MS-603: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Collection, 1945-1992.

Series C: Interreligious Activities. 1952-1992

Box 23, Folder 8, Heschel, Abraham Joshua, 1982-1989, undated.

3101 Clifton Ave, Cincinnati, Ohio 45220
(513) 221-1875 phone, (513) 221-7812 fax
americanjewisharchives.org

Jorge,

One of the matters I should like to speak with you about is the following:

AJC is sending a mission of its highest officials to Rome from Feb 10 thru 15th. As was the case in France, Germany, Central and South America, AJC leaders will meet the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Italy, the Italian Jewish Community, etc.

We are especially eager to try to have an audience for our top leaders with Pope John Paul II during that week.

I would greatly appreciate your advice as to how we should proceed.

תודה רבה

Shane

You are to write an official letter to me proposing one or two dates that week (I should say Thursday or Friday morning always) for the audience. Explain briefly the reasons. Give the number of people involved. I'll do the rest. You will be very welcome.

Thanks

Shane

Jorge

SECRETARIAT FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY
COMMISSION FOR RELIGIOUS RELATIONS WITH THE JEWS
Vatican City - Tel. 698.4386/698.3071

PROT. N. J 148/82/a

Vatican City, April 14, 1982

Rabbi Samuel H. Dresner
200 Hyacinth Lane
DEERFIELD, IL 60015, USA

Dear Rabbi Dresner,

Your letter to His Eminence Cardinal Willebrands, sent to the Institute of Jewish Affairs in London, on Feb 14, 1982, came to our office on March 10th. Cardinal Willebrands commissioned me to do the necessary research about your question and I addressed myself to Cardinal Bea's private secretary, now a member of our staff. I am happy to submit to you the results of my inquiries.

1. All texts and documents referring to the preparation of the conciliar text on Judaism and its relation to the Church, now § 4 of the Declaration "Nostra Aetate", were sent after Cardinal Bea's death to the Vatican Archives, which, as a rule, are opened to researchers only some 75 years after the time of the events referred to in the documents.

2. Fr Stjepan Schmidt, SJ, Cardinal Bea's private secretary, has kindly informed me about four encounters of late Rabbi Heschel with Cardinal Bea:

   a) on Nov.26, 1961, together with Dr Max W. Horkheimer, President of the University of Frankfurt/Main. The subject was antisemitism.

   b) on March 27, 1963, in Boston, Mass. No particulars known.

   c) on March 31, 1963, together with other representatives of Jewish organizations, in New York. To this meeting the enclosed article of "Chicago Studies" (p. 128 ff.) is partly dedicated. Rabbi Mark Tanenbaum, of the American Jewish Committee - Fr Schmidt believes - could perhaps provide some further information.

   d) April 1, 1963, on the occasion of a "Pro-Deo" Agape in New York. Fr Schmidt kindly communicated to me Rabbi Heschel's response to the Cardinal on this occasion, response which I enclose.

./.

SECRETARIAT FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY
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Vatican City - Tel. 698.4386/698.3071

Prot. N. .....

Vatican City, ...

Finally, Fr Schmidt gave me also a copy of a letter addressed to him by Rabbi Heschel, dated January 4, 1962, which might be of some interest for you (enclosed).

This is as far as I am able to go now. However, I remain at your service for further clarification and assistance, within the limits indicated above.

With best greetings, I remain,

Sincerely yours,

Jorge MEJIA
Secretary
to the Commission

Encl.

↔ Heschel, A

April 26, 1982

Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum
American Jewish Committee
Institute of Human Relations
165 East 56th Street
New York, NY 10022

Dear Marc:

The enclosed letter was in response to information sought by myself for the Heschel Archive in preparation for a future biography. Would you kindly check the correctness of this letter, and indicate how the documents of the American Jewish Committee and other can be obtained. I note that under 2. b) "No particulars" are revealed. However, this, I believe, was a meeting which you attended where the recognition of the State of Israel was implied. Is that correct?

I know you will be anxious to cooperate in putting together the relevant material for this purpose.

