophies of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism employed the same ideas in diverse configurations. In a similar way, the religions of the Hellenistic-Roman period operated with the same discrete concepts.

For this reason, we did not set monotheism against polytheism as a criterion of progress. In the so-called great ages of faith, every monotheistic creed was in actual practice a skein of tensions between the ideals of monotheism and the multiple expressions of pagan polytheism. While the belief in One God is a great advance over the belief in many gods, from the ethical as well as from the logical point of view, the decisive inquiry is what kind of monotheism? Leaps toward monotheism were not rare in the ancient world.

Toynbee's criterion of progress — the change of the admired and imitated individual from the past to the contemporary scene — is from our point of view an external, one-sided standard. He would regard as a sign of progress every act of "breaking the cake of custom." This is formally true, insofar as progress is outwardly visible. But custom-keeping and custom-breaking can both be acts of religious inspiration as well as deeds of desecration. It is the inner attitude of man that counts. In his subjective orientation, man turns to archaic forms and ancient heroes for inspiration. All religious revivals take the form

of "returning" to an ancient, long-neglected truth. All practical movements are formally oriented toward the future. But no person is free from either of these orientations. Rationalistic-ethical religious reformers may be led to select ancient heroes as symbols of the transformation that they advocate, interpreting the revolution of the ancients in their own way. It is the content of religious teaching that matters, not its symbolic guise.

The most important reason for the usefulness of this analysis is the fact that it takes account of the paradoxical character of all religions. Religion is not simply a static complex of rites, myths, sacred institutions, and sacraments. Such a description can only capture a fleeting aspect of the living reality which is multi-faceted and ambivalent. As a dynamic field of tension, Judaism is likely to be articulated at any one time in radically different ways, by those who represent its objective-rationalistic genius and by those who reflect its subjective-romantic impetus. Generally speaking, the intellectual leaders are apt to cling to the pole of humanism and rationality, while the masses are certain to center their ardor on the emotional and the esthetic, the dogmatic and the mythical, the superstitious, and the ethnic phases of the tradition. But, this probable polarization is complicated by the well-known fact that any popular cause will never lack educated and eloquent spokesmen. There will always be a kind of elite, who devote themselves to the fortification of the popular faith, either because they have not outgrown the mentality of the people or because it normally pays to tell the people what they want to hear. Honest intellectuals are often misled by the spurious rationality of "common consent." Therefore, we cannot be content with the distinction between "popular" and "official" aspects of a faith.

Also, as we noted, faith, like a tree, should grow in depth as well as in height. Often indeed, the advance of the human spirit in one direction results temporarily at least in the shrinking of other aspects of the faith. Have not rationalistic ages been notoriously insensitive to the deeper nuances of faith?

All ideals, tragically enough, cast a shadow even as they throw a beam of light into the Unknown. Like a flashlight suddenly directed at one point, the brightness of illumination thus generated makes the darkness at its edges all the more impenetrable. Since religion constitutes the totality of idealism,

this paradox affects its structure far more powerfully than it does other aspects of human culture. Hence, the importance of this threefold criterion.

In all our discussion of the nature of religion, we have not designated any ideas as being Absolutes. We did not assume a concept of God, so true and perfect as to serve as a standard by which lesser conceptions are to be judged. Neither did we assume that certain revealed truths were from time to time injected into the course of history. Nor did we assert that the bipolar orientation of the human spirit was bound to result in a steady and necessary pace of progress. Do we then propose a relativistic view of history? Is our perspective totally devoid of secure landmarks and guidelines that are rooted in the nature of things? By no means. We must distinguish between the idea of perfection and a perfect idea. In history, we recognize the aspiration to attain perfection as the noblest endeavor of man. The philosopher seeks the perfection of truth, the statesman the perfection of public ardor, the priest the perfection of man's accord with the ultimate, the prophet the perfection of the individual's striving for ethical action. But this outreaching of the human spirit must not be identified with the fullness of possession. "Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord am holy"⁸ — while God is holy, man can only *become* holy. We cannot assume that we stand today at the final goal-post of human history, judging the faltering efforts and tragic travail of man from the peak of perfection. It is precisely this prideful dogma that we have to guard against, for it is the proximate cause of stagnation and sterility. We hear this note in the last gasp of Roman paganism, an edict of the Emperor Diocletian; "For it is the height of criminality to reexamine doctrines once and for all settled and fixed by the ancients."⁹

Do we then deny the reality of absolute truths? No. But we deny the human possession of these absolutes; at least, we do not affirm such absolutes as the axioms of our inquiry. Truth grows out of the clash and juxtaposition of data, whereby the correctness of tentative judgments is tested. When we set ourselves the task of judging the nature of the *whole* of being, we cannot maintain the absolute truth of any verdict, since all the relevant facts are not available. The Absolute is there, but any

formulation of it is bound to bear the marks of time and the stigmata of partiality. As to Divine revelation, we intend to set things down from the human point of view. All new insights, all successful breakthroughs either in the perception of truth or in the apprehension of moral and esthetic values can be described as data of revelation. Such a description is motivated by subjective needs, the language of feeling, the dialectic of imagination, or the logic of social necessities. In private prayer and in public worship, we naturally employ the symbolic language of man's inner life. But, apart from poetry and prayer, we can only describe things from the human point of view, as insights, in which truth and folly are inevitably mixed, not as Divinely revealed truths.

The needs of our human situation require that we speak and act *as if* our highest ideals had independent existence. Rooted in the Cosmos, they compel our attention and demand the surrender of our self. This logic of the human imagination was recognized by John Dewey as a basic fact. The human imagination at its best is not arbitrary and loose. It too is subject to certain inherent necessities and regularities. This is the secret of good art. And the greatest Art of all is religion, the art of the good life. In order that the diverse goals and purposes of life be integrated and endowed with meaning, we need to project an all-embracing ideal into the Universe and then submit to judgment in the light of this Supreme Ideal. We have to live in the present as if the ultimate goal of man's search were known. At the same time, we must not confuse the psychology of subjectivity and of a creative imagination with the logic of objectivity and the nature of the Absolute.

On this view, progress is never certain. Nor can the religious climate of any one age be easily assayed. Our three criteria of progress are likely to afford us contradictory testimony regarding the piety of any generation. The differences among individuals within the same polarized religious tradition are, from our standpoint, far more significant than the identity of external symbols and dogmas. Frequently, the so-called advance of man's mind is only the record of development of a small elite, while behind the charade of changing intellectual fashions popular religion remains virtually the same. In any case, we cannot offer a clear dissection of periods and phases. Somewhat

after the fashion of market-analysts, we shall strive to take account of the "depth" of facts and feelings as well as of their statistical frequency.

Nationalism, like religion, is in any one age a patchwork of compromise between the two orientations of the soul. Objectively we reason in terms of the human family as a whole. But this concept is fleeting and abstract. Man's imagination is hard put to endow the concept of man in general with a solid anchorage and the feel of reality. Perhaps mankind will not really attain a "clear and adequate idea" of itself, until "the little men from Mars" lay siege to our planet.

Tragically enough, it is only by slow and painful stages that the group-consciousness of people is broadened. Primitive man is governed by clans. It takes a measure of intellectual tradition to create a tribe, which is an association of clans. Through a similar development, an association of tribes comes into being, cherishing a common past and common religious objects of worship as well as a common language and possibly a common government. An association of tribes may evolve into a nation through the acceptance of an inner judicial and administrative system. The emergence of a United States of Europe presages the concept of a "family of nations."

At each stage in their ascent from the clan to the great society of the future, people have to resolve the tension between the subjective mood which sanctifies the existing barriers and a modicum of increasing objectivity. Clinging to all that is "his own" — clan or tribal custom — primitive man tends to resist any objective criticism of tribal mores or any widening of tribal boundaries. As far as historic memory goes, men always treated those who were akin to them with consideration and rough justice. But they were very slow in recognizing the rights of "foreigners." Differences in sex and in social class were at one time considered sufficient to exclude a person from the inner circle of kinship. Thus, the patricians and the plebeians of early Rome were for many centuries not allowed to intermarry. And the status of women in ancient Rome was so low as to be only one notch above that of the slave. Exclusion of "strangers" from all rights in the country was general throughout the ancient world. Even philosophers like Plato and Aristotle maintained that only Hellenes were designed

by nature to be free, while "barbarians" were intended by nature for menial work and slavery. So wise, liberty-loving, and tolerant a statesman as Pericles sponsored an Athenian law that prohibited an Athenian citizen from marrying a Greek woman from another city.

The subjectivity of tribalism is overcome only in part by the dawning of objective intelligence, for the bias of ethnicism is more resistant to reason than the dogmas of faith. In large part, tribal allegiance is overcome in sentiment and in imagination by the building up of a more potent and more radiant aura around the larger culture-sphere of the nation. Thus, during the nineteenth century, the vision of Germany became far more radiant than that of any of its component states, and during the twentieth century, the concept of a Teutonic race displaced for many the idea of the state. Similarly, Italy as a whole could appeal to more powerful, romantic loyalties than either Tuscany, or Venice, or Sardinia. The larger unit was endowed with an "image" so resplendent that all parochial and provincial loyalties were put in the shade.

The national "image" contains a blend of many objective values along with the subjective picture of the nation. It is maintained that the nation in question is a superior breed of humanity, more devoted than other breeds to liberty or to order, to democracy or to aristocracy, to religion or to science, to rationalism or to romanticism. Whichever of the two pairs of values is chosen by the prophets of nationalism at any one time depends on the ideal that happens then to be fashionable. And the various economic or social groups comprising the nation add the tincture of their particular, political faiths to the national "self-image."

It is important to realize that the boundaries of nations, in ancient as in modern times, were the result of accidental causes. No one today takes seriously the nationalist ambitions of the Scottish or the Welsh, of the Basques or the Burgundians, of the Prussians or the Swabians, of the Pisans or the Florentines. Yet these groups were at one time "nations"; they would still be "nations" today, had only a few purely political or military events taken a different turn.

We think of the Hellenes as a "nation." The language, faith,

and culture of the Hellenes were indeed great and distinctive. In addition, they had some religious institutions in common. The association of twelve tribes in the Delphic amphictyony was the closest the Greeks came to the achievement of unity before Philip of Macedonia.

Nevertheless, the Athenians considered themselves a "nation," and they set out to establish an Athenian Empire with other Greek cities as their colonies. This ambition was not only due to a political ideal, namely, their infatuation with the concept of a *Polis*, a self-governing city, but also to their belief that they were a "treasure-people," "the educators of Hellas." They were not willing to accord to other Greek cities the privileges of freedom which they demanded for themselves. Their Athenian "idealism" was so strong that they coldly condemned the entire male populations of conquered Hellenic cities to slaughter, and sold the women into slavery.

The "self-image" of a nation is partly the product of its political history and partly the product of a cultural tradition, and it depends as much upon the capacity to forget as upon the capacity to remember. The structure of the nationalist imagination requires the myth of an original, ancestral family out of which the nation emerged, as a complex organism grows out of a simple nucleus. This myth of common descent becomes in turn the focus of popular feeling and its so-called ideology. Blood and soil tend to shunt culture and ideals into the background. Biological nationalism is thus inherent in the nature of the movement, by reason of the romance and mystery, myth and magic that envelops all that is subjective. Once it becomes frankly biological, nationalism is launched on the slippery road toward the myths and idols of racism. Then the "purity" of the nation's blood is extolled with dogmatic zeal and jealously guarded.

But as we have seen the genius of nationalism contains a potent dose of objective idealism. Without the aid of this universal concept, the "self-image" of the nation would not have become strong enough to overcome the centrifugal forces of tribe and province. The inclusion of universal ideals is also compelled by the need to placate man's rational faculties. Within the domain of nationalism, accordingly, a perpetual tug of war ensues between objective ideals and sheer, blood-based ethnicism. This inner tension is articulated at various times, in

the conflict between those who give primacy to the ideals of the nation and those who stress the supreme worth of the nation's life.

When people have grown civilized enough to be ashamed of sheer instincts, but not yet critical enough to view themselves objectively, they are quite likely to use universal ideals as the guise and disguise of their instincts. The initial step of Adam and Eve on their way to civilization was to cover their nakedness with a fig-leaf. Thus, once an ethnic group has acquired an idealized vision of the collective "self-image," its nationalism is far more potent than natural, unsophisticated ethnicism.

For such is the peculiar logic of human nature. Collective dedication to an ideal leads to collective self-glorification and the glorified self-image becomes the excuse for inflicting massive crimes upon the "unglorified" section of humanity. Thus, did the "liberty-loving" Athenians of the Golden Age set out to deprive other Greek cities of their freedom. Similarly, the Israelites, newly consecrated as "a people of priests and a holy nation" proceeded with gusto to exterminate the Canaanites. The illustrations for this theme in our own day could fill a library.

The ambiguous loyalties of nationalism stand astride man's progress toward a universal society. They are like a tunnel through which mankind must needs pass on its way toward a brighter horizon. Seen from the side of tribalized and feudalized societies, nationalism is a mighty movement of liberation and progress. It enables a backward population to overcome the stunting yokes of petty, parochial loyalties, which stand in the way of a united effort to mobilize its constructive energies. It provides the energy to batter down feudal privileges and to launch a nation on the road to economic progress. Only nationalism, whipped to a frenzy, can provide the enthusiasm and energy needed for the forced marches of the Asian and African "nations" toward a tolerable standard of living.

Neither in Russia nor in China could Communism muster the vast energies it needed without arousing the slumbering loyalties of a resurgent nationalism. Thus even so rigid and inflexible an ideology as Communism was compelled to make common cause with nationalism, though in theory the Communist faith is strictly internationalistic.

In addition to its role as a liberating force in the backward

areas of the globe, nationalism fulfills a cultural and humanizing function in the countries of the West. It erects walls which help the individual to feel at home in the vast and open space of a friendless world. It sets up a style of life and a heroic standard and it persuades the individual to submit to the charm and spell of the national virtues. For most people, the vision of humanity is still a vague abstraction, while the nation provides a concrete and vital image, which relates them to society. People can feel as leaves on the tree of life of the nation, but it taxes their imagination too much to see themselves as leaves on the tree of humanity. The domain of human culture is for the present a confluence of diverse and distinct streams of tradition, not a homogeneous ocean in which the salts of different cultures are dissolved. The national ideal is therefore still of vital importance in the total economy of man's spiritual life, though the vision of an Atlantic Community or of a Western "family of nations" is already on the horizon.

At the same time, nationalism is the largest single barrier in the path of an emergent universal society. It distorts the judgment of people quite as much as the dogmatism of a fundamentalist faith, and it leads inevitably to injustice and war. It will be overcome in the future by the very process that brought nationalism into being — namely the movement of the soul toward ever wider dimensions of objectivity and ever deeper layers of subjectivity. The perfection and well-being of the individual transcends the ideal of nationalism on the coordinate of subjectivity, while the emergence of the vision of a universal society transcends the parochial boundaries of nationalism on the coordinate of objectivity. Thus, nationalism, like religion, can be transcended and advanced by the same rhythm of spiritual alternation.

Idolatry in religion is the resistance of the soul to the dynamism of a living faith. When the mind refuses to proceed from the recognition of many gods to belief in One God, we have polytheistic idolatry. When an image that reflected a novel insight at one time is worshiped as the final vision of the Supreme Being, we have iconolatry. When a ritual act (not a dogmatic belief) is asserted to be the ultimate Will of God, we have an idolatry of action (orthopraxis as against orthodoxy). Whenever any system of thought is set up as the final summation of Truth,

we have the peculiar idolatry of ideologists and academicians. In each case, the footprints of man's progress are cherished rather than the direction of his advance.

The inability of a people to transcend their own national loyalties is the inherent idolatry of nationalism. The same resistance of the spirit is at fault in both politics and religion. When a people insists on sticking to the level of "know nothingism," or worse, using objective ideals for the purpose of sanctifying the collective egotism of the nation, we have the typical sin of idolatry in its nationalistic garb.

Progress in nationalism as in religion can be gauged by the same standards — the continuity of tension between subjective loyalties and objective ideals, the progressive deepening of the vision of the ideal individual, and the ideal society of mankind, the refusal of the people to idolize themselves and their readiness to submit their collective aims to objective scrutiny.

In certain circumstances, nationalism and religion tend to coalesce. Emile Durkheim, the French sociologist, overstated the degree of the relationship when he maintained that religion generally was simply the projection onto the metaphysical screen of the national group-consciousness. But it cannot be denied that in primitive societies, the distinction becomes nebulous; even the so-called "higher religions" which address their message to all, nurture on occasion the feelings of nationalism, and derive strength from the ethnic consciousness of their people.

When a particular national group of a certain faith is involved in a struggle against enemies of another faith, as well as of a different nationalism, then the two ideals tend to merge. Thus, the Poles in their national struggles against the Protestant Germans and the Greek Orthodox Russians sought comfort and sustenance in their Catholic faith. Similarly, the Irish Catholics could not be open-minded concerning the arguments of the English Episcopalians and Presbyterians. Many of the sectarian divisions in Europe reflected ethnic rivalries. Thus the Czechs flocked to the banner of John Huss and a number of the German princes rushed to the standard of Martin Luther. In earlier centuries, the Goths accepted the Aryan form of Christianity. The native Egyptians and the Armenians embraced a Monophysite version of Christianity and the Persians, overwhelmed by the Arab Moslem invaders, sought shelter under the aegis

of the heretical Shiia sect.

To all the nations of Europe, the Christian faith came from an extra-national source. Still, some of the European nations acquired their national consciousness and their faith at one and the same time. The Poles, the Russians and the Hungarians remembered very little, if anything, from their pre-Christian days. And the Christian Spanish nation was forged in the fires of a continuous Catholic crusade against the Iberian Moors.

When the loyalty of religion is reinforced by ethnic bonds, we may expect redoubled tension between objective idealism and subjective self-glorification in both domains of the human spirit. The idealistic phases of nationalism are likely to be unfolded and illuminated, since religion focuses attention on the individual and on objective human ideals. On the other hand, the saintly aura of religion might bathe the raw impulses of nationalism in a mysterious glow and raise them beyond the reach of rational criticism. Similarly, the bonds of ethnic loyalty are likely to furnish a powerful cementing force to the ritualistic phases of religion, since ethnicism is essentially romantic, subjective, and conservative. On the other hand, concern with the actual problems of a living people is likely to prevent a religion from becoming totally other-wordly, mystical, and rigidly dogmatic. Nationalism tends to direct the fervor of religious devotion into the channels of the actual historic community. It checks the flight of the mystic, restrains the fancy of the poet, assuages the ardor of the ascetic and recalls the fanatical dogmatist to the realities of life.

In Judaism, the unity of ethnic awareness and religious loyalty is fundamental and of a peculiar intimacy. Accordingly, we may expect to find the usual tensions of ethnicism and faith magnified and intensified, with the surge of idealism reaching occasionally peculiar heights even as from time to time the pathos of sacred egotism may sink to the lowest depths. As we turn our attention to the formative period of the Jewish mentality, we should be prepared to find the heights of objective thought and universal sympathy conjoined with intensified feelings of ethnic pride and religious exclusiveness. Instead of the usual monolithic picture, depicting either nobility of soul or meanness of spirit, we shall expect to find both extremes of the universal tensions of the human spirit. In Jewish experience, we see exemplified the basic tensions of humanity — only more so.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CENTRAL QUESTIONS

As we approach the study of Jewish history, we note first the elements in which it appears to be truly remarkable. We referred previously to the dogma of "uniqueness" of the Jew that has long been the unquestioned axiom of Jewish scholars. Projected first by prophets and theologians, the dogma of "uniqueness" was taken over by romantic nationalists. Indeed, it is shared by the ideologists of antisemitism, though with an opposing interpretation.

As an axiom or dogma, Jewish "uniqueness" need only be analyzed into its separate components for its mystical aura to be dispelled and refuted. All analytical writing, in fact all logical thought, is based on the assumption of one mind, one way of logical thinking; the same pathways to error are open to all the children of men. All human groups are different in respect of their history, culture, achievements and sufferings. There is no exact parallel to the history of Greece or Rome, of Germany or France, or the British Empire, of America or Russia. All cultural achievements are "unique," in the sense of bearing the marks of their origin and environment, but they are gradually assimilated and absorbed into the general culture of mankind. It is through analysis that we separate the enduring, universal values from the ephemeral, historical phenomena and arrive at an understanding of the human forces which account for the different developments in each case.

Nevertheless, there are certain indubitable facts in the historical record of the Jew which challenge our curiosity even at the start of our inquiry. We may summarize these striking facts under the following headings:

1. *Monotheism.* Here is a people that imposed its pattern of faith and its religious tradition upon the entire Western world. Both Christianity and Islam derive from the Jews not only their

ideas concerning God but also the traditional context into which those ideas were set. Christian and Moslem children are taught to take their place in adult society by means of teachings and tales concerning Hebrew patriarchs and prophets. The spiritual roots of Christians and Jews are set in the Holy Land and their prayers are couched in the symbols and patterns of the Holy Bible. Indeed, the collective "self-image" of the Jew as the one who has been "chosen" and "covenanted" to be a "light unto the nations" has become the "self-image" of half of mankind. The Christians too regard themselves as "the true Israel," "the first-born children," "the Israel of the spirit," and the Moslems lay claim to being the "true sons of Ishmael, son of Abraham."

The most striking fact in this triumphant achievement of ancient Israel is not the transference of so many ideas concerning God and man from one people to half of mankind. All ideas are by their very nature transferable, arising in one community at a particular time and traveling thence in widening circles to the ends of the civilized world. That which is expressible in logical form is comprehensible in all languages and cultures. If it is a powerful idea, it will make its way in one form or another, from one end of the world to the other, for the human mind and the basic paradoxes of human nature are the same the world over. All ideas arise among individuals and then are fostered by a minority of intellectuals. The same idea or slogan may have logical significance to one group of people and emotional valence to another. To the masses of any people, it is not the idea in itself but its symbolic guise or disguise that makes its appeal. To intellectuals all myths and rites are symbols for ideas; to the people, ideas are only symbols for myths expressing their secret wishes and rites reflecting their fears and anxieties. And it is precisely at this point that the triumph of the Jewish religion is so striking.

The decisive fact in the expansion of Judaism was the transference of the symbols of the Bible and *Aggadah* along with the central ideas. The ideas of ethical monotheism could have penetrated the pagan world without demolishing its existing rites and myths. This is the normal procedure. In this way the ideal of Stoicism and later of Neo-Platonism did indeed endow the ancient pagan rites with fresh meaning and appeal. But the ethnic symbolism of the Jewish faith, setting an impenetrable barrier between the chosen people and the Gentiles, and decree-

ing an implacable war against the idolatry of the nations, allowed no room for compromise and imposed a rigid limit on the extent of syncretism in its daughter-faiths.

The Christian-Moslem inheritance of the symbolic structure of Judaism is evident in many ways. The ritual of the Holy Temple is duplicated in the mass of the Catholic Church; the service of the Synagogue can be seen in the patterns of worship of the Protestant Church; the symbolism of the ideal people of Israel as the counter-part of the *Shechinah* (Divine Presence) is reflected in the concept of the Church as "the body of Christ"; the pattern of festivals, the interpretation of history as given in the Bible, the forms of conversion, the prayers of penitence and exultation, the person of the Messiah and the hope of the Last Days, above all the zealous condemnation of pagan idols and ceremonies. All these myths and rites were adopted by Christianity and Islam, albeit in altered forms.

In particular, the choice of Israel is central in Christianity; in Islam it is the choice of Abraham that fulfills the same function. The Christians asserted that they were "Israel of the spirit," entitled to the Promise and the Hope of Redemption, while the Moslems believed themselves to be the heirs of the true religion of Abraham. Thus it is the historic structure of myth and rite in Judaism that was embraced by the people of the West, not only the objective ideas. But, and here is the rub, this symbolic pattern of ancient Israel had to be transformed and inverted, stood on its head, as it were, before the nations of the world could accept it.

We have to inquire why Judaism, as a historic faith, with its own peculiar synthesis of objective and subjective elements, did not capture the minds and hearts of the Mediterranean peoples. To be sure, there was a broad band of "fearers of the Lord" round every Jewish community in the Greco-Roman Diaspora, but most of these semi-converts evidently drifted into the Christian community. Individuals by the thousands joined the Jewish fold in every generation throughout the Second Commonwealth, but two normal elements of proselytizing were absent. The Jews did not set in motion a concerted effort to convert the Gentiles, and there were very few mass-conversions to Judaism, save those carried out by force. Some Arab tribes embraced Judaism, southern Arabia had a Jewish king who

died in the year Mohammed was born, the ruling dynasty of Palmyra and the governing elite of Khazaria were converted; some Berber tribes, some East African Negroes, some Dravidian tribes in southern India — these constitute the only known cases of group-conversion to Judaism. As to why the Jews did not organize preaching missions to the Gentiles, we shall discuss this in a subsequent chapter. For the present, it is sufficient to note that the objective ideas in Judaism appealed powerfully to the minds and hearts of people; that some elements in the institutional structure of Judaism prevented it from fully capitalizing on the appeal of its ideals; that it is this same symbolism of the Jewish faith that was turned round and used to demolish the myths and rites of pagan antiquity.

2. *Antisemitism.* The second remarkable phenomenon that we encounter in Jewish history is the virtually continuous stream of anti-Jewish hatred. There is a distinctive quality about antisemitism, which is not found in the normal group-hatreds of mankind. It is as normal for the human animal to dislike or to scorn the outsider as it is normal for the individual to like his own kind. Bees and ants will instantly attack and kill a stray visitor from another nest or hive, though they belong to the selfsame species. A certain measure of anti-Jewish phobia may therefore be attributed to the status of the Jew as a minority group in the Western and Near Eastern countries. But this explanation does not account for the "mystique" of antisemitism.

In our own day, the monstrous nature of the antisemitic mentality was revealed in all its horror in the atrocities of Nazism, while the seductive appeal of its pseudo-ideology was demonstrated by the numerous accomplices that Hitler was able to find throughout the world, as well as by the silence and acquiescence of millions of "decent" people.

The uniqueness of antisemitism consists in its possessing an "ideology" with wide-ranging implications and in the deep sense of cosmic "difference" between Jew and Gentile that is taken as its axiomatic starting-point.

These two elements are already manifested in the first two literary portrayals of antisemitism — the story of Mordecai and Esther and the legendary account of the Third Book of Maccabees. In ancient Persia, with its numerous nationalities and re-

ligions, it was possible for Haman to maintain that the difference between Jews and Gentiles was of a far deeper nature than the usual differences between nations and creeds.

"There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from those of every other people, and they do not keep the king's laws, so that it is not for the king's profit to tolerate them."¹

While there were many *diasporas* in the ancient Persian Empire, most dispersed peoples tended to take on the color of the environment, giving a little here and taking a little there, so as to present an appearance of grey unity. But the Jews, or, more accurately, those who remained and those who became Jews, resisted this "normal" exchange, maintaining inviolate their "difference" from the nations. It is this jealous insistence on an impassable abyss of difference, that Haman castigates so bitterly, because it symbolizes, and stimulates, opposition to his ideal of a monolithic, unified empire. As to the meaning of Haman's phrase, "and they do not keep the laws of the king," an ancient Midrash mentions a popular saying that had become standard at least in later years — *shia, pia* — "it is Sabbath today, it is Pesach today." This was apparently the reason Jews gave for their claim to be free from the duty to serve in the king's labor-force.

The Third Book of Maccabees tells a similar Purim story concerning the Jews of Alexandria, Egypt, but with some fresh notes. This book is one of many Purim-scrolls, containing certain common features. Written in the second century before the Christian era, it tells of a plan by one of the Ptolemaic kings to exterminate all the Jews of Egypt by assembling them in a large, walled-in area, where they could be crushed by the charge of intoxicated elephants. This plan was frustrated by a timely miracle and the Hellenistic King was so affected by this dramatic evidence of Divine favor that he became an ardent friend of the Jews. In token of this deliverance, the Jews of Egypt apparently observed a Purim-like festival.

In this early work, too, we find the plan of Jewish genocide motivated by an ideology of Jewish "difference."

"And they (the Jews) were separated from the people in their food, for which reason there were many who hated them."²

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In Egypt, the priests abided by diverse and complex dietary laws. The peculiar difference which the Greeks noted was the fact that the Jewish population as a whole, not only the priests among them, observed dietary laws. Also, the refusal to participate in the rites of "civic religion" was peculiar to the Jews. Polytheists could accept graciously the worship of additional gods, as the changing fortunes of politics dictated. In Alexandria, a synthetic god, Serapis, was worshiped. The Ptolemaic dynasty favored the worship of Dionysus. It desired initially to give the Jews a favored status in Egypt, a status that would be symbolized by quasi-religious rites. Hence this complaint:

"For they alone among all nations resist stubbornly the kings and those who seek to favor them, refusing to accept all reasonable things"3

Naturally, there were dissensions among the Alexandrian Jews, some aspiring toward friendship with the Hellenes, some clinging to the ramparts of Orthodoxy.

" . . . Not only did they scorn the precious boon of citizenship, but they also condemned secretly and aloud those few among them who look upon us (Greeks) with favor."4

The Jews were pulled into opposing universalist and separatist directions by the contending forces in their heritage. But the separatist elements had high visibility. Also, in the ancient world, communities were conceived to be collectively responsible to the gods. Even the aged Plato, who in his youth saw his master, Socrates, die on the charge of "atheism," demanded in his work, *The Laws*, that those who refuse to participate in the religious rites of the community be punished by death. Nor was this insistence on collective responsibility alien to the Jewish mind. Throughout the ancient and medieval periods, Jewish communities imposed by force a strict pattern of religious conformity upon those born in their ranks. This fierce exercise of communal compulsion was limited in certain centuries and the Jewish authorities then resorted to secret methods of enforcement, in order to compel obedience. One of the privileges that Jews sought at all times was that of punishing the dissenters in their own midst so that they might face the Gentile community

as a monolithic, self-governing "nation."

Thus, the Third Book of Maccabees ends the Alexandrian Purim-story on this note:

"And when they received this letter, they did not hurry to leave but they begged from the King the right to punish as they deserve those who departed from the holy God and transgressed the Torah of the Lord. Maintaining that those who disobey the divine commandment for the sake of their belly will not be true to the command of the King either . . . And every one of the unclean from among their people whom they met on the way they caught, punished, and tortured . . ."⁵

The facade of Jewish difference was an objective phenomenon, easily recognizable by their contemporaries. In the course of time, this objective pattern of differences was supplemented by a subjective ideological tradition in the minds of both Jews and non-Jews. The growth of this tradition, postulating an unbridgeable, cosmic gulf between the Jewish people and the rest of mankind, is one of the central issues in the understanding of Jewish history. Among non-Jews, the tradition of the uniqueness of the Jew became the foundation of an anti-semitic *Weltanschauung*. Among Jews, the dogma of uniqueness was fostered by the apparent concurrence of the high ideals of religion with the natural instincts of ethnic pride and prejudice.

In any case, the myth of Jewish uniqueness was a powerful factor in the molding of Jewish destiny.

We have to study the origins of this protean myth and the many forms which it assumed in the course of Jewish history.

Myths and fables may appear to be of little significance in the making of the hard facts of history. In our materialistic age, it is frequently assumed that masses of men are activated only by the powerful, fundamental forces of economic necessity. All else is froth on the waves of the ocean. Actually, as we have seen, the forces of nationalism and religion share responsibility with the pressures of economics for the explosions of violence and brutality in history. And in both nationalism and religion, myths are far more potent than any objective phenomena. In nationalism, it is not the *facts* of racial kinship but the myth of a common origin, or a common culture that is decisive. A people is made as much by what the folk-memory has forgotten as by what it remembers. The fantastic power of

myth and fable is even now at work within the confines of the state of Israel, molding one people out of the Berber Jews from North Africa, the black Jews from India, and the westernized Jews of Europe. The manifest diversity of ethnic characteristics and cultural attitudes does not disturb the myth of oneness of descent from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And it is the same myth that separates Jewish exiles hailing from diverse portions of the globe, from their neighbors, the Arab *fellahin* of Palestine, in whose veins a goodly proportion of ancient Hebrew blood doubtless flows. To the believers, flattering myths are easily capable of refuting mere facts.

Antisemitism as a compound of myth and malice could thrive for many generations on the enduring momentum of its own tradition. Thus we find at various times and places that the antisemitic ideology flourished mightily in provinces where Jews in the flesh were hardly known. But the tradition could not have been continued for so many generations, were it not recreated afresh again and again. The ancient stereotypes had to be revived and given fresh power by forces and causes similar to those that evoked the fantasy in the first place.

3. *Survival.* The survival of the Jew from the dim beginnings of history strikes us as a miracle. Already in the classic world, the antiquity of the Jew was regarded with awe. In the Christian world, Jewish survival was generally treated not as a natural phenomenon, but as theological dogma. The Jew was to "tarry" as a "witness of the Lord," compelled to drag out a miserable existence until the Second Coming. And the Christian dogma was in its turn but a perversion of the Divine promise in the Bible.

I will make a full end of all the nations
among whom I scattered you,
but of you I will not make a full end.
I will chasten you in just measure,
And I will by no means leave you unpunished.⁶

At first glance, it might seem as if the survival of the Jews were a purely objective phenomenon. The contemporaries of the Israelites in the biblical period were the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians, and the Scythians. Those nations do not now exist as recognizeable ethnic groups, with an unbroken flow of memory. In the Talmudic period,

the Greeks, the Romans, the Nabatean Arabs and the Parthians entered the stage of Near Eastern history. These ancient identifications too are now obsolete. Thus it has become an accepted axiom that while a multitude of nations have come and gone, the Jewish people have stood, unmoved by the tides of time. Naturally, these "facts" of Jewish survival are dramatized and glorified by romantic historians as an irrefutable patent of nobility.

In actual fact, Jewish survival is not a biological phenomenon, but a psychological belief. The remarkable fact in the contrast between the history of the Jews and that of other peoples is that the Jews consider themselves to be precisely the same people today as they were at the time of Moses. The Gentile contemporaries of Isaiah or of Akiba are just as likely to have descendents today as "the men of Judah and Jerusalem." It is the continuity of memory and myth, of dream and tradition that constitutes the so-called survival of the Jews, not an obdurate physical, geographical, or biological fact.

In the imagination of the Jewish people, all Jews today are "of the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." But who can trace his racial origins into the distant past? The fact is that, from the anthropological point of view, the Jews that now inhabit the state of Israel share kinship with every known Afro-Asian racial type. And the European Jews, who are presently predominant, represent all the variations that occur on the continent of Europe, from the blond-haired, blue-eyed Nordic to the dark-haired, brown-eyed, round-headed Alpine. The evidence accumulated in the twentieth century constitutes a smashing refutation of any lingering myth concerning a "Jewish race," or a "Jewish type."

In Bible and Talmud, there is abundant reference to the racially mixed character of the Jewish people. We are told that Judah married a Canaanite, that Joseph married an Egyptian, that Moses married a Midianite, that King David was descended from Ruth, the Moabite. In the ancient world, slaves were usually compelled to accept the religion of their masters. Abraham circumcised the slave members of his household; "a mixed multitude" came up with the Israelites from Egypt. In the Talmud we learn that it was the obligation of every household-er to circumcise his male slaves and convert his female slaves within twelve months of their purchase.⁷ This practice was con-

tinued to the end of the Gaonic period, when pagan slaves were still abundant in the market places of the Mediterranean world. For several centuries, the share of Jews in the international slave trade was exceedingly large.

The diversified origin of the Jewish people did not shock the great Sages of the Talmud, for they looked upon the sonship of Abraham as a spiritual condition. A convert was required to speak of himself in prayer as a "son of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," to address the Lord as "the God of our fathers" and to speak of Palestine as "the land which Thou hast given to our fathers."

Some rabbis gave the term Jew a purely universal denotation — "any one who denies the worship of strange gods is called a Jew."⁸ Other rabbis affirmed that the greatest masters of the Law were descended from Gentile converts. Shemaia and Abtalion, the teachers of Hillel, were of non-Jewish descent, as well as Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Akiba. "Some of the grandchildren of Nebuzaraddon (who superintended the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians) learned Torah in the Sanhedrin."⁹ Since the priests were prouder than most people of the "purity" of their blood, the Talmud counsels them to remember that 4,000 slaves were assimilated into their ranks.¹⁰

But while the intellectual leaders of Judaism sought to liberate Jewish self-awareness from the stifling embrace of racism, there were certain inner factors at work within the folk-mentality which created the illusion of biological permanence and sameness.

In the first place, the central symbol in Judaism is *Kenesseth Yisroel*, the community of Israel. In facing God, we are keenly aware of His nearness as well as His remoteness. In Judaism His remoteness is felt in the generally human condition, while His nearness is felt to be real and immediate in the Covenant-relation between God and the people of Israel.¹¹ As children of man, we are weak and helpless, but as children of Israel, we can confidently trust His redeeming love, for He loved Abraham and concluded a covenant with His seed. Thus, in the Orthodox Daily Prayer Book, we read:

"Master of all worlds! It is not on account of our own righteousness that we offer supplications before Thee, but on account of Thy great compassion. What are we? What is our life? What is our goodness? What our righteousness? What our help-

fulness? What our strength? What our might? What can we say in Thy presence, Lord our God and God of our fathers? Indeed, all the heroes are as nothing before Thee, the men of renown as though they never existed, the wise as if they were without knowledge, the intelligent as though they lacked understanding; for most of their doings are worthless, and the days of their life are vain in Thy sight. Superiority of man over the beast is non-existent, for all is vanity.

"But we are Thy people, the children of Thy covenant, the sons of Abraham Thy friend, to whom Thou has sworn on Mount Moriah . . ."

This mediation of Divine love through the instrumentality of the people Israel led to the emergence of a changeless stereotype, minimizing the flux of history. Nothing ever changes in the Divine scheme. The people Israel is the same, today, yesterday, tomorrow. It travails because of the "sins of the fathers" and it rests its hopes on the "merit of the fathers." Indeed, the sins of past generations are described as "our sins," as in this verse from the Prayer Book, "and because of our sins, we were exiled from before Thee and removed far from our land . . ." By the same token, the deliverance of the past was to be taken as a personal experience by every Jew. "A person should look upon himself as if he had gone out of the land of Egypt . . ."¹²

The "congregation of Israel," *Kenesseth Yisroel*, was a *trans-historical* concept, frozen in its metaphysical reality and unchanged by the swirling currents of human affairs. Even the enemies of the Jews were viewed in the traditional and the folk-literature as reincarnations of the biblical foes. Haman was of the "seed" of Amalek. Rome was Edom, the ancient brother-enemy of Israel. In Jewish legendry, Rome was supposed to have been founded by the children of Eliphaz, son of Esau. Though the real Edomites were converted to Judaism by John Hyrkanos, the impetus of biblical imagery dictated an identification of Edom first with pagan Rome and later with Christian Europe.

When non-Jewish groups accepted the Jewish faith, they also embraced the myth of Hebraic descent. The Falashes of Ethiopia, the Bene Israel of India, the Berber Jews of North Africa, the Jewish Arab tribes, all these groups believed themselves to be descended from some authentic, ethnically "pure" Jewish

tribe. Even the Khazars who were converted to Judaism in the light of history, regarded themselves as somehow of the "seed" and the "blood" of ancient Israel. They belonged at least in part to the tribe of "Simeon" or the "half-tribe Menasseh."¹³ The conversion of individual Gentiles was attributed in the Talmud to the fact that their "outer soul" (*mazal*) was at Sinai. In Qabalah, it was assumed that Abraham and Sarah continue to exist in some heavenly form and that out of their celestial union, the souls of converts are generated,¹⁴ so powerful was the dogmatic belief that all Jews are of Abraham's "seed."

This trans-historical illusion led the Talmudic rabbis to transform the heroes of Israel's past into replicas of themselves. "Abraham our father fulfilled the entire Torah, even to the mixing of cooked foods and the mingling of private domains (for the observance of the Sabbath)."¹⁵ The image of King David was patterned after that of a pietistic rabbi, who studies all night, arising in the morning to concern himself with questions of ritual purity. The heroes of his army were not men of brawn and cunning but gentle scholars, who won their battles by the magical power of piety. The Jewish folk-mentality wrapped itself in a cocoon of myths and fantasies, which shielded its inner life from the harsh pressures of reality.

Jewish survival is thus largely a matter of faith and imagination, the effect of certain beliefs held by Jews and of the radiation of these beliefs into the non-Jewish world. In terms of objective facts, there is no reason why the Greeks of today or the Egyptians of today or the Italians of today may not regard themselves as lineal heirs of the Greeks, the Egyptians, and the Romans of antiquity. In their case, the manifest discontinuities were psychological and dogmatic, rather than concrete sociological facts. Historians generally date the end of Greek national life from the Council of Nicea, or some similar landmark, indicating the triumphant advance of the Christian faith. Presumably, the Greeks, after that date, sought inspiration in the Holy Scriptures, not in Homer and Hesiod, Plato and Aristotle. This transformation of a self-image is obviously a function of faith. Objectively, the Greeks continued to speak their language and to sense their ethnic identity. And modern Greeks consciously seek to rebuild their spiritual bonds with the glory of ancient Hellas. Similarly, modern Italians regard themselves

as heirs of "the grandeur that was Rome." Egyptians are for the present still undecided, affected as they are by the spell of the Medieval Arabian Khalifate, on the one hand, and the glory of the Pharaohs, on the other hand.

In our endeavor to understand the meaning of Jewish history, we have to account for the so-called miracle of Jewish survival. The miracle, is, however, created largely by subjective interpretation; it is a collective self-image, compounded of faith and hope, of illusion, myth and memory.

4. *The Reestablishment of Israel.* Perhaps the most remarkable event of Jewish history was the reestablishment of the state of Israel. In the varied annals of mankind it is hardly possible to find even a remote parallel to this unique achievement. We discover in history numberless examples of submerged peoples attaining sovereignty and of migrations of nations, but nowhere do we encounter the saga of a people that has cherished its attachment to a land for many centuries and then, through the enterprise of individuals, gradually managed to establish a base for an independent society and an independent government.

The emergence of the State of Israel is generally taken to be due to the influence of European nationalism upon the Jews. It is certainly true that political Zionism was essentially a Jewish variant of modern nationalism, and it is political Zionism that mobilized the resources of the Jewish people and persuaded the big powers to "facilitate" the establishment of a Jewish National Home. Yet, the miracle of Israel's rebirth could not have been achieved by modern nationalism alone. Even had Jews through the ages been only nationalists and had the peoples of Europe been actuated by purely secular considerations, there would have been no Jewish return to Zion. Nationalism, with all its genuine appeal and fervor, does not of its own accord draw people back to their "homeland." The Greeks of Asia Minor and the Turks of Greece had to be exchanged involuntarily, under the auspices of the League of Nations, and following a bloody ruthless war. They did not migrate voluntarily to their own "homelands." The Dutch from the Indonesian state did not return to Holland, until they were driven by the resurgent natives.

The Zionist dream was kept alive by the religious traditions of

the Christians as well as the Jews. Modern Zionism, like its biblical counterpart, is in essence a religious phenomenon. The rebuilding of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, following the edict of Cyrus, was a minor miracle in comparison with the massive reality of modern Israel. Yet, certain elements in the first dream of Zion were repeated in the modern Zionist movement.

The conquering Persians allowed the rebuilding of the Holy Temple, as part of their general program of religious toleration. The Persians did not apparently favor the rebuilding of Jewish power as a nation. Hence, the frequent stoppages of the work of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and the eventual disappearance of Zerubabel from the Judean scene. The Highpriest represented religion, while Zerubabel, grandson of the last Judean king, was the national focus of the popular hope for self-government. Soon after the Judean exiles began their work of reconstruction, we find that Zerubabel is missing. Apparently, the Persians favored the restoration of the Holy Temple, not the reemergence of the Jewish state.

Throughout the medieval and modern periods, the hope of Zion persisted largely as a phase of the Jewish religion. The land of Israel was surrounded with a religious aura in the very earliest generations of the Jewish people. It was the land of Promise, toward which the "eyes of God" are directed. Only there could the Lord be properly worshiped. Prayers uttered in other lands might ultimately find their way to the Holy Temple and ascend through the "gates of heaven." During the Second Commonwealth, this trend was continued. All other lands were declared to be "unclean." Many divine commands could be performed only in the Holy Land. There, the Qabbalists said, the air is free from the contamination of the "unclean shells," which prevail through the rest of the world. All hopes of redemption and resurrection were centered upon it. There, the Messiah would come, there the dead would come to life, while those buried elsewhere would have to pass through underground channels until they got to the soil of Palestine. Thus, all pietistic movements urged their followers to return to the Holy Land. Modern Zionism was made possible by a very unmodern exaltation of soil and air as in themselves holy, oriented toward the heavenly abode of God and predestined for a central role in the drama of redemption.

This exaltation of Palestine within the Jewish religion was paralleled by a similar glorification of the Holy Land in the Christian world. To Christians, Palestine was the focus of religious fantasy, almost as much as it was to Jews. Did not the Crusades elicit the loyalty and sacrifice of many millions of Christians for nearly six generations? And the Christian aura of myth and sentiment was an immense factor in the creation of modern Zionism. The masses of the people identified the Jews in their midst with some of the characters in Holy Writ, preventing the Jews from forgetting the land of their origin. The Polish urchins would badger the Jewish peddler with the cry, *Zydzi do Palestyna*, long before the vision of Zion reborn was kindled in the imagination of Dr. Theodor Herzl. All through the nineteenth century, the reactionaries of France and Germany used the Jewish dogma of redemption in Palestine as an excuse for withholding the rights of citizenship from the Jews in their midst, while political Zionism was launched in 1897, on the very threshold of the twentieth century. In the countries of the West, Christians sometimes preceded Jews in the elaboration of the goal and program of political Zionism. Be it sufficient to recall the ardent exertions of Mr. Oliphant, the American visionary and philanthropist, and George Eliot, the English novelist and humanitarian.

Thus the greatest national achievement of the Jewish people in our own day was nurtured and sponsored by the religious heritage of both Jews and Christians.

Each of the four distinctive phenomena of Jewish history relates to the inner life of the Jewish people. Their vision of the Universal God; their evaluation of their own unique role in society; their vision of permanence amidst change; their concept of redemption in the land of Israel. And this inner life was characterized at every point by the blending of both ethnic and religious loyalties. In turn, these loyalties were themselves bi-polar in nature, alternating between the vision of a national ideal and the fantasies of ethnic egotism, between the self-surrender of genuine faith and the self-sanctification of its shadowy counterpart. The greatness and the tragedy of Jewish history are interlinked. Are they also inseparable? The answer to this question can be given only after a thorough analysis of the tensions and contradictions in the entire range of Jewish experience.

Part I:
The Ancient Period

CHAPTER FOUR

THE EMERGENCE OF JUDAISM

It is at the end of the biblical period that we first encounter the Jewish mentality in all its distinctiveness. In the earlier sections of the Bible, we find traces of the slow evolution of this mentality, and these traces can be read in different ways. Some scholars postulate a sudden appearance of the monotheistic idea, while others seek to demonstrate the steps by which this idea attained its fullness. All such speculations deal with proto-Judaism and consider the origin and development of the people and their faith up to the emergence of Judaism itself.

It is certain that when the Israelites settled in Canaan, they already possessed a religious tradition of their own as well as a keen sense of ethnic pride. As a result, they considered themselves to be *radically different* from their neighbors. We know from the discovery of Ugaritic literature, antedating the Israelite conquest of Canaan, that the Israelites acquired the Hebrew language and many of its literary conventions from the Canaanites. Doubtless, they also took over some agricultural rites and Temple practices. Scripture records that many tribes, including Judah, the most populous one, were half-Canaanite, since Judah's wife, Tamar, was a Canaanite. The Midrash records the strange comment that Jacob did not want his grandchildren to touch his coffin since they were born of Canaanite mothers. But the predominant note of the biblical narrative is the feeling of difference, retrojected into the antediluvian past when Noah cursed his grandson, Canaan, and fortified by the ruthless condemnation of all Canaanites to utter extinction.