Another matter which may be of interest to you. After the death of Ruth's mother, I have been going through family documents, which are considerable and of some significance. What I want to bring to your attention is the fact that Ruth's grandfather, the late Professor Aron Freimann, who catalogued the Hebrew Manuscripts at the Vatican, and was on very good terms with the Pope Ratti, who he knew intimately when he was in Milan. I have come across letters from Cardinal Tisserant, who, I believe, had formerly been the librarian at the Vatican, thanking Freimann for his great contribution to the Vatican library, and this is what is significant for you, indicating what he was doing for Freimann to get him out of Germany. He had written to a Bishop in Michigan and his help was most significant. All of this comes together from a German Jewish paper published in 1938, which records Tisserant's presence in Beyrouth for a Eucharistic Congress, noting that he spoke to the Jewish community, indicating the efforts that the Pope was making to help Jews leave. At this point the paper quotes Tisserant as saying something like this: "Only a quarter of an hour ago I received confirmation from Michigan of our success in helping the eminent bibliographer Professor Freimann of Frankfurt to leave." This, of course, confirms Tisserant's efforts and in behalf of the Jews, to the point of speaking to a Jewish community in '38 or '39. It also indicates, of course, his friendship with Freimann etc.

MORIAH CONGREGATION
200 Hyacinth Deerfield, Illinois 60015
Rabbi Samuel H. Dresner, DHL

How best could this information be made use of?

Best wishes,

Rabbi Samuel H. Dresner

SHD:lr
Encl.

M. Tanenbaum

International Liaison Committee Meeting, Milan, Sept.6-9,1982

Giovanni Giavini

HOLINESS AND THE MEANING OF HUMAN LIFE

in relation to present-day violence

Biblical aspects of the subject

1) A.J. Heschel

I would like to begin this paper by recalling a Jew who has recently died and was dear to me: Abraham Joshua Heschel.

In one of his later books, Who is Man? (Milan,Rusconi 1971, English original 1965) he lists several pessimistic modern definitions of man and comments thus: "Man has very few friends in this world, certainly very few in the contemporary literature concerned with him. Perhaps the Lord of heaven is man's last friend on earth."(51)

In this comment lies Heschel's theme and his faith. The theme is that of the mysterious greatness of man, in face of which, in spite of sufferings endured and tragedies lived, this Jewish philosopher preserves his wonder and hope "I am - it is a marvel and a source of wonder..."(56) And again: "It is not enough for me to be able to say "I am": I want to know who I am and with whom I live in relationship. It is not enough for me to put questions: I want to know how to answer the one question which seems to be there in everything I come across: " For what purpose am I here?" (91)... Who needs me?(100). We all want to assure ourselves that something exists for which it is worth while to live(107)"

Heschel knows the answer given by various modern philosophical schools, in particular by idealism which speaks of Being as the meaning even of man.

But he is not satisfied: "The supreme and ultimate problem is not being but the mystery of being" (118)What lies beyond existence? Is what gives significance to it, and hence also to human life, a mere concept, or is it a Living Being?

Heschel's reply is rather unexpected but strong and clear, as though from a 'witness': beyond the mystery of being stands the God of the covenant. "The Greeks described the search for meaning as man in search of thought: the Jews described it as the thought (or solicitude) of God in search of man. The meaning of existence is conditioned by acceptance or refusal to respond to God who is in search of man" (123 sqq).

Heschel tried, as is known, to rest this view on a philosophical basis, along the lines of recent transcendental anthropologies; with what results I cannot judge, but I believe Prof. Emmanuel Levinas knows better what he is about here. It is rather easier to assert that Heschel knew how to get to the heart of the problem and still more to the heart of the message of Holy Scripture.

2) From Law, Prophets, Scriptures:

Old Testament

In choosing, inevitably, between numerous texts of the bible which is common to Jews and Christians, we can start from one of the most significant and splendid: Psalm 8. Here man, tiny as a child at the breast, is in astonished admiration of God the creator and at the same time aware of his surprise: even I must be great because this God takes care of me, gives me a charge, is willing to bother about me.

> Yahweh, our Lord,
> how great your name throughout the earth!
>
> Above the heavens is your majesty chanted
> by the mouths of children, babes in arms.
> You set your stronghold firm against your foes
> to subdue enemies and rebels.
>
> I look up at your heavens, made by your fingers,
> at the moon and stars you set in place -
> ah, what is man that you should spare a thought for him,
> the son of man that you should care for him?

Yet you have made him little less than a god,
you have crowned him with glory and splendour,
made him lord over the work of your hands,
set all things under his feet,

sheep and oxen, all these,
yes, wild animals too,
birds in the air, fish in the sea
travelling the paths of the ocean.

Yahweh, our Lord,
how great your name throughout the earth!