Assimilation of elements from an alien culture can go hand in hand with the proclamation of the total worthlessness of that culture. Many centuries later, the Christian church carried out a similar synthesis of Judaic, Greek, and Roman elements with

the identical claim of being radically different. So, too, Virgil consciously emulated the heroic epics of Homer, but with the claim that the Romans were descended from the Trojans, the ancient antagonists of the Greeks.

Many scholars have noted that the early chapters of the Book of Genesis constitute a running refutation of current, popular notions. Violence and anguish are not part of the inescapable order of existence, for the One God created all things out of Naught and climaxed His creation with the holiness of the Sabbath. The universe is not the product of a war between Chaos and the gods. It is the sins of mankind, not the caprice of the gods that caused the devastating Deluge. The righteous will be protected by Providence. Civilization is not the hustle and bustle of cities, but the refinements of heart and mind, for behold, Cain the murderer of his brother was the builder of cities. The pride of conquerors and civilization-builders merits Divine punishment, as in the building of the tower of Babel.

If collective political achievements are condemned, righteous individuals come to occupy the center of the stage. Patriarchs and prophets, obeying an inner voice, dominate the biblical horizon; it is their vision that molds the ancient faith and amends the tribal heritage. "All this may help to explain the strange poignancy of single individuals in the Old Testament."¹

Rejecting the priest-ridden societies of both Egypt and Babylonia, Scripture proclaims the ideal of a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation." The Mosaic tradition was apparently as anti-monarchical as it was anti-clerical and democratic, in keeping with the principle that all men face God directly. For many centuries, the Israelites resisted the appointment of a monarch. Society on earth was to duplicate the harmony existing in the heavens. Already the Babylonian state was founded on the principle which viewed "the universe as a state" and inculcated "obedience to the fixed order of things" as the great virtue.² From their contemplation of the stars, the Babylonians arrived at the belief that the entire cosmos was a well-ordered state, governed by an "Assembly of the gods." The link between the heavenly order and the earthly state were the priests of the great Temples and the king, who received direct authorization for his role by the rite of "holding the hand of Marduk." In Egypt, the king was the "son of God" and head of the priestly hierarchy.

We may regard the first stages of the religion of Israel as the protesting or Protestant movement within the prevailing cultures of Egypt, Babylonia, and Canaan. The Will of God was above the forces of nature and above the political structures of man. The ideal society should reflect this Will. All men face God directly, all are potentially priests, prophets, and messengers of the Lord. "Would that all the children of Israel were prophets," says Moses.³ The rebellion of Korah against the hereditary priesthood foreshadowed the mood of the Protestant extremists of sixteenth-century Europe — "For all the congregation is holy and the Lord is in their midst; wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?"⁴

A sense of revulsion against the "abominations" of Canaan and Egypt permeates the legal portions of the Pentateuch. Remarkably scanty when compared with the codes of other Near Eastern peoples, the laws of the Torah read as amendments of a prevailing common law, amendments proposed in the light of an all-governing Divine Will. The laws of slavery, of agriculture, the punishment of criminals, and the loaning of money were to reflect the Will of Him Who stands beyond nature and beyond society. To love Him with heart and soul and to walk humbly in His ways is to become different from all nations, as He is different from all creation.

"When we read in Psalm XIX, 'the heavens declare the glory of God' . . . we hear a voice which mocks the beliefs of the Egyptians and the Babylonians . . . not in nature but beyond it . . ."⁵

The same Psalm goes on to rhapsodize about the Divine Law.

The Law of the Lord is perfect,
reviving the soul;
The testimony of the Lord is sure,
making wise the simple;
The precepts of the Lord are right,
rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of the Lord is pure,
enlightening the eyes;
The fear of the Lord is clean,
enduring forever;
The ordinances of the Lord are true,
and righteous altogether.

By the time we reach the period of the Babylonian Exile, we find intimations of all the four distinctive characteristics of Jew-

ish history. We encounter a proud consciousness of Jewish monotheism and an all-pervasive awareness of being different from "all the nations of the earth."

Faith in God is inseparable even then from a peculiarly intense group-consciousness, for the One God is asserted to be the God of the fathers, the God of Israel. The sense of being a people set apart is reflected in the prophetic literature and in the feeling of isolation with which the Book of Lamentation begins, "How, did she dwell alone . . ."⁸ The permanence of the Covenant is then put to the test, in the devastation of Jerusalem and the exile of its inhabitants; in the return of "the congregation of the Lord" and in the return of some of the exiles from Babylonia, Judeans pass the test with flying colors. Monotheism and antisemitism, survival and Zionism, all these unparalleled phenomena of Jewish history meet us, in their incipient stages, at the end of the biblical period. Already, then, they are forced into a restless balance.

Jewish monotheism and ethnicism appear on the stage of history together, like a married couple, walking arm in arm. As in marriage, there was a combination of accidental coincidences and the mysterious outburst of the flame of love, at least on the part of the earthly spouse. As in marriage, too, the union was not a natural, instinctive or organic phenomenon, but one of choice and social mores. Hence there could be separations, then false or true reunions.

In our Scriptures, it is the Lord of the Universe who chooses first Abraham, then Isaac, then Jacob and the seed of Israel to be His treasure-people. The Bible begins its magnificent narration with the story of creation of heaven and earth. We behold the appearance of earth and sky and water, of the sun and stars, of the plants and animals. Man is created as a surrogate of God on earth, to cultivate it and to guard it. Woman is designed, not merely as man's sexual mate, but as his companion and mentor, a perpetual reminder of God's special favor. Then, the story races on to teach of God's relation to man by means of restating and reinterpreting the folk-traditions concerning the Age of Paradise, the Serpent and the Fall of Man, the Deluge, the Tower and the breakup of humanity into many different linguistic families.



Only after this general picture of humanity is presented to us, does the God of the universe reveal Himself as "the God of Israel." He chooses Abraham, "tests" him, and blesses him. Then, following the terms of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, He sends Moses to liberate the Israelites from Egypt and to conclude a covenant with the Israelites. This Covenant is "renewed" at different times, particularly by Kings Hezekiah and Josiah.⁷ A covenant is effected by mutual consent, but once consent is given, the vows of both parties are unbreakable for all time.

This theological version of the unity of Jewish ethnicism and monotheism must be viewed by historians from the human angle. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob became "the God of Israel." In turn, the God of Israel, by the refinement of thought and the ardor of the prophetic conscience became the God of the Universe. This evolution is summarized succinctly in the central affirmation of Judaism: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One." As an independent assertion, "the Lord is one" is tautologous. The oneness is already assumed in the term, the Lord. To say, as does Hermann Cohen, that the word *one* here denotes *uniqueness*, pointing to God's essential difference from all that is earthly, is to indulge in a modern form of the ancient art of "pilpul" (Talmudic hair-splitting). The original meaning of the declaration is presented in the first part of the affirmation. It is *our* God who is the One God. Henotheism, the worship of a god by one people, is here graduated and transmuted into monotheism.

Because of its rootedness in the Jewish people's ethnic awareness, biblical monotheism did not set out to elevate the pagan gods but to supplant them, not to uplift the religion of their neighbors but to refute, ridicule, and annihilate the gods of the nations. This procedure was not a calculated policy, laid down as a century-spanning program for the conversion of mankind. Ideas, we must remember, are not calmly-dwelling essences in an ethereal realm; if they are effective in history, mass-ideas carry their birth-marks with them, along with the scars received in the ruthless market-places of the world.

As the biblical authors saw it, the gods of the nations are naught but empty wisps of the imagination. It is the Lord of cre-

ation who determines the fate of all nations, uplifting some to power and dominion, and punishing others for their sins. And this Lord of universal history is "the holy One of Israel," who has chosen Zion as His dwelling place and Israel as His treasure. Characteristic of this faith in the "difference" of Israel's God is the remark attributed in the Book of Kings to Ravshokeh, the Assyrian general, and the retort of King Hezekiah,

"But if you say to me, 'we rely on the Lord our God,' is it not he whose high places and altars Hezekiah has removed, saying to Judah and Jerusalem, 'You shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem?' . . . Moreover, is it without the Lord that I have come up against this place to destroy it? The Lord said to me, 'Go up against this land, and destroy it.'"⁸

Monotheism in itself could not offer any solace to Hezekiah. After all, the Lord may have decided to surrender Jerusalem to Assyria. Hezekiah's hopes rested on the desecration of God's Name that would result from an Assyrian conquest. For the God who has made "heaven and earth" is also the "God of Israel," who is "enthroned above the Cherubim."

"Of a truth, O Lord, the Kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire; for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone; therefore, they were destroyed. So now, O Lord our God, save us, I beseech Thee, from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Thou, O God, art God alone."⁹

We see in this exchange, which was written at the beginning of the Babylonian Exile, an excellent illustration of Jewish monotheism. It affirms God's universal qualities, but at the same time it denies that other people may conceivably worship the Supreme Being under the aspect of their national deities. Other peoples are primitive fetishists, worshipers of "wood and stone." They are incapable of recognizing that God is the Master of men, not "the work of men's hands." We know today that the Assyrians and the peoples of the Near East generally were not devoid of subtlety and sophistication in their philosophy of life.¹⁰ But the singlemindedness of Jewish monotheism induced a relative blindness to the higher realms of pagan faith and culture. This willful refusal to recognize the fullness of another faith is quite understandable and altogether human in an age of contro-

versy. And the biblical period was one of endless religious disputes, as the prophets contended manfully against the pagan tendencies of the people.

Ezekiel Kaufman sees the failure of the prophets to acknowledge the total philosophy of the pagan cultures as evidence of the "pure" monotheistic character of the Jewish people. In his view, the "Jewish psyche" had become so intensely committed to the belief in One God that it was incapable of comprehending the meaning of alternative philosophies. However, the fact is that the women of Jerusalem found it altogether possible to join in the worship of Thamuz, of the queen of heaven (Isis), and of Moloch.¹¹ There is no need to assume a peculiar "national soul" in order to account for the failure of the prophetic controversialists to do justice to the philosophy of their opponents. Such is the way of the world, even today. But it is important to note that this refusal to see aught but primitive fetishism in the pagan cults became a permanent characteristic of the Jewish literary tradition. The very ardor generated by the monotheistic tradition created an unfavorable climate for the pragmatic virtues of tolerance and gentle skepticism.

Thus the doctrine of the One God involved a scornful evaluation of the faith and culture of other nations. While it led the Jews to see the nobility of order and the beauty of harmony in human nature and in the universe at large, it also led them to see naught but stupidity and stubbornness in the worship of their neighbors. To be sure, there were occasional glimpses of the validity of idolatrous worship for other nations. Notable is the passage in Malachi: "And in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering; for my name is great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts."¹² In the Book of Deuteronomy, we read that God assigned the stars, the sun, and the moon to other nations, presumably for worship.¹³ This indeed is the interpretation of Rav, a great Babylonian teacher of the third century, who adds bitingly, "the Lord persuaded the nations to worship these things in order to banish them from the world."¹⁴

The Septuagint translation added the words "to serve as illumination for them," in order to disavow the idea that idolatry was Divinely ordained or permitted. A passage in the Talmud considers the Septuagint version to be Divinely inspired so that the Greek King would not be offended.¹⁵ It was Rav's interpre-

tation, however, which reflected the popular mentality.

On the whole, it is hardly possible to separate the Jewish devotion to the One God from a concomitant, thorough contempt for the peoples worshipping other gods. For several centuries, the prophets had to contend against the lure of idolatry, especially when it was associated with lascivious practices. In this persistent effort, it was extremely difficult to disassociate the condemnation of idolatrous rites from the people who practiced them. Though the prophets generally balanced their contemptuous views of the nations around them with the hope of their ultimate conversion, we may expect that in the bazaars, the stadiums and the circuses, Jewish contempt for Gentiles was more in evidence than hope for their conversion. In practice, all ideas tend to be polarized, with some of the intellectuals affirming the universal content and the masses clinging to the romantic and self-glorifying aspects.

In the Book of Jeremiah, we find the first rumbling of the dispute between Jewish monotheism and pagan idolatry. The prophet teaches the people to proclaim their faith in Aramaic — "The gods who did not make the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under the heavens."¹⁶ Here is a declaration of unconditional war against paganism, which was in fact continued with increasing zealotry by the Christian and Moslem faiths. Inevitably this condition of perpetual belligerency was accompanied by sentiments of scorn. In this connection, the same prophet declares, "Learn not the way of the nations . . . for the customs of the peoples are false . . . They are both stupid and false . . ." and he concludes, "Pour out Thy wrath upon the nations that know Thee not, and upon the peoples that call not upon Thy Name; for they have devoured Jacob; they have devoured and consumed him, and they have laid waste his habitation."

It is easily seen that the very core of Jewish monotheism contained both a promise of redemption and a prediction of doom for the nations of the world. A similar combination of salvation and perdition was also preached by the prophets to the Jewish people throughout the biblical period. As a result of their dispersion, the Jewish people had involuntarily become popular prophets, proclaiming this double-faceted message to the na-

tions around them. The cause of monotheism had become allied with the life and destiny of the Jewish people. It was no longer an abstract idea that was proposed, but the acceptance of a new group-identity, a new orientation which implied an utter break with one's family and one's social attachments.

There is no evidence of any concerted Jewish missionary efforts to the nations. But in a sense, all Jews were missionaries, preaching their faith through their daily contacts. They won many converts, without doubt, but those who did not accept their promise of redemption were not merely unconvinced. They were positively insulted by an attitude which they could only understand as rank intolerance. The Jews announced a glorious Promise of the loving God who leads the course of human affairs toward justice and peace, and Who dwells in Zion. Some of the people accepted this Promise and came to dwell "under the wings of the *Shechinah*." But the vast majority rejected either the philosophy of monotheism or the assumption of an unbreakable bond between the One God and the Jewish people. They heard the message of doom for all who "did not know His Name," the verdict of scornful condemnation of their gods, their rites, their people. Their resentment would naturally take on an ideological frame of reference, since it was by an ideology that they were condemned. Here, then, is a massive root of that implacable hatred which was to dog the steps of the Jew in all his wanderings.

To understand the dynamic factors in Jewish history we have to study the nature of the exclusiveness that is implicit in the doctrine of the One God. This question really falls into two parts: How did the concept of the One God arise in the minds and hearts of the Jewish people? Why was God conceived to be "jealous," intolerant of idolatry?

We may expect to find all shades of prejudice coloring the answers to these two questions, since we confront here the fundamental mystery of the Jewish religion.

The most obviously biased and most frequently stated answer is the one which attributes the concept of Divine "jealousy" to the innate cussedness of the Jewish character. Following Voltaire, who pointed out that people make gods in their image, not vice versa, critics naturally argued that the Jews conceived of a jealous God, who loves only them and their ways, because

they were an arrogant, auto-intoxicated people unwilling to share their treasure with others. It was necessary for Jesus to shatter the shell of "Judaic zealotry" and open the faith in One God to all mankind.

It is hardly necessary to refute this misreading of history. We know that the Jews were only too eager to bring other people "under the shelter of the wings of the *Shechinah*," and it was the conversionist impetus of Judaism that impelled the early Christians to preach their faith. Voltaire's axiom that the Jews are more selfish and egotistical by nature than other people is as unwarranted as the other axiom that the Jews are by nature a superior race. Such axioms belong to the realm of mythology, not of rational investigation.

In its most naive and crude form, the doctrine of a unique ethnic endowment of the Jewish people was stated by the Medieval philosopher, Yehudah Halevi, who maintained that the Jews alone were talented with the gift of prophecy.¹⁷ They and they alone were peculiarly sensitive to "Divine phenomena." As mankind is distinguished from the animal world by the possession of reason, so is Israel distinguished from the human race by the power of apprehending the nature and will of God. Hence, the emergence of monotheism in Israel; hence, the folly of all rites and dogmas alien to the Jewish tradition.

The Halevian assumptions were given somewhat more sophisticated formulation in the works of modern romantic nationalists. Such thinkers naturally assume a unique and supremely significant quality in their own people. They seek to account for all events by the assumption of certain flattering national traits, as the antisemites endeavor to attribute all disasters to certain evil qualities in the Jewish race. And romantic nationalism may be expected to appeal so much more powerfully to Jewish people, because the history and destiny of the Jew are truly remarkable in several respects. It is so easy to dramatize the Jew as against the rest of mankind. Faith and national feeling combine to lend their support, and the Bible adds a peculiar contribution in the word Gentile, embracing non-Jewish humanity as a class in itself. In addition, people that are systematically defamed and abused crave the solace of praise and exaltation. And which people were defamed and abused more than the Jews?

Putting all racial axioms aside, let us see if we can understand

the tension within biblical monotheism, in terms of universal, human impulses.

The achievement of biblical monotheism is doubtless a magnificent peak in the tortuous road of human progress. Like all great attainments of the human spirit, it was not a sudden spurt but a slow and massive growth. It was preceded by the Babylonian insight into the order and harmony of the heavens, marred though this insight was by astrological superstitions. And it was preceded by the Egyptian preoccupation with the fate of the human soul, narrowed though this concern was to the life of the soul after death. In biblical times, the spirit of man had moved far into the realm of objective contemplation and far into the domain of subjective introspection. Monotheism arose out of the extension of the amplitude of the human spirit in both its objective and subjective orientations. We cannot trace the order of precedence, in the alternation of the spirit, nor the slow steps whereby the delicate nuances and fine shades of meaning evolved. It is possible that creative intuition reached for the highest insights, long before the rational process of orderly progress was revealed. But it is also possible that long and sustained reflection lay behind every inch of the road. In any case, we can see the large outlines of biblical thought. On the objective coordinate, monotheism went further than the contemporary pagan faiths, insisting on the unity of will and purpose in the universe. While there were glimpses of cosmic harmony and visions of the essential unity of "the gods" in the other Near Eastern faiths, the pagans did not go all the way in recognizing the unity of law that holds all things in thrall. The very flowering of their myths and rites prevented the pagan peoples from advancing toward the goal of unity. It is possible that as aliens for several centuries during the Patriarchal period, the Hebrews could contemplate the mighty myths of their neighbors from the sidelines and thereby rise above their petrifying spell. It is often the alien who is predisposed to advance beyond an established tradition. Thus, the Hebrews in the objective trajectory of their spirit advanced beyond the myth-making stage. They came to recognize that God could not be subject to the rhythms of life, if He is the Author of life. All myths are, of course, projections of the pulsations of human life unto the gods. It was exceedingly

difficult for the ancient peoples of the East to transcend the concept of a female deity, an Anath, an Ashtoreth, or an Isis. Thus Jeremiah was still battling against the worship of "the queen of heaven."¹⁸ From the papyri of the Jewish soldier-colony in Elephantine, near the Southern border of Egypt, we learn that the pious, unlearned Jews of the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. were exceedingly loyal to *Yahu*, but they were also worshipers of Anath.¹⁹ But by and large mythology in the sense of the gods being subject to other forces is completely transcended in the Bible. God alone is the Master; He causes the rain to come in one place, not in another; He sends the winds as His Messengers; angels issue from His Presence to survey the affairs of mankind and to do His bidding.

But this insight into the unity of Will that governs all things was supplemented by a swing of the pendulum of the spirit toward the pole of subjectivity. In this inward recoil, there were two possibilities — the subjectivity of the individual and of the ethnic group. The many-splendored greatness of the biblical faith arises precisely from the fact that both possibilities were realized, and in full measure.

First, the subjectivity of the individual; that is, his concern with the fate of his soul, his anxiety, his dread of the unknown, his longing to do the right, his yearning for the fullness of life, his fear of the abyss of death. In the early stages of culture, the individual did not allow himself to become fully conscious of the stormy restlessness in his being. It takes a measure of sophistication for a person to turn the bright lights of consciousness inward. Psychology was the last of the sciences to swim into the ken of modern man. Seen from without and only in fleeting moments of contemplation, a human being is in many respects inferior to the animals. Thus primitive man tends to look for the secret of the Divine in the beasts around him, who can run faster, kill more efficiently, or procreate more potently. In the totemic stage, man seeks to absorb within himself the mysterious powers that he recognizes in the mighty beasts of the world around him. True, by the time our knowledge of history begins, man has acquired an ascendancy over the animal kingdom, but this ascendancy was incomplete and insecure. In some respects the superiority of the beasts was evident, and those were the quali-

ties that man needed most in his battles against fellowmen. He longed for the ferocity of the cat-family of beasts, the sexual potency of the bull, the cunning of the fox, the mysterious dark power of the serpent, the kinship to water of the crocodile. It took long and arduous reflection for man to confront himself as a free, thinking self, possessing a super-animalic essence or soul.

Concurrently, the self-consciousness of the individual was held back by the powerful hold of the clan. It was Aristotle who noted long ago that man is by nature society-minded. He hunts in groups, like the red ants, not singly, as the tigers. He follows the habits of his tribe, without reflection, channeling his emotions in socially-approved grooves, obeying the hypnotic power of the herd in the grip of danger as in the throes of orgiastic frenzy, mating, fighting, and obeying without apparent concern for his personal fate. He is as much an automatic part of the herd as the bee is of the hive or the ant of the ant-hill. It is only as the process of reflection grows and deepens, that man begins to question the ties that bind him to his clan and to achieve a consciousness of his own individuality.

By the time the biblical period opens, the individual has become fully conscious of his self, overcoming the spell of the animal world and the hypnotic power of the tribe. It is as an individual that Abraham begins his career, rising above the conventions, beliefs, and loyalties of his native city. It is he, the lonely, alien sage wandering in distant lands, with only his wife by his side, who faces God in love and faith, in fear and doubt, concluding a covenant with him. Throughout the Bible, it is individuals that arise as instruments of salvation or destruction. At one point, the Lord is quite willing to annihilate the people Israel, as a whole, and to begin his work of redemption all over again with a single individual, Moses, even as He once carried out a similar verdict on the total society of mankind, saving only one individual and his family. Then the Lord "repented of the evil which He intended to do to His people," not because of their pleading, but on account of Moses' prayers and because of the oaths which He had given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.²⁰ His reason for choosing Israel derives from His love for the three patriarchs. The exaltation of the individual is not a late discovery in the Bible, as the Wellhausen school taught. Not only in the Book of Ezekiel, but in every page of the Bible from cover

to cover, the individual occupies the center of the stage. Degeneration is collective, in most instances, while redemption is achieved by the agency of one or more individuals. "And I raised up some of your sons for prophets, and some of your young men for Nazirites. Is it not indeed so, O people of Israel? says the Lord."²¹

Some Christian theologians, in their eagerness to reserve for the New Testament the glory of discovering the worth of the individual, indulge in the wildest casuistries to prove that the religion of the Old Testament was concerned solely with the fate of the ethnic group.

Their argument runs as follows: It was the self-enclosed ethnicism of the Jews that made it impossible for them to regard the human individual as a worthy object of interest of the Deity. Only in the concept of the "saving remnant" of Isaiah and in the prophecy of Ezekiel do we encounter the first glimmerings of religion as the confrontation of God and the human soul. However, it was Jesus who gathered these scattered insights and opened up the vista of the infinite depth and potency of the human soul.

This dogmatic appraisal was a natural outgrowth of the emphasis on inwardness in Lutheranism. However, a similar view was proclaimed by modern Jewish nationalist historians, especially Ahad Ha'am and his school. The Jewish nationalists sought to prove that Judaism was no "religion" in the biblical period, centering round the polarity of God and the individual, but an all-embracing philosophy of ethnic self-exaltation and a national "way of life." When Jewish consciousness was "healthy," the individual Jew found his fulfillment in the destiny of the people. In the demoralizing tragedy of the Babylonian exile, the spell of national unity was broken and the fate of the individual became the focal concern of Jewish people. This is why the prophet Ezekiel deals so persistently with the questions of individual sin and reward, repentance and redemption. The Lutheran theologians and the Jewish nationalists agreed in denying individual religion in the pre-exilic period, but for opposite reasons — the theologians, because the "inwardness" of true religion was for them purely Christian; the nationalists, because for them the vision of ethnic aggrandizement and the sense of national discipline were supreme virtues while the anxious feelings

of the individual and his metaphysical speculations concerning God were likely to divert the nation from the paths of power and grandeur.

Actually, the perverseness of both schools of interpretation is obvious. We need not enter into a detailed determination of the date of different verses in the Hebrew Bible, since there is hardly an episode or a chapter that does not deal with the choice made by individuals in the recesses of their soul, a free decision which determines ultimately the course of human affairs. Since the Scriptures deal with concrete situations, they take account of the impact of historic events, of the momentum of the past and of the fate of communities as a whole. In actual life, the individual is not free to determine his own fate. But, he stands before God in judgment at all times, and the sum total of individual actions constitutes the character of the community and its destiny.

God's concern with the individual implies His interest in all mankind. Thus, we find that God concludes covenants with Adam and Noah, ancestors of the human race, before choosing Abraham and his seed. And, "in the end of days," the whole of mankind will once again be reconciled to the Lord.

With this deep awareness of the worth and plight of the individual, the objective insights of monotheism were set in tension against the tremors and hopes of the human soul. The alteration of man's spirit from the objective periphery to the center of the soul brought about a powerful correlation between God, the ultimate Goal of objectivity, and the human soul, the ultimate focus of man's inner being. Out of this potent correlation, there emerged a concept of God, fashioned in the image of man's soul, and a concept of man, fashioned in the image of God's mysterious and all-perfect Being.

The concept of God which emerges out of the contemplation of the orderly processes in nature is inevitably impersonal. The wheels of nature move at their inexorable pace, without any concern for the feelings of people or the rights and wrongs of any situation. In nature, we behold immensity and harmony, implacable law and majestic beauty. Hence, the God of nature might be a self-contained, self-contemplating Unmoved Mover, as in Aristotle's philosophy, or an indwelling law of reason, as in

the Stoic system, or the eternal, changeless Substance of all temporary, changing things, as in the philosophy of Spinoza. In the pagan religions, the various gods were endowed with personal qualities, precisely because they were not merged with the all-encompassing chain of necessity. They represented the passing phases of the changing faces of nature. However, once the objective unity of the cosmos was fully comprehended, "the gods" were inescapably merged into an impersonal Force.

In Judaism, this concept of the God of nature was transformed by the contemplation of the depth and mystery of the human soul. The One God of Nature was not alone a disembodied Mind, but an infinite Personality. He was the Living God, who looks "to the poor and the lowly of spirit." He faces man, not only as infinite force, but He also confronts him on the human plane with infinite compassion. The human body is part of the interlaced forces of nature, but the human soul is as alien to nature as is its Creator. God is both the Author of the laws governing nature and man's Companion and Judge. On His power, the human body depends; in His love, the human soul finds its source and the cosmic context of its meaning.

In all of post-biblical thought, the tension between these two aspects of the One God determined the coordinates of speculation. At times, this inner paradox within the biblical concept itself was erroneously represented as the contradiction between "the God of Aristotle" and "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," or between Hebraism and Hellenism. As if the biblical prophets were utterly subjective, communing only with their own souls, and the Greek philosophers were utterly devoid of introspection, being solely concerned with the understanding of the forces of nature. Both Jews and Greeks were whole personalities, torn between the apparently diverse testimonies of human nature and physical nature. More to the point was the belief of the Medieval commentators that the name, *Elohim*, stands in the Bible for the God of Nature, while the name, *Adonai* (YHVH), stands for the personal aspect of the Supreme Being. According to Kassuto, some such distinction is implicit in the language of Holy Scriptures.

The intense correlation between God and the individual produced a haunting concept of man. In the biblical view, man is

not a separable entity, complete in himself. "Walk before me," says the Lord to Abraham, "and be complete."²² There is a mysterious quality in the nature of man that relates him to the Divine Being and lifts him above the creatures of the animal kingdom. If man presumes to make himself "the measure of all things," he cuts himself off from the well-spring of his own being. "For with Thee is the fountain of life and in Thy light, do we see light."²³

Exactly how the doctrine of man being made in the image of God was conceived in the biblical period, we cannot tell. Doubtless it was not envisioned in the same way by the sophisticated and the simple, by the prophets and the people. In Philo and in Medieval Jewish philosophy, the concept of the Divine image was believed to refer either to man's freedom of will, or to man's rational capacity. In Qabbalah, the Divine image was represented in concrete imagery, which, however, all devotees were cautioned to regard only as symbols. We may take it as a reasonable supposition that in the biblical period, the concept of the Divine Image hovered uncertainly between the popular or primitive view and some symbolic-philosophic interpretation.

In any case, the Scriptures postulate that man becomes truly himself, only when he faces God in humility and reverence. "The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord."²⁴ God is not ever so far from man, that He is in need of being "proved." In the objective world, God stands at the end of a chain of causes, all related and linked together in a cosmic chain of necessity. But by reason of His personal aspect, God is also at the base of all that is human. Only when man denies a portion of his own being can he bring himself to deny the existence of God. "The wicked saith in his heart, 'There is no God.'²⁵ Also: "Those who hate God deny Him."²⁶ In the biblical context, the opposite of faith in God was self-exaltation or the worship of idols, "the work of men's hands." All of us must have a focus of worship; our only choice is between the worship of the god which men make, or of the God who makes men.

To us, today, faith in God is not a self-evident phenomenon. Are we then to assume, along with many modern theologians, that we are "fallen," in an "existential" sense, from the state of Grace in which the "biblical man" lived perpetually? No such assumption is either necessary or admissible. The human mind

is basically one, but what we feel is frequently conditioned by what we think. The cosmos today is so much more vast and complex than it seemed to be in biblical times. Native to all men is the deep need of belonging to a larger realm of meaning, an order, a design or a harmony, which commands submission. Our need for the fullness of self-assertion is balanced by the need for self-surrender. And in the context of man's confrontation with God, this phase of self-surrender can best be interpreted as an expression of faith; that is, faith in the sense of *trust*, not in the sense of assent to a definite proposition.

In addition to the polarity between man and God, the Scriptures tell us of another subjective focus of thought and sentiment, the "treasure-people," Israel. The concept of a people especially chosen by the Lord of the universe as "His people" is fundamental to the understanding of the peculiar problems of Jewish history. That any one people should esteem itself to be the "salt of the earth" is by no means unusual. On the contrary, the collective egotism of a people is likely to grow at a much faster rate than its cultural attainments. Thus the Greeks of the classical age regarded the non-Hellenic peoples as inferior barbarians, incapable of sharing in the values of culture. As we have mentioned, even Aristotle believed that only Hellenes were designed for freedom. For reasons of imperialism and statecraft, Alexander the Great initiated a movement toward the amalgamation of Greeks and Persians, thus projecting the concept of one humanity. In philosophy, the Stoic movement, which combined the religious fervor of the East with the critical thought of the Hellenes, preached the doctrine of universal brotherhood.

In Judaism, we encounter this strange paradox — both concepts, universal brotherhood and the "treasure-people," were presented in uniquely powerful forms. To be chosen by its own god was a common enough belief in the Mediterranean world. And this belief contained the tacit assumption that other peoples were similarly chosen in their own way. In describing the faiths and cultures of Egypt and Persia, Herodotus identifies the gods of those countries with those of Greece. The superstitious Romans, in their eagerness to keep from fighting gods as well as men, would invite the gods of their enemies to take up residence in the Roman Capitol. The Jewish concept was *sui generis*, because

it assumed an act of selection by the One God, and a judgment of total condemnation against the gods of all other peoples. The assertion of the One God invariably implied the rejection of the claim of all other peoples to a preferred status and the affirmation of a unique position for the people Israel in the Divine scheme of things. And as the primitive feeling of racial pride and ethnic uniqueness was made vastly more challenging by its association with monotheism, the doctrine of the One God acquired the bitter accents of marketplace rivalry from its association with the life of one people. For the Jews preached that *their* god was the One God, not merely that only one God had true being.

The assertion of being chosen by the One God was saved from the moral miasma of sacred egotism by the tension between the concepts of man and God within the soul of the Jew. For the three foci of the Jewish spirit — God, the human individual, the Jewish people — were not combined in a static synthesis true for all times and places, and equally balanced in a perfect equilibrium in the minds of all Jews. Mass-ideas come to reflect the variety of feeling and the range of intellectual growth in a historic community. The three poles of thought were held in perpetual tension, varying among different people and shifting in one direction or another in accordance with education, temperament, and the spirit of the times.

Let us now see some of the elements composing the concept of being Divinely chosen:

(1) *The ritual connotation.* The people of God should worship Him, in the ways designed by Him. "I shall be your God, and you shall be my people." The entire Jewish people was deemed to be a "Kingdom of priests." In every culture, priests subject themselves to a more complex ritual than do the people generally. The peculiar "holiness" of the people Israel must needs be symbolized by some concrete rites obligatory upon all the people.

(2) *The moral connotation.* To be the people of God is to live on the highest ethical plane — "to keep the way of the Lord, doing justice and righteousness."²⁷ It is to "love the Lord," to "walk in His ways," to "cling unto Him," to shun the immoral practices, "which are an abomination in His sight." The ethical implications of chosenness are of infinite depth and refinement.

For God demands more from those who are close to Him than He requests from others. "Only you have I known of all the peoples of the earth; therefore, I shall visit upon you the punishment for all your sins . . ." ²⁸

(3) *The missionary connotation.* The chosenness of Israel is placed in the context of God's original creation of one humanity and His final achievement of a united mankind in the end of days. It is therefore the function of Israel to carry the knowledge of God to the world at large. While this missionary obligation was not spelled out in so many words, it was implied in the doctrine itself. And it is echoed in various ways.

I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness,
I have taken you by the hand and kept you;
I have given you as a covenant to the people,
a light to the nations,
to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness.²⁹

The concept of the Name being "sanctified," or "desecrated," by Israel's actions is a case in point:

"But when they came to the nations, wherever they came, they profaned my holy name, in that men said of them, 'These are the people of the Lord, and yet they had to go out of his land.' But I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel caused to be profaned among the nations to which they came."³⁰

The prophet Ezekiel goes on to say that for the sake of His Name, the Lord will return the exiles from the lands of their dispersion and rebuild the land of Israel. Presumably the good fortune of the Lord's people will speak louder than any words of theirs, so long as they are in distress. Whether the One God was to become known to mankind through Israel's *life*, or through its concerted teaching long remained a moot question. The prevailing doctrine certainly taught that the very existence of the "people of God" would bring mankind ultimately to His worship.

(4) *The aristocratic connotation.* To serve as the "people of God" within the society of mankind is to occupy the highest social position. In every ancient society, the fighters or the priests enjoyed the most preferred status. In time to come, the implements of war will be broken and universal peace will reign. Then

it may be expected that the "kingdom of priests" and the "holy nation" will attain the highest rank.³¹

Did the Israelites look forward to dominion over the nations in the days of the Messiah? In the literature of later periods, we find occasional expressions of the hope for world dominion.³² The apostles of Jesus looked forward to this consummation. However, at the end of the biblical period, it would not be correct to describe the "hope of Israel" in terms of power and military dominance. But there can be no question that this hope encompassed a preferential, social status for the Jewish people.

Aliens shall stand and feed your flock,
 foreigners shall be your plowmen and vine-dressers;
 but you shall be called the priests of the Lord,
 men shall speak of you as the ministers of our God;
 You shall eat the wealth of the nations,
 and in their riches you shall glory
 Instead of your shame you shall have a double portion,
 instead of dishonor you shall rejoice in your lot;
 therefore in your land you shall possess a double portion;
 Yours shall be everlasting joy.³³

(5) *Earthly reward and heavenly bliss.* It was always assumed by believers that they would be amply rewarded for their pains in keeping the covenant. And since human aspirations change but little, we may assume that heavenly bliss figured prominently in the vision of reward even in the early biblical period. However, in the books of the Bible, the rewards of obedience are earthly and communal in character.

If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall last to the time of vintage, and the vintage shall last to the time of sowing; and you shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land securely. And I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid; and I will remove evil beasts from the land, and the sword shall not go through your land. And you shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword.³⁴

In the post-biblical period, other-worldly rewards came to loom more prominently in the minds of the people. It was then assumed that "the people of God" would be resurrected to enjoy eternal bliss, while others would be condemned to "eternal

shame." Later still, the visions of heaven and hell take firm hold of the imagination of the people and it is consequently taken for granted that the joys of heaven would be reserved more or less exclusively for the "people of the covenant." The Talmud records a vehement debate on the question, whether "the pious of the nations (the phrase really means the *saints* of the nations) have a share in the world to come."³⁵ The Mishnah asserts categorically, "All Israelites have a share in the world to come (except for heretics)." And the Midrash in numberless places points to the superior status of the Jews in the hereafter. "Hence we learn that Israelites will not see the face of hell."³⁶ "Beloved is circumcision for the Lord swore to Abraham that anyone who is circumcised will not descend into hell."³⁷ In time to come, Abraham will sit at the gate of hell and will not permit a circumcised Israelite to descend into it."³⁸

In the climactic day of universal judgment, all accounts will be righted, the people of Israel will be exalted and vindicated, while the "nations" will be punished. This is the common dogma of fundamentalist believers in nearly all faiths.

The three poles of Jewish consciousness — God, man, and Israel — were held in perpetual tension. The mentality that resulted from their dynamic interrelationship varied extensively from person to person, from generation to generation, from country to country. Judaism, as a historical force, was not restricted to the noble expressions of its best sons. Rooted in the hearts and minds of its people, it reflected the rise and fall of all waves of ethnic romanticism and rational liberalism. Retaining the three foci of Jewish piety, the actual result could vary from the loftiest heights of self-dedication in love of God and man to the lowest, most fantastic delusions of ethnic self-glorification.

To the "enlightened," God and man would loom brightest on the horizon, while the concept of Israel would be reduced to a symbol of redeemed humanity, a concrete image of the spiritual elite among all the nations. To the romantics, mankind was only a vague background for the living reality of Israel, while the myths and rites of religion took on the strident accents and beligerent postures of ethnic aggrandizement.

This threefold tension within the soul of the Jew made a variety of views possible, according as one or another ideal pre-

dominated. Yet, a facade of unity could well be maintained, hiding the inner tensions of the spirit by a blanket of ambiguous words and symbols. Tension in the spiritual realm corresponds to vectors of force in physics. At this point, we may formulate a Newtonian law regarding the components of force — *each spiritual ideal acts as if it were alone, independently of the other forces operating simultaneously.*

Thus, the universalist impetus of religion and the isolationist passions of ethnicism exerted their respective effects upon the fate of Jewry. The love of God and man turned the Jewish communities into historical vehicles of noble ideals, while the glorification of the people Israel as a unique, divinely favored aristocracy aroused bitter resentment among the neighbors of the Jews. Furthermore, to the masses of the people, the noble ideals of their prophets and sages were more often garments of glory in which to strut than principles of practical wisdom by which to live. To them, it was *their* God, Who was the Creator and Judge of all men, not the reverse. And the contact of the Jewish masses with their neighbors was as potent a factor in history as was the intellectual give-and-take on the level of philosophers, priests and prophets.

At the same time, there was no unbridgeable chasm between the Jewish leaders and their followers, as there came to be in classical Greece between the philosophers and the people. For the prophets and preachers in Israel labored within the community and under the aegis of the tradition. They appealed to ethnic pride even while they pushed back the narrow horizons of their contemporaries. They flattered even while they exhorted, offering the "fat of the land" along with the "dew of heaven." They projected a splendid goal of universal redemption and described the role of Israel to be that of "the suffering servant," but in the center of that radiant utopia they placed the empirical people, magically shriven of sin and provided with "a new heart" and "a new spirit."³⁰ They urged the driven exiles to be more than human, even while they appealed to passions and prejudices that were human, all too human. In their preaching they illustrated the paradox of human nature, in which egotism and idealism are inextricably mixed. If they had possessed the gentle skepticism of a Qoheleth or the capacity of a Socrates for self-criticism, they might have separated the idealistic wheat from the

egotistic chaff in their message. But then they would not have drawn the people into the orbit of their influence. Having fused the loyalties to God, man, and Israel in the fire of faith, they perpetuated the mighty tensions which led simultaneously and inevitably to Israel's colossal spiritual attainments and to its sorrowful fate.

Deutero-Isaiah illustrates perfectly this inner tension between egotistic ethnicism and universal idealism. On the one hand, he rises to the highest peak of idealism in the portrayal of "the suffering servant," who patiently labors and travails in disgrace for the benefit of others.

Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.
But he was wounded for our transgressions,
he was bruised for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that made us whole,
and with his stripes we are healed.⁴⁰

But this same prophet put the earthly prosperity and radiant happiness of Israel in the center of his utopian vision.

Foreigners shall build up your walls,
and their kings shall minister to you;
for in my wrath I smote you,
but in my favor I have had mercy on you.
Your gates shall be open continually;
day and night they shall not be shut
that men may bring to you the wealth of the nations,
with their kings led in procession.
For the nation and kingdom
that will not serve you shall perish;
those nations shall be utterly laid waste.⁴¹

The inner history of Jewish life reflected its threefold tension in the three heroic figures of the biblical period, the priest, the king, and the prophet.

The priest represented the ideal of loyalty to God, as this loyalty was fashioned and molded in the religious tradition of the people. In all ages, the priest ministers to the irrational yearnings of man's heart, stilling anxiety, allaying the sense of guilt and inducing "peace of soul." In the office of priest, the *subjective* phase of religion is given expression. The dark fears that

dwelt below the surface of consciousness are released and overcome by his ministrations. All that is one's own, symbolized by the collective tradition, is celebrated as ineffably holy. The collective ego is magnified and sanctified, and the anxiety-ridden ego of the individual is absorbed and transmuted in the blaze of collective enthusiasm.

The priest is perpetually in danger of sinking to the level of the primitive medicine-man. His rites hover between a service in awe and humility, seeking to *persuade* the gods and a magical exercise of secret formulae which *compel* the occult powers. In Judaism, the priests were raised above the primitive and pagan level by the idealistic impetus of prophecy. For in prophecy, the *objective* phase of religion was expressed. The prophets taught the people to regard the priestly rituals as symbols of the "service of the heart." God is not placated by the mumbo-jumbo of the ritual, but by the virtues of humility and sincerity, kindness and generosity. "For it is steadfast love I want, not sacrifice."¹² The prophets did not argue for the abolition of all rites and ceremonies, as is sometimes supposed. Isaiah received his first vision in the Temple, Ezekiel outlined the shape of the restored Temple, Haggai and Malachi participated in the dedication of the second Temple. But the prophets taught that rites were instruments of piety, not substitutes for genuine devotion and worship.

It may appear paradoxical to treat the prophets as teachers of the objective phase of religion. The usual assumption is that the prophets were mystics, subjective pietists par excellence. Indeed, the mystical side of the prophetic experience must not be overlooked, especially when we consider the personality of the prophet in its fullness. But the *teaching* of the prophets stressed the objective aspect of piety; i.e., the compatibility of the Divine Will with rationality and morality. For the prophet, too, had to struggle constantly against the tendency to sink into the role of a "prophetizer," *mithnabe*. The "prophetizers" shared in the ecstatic frenzy of the prophets; in point of mystical experience, there was no difference between them. Ezekiel Kaufman maintains that the Hebrew prophet thought of himself as a messenger to his contemporaries, while the Canaanite "prophetizers" were ecstasies, impressing the people and themselves by the excesses of their enthusiasm. This distinction captures only a portion of the

prophetic elan. Furthermore, there is no doubt that in times of crisis the "prophetizers" looked upon themselves as bearers of a Divine spirit (charisma).

The greatness of the literary prophets consisted in their recognition that the voice of man's reason and of man's conscience was in harmony with the Divine Will. Their religious consciousness, in all its intensity, was a dynamic balance of the inner and outer orientations of the soul. Ethical insight, as we have seen before, develops in the amplitude between the depth of subjective feeling and objective reverence for law. In the great literary prophets we find so keen an awareness of ethical obligation, because their inner life was governed and controlled by the conviction that rationality and morality were the core of the Divine Will.

The prophets did not invariably maintain a high ethical position. At times they did sink to the level of the Canaanite "prophetizers," who echoed the feelings of the mob instead of the sentiments of a sensitive soul. Thus, Moses is said to have ordered the total extermination of the Canaanites, and Samuel blamed King Saul for sparing the lives of the King and the cattle of the Amalekites. In commanding these acts of cruelty, the prophets were children of their age. But in rising again and again above the priestly prejudices and racial pride of their contemporaries they demonstrated their true stature as pioneers of man's unfolding sense of humanity. While the so-called "false prophets" flattered the vanity of the people, the "true prophets" rebuked their people by holding up to them objective standards of right and wrong. Their truth and their authenticity were proved precisely by their transcendence of popular myth and egotism and by the compatibility of their message with the ethical-rational impetus of the human mind.

This bold outreaching toward the universal society of mankind helped to create the third polar tension in Judaism, centering about the ideals of the king and the purpose of the state.

From the political standpoint, a great king is one who conquers his enemies and exacts tribute from his neighbors, establishing peace and justice within the borders of his state and spreading fear into distant lands. In tension with this "normal" concept of the successful king, there gradually evolved the vision of the King-Messiah, who will reign over Israel "in the end

of days." The King-Messiah is described to us in the uplifting accents of ethical perfection and universal peace. The many-splendored nobility of his stature is too exalted to be real. He is the symbol of the ethically perfect individual, leading the redeemed society of mankind. He is the symbol of perfection, ever to be approached, never to be reached.

In Judaism, the tension between an ideal King-Messiah and a victorious, conquering hero was exceedingly important. In all its variations, this tension reflected the real meaning of the national ideal at any one time. To some, the King-Messiah was primarily a military hero, who combined miraculous powers with earthly success. To others, he was an ethereal vision, totally removed from this world, a myth, a hope, a prayer. To still others, he was a supernatural being, biding his time in heaven and waiting to be "revealed." In any case, there was a sense of awesome tension between the concepts of a secular king, ruling over a triumphant Israel, and the ideal King-Messiah, reigning over a perfect world. But, as the people saw it, there was no contradiction between the two concepts. For what is more "natural" to any people than that they be elevated to the highest rank in a perfect society, to be more "equal" than others in a society of equals?

The entire history of Judaism could be written in terms of the genesis and growth of each of these three hero-images — priest, prophet, king. For in every period of Jewish life, the temper of the people was expressed in the hero-images of their literature and life. The religion of the people showed the preponderance of the priestly or prophetic elements, and the politics of the age showed whether the vision of a secular kingdom or a Messianic age of universal perfection was in the ascendancy.

Insofar as the relation of the Jews to their neighbors was concerned, neither the egotistic nor the altruistic motive was over-come in Jewish life; each was maintained in a state of tension. The self-sanctifying, self-magnifying phases of popular piety were effective as historical forces, even while the self-dedicatory, self-transcending phases of prophetic teaching were real and operative.

This tension accounts for the extreme tenacity of Judaism. Its component elements did not fall apart; the elite and the masses constituted one people. The wisdom and fervor of the prophets became the cherished heritage of the entire community. Every

Jew was to be somewhat of a priest, somewhat of a prophet, somewhat of a King-Messiah. All were to pray, all were to learn, all were to share in the building of a holy community. And the knowledge of being the proud possessors of such lofty ideals made the people invulnerable to the attraction of alien cultures.

But this tension also accounts for the immense travail and tragedy of Jewish experience. Natural feelings of popular pride and prejudice were endowed with high authority and elevated beyond the breath of criticism, by their association with the pathos of the prophets and the subtlety of the sages. In turn, this intensified ethos of self-exaltation in religion and in politics inevitably provoked a massive reaction. The ideals of the wise tend to become the flattering clichés of the people, fashioning a community which is more likely to be isolated than dedicated.