To be sure, the bible knows that this solicitude, this interest of God for us is not always obvious; indeed it sometimes expresses dramatically, even brutally, the mystery of God's silences, of his "hand", of his way of acting:"My God, My God, why have you deserted me?" (Ps. XXII) "You destroy man's hope" (Job XIV,19)

But this ruthless frankness does not do away with but rather emphasies and reinforces hope: Job, having once reached the limits of his wretchedness, rediscovers God as his mysterious hope, as his friend and advocate (Job XLII) and the second part of Ps XXII sings of God as saviour, as hope, as the meaning of apparently meaningless suffering.

Even the opening page of the Bible (Gen. I) is like a hymn to God, to his "spirit" to his "word" and hence also a hymn for the works of God - those of the famous "six days" (we are reminded of the saying of Rabbi Akiba quoted by Heschel: " a hymn every day, a hymn every day): but among these "beautiful and good" works the greatest emphasis is given to the sixth: to man. True, even man belongs to a day which has "morning and evening", which hastens on, which is not eternal, all the same it is nearest not only to the animals but to the seventh day which has neither morning nor evening, the sabbath of the eternal holiday of God and with God. It is to this

Akiba - the rehearsing Torah every day, - pray every won't need drug to aid memory

holiday that God calls Adam: the Spirit and the word of God are able indeed to "make him come out" to make him pass also from the "sixth" to the "seventh day" in spite of Adam's sin.

Genesis II and III recalls the irruption of sin and death into our history. From then on the signs of sin and death multiply. They are well known and a few allusions are enough: Cain kills his brother Abel; Lamech, advanced in technical skill, in crafts and in arms, introduces seventy-sevenfold vengeance (Gen. IV); in Noah's time sin and death spread like a flood; the vicissitudes of the Jewish patriarchs and their descendents are often marked, as we know, by times of struggle for existence, of oppression , of wars incurred or declared and waged.Often those incurred and sometimes those declared are interpreted as willed by God in punishment for the sins of Israel or of her neighbours (this is the case particularly with the terrible hèrem). It seems really to be a reign of death, an inexorable and desperate loss of the positive sense of human life, sanctioned almost by a decree of God himself.

But the bible knows and proclaims another line of thought. Adam the sinner is not directly accused; instead it is the fratricide Cain who is accused, yet anyone who should kill him is severely threatened with vengeance (perhaps because he was repentant? Gen. IV 11 - 15). After the flood we find the renewed 'blessing' and 'covenant' with Noah and his descendants and the law imposing respect for the "blood", i.e. for the life of man - every man who emerged from that catastrophe which issued almost in a new creation (Gen.IX,1-11) In the Torah we find laws evidently amending the vindictive system announced by the Cainite Lamech: even the lex talionis - which to many seems uncivilised

and inhuman - inculcated justice in the punishment of the guilty, because he, though meriting a punishment fitting his crime, remained a human person (Exod. XXI,12-27; Lev. XXIV, 16-21); the commandment "thou shalt not kill" pointed to that respect for human life which forbids taking it at least from one who does not deserve death, i.e. from one innocent of capital offence and not an enemy aggressor; other rules aimed at inspiring magnanimity towards a "neighbour" guilty of some wrong (e.g. Lev.XIX,18: 'You must not exact vengeance nor must you bear a grudge against the children of your people. You must love your neighbour as yourself') . Even the hèrem legislation was not only limited to certain peoples, but already indicated its true function and meaning: the important thing was that Israel should not confuse itself and its faith with other nations, and with their idolatry (Deut. VII, 1-6; and XII, 2-3); such confusion had indeed already led to a loss of the sense of human life: sacred prostitution and human sacrifices had already been introduced - in other words the lives of some at least had been exploited for cult or other purposes: this is what is hinted at by some hèrem texts, like Exod. XXIII,32-3; XXIV, 11-17; Psalm CVI, 34-39 .

Already, then, this series of texts corrected the negative and desperate impression which followed Adam's sin.

But another line of thought deserves attention, which begins with Genesis III and touches closely the theme of the meaning of human life and of its hope. Genesis III,15 in fact hints at a mysterious 'seed of woman' which will do battle against 'the serpent and his seed'. Further on, that 'seed of woman' takes on more precise outlines. Seth, Noah, Sem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah and the succeeding story of Israel, especially that of Moses and David.