This danger can be averted so long as people live in an open society, with the currents of wisdom flowing freely through the land. The impact of other cultures and faiths encourages the spirit of free criticism and analysis, keeping the flow of sentiment and reflection from congealing into rigid absolutes. But, when a society is subjected to attack, it tends to shut the gates of its mind and heart to outside influence. In a "closed" society, fluid tensions tend to freeze and crystalize. Indeed, it is undeniable that massive and mighty resistance was offered at times to the spirit of inquiry, which separates diverse elements allowing the leaders of the age to find the right synthesis of conflicting elements. And this occasional resistance to self-criticism opened the way to the two grave dangers of Jewish history, the danger of stagnation and fossilization in the life of the spirit and the danger of isolation from the non-Jewish world.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE FIRST RETURN

In the first generations following the Babylonian Exile, the four distinguishing characteristics of Jewish history were manifested:

1. The immense appeal of Jewish monotheism was demonstrated in the acquisition of a flood of converts.

2. The capacity to adapt old habits and mores to new situations was proven, a capacity which made survival possible. And this capacity was balanced by an idealization of the past, which glorified the myth of the "holy seed," and which immensely fortified the natural conservatism of the Jewish faith.

3. The return of the exiles to Judea, first under Zerubabel and later under Ezra, demonstrated the organic unity of both aspects of Judaism, the national-zionist ethos and the religious ideals.

4. Finally, the first signs of the peculiar gulf between the Jewish and Gentile worlds appeared.

Let us now examine these distinctive elements.

The fall of Jerusalem and the exile of its leading citizens. The Babylonians followed the Assyrian policy of uprooting and commingling captured peoples. Yet, while the Ten Tribes disappeared, the Judean exiles did not. New factors were evidently at work. In three successive waves, Judea was devastated. The first exile occurred when Nebuchadnezzar led the young king, Jehoiachin, as a prisoner into Babylonia.

"He carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valor, ten thousand captives and all the craftsmen and the smiths; none remained except the poorest people of the land."¹

Eleven years later, King Zedekiah, who was appointed by Nebuchadnezzar and who rebelled against his overlord, was captured.

"And the rest of the people who were left in the city and the deserters who had deserted to the King of Babylon, together with the rest of the multitude, Nebuzaraddon, the captain of the guard, carried into exile. But the captain of the guard left some of the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and plowmen."²

Gedalia, son of Ahikam, was appointed by the Babylonians to serve as the governor of the "remnant of Judah." He chose Mizpah as his residence, established there a "house of God" to which gifts were brought by pilgrims and encouraged the people to cultivate the land of the exiled. Gedalia was killed by Ishmael of the royal house, and the death of Gedalia was observed by a fast-day by Jewish people down to our own day. To the prophets and the sages, Gedalia symbolized the policy of submitting to superior physical force, while building inner strength for the future. The assassination of Gedalia was the first example of the blinding fever of zealotry which dooms a people to disaster. Following the death of Gedalia, the Babylonians exiled an additional group.³

This selective and gradual process whereby the Jewish community of Babylonia was formed had the effect of concentrating there a social-cultural elite. It would be incorrect to maintain that the upper classes, the landed aristocracy, and the skilled artisans contained the "best" cultural-religious elements of Judea. Doubtless, there were "false prophets," worshipers of idols and morally corrupt elements among the exiles in Babylonia. Nevertheless, a relative concentration of the more idealistic and thoughtful people of the community was effected by the policy of Nebuchadnezzar. The fact is that Jeremiah compares the Jews who were taken to Babylon to "a good olive tree," and the remnants of Judea to a "very bad olive tree." Also, the anti-Babylonian party apparently contained "the women of Jerusalem" who openly proclaimed their worship of the "queen of heaven" and who took Jeremiah with them by force to Egypt. The tension within the Jewish soul between prophetic monotheism, teaching that the One God is served by righteousness, and ritualistic paganism, seeking to placate the gods (even the One God) by ritualistic piety, was reflected in a polarization of Judahite society.

The prophetic philosophy was favored by the intelligentsia and the aristocracy, while the military chieftains and the people

generally inclined to the less sophisticated and the less subtle forms of piety. Such a differentiation has happened many times in history. Socrates was tried and executed only after the Democratic party triumphed over the oligarchic tyrants. Philosophy is the peculiar treasure of a leisured, highly cultured class, as Gilbert Murray notes.⁴ So, in Babylonia, the prophetic heritage was more concentrated and potent than in Judea or in Egypt.

Some historians maintain that monotheism triumphed within Babylonian Jewry, because the worship of the Baals was connected with local shrines. This explanation is far too thin. The "queen of heaven" could be worshiped in many places. In Babylonia, she was worshiped as Astarte. And the pagan mentality was certainly at home in the environment of Babylonia.

In contrast to the policy of the Assyrian conquerors, Nebuchadnezzar did not bring foreign settlers into the land of Judea. The Idumeans moved into the southern portion, the Nabateans exerted pressure from the East, but the land was not settled completely, legally and systematically. It continued to beckon to the exiles as the personal property of their forebears as well as the national possession of their people.

There was nothing unusual about the conquest of Jerusalem and the exile of its citizens. But the exiles did carry with them into captivity a unique treasure which made their return possible. It was a grand literature which fortified their powers of resistance in three ways.

It built up their collective self-respect. A people conscious of possessing a high culture does not easily submit to the lure of assimilation. Its culture stakes out a claim on its members to retain their identity. Biblical literature fulfilled this function in much the same way as Polish literature provided a rallying point for Polish *émigrés* in the nineteenth century and Greek literature for Greek colonists in classical times. But there were two phases of biblical literature which exerted their effects in unparalleled ways, the doctrine of God and the doctrine of Israel.

The doctrine of God. The prophetic concept of God constituted a perpetual challenge to the pagan mind. It was so all-embracing in scope, so intensely ethical and compassionate in quality, consonant with the deepest yearnings of the human soul

that the diverse peoples could not but feel its impact. The entire pagan pantheon had to be set against the One God of Israel, for not one of the gods was conceived to be the sole master of the universe. Zeus, "father of the gods," could be persuaded by the wiles of Hera to overlook a human drama. Ra, the creator of Egypt, could be temporarily the victim of Isis' machinations. The very tolerance of paganism which allowed for the *possibility* of many gods set definite limits to the aggrandizement of any one deity. The greatness of any one god was portrayed in mythology by achievements and victories against other gods. In popular Jewish legendry, we encounter a similar tendency, with God contending against the monster, Leviathan, and against Rahab, the prince of the sea.⁵ But in biblical literature, God is One, without any competitors. And this One God concerned Himself with the anxieties of the poor and the broken-hearted. To acknowledge Him was to take hold of an unbreakable pillar in the midst of an earthquake. To ignore Him was to offend an implacable and jealous Master.

In the ancient world, the worship of different gods was carried from country to country with relative ease. Why should people not experiment with diverse rites? The women of Jerusalem who worshiped the "queen of heaven" in the days of Jeremiah were not at a loss to cite good, logical arguments for their practice.⁶ But the worship of the God of Israel was irreversible. Once accepted, His "jealousy" brooked neither rivalry nor partnership. The author of the Book of Kings speaks of the early Samaritan converts as worshipers of their own gods as well as of the God of Israel.⁷ In the days of Ezra, a century and a half later, no such accusation against the Samaritans is presented. In the Talmudic period, this accusation is renewed, but in a style which betrays it as a popular slander. The Samaritans had become zealous observers of the Law. And the Talmud concedes that any commandment which the Kutherans (Samaritans) keep, they observe even more faithfully than Jews.⁸ Monotheism poses a powerful appeal to the human soul. Those "elders of Israel" who proposed to Ezekiel that the house of Israel shall become "like all nations" felt in their hearts the ignominy of idolatry; thus, they described it in the contemptuous phrase, "to serve wood and stone," as if paganism were nothing more than the adoration of

a fetish.⁹ Even those who wavered in their loyalty to Judaism and toyed with apostasy could not ignore the intellectual truth of monotheism.

Prophetic monotheism was morally as well as intellectually powerful. The notion that God is served by acts of kindness and by purity of soul compels the assent of the mind, in its objective orientation. And this ethical emphasis was projected not only in the teachings of the prophets concerning the subsidiary role of rituals, but also in their explanation of the national catastrophe of the Jewish people.

The Babylonians maintained that Marduk gave their city to Cyrus even as the prophets declared that it is the God of Israel who sets up Assyria as "the rod of his anger" and "the scourge of the nations."¹⁰ In this assertion of the supremacy of the national god in history and his determination of the destiny of nations we do not confront the essence of the prophetic message. Such an inference was altogether congenial to the pagan mind. Was not a similar line of reasoning presupposed by the Romans when they invited the gods of their enemies to take up residence in their own city?

Nor was it a radical extension of the concepts of pagan priests to imagine that it is "their" god who disposes of many lands not merely his own domain. This outreaching from religious provincialism toward a vision of universal history is imbedded in the first chapters of the Book of Genesis. And it is reflected in Jeremiah's prophecy concerning the "return" of the Elamites and his portrayal of the cup being passed around by God to all the nations.¹¹ In paganism, such an exaltation of the dominion of the national god was implicit in his identification with one or more of the forces of nature. Thus we find that already in ancient Egypt the gods of the Canaanites are identified with one of the deities in the Egyptian pantheon, generally Seth.¹² It is this aspect of the expansion of a god's sway that is frequently associated with the emergence of empires.

The greatness of the prophetic interpretation was the ethical nature of the sin which they attributed to the Jewish people. To be sure, they frequently excoriated the practices of idolatry and the failure to observe the Sabbath as a day of rest or to respect "the Sabbath of the land."¹³ In fulminations of this character, they were no different from the contemporary priests of pagan

faiths. Such has been the priestly contention of all ages and climes. But — and here the unique greatness of the prophets comes to light — they also were capable of transcending ritualistic piety and of rising to a purely ethical interpretation of the Divine Will.

When King Zedekiah inquires how he can stave off disaster, Jeremiah tells him,

"O house of David! Thus says the Lord: Execute justice in the morning, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed."¹⁴

In an elaboration of this theme in the next chapter, the prophet adds,

"And do no wrong or violence to the alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place."¹⁵

The reneging of the nobles on the agreement to liberate the slaves evoked the wrath of Jeremiah more than any other action of the King.

This ethical insight gave the exiles reason to feel the superiority of their faith over the pagan practices of their conquerors. In the comparison of different faiths, objective standards are inevitably employed. And when diverse peoples are thrown together in common misery, such comparisons become the order of the day.

Furthermore, the oppressed exiles of Judea could feel that they were on the side of the God, who judges all things in the scales of justice. A God of power may well be on the side of the army with the most powerful weapons and a ritualistic, priestly god on the side of the rich, who can offer him the most lavish holocausts. But a God of Mercy is on the side of the poor whose wealth is simplicity and purity of life and humbleness of spirit. Luxury corrupts while poverty chastens a man's soul.

Finally, the concept of a non-mythological God implied the assurance of His eternity. A God who stands beyond birth and death is "first and last."¹⁶ As the eternal God, His Word too is eternal. And the people to whose keeping that Word has been entrusted is also eternal.

At this point, we encounter the transition from great objective ideas to the exaltation of subjective possessions — the underside of the Jewish faith. And Jewish history in all its contradictions is the result of this inner tension between the two orien-

tations of its sacred tradition. It was the doctrine of God that lent worth, grandeur and deathlessness to the great works of the Hebrew spirit. But this doctrine was associated with an exaltation of the Jewish people that led to the interposition of a wall of hate between the Jews and their neighbors.

Doctrine of Israel. The association between the God of Israel and the people of Israel was expressed in the doctrine of the covenant. By continuously rehearsing the implications of the covenant the prophets were able to evoke the spirit of loyalty and sacrifice from the Israelites.

At every great crisis in the life of the people, it is the covenant that is recalled. In the Book of Exodus, God determines to redeem the Israelites, not because of His abhorrence of injustice or His love of freedom, but because of the covenant with the patriarchs that He "remembered" and because He had chosen the Israelites as "His servants" or collectively as "His eldest son." The editors of the historical books, from Joshua to II Kings, explain all successes and reverses in terms of the covenant. And Ezra, in his plea to the Jews of Jerusalem, returns to the same theme.¹⁷

The task of weaning the Israelites away from pagan practices could hardly have been achieved without this portrayal of the covenant between God and Israel as a unique cosmic drama. Thus it is the prophet Jeremiah, in whose lifetime the battle for the mind of the Jewish people reached its climax, who gives this doctrine its most extreme formulation:

Thus says the Lord,
 who gives the sun for light by day
 and the fixed order of the moon and the stars
 for light by night
 who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—
 the Lord of hosts is his name:
 If this fixed order departs
 from before me, says the Lord,
 then shall the descendants of Israel cease
 from being a nation before me for ever.¹⁸

Even more forcefully and specifically, Jeremiah asserts this cosmic parallel as follows,

"Thus says the Lord: If I have not established my covenant with day and night and the ordinances of heaven and earth,

then I will reject the descendants of Jacob and David my servant and will not choose one of his descendants to rule over the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."¹⁹

The unchangeability of the Divine Will was not a rigid dogma for the prophets. They asserted time and again that He accepts repentance. The logic of the prophetic faith did not preclude Hananya's prophecy concerning God's acceptance of the repentance of the people of Jerusalem. In the Book of Jonah, He accepts the repentance of the people of Nineveh and withdraws the order for its destruction. He could also withdraw a Promise or radically restrict its application, as in His threat to substitute Moses and his seed for the entire people of Israel.

The concept of a Divine Covenant between God and Israel was thus held in tension between two polar positions, the one in which the "seed of Abraham" was considered intrinsically holy and invested with the Promise of redemption, the other in which the body of ideals was considered as the indispensable condition of redemption as well as its purpose and its seal. The latter position could lead toward the wholehearted acceptance of Gentile converts as "sons of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." The former position could be carried to the point of regarding the biological character of the Jewish people as Divine, particularly after it had disavowed the obvious, external rites of idolatry. The subjective mood which extols all that is one's own, one's blood, one's heritage, one's people, is also likely to esteem very highly the piety of one's own group and to draw the veil of sanctity over all their failings. And the sins of other nations are likely to be exaggerated in the same measure as the righteousness of one's own people is extolled. We assign the name of Judaism to the complex of sentiments and ideals which is constituted by the tension between the polarity of God and the individual on the one hand, and the conviction of group holiness, resulting from the "holy seed," on the other hand. Isaiah's doctrine of the "saved remnant"²⁰ is illustrative of the many mediating positions between these orientations. We must remember that in actual life polar tension is likely to be articulated in a social dichotomy, which may or may not take organizational form. There will be those for whom the "seed" is itself Divine, the calls for repentance being so many slogans that "prove" the superiority of the Jewish race. At any one time, the adherents of this view will iden-

tify the "saved remnant" with the empirical community. They are "the brand plucked from the fire."²¹ Satan must not see their faults. And as the contemporary Jewish community is the heir of the Promise, so the non-Jewish world is "as naught before Him."²²

There will also be a group which will incline to the opposite extreme and build its spiritual homeland at the pole of individualism, theism, and humanism. For them the doctrine of the "holy seed" will be a mere symbol of the "invisible *ecclesia*," the worldwide fellowship of the saints, which transcends all creeds and ethnic boundaries. They would welcome converts not merely as hangers-on and servants but as full-fledged partners in the "community of God."²³

In a Diaspora situation, those for whom the tension has broken down completely will tend to leave the historical community. The individualists may find kindred souls among their neighbors. The rigid zealots of "the holy seed" will retreat into self-contained isolated communities, such as we find described in the Damascus Covenant and the Qumran scrolls. A measure of objective orientation is inescapable in a situation of ethnic dispersion, unless the minority is allowed to maintain mass-settlements, protected by social and cultural walls from any contact with their neighbors.

The threads of historic continuity are held by those for whom the polar tensions of Judaism continue to be a dynamic reality. But they too will not be of one mind and one heart. On the contrary, they will reflect all the possible mediating positions between the three coordinates of loyalty, leading respectively to God, man, and people. The divisions within the social community will articulate the schism within the soul. The masses of the people will tend to crowd toward the pole of collective self-aggrandizement, while the intellectual leaders will incline toward the poles of God and man. The social and political leaders of the people will occupy mediating positions, and the strife between different sets of leaders will reflect the inner contradictions within the spirit of the people, but only indirectly, for all actual leaders must be mediators.

In the consciousness of the people ethnic pride was raised to a new dimension because it was based on the supposed act of the One God. While Aristotle could say that only Hellenes were destined for freedom, there was a tentativeness and a natural-

ness about his generalization. It was his personal generalization; hence, it was subject to change. And the rationality of his method itself called for the refutation of his irrational generalization. The disciples of Aristotle preached the oneness of mankind, without feeling that they were contradicting their master. Aristotle himself is said to have met a Jew whom he acknowledged to be a "Hellene in spirit" and from whom, he said, he learned more than he could teach.²⁴ But when ethnic pride is made into a religious dogma, the natural offensiveness of the doctrine is aggravated a thousandfold. A natural and flexible prejudice is turned into an unyielding Absolute Egotism. The One God, who is *different* from other gods, made His people *different* from other people.

Thus Deutero-Isaiah makes constant use of the dramatic device of a cosmic trial, in which God appears to judge "the nations," while keeping Israel at his side. The triumph of the One God over lifeless idols is inseparable from the concomitant triumph of the people Israel.

Thus says the Lord:

The wealth of Egypt and the merchandise of Ethiopia,
and the Sabeans, men of stature,
shall come over to you and be yours,
they shall follow you;
they shall come over in chains and bow down to you.
They will make supplication to you, saying
"God is with you only, and there is no other,
no god besides him,"
Truly thou art a God who hidest thyself,
O God of Israel, the Savior,
All of them are put to shame and confounded,
the makers of idols go in confusion together.
But Israel is saved by the Lord
with everlasting salvation;
you shall not be put to shame or confounded
to all eternity.²⁵

The commingling of the battle of the Lord with the battle of Israel made certain that monotheism would prevail within the hearts of Jewish people. All the pathos of ethnic pride and hope was now related to the victory of the God of Israel. But this same association arrayed the Jews against "the nations" and their gods. A metaphysical gulf was opened up between Israel and the rest of humanity.

And the non-Jews reacted to this claim in different ways. Some accepted it altogether and joined the community of Israel. Some accepted only the truth of the Jewish God-idea. Some reacted with the complex of puzzled admiration and hurt pride, which in later years was called antisemitism.

Conversion and hostility. Already in the Babylonian diaspora, we recognize the twofold impact of Judaism upon the pagan world. In Greek literature, we encounter several references to the Jewish people as "philosophers," who believe in the One God.²⁶ Deutero-Isaiah seeks to reassure the converts that God will make them joyful in His House of prayer."²⁷ His visions of the future portray dramatically the humiliation of the nations and their humble acknowledgments of the God of Israel. They will bring the children of Israel back to Zion in triumph and delight to be servants of God and of His people.

Kings shall be your foster fathers,
and their queens your nursing mothers.
With their faces to the ground they shall bow down to you,
and lick the dust of your feet.
Then you will know that I am the Lord;
those who wait for me shall not be put to shame.²⁸

Deutero-Isaiah's prediction of the ultimate conversion of all the nations was doubtless based upon the initial success of Jewish missionary propaganda. While there is no evidence of a concerted Jewish missionary effort, we cannot doubt that many converts were welcomed into the fold. The book of Esther speaks of mass-conversions. At the time of Ezra, we find a considerable number who "could not prove their fathers' houses or their descent, whether they belonged to Israel."²⁹ The returnees had many slaves who doubtless accepted the faith of their masters.

The mighty impact of the Jewish faith produced the hostility of the many as well as the conversion of the few. For, as we noted previously, the Jews campaigned for the acceptance of the God of Israel, the God who had already selected His own, not for faith in One God in general.

Also, the Jews asserted it to be a sin to worship other gods. Josephus tells us of the refusal of Jewish soldiers to take part in the rebuilding of pagan temples, accounting it a moral sin to help other people worship their gods.

The legends of Daniel and "Bel and the Dragon" reflect the popular concept of the contest against idolatry. The more deeply monotheism penetrated Jewish consciousness, the more impelled Jews were to combat the "gods of the nations." The shadow of antisemitism was thus virtually inseparable from the teaching that the God of Israel was the One God.

A perfect illustration of this development is afforded to us in the tragic experience of the Jews of Elephantine, a military colony at the southern border of Egypt.

This colony of Jewish soldiers was probably established some time before the destruction of Jerusalem. The reformation of Josiah establishing a single Holy Temple was not yet firmly fixed in the minds of the Judahite people. Hence they built for themselves a temple at Elephantine, sacrificing lambs as well as offering incense. The sacrifice of lambs was particularly offensive to the priests of a neighboring Egyptian Temple. These priests of Khnum worshiped their god in the form of a ram. When Egypt was conquered by Cambyzes, King of Persia, the temples of the Egyptians were destroyed, but the temple of the Jews in Elephantine was allowed to stand. Here is an instance of the sense of kinship between the Judean monotheists and the Persian dualists. Persian sympathy for the establishment of Judaism is also evident in a letter addressed to these soldier-Jews, ordering them to observe the Passover in keeping with the law of ritual purity.

But at this point, we are interested in the fact that the priests of Khnum conducted a pogrom against the Jewish Temple and razed it to the ground. The pious, simple Jews addressed letters to the high priests in Jerusalem and to the sons of Sanbalatt in Samaria, asking the Palestinian leaders to intercede for them so they could regain the right to rebuild their Temple. In these letters, they attribute the beginning of Egyptian hostility to the coming of a messenger from Jerusalem. This messenger, Hanania, by name, evidently came for the purpose of strengthening the faith among the remote, ignorant soldiers who retained certain definite vestiges of polytheism. The success of his mission, it appears, aroused implacable hostility among the priests of Khnum and their followers. "Khnum has been against us," they write, "ever since he came to us in Egypt."³⁰

The Return. While some of the neighbors of the Jews reacted with hostility and others by conversion to the challenge of the Jewish faith, the governing circles of the Persian empire were favorably disposed toward the Jewish religion. We may assume that in the Persian court the higher reaches of the Jewish faith were expounded, the aspects of God's universality and His concern for mankind as a whole. The upper circles of Persia at the time of Ezra were Zoroastrians whose concept of God and human destiny was very close to that of the Jewish people.³¹

The favor of the Persians was shown not only in the decree of Cyrus, but in the continuing policy of the administration. We may well doubt whether Cyrus issued a special permit for Jews to return to Judea and to rebuild the Temple; probably such a grant was implicit in his general order, permitting all desecrated temples to be restored and all exiled peoples to return to their former homes. The fact is the Cyrus did not grant a special privilege to the Judeans which he did not bestow equally upon the people of Tyre, Palmyra, and Assyria. It was his policy to restore the Temples and to permit exiled peoples to return. But the blanket order of full authority given to Ezra and later to Nehemiah is indeed amazing.

"And you, Ezra, according to the wisdom of your God which is in your hand, appoint magistrates and judges who may judge all the people in the province beyond the river, all such as know the laws of your God; and those who do not know them, you shall teach. Whoever will not obey the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgment be strictly executed upon him, whether for death or for banishment or for confiscation of his goods or for imprisonment."³²

While the authenticity of this document has been questioned, its general content rings true. We must not jump to the conclusion of some German scholars that "Judaism was the product of the Persian government." The favor of the government was essential, but this benevolence was obtained by the leading Jews of the diaspora. The first wave of Judeans from Babylonia, led by Zerubabel and Joshua, was constantly reinforced by fresh migrations and by the sustained interest of Babylonian Jewry.

The rapid pace of Judean recovery caused the "enemies of Judah and Benjamin" to be alarmed. They sought to frustrate the efforts of the Judeans to reestablish a measure of self-govern-

ment, soliciting the help of the provincial officials of the Persian empire, who stopped the work of fortifying the walls of Jerusalem time and again. The Persian Empire might be expected to resist the reconstitution of the Judean nationality, but it would favor the normal functioning of the Jewish faith. However, faith and national sentiment were so closely intertwined in Judaism as to lead to the restoration of a national community under the protective wing of a recognized religion.

The interest of Babylonian Jewry in the Judean community was both religious and nationalistic in character. The One God could be properly worshiped only in His own Temple. At the same time, the Judeans, feeling themselves to be "slaves" on the land of their fathers, longed for some measure of independence. They had authority to enforce the laws of their faith, but they sought, too, the revival of their ancient kingdom.

The remarkable aspect of the restoration of the second Commonwealth was not the first wave of immigration and the rebuilding of the Temple. The first immigrants possessed property in the homeland of their fathers. Some of them were old enough to remember their former houses. And the issuance of Cyrus' declaration to all the captive peoples was sufficient to motivate the initial band of immigrants. But this first group would have disappeared within the "melting pot" of Judea, were it not for the flow of reinforcements from Babylonia. And in Babylonia, a selective process was continually at work, fortifying the Palestinian attachment of the "loyal" elements, and drawing the marginal groups into the cosmopolitan society of the Persian empire.

Summarizing now the reasons for the return of waves of Judeans to Judea, we note the contribution of each of the four elements of the Jewish situation:

1. The appeal of the Jewish faith, which commanded the loyalty of the Jews, brought them converts, and attracted the approbation of the upper circles of Persia;

2. The appeal of the Jewish national idea which, based upon a long history, was nurtured and molded by the philosophy and faith of Judaism, in such manner that instead of displacing nationalism, religion itself preserved Jewish ethnicism as the *underside* of Jewish consciousness;

3. The subjectivity of the Jewish faith, producing the immense

pathos of the Chosen People complex, which in turn lent vigor to the endeavor to rebuild the "remnant" in a utopian pattern;

4. The popular aspect of the Chosen People complex which made the Jews feel lonely and "different" among all their neighbors.

In the Book of Lamentations, we encounter this consciousness of the unique *loneliness* of the Jew. The opening chord of this mighty poem sounds this theme, "How did she dwell alone!" Throughout this book, the tragedy of the Jew is accounted for in terms of the actions of God. It is not this or that enemy, not this or that policy, not this or that maneuver which is to blame. It is God Who shows no mercy, devastates "His land," and scatters "His people." The Jew is taken out of the rushing currents of history and thrust into direct confrontation with God. Even in exile he hardly sees his neighbors as people, only as instruments of Divine wrath or Divine favor. Hence, the "loneliness" of the Jew, of which we shall later encounter many examples.

This loneliness was intensified by the Jewish "cold war" against idolatry, as well as by Jewish insistence on "uniqueness" and on the folly of other faiths.

Repudiation of the Samaritans. It was the impassioned loyalty of the Hebrew prophets to the One God that hammered out the steely soul and amazing elan of the Jewish people on the anvil of their continuing disasters. But it was the same single-minded zealotry that generated among many non-Jews that mystical and implacable hatred which was to pursue the Jewish people relentlessly in all ages and climes. This Jewish zealotry was not a reflection of the native intolerance of the people, but, as we pointed out, an implication of the popular interpretation of the Covenant concept. Nor was this zealotry a permanent, ineradicable feature of the Jewish religion since, as we have said, at some times and in the minds of some Jews, the humanistic and universal aspects became decisive.

The Jews of Babylonia were a select group, as we noted, and from the time of the first exile (597 B.C.E.) to the days of Ezra and Nehemiah (440 B.C.E.), they were subjected to the operation of an additional selective process. The pagan-minded materialists as well as the sophisticated idealists drifted steadily into the non-Jewish world, succumbing to the same

processes which obliterated the identity of the Ten Tribes. Those who resisted the lure of cosmopolitanism on the one hand, and materialistic pressures on the other, came to pride themselves on those rituals which had high visibility as well as crucial importance in the exilic community. They emphasized the importance of the Sabbath, of circumcision, of dietary laws and of the ritual laws of "impurity."

The fact that the Babylonian exiles did not build a temple, as did the Jews of Elephantine, was of decisive importance in hastening the triumph of the prophetic spirit. For the Temple was the focus of the priestly caste and its mentality: God to be placated by the offering of sacrifices and by a hallowed ritual. The refusal to build a temple on "strange soil" insensibly directed the current of piety into channels of prayer and meditation, humility and integrity. Man's craving for ritual now assumed a personal pattern. Each Jew was to build an aura of holiness around himself.

We note here the beginnings of that *mizvah-mentality* that was to become so characteristic of rabbinic Judaism. And the upper circles among the Jews of Babylonia, esteeming their glory to be in the past, came to value genealogical distinction with the proud ardor of Boston Brahmins and the inflexible rigidity of a fundamentalist faith. Thus the stage was set for the double tragedy of the exclusion of the Samaritans and the expulsion of the foreign women.

The emergence of the Samaritan sect is shrouded in obscurity. According to the Book of Kings, they were semi-converts, worshipping their former gods as well as the God of Israel.³³ In the book of Ezra-Nehemiah, they are treated as low-caste converts. The orthodoxy of their beliefs is not questioned, but they are declared to be generally unworthy to share in the glory of rebuilding the Holy Temple.

"Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the returned exiles were building a temple to the Lord, the God of Israel, they approached Zerubabel and the heads of fathers' houses and said to them, 'Let us build with you; for we worship your God as you do, and we have been sacrificing to him ever since the days of Esarhaddon, King of Assyria, who brought us here.'

"But Zerubabel, Joshua and the rest of the heads of fathers'

houses in Israel said to them, 'You have nothing to do with us in building a house to our God; but we alone will build to the Lord, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the King of Persia, has commanded us.' "34

Here, an opportunity for the undertaking of a joint effort was frustrated either by religious zealotry or by ethnic pride.

We know that the Samaritans of later years were every bit as zealous in their service of the One God as were the Jews. They took over the Hexateuch, the Five Books of Moses, and the Book of Joshua. With remarkable tenacity they held on to their sanctuary on Mt. Gerizim. When John Hyrkanos (104-125 C.E.) destroyed that sanctuary, he did not force them to accept Judaism, as he did the Edomites and the other pagan inhabitants of Palestine. For centuries, the wound created by the secession of the Samaritans continued to fester. Nevertheless, their tragic history paralleled that of the Jews. Though small in numbers and pressed by enemies on all sides, they enjoyed periods of religious renaissance as well as long centuries of decline. They produced Marranoes under the reign of Justinian (518-565 C.E.), long before the Jews. While they did not lack religious tenacity and ethnic pride, they deprived themselves of the prophetic heritage of self-criticism, which is essential to spiritual growth. Imprisoned by the tight bands of dogma and ritual, they were unable to meet fresh challenges with a creative, spontaneous response. Worshiping the past, they allowed their temple to absorb the totality of their devotion. Their eventual "fossilization" is proof of the decay which overtakes one-sided piety, the piety of feeling and practice, of dogma and ethnic subjectivity. Their fate illustrates the peril which Toynbee designates as the "idolization of the ephemeral self." Depriving themselves of the tension between reason and ethics on the one hand, and ethnic loyalties on the other hand, they lost the motive force of the drive for spiritual growth.

The Expulsion of Foreign Women and Their Descendants.

While in the exclusion of the Samaritans, the motives were partly religious and partly ethnic, the expulsion by Ezra of the foreign women and their descendants was definitely a trag-

ic product of the quest for racial "purity." No attempt was made to convert either the women or their children. The verses from the Pentateuch which are quoted in Ezra-Nehemiah are those which refer to the "seven nations," that were placed under the ban and doomed to annihilation. At the same time, a "religious" reason is given for this expulsion — the foreign women might corrupt the piety of their husbands as the foreign wives led King Solomon astray. Religious fanaticism and ethnic self-glorification always go hand in hand, as in this telling sentence:

"For they have taken some of their daughters to be wives for themselves and for their sons; so that the holy race has mixed itself with the peoples of the land."³⁵

Several Christian historians and some Jewish nationalistic scholars have taken this incident as a typical expression of Jewish racialism, the former in condemnation, the latter in approbation. The great contemporary historian, Ezekiel Kaufman, pointed out that Ezra's action was repudiated in rabbinic Judaism.³⁶ According to him, the idea of religious conversion, as distinguished from gradual, ethnic acculturation, was still unknown in the days of Ezra. Rabbinic law, Kaufman maintains, devised a ceremony for conversion, which transcended the ethnicism of Ezra's day and established a universalist faith. Pharisaic-rabbinic Judaism was not racistic, but universalistic.³⁷

In terms of our analysis, we can see that neither view does justice to the tragic event as a whole. The tension between ethnic pride and dedication to the service of God was not broken in any age, though different aspects of this dynamic balance predominated at one or another period. In the time of Ezra, Deutero-Isaiah's message of welcome to converts was already hallowed. Possibly the book of Ruth and the great little book of Jonah were also known and cherished at that time. Even the Pentateuch writes of the "mixed multitude" that came out of Egypt along with the tribes of Israel.³⁸

But conversion did not necessarily imply the right to marry into the "community of the Lord." The returnees from Babylonia brought with them *nethinim*, descendants of the Canaanites whom King Solomon had decreed to be slaves of the Temple. For many centuries these hapless people were prevented from

intermarrying with the rest of the community. According to Professor Zeitlin, the insistence on racial "purity" was one of the issues between the Pharisees and the Sadducees.³⁹

To say, as do many historians, that in Ezra's day a rigorous policy of racial "purity" was needed, in order to produce a healthy nucleus for future growth, is to turn history upside down and to convert it into prophecy. Ezra could only scan the realities of his own time. As to building "pure" nuclei for future generations, which racist does not imagine that he is building for the future?

We can hardly doubt that Ezra and Nehemiah represented the "strict" party, while the opposing group was either represented by the people listed as enemies in Ezra-Nehemiah or by some unknown personalities. Centuries later when Pharisaic-rabbinic Judaism came to welcome converts by droves, the strict party had not been eliminated. We find Rabbi Eliezer maintaining that the nature of the convert is evil, at the very time when Rabbi Joshua was pointing to God's love for the convert.⁴⁰

Not all the people of Judea accepted the rigorous interpretation of Ezra, in spite of the threat to confiscate the property of all opponents. The "self-segregation" of the pious from the "nations of the land" took place in several stages and in diverse degrees. The Jewish *am haarez* (people of the land) came into being, filled with the bitter resentments naturally possessed by a spiritual proletariat. On the one hand, they identified themselves with the "community of the Lord," sharing in the pride of being of the "holy seed." On the other hand, they resented the separatism of the "purists" and their sanctimonious arrogance.

It was in Ezra's time that the groundwork was laid for the eventual emergence of the *am haarez*. However, it was also then that the institution of Torah-study was established. The opportunity to share in the sacred lore was afforded to all the people. In connection with the Temple sacrifices, public assemblies of prayer and study were instituted. The dissemination of Torah-learning militated against any permanent stratification of the community into a proletarian *am haarez* and a spiritual aristocracy.

Ezra and his followers did not apparently reject the entire

concept of religious conversion. But they assumed that the laws of the Pentateuch against "the surrounding nations" applied to all the Gentile inhabitants of Palestine. Converts from distant lands were acceptable, but even they might not marry members of the priestly families. Most converts entered the Jewish community by way of slavery and intermarriage with the lower castes. In first-century Judaism we find a class of purists known as "Israelites who marry their daughters to priests." Presumably, they too would not allow a son of theirs to marry a convert, just as no priest was allowed to take a converted Gentile woman as his wife. Zeal for racial purity was a tenacious manifestation in Judaism. In the Mishnah, we encounter a ceremony, *kezazah*, whereby a family would cut itself off from any one of its members who married a person unworthy to join their circle.⁴¹

All through the period of the Second Commonwealth, "purity" of descent was a virtual obsession with many people. Though Herod destroyed the pedigree-scrolls that were kept in the Temple, private records were kept by some families.⁴² Rabbi Yose, a Galilean teacher of the second century permitted a priest to marry a descendant of converts, but a later teacher testified that long after the destruction of the Temple, the priests refused to allow any of their number to marry a descendant of slaves or of converts, "even of ten generations," unless the mother was a pure Israelite.⁴³

The decisive consideration for Ezra and his party was doubtless the Law, as they understood it. We encounter here the first instance of the Jewish people becoming victims of the law which grew up in their own midst. The concept of a clear and detailed Divine law was so fascinating as to shove into the background all other considerations. The need to modify the Law was not felt as yet, and the interpretive devices whereby it could be brought into accord with the changing needs of life were not yet known.

The liberal wing of rabbinic Judaism rejected Ezra's policy by implication, though not directly and specifically. The Talmud tells of a great day in the Academy of Yavneh (Circa 90 C.E.), when Rabbi Joshua ben Hananyah attained authority. On that day, Judah the Ammonite, a convert, appeared before the rabbis with the query, "May I marry a Jewess?"

Rabbi Gamliel said, "No." Rabbi Joshua contradicted him with the words, "Sennacherib had come and had mixed up the nations," so that it is no longer possible to say that any one belongs to the specific nations with whom intermarriage is prohibited.⁴⁴ Now, Sennacherib lived some three centuries before Ezra. Thus, the implication of Rabbi Joshua's decision was a direct reversal of the policy of Ezra.

It is interesting to note that, in the generation of Ezra and Nehemiah, Pericles instituted an ordinance in Athens, prohibiting the marriage of a citizen with a foreigner. Pericles himself violated his own law and at the end of his life his marriage was finally given official status. Similarly, the Greeks in Ptolemy's Egypt were not allowed to intermarry with the natives. Again, this law was not enforced. For many centuries, the patricians of Rome were not allowed to marry daughters of the plebians.

Can we equate Ezra's expulsion of the "foreign women and all that were born from them" with such ordinances as those of Pericles, or Ptolemy, or the Roman Senate? The essential *plus* of religious racism is the fact that it is endowed with absolute authority. There is a tentativeness and a measure of flexibility in an ordinance based on political, practical, or even philosophical considerations. But it is of the essence of dogmatic religion to speak in absolute, unvarying terms. Ezra's action was looked upon as an example to future generations. Opposing principles were projected in Talmudic literature, but at no time was the action of Ezra specifically criticized and explicitly repudiated.

The Firm Covenant. While the subjective phase of the covenant concept led to the tragedies of the rejection of the Samaritans and the expulsion of the "foreign women," the objective phase of this same ideal attained a new climax of creative vigor. Implicit in the idea of a covenant between God and the people Israel is the free role of the human partner. The children of Israel were not obligated to obey the Divine command (except in the general human domain, where their obligation dates from the time of Noah), if they had not voluntarily consented to accept the Torah of Moses. The concept of human freedom is thus asserted on a cosmic scale. Man

confronts the Lord Himself in freedom. Similarly, in the account of the revelation at Sinai, the voluntary acceptance of the Israelites provides the climax of the unique self-revelation of the Deity, not the accompanying thunder and terror.

In the "Firm Covenant" which Ezra and Nehemiah concluded, the initiative is completely in human hands. There is no mention of miracles preceding the great event nor any mention of miracles following it. A number of leading men undertake to abide by certain regulations and they signify their resolution by affixing their signatures to the "Firm Covenant." They believe their actions to be consistent with the Divine Will, but God did not "tell" them precisely what they should do.

In the Sinaitic revelation, God's Will comes from without, through fire and thunder and by means of a human agent who is also more than human. In the Great Assembly of Ezra, God's will comes from within, through meditation and reasoning. To be sure, Ezra's meditations were centered on the letters of the Torah and strictly limited by walls of dogma. Yet, his action was a massive testimony to the voice of God that issues out of man's heart and mind.

Ezra's initiative was a demonstration of religious maturity that had incalculable consequences for the future growth of both Judaism and Christianity. Within Judaism the Great Assembly inaugurated a long series of *takkanoth*, religious ordinances which rendered the Law mutable and liveable in practice, though it was immutable and inflexible in theory. In the Christian Community, the example of Ezra and Nehemiah provided the precedent for the various synods, which were so largely instrumental in the ultimate triumph of the Christian faith.

"Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the people of Israel were assembled with fasting and in sackcloth, and with earth upon their heads. And the Israelites separated themselves from all foreigners, and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. And they stood up in their place and read from the book of the law of the Lord their God for fourth of the day; for another fourth of it they made confession and worshiped the Lord their God."⁴⁵

"The rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gate-keepers, the singers, the temple servants, and all who have

separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the law of God, their wives, their sons, their daughters, all who have knowledge and understanding, join their brethren, their nobles, and enter into a curse and an oath to walk in God's law which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our God and his ordinances and statutes. We will not give our daughters to the peoples of the land or take their daughters for our sons; and if the peoples of the land bring in wares or any grain on the sabbath day to sell, we will not buy from them on the sabbath or on a holy day; and we will forego the crops of the seventh year and the exaction of every debt."⁴⁶

The observances which they undertook were new applications of principles which they believed to be stated in the Pentateuch. They extended the law against intermarriage; they broadened the prohibition against doing work on the Sabbath; they interpreted the law regarding the seventh year as implying the total forgiveness of debts; they pledged to give a third of a shekel for the maintenance of the Temple and vowed to give the sacrifice of wood, the tithe, the first fruits, and all other prescribed offerings.

The Synagogue. The Great Assembly of Ezra was probably continued in some way from the time of Ezra (440 B.C.E.) to the generation of Simon the Just (circa 330 B.C.E.).⁴⁷ Various regulations were instituted from time to time, which resulted in the crystallization of the pattern of the synagogue. While prayer-meetings were held in Babylonia from time to time, the synagogue as a regular institution resulted in all likelihood from the practice of associating all Israelites of any particular Palestinian locality in the worship of their priests at the Holy Temple (Maamad). The priests were divided into twenty-four "guards"; each "guard" served its turn at the Temple. And along with each "guard" of priests, the Israelites who remained in their cities worshiped and read from the Torah at the time when the sacrifices were offered in the morning and in the evening.⁴⁸

The pattern of worship and study in the synagogues corresponded to the order of sacrifices in the Temple. Yet the service of the synagogue represented a vast advance over the

ritual of the Temple. At its center, was the study of the Torah and its interpretation. And within its precincts there was no distinction between classes and families, between Israelites and Gentiles. It is possible that even the partition between men and women, so characteristic of the Medieval synagogue, was not maintained in the ancient institution. The Synagogue was a concrete expression of religious democracy. Its newness liberated it from the historic associations which so frequently stifle religious institutions.

Within the walls of the synagogue, the offices of the prophet and the priest became extinct but the ideals of priesthood and prophecy were extended to all the people. In the Temple, only priests could officiate. Prophets too generally preached within the precincts of the Temple and received their visions there. Ezekiel who lived in Babylonia had his visions by the side of a river; *i.e.*, in a place of levitical purity. In the synagogues, there was no need for the offices of priests and prophets. All Israelites could learn to recite the prayers, though the Priestly Benediction was restricted to priests. The Torah could be read and interpreted by all, with the qualities of saintliness and scholarship taking the place of the privileges of birth and social caste. Gradually, Israelites as well as priests were admitted into the High Court or Sanhedrin, which judged capital cases.

But the function of the priesthood was now taken over by all Jews. The vision of a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" was translated into a regimen of observances for every Israelite. While Ezekiel confined at least some of the dietary laws to priests, the people assumed them all.⁴⁹ Some Israelite pietists assumed the "purity" laws of the priesthood, and ate their daily bread with the same tabus that guided the priests in eating the "heave-offering" (*terumah*).⁵⁰ The undertaking to worship God by means of daily prayers, morning and evening, amounted to the extension of an essentially priestly function to all the people. And every layman could aspire to the dignity of reading the Torah or leading the Congregation in prayer, or to becoming an *archisynagogos*, a head of the synagogue.

In the same manner, the function of the prophet was taken over by the scribes and interpreters. It was now their duty to

apply the teachings of the Torah to the daily concerns of the community and to deduce the eternal principles underlying the laws and stories of the Scriptures.

In a deeper sense, the prophet pushed back the frontiers of faith in two ways, by centering attention on the rational-ethical content of religion and by the intensity of his mystical experience. The greatness of the prophet consisted in the fact that he was a philosopher as well as a mystic, a statesman as well as an intense individualist, a man of reason and conscience as well as a person of profound religious feeling. And the two sides of his nature were held in a dynamic balance and a restless equilibrium.

The formal acceptance of the Law of Moses at the Great Assembly gradually narrowed and eventually eliminated the institution of prophecy. Ezekiel Kaufman argues that the Law in itself could not be responsible for the extinction of prophecy.⁵¹ Does not the Deuteronomist assure the people that prophets will arise when needed?⁵² Kaufman attributes the disappearance of prophecy to the growth of the popular conviction that God's love had departed from them. Prophecy came to be regarded as the mark of God's redemptive concern.

From the standpoint of our analysis, the replacement of prophecy by preaching and instruction is understandable. It is of the essence of law to narrow the range of oscillation for the spirit of man in both its objective and subjective movements. The existence of a universally accepted body of laws makes it difficult for men of great insight to say that God does not want the multiplicity of rites. And on the subjective side, men of law, trained in sober analysis and meticulous reasoning, will always look askance at the antics of religious enthusiasts. More particularly, the emergence of a new class of scribes and interpreters, expounding the Word of God, makes the daily role of the prophet superfluous. For the prophets preached and taught regularly, their oracles being given only on special occasions. The very authority of the Torah depended upon a dogmatic idealization of the first prophets. Surrounded with an aura of mystery, the image of the prophet was reserved for the mythical past and projected into the distant future. At the same time, and in a minor way, every Jew was elevated to the rank of "sons of prophets."

But while prophetic personalities could not exert great public influence, they did not disappear altogether from Jewish life. The great Sages and rabbis continued the prophetic tradition in its objective phase. They sought to grasp the underlying principle in the Divine law and to apply that principle to the circumstances of their day. Like the prophets of old, they were masters of the law rather than victims of it. By means of a treasury of interpretive principles, they could rise above the law to perceive its eternal core and to confront the realities of their day.⁵³

The subjective aspect of the prophetic personality was represented during the Second Commonwealth by the apocalyptic visionaries, diverse ascetics and saints and occasional, popular preachers. Josephus tells us of several "prophets" of this type. The popular image of a prophet, *i.e.*, a magical wonder-worker and predictor of future events, was to be encountered in every age, since superstition and folly are timeless. As Goethe put it, "*Der Kleine gott der Welt ist stets derselben schlag*" — (The little god of the world is always of the same stripe.) But the scepter of authority, at the threshold of the Second Commonwealth, was shared by the priests, the scribes, and the interpreters. Little room was left for the pretenders to prophecy, save on the popular level, in marginal groups, and at times of great public excitement and expectancy.

And so the Talmud speaks in one place of the Sages as the heirs of the prophets, while in another passage, "fools" are said to be the successors of the prophets of old.⁵⁴

CHAPTER SIX

THE SECOND COMMONWEALTH

The effect of the tension within Judaism between the objective concept of One God and the collective egotism of the people chosen by Him and covenanted unto Him was outlined in the preceding chapter. So long as the Jews lived within their own country, this tension manifested itself in the outbursts of men of genius against popular religion.

In exile, the God of Israel won a triumphant victory over the residual remnants of idolatry, since faith in Him became the one basis of hope for national redemption. The battle of the gods then shifted its ground. It now became the battle of the God of Israel and the people of Israel versus the "gods of the nations" and "the nations." The Talmud notes this radical change and tells of the capture and incarceration of "the demon of idolatry" by the "Men of the Great Assembly."¹

To be sure, in the realm of the spirit, victories are often illusory, with the conquered gods continuing their sway under other names. So the pagan gods of Europe became either demons, or saints, or angels in Medieval Christianity. In the Second Commonwealth, the struggle between prophetic monotheism and the ethnic god of Israel was no longer presented in the clear terms of two mutually exclusive alternatives. Instead, the ideological battle was now carried on within a polarity accepted by all. The differences were matters of emphasis, interpretation, and symbolization, and did not always take on the lineaments of a recognizable ideological controversy. Writes Professor Zeitlin of this period,

"The view that Yahweh was an ethnic God and the Judeans a chosen people was not entirely extirpated. Many Judeans, particularly the Sadducees adhered to this view."²

From the time of Ezra (440 B.C.E.) to the revolt of Mattathias

(167 B.C.E.) there are no historical works of any kind. Yet those two and a half centuries were not devoid of creative achievement. It is then that the Law and the Prophets received their final form, though the canon of the Scriptures was not closed until the Academy at Yavneh (*circa* 90 C.E.). The basic structure of the Synagogue service was worked out, with the reading of the Torah on Mondays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. The Oral tradition of interpretation and practice had begun to grow apace among the non-priestly scholars or Scribes. The dogmas of immortality and the resurrection had begun to strike roots in the hearts of the people.

The outstanding quality of this age appears to have been a remarkable intensification of monotheistic piety among all the people. It was no longer necessary to set the Word of God over against the life of the people "as an iron pillar and brass walls."³ For the people now sought this Word regularly, hearing it three times weekly, and participating in its interpretation. Not merely saints and sages like Daniel, Hananya, Michael, and Azaria, but even ordinary soldiers refused to eat the oil of Gentiles.⁴ To die for the "sanctification of the Name" was now a popular ideal, so that a woman like Hannah could offer her seven sons on the altar of martyrdom.⁵

The intense faith which characterized the life of the ordinary Jew was a marvelous achievement of the prophets and the scribes, and this triumphant culmination of centuries of effort set the pattern for the subsequent great ages of faith in both Judaism and Christianity. In polytheism, devotion to and belief in any one god was generally of a tentative, quasi-experimental nature. We recall that when their armies were defeated, the Romans were not above punishing their gods. Monotheistic devotion is as unique in quality as is monogamous love.

Furthermore, the faith of the Jew was fortified by the belief that the initial act of devotion was undertaken by God. Through His love of the Patriarchs and by His choice of Israel, God had chosen every Jew as His own. The balance of feeling in piety is always weighted heavily in favor of passivity. The mystical states of "illumination" and "ecstasy" are almost completely passive. The mystic feels himself "led," or "seized," or "pursued." And mysticism is merely an intense

awareness or exaggeration of the feelings of piety. Even in its mildest forms, faith is felt to be due to an act of love or grace on the part of God. It is not altogether man's creation, but in part at least, a perception, "a vision of things unseen," a response to God's call. Being of the "holy seed," the Jew could feel that his loyalty was commanded and compelled by His Creator. If he was not himself a prophet, he was part of the prophet-people. As Hillel later put it, "Leave the Israelites alone; if they are not prophets, they are sons of prophets."⁶

But, this upsurge of monotheistic faith deepened the Jewish feeling of isolation and loneliness.

How are we to understand the absence of any historical writings in the period between Nehemiah and the Maccabees?

The lack of interest in the writing of history is a natural product of a subjective mood, in which the outside world exists only as an intrusion and as an annoyance. The study of history derives from an objective orientation, a willingness to view all things within the perspective of humanity as a whole.

In the biblical period, the polarity between monotheism and paganism, the rational-ethical and the ritual-ethnic, generated a dynamic state of tension. The retelling of the ancient sagas of Israel and the reinterpretation of its chronicles were part of the stock of arguments used in the battle for the soul of the Jew. The historical books of the Bible have been aptly called "*heilsgeschichte*," the story of salvation. But from Ezra to the Maccabees there were no striking deeds of Divine redemption to record. The *Letter of Aristeas* tells of the pride of Alexandrian Jews in the fact that the Scriptures were translated into Greek by the seventy scholars and that Ptolemy placed the Septuagint version of the Scriptures in his royal library. The Palestinian Jews had to wait for the triumph of the Hasmonean War of Liberation as a wonder worthy of being remembered.

"Who wrote *Megillath Taanith* (the "fast-scroll" listing the days of victory on which one may *not* fast)? Hananiah son of Hizkiah and his group who loved the troubles. Said Rabbi Simon ben Gamliel, 'We too love our troubles, but if we were to write them all, we should not succeed.'"

Among the Greeks, Herodotus is regarded as "the father of

history." As a commercial and colonizing people, they had a pragmatic interest in learning of the ways of other people. Herodotus wrote for entertainment as well as for instruction. In Xenophon's writings, the same motives are apparent in addition to the desire to glorify his exploits and those of his countrymen. Thucydides could more easily attain the authentic objectivity of a historian, since he wrote of an intra-Greek struggle, the Peloponnesian War. The study of history was highly esteemed among the Greeks, as a way of educating citizens and statesmen, and as a species of literature. In the Hellenistic age, there proliferated historical romances and all kinds of fictionalized quasi-histories.

We may note, in passing, the utter fallacy of describing Judaism as "the religion of history." The sole justification for this commonly used designation is the fact that the Bible operates within an historical framework, beginning with creation and ending with the reforms of Ezra. In the contest between Judaism and paganism, it was not the "God of history," but "the God of Jewish history" that was set against the gods of the heathen.

Within the self-centered enclave of Judaism, no account was taken of the great world. God was the sole actor, to our pietists, and His chief concern was the Jewish people. It is only under the impact of literary attacks and following the example of Greek authors, that Jewish writers like Philo, Justus, and Josephus undertook the task of interpreting the fate of the Jews in terms of general human experience. To be sure, within the Jewish heritage, the reflections of the Sages could have provided a broad perspective for the study of human affairs. But, then, in the pre-Maccabean era, the priestly caste was predominant, while the creative clan of prophecy was on the wane.

The most fundamental distinction between Judaism and Hellenism consisted in the fact that the teachers of wisdom in the Hellenic world had virtually *broken away from* the subjective religion and culture of the people, while in Judaism, general wisdom and the prophetic heritage were maintained in dynamic tension with popular culture and subjective feeling. The philosophers, dramatists, and artists of Greece did not share the naive faith of the people. To escape popular wrath, the philosophers bowed occasionally in the direction

of "the gods" and later they even elaborated fanciful interpretations of the ancient myths, but in reality there was only the most tenuous connection between the concepts and ideals of the philosophers and the notions of popular culture. In the classical period, Anaxagoras was exiled, Socrates was executed, and Aristotle was expelled from Athens. The Pythagorists in southern Italy were massacred. In the Hellenistic period, first the Stoics and later the Neo-Platonists sought to effect an alliance with popular religion. But all the attempts to bridge the gap between philosophy and popular religion were obviously artificial, tentative, and illusory. Writes Josephus of the ideas of the Jews,

"... for Pythagoras and Anaxagoras and Plato and the Stoic philosophers that succeeded them, and almost all the rest, share these sentiments and notions concerning God; yet, these men dared not disclose those true notions to more than a few, because the body of the people were set against them."⁸

In contrast, the prophets spoke with the authority of the God whom the people worshiped. Their words were cherished equally with the Law and the priestly tradition. In Judaism, the bonds between prophecy at its ideal best and popular religion at its lowest levels were not ruptured; the prophets remained part and parcel of the religious life of the community.

The inner correspondence of philosophy and prophecy are generally overlooked. Many scholars build strawmen out of abstractions in books and label them Hellenic and Hebraic respectively. Actually, the Jew and the Hellene did not represent unique and opposing breeds of mankind. There was as much craving for the consolations of piety among individual Hellenes as there was appreciation of the glories of reason among individual Jews. When the Hellenes accepted Christianity, they exhibited the narrowness of dogmatic fanaticism and of collective self-exaltation in ways that are usually associated with Orientals. And when Talmud-trained Jews discovered the works of Aristotle, they reveled in the glories of pure reason as well as any disciple of the Megarian sage.

It is important to see both cultures within their historic contexts and to note their similarities as well as their differences. Both Judaism and Hellenism had largely broken through the dense cloudcover of mythology, which smothered the thought

of ancient man. In mythopoeic thought, man, nature, and God are all one. The prophets emphasized the gulf between God and nature; the philosophers separated nature from both God and man. Ethical objectivity is the core of prophetic thinking, intellectual and esthetic objectivity, that of the philosophers. In both cultures, the non-priestly individual, relying on the guidance of his own "inner light," comes to the fore. Hesiod was not attached to any temple; the Muses selected him and lent wings to his words, farmer though he was. In the same manner, Amos, the herdsman and sycamore tender, felt called upon to articulate the word of God, though he was "neither prophet, nor son of a prophet." The "strange poignancy of simple individuals in the Old Testament" is paralleled by the emergence of self-reliant philosophers in Hellenic thought. In mythological cultures, man is merged into nature, and the structure of society is justified and mystified. By contrast, philosophy celebrates the freedom of man's intellect, and prophecy extols the glory of man's spirit. In the Hebrew Bible, man is free and the "*image of God*," so too in Hellenic thought, man participates in the nature of the gods. Pindar sang "Of one race, one only, are men and gods . . ."

Neither in Hellenism, taken as a whole, nor in Jewish life, as it was articulated in rites and institutions, was the spell of mythology entirely broken. Plato uses myths constantly, whenever the illumination of logic fails him and even Aristotle falls back upon mythology in his conception of the heavenly spheres. In the Hebrew Bible, the tension between prophetic idealism and popular mythology was continuous and unbroken.⁹

The usual approach in contrasting Judaism and Hellenism is to set a selected phase of Hellenic life over against a selected aspect of Jewish life and culture.

We need to guard against the seduction of well-worn clichés, which attribute the varied gifts of reason to the Hellenes and of ethical-religious feeling to the Hebrews. Such distinctions are far too facile.

Manifestly, there were "thinkers" among the Hebrews and "doers" among the Greeks. The prophets spoke of the "knowledge of God" and so did the philosophers. If the prophets were primarily men of intuition, the Sages who inherited their man-

tle were men of scholarship and sober reflection. If philosophers were men of intellect, Plato was as intuitive, as poetic, as fervently fascinated with the Good as any man that ever trod on the face of the earth.

As a matter of fact, we are told that when Aristotle and his disciples first heard of the prophets and their teachings, they acclaimed the Jews as "philosophers" all. Aristotle is said to have remarked that he learned more from a Greek-speaking Jew than the Jew learned from him.¹⁰ Similarly, the Jews believed that the philosophers of classical Hellas were disciples of the prophets.¹¹ And this gleam of recognition on both sides in classical times was far closer to the truth than the diverse *pilpulistic* distinctions of Aryan antisemites, existentialist preachers, and nationalistic dogmatists, in our own day.

The prophets searched their hearts for the Word of the living God, but it is for their "faith" or their "fervor" that they are extolled by some writers. However, "faith" and "fervor" were common then, as they are in all naive ages. What made the prophets great was not their belief *that* God spoke to them, but precisely *what* God told them. The content of their message was both rational and moral. God desires goodness, gentleness, purity; rituals are only aids to piety. And God calls upon us to rise above our own ethnic concerns and prejudices, that we may criticize and evaluate the actions of our own group in the light of His Will and in the perspective of humanity as a whole. The newness of the prophetic message was therefore its rational-ethical content; in other words, its philosophy.

While the Hellenic philosophers began their discourses with the data of human reflection, they did not ignore man's relation to God. Except for the Sophists and the Epicureans, they found a place for God in their system. The Stoics spoke of the Divine Will as immanent in nature; the neo-Platonists sought to reach the Good by a series of exercises which refined the soul; the Aristotelians placed the "contemplation of God" at the apex of their system.

Josephus caught the difference between Judaism and Greek philosophy aptly when he declared that piety was to the Greeks another virtue, while to the Jews it was the supreme virtue.

"Moses did not make religion a part of virtue, but he saw and he ordained other virtues to be parts of religion."¹²

Similarly, Philo asserts that piety or holiness is the "queen" of the virtues.¹³ And *The Letter of Aristeas* insists:

"If you take the fear of God as your starting point you will never miss the goal."¹⁴

Naturally, the teaching methods of the prophets were altogether different from those of the philosophers. The prophets were *part* of the national culture and religion; hence, they could refine the concepts and notions of the tradition even as they taught it. This was the source of their strength, but also the reason for their occasional failure to transcend the limitation of dogma or ethnic bias. The philosophers had to build their ethics afresh out of independent foundations, since they were relatively free from the spell of their native faith. This was the source of their strength. But their weakness too derived from this relative independence. Their teaching lacked the natural force and plausibility of an unquestioned tradition and a firm faith. Even their highest moral principles were tentative and indecisive, lacking the cutting edge of the prophetic assertion, "Thus spoke the Lord." They could teach the few to be reasonable and resigned, but they could not imbue the many with enthusiasm, ardor, and hope.

The Hellenic philosophers are sometimes confused with the pre-Socratic Sophists, and the classical prophets with the Canaanite prophetizers, and it is argued that the sole interest of the philosophers was intellectual-esthetic; of the prophets, faith and submission to God. The key-word of philosophy in this view was "contemplation" and the key-word of prophecy was "ecstasy," or "vision." This interpretation is as superficial as it is widespread. Actually, the post-Socratic philosophers were intensely concerned with the good life, and the literary prophets directed their superb critical barbs at the practices and beliefs which the people called piety, ecstasy and "prophetic frenzy." It is generally forgotten that Socrates risked and finally gave his life for the sake of truth and justice. Plato set out to reform the life of Syracuse and was temporarily enslaved for his pains. In the "Scipio circle" at Rome, the philosophers of Greece were welcomed. And from that aristocratic circle emerged moral leadership and creative statesmanship for the movement of social reform in Republican Rome. Throughout the history of western Europe, philosophy shared

with prophecy the honor of stimulating and guiding the movements of social justice.

What then was the "cutting edge" of Hellenic culture? Clearly the thrust of man's spirit was largely disassociated from the restraining chains of the popular tradition. The ramparts which ringed the horizon were breached, and brave souls dared to confront the universe anew.

Philosophy, or the quest of the intellect for truth, was no longer pursued by priests of this or that god. It became an independent discipline, unrelated to "the gods" as a whole. To Socrates, the "demon" and the "oracle" were little more than figures of speech. Ethics was no longer dependent on any sacred tradition, or on the unquestioned mores of society. It was a subject of independent investigation and even experimentation. And art too sought its consummation in accord with its own genius. While the theatre in Greece grew out of Dionysian games and sculpture out of the anthropomorphic concept of popular religion, these arts became domains of culture in their own right. The quest of the beautiful was for the Greeks as worthy a pursuit as that of the good and the true.

Explaining Aristotelian ethics, Gilbert Murray writes:

"When a brave man faces danger or a martyr faces suffering he does so *eneka tok kalon*, i.e., literally, for the sake of the beautiful. It does not mean the 'showy,' nor yet the 'artistic.' It denotes the sort of action which, as soon as we contemplate it, we admire and love, just as we admire and love a beautiful object, without any thought of *personal* interest or advantage."¹⁵

Rabbi Judah the Prince (200 C.E.) may well have had the Greek word, *Kalon*, in mind when he insisted that an action must appear beautiful to humanity in general (*tifereth lo min ho-adam*) as well as beautiful to oneself. "Rabbi Judah the Prince says, 'Which is the right road, that a man should choose for himself? That which is beautiful to the doer and appears beautiful to humanity.'"¹⁶

Intellectual growth is achieved by the double action of persistent doubt and fresh insight. The acids of doubt corrode the joints of the structure of authority, while man's hunger for a faith to live by prevents the traditional structure of values from disintegrating altogether. The result of this twofold ac-

tion of skepticism and belief is, on the intellectual level, a progressive rearrangement of the structure of faith. The relative stability of human nature in normal times makes it likely that basic values will be retained, though in diverse and varying patterns.

But man lives on the level of sentiment as well as reason. Transposed to the key of feeling, the doubting of the philosopher becomes the moral cynicism of the libertine, and the intellectual's quest for new horizons of truth becomes, on the popular level, the pleasure-seeking of the libertine. Thus while the break in the soul of the Hellenic was expressed intellectually in the emergence of the relatively independent disciplines of philosophy, literature, science, and art, the same schism within the soul was articulated emotionally in the wild pursuit of natural and unnatural pleasures. The cultivation of the "Greek vice," homosexuality, was the symbolic expression in the domain of passion of the dissolution of the old truths and the quest for new anchors. Despair is the emotional equivalent of doubt, and the headlong rush for new pleasures is a reflection of the despairing restlessness of the soul. This divergence in the articulation of the crisis of the soul will be reflected within every community, with the hosts of pleasure-lovers expressing the bewilderment of the age in their own way, even as the philosophers persevere in doubting and questioning — opening new windows into the unknown. Alcibiades and his passion-drunk cronies were the "disciples" and "friends" of Socrates.

Since the root of Hellenism was the break between the objective realm of values and the life of subjective emotion and tradition, we should expect that an encounter with Hellenism will induce a similar dichotomy of spirit in the non-Hellenic culture which will come near the breaking point, even if it does not disintegrate.

Hellenism and Judaism clashed on many levels. We should expect the independence of the objective realm in Greek culture to intensify the innate, rational-ethical aspiration within Judaism. The charm of philosophy could be expected to beguile the Sages into carrying the universalist tendencies of the prophets to unprecedented heights. At the same time, the se-

duction of Greek manners and pleasures would exert their disruptive pull upon the well-to-do segments of the Jewish community, inducing them to plunge with abandon into the pursuit of pleasure. Thus, a Hellenizing movement was bound to arise, on both levels, the intellectual and popular.

We might also anticipate that the reaction of the people loyal to tradition would be violent. On the intellectual level, it was likely to be expressed in a massive resistance against the lure of doubt and the glare of reason, or against "Greek wisdom" generally. Piety will become desperate and dogmatic, for dogmatism is the attempt to shut violently a door which has been thrown open by fresh gusts of wind. A naive faith becomes defiantly dogmatic under the stress of desperation.

The unquenchable stirrings of objective conscience among the desperate dogmatics will then be allayed by concentrating attention upon the social vices of the Hellenic community. The human tendency to overlook the good in others and the evil in oneself is magnified a thousandfold when two cultures come into collision. For then it becomes an act of piety to exaggerate and to extol the virtues in one's own camp and to number meticulously the vices in the camp of the enemy. The spirit of prophecy is inverted. The objective values in the tradition are cherished as banners under which to fight, not as standards by which to judge. The pathos of prophecy is turned into a posture of arrogant contempt. Subjective passion is everywhere exalted.

Such a dichotomy of spirit was precisely what resulted in Palestine, following the incorporation of Judea into the Hellenistic world. From the conquest of Alexander (333 B.C.E.) to the rebellion of the Maccabees (167 B.C.E.), the Jews were in continuous albeit marginal contact with the Hellenic world. The colonizing Greeks settled as merchants in port cities and in special Hellenic towns strung out along the lines of commerce. The Judeans were farmers, for the most part, with a comparatively small segment of merchants and soldiers established in the new metropolitan centers. We may study the effects of this clash of cultures by focusing attention on two cities, Jerusalem, the metropolis of Judea, in a way, of the entire Jewish community, and Alexandria, the great center of Hellenistic Jewry.

In Jerusalem, the initial effect of the impact of Hellenism

was to increase the inner tensions within Judaism and to bring them to the breaking point. Accordingly, we note the gradual evolution of two parties, the Hellenizers and the *Hasidim*. The issue which brought about the final split between the two parties was the attempt of the Hellenizers to convert Jerusalem into a "Hellenic" city. Doubtless certain economic advantages were associated with the acquisition of Hellenic status in the Seleucid empire. To qualify for this status, a city had to have the typical institutions of a Hellenic city, a gymnasium for the education of the young, a theatre, and possibly some other pagan symbols. To the "Hellenizers," these institutions were attractive in themselves, apart from whatever commercial advantages could be derived from the status of "Antiochenes." The intellectuals were fascinated by the universal values imbedded in Greek culture; the pleasure-lovers, clustered around the moneyed clique of the Tobiad family, were attracted by the free and easy morals of the Greeks. The Greek custom of exercising in the nude within the gymnasium was for the Jewish youths symbolic of breaking away from the customs of their fathers.

Some Jewish youths may have been led to perform operations intended to conceal the mark of circumcision. Possibly again, some youths may have become addicted to homosexuality. There is no reason to believe that such excesses were frequent. In any case, the gymnasium and its exercises in the nude was sufficient to horrify the pious population of Jerusalem, especially of the Judean countryside. The plain meaning of the second chapter in Genesis is that to wear garments, covering one's nakedness, is the first step of culture taken by Adam and Eve. God Himself made the first garments for them, after they had eaten of "the tree of knowledge." The Book of Jubilees specifically declares it to be a sin to walk about in the nude.

"Therefore He commanded in the tablets of heaven to all who abide by the law to cover their nakedness and not to uncover themselves, as do the nations."¹⁷

The philosophy of the Hellenizers has come down to us in the language and literature of its bitter opponents. Nevertheless, the following quotation from the first book of Maccabees rings true:

"At that time there came forth from Israel certain lawless

men who persuaded many, saying 'Let us go and make a treaty with the heathen around us, because ever since we separated from them many evils have come upon us!'"¹⁸

The Hellenizers wanted to break away from the lonely isolation which was then beginning to dog the steps of all Jews. In the Persian empire and wherever the prevailing culture did not contain a powerful and independent realm of objective and secular values, the isolation of the Jew was remarked only by extremists within and embittered enemies from without, like Haman. As long as many different cultural and religious communities existed side by side, the lonely eminence and resolute defiance of the Jews as against "all the nations of the earth" was not felt so keenly. But in the Hellenistic world there ensued a commingling of races and cultures, at least in the cities, and this naturally was reflected in the popularity of syncretistic religious tendencies. This intermingling of peoples was occasionally slowed down by legislation but never completely halted. Alexander the Great encouraged the intermarriage of Greeks and Persians in the desire to create a cosmopolitan society. The Ptolemies prohibited the intermarriage of Greeks and Egyptians in order to maintain a governing class. The *Seleucids* generally adhered to the cosmopolitanism of Alexander with strong emphasis on the dominating character of Hellenism.

In the *Seleucid* society, Jews in the cities came to sense their peculiar loneliness ever more painfully as the Hellenizing movement proceeded apace. Hence, the pathos and impetus of the Hellenizing movement.

How far were the Hellenizers ready to proceed in their endeavor to attain the status of "Antiochene" citizens? Were they willing to participate in the worship of pagan gods? Did they aim to apostatize completely or were they only desirous of meeting the Greek world half way, as it were? Doubtless, there were many different kinds of Hellenizers, with the majority being quite restrained in their flirtation with Hellenism.¹⁹ The majority of any population is usually conservative, especially in matters of faith.

The genesis and the character of the Hellenizing movement are still in dispute. Baer assumes a progressive penetration of Greek philosophical ideas into the circles of the First Hasidim.²⁰

Some writers believe that the books of Qoheleth and Ben Sirach reflect Hellenic ideas. Still others see the beginning of the process of acculturation in the rise of the Tobiad class of tax gatherers (circa 200 B.C.E.).²¹

The depth of Greek influence is also in dispute. It appears certain that Antiochus' decision to dedicate the Holy Temple to the worship of the Syrian Zeus (Baal Shamoin) was not approved by the original Hellenizing party or by any Jewish group. In his anger, Antiochus decided to punish all Jews and went far beyond the desires of the assimilationists. In all probability, the Jewish Hellenists sought to follow the usual, syncretistic pattern, then prevailing in the Near Eastern world, blending their own heritage with the quasi-universal culture of their day.

The Hasidim stood at the opposite extreme of the process of acculturation. In their soul, too, the equilibrium between objective and subjective tendencies was shattered. Subjectivism took over completely. In spirit they retreated from reality. The Will of the One God was for them the sole axis around which the entire world revolved. Gone was that dynamic tension between the ethical-rational approach and the law of tradition, which distinguished the prophetic movement in its creative period. Instead of living in that tension which induces self-questioning and humility, the Hasidim were now driven by the passionate assurance which derives from the single-mindedness of dogmatism. All they had to do was to obey the Law which alone was true. God would take care of their needs.

Thus the utter passivity of the Hasidim in the face of Antiochus' persecution becomes understandable. On the Sabbath they would not lift a finger in self-protection.

"Nevertheless, many in Israel were firmly resolved in their hearts not to eat unclean foods. They preferred to die rather than be defiled by food or break the holy covenant, and they did die."²²

"...And their pursuers said to them, 'Enough, come out, do the king's command and live.' And they said, 'we shall not go out, we shall not obey the king's command to desecrate the Sabbath.' And the soldiers hastened to fight against them. And they did not respond, not even to throw stones or to close the entrances of their hiding places. For they said, 'Let us all

die in our innocence. Heaven and earth are our witnesses that you are killing us without justice.'"²³

This refusal to fight on the Sabbath day on the part of strong-minded, zealous, and violent men is a typical illustration of the total absence of the prophetic spirit in the rigid piety of the Hasidim. They no longer believed that the inner light of intelligence could be trusted to convey to man an inkling of the Divine Will. Not in general principles, such as were formulated by prophets and psalmists, but in the specific minutiae of the Law was the Will of God to be discerned.

In the mentality of the Hasidim, there was only one standard of right and wrong; one source of guidance. The Torah was all, and human understanding of no consequence. The Hasidim were by no means prepared to renounce the ways of violence. In the punishment of offenders against the Law, they were ready to exact the ultimate penalty, even if the "sinners" did no more than fail to circumcise their sons. Their passivity was not a consequence of their pacifism, but of their "totalitarian" faith.

Mattathias was able to convince many of the Hasidim that it was not sinful to defend oneself on the Sabbath. But even after this decision was accepted, only actual fighting in self-defense was allowed. It seems that even a century after Mattathias, it was still possible for the Roman general Pompeii to take advantage of the Sabbath and set his siege-machines in order to break into the city before the people would fight back.

As Josephus puts it:

"...for though our law gives us leave then to defend ourselves against those that begin to fight with us and assault us, yet it does not permit us to meddle with our enemies while they do anything else."²⁴

For the Hasidim, the priestly mentality had come to usurp the place of Judaism as a whole. Not only was the ethical-rational factor in prophecy eliminated, but even the ambition for self-government was quenched.²⁵ We find that the Hasidim deserted the banner of Judah Maccabee as soon as their freedom of religious worship was assured. They were ready to welcome Alcimus into Jerusalem, though he was chosen by the Syrian king and protected by a Syrian army. As Professor Solomon Zeitlin summarizes their attitude:

"But as soon as the Jews received religious freedom, the Hasidim not only withdrew from the Hasmoneans and refused to participate in the struggle for the political independence of Judea but actually opposed them."²⁶

Yet the Hasidim were not quietists, content to leave the use of force to the men of evil. On the contrary, they attacked the Hellenized and the hesitant Jews with the ruthless zeal of fanatics on the theory which was later to be formulated in the words, "All Israelites are responsible for one another."²⁷

"At that time a company of Hasidim joined them [Mattathias' men], an exceedingly forceful group of Israel, each one offering himself willingly in defense of the Law. All the refugees from misfortune joined them, and came to reinforce them. They mustered an army and smote sinners in their anger, and lawless men in their wrath, while the rest fled to the heathen to save themselves. Mattathias and his friends went about, and tore down the altars, and circumcised by force as many of the uncircumcised children as they found in the borders of Israel . . ."²⁸

The cruel repressions of Antiochus and the Maccabean rebellion were enacted within the context of a civil war between the two extreme parties, the Hasidim and the Hellenizers. Neither of these two parties represented an unusual reaction to the challenge of Hellenism. The upper class of the Syrians, the Phoenicians, and the Egyptians reacted to the impact of Greek culture more or less in the fashion of the most extreme Hellenizers. And among all these peoples, there were small groups, clustering round their priestly families, who remained zealous for their respective faiths and traditions. The magnificent spirit of mass-martyrdom of the Hasidim was a function of the intensity and singleness of purpose of monotheistic piety. Every great religion, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism as well as Christianity and Islam, had its individual martyrs. It is certain that the people's martyrdom of the Hasidim set the pattern for pietists in all the religions deriving from Judaism.

Christians and Moslems harked back for inspiration to the noble mother of seven young martyrs and to Eleazar, the fearless sage.

Was the ideal of martyrdom a creation of Jewish genius? Only in the sense of its being a *mass-ideal*, since all the people

were expected to live for the "sanctification of the Name" (*kid-dush hashem*). As an ideal for the few, the pagan world was swamped with so called *aretalogies*, tales of virtuous men who usually died as martyrs. Socrates, in Plato's account, was a martyr for "the laws" of his city. The story of the Indian sage, Calanus, defying Alexander the Great, occurs in many different versions. Philo quotes Zeno's motto as the maxim of these unyielding men of piety, "Sooner you will sink an inflated bladder than compel any virtuous man to do against his will anything that he does not wish." But these heroic ideals were cherished in Judaism by the entire band of Hasidim, and the Jewish people as a whole identified themselves with these pietists.²⁰

The greatness of Judaism was revealed in a singular capacity for recuperation and renaissance. Following the dissolution of the creative tension in Judaism by the division into Hellenizers and Hasidim, we behold the gradual reestablishment of a spiritual balance. The Pharisees emerge embodying the spirit of prophecy as well as a zeal for priestly rituals. And in Alexandria, Hellenistic Judaism makes its appearance, reestablishing the balance between faith and reason.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE JEWS IN EGYPT

It is in Alexandria, Egypt, that Hellenistic culture established its mightiest center. There, too, the largest Jewish community outside Palestine flourished for many centuries. According to Josephus, Alexander the Great invited Jews to settle in the newly-founded metropolis. More probably, Ptolemy the First in his numerous raids on Judea carried back many thousands of captives and soldiers. Liberated slaves and merchants formed the core of that fascinating community, which, in its tensions and struggles, anticipated so much of the pathos and tragedy of the modern Jewish Diaspora.

In Alexandria, Judaism attained one of its noblest peaks, with the emergence and efflorescence of philosophical religion. Alexandria also beheld the tragic decay of this majestic achievement, and the recrudescence of blind fanaticism. In this polyglot metropolis, the hope of Jewish philosophers for a fraternal union with the Greek nation was nurtured for many generations. Here, too, the hate and fanaticism of Greek and Egyptian demagogues on the one hand, and Jewish zealots on the other, demonstrated an interlocking demonic fury and joint capacity to frustrate the noble intentions of reasonable peacemakers. Finally, it was in Alexandria that the spirit of the Medieval Era was duly inaugurated with the savage lynching of the philosopher, Hypatia, by a Christian mob led by crazed monks, and the subsequent expulsion of the Jews by a similar mob. The mutual fertilization of philosophy and tradition with the consequent emergence of enlightened religion; the forging of fraternal bonds between Jews and Greeks and the gradual building up of a band of semi-converted, Sabbath-observing, synagogue-attending Gentiles; the reaction against this friendly intercourse of the two peoples and their

cultures by the self-centered, fanatical mobs of both communities under the prodding of a selfish, exploiting Imperial power; the drowning in blood and superstition of the noblest efforts of Greek philosophers and Jewish sages — this tragic sequence is the tale of Alexandria that we shall now seek to explore in detail.

The earliest contacts between Greek philosophers and Jewish scholars in Alexandria were most friendly. Hecateus was one of the Greek intellectuals that Ptolemy the First lured into his kingdom, with the object of establishing the dominion of the Macedonian conquerors on the foundation of ideal, philosophic principles. Hecateus attributes the Israelite exodus from Egypt to a plague that devastated that land. In their eagerness to appease their gods, he reports, the Egyptians expelled all foreigners. Some of the refugees went to Greece; the rest settled in Judea. According to this legend then, the Jews and the Greeks were originally one people.¹ To the Greek philosopher, this legendary kinship was a reflection of the inner identity of Hellenism and Hebraism. The establishment of a Jewish state and its temple is attributed to Moses, who is described as a worshiper of the God of the philosophers. Moses divided the Jews into twelve tribes, "for this is the most perfect number, corresponding to the number of months in the year." Thus the amphictiony of Delphi also consisted of twelve tribes. Hecateus also saw a parallel in the Mosaic prohibition of the worship of images and Xenophon's admonitions to avoid the lure of anthropomorphism. Moses exhorted the people to worship the all-encompassing God, even as some of the philosophers did likewise, except that he prohibited the worship of the popular gods. The philosophers, as we noted previously, tended to distinguish clearly between their own faith and that of the people generally.

"It is an ancient tradition which we have received in the form of a myth, that the heavenly bodies alone are gods, and that the Divine Being includes and embraces all of nature. All other opinions were added, in mythological form, for the sake of influencing the masses and inducing them to abide by the laws of society — namely, that the gods have a human form or that they resemble some of the beasts of the field."²

In the same spirit, Theophrastes, Aristotle's disciple, explains

the order of sacrifices among the Jews as a necessary concession to the spirit of the time, for the "Jews among the Syrians" are "essentially philosophers."³ The identification of Jews with philosophers is also made in a quotation that Josephus preserved for us, in which a writer cites Aristotle as saying "these Jews are the descendants of the philosophers in India."⁴ This sense of spiritual kinship between Jews and Greeks was reflected in the legend that grew up concerning their common ancestry. In addition to Hecateus' reference to this legend, we have in the first book of Maccabees a letter from Arius, the king of Sparta, to Hionyos the High Priest, in which the Spartans are said to be brothers of the Jews, descendants of the family of Abraham.⁵ This Arius (308-265 B.C.E.) was an historical figure, but the authenticity of the letter in its present form has been questioned. Thus, too, the second book of Maccabees mentions that Jason, the High Priest, sought refuge in Sparta because of its racial kinship to the people of Israel.⁶

Doubtless, too, the ancient world was impressed by the extreme loyalty of both Jews and Spartans to the "laws" of their country. The words inscribed at Thermopylae read, "... tell the Spartans that it is in loyalty to their laws that we lie here."

The Jewish scholars and sages were also convinced of the inner unity of philosophy and prophecy. Aristobulus, a contemporary of Judas Maccabee, was probably the leading Jewish sage of Alexandria. He composed a philosophical commentary on the Pentateuch, in which he maintained that Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle were all influenced by the teaching of Moses. His commentary is allegorical in nature, pointing out that the ideas of the philosophers are already contained in the Torah. For instance, the references in the Pentateuch to the "voice of God" must be understood in the sense of the "harmony in the structure of creation." The Divine creation of light refers to the emergence of Wisdom; the attainment of truth is the apex of man's achievement; and the laws of the Torah educate and dispose man for this consummation. To the standard four virtues of Plato (wisdom, courage, temperance, justice), Aristobulus adds the virtue of piety, and assigns to it the highest rank—an estimate rare in Plato and exceedingly rare in Hellenic philosophy generally.⁷ The only dogma on which Aristobulus specifically insists is that of the

actual descent of the Deity on Mount Sinai in order to manifest His Majesty to the Israelites.⁸ The revelation at Sinai gave the Jewish faith "unique and irrevocable status." "Thus it is clear that a descent of God had actually happened... that God himself, without any mediation, showed His Greatness by means of these phenomena."⁹

Thus Aristobulus virtually identified the lessons of Hellenic philosophy and the Jewish faith, though he remained strictly loyal to the dogma of revelation. The Hellenistic Jewish writers, particularly Philo the elder (225-158 B.C.E.), stress the central role of Abraham, who preached the doctrine of faith in the God of justice and righteousness, without encumbering that luminous core of faith with a multitude of ritual observances.¹⁰ The inner consistency of the laws governing the cosmos and the "way of the Lord" described in the Torah formed the theme of the early Jewish Hellenistic teachers. Abraham was represented as the original discoverer of this unity of physical nature and the Divine Law.

It appears then that the Hellenistic Jewish teachers recognized the remarkable similarity between the teachings of the philosophers and the prophets. Plato ranked the prophet generally below the philosopher, but at times he assigned the highest rank to those caught up in a "divine frenzy."¹¹ Aristobulus accorded to philosophers the status of prophets. Speaking of the meaning of the "voice of God" in the Pentateuch, he wrote, "It appears to me that Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato, who pondered long on this problem, accepted this doctrine. In profound contemplation of the structure of the cosmos, which was created by God and is constantly sustained by Him, they said that they heard the voice of God."¹²

The argument of the Jewish preachers was directed against the practices and beliefs of the common people. In Judaism, they maintained, there was an inner organic unity between doctrine and practice, prophetic insight and popular acceptance, whereas among the Greeks, the philosophers stood alone and isolated. The Hellenistic writers set out to prove that the laws and tales of the Torah were allegorical versions of the principles of the philosophers and applications of their doctrines.

The *Letter of Aristeas* is a wonderful example of this line

of thought, which prevailed in the upper circles of Alexandrian Jewry. The author, ostensibly a Greek, describes how Ptolemy Philadelphos is persuaded by his librarian to arrange for a translation of the Hebrew Bible. Two Greek scholars are sent to Jerusalem where they are duly impressed with the magnificence of the Holy Temple and the loftiness of Jewish teaching. Seventy scholars are selected to go to Alexandria for this purpose. They are entertained for seven days. In turn, the scholars from Jerusalem demonstrate their Hellenic education and their mastery of philosophy to the assembled scholars at the Ptolemaic court. The translators did their work in seclusion on the island of Pharos and their labors were aided by Divine inspiration; consequently, their work is officially accepted. We are told that a Greek writer was punished with a fit of insanity for daring to quote the Pentateuch from an unauthorized translation.

Historians are generally agreed that this work was really written by a Jew in the years 270-277 B.C.E. The Alexandrian Jews observed a special feast in commemoration of the completion of the translation, which was read by them in place of the original Hebrew version. The Septuagint was to the Alexandrian Jews a patent of philosophic nobility. It proved that they were not a "barbarian" people, but a great nation, dedicated to a life of virtue and metaphysical contemplation.

For in the observance of the commandments the good life is embraced. The legislator set down the principles of piety and justice, teaching them not merely by way of prohibitions, but also by means of commandments . . . Firstly, he proved that God is One, manifesting His power in all things and His dominion everywhere . . . And the wise legislator who was endowed by God with the power to understand all things fenced us around with an unbreakable barrier and with iron walls, that we should not mingle with other nations and that we remain pure in body and in soul, free from superstition and fearing the One God . . .¹³

The author goes on to explain the dietary laws as instruments of segregation and as providing the ramparts necessary for the cultivation of the good life. Segregation of Jews from other nations is justified by him on the ground of the prevalence of idolatry and unnatural sexual vices among the pagans.¹⁴ The Greeks, for whose edification this work was intended, would not be offended by this reference, since they were

not among the original neighbors of the Jews. Also, at that time, the Greeks sought to stay apart from the Egyptian natives whom they governed.

This work reveals, therefore, the tension in the soul of the Jew between the attraction of universal ideals and the subjective exaltation of his own people and tradition. His high esteem of Hellenic culture is shown in his eagerness to demonstrate that the Jewish scholars were familiar with Hellenic literature. They were followers of the "middle road which is the most beautiful," as well as their own tradition.¹⁵ In their discussions with the king, the scholars stress only the general virtues of mankind. At the same time, the author ignores the higher reaches of non-Jewish culture, condemning pagan forms of worship as the utter stupidity of fetishists and calling for the segregation of Jews from the superstitious masses around them. As Cherikower put it, "The way to the cultural emancipation of the Jews led through the Greek Bible, through studying and commenting upon it, not through neglect of its precepts."¹⁶

At the same time, we must remember that this view was not that of the extreme assimilationists. The way was open in Ptolemaic Alexandria for individual Jews to pursue their own path to full equality. Some Jews jumped across the Mosaic "iron walls" and attained high status in the governing circles of Alexandria. Even the rabid antisemites of Philo's day were ready to accord the rights of Hellenes to the Jews who acquired the graces of Hellenic life and participated in the rites of the Alexandrian civic religion. The author of this work spoke for the "Conservative" leadership of Alexandrian Jewry, who wished to guard the "iron walls" of the Torah even while accepting the arts and virtues of the Hellenic world.

Yet even this moderate program of cultural synthesis was probably repugnant to the masses of Alexandrian Jewry, who, following the Maccabean rebellion and the resurgence of the Jewish nation, became increasingly subject to the influence of the Palestinian leaders. To the sages of Jerusalem, the Septuagint translation was not a glorious event of cultural synthesis, but a national disaster.

"And these are the days when the Torah obligates us to fast, and he who fasts will not eat or drink until the evening....

On the eighth of Tebeth, the Torah was written in Greek in the days of King Ptolemy, and darkness descended upon the world for three days."¹⁷

In another passage, the Talmud describes the day of the acceptance of the Septuagint as "catastrophic for Israel just like the day when the Israelites made the golden calf."¹⁸

The Jews of Palestine were predominantly cultural-religious "purists," proud of their repudiation of Greek power and influence. In two letters, the Jerusalem leaders urged the Jews of Alexandria to observe the festival of Hanukkah, celebrating Judah Maccabee's triumph over the Syrians.¹⁹ Apparently, the aristocratic circles of the Jewish *politeuma* in Alexandria did not follow this advice. We know that Philo counts neither Hanukkah or Purim among the festivals of the Jewish calendar, though he strains hard to prove that precisely ten festivals occur in the year. To make this point, he divides Passover into three different festivals, and counts as a holiday every day if it is lived as a day of holiness.

Yet the Jewish aristocrats considered Jerusalem to be their "metropolis," as Philo put it. Their thinking was naturally influenced by the prevailing political concepts in Egypt and in the Hellenic world. Egypt was divided into 36 *nomes*, each with its own "metropolis". Each division was associated either with a deity or with a totem.²⁰ In the Greek world, colonies that were centuries-old would still be related to the original city, the metropolis, by ties which were generally sentimental and sometimes political as well.

The Jewish community of Alexandria was continually replenished by immigrants from Palestine, with the result that the influence of the nationalistic mentality grew apace. Honyo IV, a former high-priest of the Jerusalem Temple, and a descendant of the pre-Hasmonean dynasty, established a Temple in Leontopolis amidst a large colony of Jewish soldier-farmers (*circa* 160 B.C.E.). Though sacrifices and incense were brought to this "house of Honyo," it never achieved the following of the Jerusalem Temple.²¹ The sons of Honyo played a mighty role in the struggle for power among the various factions of Ptolemaic Egypt. A Jewish general of Cleopatra's army saved the land of Palestine from being taken over by Egypt (96 B.C.E.). The civil war in Palestine between Alexan-

der Yannai and the Pharisees drove masses of Pharisaic Jews into Egypt (90-85 B.C.E.).

It is safe to assume that the tension between humanism and philosophy on the one hand, and ethnocentric orthodoxy on the other, was articulated in a social division between the well-to-do classes and the proletarian masses. While the former took advantage of every opportunity to earn the status of Alexandrian citizens, the latter devoted themselves to the raising of the "iron walls" ever higher. Since a gymnasium education was the prerequisite for a favored status in a Greek city, the members of the older families of the Jewish aristocracy sent their sons to these institutions, whenever the doors were open to them. On the other hand, the newer immigrants from Palestine despised these concessions to Hellenism and combatted them, even as they fought against the Hellenizers and the gymnasium in Jerusalem.

The Jewish community in Alexandria was self-governing within limits. It was headed by an Ethnarch, later by a Gerousia, a body of Elders. In the Great Synagogue, seventy chairs were placed for the members of the Sanhedrin. Since the community was allowed to live "in accordance with its ancestral laws," it had the right to punish offenders against the laws of Judaism. The inner tensions between tolerant humanism and isolationist ethnicism were, therefore, not purely academic. On occasion, these tensions could explode into civil riots.

Indeed, we possess an account of such a struggle within the Jewish community in the fictional Purim-like tale, known as the Third Book of Maccabees, to which we referred in an earlier chapter. It will be recalled that this book tells of an attempt by the king of Egypt to impose the worship of Dionysius upon all the inhabitants of the land. When the Jews refused to accede to the King's demand, he decreed their total extermination. On one day they were to be assembled in one place and trampled by elephants. But by the intervention of Providence, the elephants turned against their masters. The Jews were saved. The king was properly impressed. He freed the Jews and, in compensation for their suffering, he allowed them to punish the assimilationists among them.

The historical context of this story is probably the intervention of Honyo (Onias) and his Jewish army on the side of

Queen Cleopatra after the death of Philometer (145 B.C.E.). Cleopatra lost. The new king, Euergetes II, planned to punish the Jews, but after a few months he married Cleopatra, probably extending a general amnesty to her supporters. The danger of a blood-bath for Jews was thus averted.

Of interest to us is the passage describing the vengeance of the "orthodox" against the Hellenizers:

When they received this letter (countermanding the order of extermination), they did not hasten to leave, but they asked the king for permission to punish properly those who departed from the Holy God and desecrated His Torah. They pointed out that those who violate the command of God for the sake of their belly will not be faithful to the command of the king either . . . And they caught, punished, and tortured all that they could lay hands on from among the unclean of their people. They caught on that day more than three hundred men, separating the unclean from their joyous festivities. . . ."²²

We note here the bitter enmity between the two factions in Alexandrian Jewry. As time progressed, the nationalist zealots became steadily more powerful. The governing aristocracy was split between extremists who followed their own way to civic equality by means of total assimilation, and moderates who sought to discover a "middle road." The continuous exodus of the assimilationists from the Jewish community helped to tip the scales in favor of the zealots. One family produced the most famous leader of moderation, Philo, and the most notorious apostate, Philo's nephew, Tiberius Alexander, Roman prefect of Alexandria, and for a short time, the governor of Judea. On the other hand, by the very impetus of their belligerence and fanaticism, the nationalistic zealots set in motion a series of events which culminated in the well-nigh total annihilation of Egyptian Jewry.

Palestinian Jews flocked into Alexandria in a steady stream, intensifying the influence of the peculiar, literalistic piety which had been slowly developing in Jerusalem. The upper circles of Egyptian Jewry gradually lost control of the masses of their own people, the course of events running parallel to the tragic developments in Palestine and ending in a similar catastrophe.

Julius Caesar granted the rights of self-government to the Jews of Alexandria, but this right was exercised apparently only in religious matters. To judge from the extant papyri,

civil affairs were carried out in accord with Hellenistic law. The individual Jew was allowed a large measure of freedom. In one quarter of the city, Jews and Greeks lived side by side. Until the edict of Claudius (41 c.e.), many Jews sent their sons to the Greek Gymnasias. Those who had lost their faith in Judaism and those who had come to accept the total allegorization of Torah-law may have drifted out of the community in pursuit of their personal careers. While Jews and Egyptians had to pay a poll-tax, Hellenes and Roman citizens were free from this obligation. And the Jews who sacrificed to the city-gods, it appears, could qualify as Alexandrian citizens.

The Jewish community was both an ethnic unit and a religious association, as was the Greek colony and the Egyptian nation. But what distinguished the Jews was the extreme exclusiveness of their religion. The Greeks tended to identify their gods with the gods of other nations, so that they could join the native population at some of their celebrations. The Jews set their face adamantly against any recognition of the gods of other nations. Non-Jewish individuals could join the semi-privileged Jewish community by means of conversion in whole or in part, but toward the unconverted pagan world, the Jews maintained the attitude of total condemnation. And this religious isolation inevitably implied a deepening of the gulf that normally divides ethnic groups.

The religious barrier had the effect of fostering a powerful attachment to the Palestinian center, a loyalty which linguistic and cultural assimilation did not dissipate. In their common isolation from pagan society, diverse Jewish communities clung to each other with uncommon devotion, sending their gifts annually to Jerusalem. At the same time, they refused to share in the cost of civic affairs, since these were frequently associated in one way or another with idolatry. The loyalty of Diaspora Jews to Jerusalem, deriving from religious as well as ethnic sources, was far more potent than that of other ethnic groups to their respective centers; correspondingly, Jewish isolation was all the deeper.

The Jews in Alexandria made common cause neither with the Egyptian people nor with the Greeks. While the Egyptian population was rightless and degraded in the Hellenistic and

Roman periods, the Jews were semi-privileged. The Ptolemys raised some of them to the status of Macedonians and employed others as policemen, soldiers, and tax-gatherers. During the Roman period, Jews were exempt from military service and from all duties that might interfere with the observance "of the laws of their ancestors." While the Egyptians envied the Jews, the Greeks scorned them as "natives." Philo considers the Egyptian religion to be the height of folly.²³ The Egyptians in the Torah symbolize for him sensuality and demoralization. Josephus regards the Egyptians as the original enemies of the Jews.²⁴

Relations between Jews and Greeks in Egypt fluctuated widely. Many times they were on opposite sides in the various bloody struggles that marked the last century of the Ptolemaic regime. However, we may assume that the Greeks, like the Jews, were not all of one mind. Both Josephus and Philo point out that the Greek antisemites were spokesmen for the Greek rabble, not representative of the Greek community as a whole. Unfortunately, those who "think with their blood" are more likely to make history than those who think with their minds.

By a succession of street riots, the reasonable policy of moderate Jews and liberal Greeks was frustrated, and the doom of Alexandrian Jewry was sealed. And all those riots, whatever their local causes and contingencies, were exacerbated by charges of Jewish scorn for the "gods" of their neighbors, Jewish clannishness, and militant messianism.

The visit of King Agrippa I in Alexandria in the year 38 C.E. led to the first pogrom against the Jews. Carrying images of Gaius Caligula, Greek mobs, egged on by demagogues, stormed into the synagogues of the city, and the Roman governor sided with the cunning aggressors. Locked in one of the quarters of the city, the Jews apparently armed themselves, sent for help to other communities and bided their time. The Alexandrian community was divided between the moderates who sought to achieve a *modus vivendi* with their neighbors and the extremists who plotted revenge. Philo, leader of the aristocratic, peace-loving party, went to Rome to plead the cause of the Jews before the Emperor. The megalomaniac Caligula paid scant attention to the Jewish delegation, but upon his assassination and the subsequent accession of Claudius (41 C.E.),

the extremist Jews surged out of their quarter and avenged themselves upon the Greeks for the pogrom of 38 c.e. Again the Roman legions intervened to stop the riots. Apparently, the extremist or popular party, distrusting the conciliatory spirit of Philo, sent another delegation to Rome. In any case, Claudius decided the issue more or less on the basis of the status quo, rebuking the extremist Greek agitators. However, he warned the Jews against sending two delegations and against soliciting help from other lands, ending with the biting remark, that they will deserve bloody punishment, if they do not heed his advice, "as fomenting something like a general plague for the whole world."²⁴

For the purposes of Roman administration, a Hellenic in Egypt or an Alexandrian citizen of the first class was "one who belonged to the gymnasium."²⁵ The riots and counter-riots now made such an achievement by a Jew extremely unlikely. And Claudius confirmed this newly-made gulf, by ordering that the Jews should not seek any additional rights and should not enroll in the Greek Gymnasia. At the same time, he warned the Greeks against any attempt to deprive the Jews of their rights and, to underscore his warning, he ordered the execution of the Greek delegates. The mighty effort of Greek and Jewish sages for two centuries to bridge the gulf between the two peoples was undone by a few demagogues and maddened mobs in a few years. So difficult is it to build the channels of communication, so easy is it to destroy them!

Philo, the gentle sage who welded the noble piety of Judaism and the philosophical genius of Hellenism into one luminous vision, lived at the end of an epoch. He maintained that the two cultures coincided at their respective summits. Philosophers and prophets intended the same virtues and aimed at the same truths. The Law of the Jews was, in its essence, precisely the kind of pattern of living that some of the philosophers, lacking authentic revelation, sought to discover by their unaided reason. Jews and Greeks differed but little. Hence, the Greek majority should share its civil privileges with the Jews. But the Greek mobs and the Jewish zealots combined to make reconciliation impossible.

The outbreak of the Great Revolt (65 c.e.) in Judea gave the Greeks of Alexandria the opportunity to foment attacks

against the Jews. Bent on vengeance, many Jews sallied out to attack the Greeks. A renegade Jew, Tiberius Alexander, was then the commander of the Roman troops, and he let his legions loose upon the Jewish quarter, keeping the elders and the aristocratic leaders under his protection. A terrible massacre resulted.

Seven years later hundreds of Palestinian Sikarii (extremist rebels, who used short knives for the purpose of assassinating opponents in a crowd) somehow escaped the slaughter in Jerusalem, and found refuge in Alexandria, where they attempted to stir up a revolt against Rome. The Jewish community was divided. The terrorists killed some of the moderate leaders, but the "leaders of the elders" managed to persuade a Jewish general assembly that the Sikarii were bent upon repeating in Alexandria the disaster they had caused in Jerusalem. The Palestinian immigrants were surrendered by the Jewish "elders" to the Romans and the community was temporarily spared the fate of Jerusalem. In Cyrenaica, a similar development took place, with a zealot pseudo-Messiah getting the support of the poor people, while the "elders" remained faithful to Rome.

The crushing of the Great Revolt in Jerusalem placed all the Jews of the Roman Empire in a humiliating position. All of them were now subject to a special tax, *fiscus Judaicus*, on the theory that their previous contributions to the Holy Temple should rightfully be diverted to the Temple of Jupiter. The amount of this tax was only one-fifth of the poll-tax in Egypt. But inasmuch as it was restricted to Jews, it served to deepen the gulf between Jews and Gentiles. We now encounter a steady increase of nationalistic feeling among Egyptian Jews.²⁶ The captives of the Jewish War were sold on the slave market of Alexandria. They won freedom in the course of time and swelled the ranks of the rebellious masses. As Cherkower put it: "When the hard times were over, the Jewish prisoners who found new homes in the households of their brethren in Egypt were probably treated as heroes, who had fought a sacred war for God, His people and His country. So the ardent patriotism of the Palestinian fighters may have been felt in Egypt and perhaps contributed its share to the increase of national feeling."²⁷

The tragic results of this sullen bitterness coupled with religious fanaticism were soon to be felt.

In the three years of 115-117 c.e., the Jews of Alexandria launched a massive assault against the Greeks. Gaining the upper hand, they committed terrible atrocities against the Greeks and Egyptians. Soon the riots turned into a full-scale civil war, involving not only the countryside of Egypt, but Cyrenaica and Cyprus as well. A Jewish "King" or Messiah by the name of Andreas led the armies of the Jews. The Emperor Trajan who was on the verge of completing the conquest of the Parthian kingdom was compelled to relinquish his gains in Mesopotamia and to send his legions to Egypt and Cyprus.

The following points are important to bear in mind:

1. The Jewish rebellion was directed against the Egyptians and Romans as well as against the Greeks. All Gentiles were apparently lumped together in the minds of the Jewish fighters. The extant papyri indicate that the civil war resulted in the devastation of the city of Alexandria and of the lands of Egypt, Cyrenaica, and Cyprus. Papyri dating from thirty-five years after this war show that the ruins were still visible at that time and the sense of horror still fresh.²⁸

2. The atrocities charged to Jews in the surviving literary fragments were of an incredible ferocity. And the papyri, which contain private letters and records, show that the Greeks and Egyptians really believed the fantastic tales concerning Jewish cruelty. A letter from an old Egyptian refugee reveals that the writer sincerely believed that Jews roasted their captives. Dio Cassius tells of Jews smearing themselves with the blood of their victims. Appian, an eye-witness, tells of the pollution of Greek and Egyptian temples by Jews.²⁹

3. The Messianic character of the Jewish revolt is not attested with complete certainty. But the references to a Jewish king, Andreas or Lukas, of Cyrenaica and the wide extent of the rebellion lead most scholars to believe that the catastrophic upheaval, however it may have begun, was essentially impelled by Messianic expectations.

Cherikower points out that "the Jewish revolt appears to be devoid of any reasonable aim." It could only be understood in terms of the smoldering flames of religious fanaticism and

ethnic bitterness, which gathered strength behind the physical and psychic ramparts of isolation. In Egypt of 115 C.E., as in Judea of 65 C.E., the rational and aristocratic leaders lost control of their people. The balance of popular feeling shifted decisively toward the poles of religious fanaticism and ethnic zealotry. The intellectual leaders were rejected and a Messiah arose from among the people. Always, the breakdown of inner equilibrium is reflected in a social dichotomy, with the embittered proletariat repudiating their intellectual-social leadership, and projecting upon the political scene a man of their own kind who represents their suppressed emotions and their beloved myths.

Cherikower concludes, "Various explanations of the reasons and motives of the revolt have been put forward by modern scholars, but in my opinion the only reason was the Messianic character of the whole movement."³⁰

The net result of this catastrophe was the virtual decimation of the great Jewish Diaspora in the Hellenistic world. In the broad lands of Egypt and Cyrenaica, Jews were eliminated almost totally. In Cyprus the Jews had the upper hand in the beginning, massacring many thousands of their enemies. But they were soon defeated and totally annihilated. A Jew, even if shipwrecked, was not allowed thereafter to set foot on the soil of Cyprus. Alexandrian Jewry was not completely exterminated, because there the revolt ended early. Perhaps, too, the counsels of moderation were not silenced altogether within that great city, where the Jewish "elders" enjoyed the support of the Roman authorities. Refugees from the countryside were settled in one of its suburbs by the Romans. One of the Roman commanders apparently exacted revenge from the Jewish communities of Syria and Mesopotamia and was punished for exceeding his instructions.³¹ In two or three generations, the physical ravages of "the Jewish war" may have been repaired, but the heritage of hate which it engendered proved to be more enduring and fateful. In the formative years of Christian literature, Jew-hatred was endemic and pathological throughout the Eastern part of the Roman Empire. Precisely when the ideas of the Jewish faith and such institutions as the Sabbath achieved their greatest popularity in the Roman Empire, the Jews became the most hated and

the most feared tribe of mankind. And this tragedy resulted, as we have seen, from the radical unbalancing of the Jewish spirit, the utter victory of subjective zealotry.

Cherikower summarizes this tragedy very aptly: "It was the irony of fate that Egyptian Jewry, so anxious for so many centuries to be on good terms with its heathen neighbors, should take a leading position in this movement of extreme national significance. Yet it was not mere chance. We have seen that the Egyptian Jews in the Ptolemaic age, and to a greater extent, in the early Roman period, were divided into two groups, one seeking close contact with the Greeks, the other more influenced by Palestinian Jewry and strongly devoted to the ancient national creed and customs. The second group made steady progress, helped by certain gradual changes in external political and social conditions which were disadvantageous to the first group. Now this national trend achieved its final victory, drawing the whole of Egyptian Jewry into a dangerous and bloody action."³²

Gedalia Alon doubts that the Messianic pretensions of Andreas of Cyrenaica played a decisive role in these outbreaks. In his view, the riots began as another stage in the continuous rivalry between Jews and Greeks. These local upheavals acquired the aspect of an anti-Roman rebellion on the part of all the Jews, after the Roman army intervened to stop the riots. It is probable, Alon admits, "that Jewish Zealots from Palestine and the Diaspora brought fresh ferment to the movement, turning the civil struggle into a political-national, anti-Roman rebellion." Also, "it is certain that the Jewish fighters were themselves divided on the nature and purpose of the war." The elders of Alexandrian Jewry did not see the war as an anti-Roman struggle. For this reason, the Emperor Hadrian did not accede to the demands of the Greeks that the Jews be exiled from Alexandria. From some documents, it appears that the spokesmen of the Alexandrian Greeks lost their case and forfeited their lives, as at the trial before the Emperor Claudius.³³

After the bloody convulsions of the years 115-117 C.E., the Jews of Egypt and Alexandria declined steadily in both numbers and significance. The terrible ruins of the war stood for several generations as mute witnesses to the peculiar hatred dogging the steps of a peculiar people. In its sullen isolation, the once great Alexandrian Jewry continued to drag out a miserable existence, but its vitality was now sapped, and the

rapidly expanding Christian church swept into its orbit large numbers of its sons and daughters. Accustomed as the Alexandrian Jews were to an allegorical rendering of the Torah-law, they fell in easily with the prevailing exegesis in Christian circles. Nor did the growing antisemitic venom in Christian literature discourage the Jewish converts. On the contrary, antisemitism appeals to the "self-hate" of those who break violently with their own people.

When one of the forces in the equilibrium of Jewish life becomes so powerful as to draw all loyalties tightly around it, the opposing foci in Jewish consciousness develop intransigent extremists of their own. Thus, the steady growth of Jewish isolationism and ethnic zealotry led to the separation from the community of those who held doggedly to the humanistic core of Judaism. Those who rebelled against the barriers of sentiment and dogma that hemmed in the Jewish community were more likely to join the Christian than the pagan community. In the emergent Church, they could persuade themselves that their Jewish heritage was continued; their allegorization of the Law and the Scriptures made the transition to Christianity easy and natural; their participation in Hellenic culture could be continued within the Christian framework. In addition, as Christians, they, or at least their children, were free from the special Jewish tax and from that heavy burden of hate which broke the backs of their "stubborn" brethren. As in Palestine, so in Egypt and throughout the Diaspora, the Christian community gathered strength out of the successive failures of nationalist uprisings and the consequent frustration of militant messianism. In Egypt, this development was aided by the prevailing tendencies toward syncretism, especially after the reign of Hadrian. In a document dating from that period, we read: "Whoever in Egypt worships Serapis is also a Christian, and those who call themselves Christian Bishops venerate also Serapis; every Grand Rabbi of the Jews, every Samaritan, every Christian religious leader is at the same time a magician, a prophet, a quack-healer. Even when the Patriarch himself comes to Egypt, some demand that he pray to Serapis, and some ask that he pray to Christ."³⁴

Professor Goodenough has assembled a vast amount of archaeological data which prove the wide extent of religious syncretism in the first centuries of the Christian Era. Many Jews

were caught in the beguiling currents of this all-dissolving and all-reconciling tide. But this syncretistic tide tended to pull the Jews who were favorably disposed to it out of the isolated and sorely stricken Jewish community. In the second century of the Christian Era, we encounter some non-Jews who observe the Sabbath and worship "the highest God." The speedy rise of the Christian Church soon chipped away all the hesitant and half-way converts, those not ready to cast their lot altogether with the steadily shrinking Jewish community. During and after the long reign of Constantine (288-337 C.E.), Christian mobs, led by monks, destroyed one synagogue after another. Some of the Roman Emperors occasionally intervened in behalf of the Jews, but not consistently or with sufficient force. Theodosius I ordered that the Bishop of Kallinikon, a town on the Euphrates, be punished for the demolition of a synagogue (388 C.E.), but he withdrew his order at the insistence of Saint Ambrose.³⁵

As a general rule, throughout the Byzantine East, the Jews hovered on the fringe of the Christian community, inspiring the movements within the Church which tended toward a greater measure of pure monotheism. Many of the early schisms were associated with the ethnic loyalties of oppressed groups and with their resentment of Hellenic leadership. The Monophysite heresy was embraced by the native Egyptians, in part because the Hellenic church rejected it. Hellenistic culture, which provided a common spiritual foundation for the Roman Empire, was, at the beginning of the fourth century, in total retreat. Catholic orthodoxy was defended by Greek mobs and monks, who assailed heretics, philosophers, and Jews with equal ferocity. In the year 415 C.E., Bishop Cyril headed a mob which drove all the Jews out of Alexandria. Evidently some Jews drifted back when the frenzy of the mobs abated for a century or so later, Jews were again a prosperous, if not a powerful minority there.³⁶ With the growth of fanaticism, we encounter cases of forced baptisms during the reign of Emperor Mourikios (582-602 C.E.).

The final blow against Egyptian Jewry was delivered, as in all previous instances, in connection with the battles in Palestine. In 614 C.E., a Jewish army was organized by Benjamin of Tiberias to fight alongside the Persians for the conquest of Jerusalem. The Persians and the Jews were initially success-

ful, capturing the city and slaughtering a goodly portion of its inhabitants. According to Christian chroniclers, Jews ransomed thousands of Christians in order to kill them. In all of Palestine, churches were demolished. Persians and Jews laid siege to Tyre, but the impregnable city held fast. The Tyrian Christians proceeded to kill one hundred Jewish captives for every church the invaders destroyed. Palestine was in Persian hands for fourteen years. Many Christians reverted to Judaism during this period. But the alliance between Jews and Persians did not last long. Soon the Persians, distrusting their Jewish allies, sent many of them back to the vast hinterland of Persia. In their turn, the Jews of Palestine and Syria decided to rejoin the Byzantines, especially since the Emperor Heraclius agreed to grant them a general amnesty. In the year 628 C.E., Heraclius regained control of Syria and Palestine. In Tiberias, Heraclius was the guest of Benjamin the Jew, who explained his ruthless persecution of the Christians with the brief remark, "They hate my Torah." In 620 C.E., Jerusalem was retaken by Heraclius who was persuaded by the monks of that city to break his pledge of forgiveness to the Jews. The monks undertook to observe a special fast day in atonement for Heraclius' breaking his solemn promise. Jews were now massacred throughout Palestine. Many of them accepted Christianity in self-defense and desperation, including the arch-rebel, Benjamin of Tiberias.⁸⁷

In retaliation for the Jewish rebellion in Palestine, Heraclius issued a general order calling for the forced conversion of all Jews in the Byzantine Empire. This order was carried out wherever the authority of the Emperor extended. It was probably effective in the Balkan peninsula and in Asia Minor. However, this wave of compulsory baptism was rolled back in a few years insofar as Egypt and Syria were concerned, by the rise of Islam and the surge of Arab armies. In 638, Jerusalem was taken by Khalif Omar. In 641, Alexandria surrendered to the Arabs. The Moslem commander notified the Khalif Omar when he took the city, "I conquered the city . . . found in it 40,000 tributary Jews."⁸⁸

In sum, Hellenistic Jewry, with Egypt as its most populous center, disintegrated because it was caught between the anvil of Jewish nationalism and the hammer of the Greek mob. When the Egyptian Hellenic mob became Christian, its ferocity toward Jews was abetted by its newly found fanaticism.

Moderate Jewish opinion suffered the same fate as Greek philosophy, succumbing to the irresistible surge of popular frenzy. The polarization of Jewish sentiment and thought was reflected in a schism within the community, with some elements drifting into Christian society and others falling into an incipient medieval ghetto, condemned to intellectual as well as physical isolation. The vast literature of Hellenistic Jewry, conceived in the grand synthetic vision of Aristobulus and Philo, no longer seemed relevant or even comprehensible to the tight little islands of Jewry, dotting the Byzantine Empire. Deprived of their own spiritual elite, the loyal remnants of Hellenistic Jewry came to depend more and more on the leadership of Palestinian and Babylonian Jewry. Its own history had come to a dead end.

From Alexander to Heraclius, there extends a millennium during which the two great peoples of antiquity first clashed and then combined to create the Christian faith. Though classical Hellenism and ancient Judaism no longer existed in the Byzantine world, the spirit of Hebraic culture and the impetus of Greek philosophy continued to function within the Christian framework, even if both Judaism and Hellenism were disavowed by the high priests of the now dominant faith. Yet this parallel is incomplete. For the history of Judaism was continued by the segment of Jewry which was only marginally affected by the challenge of Hellenism. Out of Babylonia and its environs, masses of Jewish immigrants came to fill the ranks of the depleted communities in Egypt and Byzantium. Following the Moslem conquests Jewish immigration flowed in a steady stream from East to West, with the Talmud of Babylonia displacing the Talmud of Palestine and the two Talmuds together erasing the memory of a millennium of spiritual travail, in which Hebraic prophecy and Greek philosophy were blended in a dynamic and creative synthesis. The grandeur of the Philonic synthesis was destined to be partially recovered in the ninth and tenth centuries, when the Jews of the Moslem world faced the challenge of the Hellenic stream of thought in a new and transmuted form. It was triumphantly reasserted at the beginning of the modern period and in our own day, for the essential unity of the human spirit is reflected in the confluence of Greek philosophy and the Hebrew faith.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE EMERGENCE OF PHARISAIC JUDAISM

The schism between Hasidim and Hellenists in Judea led to the Maccabean rebellion and eventually to the attainment of Jewish independence. As we said earlier, the Hasidim supported the Maccabean cause only in the beginning. Their sole interest lay in the achievement of religious freedom and autonomy. However, the course of events forced their hands, and at a Great Assembly (141 B.C.E.), they concurred in the naming of Simon, Judah Maccabee's brother, leader and High-priest, "forever, until a true prophet should arise."¹

In its first decades, the Maccabean movement unleashed a fierce persecution of the Hellenizers, but by degrees it mellowed and sought a course of moderation. The Pharisees dominated the council of Hyrkanos in the early part of his reign, but toward the end the Sadducees prevailed (135-104 B.C.E.). Under his rule and that of Alexander Yannai (103-76 B.C.E.), the Idumeans in the South and the Galileans in the North were forced to accept Judaism, while the Samaritan Temple was demolished and desecrated and some foreign communities exiled. The forced conversions of Yohanan's and Yannai's days are so contrary to the spirit of Judaism that we need to consider the reasons behind them.

In the first place, the holiness of the land imposed upon the Jews the obligation to uproot paganism from its confines. This duty is clearly formulated by Maimonides.² Presumably the Idumeans were settled by that time within the historic borders of the land of Israel. In the second place, the Maccabean princes were motivated by political considerations — the creation of a united and vigorous community. We have no way of knowing whether this policy of enforced conversion was approved by the Torah-scholars and Pharisaic leaders.

It is during the reign of the Highpriest Hyrkanos, that we encounter the emergence of three parties—the Sadducees, the Pharisees, and the Essenes. Josephus described them as three schools of thought. Following are some excerpts from Josephus' account:

Pharisees

"They live meanly and despise delicacies in diet; and they follow the conduct of reason.... And when they determine that all things are done by fate, they do not take away the freedom from men of acting as they think fit. They also believe that souls have an immortal vigor in them, and that under the earth there will be rewards and punishments... that the souls of the righteous will be revived and live again..."³

"...they are esteemed most skillful in the exact application of their laws..."⁴

"...they have so great a power over the multitude that when they say anything against the king or the high priest, they are believed..."⁵

"...the Pharisees have delivered to the people a great many observances by succession from their fathers, which are not written in the laws of Moses; and for that reason it is that the Sadducees reject them."⁶

Sadducees

"...the Sadducees are able to persuade none but the rich... but the Pharisees have the multitude on their side..."⁷

"...that souls die with the bodies... nor do they observe aught besides what the Law enjoins them, for they deem it virtuous to dispute with the teachers of philosophy whom they frequent."⁸

"...deny fate altogether and suppose that God is not concerned in our doing or not doing what is evil... men's own choice... also deny immortality of the soul and the punishments and rewards in Hades"⁹

Essenes

"These Essenes reject pleasure as an evil, but esteem continence and the conquest over our passions to be virtue. They neglect wedlock, but choose out other persons' children..."

"These men are despisers of riches... for it is a law among them that all must share their possessions with the whole order. They have stewards appointed to take care of their common affairs. They think that oil is a defilement... for they think that it is good to be sweaty... They wear white garments..."

"Their piety is extraordinary, for before sunrise they do not utter a profane word. After morning prayers, they are sent to work, till the fifth hour... they then bathe their bodies in cold water... they go in purity to the dining room, as into a certain holy temple..."

"They are eminent for fidelity and are the ministers of peace. Before a newcomer is allowed to touch their common food, he is obliged to take tremendous oaths, that in the first place, he will be pious toward God, and then, that he will observe justice toward men, and that he will do no harm to anyone, either of his own accord, or by the command of others; that he will always hate the wicked and aid the righteous; that he will show fidelity to all men, especially those in authority, because no one obtains the government without God's assistance . . ."

"Now after the preparatory period is over, they are divided into four classes; and the juniors are so far below the seniors that a senior must wash himself if he is touched by a junior, just as if a foreigner had touched him . . ."

"There are those among them who undertake to foretell future events, by reading holy books and using several kinds of purifications . . ."

"Moreover, there is another order of Essenes, who follow the same patterns of living, save that they do marry . . ." ¹⁰

These selections give us an inkling of the nature of the three movements. In addition, Josephus speaks of the followers of the Fourth Philosophy, who follow the doctrines of the Pharisees generally, except that "they have a violent attachment to liberty and say that God is to be their only Ruler and Lord . . . nor can any fear make them call any man Lord." ¹¹

We also know that there were additional trends and sects; such as those which cherished the Book of Jubilees, containing a different calendar from the one which became standard in Judaism. The Jewish calendar, since the Mishnah and Talmud, is actually an adaptation by the Pharisees of the Hellenistic calendar, the so-called Metonic cycle, calling for the intercalation of seven months in nineteen years, in order to harmonize the lunar and solar years. ¹² Then, too, there were the apocalyptic "prophets" and their followers, who nurtured glowing hopes and fantastic visions about the Messiah and the end of days.

The Pharisees were by no means one monolithic party or sect and thus it is difficult to give a consistent and coherent account of the nature of Judaism in the first century before the Christian Era. The documents of the Mishnah (200 C.E.) and Talmud (300 C.E. and 500 C.E.) belong to a later period.

But our analysis of the tensions within the Jewish soul allows us to interpret the various parties as diverse ways of re-

solving these inherent contradictions. The three hero-images of Judaism — prophet, priest, and king — each contain a spiritual or self-dedicatory pole and an ethnocentric or self-glorifying pole. The parties of ancient Israel are understandable in the light of this threefold polarity with its resulting intellectual turbulence.

The Sadducees consisted of the social aristocracy, which drew its leadership from the Highpriestly hierarchy. (Sadducee — of the Zadokites, the priests who remained faithful — Ezekiel 44:15.) In ritual matters, they considered the tradition and competence of the priests to be altogether sufficient. They disdained the learning and the authority of the non-priestly scholars, and they were not eager to transform the entire Jewish people into a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation." Along with this orthodoxy of ritual, they fostered a secular approach to the problems of government. Their ideal of kingship was practical and mundane; they had no use either for the rational and critical or the mystical and pietistic phases of prophecy. The objective aspirations of their heart and soul were presumably satisfied by the prevailing cultural ideas and political ambitions of Hellenistic culture. There was no tension in their soul between the imperatives of rationality and the precepts of tradition, for their faith had become empty ritual and their intellect was exposed freely to the contemporary winds of doctrine. An orthodoxy of sheer practice can get along splendidly with the skeptical mood of worldly aristocrats. The Sadducees were not essentially different from the Hellenistic priests in the pagan temples, who dabbled in philosophy even as they continued to practice their primitive rites. On the other hand, we must remember that the Sadducees were the heirs of the old, pre-pharisaic piety, even as they were the heirs of the pre-maccabean Hellenizers. In all probability, there were many intensely religious Sadducees, who opposed the diverse Pharisaic innovations as unorthodox. The Book of Jubilees was probably produced by this group; possibly, also, the Damascus Covenant, which Solomon Schechter has attributed to a dissident Sadducee sect.

The pattern of ideas and sentiments in the Book of Jubilees is an excellent reflection of the sterile and zealous piety of an orthodox Sadducee. The Law, according to this work, was not

created out of the exigencies of Jewish life, but was a faithful copy of the "heavenly tablets." Not only the moral law, but many ceremonial rites were inscribed on the "heavenly tablets." They are therefore valid for all time. All the festivals were already observed by the patriarchs. They were even obligatory for the angels. It follows that nothing can be added to the Law, nothing detracted from it. There is no room for the creative activity of Torah-scholars, the scribes and "sages of Israel."¹³ Some of the laws of this book survived the reforming tendencies in Mishnah and Talmud, reappearing again in the Qaraite movement of the eighth century. A case in point is the prohibition of conjugal relations on the Sabbath.

In addition to this rigid conception of the Law, the Book of Jubilees is characterized by a feverish intensity of ethnic pride and zealotry. Nine-tenths of mankind is given over to Satan, only one-tenth is to be saved.¹⁴ The Canaanites were to be forever accursed because they settled in the land of Palestine, which was assigned by lot to the sons of Shem.¹⁵ Hebrew was not the language of the Canaanites, but the "language of creation," and it was rediscovered by Abraham.¹⁶ Circumcision is a cosmic law. All the heavenly seraphs and the holy angels are circumcised. This is why Jews who belong to God must be marked this way. If they fail to submit to this rite, they are doomed to perdition.¹⁷ Only Israelites are to bear this sign, for God appointed diverse spirits to mislead other nations, but over the people of Israel He did not appoint any spirit-guardian; He alone is their governor and ruler.¹⁸

Jacob is commanded by his father "to separate from the nations," to refrain from eating with them, "for all their deeds are uncleanness and their ways abomination."¹⁹ The worshipers of idols have no hope in the land of the living; "as the sons of Sodom were taken from the earth, so will be the lot of all the worshipers of idols."²⁰

There is no hope of peace between Esau and Jacob. Says Jacob in reply to an overture from his brother and foe, "If a pig should change his hide, softening his fur to be like wool and growing horns on his head like a ram, then I shall make you a pact of brotherhood."²¹

This book teaches the doctrine of spiritual immortality, not that

of the bodily resurrection of the dead. Its author, as we have seen, condemns the practice of nudism, in which the Hellenistic priests engaged during their exercises in the gymnasium, before the Maccabean rebellion.

It follows that the Sadducean party embraced ethnic zealots as well as secular politicians, reactionary pietists as well as skeptical ritualists. Of the three foci of Jewish loyalty, they cherished the priestly ideal most, reserving authority to priests. The living dynamism of prophecy, its tension between mysticism and rationalism, they did not sense, so that Moses became for them merely an apocalyptic seer. Of the King-Messiah ideal, they retained only the secular ambition of lordship over the surrounding nations.

We have no literature that can be ascribed to the Essenes with certainty. According to Zeitlin, the term Essene is identical with the Hebrew term Hasidim — the party which led the resistance against the Hellenizers.²³ The nature and import of the Qumran literature is still in dispute. However, it appears fairly certain that the Essenes of Judea and the Therapeutae of Egypt were essentially mystics, who sought to render themselves worthy of Divine inspiration (*Ruah Hako-desh*). The mystic phase of prophecy constituted the central goal of their endeavors, but they lacked both the rational impetus and the fervent public-mindedness of the prophets. Whether or not they participated occasionally in the worship of the Holy Temple, they carried over the priestly concern with ritual and mystery to the task of transforming their own persons into "temples of the Lord." The ritualism of the priesthood embraced and dominated every aspect of their lives as individuals. Their meals were sacrificial offerings, with a priest pronouncing the blessing. Bathing and the wearing of white robes, periods of silence and meditation, laws of purity and excesses of Sabbath observance — these were the distinguishing marks of the Essene way of life. The surrender of private property and the submission to the discipline of the group articulated the mystic's yearning for the totality of self-giving and the acceptance without reservations of "the yoke of the kingdom of heaven."

The main focus of their piety was God, with the in-

dividual soul as secondary focus, while the idea of the people of Israel was almost totally supplanted by that of the small band of saints. God was the source of all Power, all Grace, all decision. Man's duty was not to help God complete His creation, but to consider his own obduracy, to submit, utterly and unconditionally.

As to the kingship ideal of Judaism, we know that the Essenes had no use for earthly dominion and national glory. Their vision of the kingdom could only be Messianic. Did they conceive of the Messiah as a Divine Savior who would gather righteous individuals, "one out of a city and two out of a family?" Or did they think of the Messiah as the Redeemer of the people of Israel, the "king of the Jews," who would drive the Romans out of the Holy Land, ending the dominion of evil throughout the world and inaugurating the reign of the One God? Were they unworldly pacifists, waiting patiently for God's redeeming power, or were they political activists, determined to fight for the realization of "hope of Israel?"

We cannot answer these questions with certainty. In all probability, the two aspects of the messianic vision contended for dominance within their souls, as within the Jewish community as a whole. We know of some Essenes who fought in the Great War of Liberation. On the other hand, most of them were probably passive pietists, waiting for the kingdom of God to emerge by Divine fiat. Otherwise, Josephus would not have dared to give so glowing an account of their life.

The keyword for the understanding of Pharisaism is *tension*. In the structure of their organization, they manifested the tension between withdrawal from the community and active leadership within it. In their concept of piety, they retained the tension between prophetic inwardness and priestly ritual. In their concept of the individual Jew, they incorporated the three contending ideals of prophecy, priesthood, and kingship. In their judgment of the Jewish people, they retained the genius of prophetic self-criticism along with the tendency to self-glorification and self-segregation. And in their vision of the Messiah, they retained the tension between the ethnic and the earthly, on the one hand, and the individualistic and the spiritual on the other. Caught up in these tensions, they re-

jected all that was extreme and one-sided — the glory of national independence and secular kingship, the temptation to seek individual salvation in disregard of the community, the ambition of the priests to monopolize the aura of holiness and the scepter of authority, the unworldliness of the mystics, the recklessness of the Zealots and the passivity of the pacifists. Theirs was a religion of restless dynamism and a search for equilibrium. Let us see how each of these tensions was embodied in their life.

The Pharisees were both a sect and the people. They withdrew from the people by their undertaking to observe the purity laws and by sundry self-imposed regulations called *divrai ha-veruth*. Thus they formed a self-contained circle of pietists, who did not eat in the homes of outsiders and did not associate with the common people. But the purpose of their withdrawal behind the ramparts of ritual was to cultivate a pattern of ideals and sentiments in behalf of the entire community. Hence, the other side of their public activity, their devotion to the teaching and the guidance of all the people. They cautioned their followers to work with and for the people ("Do not separate thyself from the community"), but for reasons of ritualistic stringency they separated from "people of the land." In their turn, the people responded by adopting an ambivalent attitude toward the Pharisaic leaders. On the one hand, the people followed the teachings of the Pharisees; on the other hand, large numbers resented the aloofness and separatism of the Pharisees. At times, the enmity between the common people (*am haaretz*) and the inner circle of the Pharisees reached catastrophic proportions.²⁴

The formation of the Zealot party by a dissident group of Pharisees presaged the disasters to come. The Zealots announced it to be a sin to recognize any other Lord, save God Himself. Rebellion against Rome was thus a religious obligation, regardless of any expectations of success or failure. To the Zealots, the kingship ideal of Judaism left no room for either a Jewish secular government or for any foreign power. The masses of the people were fascinated by the absolute consistency and the reckless boldness of the Zealots.

Pharisaic leaders like R. Yohanan ben Zakkai failed to hold the Zealots in check. We can hardly doubt that the moderate

Pharisees acknowledged the legitimacy of Roman dominion; yet, as Professor Louis Ginzberg has pointed out, the Palestinian rabbis did not dare to formalize this assent, as the Babylonian rabbis of a later period did in announcing the formula, "the law of the government is law," *dina dimalchuta dina*.

Prior to the outbreak of the Great Revolt (65-70 C.E.), and again before the Bar Kochba rebellion (131-135 C.E.), the Zealots succeeded in wresting the helm of leadership from the priests and the sages. Both revolts were reckless outbursts, which the sober leaders of the people neither desired nor approved. Both were also pseudo-messianic movements, reflecting a peculiar blend of militancy and mysticism.

The ritualistic gulf between the Pharisaic pietists and the "people of the land" may have diminished the force of Pharisaic leadership, though this gulf was never as wide or deep as the one that divided the philosophers of Greece from their people.

Using an historical analogy, we might well inquire why the maintenance of Buddhist monasteries alongside the lay societies did not arouse hostility of the type we encounter between the *haverim* and the *am haaretz*. The monastic order of Buddhism was completely removed from the world, as well as supported by the laymen. Hence the laymen could feel that the monastic orders were "theirs." The early Pharisaic teachers were presumably self-supporting, part of the "world." Hence, the resentment of the *am haaretz* (people of the land) for those who scorned their way of life and imputed to them a state of "impurity."

Because the Pharisaic movement embraced the people as well as a loose association of "purity" observers, the lines of ideology within the movement were blurred. In every synagogue, especially those remote from Jerusalem, local preachers would arise, giving their own interpretation to the traditional pattern of ideas. These provincial preachers might well transform the common lore of the Pharisees by their own emphases and by their responsiveness to the desires and needs of the people.

As the experience of nineteenth-century America demonstrated, the frontier of a civilization is the place where sectarianism flourishes.

Whenever a group of people withdraws from the community in order to gather strength for the purpose of returning to the people and bringing to them a message of redemption, we may expect that some members of the group will be more conscious of the immediate implications of their retreat than of the ultimate purpose of their withdrawal; they will cherish their own superior holiness rather than the humble piety that is presumed to be the final consequence of their society. Thus, the Talmud mentions seven vicious kinds of Pharisees and lists so-called "Pharisaic plagues."²⁵ In the New Testament, the Pharisees are generally, though not always, described as "holier than thou" ritualists, "hypocrites," who thank God daily for not being like the rest of the people.²⁶

On the other hand, the Pharisaic system of piety employed self-segregation as a tactical device. Its purpose was to win the people over to a life of holiness and spirituality. The Pharisees thought and lived in behalf of "all Israel." Their ideal was a religious democracy, but the equality they favored was not to be achieved by the leveling down of the favored few, but by the elevation of all the people to the pious standards of the elite.

The Pharisaic pattern of piety reflected the two phases of the heritage of prophecy, the two sides of the priestly ideal, and the two aspects of the Messianic vision.

In the institution of prophecy, there was a subjective-mystical as well as an ethical-rational impulse. The subjective-mystical ideal was to retreat from the world in order to become worthy of receiving the Holy Spirit (*Ruah Hakodesh*). The ecstasy of mystical experience was the hope, if not the goal of the Pharisaic sages. While prophecy as an institution was deemed to be a Divine favor that God removed from His people until the time of Redemption, the descent of the Holy Spirit was regarded as the reward of the truly righteous, particularly if their generation deserved this mark of Divine benevolence. "Torah leads to carefulness, carefulness leads to alacrity, alacrity to cleanliness, cleanliness to separation, separation to holiness, holiness to humility, humility to the fear of sin, the fear of sin to the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit to the Resurrection of the Dead..."²⁷ This subjective-mystical phase of prophecy is also evident in the Pharisaic tendency to

glorify the customs and practices of Jewish people. All that is Jewish is presumed to be Divinely inspired. "Leave the Israelites alone," said the great Hillel, "if they are not prophets, they are sons of the prophets."²⁸

On the other hand, the Pharisees carried on the objective-rational heritage of the prophets. They sought to penetrate to the "reasons of the Commandments," formulating general principles and values. They insisted that the "Merciful seeks the heart."²⁹ In the study of the Law, they applied logical principles and deduced fundamental rules from the verses from the Torah. They did not hesitate to borrow the rules and methods of the Alexandrian grammarians for the purpose of wresting fresh instruction and inferring new conclusions from the ancient text.³⁰ These hermeneutic rules gave the Pharisaic sages powerful instruments for the adjustment of the Law to changing conditions. A century ago, Geiger described the Pharisees as religious Reformers; Zeitlin dubs them, "Religious Progressivists." Yet the ambivalence of the Pharisaic mentality is shown in the fact that the Pharisees concealed the source of their methods from the people, maintaining that their rules "were revealed to Moses at Sinai."³¹ This claim, however necessary it may have been at the time it was projected, served to intensify the tendency of Jewish people to maintain the uniqueness of their oral tradition and to set their face squarely against any foreign influence. Fiction is often more effective in history than fact. The belief that all the hermeneutic rules as well as their specific applications were spoken by God at Sinai was more potent in history, than the fact of their being formulated by Hellenistic grammarians in Alexandria.

The borrowing of the Pharisees was apparently confined to the early period, the centuries before the Christian era. As Professor Louis Ginzberg has demonstrated in his study of the Palestinian Law, the closest parallels are found between Greco-Egyptian law and Jewish law, but there was hardly any contact between later Roman law and the laws of the Talmud, though Roman citizenship and Roman law were extended to all the inhabitants of the Empire in the year 212 C.E. A progressive hardening of dogmatic barriers made the rabbis of the Talmud far less susceptible to outside influence than were the early teachers. The "disciples of the wise," as the teachers of

Mishnah and Talmud were called, could be expected to deduce novel conclusions and new doctrines, out of their reflections on the inner pattern of ideas in the Divine laws. And the new discoveries would then be regarded as having been given to Moses at Sinai.³² "There is no session in the House of Study without some novel discovery." The Sages were, therefore, not merely passive transmitters of the tradition; they were also creators of fresh law.

To be sure, not all the Pharisaic teachers approved of innovations and novel interpretations. To some Pharisees, the entire tradition was all of one piece, conveyed verbally to Moses and transmitted by him through an unbroken chain of tradition. To these Pharisees, the best teacher was one who never injected his own opinion in the interpretation of the tradition. "Never did I say aught that I did not learn from my teachers." To others, the rational faculty was itself God-given, and the application of reason to the Law, resulting in novel conclusions, could be considered a Divine mandate. This ambivalence is best illustrated in the discussion between two Sages of the first century, R. Eliezar and R. Joshua.

The discussion centered on a minor question involving the liability of parts of a portable stove to ritual impurity. R. Eliezer performed a number of miracles to prove that the heavenly tribunal favored his decision. He ordered a tree to jump, a stream to change its course, walls to incline, a voice from heaven to declare in his favor. All these miracles happened as he ordered. Yet R. Joshua protested, "It is not in heaven." The Law must be decided on strictly rational grounds and without any intervention from above. And the view of R. Joshua was sustained by the majority of the Academy.³⁴

The inner rationality of the Law is the basic assumption of all Talmudic discussions. It was supplemented only on rare occasions, as when the decision to follow the Hillelites against the Shammaites was corroborated by a *bath kol*, "the echo of a Divine voice."³⁵ This echo of God's voice was presumed to be a faint remnant of the gift of prophecy. Ever since the last prophets died, the Holy Spirit had been taken away from Israel, but they would still make use of the "echo of the Divine voice."

Along with this tension between the subjective-mystical and

the objective-rational phases of prophecy, the Pharisees retained the tension between the two phases of the priestly ideal.

On the one hand, they guarded zealously the sacrificial system of the Holy Temple, associating the service of the Synagogue with that of the Temple. They insisted that the regular sacrifices (*tamid*) should be maintained out of public funds, not private charity. They associated all the laymen of Palestine with the performance of the sacrifices at Jerusalem by the institution of *Maamodoth*. The laymen in various cities would gather for services during those two weeks in which the priests of their respective localities took their turn at officiating in the Holy Temple. They elaborated the laws of sacrifice and ritual purity in amazing detail and hedged them about with multiple fences.

On the other hand, they transferred the holiness and ritual of the priests to the larger community. They undertook to eat their daily bread with the same exacting requirements as the priests consumed the meat of the sacrifices. They multiplied ritual observances so as to surround every single Jew with the aura of the priesthood. They developed a complex system of *mizvoth*, stamping the concerns and activities of everyday life with the seal of priestly holiness. They set out to develop a complex law governing the piety of the people and yet they sought consciously to avoid the danger of dry legalism. While they proceeded to steer the souls of their followers through the tortuous, "twisted paths of Torah," they clung in thought to the prophetic core of faith.

We note herein two polar tensions: between the hereditary priesthood and the people generally; between the performance of the rites and their inner meaning. The Pharisees retained both emphases, with the result that each one of the four attitudes was represented in their life. Though they extended the cosmic role of priesthood to the Jewish people generally, they continued to lavish all their affection and loyalty upon the Holy Temple, elaborating the details of the sacrificial system with zealous precision. They rioted against King Alexander Yannai, when he failed to follow their instructions in regard to the minutiae of water-ablutions. Yet when the Temple was destroyed, Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai as-

erted that loving-kindness was the preferred form of sacrifice.³⁶ One rabbi even had the temerity to assert that "when the Temple was razed to the ground, an iron fence between Israel and their father in heaven was leveled down."³⁷

Nevertheless, in the prayers instituted at the Yavne Academy, the petition for the restoration of the Temple and the sacrifices is given a pivotal place. So central was the attachment of the second-century pietists to the exact location of the altar and the Temple that the rebellion of Bar Kochba was launched in part because the Emperor Hadrian ordered the construction of a Temple dedicated to Zeus on the sacred grounds of the ancient Holy Temple.³⁸ This final catastrophe, which sealed the doom of the Jews in Judea, could have been avoided if the Pharisees had succeeded in overcoming completely the archaic, earth-bound tradition of priestly piety.

In respect of personal observance, the Pharisees stressed the inner humility and piety of the worshiper as against the efficacy of sheer external ritual. Heirs of the prophets, the Pharisees taught their people not to be content with mere compliance and to esteem the central virtues of piety. We are told of many saintly rabbis, loaded with Torah and *mizvoth*, whose prayers were ineffective so long as they were conscious of their own importance, but so soon as "their heart was broken," their petitions were answered.³⁹ Many of the New Testament parables occur with insignificant variations in the Midrash. But at the same time, some Pharisaic Sages maintained that the *mizvoth* constituted cosmic pillars, as it were, sustaining the world. These rites, they asserted, were efficacious in their own right, being ends in themselves rather than instruments of piety. Here again, we should note that when two ideals are held in tension, some people will emphasize the one pole of the spiritual field of force and some the other. And those who viewed Jewish life from the outside were more apt to notice preoccupation with external trivia than the intangible inner phase of Jewish piety.

The tension within Pharisaism between the poles of prophecy and priesthood was reflected in their attitude toward the non-Jewish world.

The ascription of the priestly role to the entire people of

Israel could not fail to raise ever higher the barriers of ritual between Jews and Gentiles. We can hardly doubt that political considerations occasionally forced the rabbis to legislate some of their religious ordinances. Thus, the assertion that all Gentiles were ritually impure may have been precipitated by some hostile Roman act. The prevalence of homosexual practices among the Greeks and Romans was doubtless a contributing factor in this segregationist legislation. Such explanations, however, are incomplete if they fail to take account of the segregationist impetus of Jewish piety, which aggravated the factors of economic exploitation, political rivalry, and military aggression. As priests, Jews should be kept apart from the normal run of mankind, with only minimal opportunities for social intercourse with the Gentiles. It follows that Jews should be "distinguished" by their garments, by their food, and by their speech.

While this way of thinking was always implicit in Judaism, it was normally balanced by opposing considerations. However, in periods of extreme stress, this dark mood would result in social actions that were calculated to keep Jews permanently estranged from their non-Jewish neighbors. Thus, following a succession of near-riots, riots, and pogroms, relations between Jews and Gentiles deteriorated sadly. Thereupon, a few years before the Great Revolt, the Shammaite or zealot wing triumphed by physical force over the Hillelite or moderate wing of the Pharisaic movement.⁴⁰ On that day, we are told, "eighteen prohibitions" were added. Nearly all of these ordinances were intended to make even more forbidding the formidable barrier between Jews and Gentiles, reinforcing the bitterness of social conflict by the inflexible absolute of religion. "They prohibited Gentile bread, because of their oil; they prohibited Gentile oil because of their wine; they prohibited Gentile wine because of their daughters . . ." ⁴¹

Summarizing extensive research concerning these laws, Alon asserts:

This prohibition is the confirmation of a situation which developed organically out of a definite and basic viewpoint which prevailed in the nation from the earliest days, though it was not admitted by all or practiced by all. The formal prohibition was occasioned by political considerations . . . ⁴²

The sense of horror felt by the average Jew at the thought of associating with non-Jews is reflected in the New Testament, where Peter announces a new policy:

Ye yourselves know how it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to join himself or come unto one of another nation; and yet unto me God hath showed that I should not call any man common or unclean.⁴³

Following the destruction of Jerusalem, the study of "Greek wisdom" was similarly prohibited, save for those youths who were trained for diplomatic posts.⁴⁴ While the extent and the duration of this ban cannot be determined, it is certain that the literature of the Mishnah and the Talmud reflects the progressive withdrawal of religious leaders from the Greco-Roman world.⁴⁵

There was also an opposing trend, derived from the prophetic heritage of Pharisaic Judaism. A prophet preaches to the unprophetic multitude; he does not seclude himself from them to sulk in solitude. This motive is particularly strong in the literature of the Hellenistic Diaspora, and it was not lacking altogether in the labors of the rabbis. Could the Jews "sanctify the Name of God" and fulfill their role as a prophet-people if they locked themselves behind the barriers of a forbidding ritual? This trend of thought was not utterly silenced even in the darkest days of Jewish history. It was accordingly a supreme *mizvah* "to bring people under the wings of the *Shechinah*."⁴⁶ In the New Testament we read of the mighty efforts of Pharisees to preach their faith to Gentiles and to bring converts into the faith. We know that the members of the ruling family of Palmyra, the desert kingdom, were converted by traveling Jews. One Jewish missionary apparently felt that circumcision was not imperative for Gentile adults, while the other Jewish teacher believed circumcision to be the decisive step of conversion.⁴⁷ Converts to Judaism were found throughout Palestine, though they were particularly numerous in the Diaspora, where there were also many thousands of "semi-converts," "fearers of the Lord," and "Sabbath observers." In a city like Damascus, where "10,000 Jews were killed in one hour," at the outbreak of the Great Revolt, Josephus tells us that the Gentile women were "nearly" all attached to Judaism.⁴⁸

The Pharisaic movement was torn between its humanist and

its isolationist factions, almost for the entire period of its existence. The Shammaite wing was staunchly segregationist. Its temporary triumph contributed to the defeat of the peace-party in Palestine and the subsequent launching of the Great Revolt (65-70 C.E.). In the complex laws of ritual purity, the Pharisaic teachers possessed a weapon which was extremely effective among the superstitious masses. The Talmud cites many instances of the paradoxical piety of the people: they shunned "ritual impurity" with far greater zeal than they manifested in respect of moral sins.⁴⁰ Neither murder nor sexual crimes were as abhorrent to the fear-ridden imagination of the people as the state of ritual impurity. But the progressive extension by the Shammaite wing of the laws of impurity to all that was non-Jewish provided numerous occasions for deadly insults to merchants and soldiers. People do not resent a physical slap on the face so much as a gesture of total contempt and condemnation. By degrees, the image of Jewry was changed in the public mind from that of a "society of philosophers" and men of holiness, to that of "a race of misanthropes." This image was doubtless a contributory factor to the vast tide of hate that engulfed the Jews of the middle of the first century.

Following the tragic debacle of the Revolt, the Shammaite school ceased to operate, but its spirit was well represented among the later teachers and Sages of the Talmud. Indifference and even hostility to converts flowed directly from the intense feeling of mutual responsibility of all Jews before God. "All Israelites are responsible for one another."⁵⁰ The relapse of a convert to pagan ways was a "sin" for the entire community. The Hillelites, on the other hand, maintained the policy of welcoming converts to Judaism. In general, they favored the interpretation of the Torah in accord with the verse, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness and her paths are peace." Well known is Hillel's succinct summation of the essence of Judaism, "What is hateful unto thee, do not do unto others; the rest is commentary, go and learn." It is important to note that Hillel spoke these words to a would-be Gentile convert, who wanted to learn the whole Torah while standing on one foot and who was rejected by Shammai. But whether they were Hillelites or Shammaites, the Pharisees were driven by the logical impetus of their thinking. If it was right for the *Haver-*

im, the members of the inner circle, to separate themselves from the common people, why is it not even more desirable for the Jews as a whole to be separated from the Gentiles?

And as the common people treated the pietists with a mixture of admiration and disdain, the pagan neighbors of the Jews reacted with the same peculiar blend of bitter hostility and secret reverence. The reverence of the Gentiles was caused by the inherent nobility of the central teachings of Judaism, the doctrine of the One God, Who was concerned with the sufferings of men and Who promised to redeem them. The hostility was aroused by the seeming haughtiness of the Jews, their contempt for Gentile ways, their scorn of the official "gods" of the cities and thus their apparent "hate of mankind." Out of this mingling of hate and admiration, both Christianity and antisemitism were born. But before we proceed to study the emergence of Christianity, we need to take account of the third fundamental polarity in Pharisaism — the polarity in the hope of the Messiah.

The origin and growth of the messianic ideal in Judaism cannot be traced with any degree of certainty. The messianic vision we must remember, was not an officially formulated dogma, clearly stated and adopted. It was too sensitive an area of popular feeling to be viewed in the broad light of day, too basic a presupposition to be objectively articulated, too indispensable for the daily morale of the people to be whittled down by intellectual arguments and by the sober considerations of rationality and practicality. It was of the stuff of which popular myths and mass-dreams are made, glowing with an unearthly radiance, full of contradictions, yet immensely appealing.

Rationalists today are prone to underestimate the force of the messianic hope. Having cut down the vital fullness of ancient Judaism to a series of reasonable propositions concerning the "worthwhileness of life," they are hardly able to comprehend the inner logic and invincible passion, which made Jewish martyrdom possible. Considerations of heaven and hell played their part without doubt in steeling the nerves of individual Jewish pietists. But the public policy of the Jewish people was guided in large measure by the changing hues of

the messianic vision that loomed more often than not on the edge of the contemporary horizon.

A great Hasidic teacher of the nineteenth century, Rabbi Moses Teitelbaum, was in the habit of addressing God on the eve of Yom Kippur as follows: "O God, Thou knowest that if it were not for my belief year by year, that the Messiah would come soon, I could not have lived. Thus, you fooled me year after year, deluding me with a false expectation. What does it profit Thee, O Lord, to delude a foolish old man? Send the Messiah down at last."

The psychology of this old rabbi corresponded more closely to the actual mentality of the Jewish people than the official and casual remarks about the Messiah in Talmud and Midrash would seem to indicate. The speedy advent of the Messiah was the ultimate argument in the defense of the Jewish position in the world. Even Philo, who shied away from miracles, rested his case for the triumph of Judaism on the coming of the Messiah.⁵¹

The vision of the Messiah grew apace, gathering momentum with the steady deterioration of the Jewish position. The more unbearable the contemporary situation of the Jews became, the more the "hope of Israel" became richly-hued and many-splendored. In the Talmud and in the late Midrashim, the vision of the Messiah possesses features which may have been derived from Christian theology, such as the pre-existence of the Messiah and his vicarious suffering in behalf of all Israel.⁵² Some features of the messianic vision, such as the appearance of "the Messiah son of Joseph," who will die in battle, prior to the appearance of the "Messiah son of David," may have been suggested by the debacle of Bar Kochba, whom Rabbi Aqiba acclaimed as Messiah.⁵³ On the other hand, we can hardly doubt that messianic ideas which occur in the later passages of the Talmud and the Midrashim enjoyed wide currency many generations before they were incorporated in approved literature. The messianic vision was a popular dream or myth, and there is neither consistency nor clarity of outline in the bright visions of the world of dreams.

In keeping with our analysis, we should expect to find all the polarities of the Jewish faith reflected in the messianic vision — the tension between the national motive and the universalistic aspiration, between the rationalistic-ethical concept of the ideal king and the mystical-utopian vision of an unearthly kingdom of

happy saints, between the militaristic hero and the gentle, suffering, saintly teacher who scatters the enemies of Israel by "the breath of his mouth." No vision of the Messiah was entirely free of mythical and miraculous elements, but there is a discernible difference between the hope of an immensely improved natural world and the view of an ethereal, eerie, mythological dream-world, in which the dead arise, the judgment of all men and nations takes place and the physical nature of human life is metamorphosized into the perfection of angels. The visions of "world to come" and the "days of the Messiah" were now mingled together, now kept apart in different minds at the same time and in different eras. Popular conceptions do not lend themselves to clear-cut definitions.

The concept of the Messiah as a victorious general is implicit in much of the early and later literature. King David, primary model of the Messiah, was after all a military hero. God selects certain individuals as the instruments of redemption, sending His help through their leadership.

The meaning of the Zealot slogan, "No Lord but God," is that the leader of the national fight for freedom must consider himself to be the instrument of God's Will. If successful, he is a Messiah or at least one of his precursors. Maimonides summarizes the many Talmudic discussions and traditions in this succinct statement:

If a king should arise from the house of David who studies the Torah and observe *mizvoth* like his father David in accordance with the written and oral laws, compelling all Israelites to follow him in his devotion to Torah and in fighting the battles of the Lord, we have to presume that he is the Messiah. If then he succeeds and builds the Temple in its place, assembling the scattered ones of Israel, then he is surely the Messiah, whose function it is to bring the whole world to the united service of the Lord, as it is said, 'For then I shall change the speech of the nations to a pure speech, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord and serve Him with one accord.'⁶⁴

The universalist role of the Messiah is not denied by Maimonides, but it is considered to be his later task; the primary task of the Messiah is to demonstrate initial success in the liberation of the Jewish people. One might conclude that Judah Maccabee and his brothers were Divinely chosen instruments of national triumph. The Talmud rejects this notion, ignoring Judah's role al-

together. But the Hasmonean family had a large popular following. It was widely believed that when it was God's Will to grant victory to the Jews, He insisted on giving His bounty only through the agency of the Hasmonean family. Speaking of non-Hasmonean Jewish generals who failed to win victory, the author of the First Book of Maccabees states, "They were not of the family of those men into whose keeping was entrusted the power of saving Israel."⁵⁵

The belief that the Messiah must be a son of David had such abundant Scriptural support, that Simon was named Highpriest and ruler, "until a true prophet should arise." But even a "son of David," who was blessed with initial successes, could not be certain of becoming Messiah, until the ultimate victory. Hezekiah was granted a mighty, miraculous victory, but the ultimate favor was denied to him, though one Talmudic authority maintained that Hezekiah was indeed the Messiah.⁵⁶ A string of military victories might establish a presumption of messiahship. Thus Rabbi Aqiba acknowledged Bar Kochba as the Messiah, but in this view of messiahship nothing fails like failure.

The polar concept of a military hero favored by God is transformed easily and logically to the opposite polar concept of a heavenly being, predestined to lead the way of salvation. A hero in war is given the help of God at critical moments. Pious Jews attributed all victories to God. Addressing his troops on the eve of battle, Judah Maccabee asserts, "There is no difference in the sight of heaven to save by many or by few. Victory in battle does not depend on the size of an army, but rather on strength that comes from heaven."⁵⁷

The imagination of the people conjured up marvelous heavenly portents in connection with all great events.

The concept of the Messiah, however, involves much more than a supremely successful Jewish general and king. In keeping with the prophecies of Scripture, the Messiah is the *final* hero in the history of Israel and mankind. He ushers in the age of perfection that transcends all the processes of history. Since he marks, in some decisive way, the end of the road that was begun by Adam and Eve, it is natural to assume that, in some meaningful way, he or his soul was prefigured in the mind of God even before the creation of the world. Hence, the Talmud speaks of the "Name of the Messiah" as being one of the "seven things" de-

signed before creation.⁵⁸ The "Name" means either "the Idea" in the Platonic sense, or the soul.⁵⁹ An ancient Midrash speaks of the "spirit of God hovering over the face of the deep" as being "the spirit of King Messiah."⁶⁰

Designed from the beginning, the soul of the Messiah was to usher in "the end of days." The biblical perspective of history was uni-directional, leading in God's own and mysterious way to a revealed climax, "the world to come." We encounter many traditions in the Talmud concerning the length of time between the advent of the Messiah and the transformation of human society in the glory of the "time to come." Some speak of the Days of the Messiah as lasting two thousand, others speak of four hundred and still others of forty years. In every case, it is the advent of the Messiah that opens up the new era, leading to the heavenly utopia of the "time to come." The heavenly and miraculous aspects of the Messiah are already projected in the Book of Daniel, which was probably written during the Maccabean revolt. Daniel is shown pondering the meaning of Jeremiah's prophecy, foretelling the return at the end of seventy years. The events of the Hellenistic period are rehearsed, the resurrection of the dead is predicted, the "end" is announced in cryptic language:

And behold, with the cloud of heaven
there came one like a son of man,
and he came to the Ancient of Days
and was presented before him.
And to him was given dominion
and glory and kingdom,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him;
his dominion is an everlasting dominion
which shall not pass away.
and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.⁶¹

The *Vision of Ezra* or IV Ezra was probably composed at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. It centers attention on the suffering of the saints and the tragedy of Israel. All the iniquities of this world will be righted when the Messiah comes. Out of the sea he will emerge "in the shape of a man" and he will fly with the clouds of heaven. He will destroy all the wicked by a "river of flame" that will issue from his mouth. He was kept by God from the beginning for the "saving of creation." The

heavenly Zion will then be revealed, all ready made. He will bring the "Ten Tribes" back from their lands of exile.⁶²

The books of Enoch fostered the hope of the "time to come," when all idols and temples will be abolished, the righteous will awaken from their sleep and receive the gift of wisdom; all the sinners will be given over into the hands of the saints, a mighty and glorious king will reign, even the angels will be judged and punished; at last the heavens will be changed and a perfect world will be established.⁶³

The apocalyptic books presently in our possession are but a fraction of the vast literature that circulated among the people. The Vision of Ezra speaks of seventy "hidden" books accompanying the twenty-four books of the Bible. The language of hope is rich and many-sided. The Savior is depicted in glowing colors, the angels acclaim him, all the kings of the earth acknowledge him as the "son of man."⁶⁴

In the Talmud and Midrashim, we encounter a complex plethora of additional speculations, deriving from an uncertain date. We encounter the belief in a Messiah, son of Joseph, who is doomed to die on the battlefield.⁶⁵ We note the doctrine that the manner of the Messiah's advent is dependent on the conduct of the Jewish people — "if they merit it, he will come riding on the clouds of heaven; if they do not deserve Divine favor, he will come as a poor man riding on a donkey."⁶⁶ The dogma that the Messiah will assume the role of a Divine Judge occurs in several forms. "A king of flesh and blood does not permit his crown to be worn by others, but the Holy One blessed be He, will put His own crown on the King Messiah."⁶⁷ The assurance that the Messiah was already here was sorely needed at certain times. Hence the comforting thought, "In the day when the Holy Temple was destroyed, the Messiah was born."⁶⁸ The Messiah will overcome the power of death;⁶⁹ Satan will be conquered by him;⁷⁰ he suffers in order to ameliorate the agonies of Israel.⁷¹ We even find speculations concerning a "new Torah" or new *mizvoth* to be given by the Messiah.⁷² In the mystical stream within Judaism, there was always the teaching that "the secrets of the Torah" will be revealed at the time of the Messiah.⁷³

We can best understand the "Hope of Israel," amorphous and resplendent, in terms of a dynamic tension between the idea of

a military hero, and that of a mythical, heavenly being; a savior of the Jewish people in the context of history, and a savior of the righteous of all nations from the grip of Satan. This protean vision took different shapes in diverse minds and at various times and circumstances. All that was certain for the Jew was the dogma of the Messiah's speedy advent. For it was this multifarious dogma that generated the invincible will of the people to cling to their tragic destiny.

CHAPTER NINE

THE JEWISH-CHRISTIAN SCHISM

Against the background of these diverse polar tensions within the soul of the Jew, we can understand the emergence of Christianity and its gradual severance from the Jewish community.

John the Baptist preached a message of repentance in the harsh, ruthless language of an apocalyptic prophet, expecting the imminent advent of the Messiah. He bade the people turn to God in heart and soul, and he warned them against complacent reliance upon "the merit of the fathers"; on the Day of Judgment it will not suffice to be "of the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." His call for baptism in token of cleansing oneself from sin was probably in keeping with the ritual practices of his day. The Talmud attributes a ceremony of lustration to Ezra. It is probable that the baptismal requirements for prayer and Torah-study were stricter in the first century than in the later generations of the Talmud.¹ Even in the later pietistic literature, we encounter the requirement to bathe after sincere repentance, in token of dedication to a new state of purity. Belief in the speedy arrival of the Messiah was already then an integral element of Jewish piety. Every revivalist movement in Judaism, from that day down to our own time, has reawakened this feeling of living in "the end of days." The followers of John fasted frequently and led ascetic lives. Apparently they did not differ in any essential respect from the rest of the community.

Under the influence of John the Baptist, Jesus began his career as a popular preacher, fired by messianic hopes and visions. Belonging to the outer, provincial wing of the Pharisaic movement, he directed the force of his message against the abuses of the faith, which were abetted by the official leaders of the Jerusalem schools. His debates with the Pharisaic leaders should,

therefore, be understood as an intra-party dispute, since Jesus shared with his opponents the same basic beliefs. He protested against the preoccupation of Pharisaic leaders with rites of "purity," such as the washing of hands. These extensions of the priestly ritual made it impossible for the Pharisaic leaders truly to mingle with the common people, to eat in their homes. He protested against the excessive infatuation of the Pharisaic teachers with the niceties of legalism to the point of ignoring the essential demands of ethics and religion. He directed his wrath at the smug self-assurance of the entrenched leaders, who flattered themselves on their multitudinous "merits." He demanded total surrender to the Divine Will, total self-giving to society and God; total love, without any reservations.

All these protests and demands were entirely within the range of ideas and emphases in the tradition. In every age, there is room for the criticism of the entrenched leadership, for the rebuke of those who substitute the instruments of religion for their inner purpose, for the restatement of the essence of faith. As to the high ethical demands of Jesus, they were part and parcel of Jewish utopian idealism in all ages. In principle, the Jews never rejected the ethical demands of Jesus, and in practice the Christians, taken as a group, did not accept them.

Jesus won a vast following in a few years, chiefly among the Galileans and among the common people. He devoted himself to the regeneration of the "lost sheep in Israel," and these hapless, harassed, penitent "prodigal sons" found in him an unforgettable champion. But he also made many enemies. He antagonized the Zealots, who were very powerful in Galilee, by his counsel of submission to the Romans.² He antagonized the entrenched Sadducean priests by his chasing of the "money-changers" out of the Temple grounds;³ even more by his arousing messianic hopes among the people which might have resulted in bloody reprisals by the Roman legions.⁴

All these hostile camps were brought together by the claim of Jesus himself or of his followers that he was the hoped-for Messiah. If only he could have proved this claim, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the Zealots and the pacifists, would have followed him even unto death! But so paradoxical was this claim, it could be proven only at "the end of time." Doubtless, many of the people who cried out to Pilate, "Kill him," wanted to force the hand of God, so that the Messiah would be "revealed" in all his glory.

The pragmatic leaders sought, like Caiaphas, to remove the impending threat of Roman reprisals, and the pietistic sages sought to bring the issue to a head. The crown of the Messiah led all who assumed it to certain death, before Jesus and after him. For "the Hope of Israel" was compounded of myth and fantasy and uncontrollable mass-hysteria. A successful rebellion against Rome might have realized part of the messianic dream, but Jesus, like Hillel in his generation, and like Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai in the next generation, sought to calm the rebellious mood of the people, and to direct their feverish zeal toward non-political channels.

Was Jesus then "rejected" by the Jewish people? This frequently-asked question is loaded with theological nuances. It suggests that all the Jews in a body considered his claims and his message as a unit, and rejected it. It is important to note that Jesus was repudiated by *some* Jews and accepted by others. His *ideas* were not presented for adjudication. They were neither accepted nor rejected, but were themselves part of the dynamic tradition. His messiahship became the dividing line. Those who accepted him as the Messiah soon found a host of verses to support their claim; those who repudiated his messiahship could not afford to remain passive. In the circumstances of their day, all claimants to this exalted role were dangerous to the peace of the community. Pilate could afford to wait; he was confident he had the power to crush any rebellion. But the priestly leaders of the people feared that mass-enthusiasm would get out of hand. They thought they had no choice.

What heritage did Jesus leave behind him? In the first place, his role as the Messiah. No hope can grip the human imagination if it is composed altogether of futuristic elements. Hence, the Messiah was at all times assumed to be a return of an earlier savior — Moses or David or Elijah. In the small Christian community of Jerusalem, there was left the memory of the Messiah as they knew him in all his earthly reality. Thereafter, their faith in him could be endowed with the colors and sounds of real life.

But the knowledge of the "Name" of the Messiah and even of his career as a reforming teacher could not have produced the germ of a new and great religion. The Talmud mentions several schools of thought, each of which thought it knew the "Name" of the Messiah. In addition to the "Name," the teachings of Jesus were treasured along with the Holy Scriptures. And to these teach-

ings was added the nagging conviction that the official heads of the Jewish people had rejected the one who had come as a saviour, because of their preoccupation with externalities and their neglect of spiritual realities. This fresh reassertion of the prophetic emphasis in the context of redemption staked out a mighty claim for the assent of all mankind. The stage was now set for the second triumph of monotheism, repeating the miracle of the biblical period. As prophetic monotheism slowly won the hearts of the Israelites, this same spiritual impetus now began to win adherents in the open society of the Hellenistic world.

And the realization of the rejection of the Messiah by his own people made possible the inversion of the "Hope of Israel," transferring its benefits to "Israel after the spirit." While the Jews believed that only the righteous will enter "the world to come," they tacitly included the vague, collective entity, "the Jewish people," among the saved — this in full knowledge of the fact that not all Jews were righteous and that there were some worthy saints among the Gentiles. The protean concept of "the people" is probably the most potent focus of loyalty in the human heart, though its content is uncertain and subjectively determined. Now there dawned the opposite conviction, that "the people" had rejected their Messiah and were rejected in turn. The same vague entity, with all its dark pathos and uncertain contours, reoccurs in the Christian mentality, but there "the people" are among the unsaved.

This reversal of valence in regard to the Jewish people did not occur all at once. In the *Acts of the Apostles* and in the letters of Paul, we see how the great preacher of the new faith struggled against the awful possibility that "the Hope of Israel" had been lost. He consoled himself with the thought that God had purposely hardened the hearts of "the people" against their Messiah in order to encourage the fullness of the nations to enter into the faith. However, after the Gentiles will have been converted, "the people" too will be embraced in the community of the "saved." "For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery, lest ye be wise in your own conceits, that a hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in."¹⁰

How well this "apostle to the Gentiles" knew the minds of the people to whom he preached "the good news" of salvation. They

were ready to embrace the powerful faith of monotheism, but they were reluctant to receive this great boon from the hands of the hated and despised Jews. This is a universal phenomenon. People will eagerly embrace new ideas, but they must put their own labels upon them.

The reversal of valence attaching to the concept of "the Jewish people" transformed the Christian community from a Jewish sect into a belligerent heresy. All the diverse groups which made up the Jewish community considered themselves to be the healthy nucleus of "the people," while the Christians, in part by virtue of their rapid success among the Gentiles, considered "the people" to be misled, misguided, and doomed. And "the people" were represented for them by the leaders of the "Congregation of Israel," the Sanhedrin and the priestly masters of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. We cannot really tell how many Jews accepted the Christian faith either in the Aramaic or the Hellenistic Diaspora. Nor did the size of this segment matter historically, for in the language of symbolism it was "the Jewish people" as a whole that was presumably tested and found wanting.

In terms of our analysis of the balance of tensions within Judaism, we can now see how the early Christian community shattered this tri-focal field of force.

First, the tension between the Jewish people and humanity. It is not true that the Christians were more universalist than the Jews, opening up the boon of salvation to all men, while the Jews sought to keep the Promise all to themselves. But it is true that Christianity was less *nation-centered* than Judaism. The fact is that within Pharisaic Judaism there was a powerful, liberal trend that aimed to disseminate the faith among the nations and that taught "the pious of the nations have a share in the world to come."⁷ There was also a tendency to take account of the monotheistic currents of piety, flowing beneath the surface trends of paganism.⁸ On the other hand, in the first two centuries, Christian thought was distinctly illiberal, discountenancing the belief that God reveals Himself in different ways to different peoples. Did not the Fathers consign the vast majority of mankind to perdition and open the gates of paradise only to those who accepted their dogmas?

Yet the Christian community was far better disposed for the

winning of converts than the Jewish people, precisely because it was a church, not a historical-sociological group. The essential difference lay in the fact that the Christian community consisted of *individuals*, who gained or lost their own title to salvation. Anyone could enter and anyone could leave this "Israel of the spirit." The promise of salvation and the warning of damnation were directed to the individual. In Judaism, the individual could dissipate or enlarge his heritage, but the faith was still his heritage, as a member of "the people." Because of "the merits of the fathers" the Jew believed himself to be the object of Divine favor; because of the "sins" of the fathers, he was pursued by the "wrath" of God. In Judaism, this principle of collective responsibility embraced the distant past along with the present and the future, so that the individual confronted God as part of the favored "seed of Abraham." To be sure, this mythical unity of "the people" was counteracted by the impact of prophetic emphasis on the worth and responsibilities of the individual. Nevertheless, the two motives were held in a dynamic balance, and both motives exerted their separate pulls.

In Christianity, the balance between the individual and the historic community was shattered by the rejection of "the people" as the focus of Divine concern. Any number of individual Jews could enter the Christian community, but "the people" as such was repudiated. Doubtless, following the disasters of 70 C.E., of 113-115 C.E., and 135 C.E., the ranks of the Christians were swelled mightily by Jewish converts. But each such convert entered as an individual; "the people," regardless of the numbers represented, remained in the "outer darkness." In fact, in the second century, the Church insisted on a special formula of abjuration, by which a prospective Jewish convert pronounced "anathema" upon his people. No such formula was exacted from Gentile converts.

Secondly, the tension between prophecy and priesthood was shattered in the Christian community. The evolution of events was paradoxical. For in the beginning, it was the renewal of the mystical-ecstatic phase of prophecy that served as a substitute for the priestly concern with ritual. To become a Christian was to be baptized by the "Holy Spirit." Later, priestly sacramentalism was reasserted with a vengeance, eliminating any lingering traces of

the prophetic mentality except among such heretical sects as the Montanists. And still later, the challenge of philosophy reestablished a fresh tension between the objective phase of religion, now stated in the abstract terms of Greek philosophy and the sacramental system, which centers around the priestly focus of piety.

Jesus' criticism of the Pharisaic preoccupation with the niceties of ritual was indeed an expression of the ethical-rational phase of prophetism, but it was not argued on this basis. Jesus did not motivate his position by reference to this current in the tradition, but he spoke as if "with authority"; that is, he appealed in terms of a "power" that was vested in him. Thus, after his death, it was the mystical-magical aspect of prophecy that loomed preeminently in the mind of the people. Not the cogency of his message, but the supposed mystery of his personality was the outstanding fact left in the memory of his disciples. The sudden emergence of the "prophetizing" phenomenon at Pentecost marked the birth of the new church.⁹ To receive "the gift of the Holy Spirit" was thereafter the mark of a Christian. Paul considered "baptism with water" to be relatively unimportant. All that really counted was "baptism with the Holy Spirit"; that is, to be seized by a sudden rapture of mystical frenzy and to "speak in tongues." This phase of mass-hysteria was later controlled by the appointment of official interpreters. It remained a permanent legacy of Christianity to maintain that in matters of faith one speaks not out of his own experience and reflection, but out of the overflowing of Divine Grace. Man is in a passive mood of resignation and humility, while the Redeeming power of Grace seizes hold of him.

In the early church, the phenomena of mass-ecstasy were duly curbed and controlled, with marginal groups such as the Montanists continuing the old "prophetizing" tradition. The emergence of the sacraments marked the reassertion of the priestly element in Christianity. By that time, the church was already far removed from its Jewish origins, and the reemergence of the priestly emphasis entailed therefore a tacit or a conscious acceptance of some pagan symbols as well as the creation of new ceremonies.

The most outstanding feature of the priestly ritual was the offering of sacrifices at the Holy Temple. An ambiguous attitude to the Temple ritual was an implicit element in the heritage of

Jesus, since he prophesied its destruction and its rebuilding "in three days."¹⁰ His followers, particularly his older brother, James, frequented the Temple, but possibly more in the spirit of cautious conformity than of firm conviction. It was for the sake of demonstrating outward compliance with the Law that James advised Paul to bring an offering in the Temple.¹¹ In his letters, Paul speaks of the human body as a temple unto the Lord. The destruction of the Temple became the most potent argument in the disputations of the Christians with Jews.¹²

The reemergence of the priestly element in Christianity involved therefore both an acceptance and a repudiation of the Temple ritual. Delving deeply to the archaic origin of animal sacrifice, when the sacrificial animal was considered either a substitute for the worshiper or as being akin in substance to the god, the Christians interpreted the career of Jesus as the sacrifice that God Himself brought to atone for the sins of mankind. For God "so loved the world" that He brought His own son as a sacrifice in its behalf. The notion that the Lord Himself might engage in prayer, by way of setting man an example, occurs frequently in Aggadic literature.¹³ He even brings a sacrifice as atonement for having made the moon small.¹⁴ Communal eating of the blessed host in the Eucharistic ritual of Catholic Christianity was again a reassertion of the priestly emphasis, since it was the function of priests to eat the "sin-offering" (*hat-ath*) brought into the Temple. But this very transfer of the priestly focus from the Temple to the person of the communicant made the restoration of the Temple totally unnecessary. Of course, it is conceivable that Christian sacramentalism would have taken a different turn had the Temple not been destroyed. In that case, the Temple itself might have served as the common sacred institution of both Judaism and Christianity. In Judaism, the Temple and the sacrificial system were associated with the messianic hope and the metaphysical mystery of cosmic redemption.

"'And the foundation of the earth' — these are the sacrifices."¹⁵ "Without the regular sacrifices and the accompanying prayers of *maamadoth*, heaven and earth could not endure."¹⁶ There is a special department in heaven, called *Zebul*, "where Jerusalem, the Holy Temple and the altar are built, and Michael, the archangel stands and offers sacrifices."¹⁷ As to what precise-

ly Michael offers as a sacrifice, different opinions occur in the Midrashim. According to some Midrashim, Michael offers "the souls of saints"; according to others, he sacrifices "fiery lambs."¹⁸ The practices of penitence and fasting were considered to be forms of sacrifice.

"At the time when the Holy Temple was still standing, a sinner would bring a sacrifice out of which only the fat and the blood were offered on the altar and he was forgiven. Now that I fasted and my fat and blood were diminished, I pray that it may be Thy Will that the fat and the blood that I lost be as offerings to Thee."¹⁹

To the prophetic strand in rabbinic Judaism, every good deed was an acceptable sacrifice. When Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai was told of the destruction of the Temple, he said, "My son, let it not grieve you, we have a form of atonement that is as effective as the service of the Holy Temple, and it is the practice of loving-kindness, as it is said, 'For it is steadfast love I desire, not sacrifice.'²⁰

The learning of Torah and the offering of prayers were also taken to be substitutes for sacrifice.²¹ We are even told that prayers are greater than sacrifices. Nevertheless, in Judaism, the supplications of the Prayer Book center round the petition for the restoration of the Temple and the sacrifices. The tension between the prophetic and the priestly emphases was continued in rabbinic literature. In Christianity, a similar tension was maintained between philosophy and sacramentalism.

In respect to the third vision of Judaism, that of kingship, we also find that the bi-polar Jewish tension was broken in Christianity, and subsequently reinstituted in another form.

Kingship in Judaism was a bi-polar ideal, embracing the hope of a polity here on earth and the vision of a kingdom of heaven to be established in "time to come." The earthly kingdom of the Jews was to be some form of theocracy. The Pharisees were not thrilled by the prospect of a secular Jewish kingdom. In their battles against Alexander Yannai, they were prepared to accept the overlordship of the Syrian government in preference to the domination of the Hasmonean prince.²² During the civil war between Hyrkanos and Aristobolus, they petitioned Pompey to relieve them from both claimants to the Judean throne.²³ They

wanted cultural-religious autonomy, under the protection of Rome. After the death of Herod, they renewed this petition to the Roman Senate.

It would be an erroneous interpretation of the Pharisaic position to maintain that they were only concerned with "religious" freedom. In the domain of "religion," they included the right of rabbis to enforce the observance of Jewish law. Even under the Romans, they considered it their duty to punish all violators of the Jewish ritual. The principle of collective responsibility before God was so central in Rabbinic thinking, that only at rare intervals and with the utmost reluctance did the Jewish community ever surrender the right to punish corporally the violators of its ritual law.

As the ideal of secular government was modified by the operation of Torah-law, so the vision of the kingship of the Messiah was modified by the lingering of earthly and secular goals. The "kingdom of heaven" was to be marked by the universal acknowledgment of the One God, but it is to Zion that the nations would stream; it is the Jewish king that they would serve and acknowledge as their master; it is the Jewish people that all men would willingly accept as their superiors, et cetera.

In Christianity, the two poles of the kingship ideal were dissociated. The kingdom of God was not of this world. And the earthly kingdom of the Romans was to be allowed to run its course until "the end."

In Christianity, the civil law of the Romans was taken over bodily. Even the institution of slavery which had virtually disappeared among Jews, insofar as the enslavement of other Jews were concerned, was retained in the Christian world. In the sixteenth century of the Christian era, Popes could still bring themselves to sell Christian captives into slavery and consign them to labor in chains on their galley ships. Here the evil resulting from the separation of the two foci of kingship is clearly manifest. Law is the expression of dominion. If the kingdom of God and of Caesar are unrelated, then the latter may be allowed to go its way, without any interference by the moral and religious insights of the Church.

In Christianity, the old theocratic ideal was reborn after the breakdown of the Roman Empire. The Popes of the Middle Ages resurrected the ancient polarity, seeking to reduce the state

to the status of an arm of the Church. Canon law dealt with economic, social, and political questions. In both the Protestant and Catholic worlds, there were to be bloody wars and a century of terrible travail before an "agonizing reappraisal" made possible the emergence of the modern principle of the separation of church and state.

The sudden release of tension in Christianity generated a one-sided but exceedingly powerful ideology. With single-minded zeal, the early Christians devoted themselves to the saving of individuals, the establishment of "Israel after the spirit." Release from association with the Jewish people liberated the early Christians from the need of apologizing for the wretchedness and misfortunes of the Jews.

Nor were they tarred with the brush of the already powerful antisemitic ideology of the Greco-Roman world. Furthermore, stressing the responsibility of individuals instead of the community as a whole, they could convert any number of people, without fearing that any untoward consequences would result for the entire community from the backsliding of unfaithful converts. Some of the rabbis taught that backsliding converts prevented redemption since "all Israelites are responsible for one another."²⁴ Even those rabbis who asserted that God loves converts could not but restrain their missionary zeal for fear of possible backsliding, whereas Christian missionaries were relieved from any such fears.

Disassociation from Jerusalem and the Holy Temple protected the early Christians from the tidal wave of agonized despair that inundated the Jewish Diaspora following the terrible debacle of the Great Rebellion. Hostility to the purity laws and, following Paul, liberation from the Law freed the Christian missionaries from the need of interposing the obstacle of circumcision, as well as the cumbersome dietary and purity laws between prospective converts and the "good news." To be sure, the Catholic Church developed a massive ritualistic system of its own in the course of time. The popular mind revels in rituals, as in miracles, generally speaking, but it repels the rituals and miracles that are already stamped with the seal of otherness and strangeness. For the people of the Roman world, the laws of Judaism bore the marks of an alien faith. It is not rituals as such that the

pagan world hesitated to accept, but the rituals of an alien people.

Concentration on the personal experience of conversion — "baptism with the Holy Ghost," as Paul put it — opened up to all men the opportunity to be accepted as "authentic" members of the newly formed "chosen people." Within the Christian community, they could "feel" and "know" that they were "chosen."

Similarly, when the tension between faith and reason snapped, the early Christians were catapulted into the otherworldly domain of religious frenzy and fanaticism. They acquired the passion, the single-mindedness, and the hypnotic logic of extremism, which, to the popular mind, are the marks of consistency. The advance of Christianity was made possible by the contagious fever of religious enthusiasm. And this enthusiasm was freed from the restraints which, in a balanced faith, keep in check the fear of devils, the belief in the imminence of the "end of the world," the vision of universal conflagration, or of the eternally burning "fires of hell." When the logic of a new idea or a fresh vision appeals to the mind, its impact is generally absorbed within the existing framework of symbols and rites. But religious conversion is a psychic upheaval, preceded by a virtual breakdown of personality and followed by a new, radical reintegration.²⁵ Thus the unsettling of the religious tension in Judaism and the radical shifting of the psychic equilibrium toward the pole of emotion and fantasy made possible the powerful, missionary impact of apostolic Christianity.

Yet the wave of Christian enthusiasm would have passed as quickly as it had come, were it not for the inherent kernel of truth embraced in its message. Christianity became the vehicle of the monotheistic pattern of piety to the Gentile world. It was the bearer of the prophetic concern for the redemption of the individual through penitence and humility and ethical action, not merely of the idea of one God, which the Stoics also affirmed. And as the monotheistic philosophy of life first triumphed within the Jewish community, so now it began its triumphant advance within the Roman world. And as the Jews were won over to the noble faith of the prophets by the assurance that God took the initiative and extended His love to them first, so now the Christian missionaries could argue that God had taken the first step toward the redemption of all who would listen. And

as the Jews knew themselves to be a people, not merely an association of believers, so the Christian community, "Israel after the spirit," believed itself one body, even a "race." In the third century, the Roman populace referred to Christians as a "third race," with Romans being the first and Jews the second. This sense of global unity was a powerful factor in the eventual triumph of the Catholic Church.²⁰

The Christian critique of the Jewish Law and the Jewish people were exceedingly powerful weapons for the conversion of the Gentile world, as Saint Paul, "the apostle to the Gentiles," recognized. For apart from the exotic beauty and appeal of the parables of Jesus, this critique turned the Christian community into a heretical sect. And, as Toynbee has pointed out, it is the tendency of "the barbarian world" to accept the culture of a civilized people in a heretical form. For a heresy contains the essential truth of the original faith along with the charge that the original faith was wrong and perverted. Hence it ministers to both the admiration of the "external proletariat" and to its contempt for the culture it seeks to embrace. In the domain of religion, Judaism was the nuclear bearer of monotheistic piety; therefore, it was natural for the Hellenistic world to embrace the "heretical" form of monotheism as it was presented to them in Christianity. For similar reasons, the Arabs later embraced Islam, the heretical form of both Judaism and Christianity; the Persians embraced the Shiia as the heretical form of Islam; the Goths took over Aryanism, the heretical form of Catholic Christianity. On the other hand, when both Christianity and Islam were the faiths of mighty empires, it was Judaism that the Khazar governing class accepted, for by that time it appeared to be the despised and rejected heresy of the two contending centers of culture.

It remains for us to discuss why the Christian faith did not win the Jewish as it won the Hellenic world. This question is sometimes put in the following form: Why did the Jews "reject" Jesus or Christianity? We have already seen that Jews, as individuals, reacted to the Christian challenge both by rejecting and accepting it. Some Jews accepted, some Jews rejected the message of Christianity. We cannot tell whether the percentage of Christians among the Jews was greater or smaller than the percent-

age of Christians among the Greeks, Syrians, or Egyptians. In all probability, the effect of Christian propaganda, among the Jews, following the destruction of the Temple, was far more potent than among the non-Jews. The most fruitful field for the early mission of the apostles was doubtless the crowd of semi-converts and "fearers of the Lord" that hovered around every synagogue in the Diaspora.

But the "rejection of Jesus by *the Jewish people*" was part of the dogmatic structure of ancient Christianity. Whatever the percentage of non-Christian Jewry may have been, the hard core of unconverted Jewry was the bearer of the historical designation, "the Jewish people." At the time of Constantine the Great, only a small percentage of the Hellenistic world was Christian. Down to the fateful year when Constantine accepted the Christian faith, it is quite likely that a much larger percentage of the Jewish Hellenistic Diaspora was embraced in the Christian community than was secured by Christianity from among the Gentiles in the Roman world. But "the Jewish people" continued to be identified with those who followed the leadership of the official schools in Palestine.

The saga of the Jewish rejection of their Savior was the symbol of the "universalism" of the Christian message, for it dramatized the openness of the new faith to individuals. The repudiation by the Jews of the Son of God made the promise and the "good news" open to all.

Within the Jewish community, the tide of Christian sentiment represented messianism, not monotheism; accordingly, it ebbed when the national fortunes rose, and flowed when they sank. We know that there were several different sects of Hebrew Christians in Palestine, which lingered on well into the fourth century. In the Diaspora, the Jewish converts to Christianity, we may assume, tended to drift into those Monophysite and iconoclastic sects, which were decried as "Judaistic" by the Orthodox. The succession of Jewish nationalist uprisings, from the Great Revolt of 66 C.E. to 132 C.E., widened the gulf between Jews and Christians, since the latter did not participate in the rebellions of the Jews, which frequently bore a messianic character. On the other hand, Jews did not suffer from the periodic persecutions of the Christians by the Romans. With reason or not, Christian writers accuse the Jews of fomenting trouble be-

tween them and the pagan power. The insertion in the Eighteen Benedictions of a curse against the Hebrew Christians at about the year 100 C.E. led to Christian anathemas and to endless hostilities between the two faiths, making the break between them final and irrevocable. The Jewish-Christian dialogue after the year 100 C.E. no longer took the form of "*What* was right?" but "*Who* was right?" Which is the true Israel, the bearer of the Promise and the object of Divine Love, "Israel of the spirit," or "Israel of the flesh?" And the choice was hard and fast, excluding any mediating position. Christian apologetics had to degrade the Jew in order to exalt itself.

It is important to note that Christian antisemitism as reflected particularly in the Gospel of John and in Patristic literature was largely exegetical and mythological. The Jews had to be of "their father the devil," if the Christians were of God, since the coming of the Messiah was the acid-test of the faith. If the eschatological meaning which the Christians read into the Hebrew Scriptures was right, the Jews and all their works were somehow accursed, not merely wrong, but wrong in a mystical, occult sense, akin to the wrongness of Satan who is yet an angel of the Lord.

Thus Justin Martyr describes Jewish Law no longer as a "schoolmaster," as did Saint Paul, but as a sign of Divine wrath:

Circumcision was given to you as a sign that you may be separated from other nations, and from us, and that you alone may suffer that which you now justly suffer.²⁷

In second-century apologetic literature, the argument is frequently encountered that the Jews believe in Christ and yet, on account of their loyalty to the Devil, refuse to confess him. An apocryphal gospel represents the highpriest as saying:

Do we not believe in Christ, but what shall we do? The enemy of mankind hath blinded our hearts and shame has covered our faces that we should not confess the mighty works of God.²⁸

Summarizing the literature of the fourth century, James Parkes writes:

The Jew as he is encountered in the pages of the fourth-century writers is not a human being at all. He is a 'monster,' a theological abstraction of superhuman cunning and malice, and more than superhuman blindness.

To be sure, there was a long series of atrocities committed by Jews and Christians against one another. So long as the Christians were a Jewish sect, they were subject to flagellation and persecution by agents of the synagogue. Several writers of the second century claim that Jews incited the pagans against the Christians by spreading diverse anti-Christian calumnies. In all probability, the Jewish Christians were harassed during the Great Rebellion (66-70 C.E.) and the Bar Kochba rebellion (131-135 C.E.), since these upheavals were impelled by the fever of messianic expectation. In the fifth century, when Christianity restricted and oppressed all competing faiths, Jews and Samaritans struck back in bloody violence, from time to time. At the beginning of the seventh century, the Jews of Palestine joined an invading Persian army in an attack on the Christian population. Finally, the Acts of the Saints, the popular fiction of the time, generally represented the Jews as the chief villains.

But the actual incidents in which Jews and Christians were involved on opposite sides were relatively unimportant in the long run. The wounds of the sword are quickly healed and forgotten, but the wounds of the soul endure. In the dark ages of theology, the decisive role in the making of the popular mind was played by the sacred texts and their interpretation. The events of the New Testament were rehearsed time and again, and dramatized as if the whole travail of human destiny was contained in them. And in the divine comedy of the New Testament, the Jew was assigned the part of Satan. This diabolical caricature was destined to serve as the fixed stereotype of the Jew in the Christian world down to modern times.

The situation of the Jew in the Christian world would be paralleled by that of the Protestant minority in a Catholic country and that of a Catholic minority in a Protestant country, if the writings of the architects of the Reformation and the Counter Reformation were kept alive and employed as texts in the schools and the churches of their latter-day followers. For each group claimed to be "of God" and asserted that its opponents were "of their father, the devil."

No passage in the New Testament is as vicious toward the Jews as the writings of Luther and Calvin are toward the Pope and the Catholics. But these latter writings are now gathering dust in the basements of university libraries, while the poison-

drenched phrase, "the Synagogue of Satan," is included in the Holy Scriptures of the Western world.

Does this mean that antisemitism is an ineradicable disease of the Western mind? By no means, but it is an endemic disease, to be closely watched and guarded against. The meaning of a text is given in its interpretation. Certainly, the career of Jesus and his crucifixion can be so interpreted as to engender a deep appreciation of the Jewish heritage. Multitudes of Christians were raised in this latter spirit. Now that Christian educators have been alerted to the dangers posed by the antisemitic mentality, we might expect that they will make conscious efforts to prevent the monstrous dragon's teeth of Judeophobia from being sown by their very attempt to plant the good seeds of Divine love in the hearts of children.

CHAPTER TEN

DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM AND RECONSTRUCTION AT YAVNEH

The conquest of Palestine by the Romans under Pompey (63 B.C.) requires no special explanation. Though this conquest was made very easy for the Romans by the civil war between Hyrkanos and Aristobulus, and by the hatred of a substantial segment of the people for both brothers, we realize that, in one way or another, Palestine would have come under the military domination of Rome. But the progressive worsening of the relations between the Jews and the Roman power in the 130 years from Pompey to the year 70 C.E., when the Great Revolt was crushed, needs to be explained.

Under Julius Caesar (died 44 B.C.) the Jews were confirmed in all their privileges throughout the Empire, and for days Jews mourned at the grave of that celebrated conqueror and statesman.¹ Yet, despite the fact that these privileges were never completely revoked, in the year 70 C.E. the land of Judea lay in ruins, with hundreds of thousands of Jewish captives glutting the slave markets of the Mediterranean world. Furthermore, as we said earlier, all the Jews of the Roman Empire were made to pay a special tax following the destruction of the Temple, on the theory that their previous donations to their own religious center at Jerusalem should be diverted to the service of Rome. In this manner, the Jews were singled out from the rest of the citizenry of the Roman Empire and made collectively responsible for the rebellious acts of their brethren in Judea. The manner in which this *fiscus Judaicus* was enforced under the Emperor Domitian (81-96 C.E.) was extremely offensive. The Emperor Nerva (96-98 C.E.) removed some of the odium attaching to this levy, but in some attenuated form, it was probably continued down to the time of Emperor Julian (361 C.E.). The de-

terioration of the Jewish position in the Roman Empire was virtually steady and continuous.

Under Tiberius (14-37 c.e.), Jews were expelled from the city of Rome on account of "noise," probably a protest demonstration of some sort. Under Gaius Caligula (37-42 c.e.), a tense crisis was reached when the Emperor ordered the Roman governor of Syria to put his statue in the Holy Temple of Jerusalem. Luckily, this crisis was averted by the opportune assassination of the megalomaniac Emperor. Under Claudius (41-54 c.e.), the Jews of Alexandria were reinstated in most of their rights, but they were warned not to make of themselves "a plague upon the whole world."² There is also extant one report of an expulsion of Jews from Rome in the days of Claudius, on account of the conversion of a senator's wife to Judaism. At the same time, this Emperor, writing only a few years before the Great Revolt, confirmed the rights of Jews in the entire Empire. "I consider it right that the Jews who dwell in the entire Roman Empire should observe the customs of their fathers without restraint . . ."³ Under Nero, the search of the Emperor for a popular scapegoat, to divert the anger of the people from himself, resulted in the crucifixion and public burning of the Christians, at that time still widely regarded as a Jewish sect. Someone at the court deflected the malice of the Emperor from Jewry as a whole to a Jewish sect. Under Nero, too, the rapacity of the Roman procurators in Jerusalem and the arrogance of the Greeks in Caesarea so exasperated the Jews of Palestine that they plunged with suicidal fury toward the abyss of destruction. Under Vespasian and Titus, the holocaust of devastation ran its bloody course, and the Jews of the Roman Empire reached the brink of total annihilation.

Yet, during this period, the position of the provinces in the Roman Empire improved steadily. While in the days of the Republic all conquered territories were regarded as the collective property of the people of Rome, the privilege of Roman citizenship was steadily enlarged so as to embrace first the Italian cities and later the entire Italo-Hellenic world. Similarly, in the Hellenistic period, the concept of Hellene had come to embrace those who shared the culture and language of the Greeks. In the first century, the non-Hellenes in Egypt and the non-Romans in

the provinces were subject to special taxes and to some personal indignities. Thus, the native Egyptians had to pay a special poll-tax, and they were subject to the degrading penalty of public flogging, while the Hellenes in that country were free from these liabilities. Many Jews throughout the Empire enjoyed the status of Roman citizens. Gradually, however, the privileges of Roman citizenship were extended to wider circles, and under the Emperor Caracala (211-217 C.E.), all the inhabitants of the Empire were declared to be citizens of Rome. What then was it that led the Jews to drift toward an ever more isolated and precarious position, even as the rest of the population was moving toward a cordial acceptance, even welcome, of Roman rule?

We know that following the horrible debacle of 70 C.E., the native Jewish population of Judea rebelled again in the year 131 C.E., while the widely acclaimed Emperor Hadrian was governing the empire. The disaster of 131-135 C.E. rivaled the earlier calamity in the horror and desolation that it brought for the Jews in Palestine and throughout the Diaspora. Naturally, there were proximate causes in each rebellion, but it was easy enough to recognize that the Jews were seized by a massive undertow which pulled them irresistibly toward destruction. And it is this undertow of popular frenzy and uncontrollable desperation that we have to confront and comprehend.

In the Babylonian Talmud (200-500 C.E.), the slogan of the Zealots, "No Lord but God," was already either unknown or uncomprehended. On the contrary, the Babylonian Talmud lays down the principle, "*Dina demalchuta dina*,"⁴ the law of the government is law. It regards tax-collectors not as robbers, but as lawful employees of a legitimate government, providing they collect no more than the law enjoins, and it prohibits any attempt to evade taxes.⁵ In the Palestinian Talmud, we do not find any such acceptance of the rule of the imperial authority. In both Talmuds, the Zealots are stigmatized as "bandits," but no effort is made to understand how the country came to be taken over by so-called "bandits."⁶ What was it in the heritage of the Jewish people that caused these desperate bands of Zealots to attain power in the beleaguered city of Jerusalem at the time of the Great Revolt? This question is nowhere faced directly. The habit of referring both blessings and disasters to the direct intervention of Providence offered a ready answer for all misfor-

tunes. Why concern oneself with the facts of history, when the answer is known beforehand? Sufficient for an understanding of the great tragedy is an apt verse from Scriptures: "Why is the land lost? Because they forsook My Torah."⁷

Yet the Babylonian Talmud offers indirect explanations to account for the catastrophes of the Great Revolt and the Bar Kochba rebellion. Seemingly irrelevant stories metaphorically express the idea that Jerusalem was destroyed because of the following factors: factionalism or causeless hatred, a jealous insistence on the letter of the law, and a series of misunderstandings between the Jews and the Roman government. These factors can easily be discerned in all the accounts we have of the Great Revolt. But they are the surface manifestations of a deeper malaise. Why was Jewish society so woefully fragmentized on the eve of its tragic death? Why did not the leading rabbis possess sufficient acumen at a crucial moment to transcend the letter of the law? Why were there so many failures of communication between Jews and Romans?

The rabbis of the Talmud did not feel the need to deal with these fundamental questions, because the basic answer was given for them in the belief that God destroyed the Temple for His own reasons. The Romans and the Zealots, the Sikarii (knife-wielding patrioteers), and the Greeks, were only instruments, chosen by God for the chastisement of His people and the demolition of His "House." We are told that the Emperor Nero shot arrows in all directions to divine the Will of God, and all the arrows miraculously pointed toward Jerusalem.⁸ In the same spirit, the book *Yosippon*, which is a late homiletic recasting of Josephus' *Wars of the Jews*, presents Titus as a saintly general, who did not want to burn the Temple. The terrible avalanche of disasters was planned and directed by God Himself. God set out to punish Israel; this was the decisive event — the diverse roles of all earthly powers in the execution of God's plan did not really matter. Thus, too, following the Babylonian conquest, the Book of Lamentations attributes the desolation of the city to no earthly enemy, but to God above. Israel's fate is solely in God's hands.

The insulation of the Jewish mentality from the melancholy facts of actual history helped to fortify Jewish morale, but it also served to make the Jew oblivious to the actual play of forces

in his environment. There was no inducement to understand or even to see "the nations," in all their actual complexity. In the center of the lighted stage, the people of Israel stood alone. It was for them that the world was created, and the laws of heaven and earth were fixed. The rest of humanity was only so much background, for the fulfillment of Israel's vocation. The "nations" were there, to reward Israel or to punish it; but it was God alone who determined the fate of Israel. "And it was on account of our sins that we were exiled from our land."⁹

Josephus describes the *Wars of the Jews* in great detail, but he too arrives ultimately at the same conclusion. It was the Will of God to destroy His "House"; hence the madness of the Zealots and the incredible folly of Jewish leaders. At crucial moments, God intervened to prevent the sober counsels of wisdom from prevailing. Thus he writes:

"These men, therefore, trampled upon all the laws of men and laughed at the laws of God; as for the oracles of the prophets, they ridiculed them as the tricks of jugglers; yet, did these prophets foretell many things concerning the rewards of virtue and the punishments of vice, which when these Zealots violated, they occasioned the fulfilling of those very prophecies belonging to their own country; for there was a certain ancient oracle of those men, that the city should then be taken and the sanctuary burnt by right of war, when a sedition should invade the Jews, and their own hand should pollute the temple of God. Now while these zealots did not disbelieve these predictions, they made themselves the instruments of their accomplishment."¹⁰

With all his realism, Josephus tells of many signs and portents which indicated plainly that it was the Will of God to destroy the Temple. The priests on Pentecost heard the angels call unto one another, "Let us remove hence."¹¹ The ultimate cause of Israel's catastrophe was thus the Will of God.

When we turn to the accounts of modern Jewish historians, we encounter again the same three factors mentioned in the Talmud — misunderstanding, factionalism, zealotry. But the modern historians are apt to substitute the malice of the Romans for the wrath of God, as the ultimate cause.

Klausner stresses the factor of misunderstanding. "The Romans did not understand the Jews, and the Jews did not understand the Romans." To the Romans, it seemed altogether right and prop-

er to take the public money kept in the treasury of the Temple for the purpose of bringing fresh water into the city of Jerusalem. They could not see any offense in the parading of the legions with their banners.

Klausner also mentions the messianic visions which, according to Josephus, inflamed the hopes of the Jews. But he postulates a deliberate and sinister design on the part of the Romans to destroy Jerusalem utterly, as they destroyed the city of Carthage, because it was the "metropolis" of the Jews in the entire world. He assumes that Florus, the Roman governor in Jerusalem, was aware of this secret design, though Varus, his superior and governor of the entire Syrian region, was not.¹²

Klausner's theory is not supported by other historians. Individual Romans may have thought of Jerusalem as a kind of spiritual Carthage, but there is no evidence of any such deliberate policy among the governing circles of Rome.

Dubnow asserts that "the war was bound to come." For it was the policy of Rome, as Virgil put it, "to govern nations, to treat mercifully those who submit and to punish with weapons those who are proud."¹³

"The Jewish people belonged to the 'proud,' who battled for their freedom; therefore, they were punished most severely."¹⁴ The delicacy of the Jews in regard to their national being angered the Romans. Why be so very careful in regard to this small and stubborn people with its autonomy and its strange institutions? Why not treat Judea as any other Roman province, which makes no demands on the imperial government? Woe to the conquered! They must accept their fate in silence. The Romans could not understand this stubbornness of a nation which set up its principle, 'the force of the right' against the principle of the rapacious empire, 'the right of force.'"¹⁵

In these quotations, we recognize that Dubnow neatly skirted the real problem. He points out that the Jews were a "proud" people. But he forgets that the Greeks, the Egyptians, and the Gauls were also proud. They rebelled, too, when the opportunity arose, but in time they accepted the Roman yoke as inescapable. And he overlooks the fact that the proud Jews invited Rome on several occasions to take over the direct rule of the country. Evidently, their pride was not of the secular-political variety. The question is, why were the Jews more proud than others? Unconsciously, Dubnow identifies the religious separatism of the Jews with a sense of delicacy in regard to "their na-

tional being," as if the ancient Jews were secular nationalists of the nineteenth century, eager to protect the "purity" of their national culture. Finally, Dubnow seeks the core of the Jewish resistance to Rome in an ethical principle, "the force of right," as if the Zealots and Sikarii were moved by abstract moral principles in their battle against Rome. To oppose the "might of right" to the "right of might" is to think in modern terms, on the assumption that ethics is independent of religion. Both Klausner and Dubnow were more eager to forge bonds of kinship between the ancient Zealots and modern, secular nationalistic Jews, than they were to understand the inner impetus of Jewish life.

Graetz came closer to the understanding of the Jewish tragedy than the secular historians of the twentieth century!

The root of this sickness is not to be found in the wicked men who happened to be the bearers of authority in Judea, but in the tyrannical policy which the Roman legislators assumed toward the Jewish people, seeking to humble and humiliate it. This hatred was furthermore the consequence of the great gulf between the two nations who were so far removed from one another in sentiments and ideals. Even if the Roman procurators had been good and righteous men, eager to administer the affairs of the country in equity and mercy, they could not have prevented their soldiers from insulting inadvertently the feelings of the people, who resented the slightest offense against the customs and institutions of their religion.¹⁶

Graetz senses that the "tyrannical policy" of the Romans does not in itself explain the tragic conflict. The Romans regarded Judaism as a legal religion and extended their protection to it in the entire Mediterranean world. The real culprit was the "great gulf" between the Jews and Romans — a gulf that resulted in hate and misunderstanding. But he fails to take account of the fact that this great gulf had not always appeared so forbidding. The early Maccabeans, intensely proud of their race and zealous for their faith, found it advisable to address the Spartan people as their brothers, "children of Abraham," and to seek the protection of Rome. Some of the Roman emperors got along splendidly with the Jews in their dominions. The deepening of the Roman-Jewish gulf from Pompey to Vespasian is precisely the phenomenon we have to understand.

Professor Salo Baron was impressed with the fact that in the

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Diaspora, the Gentile-Jewish "gulf" existed between the Jews and their neighbors, not between the Jews and Roman authority; on the contrary, Rome was nearly always a protecting arm for the Jews. In Judea, on the other hand, Greco-Jewish rivalries quickly degenerated into rebellions against Rome. And this anti-Roman fury of Palestinian Jewry ultimately drew the entire Diaspora into its vortex of destruction.

Waves of hatred radiated from the Palestinian center, waves of hate against Rome spread by Zealots, waves of hate against Jews spread by Greeks and Romans. Ultimately, the Jews of the far-flung Mediterranean basin were decimated and nearly annihilated by these concentric waves. With an almost typically American predilection for the seeking of salvation through organization, Baron attributes the Great Revolt and its tragic aftermath to the failure of Diaspora Jews to restrain the hotheads of "the Palestinian Center," by the authority of a world-wide Jewish organization.

By delegating all responsibility for world Jewish affairs to the Palestinian leaders, and taking care only of their regional or local struggles, the communities in Egypt, Syria and other lands became largely passive bystanders in the great drama of Jewish history which unfolded in the later Maccabean and Herodian age. This political stupor, though temporarily advancing Palestine's centralized controls, ultimately paralyzed the home of despised Jewry when the great hour of decision struck for both groups.¹⁷

Professor Baron touches here upon the strange paradox in the global situation of the Jewish people. While all Jewish people in the Roman Empire suffered for the sins of the Palestinian segment, the interests of the different Jewish communities differed widely. The Jews in the Diaspora needed to cultivate the good will of the Romans, while the Jews of Palestine drifted steadily toward rebellion against Rome. Since the Jews of Palestine constituted the central core of the Jewish world, Jerusalem being regarded by both Jews and Gentiles as the metropolis of all Jews, the suicidal policy of the Palestinian community ultimately led to the virtual annihilation of the Jews in Egypt, Cyrenaica, Cyprus, and Syria. If the Jews of the Diaspora had controlled the destiny of world Jewry, the whole aspect of our history would have been different.

But a democratic world organization of the Jewish people was

totally unthinkable to the Jews of the Roman world. Such an organization presupposed concepts and sentiments altogether foreign to ancient Jewry. Needless to say, the Jews of the Diaspora did not "delegate responsibility" to the Palestinian center by any deliberate or overt act. Furthermore, the Jews in the Diaspora were divided in their sentiments between the pro-Roman "elders" and the rebellious masses. The Zealots were far less powerful in the Diaspora than they were in Palestine. It is true that the organized power of Diaspora Jewry might have prevented the disastrous slide of Judea toward the abyss of destruction. But the centripetal forces and the insular sentiments that such an organization would have generated were far more likely to subordinate the periphery to the center than the center to the periphery.

We seek to grasp the import of Jewish history by studying the inner life of the Jews. The limited measure of freedom that they possessed to guide their own destiny was inherent in their capacity to reflect on the sentiments and ideas within their own hearts and minds. To be sure, the mind is almost as unfree as any material phenomenon. By the time people attain maturity, their minds have been molded by a tradition emanating from the past. They are free only to the extent to which the objective orientation is free to assert itself in their life. For as the pendulum of the spirit swings toward the pole of rationality and humanity, man is enabled to see the world as it is, to examine his own heritage and character impartially and critically, and to see his own people as others view them. The ethical-rational approach is the fruit of objectivity, and freedom is of the essence of both reason and ethics.

We have noted in the preceding chapters how the objective orientation produced that mighty creative surge within the soul of the Jew, which resulted in the philosophy and program of ethical monotheism. In the life of a community, spiritual tension is articulated in social divisions and dichotomies. Certain social classes come to assume leadership for either the subjective, or the objective trends, or for an equitable balance between them. Under the pressure of an overwhelming, outside force, the mediating elements are likely to be weakened and the two extreme camps come to grips with one another. As a result, the tension is broken; the extremists of universalism are sucked into the

whirlpool of the general society; the extremists of subjectivity are driven by their own logic to become steadily more isolationist, more insulated from the climate of opinion prevailing among their neighbors, more incapable of communicating with their own contemporaries. They become the victims of the blind forces inherent in their position within the stream of history. This is precisely the course of development from the end of Judean independence under Pompey to the end of the Judean Kingdom under Vespasian.

Pharisaism contained a powerful trend toward liberal theism, since it inherited the rational-ethical impetus of the prophets. In the Mishnah, where the tradition of Pharisaism is enshrined, angels and demons, miracles and superstitions, are almost totally eliminated, though these folk-creations abound in Midrash and Talmud.

The political philosophy of Pharisaism called for "government by Torah-Scholars." A judge or an administrator, who is not "worthy" by the standards of Pharisaic Law, is like an idol in the Temple. Except on an emergency basis, there is no law other than that of God and the interpretation of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin, ideally consisting of Torah-scholars, is also privileged to enact emergency regulations. Neither the King nor the High-priest could declare war without the endorsement of the Sanhedrin. In their imaginative recasting of Jewish history, the Pharisees taught that the Kings and heroes of the Biblical period were also great scholars. King Saul and King David were in dispute regarding a nice legal point. Ahitofel, Joab, and Benayah ben Yehoyoda were all scholars, mighty in the complex dialectics of Torah. And the Messiah in "time to come" will also be a great Torah-scholar.

The ideal of government by Torah-scholars corresponded to the ideal of the Platonists and the Pythagoreans — rule by the philosophers. In their war against the Hasmonean King, Alexander Yannai, the Pharisees probably aimed at the establishment of such a government. After their tragic failure, they continued to foster this aristocratic ideal within their academies, limiting their rule to matters of personal conduct. Again and again, they proved their willingness to accept the domination of a foreign government, providing they were allowed "to live in accord with the laws of their fathers."

Under the pressure of events, however, the mild philosophy of Pharisaism gradually disintegrated. Herod and his successors leaned so brazenly toward the fleshpots of assimilation that the people reacted by retreating ever more decisively toward the dream-world of the past, nurturing the embers of hate toward their non-Jewish oppressors. Herod's elimination of an independent Sanhedrin undercut the power and authority of the Pharisaic scholars, who were the intellectual and spiritual leaders of the people. As the grip of Rome on Judean affairs tightened, the power of the mediating group was weakened. Gradually, the Sages lost control of the people, who turned to extremists for leadership. Shamaites prevailed over Hillelites, militants over moderates, pseudo-messianists over "peace lovers."

The harsh temper of the population was certain to explode in actions, large and small, which provoked an even greater reaction from the surrounding non-Jewish world. Popular militancy, once set in motion, feeds upon the incidents it generates, gathering momentum as it cascades down to the abyss. It soon finds leaders, who "think with their blood," and sets into motion an irreversible chain of events. In the generation of the Great Revolt, some of the Zealot leaders reflected the desperate mood of the disinherited "who have nothing to lose but their chains." At least one leader (Mcnahem) appealed to the mystical undertones of messianism.¹⁸ The story of the Great Revolt is the sad tale of a runaway popular revolution. While the aristocrats and the well-to-do sought to keep the peace, or, if that became impossible, to conduct the rebellion with moderation, so as to be able to achieve a negotiated peace, the masses repudiated this course. As we read of the assassination of Hanan ben Hanan, of the burning of the granaries in Jerusalem, of the civil wars raging in the midst of the besieged, doomed city, we cannot but recognize the Great Revolt as a paradigm of a Jacobin revolution that has run-amok — a popular convulsion bereft of trained and realistic leaders. The Great Revolt was not a sudden catastrophe, precipitated by one or more acts of the vicious Roman governor, Florus. It was the climax of two civil wars, a war between Jews and Gentiles, followed by a war between Jewish classes.

The Civil War between Jews and Greeks in Palestine and Syria is all the more remarkable in that it coincided with the

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emergence of a large group of semi-converts in the teeming cities of the Eastern Mediterranean. We have noted previously the peculiar conjunction of admiration for Judaism and hatred for the Jewish people. The massive wall of hate between the Jews and their neighbors rose steadily in the decades preceding the Great Revolt, culminating in a regular war. On the very same day, when the Zealots massacred the Roman garrison, after promising them free passage (August 6th, 66 C.E.), the Greeks in Caesarea murdered the Jews in their city. This is how Josephus describes the state of affairs in Syria on the eve of the Great Revolt:

"However, the Syrians were even with the Jews in the multitude of men whom they slew; for they killed those whom they caught in their cities, and that not only out of the hatred they bore them, as formerly, but to prevent the danger under which they were from them, so that the disorders in all Syria were terrible, and every city was divided into two armies, encamped one against the other, and the preservation of the one party was in the destruction of the other; so the day time was spent in the shedding of blood and the night in fear, which was of the two the more terrible for when the Syrians thought they had ruined the Jews, they had the Judaizers also in suspicion."¹⁹

Was the implacable hatred of the Greeks and Syrians in the Near East toward the Jews a "normal" phenomenon? In all societies, foreigners are welcomed when they can help the prosperity of the native population and repudiated in times of economic strain and stress. Jews competed against Greeks and Syrians throughout the Mediterranean world. It was, therefore, "normal" for them to be embroiled in a perpetual struggle against their competitors. Yet this explanation fails to account for the persistent, ruthless, and total war that developed between the Jews and their neighbors. Josephus tells us that in one Syrian city, Arameans and Greeks were struggling against one another for political supremacy. A group of Jewish refugees from Babylonia came to the city. Because they too spoke Aramaic, the Jews tipped the scale against the Greeks. One would expect that the two Aramaic-speaking peoples would join forces and acknowledge their kinship in opposition to the non-Aramaic Hellenes. As a matter of fact, however, the Greeks and the Syrians combined to attack the Jews, annihilating them.²⁰

This incident is an illustration of the *plus* of hate directed

against the Jews. To the "normal" rivalries and jealousies between ethnic and linguistic groups, there was added, in the Jewish case, a massive defiance of the religious feelings of the Gentiles. The religious barrier was raised progressively higher, as the piety of the masses became steadily more isolationist and more ritualistic. And to these two causes, we have to add the frenzied growth of the messianic myth, which made the Jews feel that they were about to "inherit" the world.

"But what most encouraged them to undertake this war was an ambiguous oracle that was found in their sacred writings, how about that time, one from their society should become governor of the habitable earth."²¹

In sum, ritualism, ethnicism, and messianism grew apace, as the delicate balance of Pharisaism was upset and the subjective mood became dominant. And of these three manifestations of religious ethnocentrism, the rise of a non-rational, non-universal, militant messianism was the most fateful development. As the mystical-ethical messianism of Christianity led masses of Diaspora Jewry out of the Jewish community, so the militant messianism of the Zealots led to the devastation of Judea, the decimation of its inhabitants, and the degradation of the Jews in the entire Roman Empire.

The great historian, Mommsen, sums up the reasons for the Great Revolt in one sentence:

The war was thus not one between two powers for dominance nor essentially a war of the oppressed against the oppressors for the gaining of freedom; not desperate statesmen, but fanatical peasants have begun it, waged it and paid for it with their blood.²²

This summary is of course one-sided, since it leaves out of consideration all the ancillary factors in the situation, the rapacity of the Romans, the rivalry of the Greeks, the noble heritage of the Jewish people, which made them too proud and too heroic to acquiesce in a state of humiliation, but it correctly points to the main factor—the breakdown of rational leadership.

The mentality of militant messianism is easily mistaken by moderns for the love of freedom characteristic of a nationalist movement in our day. The slogan of the Zealots, "No Lord but God," seems to accord well with the rhetorical flourishes of Independence Day orators; such as, "Obedience to tyrants is re-

bellion against God," or "Give me liberty, or give me death." In this view, the basic motivation of the entire series of Jewish rebellions in Palestine and in the Diaspora was simply the love of liberty. And the reason for the fact that Jews rebelled more frequently than other oppressed groups in the Roman Empire was the fact that Jews, as deeply religious people, hated tyranny with all the fire of their souls and loved freedom with singular devotion.

Such a naive interpretation of the past ignores the basic known facts. The religious leaders of the people opposed the rebellion of 66 C.E. and of 131 C.E. While Rabban Shimeon ben Gamaliel and his colleagues of the Sanhedrin did cooperate with the rebels for a time, they did not favor the launching of the rebellion; as a matter of fact, the rebellion was made possible by the progressive deterioration of the religious leadership of the Jewish community. It was the misrule of a succession of venal High-priests which led the masses of the people to compose the bitter satire, recorded in the Talmud—"Woe is me, from the house of Boethos, who are high priests themselves, their children treasurers, their sons-in-law administrators, and their servants beat the people with sticks."²³

The fateful progress of the rebellion was marked by the elimination of both priestly and rabbinic leadership. The rabbis of that and every other generation did not hesitate to render unto every Caesar that in which Caesars are interested. Then, too, the Jewish rebellions did not attract the help of any of their Gentile neighbors, who in political and economic matters, were as sorely oppressed as the Jews. The rebellion was triggered by the civil war between Jews and Greco-Syrians. The Romans had no difficulty in obtaining the help of all the pagans and of many Jewish contingents in their campaign against the entrenched Zealots in Jerusalem.

The strange feature of the Jewish rebellions was their total irrationality. The Jewish leaders did not calculate their chances of success in military figures, but in terms of their interpretations of the Divine Will. When Jerusalem was besieged and resistance seemed hopeless, the defenders retorted to Titus's appeal to surrender as follows:

That yet this Temple would be preserved by Him who dwelt therein, whom they still had for their assistant in this war, and did

therefore laugh at all his [Titus] threatenings, which would come to nothing, because the conclusion of the whole depended upon God only.

Trust in the rightness of Divine Providence enters of course into the calculation of all religious people, but the weight of this factor is used only to tip the scales when the probabilities of success and failure are more or less evenly balanced. The Zealots and Sikarii had no earthly basis for their belief in victory, especially when they were forced back into the city and behind the walls of the Temple. From the beginning, they placed their hopes on Divine intervention. For surely God will not permit "His House" to be demolished.

The Zealot slogan "No Lord but God" was actually a popular version of the messianic vision. The Jews are God's own people, so their reasoning ran; since God's power is infinite, the Jews cannot lose in the ultimate contest. The primary sin is to exchange God's rule for the dominion of men. If God is the ultimate commander, then he who leads the battle for Him on earth is the Messiah, the chosen instrument of His triumph. The judges of the Bible, such as Jephtha, Gideon, Samson, were the prototypes of the military leaders in the Great Rebellion. Victory on the battlefield became the attestation of messianic status for the Zealots; hence, the many claimants for this dubious crown.

Josephus was keenly aware of Roman sensitivity to the menace of messianic movements; therefore, he eschewed the use of the term, Messiah, speaking instead of various "prophets." Describing the extremist rebels, who were called Sikarii, and who made it their business to assassinate all moderate leaders, he writes:

And now these impostors and deceivers persuaded the multitude to follow them into the wilderness, and pretended that they would exhibit manifest wonders and signs, that should be performed by the providence of God

Moreover, there came out of Egypt, about this time, to Jerusalem, one that said he was a prophet, and advised the multitudes of the common people to go along with him to the Mount of Olives, as it was called, which lay over against the city, and at the distance of five furlongs. He said, further, that he would show them there how at his command, the walls of Jerusalem would fall down²⁵

Menahem, son of Judah, son of Hezekiah, leader of the Sik-

arii rebels entered Jerusalem, "dressed as a King," expecting to be acclaimed as Messiah. He was killed by a competing group of Zealots, but his name came down in Jewish legendry as the expected name of the Messiah. Of Bar Kochba (whose real name is now known to have been Ben Kosiba), leader of the rebellion of 131-135 C.E., we know that Rabbi Aqiba acknowledged him to be the Messiah. And the leader of the terrible war of the Jews against the Greeks in Cyrenaica in the years 111-113 C.E. was doubtless also acclaimed as Messiah by his followers.²⁸

In the popular mind, the vision of the Messiah became primarily that of the triumphant leader of the battle for independence, with the ideal and spiritual qualities of the messianic hope receding into the background. The polar tension in "the hope of Israel" between dedication to universal values and national self-exaltation was virtually shattered, in favor of total preoccupation with the earthly position of the Jewish people. The priestly and Pharisaic leaders proved unable to restrain and to guide their own people. And we behold a ferocious class war in Jerusalem, with the poor, the ignorant, and the slaves ranged against the upper classes of wealth and learning. Simon ben Giora gathers an army of escaped Jewish slaves; the Sikarii burn the archives, where the records of financial transactions are kept; they assassinate all who are suspected of moderation; lynch law takes effect in the city, as all central authority breaks down.

The desperate resistance of the wealthy and educated classes to the militant zealotry of the masses in the Great Revolt was a reflection of the contrast between the relatively balanced and sober piety of the intellectual leaders of the people and the feverish, one-sided, self-exalting piety of the common people. This contrast was not drawn in terms of gradations in the love of people, love of freedom, or love of God. In respect of the ordinary and patriotic passions, the people are neither better nor worse than their leaders. But, in every age and clime, the masses are relatively deficient in the virtues deriving from sober reflection. The tension between collective egotism and the intellectual-universal values in every culture will always be articulated in a struggle, more or less intense, between the educated minority and the passion-driven masses. When the intellectual and aristocratic leaders fail to represent the objective point of view ef-

fectively and persuasively, the inherent impetus of the mass-mind is certain to drive with hypnotic desperation toward the abyss of social chaos and disaster.

Thus the breakdown of leadership was the decisive turning point that led to the catastrophe of total destruction.

The Herodians were too opportunistic and selfish to win the hearts of the people. When the chips were down, they were found fighting on the side of the Romans. Yet, they could, on occasion, appeal to the popular imagination. It is worthy of note that if Agrippus I had continued to rule, the Great Revolt might never have occurred. Agrippus II and Berenice were too feeble morally to stem the tide of popular frenzy. The Highpriests appointed by Agrippus II were resented by the people for their greed and rapacity. The rabbis of the Pharisaic party were not strong enough to take up the reins of leadership. Disavowing their intellectual, ritualistic and political leaders, the masses gave way to the desperation and frenzy of militant messianism.

Goaded by ruthless and cruel Roman administrators, the Jewish proletariat responded by increased pride in their own heritage, intensified conviction concerning their centrality in the Divine scheme of things, embittered scorn for the pagan world, its gods and its people. They retreated ever more decisively from any association in thought, feeling, or action with their Greco-Syrian-Egyptian neighbors and with their Roman overlords. The "laws of their ancestors," stressing the "impurity" of Gentile soil, Gentile products, Gentile persons, made the Jews appear not only different from their neighbors, but hostile to them. This appearance of hostility proved to be ruinous for the Jews. And once the avalanche of hate is launched and propelled by economic rivalry, the demon of mutual hostility tends to feed on its own children, like the mythological Cronos.

The Pharisaic rabbis succeeded in transmitting to their people an immense zeal for the Law, but not an understanding of its essential humanism. The boundless zeal of the *am haaretz*, the peasants of Judah, for the Law was demonstrated when, in order to prevent the placing of Caligula's image in the new Temple, they gathered en masse on the slopes of Mount Carmel, ready to be trampled to death by the legions of Petronius (40 c.E.). But this unparalleled devotion in the field of ritual did

not carry over into the ethical-rational domain. The same mass of simple pietists, who preferred death to the desecration of the Temple, practiced or condoned the ruthless terror of the Zealots, which Josephus describes in hair-raising language. The Jews who lived side by side with Syrians, Greeks, Phoenicians, and Egyptians did not convey to them any conception of the inherent humanity of rabbinic Judaism. This is the most damning demonstration of the failure of the rabbinic leadership and instruction. The one quotation from rabbinic lore that we encounter again and again in classical literature is the counsel to mislead the heathen and the heretics, "leading them into a well, but not out of it." Vile prejudice and empty ritual are embraced by the masses far more easily than high ethical ideals. As we noted previously, the Mishnah remarks that the priests of the Holy Temple resented ritual impurity far more than murder.²⁷ And this perverted concept of Judaism extended far beyond the priests to the masses of the people generally. The failure of leadership was demonstrated when the rabbis failed in their efforts to direct the course of events before and after the outbreak of the Great Revolt. The different parties among the rebels disregarded the Sanhedrin, and fell to fighting among themselves. It was necessary for Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai and his disciples to deceive the Zealot leaders by feigning death, so as to be carried outside the walls of the city and into the camp of the Romans.

Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai was allowed by the Emperor Vespasian to dwell in Yavneh, where the loyalist Jews were concentrated. There he laid the foundation for the enduring edifice of Judaism. In Yavneh, the Pharisaic rabbis were able to establish at last that "government of the Sages," which they had attempted unsuccessfully to launch several times previously. Without the Temple, the Sadducees and the priests had no function; the Herodians had gone over to the enemy; the Zealots had been crushed. Hence, the "vineyard of Yavneh" became an exclusively Pharisaic institution. It offered a visible substitute for the Temple hierarchy and a religious surrogate for political authority. Beginning the task of systematizing the tradition, it set up a self-contained enclave, bounded by invisible ghetto walls, a government within a government, making it possible for the

people to preserve their inner freedom amidst outer subjection. Freed from the competition of the priesthood and the Temple, the Sanhedrin at Yavneh projected the democratic principle of Torah-learning as the sole basis of authority. After some hesitation, the gates of the Academy were thrown wide open to all who wanted to learn. The crown of government was in the dust, the crown of priesthood was broken up, but the crown of Torah was the brightest of them all, and it was offered to all comers.

To soften the antagonism of the masses to the dominion of the Sages, the rabbis of Yavneh sought to humble the pride of the scholars and to exalt the worth of labor.

The rabbis of Yavneh were accustomed to say — "I am a creature and he is a creature. My work is in the city, his is in the field. I rise early for my work, he rises early for his work. As he does not aspire to my work, I do not aspire to his work. Will you then say that I do much and he does little? No, for we have learned, Whether one does much or little, what matters is that one should direct his heart toward heaven."²⁸

To fill the void in the religious life of the people, they formalized and fixed the forms of prayer and the rituals of the diverse holidays. They made it possible for converts to be admitted, though they could not bring an offering into the Temple. They allowed the gradual lapsing of those ritual purity laws, which during the Second Commonwealth interposed so hateful a barrier between the rabbis and the people, and between Jews and their neighbors. Yet, somehow those purity laws lingered on, especially in Palestine, to be revived by the Qaraites in the eighth century.

The rabbis in Yavneh attempted to cool the messianic ardor of the people. Their assumption of the authority to ordain rabbis and to establish courts throughout the land helped to exert some control over the turbulent passions and myths of the populace. The Yavneh Torah-scholars took over from the Highpriesthood the custom of sending official messengers to the Diaspora. Apparently, the rabbinic courts exerted considerable power in Palestine. At various times, they even condemned violators of religious laws to death. The canonization of the Holy Scriptures and the concomitant interdiction of the Apocryphal and the Pseudoepigraphical works was doubtless motivated at least in part by the desire to suppress the messianic prophecies in them. In official

literature, miracle-mongering is toned down and the preoccupation of the populace with demons and with angels is rigidly discountenanced. In the Mishnah, angels are hardly mentioned, and allusions to the hope of the Messiah are rare and restrained.

It may well be doubted whether the Sanhedrin at Yavneh could have won the people to the acceptance of their authority if they did not have the help of "a scion from the house of David." The dynasty of Hillel, which claimed descent from David, symbolized to the people the triumph of the past and the messianic glory of the future. In Palestine, in Babylonia, in Egypt, and in Spain, for many centuries, those who claimed descent from the house of David were accorded the right to govern the Jewish community. With profound reverence for popular feeling, the Sanhedrin harked back to the powerful symbol of Israel's hope for the future. In the same spirit, they nourished the belief in the restoration of the Temple and the sacrifices. They insisted on the continuance of voluntary "gifts to the priesthood," and on the observance by the priesthood of the laws of purity. "Soon the Temple will be built,"²⁹ and the priests must be ever ready to officiate.

Tragic and painful was the rift between Jews and Christians that now developed. Before 70 C.E., the Highpriests persecuted the Hebrew Christians, while the Pharisees held aloof and even defended the Apostles. Rabban Gamaliel interceded in behalf of Peter and John.³⁰ The Pharisees protested when the Highpriest Hanan ben Hanan caused James, "the brother of Jesus," to be tried and executed.³¹ Following the destruction of the Temple, the hostility between the two branches of the ancient faith grew apace. For its part, the Sanhedrin at Yavneh instituted "the curse of the heretics," as a means of driving the Christians out of the Synagogue. Ancient versions of the Eighteen Benedictions, which were found in the Cairo Genizah, leave no doubt that the "curse" was directed at the Christians, particularly the Jewish Christians.³² In their turn, the Christians instituted an "anathema" against the Jews to be recited by Jewish converts.

It is not possible to determine whether the "curse of heresy" was directed only at Jewish Christian groups of which several sects persisted well into the fourth century. In any case, the rivalry in Palestine between Jews and Christians of all kinds was

long and bitter. It is reasonable to suppose that many of the heresies which arose in the Eastern Roman world and which inclined toward strict monotheism were impelled by the influence of Judaism. On occasion, this rivalry became a bloody contest.³³

In sum, we may regard the Academy of Yavneh as the institution which reestablished an equilibrium between the religious and ethnic polarities within Judaism. In regard to the priestly element, the rabbis set forth in detail the ritual pattern of the life of the Jews. At the same time, the rabbis articulated the prophetic emphasis in their maxims and in their insistence on the spiritual content of the rituals. Priestly prerogatives were preserved, but only in theory; in practice, the priesthood was reduced to a memory and a symbol. The sacrifices of the Holy Temple were rehearsed as abstractions, forming part of the unearthly dreams about the Messiah, the Temple in heaven, and the heavenly Jerusalem. The Academy of Yavneh was dominated by the ambition to preserve the traditions of the past. Patiently, the "testimonies" of the surviving scholars were collected and scrutinized. At the same time, the majority of the scholars imposed a ban upon Rabbi Eliezar ben Hyrkanos, the diehard reactionary, who resisted all innovations and who boasted of his lifelong conservative policy, "Never did I say aught which I did not receive from my teachers."³⁴ Above all, the embittered ethnicism of the people and their militant messianism were curbed by a sense of realism and by a high concept of God's concern for all men.

To be sure, the rabbis failed to prevent the suicidal wars of the Jews in Egypt, Cyrenaica, and Cyprus (111-113 C.E.) or the rebellion of Bar Kochba (131-135 C.E.). But they managed to establish an inner sanctuary, wherein the ideals and the values of Jewish life were nurtured for many generations.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

ANTISEMITISM IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

It may be of value to bring together all of our observations concerning the tragic wall of hate which surrounded the Jewish people from the time of their first dispersion. That formidable barrier of animosity, not unmingled with admiration and even awe, was unique in that an ideological dimension and several special motivations were added to the "normal" hates that divide mankind. Even before the rise of Christianity, anti-semitism had become an intellectualized hate, almost an ideology. Its bill of complaint ran about as follows: the most odious of all peoples; they hate all men and consider it sinful to do a favor to pagans; they scorn and insult the gods; they treat all non-Jews as "unclean"; they seek special exemptions for themselves from the laws to which all others are subject; they look forward to the ultimate subjection of the rest of mankind; they do not want to cultivate fraternal ties with any people, preferring to live in an isolated enclave of their own. These charges are essentially the arguments of the classical antisemites.

It is important to recognize that the ethnic-dogmatic currents within Judaism could indeed impress outsiders with this distorted picture of the Jewish faith. But this unlovely image is a distortion because ethnic-dogmatic extremism in thought and sentiment was generally counterbalanced within the stream of tradition by opposing trends. Antisemitism tended to "prove" itself by the defensive reactions that it provoked. In times of persecution and distress, the dark pathos of ethnic zeal and religious fanaticism tended to prevail, while the moral and rational components in Judaism would come to expression only in periods of relative calm. This inner tension within Judaism was generally articulated in a distinction between the feverish mentality of the zealous masses and the gentle wisdom of the Sages. Let us

see how the subjective phase of Judaism lent credence to the antisemitic charges:

1. *Scorn of gods.* Purely objective monotheism may be expected to take account of the impossibility of capturing the Infinitude of God's Being in any human concept; at the same time, Biblical religion took note of the indwelling light of God in the hearts of all men; it implied therefore that all ways of piety and goodness lead to God. In the prophet Malachi, this height of objectivity was reached. "For in every place incense is offered to My Name and the offering is pure. . ."¹ But Judaism as the living faith of a historical people was not a universal, theistic humanism, but a restless, dynamic balance between ethnic-dogmatic impulses and ethical-rational aspirations. The One God of Judaism is not merely an abstract, universal concept; He is a committed, covenanted Being, the "God of Israel," Who has chosen His people in the dim beginnings of history and has assigned a lower status to "the nations." The humanistic impetus of Judaism was articulated in the assumption of an underlying, universal religion, "the seven laws of Noah."² In its liberal interpretation, this doctrine did not prohibit the worship of many gods (*shittuf* or partnership), and did not consider idolatry to be sinful for non-Jews.³ It could therefore regard the cults and creeds of the Hellenistic world as legitimate attempts to worship the Supreme Being. At the same time, such "fearers of the Lord" could abandon their pagan rites, if they were so minded, cross the threshold into the Jewish community, and live "under the wings of the *Shechinah*." In this view, too, the "righteous of all nations have a share in the world to come."⁴ The exponents of this view might well scorn and ridicule those religious rites of antiquity which were in themselves crude and immoral, but they would not condemn the entire way of life of the Gentile world. As a matter of fact, not only such classical philosophers as Anaxagoras and Plato, but even Plutarch, the apologist for pagan mythology, condemned *some* pagan rites. This is recognized by the Jewish Sybilline Oracles. Thus the Septuagint translation of verse 22:27 in Exodus makes it a crime to curse the gods of other nations.

But in their self-centered, self-exalting mood, Jewish teachers saw matters differently. The "gods of the nations" were naught, their worship an abomination, their hope a delusion. Even the insignia of the Roman legions were a hateful abomination, and

to throw a fistful of incense on the altar of the "god of the city" was a capital offense.

Very instructive, in this connection, is the discussion between the ancient sage, Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai, and his disciples, concerning the meaning of the verse in Proverbs 14:34 — "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." The young and zealous rabbis interpreted the first part of this verse as referring to Israel, applying the second part to the "nations"; as if the verse read, "Righteousness exalts the one nation (Israel), but even the kindness of the nations is a sin for them" (because they do it in pride, or in order to strengthen their dominion). Their master rebukes them at last saying, "As the sin-offering (*hatoth*) was forgiveness for Israel, so is charity forgiveness for the nations of the world."⁶

Left to itself, Diaspora Jewry tended to be tolerant and liberal, as its apologetic literature attests. However, even in Alexandria and Rome, there was a continuous accretion of recent immigrants and newly liberated slaves, who disdained the assimilationism of aristocratic elders like Philo. Self-centered Jews did not indulge in debates, engage in missionary activity or seek to expand the community of the faithful. For them, converts were as "pernicious for the Jewish people as a plague."⁶ For they cause all Jews to be co-responsible for their possible misdeeds.

In Palestine the champions of insular piety considered it their obligation to fight against the slightest trace of idolatry. The Roman coins in Palestine did not bear the image of the Caesar. When the Hasmonean dynasty attained power, it compelled the conquered peoples, Edomites, Iturians, and others, to accept the Jewish faith or to emigrate. To the pietists, the land itself was holy, and "whoever dwells outside the Holy Land is like one who has no God."⁷

The concentrated ethnic zealotry of the Palestinian center was communicated to the masses of the people in the Diaspora with the successive waves of emigrants, captives, and slaves. The refugees from the successive struggles against Rome brought shock-waves of impassioned nationalism to the far-flung settlements of the Hellenistic Diaspora. The aristocratic elders of Egypt, Cyrenaica, Syria, and Cyprus could no longer control their own communities. The growth of nationalism in the Diaspora transformed the monotheistic God-idea itself into an offense and a challenge — as if the Jews claimed their God alone

was all in all! The climax was reached when the rebellious Egyptian and Cyrenaican Jews demolished the temples of the Egyptians and "roasted the venerated animals" on the altars of the gods in the riots and rebellions of 111-117 C.E. These civil wars and anti-Roman insurrections resulted in the decimation of the Greek-speaking Jewish Diaspora.

Thus one facet of Judaism lent plausibility to the antisemitic charge that the Jews scorned the gods of their neighbors.

The paradox of Jewish piety was the weakness of its strength. It was precisely the majestic concept of the One God that made the Jewish faith so terribly offensive, when it was dominated by ethnic pride and zealotry. So long as the theological argument was conducted on the level of ideas and on the assumption of an all-human equality, the impact of Jewish monotheism was immense; as soon as the argument was reduced to the subjective taunt of "*My God*" versus "*Your gods*," the non-Jews returned the taunt with limitless hatred, condemning the Jews as "godless" and "haters of mankind." Unfortunately, under the impact of the unfolding tragedy in the homeland, nationalist sentiments in Diaspora Jewry grew apace during the Roman era, undermining the leadership of the aristocratic, "pro-peace" parties and stimulating the revolutionary elements.

We need only remark that triumphant Christianity followed the same course of development as dogmatic Judaism. Paul in Athens identified the "altar to the unknown god" with the One God, but in later centuries, Christianity exemplified all the exclusionist zeal of the subjective wing in Judaism, condemning the gods of the nations as devils. Hence, the implacable hostility with which Christianity was received by many sectors of the population. There are indeed many parallels between the intermittent persecutions of the Christians by various Roman administrations and the rising tide of classical antisemitism. The same calumnies occur in both movements, including the notorious "blood-accusation." Yet, on the whole, the Christians managed to keep their message free of any nationalistic entanglements. Conveying their message as individuals, they could avoid giving offense, if it suited their purpose, speaking in the accents of a cosmopolitan society, and upholding the teaching of one tradition out of many in the Hellenic-Roman world. They could insist, as did Paul, that in Christ there was no distinction between Greek and Babylonian, Jew and Gentile. They did not

pride themselves on the inherited protective power of "the merit of their fathers," nor did they blame themselves for "the sins of the fathers." They could recommend to others the very gate by which they themselves had entered the community of the elect.

It is not as if Christianity and Judaism differed on the role of the Jewish nation in the scheme of salvation. Christian propaganda concurred in the Jewish slogan "salvation is from the Jews," but for the Christians, "the Jews" in this phrase belonged to the realm of the ideal, the "Israel of the spirit," not to empirical reality.

Ernest Renan attributed the genesis of antisemitism to the very nature of the belief in One God, Who is the Absolute.

It was the fatal consequence of the introduction of the Absolute in religion. The Christians later brought this evil to a climax, when after being numbered among the persecuted for three centuries, they became persecutors in their turn.⁸

From our analysis it appears that the concept of the Absolute in itself was not the source of the trouble. Hardly an antisemitic author complained about the ideas of God, the Moral Order, and the sanctity of the human soul as such. A pagan apologist like Plutarch accepted the belief in a Supreme Being. But it was the absolutization of the people and the exaltation of the ritual in the name of the One God that aroused the wrath of the Greco-Roman writers. The prophets and the philosophers set the Absolute above the people and above their wonted ways, emphasizing the worth of the rational-ethical and the universally human. But the sanctification of that which is one's own in blood or in tradition, as absolutely right and true, was a natural development of the progressive intensification of the subjective mood of piety.

2. *Exaltation of the Ritual and the People.* With the breakdown of the prophetic-philosophical temper under the impact of successive disasters, the union of the One God with the one people deepened the mood of withdrawal and self-segregation, intensifying the complex animus of antisemitism; at the same time, the unity of One God with only one valid ritual provided the incidents and occasions which triggered the anti-Jewish riots. The laws of the Sabbath and the numerous dietary regulations led the Roman rulers to exempt the Jews from military service. It

was impossible to grant the Jews equality without granting them special privileges, allowing them to live "in accordance with the laws of their ancestors." This exemption from forced military duty and from forced labor was certainly resented by the masses of the people, who suffered from these burdens. While the ancient Jews could make "deals" with rulers and potentates, they could not establish bonds of true friendship and fraternity with the people, their actual neighbors. The ancient world was familiar with exemptions granted to priests, but here was a whole nation, claiming similar privileges. Already, the author of *Targum Sheni*, an Aramaic commentary on the book of Esther, motivates the resentment of Haman's followers by the fact that the Jews claimed exemptions from forced labors on the grounds, "It is Sabbath today! It is Pesach today!" Naturally, the pagans attributed such institutions as the Sabbath, Shemittah (the land lying fallow every seventh year), and the Jubilee year to Jewish laziness.

It is sometimes said that the pagans objected to the excessive ritualism of the Jewish religion or to the national character of the Jewish rituals. These judgments fail to grasp the real nature of the problem. For the pageantry-loving peoples of the ancient world, ritualism was never excessive. And the converted Gentiles were more likely to abide by the dietary and "purity" laws than by the serene ethical-spiritual principles of Judaism. But they could not tolerate a ritual which relegated them to the realm of the unclean. In the domain of ritual, the pagans were offended by the suggestion that "they and theirs" were not considered good enough by their Jewish neighbors. They suspected that the real purpose of the regulations of diet and "purity" was to interpose an impassable barrier between them and the Jews. This purpose was certainly part of the complex of motivations that is embraced in these laws. We have noted that even so bold a champion of Hellenic-Jewish rapprochement as the author of the *Letter of Aristeas* asserts that the purpose of the dietary laws was to interpose an "iron curtain" between Jews and others. With the continuous growth of national zealotry throughout the Hellenistic period and with the increasing influence of the Palestinian center on Diaspora Jewry, these laws became more complex and more rigid. Wine and oil, milk and bread could be eaten only if prepared by Jews; the accidental touch

of a Gentile's hand and even a chance conversation with him was "defiling" (lest a drop of spittle fall on the interlocutor). While these laws were not necessarily observed by Diaspora Jewry, we may suppose that their impact was felt as doctrine, even if not as practice, whenever the influence of the Palestinian center was strong. The increase of national zealotry made both Jews and Gentiles feel that the dietary laws were not religious rituals so much as they were an expression of "sanctified egotism."

The Sages of the ancient world were not unaware of the devastating impact of these laws on the relations between Jews and Gentiles. Speaking of the tragic isolation of the Jewish people, the Midrash tells this parable:

It may be compared to a king who, upon marrying a lady, enjoined her not to converse with her neighbors, not to lend them anything and not to borrow from them. Sometime later, the king became angry at his wife and drove her out of his palace. In her trouble, she went to all her neighbors and pleaded to be admitted into their homes, but none of them would take her in. Sadly she returned to the palace. Said the king, "On account of your insolence, you have no friends at all." But the lady replied: "My Lord, if I had been allowed to borrow from my neighbors and lend to them some household goods, so that some of my things were in their houses and some of theirs were in mine, would they not have received me gladly?"

Even so, the Holy One, blessed be He, says to the people of Israel, "Your insolence has caused it all."

But the Israelites say, "Master of all the worlds, did you not write in your Torah, 'Thou shalt not make marriages with them, thy daughter thou shalt not give to their son, and his daughter thou shalt not take for thy son! If they had been in the habit of borrowing from us and lending to us and we had intermarried, so that their daughters were with us and our sons with them, would they not have received us? Indeed, it is Thou that hast caused it all!'"⁹

Coudenhove concludes his chapter on classical antisemitism with the same observation,

The history of ancient antisemitism teaches us that it rested completely on the ground of religion, nothing else.¹⁰

Religion was certainly the cause of antisemitism, but this religion functioned in a hate-provoking manner only when the fevered impetus of ethnic zealotries upset and distorted its inherent equilibrium. Under the impact of Palestinian ethnicism, which

was in turn provoked by Roman misrule, the offensiveness of the Law to other nations was greatly intensified. It appeared as if the Law were a translation in religious terms of the self-segregating ambition to dwell apart from the nations. When ethnic feelings were unruffled and calm, both Jews and Gentiles understood that in reality the relationship was reversed — it was the determination to preserve in behalf of all mankind that historic island of monotheism which was beset on all sides by the turbulent waves of the ocean of paganism that impelled the rabbis to hedge it about with diverse fences and barriers.

In the ceremony of *Havdalah*, marking the end of the Sabbath, the worshiper compares the separation of the Jew from the nations to the separation of the Sabbath from the days of the week, the separation of the holy from the secular and the separation of light from darkness.¹¹ At first glance, this formula appears to reflect sheer ethnic egotism. But upon reflection, the balancing consideration swims into our ken. For light is concentrated in order to illumine the darkness, the Sabbath and holidays are set aside in order to affect weekdays and the life of the marketplace. And just so, the separation of the Jew, rightly understood, is for the purpose of influencing the rest of mankind.

However, in difficult times, ethnic rivalries befouled the religious dialogue between Jew and pagan. The pagans took the Jewish attack against their gods to be a malicious assault against themselves. The Jews tended to regard the nobility of their task to be the measure of the greatness of their own collective being. As in similar disputes, the argument shifted from the ideas to the peoples behind the ideas.

Did the Law itself enjoin the Jews to be unfriendly to their pagan neighbors? Legends to this effect circulated in the ancient world. It is said that Jews must not help wandering strangers to find their way; that Jews are enjoined from doing any favor to pagans; that Jews are obligated to lead unwary pagans into a pit, and not help them get out of it.

These and similar statements represent partly garbled versions of maxims which are included in the literature of Talmud and Midrash. These hateful outbursts were doubtless formulated under the stress of ruthless civil wars between Jews and their neighbors. They are additional illustrations of the distorting impact of nationalistic fervor and fury upon the dynamic equilibrium

of Judaism. But they were balanced by opposing injunctions to feed the poor of the nations, to visit their sick, to bury their dead and, in general, to "multiply the arts of peace in the world." The peculiar circumstances of any one time and place are apt to be frozen into eternal maxims and endowed with the mystical aura of sanctity.

Nationalism is relatively inoffensive when contacts between different ethnic groups are reduced to the minimum. Such a situation existed in Babylonia where Jews were settled in large, contiguous mass-settlements on the land and in cities. There, the Jews enjoyed virtual autonomy and a large measure of geographic isolation. The Babylonian Talmud which emerged from the academics in that country forged the patterns of life and thought for the Jews the world over.

It is in the Talmud that Judaism reestablished in part an unstable and desultory equilibrium between the ethical-rational and the ethnic-dogmatic forces. This balance was sufficient to guide Jewish life for centuries, but only so long as the Jewish community was relatively isolated in a non-Jewish world, which possessed a minimum of secular life and objective values.

To what extent did the antisemitism of the Hellenic-Roman period endure in the Christian world and continue to envenom our own age?

Classical antisemitism did not enter directly into the stream of Christian tradition and culture. In Western Europe, there were three sources of law — Roman law, Canon law, and Germanic custom. In Roman law, the Jews were equal citizens, ever since the Emperor Caracalla extended the privileges of citizenship to all the free residents of the Roman Empire. The Jewish religion was protected by the law of the land against arbitrary exactions. Even when the Christian emperors forbade the conversion of pagans to Judaism, the holding of Christian slaves by Jews, and the building of new Synagogues, the essential legality of the Jewish faith remained. Theodosius observed quite properly, "It is established that there are no laws by which the sect of the Jews is forbidden to exist." However, this statement was not included in the Code of Justinian, nor was it incorporated in the "breviaries" of the laws of Theodosius that circulated in Medieval times.¹² Justinian himself intervened in an intra-Jewish dispute as to whether or not the Pentateuch should be read in Greek in

the Synagogue, and his famed general, Belisarius, compelled the members of one North African community to accept Judaism. In the Byzantine Empire, the observance of the Jewish faith was completely prohibited *four* times — each such decree being separated by roughly a century from its predecessor. These decrees, offering the Jews the choice between baptism and expulsion, were motivated by religious fanaticism, not secular antipathy. As the Catholic Church consolidated its hold on the Mediterranean world, the culture of pagan Rome and Greece, its vices and its virtues, was consigned to oblivion.

However, indirectly and by devious ways, the venom of anti-Jewish feeling was preserved in the books of the classical age. In nearly every age, there were scholars in Europe who studied the writings of the pagans as well as those of the Church Fathers. This was particularly true in the various periods of cultural renaissance which interrupted the dark night of the Medieval era. With the developing Italian Renaissance, the works of the pagan authors were cherished and widely admired for the human values they contained. The humanism of the Renaissance continued to be a focus of loyalty for the educated classes of Europe, along with the piety of either the Protestant or the Catholic churches. And this humanism contained the ancient virus of anti-Jewish feeling, as it was articulated by poetic satirists, like Juvenal, and biased historians, like Tacitus.

The modern secular world did not burst upon the horizon all at once, producing its ideals, its loves and its hates, out of its own circumstances and reflection. Slowly and insensibly, it emerged out of the soil of the past, transferring the impetus of ancient hates as well as ancient philosophies. The anti-clerical, humanist, or liberal trend in modern European culture drew its inspiration from the Greco-Roman culture, which contained considerable anti-Jewish animus. The European mind was characterized by the dynamic tension between objective humanism and the subjective loyalties of nationalism and religion. And all three foci of sentiment and value contained generous admixtures of the poison of antisemitism. The emergence of modern, secular, and even anti-religious brands of antisemitism was thus foreshadowed and nurtured by a long tradition in European letters.

CHAPTER TWELVE

TRENDS AND TENSIONS IN THE TALMUD

While the Talmud corresponds in the time of its composition and the scope of its contents to the Patristic writings of the Church, its role in the molding of Jewish character, thought, and ways of life is greater by far than this comparison would indicate. It was more than theology, more than law, more than "religious literature" of any kind. Deprived of other avenues of expression and concern, the Jewish people lavished their total devotion and intellectual acumen upon the intricate dialectics of the Talmud. To observe the Law was to submit to God, but to study it was to share actively in the creative dynamism of the Divine Spirit. Man relates himself to God in two ways, by self-submission and by self-assertion, or as a Talmudic legend puts it, as "a slave before the All-Present" or as "a prince before the All-Present." The Talmud evoked both types of religious devotion. In its study, the scholar fancied himself participating in a cosmic symposium, discussing issues that were debated in the heavenly Academies, and his earthly decisions were binding on the heavenly assemblies, to which he advanced after death. This active identification with the Divine elan was balanced by the spirit of total submission. The scholar was the loyal servant as well as a master of the revealed law.

The Talmud began to dominate the entire horizon of the Jewish people even before it was completed, for the Palestinian patriarch and the Babylonian exilarch maintained academies of Torah-scholars, where the dialectic of the Talmud was cultivated. Virtually the entire Jewish Diaspora helped to support these central institutions of Jewish life. The Jerusalem Talmud, which is relatively small, sketchy, and incomplete, was given its present form around the year 350 C.E., while the Babylonian Talmud was completed in the year 500 C.E. The progressive decline of

Palestinian Jewry liberated the Babylonian academies from their dependence on the authority of the Palestinian Patriarch and allowed them to give due recognition to the implications of their own situation. For several centuries before it attained spiritual independence, Babylonian Jewry was relatively free to follow the lead of its own genius, because the shifting boundaries of the Parthian or Persian Empire kept it out of the confines of the Roman Empire.

The Babylonian Talmud is so vastly superior to the Palestinian that a formidable case could be made for the proposition attributing the creative survival of the Jewish people to the mighty labors of the Babylonian scholars. By the intricacy and subtlety of its dialectic, the Babylonian Talmud challenged the keen minds of Jewish scholars. There was ample room within its winding, labyrinthine paths for eager and brilliant minds to wander for a lifetime. The Talmud is not a compendium of ready-made legal decisions; essentially, it is the record of legalistic and homiletic discussions at the Academies. By participating in this dialectic process, scholars could feel that they shared in the discussions of the heavenly academies; nay, in the reasoning of God Himself. Did not the Talmud assert that God repeats the words of the Sages in His daily lectures, saying, "Jonathan, my son, says this: Yoshia, my son, says that?"

The most dangerous crack in the armor of a minority religion is likely to be made by the restless chiseling of the scalpel of intellectual curiosity. It is the active and keen minds that venture forth from the shadowed cavern of Plato's parable to explore the outside world and to glory in the riches of an ever-widening horizon. Judaism was able to hold the vast majority of its keen minds because, in the Babylonian Talmud and in its commentaries, it provided ample scope for brilliant intellects to pursue the subtleties of legalistic logic and, on occasion, to glory in the excitement of discovering fresh casuistic novelties. Yet if the Roman Empire had included Babylonia within its system of rapid communication, it is hardly likely that an independent, virile center of studies would have developed in Babylonia. In all the countries of the Roman Empire, where the Palestinian patriarchate exercised its authority, there were no Torah-academies, save possibly in distant Rome, for a very brief period.¹

The growth of the Babylonian center was not achieved with-

out a struggle against the Palestinian authorities. When toward the middle of the second century, the Babylonian scholars desired to establish the yearly calendar, the Palestinians managed to prevent them.² Only when the Byzantine Emperor was about to close the Patriarchate, did Hillel the Second (died 365 c.e.) give up the monopoly on the calendar. To fix the calendar, setting the dates for the observances of the various fasts and festivals, is to assert the prerogative of religious leadership year in and year out. Since the Jewish calendar was both lunar and solar, considerable latitude was left for the discretion of the central authorities. The Palestinian Patriarchs kept the calendar a "secret," or a monopoly, insisting on the need to send moon-watchers to the summits of the Judean hills in order to announce the precise hour of the "birth" of the "new moon." As a rule, they followed the Hellenistic policy of intercalating seven lunar months in nineteen years, but so long as they could help it, they refused to freeze the calendar in any fixed form and to surrender their role as arbiters of the Jewish faith.

When Abba Aricha (Rav) came up from Babylonia to study in the Academy of Rabbi Judah the Prince at Tiberias, the latter would not give the Babylonian scholar the right of complete ordination.³ The Palestinian patriarchs determined to keep the power of ordination as the exclusive privilege of their own academies. In their turn, some of the Babylonian teachers maintained that it was sinful to emigrate from Babylonia to Palestine.⁴ The independence of Babylonian Jewry was helped by the legend that its Exilarchs were descended from the family of David. And the Babylonian Exilarch claimed descent from King David through a male line, while the Hillelite Patriarchs of Palestine laid claim to Davidic descent only through a female line.⁵ Thus did myth and fancy help to establish a flourishing center for Jewish learning, which was destined to take over the banner of leadership from the Jews of Palestine. Following the Christianization of the Roman Empire, the Palestinian center declined rapidly and the Babylonian community set out to edit the literature that would assure the continued life of Judaism as a religious communion in the Diaspora.

In theory, there were no essential differences between the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds. The Babylonian Talmud,

according to the Orthodox belief, was accepted simply because it was a later compilation, in which Palestinian emigrés had the chance to collaborate. Actually, the differences between the two works were of a radical nature, reflecting the gulf between two social patterns and ways of thought. As Professor Louis Ginsberg has pointed out, the Babylonian Jews discontinued the practice of giving various gifts to the priests and the Levites. They also limited and, for many purposes, abolished the cumbersome structure of "ritual purity," which caused so much grief and dissension in Palestine. "The words of the Torah do not become impure," a Babylonian Sage asserted. In Babylonia, people could participate in worship and study without prior lustrations. And the Torah-scholars did not have to keep apart from the people, refraining from eating their bread and from visiting in their homes. The Babylonian Jews learned to live in peace with their non-Jewish neighbors, though at times they were oppressed by the king or the Zoroastrian priests. Hence, they softened the harsh laws and the isolationist practices governing the relation of Jews and pagans. "The Gentiles in the Diaspora are not to be considered idolators in the real sense of the word," a Babylonian teacher asserted.⁶ While the Mishnah of Palestine prohibited the sale of merchandise to a pagan three days before a pagan holiday, the Babylonian teacher, Samuel, limited the prohibition of trading to the festival itself.⁷

But the most important maxim of the Babylonian Talmud, insofar as the adjustment of Jews to the harsh conditions of a dispersed minority is concerned, was the clear assertion, "The law of the government is law."⁸ The Palestinian rabbis frequently attempted to dissuade the people from rebelling against Rome, but they did not go so far as to endorse the right of the government to collect its taxes. Individual rabbis, like Rabbi Yose ben Kisma, may have asserted, "This nation was given dominion by heaven,"¹⁰ but the rabbis as a group did not approve of this position. In Babylonia, however, the civil government was accepted *de jure*, not only *de facto*. It was even imagined that "the Holy One, Blessed be He, administered an oath to the Israelites that they shall not rebel against the nations of the world, and He administered an oath to the nations that they shall not exceedingly oppress the Israelites."¹¹

The Babylonian Talmud even decrees a special blessing to be said in the presence of Gentile Kings; namely, "Blessed be He who has given of His glory to His creatures."¹¹ In Babylonia, it was natural for Jews to channel their loyalties into the grooves of religion, whereas in Palestine, the protean sentiments of Judaism could easily be harnessed to the cause of national independence.

The deterioration of the influence and the privileges of Palestinian Jewry and the growth in numbers and political power of Babylonian Jewry made possible the acceptance of the Babylonian Talmud throughout the Diaspora. For two centuries, the two Talmuds existed side by side, each country using its own Talmud. When the Moslem empire united Babylonia and Palestine, there ensued a "silent struggle" between the proponents of the two authoritative works. The Babylonian authorities proved victorious in this struggle, in part at least because they were close to the new center of Moslem culture and power.

Palestine, we recall, was the scene of a bitter civil war between Jews and Christians, during the reign of Heraclius (610-641). Following his conquest of Jerusalem, the Jews of the Byzantine Empire were compelled to become Christian. However, Egypt was conquered by the Moslems in 640 C.E. and Syria in 636 C.E. While the Ummayyad Khalifs made Damascus their capital, the center of Moslem power shifted steadily toward Iraq. The Abassid Khalifs built the city of Baghdad near the ancient capital of Babylonia.

The reestablishment of the Exilarchate in Baghdad, following a brief hiatus, fortified the two Babylonian academies, Sura and Pumbeditha, and made them centers of authority and power as well as of learning. The Exilarch and the two Gaons worked together in the collection of "gifts" from the Jewish communities, which were not always voluntary, and in the appointment of judges who were not always locally acceptable. Through the moral influence, the social ascendancy, and the political power of the Gaons and the Exilarchs, the Babylonian Talmud came to be accepted throughout the Jewish Diaspora.¹²

While many Jews gloried in the power and position of their hierarchy of Torah-scholars and Davidic descendants, others resented the pride of the new aristocrats and their presumption

of the right to impose their decisions upon the entire community. The Qaraite or anti-Talmudic Jews became an organized movement when Anan, a rejected candidate for the Exilarchate, undertook to defend their cause and to provide an ideology for their long-smoldering grievances.

In spite of certain heroic and brilliant achievements, the Qaraite movement remained a marginal sect. It did not succeed in winning the allegiance of the masses of the Jewish community, nor did it penetrate the hierarchical structure of power in the Orient. This rebellion against the Talmuds implied a revolution against the entrenched Torah-aristocracy. Having failed to shake the "establishment" of their day, the Qaraites lacked the political power to protect themselves from occasional outbursts of persecution at the hands of their rabbinic brethren.

Internally, the Qaraites were torn apart by two opposing tendencies. On the one hand, they represented the protest of the individual and his free conscience against the burden of centralized authority and the pressure of an unyielding tradition. They anticipated the creative genius of the Protestant movement in Christianity. On the other hand, they contained within their ranks considerable numbers of pre-Talmudic pietists, who clung desperately to ancient outworn practices, which rabbinic leadership had wisely allowed to die. This contradiction proved fatal in the long run, though the Qaraites did enjoy several periods of growth and creativity. Qaraism flourished only in the Moslem Diaspora, since the resentments which led to its genesis and growth were not understood in the West. By failing to strike powerful roots in Franco-German Jewry, the movement was condemned to inanition, since the Jews of Europe were fated to become the bearers of Jewish destiny in modern times.

The Babylonian Talmud has been attacked many times as an embodiment of Jewish hate and isolation. James Parkes, a friendly interpreter and defender of Judaism, has this to say of the Talmud:

But those, on the other hand, who have attacked rabbinic Judaism, whether they be atheistic or liberal Jews, or antisemites or, indeed, the average Christian theologian, have had no difficulty in by-passing any serious examination of the theology and morals which can be distilled from rabbinic texts, by exposing the exceedingly curious character of the texts themselves, from which they quote without difficulty sentiments and opinions which are trivial,

ridiculous, and even indelicate. They also are able to do this without misquoting or distorting the text, for in the vast and incoherent mass of rabbinic literature all this is to be found."¹³

The author, in his eagerness to do justice to "rabbinic literature," explains the occurrence of ridiculous and indelicate passages as being due to the life-encompassing quality of Judaism. "Nothing could more dramatically illustrate the thesis that Judaism has no water-tight compartments, and knows no distinctions between what 'is sacred and what is secular.'"¹⁴

In reality, the distinction between the sacred and the secular is basic in the Talmud, but many areas that are usually considered secular in Europe and America — such as intimate marital relations — are treated in detail in order to interpret the Torah-regulations of "family-purity." Furthermore, the Talmud was cumulative, consisting of layers piled upon layers; the editors did not feel free to eliminate or to censor the records of previous discussions. Here is an excellent illustration of the curious nemesis of dogmatism. The assumption that the words of preceding generations of scholars were spoken with the aid of the Holy Spirit (*Ruah Hakodesh*) made censorship on the part of later authorities virtually unthinkable.

We should note, too, that the inference from Talmud to "rabbinic literature" is not justified. Except in legalistic discussions and in Qabbalistic speculations, rabbinic literature is exceedingly chaste in style and expression. Maimonides asserted that Hebrew may rightfully be called a sacred tongue, since it contains no terms for the organs of sex.

Actually, the Talmud contains and gives expression to the diverse tensions within Judaism. Radically opposite judgments could find a measure of justification in the intricate convolutions of its casuistry. While it demands total and unquestioning commitments to the dogma of Divine revelation at Sinai, it also encourages the reader to think in total freedom, within a dogmatically circumscribed area, confronting even God with an island of inviolate freedom. Thus, the Israelites according to the Talmud, were free to accept or to reject the Torah. Had they accepted it only under duress, they would have been free to disregard its precepts.¹⁵ The Covenant between God and Israel is not merely one of so many laws, but God and man share the qualities of reason, within the circumscribed walls of Torah. The

Talmud is certainly committed to unquestioned dogmas, but it is not chained to the letter of Scriptures, or to any living totalitarian authority, preserving a healthy skepticism concerning the things that are not of this world. Diverse opinions are offered as to heaven and hell, the Messiah, Judgment Day, and the Resurrection. Invariably, the Talmud assumes that Torah is the exclusive agency of salvation and redemption, and "even a non-Jew who concerns himself with Torah is like the Highpriest;"¹⁶ yet the paths of Torah are "twisted" — subject to diverse interpretations. The opinions of the minority are recorded for the benefit of future generations and for reconsideration in future contingencies; rarely are legal opinions stigmatized as heresy. The fundamentalist axioms are counterbalanced by the discipline of reasoning and the broad-beamed toleration of several, different approaches.

BETWEEN ETHNIC PRIDE AND HUMANISM

Throughout all its discussions, the Talmud postulates a deep and abiding distinction between Israel and "the nations of the world." Whether the subject under discussion is a matter of torts or of loans, of theft or of murder, of an ordinary commercial transaction or of an "ox that gored a cow," this distinction is always treated as a basic, virtually a cosmic category. Apart from the many hateful or contemptuous references to "the nations," the fact itself that the Talmud never overlooks or disregards the difference between Jew and Gentile is significant. For it insinuates the feeling that nothing on earth matters quite as much as the distinction between Israel and "the nations of the world."

Thus, the legal structure of Judaism embodies this distinction in all its sections. In presenting testimony to a court, the word of a non-Jew is of no effect whatever, except in marginal contingencies, and when it is offered indirectly. In cases of torts and damages, it matters very much whether the injury was done by a Jew to a non-Jew or vice versa. Even in commercial transactions, the gulf between Jew and Gentile was fundamental. The Talmud itself is already cognizant of the criticism of Roman jurists on this score.¹⁷ In ritual "purity," non-Jews are "impure" in their lifetime but their cemeteries do not "defile" a priest, whereas the opposite is the case with Jews.

In Jewish myth and legendry "the nations" are represented

as the jeering partisans of Satan. "Out of Sinai, hate came down to the nations of the world."¹⁸ God resolved to hate those that did not accept the Torah. The election of Israel implied a corresponding rejection of "the nations."

Three things Moses begged from the Holy One, blessed be He, and they were granted to him:

He asked that the *Shechinah* might rest in Israel, and it was granted to him, "for behold when you go with us, we shall be distinguished from all the nations on the earth."

He asked that the *Shechinah* might not rest on the worshipers of the stars and it was granted to him.

He asked to know the ways of the Holy One, blessed be He, and it was granted to him.¹⁹

In visions of the future, "the nations" are arrayed against Israel, so that the justification of one amounts to the condemnation of the other. In one fanciful description of Judgment Day, showing how "the nations" are confounded and Israel is exonerated, we read that "the nations" or the "worshipers of stars" say:

Master of the universe, the Israelites that did receive the Torah, did they really observe it? Says the Holy One, blessed be He, "I testify in their behalf that they observed the entire Torah."

But then they say,

Master of the universe, is it permitted for a father to testify in behalf of his son? For it is said, "My son, my first born, Israel."²⁰

These fond fancies of the future portray all the nations of the world as rushing to be converted to Judaism, but it is asserted, the Jews will then refuse to accept them and they will become *gerim gerurim*, rejected converts.²¹ When the Messiah comes, "All men will become slaves to Israel."²²

In its dark and bitter moods, the Talmud ignores any distinction between good and bad Gentiles. Recalling the doctrine of "the seven commandments of the sons of Noah," it maintains that the "nations," one and all, failed to observe these universal principles of religion; hence, their one chance for redemption was lost.²³

Illustrative of this interpretation is the introduction to the commentary on the Talmud which was written by Rabenu Nissim of Kairowan, in North Africa, an eleventh-century scholar. This introduction and commentary forms part of many printed edi-

tions of the Talmud. Speaking of the "seven commandments of the sons of Noah," the author asserts that additions were made by diverse scholars, with the number being increased till it reached twenty-eight, according to some, and thirty, according to others. He then continues, as follows:

And because the children of Noah, outside Abraham and his seed, did not abide by these commands, and violated the laws that they were obligated to observe, their excuses were invalidated and they were made deserving of punishment; that is, they cannot now ask why was the Torah given to Israel and not to them? For those who did not accept the few commands cannot be trusted to be faithful to the many commandments. This is precisely what our teachers say, "What did He see? He saw the faithlessness of the nations who did not keep the commands of Noah . . ." ²⁴ Nevertheless, the Holy One blessed be He, gave the nations still another opportunity, when in His Wisdom, the time arrived for the giving of the Torah to Israel. For He gave the Torah in the wilderness, which is open to all men; thus, He left no valid excuse to the nations. Said Rabbi Yohanan, we learn that the Holy One, blessed be He, circulated the Torah among all nations and tongues and they refused to accept it, until the Israelites said, "We shall do and we shall hearken."

Thus all the excuses of the nations are stultified; they are deserving of punishment, and the Israelites have properly merited to be singled out for the glory that was given to them, to be uplifted and called His people and His treasure, to receive the Torah, for the observance of which they are entitled to receive a good and endless reward.

This reward is theirs as of right and they can demand it as creditors, until they get it. Though in the beginning, when God gave them the Torah, He did it out of kindness, benevolence, and pity; nevertheless, after they practiced it, they merited their share and He was obligated to pay them their reward. For, consider if the reward of the righteous in the World to Come were due to God's benevolence and kindness and not an obligation upon Him, He would have created us from the beginning in a world that is all good and enduring, giving us of His hidden delight, and He would not have troubled us with the practice of the commandments. But since He created us in this world, to serve Him, to labor in the learning of His Torah and to occupy ourselves with His commandments, we know that He selected the good part for us. . . . ²⁵

The legalistic logic of Rabenu Nissim was consistently ignored by the apologists of the Talmud and just as consistently identified by the antisemites with the substance of Jewish teaching. Actually, the Jewish faith was a dynamic, restless tension between opposing orientations. To maintain a balanced equilibri-

um between the pull of opposing loyalties and sentiments is the fate of thinking people in all generations. Among the Jews, the bitterness engendered by persecution and the narrowness of fanaticism occasionally rendered the task of keeping a serene balance extremely difficult. Hence, such attitudes as those of Rabenu Nissim.

This consistent denigration of non-Jewish humanity was at times extended to the point of complete dehumanization.²⁶ Doubtless, in these bitter and hate-filled moods, the Talmud encouraged Jews to abide by one standard of morals in dealing with fellow-Jew and by quite another standard in dealing with non-Jews.²⁷ While the sense of mutual responsibility within the Jewish community was developed to an extremely high level, the sense of neighborliness, let alone fraternity, and even the feelings of common decency were blunted and deadened when the relations between Jews and their neighbors were in question. We can hardly doubt that the Talmud was in part to blame for the vast harvest of hatred that Jews had reaped in nearly every age. A student of antisemitism and a lifelong defender of European Jewry attributes the readiness of Christians to half-believe such canards as the so-called blood-accusation to these passages in the Talmud, which appear to draw a cosmic gulf between Jews and the rest of humanity.²⁸ Yet, the Talmud and the Midrashim clustering around it did not altogether lose the vision of one humanity. Said one scholar, "Israel was exiled among the nations for the sole purpose of winning converts."²⁹ In one dramatic passage we read, "Jew or non-Jew, man or woman, slave or servant-girl — for all people it is in accord with a person's deeds, that the Holy Spirit rests upon him."³⁰

Israel's election was for the purpose of bringing the Divine message to all men. "If you do not speak of My Divinity to the nations of the world," says the Lord, "I shall surely punish you." Israel was to be the instrument of bringing the knowledge of God to mankind. "The Holy One, blessed be He, gave the Torah to Israel in order that they should master it in behalf of all the nations."³¹

In another passage we read that the Lord scattered Israel among the nations, as a farmer scatters his seeds, in order to reap a rich harvest. Hence, Jews should extend their deeds of benevolence to the non-Jews as well.

THE MEANING OF JEWISH HISTORY

The rabbis taught that the Gentile poor should be fed along with the Jewish poor, that their sick be visited along with ours, that their dead be interred along with the dead of Israel, in order to fortify the ways of peace.²²

While it is true that, in strict law, Jews were permitted to take usury from non-Jews, the Talmud prohibits this practice, except when a person is compelled by severe economic pressure and only as a last resort.²³ This loophole was utilized by the Medieval rabbis to make possible the resort to usury, since other avenues of industry were then closed to the Jews. Prevented as they were from engaging in agriculture and from joining the guilds, most Jews in Western Europe were expected by the princes that offered them the right of residence to engage in the money business. In Central Europe, where Jews practiced many trades and where many of them needed to borrow money from their own co-religionists, the rabbis discovered a legal fiction (*hetar iska*), similar to the one the Church adopted toward the close of the Medieval period, whereby Jews could charge interest on loans to fellow-Jews and remain strictly within the letter of the Law.

Within the Talmud, the tension between humanism and ethnicism was continuous and unresolved. It was possible for Talmud-trained people to effect their own resolution of these conflicting trends, some magnifying the one aspect of the tradition and some emphasizing the other aspect. As we have noted previously, the masses of the people probably inclined toward the pole of ethnic pride and prejudice, while the saintly few thought in universal and humanistic terms.

BETWEEN RITUALISM AND INWARDNESS

Ritualism — the belief that certain concrete practices represent in themselves the Will of God and the path of salvation — is a typical expression of the fear-ridden, subjective mood of retreat from reality. The more a people sinks into the sheltered caverns of ritual, the more it removes itself from the society of mankind. On the other hand, to the extent to which a religious community arrives at the notion that universal ideals and sentiments are the objects of Divine concern, meaningful communication can be established between that community and other

religious groups. For the universal values consisting of principles of action and states of feeling belong to all groups, forming the bridge of mutual understanding and mutual esteem that unites them. We may therefore assay the measure of inner withdrawal from human society by the emphasis placed on the sheer performance of particular rituals.

How does the Talmud and its literature fare in terms of this standard?

On the whole, we can hardly doubt that the Talmud inculcated the spirit of total preoccupation with the niceties of the Law. All the zeal that, in a healthy society, is spent on the varied facets of public affairs was in the Talmud concentrated on the meticulous spinning of the threads of law. Nothing was too trivial for the Law, nothing too delicate. The Talmudic rabbis transferred the priestly mentality from Temple and sacrifices to the everyday life of the ordinary Jew. The scholar was in effect the new priest of Torah and *mizvoth*. "Whoever plays host to a scholar in his home is like one who brings the daily sacrifice."³⁴ "Whoever desires to pour water on the altar should fill the throats of scholars with wine."³⁵ But in a larger sense, this priestly role is played by all who observe the Law with great care. "Whoever prepares his mind, washes his hands and prays, it is as if he built an altar and brought a sacrifice upon it."³⁶

In keeping with this priestly preoccupation, we find that the practice of prayer becomes regularized and fixed. In the first century, the rabbis inveighed against the tendency to freeze the fluid flow of prayer: "Do not make your prayer a thing of fixed form, but a matter of pleading and supplication."³⁷ Two Babylonian rabbis define "a thing of fixed form" as being that in which a person can discover no novelty.³⁸ The ancient Hasidim would wait one hour before praying in order to make certain that their heart was directed to their father in heaven.³⁹ To illustrate the duty of intense concentration in prayer, one rabbi asserts that true prayer is no longer possible. "I can release the entire world from the law of prayer, from the time when the Holy Temple was destroyed and until the present . . . for we are all distraught, as if we were intoxicated without wine."⁴⁰

Nevertheless, the realities of the situation required that the exact wording of each prayer be fixed, with relatively minor var-

iations. The first official Prayer Book (*Siddur di Rav Amrum*) was released several centuries after the completion of the Talmud, but in its essentials it was fixed during the Talmudic period.

The priestly and the prophetic elements in the Talmud are inextricably mixed together. On the one hand, the Talmud excommunicates all who deviate in the slightest from any rabbinic ordinance. "Whoever transgresses the words of the wise is deserving of death."⁴¹ Whoever changes the formula fixed by the sages in prayers, did not fulfill his obligation.⁴² The Talmud even goes so far as to say, "*Mizvoth* do not require to be accompanied by intentions."⁴³

The role of public worship is stressed. "The prayer of a person is heard only in the Synagogue."⁴⁴ For when ten men pray together in the Synagogue, the Divine Presence is with them.⁴⁵

At the same time, the Talmud stresses that all ritual is only the outward expression of an inner reality. "The Merciful seeks the heart."⁴⁶ An entire chapter in the Tractate Taanith tells how great sages failed to move the heavens by their prayers, but when "their heart was broken," they were promptly answered. According to the discussion in the same chapter, simple-minded people achieved more by gentleness and love than famous sages with their mountainous merits of Torah and *mizvoth*. While the *mizvoth* were of cosmic significance to the rabbis, they never forgot the simple piety of the psalms and the prophets. In a ritualistic mood, they taught that God himself offers a sacrifice for His sin in reducing the size of the moon;⁴⁷ and Michael the Archangel offers the souls of saints as sacrifices on the heavenly altar.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, they also taught that all the 613 *mizvoth* are contained in the words of Habakkuk, "The righteous man lives by his faith," or in the words of Amos, "Seek ye me and live," or in the words of the Psalmist, "In all thy ways know Ilim, and He will direct thy paths."⁴⁹

BETWEEN REASON AND MYSTICISM

It would be more correct to describe the Talmud as the work of an isolated community than as the product of an *isolationist* band of scholars. In Babylonia, the Jews lived in mass-settlements of their own, but they were not impelled by desperation and bitterness to turn their backs upon the world and to de-

molish consciously the bridges of rationality and reality to the culture of other nations. The Babylonian Talmud was composed outside the sphere of Hellenistic culture, and before the emigré pagan philosophers, escaping the fury of Byzantine dogmatism, could make their influence felt. In Babylonia, the sacred lore of the Zoroastrians was not yet written down during the Talmudic period. And in the Persian-Parthian cultural domain, the bonds between ethnic culture and pagan practices were then still too strong to allow for the emergence of an independent secular culture. The Talmudic Sages operated in an airtight mental world of their own, but they did so naturally and simply without any conscious repudiation of the outside world.

In its objective orientation, the human spirit seeks to discern the physical laws which govern reality and the moral laws determining a perfectly ordered society. The ethical maxims that derive from this orientation lend themselves easily to legal formulation. To the public spirited philosophers of antiquity, there were four cardinal virtues — courage, wisdom, temperance, justice. Reflecting this spirit, the rabbis forced even the command to love one's neighbor as oneself into the mold of law. "And thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself — select for him a beautiful death."⁵⁰ This is to say, the law of love must encompass every contingency, applying even in the execution of the death penalty.

The objective component of Jewish ethics prevented it from becoming solely a matter of nurturing the gentle emotions in life. In the Talmud, ethical problems are approached with the firm and inflexible measuring rods of law and reason, as well as the feminine feelings of compassion and love. In comparison with Christian ethics, the discussion of the Talmud appears to be legalistic, abstract, and unfeeling. But the Talmud articulates the moral-rational orientation of man's spirit, as well as the subjective yearnings of religion. Even the love of God is embraced in a structure of law and reason. To love God is "so to act that He will be beloved by mankind."⁵¹ Hence, if the acme of love in Islam is self-surrender and the goal of Christianity is self-giving, love in Judaism is active participation in the building of the ideal community.

But there is no lack of love and pity in the Talmud. In addi-

tion to the observance of the law, the Jew was asked to go "beyond the line of the Law," *lifnim mishurath hadin*. Well-known is the story of the rabbinical employer, one of whose workers broke a barrel of wine. The employer seized the garments of the worker for damages. When the case was brought to court, the presiding rabbi ordered the employer to return the worker's garments. Questioned the learned litigant, "Is this the law?" "Yes," said the rabbi, "for the Torah says, 'And thou shalt do what is right and good.'" In addition, the rabbi ordered the employer to pay the day's wages to the poor laborer, on the extra-legal principle "that you may walk in the way of the good."⁵²

Nevertheless, the dominant motivation in Jewish ethics is not compassion but the awareness of and reverence for the divine law of righteousness. Everything is to be done in measure and with due regard for conflicting interests. Even the practice of philanthropy must not be exaggerated. "He who desires to expend his property for philanthropic purposes must not waste more than a fifth of his possessions."⁵³ Fixed canons fashion every aspect of life — the practice of charity, the relations of pupils to their master and a master to his pupils, the relation of parents to their children and the conflicts between filial loyalty and the demands of religion.

Even in regard to so simple a precept as the prohibition of any kind of deception, the Talmud does not rest content with the mere enunciation of ideals. With great care and attention to detail it spells out the various contingencies in life to which the law of *onaa* (cheating) applies. Many of the commonly accepted practices of modern merchandising would be ruled out by the keen conscience of the Talmudists; such as charging whatever the market allows. Pages upon pages of the Talmud deal with the morally impermissible practices of commerce, which are considered entirely proper and decent in modern business. Frequently, the Talmud intrudes into the realm of "things that are given to the heart," which only the Lord God can see and judge. Integrity in trade is ranked as the highest virtue. "He who deals faithfully in business, earning the good will of his fellows, is considered as if he had fulfilled the entire Torah."⁵⁴ On the other hand, a person who is unfaithful to his given word was regarded as an idolator. The moral law was conceived to be

of cosmic pervasiveness, and it was as inflexible and objective as the laws of nature or the laws of reason.

In the modern period, as attention began to be centered on the inner structure of Jewish ethics, scholarly opinion was divided.

Romantics like Samuel David Luzzato taught that the essential quality of Hebraic ethics was pity, especially in contrast to the manly virtues of the classic philosophers, courage, temperance, prudence and justice, or wisdom, temperance, courage and justice. Luzzato was particularly concerned with the emphasis on compassion, forgiveness, charity, and goodness in Bible and Talmud.

Does not a modern rationalist like the German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, excoriate compassion as irrelevant to the strict orders of the Categorical Imperative? Seneca expressed the Roman genius, so inimical to Judaism, when he wrote:

"Pity is a mental illness induced by the spectacle of other people's miseries, or alternatively it may be defined as an infection of low spirits caught from other people's troubles when the patient believes that those troubles are undeserved. The sage does not succumb to such like mental diseases."⁵⁵

Luzzato points out that a Roman sage like Seneca could well watch the cruel gladiatorial games without succumbing to the infection of the "mental illness" of pity, while it was unthinkable for a Talmudic sage to be a willing spectator of such brutality.

On the other hand, rationalists like Moritz Lazarus, Ahad Ha'am, and Hermann Cohen, considering the ethics of the Talmud as a whole, found it to be austere legalistic and abstract. Along with Kant, they thought of ethics primarily in terms of reverence for the moral law. And in the endless legal discussions of the Talmud they perceived the principle that ethics is a rational discipline, capable of being reduced to law; not solely a matter of love, empathy, and imagination.

Ahad Ha'am cites the famous case of two men in the desert, with one pitcher of water. If both should drink, both will die; if one should drink, he will save his own life, but his companion will die. While one rabbi asserted in keeping with the principle of compassion, "Let both drink and neither should see the death of the other," the true genius of Judaism, according to Ahad Ha'am, was reflected in the decision of Rabbi Aqiba who coun-

seled the owner of the pitcher to save his own life. Rabbi Aqiba's view was that of "absolute ethics." Life, even if that of the owner only, should be saved, if possible.

Actually, the Talmud reflects in this domain as in so many others a dynamic and restless balance between the rational and the emotional, the concept of right and wrong as fixed by inflexible law and the concept of good or bad, as deriving from the yearning for the attainment of the Supremely Good.

In keeping with the objective-rational orientation of Jewish ethics, the rabbis ranked the love of learning as a supreme virtue. This valuation was given concrete expression not only in so many maxims, where "the learning of Torah" is said to outrank all other commandments, but even more deeply in the entire complex of Jewish life as it is recorded in the Talmud. The education of children was the primary obligation of the community. In one passage, the children of the schools are designated collectively as the Messiahs.⁵⁶ There was no greater disgrace than ignorance, no greater honor than learning. "If you have knowledge, what do you lack? If you lack knowledge, what do you have?"⁵⁷ The *Talmid Hacham*, disciple of the wise, was regarded as the one legitimate type of Jewish aristocrat, after the decline of the priesthood and the disappearance of the land-owning aristocracy. There is no real limit to the authority of the rabbis, save that of the foreign government, for in a Jewish community, the powers of the government are in normal times entirely circumscribed by the precepts of Torah. In fact, the Talmud may be said to reflect the ideal of "government by the Torah-scholars." While the citizens of any one community were allowed to govern themselves, they could not make new ordinances without the consent of the resident Torah-scholar, even if he had no official authorization. This ideal became the basis of the self-governing institutions of the Jewish communities in the Medieval era.⁵⁸

Torah-learning did not consist in the commitment to memory of so many pages of the Talmud, but in the mastery of a pattern of reasoning, both subtle and involved. Not "the donkey weighted down by books" but he "who uproots mountains and grinds them together by reasoning" was held up for admiration. True, the dialectic of the Talmud is rigidly limited by the verses of the Pentateuch and the precepts of the Oral Law. The Torah-schol-

ar is not permitted to question either the letter of Scriptures or the authenticity of any tradition in the Talmud, but working within these limitations, there was still ample room for the exercise of logical reasoning and disciplined reflection. In theory, the members of the Sanhedrin were supposed to be acquainted with "seventy languages" and all forms of secular wisdom, though the "wisdom of the Greeks" was generally proscribed.

On the other hand, the inner rationality of the Talmud was in dynamic tension with powerful subjective trends. Disciples are enjoined to refrain from studying logic.⁵⁹ There are abundant references to mystical visions of Elijah (*gilluy Eliyahu*).⁶⁰ Students are cautioned "not to inquire what is below, what is above, what is before and what is behind." However, the ultimate goal of the mystic, union with the being of God or His Will, is shunned. To "cleave unto the Lord" is to walk in His ways and to support Torah-scholars.⁶¹

Apart from the final goal of mysticism, we encounter in the Talmud a readiness to believe in lesser forms of Divine communication. The dispute between the Hillelites and the Shammites was decided by means of a *Bath Kol* (Divine Echo). Demons and miracles abound in the Talmudic world. Diverse superstitions are recorded side by side with maxims of amazing depth. Nor are these shadowed precincts of the Talmud separable from its main currents.

The evil instincts of men are explained as the result of a cosmic catastrophe. "When the Serpent cohabited with Eve, he injected into her corruption. The Israelites standing at Mt. Sinai, were freed from this corruption. The nations, who did not stand at Sinai, their corruption was not taken from them."⁶² Here, too, the superiority of Israel is taken to be an innate mystical incorruption, and the inferiority of the Gentiles is presumed to be an inherited, demonic quality, which vitiates even the good that they occasionally undertake. This malicious judgment is extended to the Dietary laws. Non-kosher food "stops up the heart," blunting a person's sensitivity to spiritual things.

Similar mythological thinking is shown in the principle that all "suffering is due to sin," with certain specific plagues being sent in punishment for specific violations of the ritual law;⁶³ that all people die because of their sins, save only a few who perish because of the "sin of the Serpent";⁶⁴ that God regrets the crea-

tion of the Evil Desire and the state of exile; that God Himself has sinned in "diminishing the moon," thus requiring a periodic sacrifice of atonement;⁶⁵ that God Himself inquired of His High Court concerning certain vows He made with the object of having them nullified; that up in heaven there is an angel, "whose Name is like that of His Master";⁶⁶ that the Torah exists in heaven as "white fire engraved on black fire."⁶⁷ In fact, nearly all the central ideas of Qabbalah are found in the Talmud and Midrash; quasi-magical power is attributed to the Torah. Those who attain sainthood by its observance acquire power of cosmic dimensions. The saint becomes "the foundation of the world," shielding it from evil by the potency of his merits. "The Holy One, blessed be He, decrees and the saint (*Zaddik*) nullifies."⁶⁸

How did the Talmud contribute to the survival and destiny of the Jewish people? The answer should now be clear. In the pages of the Talmud, the subjective-objective equilibrium was partially restored, though with a definite bias toward religious fundamentalism and ethnic insularity. Rationalists like Maimonides, romantics like Halevi, and mystics like Moses de Leon could find some support for their views in the Talmud. The Talmud itself does not lay claim to being the sole repository of the totality of wisdom, though the academies of Germany and Poland restricted their curriculum to Talmudic studies. In Medieval Spain, the thin layer of Jewish aristocracy encouraged the study of all the disciplines and sciences then known. On the other hand, those who favored the ruthless reduction of contact with the Gentile world and secular culture to the absolute minimum could also find in the Talmud ample support for their views. And the Qabbalah of the Medieval era, which reintroduced into the stream of Judaism many typical, mythological ideas, could make good its claim of being authored by the Sages of the Talmud.

While the Talmud dealt rigorously with ethical questions, it treated eschatological and purely theological issues with relative tolerance and flexibility; this contrast served to minimize the ardor of dogmatists. The Talmudic Sages seemed to feel that the community needs to take account of acts that are contrary to its welfare, not of ideas and beliefs, except if they be definitely heretical. The first authoritative interpreters of the Talmud, the Gaonim, laid down a clear distinction between law (Hala-

chah) and ideological speculation (Aggadah). While the law of the Talmud was binding, the boundaries of the intellectual horizon were not rigidly fixed. It was possible for an eighteenth-century scholar like Moses Mendelssohn to draw the conclusion that Judaism does not contain any dogmas. Though this inference is not true, it indicates the broad range of interpretation open to students of the Talmud.

The most important historical function of the Talmud was to lay the groundwork for internal Jewish self-government. With the breakup of the Western Roman Empire, the unity of Roman law was shattered. Germanic custom did not prevail throughout Europe and Asia, and Canon Law did not reach beyond the confines of Catholic Europe. Jewish law, based upon the Talmud, could be interpreted, applied, and enforced wherever a learned rabbi was to be found. And for difficult questions, decisions could be sought in the early Middle Ages from the great academies in Babylonia. The unity and complexity of Talmudic law made it possible for the Jews to maintain a virtual commercial empire in early Medieval times, with letters of credit in one part of the world being validated thousands of miles away without any dangerous shipment of currency.

Groups of Jewish merchants maintained channels of trade that extended from the western borders of China, coursed overland through several routes and ended in the cities of France, Spain and England. While the Jewish merchant was everywhere an alien, he could count on the welcome of tiny colonies of co-religionists in all the way-stations of international commerce. Everywhere the Talmud provided the basis of Jewish law and observance. The Jewish merchants, pioneering new markets and new patterns of commerce, could not have performed their extremely useful function, without the commercial and civil law of the Talmud.





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