Here emerges another biblical datum: some human lives, some men, some people, though still "vessels of clay" and weak "flesh" have a special task in the hands of the divine ' potter' and under the guidance of his Word and his Spirit, but it is a task to be performed for all the families, all the peoples of the earth: by these they shall be "blessed", to these they shall convey "blessing". This is certainly said above all of the 'seed' of Abraham, or of Israel (Gen. XII,3; XXII, 18; Isaiah II,1-5; XIX, 23-25; Tob. XIII,3-4; 13-16; 18b; cf. Jonah.)

To be precise, however, it is not said in the same way of all the 'seed of Abraham': Isaac in fact is preferred to Ishmael, although the latter also receives a 'blessing'; Jacob is more blessed than Esau; Judah and David more than their brothers; according to Isaiah VI,13 the holy seed will be only a 'stock', a 'remnant' of Israel, a 'remnant of poor people' as Zephaniah III ,12-13 explains; in Isaiah the instrument of salvation will be a mysterious "servant of the Lord" sometimes identifiable with Israel, sometimes not; chapter XLV even speaks of the Persian king Cyrus as of the man "chosen" to serve God's plan . For the rest, the whole discourse on the 'election' of Israel does not cancel that of Psalm VIII and Genesis I about Adam.

Without wishing then to misconceive the special place belonging to Israel and to the reality of its history, such as the Law of Moses, the land, Jerusalem, the temple, the house of David, etc., it seems to me that the Hebrew bible itself focuses attantion still more on the tremendous and fascinating mystery which is the God of Israel, his Word, his Spirit, realities vaster and more complex, open to a future similar to and linked

with the past, yet also different: "new", like a "resurrection of dried bones" (Jer. XXXI, 31,34; Ezech. XXXVI, 22-32; 37; etc.,)

This future, linked with and similar to the past yet also different, is what we call "messianism", a term and a theme common to Jews and Christians. Beyond the difference of content which one or the other gives to the theme, this idea remains common: this messianic future too remained and remains bound up above all with the God of Israel, but also with certain human lives: especially with those of Israel, of a 'remnant' of Israel, of its 'stock', of its 'holy seed', of a 'servant' of Israel, a 'prophet like Moses' (Deut. XVIII,15), of a new David (Ezech. XXXVI, 23-25 etc.)

The position of man, then, or at least of some men, of some man, still appears evident in the history which God carries forward with us.

3) The new covenant in the Christian view

Clearly, for us Christians the future promise is connected with that crucified Jew who was called Jesus of Nazareth. In his life-story, and especially in his passage and exodus from death to resurrection, we see the connection with Israel's past and also the "new" which explodes out of him and which is at the heart of our theme.

That crucified one might have seemd accursed, according to the mosaic law (Deut. XXI,22-3); he was an object of horror for the Romans and the Greeks (Cicero, Pro Rabirio, 16; I Cor. I, 23): he is a failure and a defeat for human logic; for us he is the Christ, the son of God, the Power of the Most High in the powerlessness of Jewish "flesh", in a fragile

'wild flower' grown in barren earth.... without beauty, without majesty" (Isaiah, XL,6; LIII,2-3).

In Jesus of Nazareth we see the son of God who died "for the nation, and not for the nation only, but to gather together in unity the scattered children of God" and those also who through the words of his witnesses would believe in him. John XI, 51-52; cf. XVII, 20-21).

This means among other things that a Jew too, can and should be considered a "son of God" one "for whom Christ died". "Obviously" we are inclined to say. But alas our Christian history has not always seen the Jew as such. To be candid, even today it is not obvious and easy for us to "bless" all Jews, as it was not easy for them to bless all the sons of Esau, of Ishmael, of Noah, of Adam. We still need much prayer and much work before the field of our hearts will be "good soil" for the gift of God.

Further, from this our faith in Christ crucified , it follows that one who is condmened, ostracised, a sinner, a foreigner, who "does not count, does not produce, is good for nothing" in the scale of human reckoning, remains still a "scattered son of God'... one for whom Christ died", one with whom Christ has a'covenant', with whom he is writing a history. As such he should be esteemed and treated. But not all of us Christians find this 'obvious' - on the contrary! Even among us there are not many like Francis of Assisi, Benedict Cottolengo, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, etc.

From our faith in the Crucified derives also a new way of conceiving the struggle with and victory over evil. Jesus himself, certainly, was we may say even 'violent', strong that is in certain circumstances with words and gestures: look at the expelling of the money-changers from the

temple, the invectives against those scribes and pharisees, "hypocrites", and against his dear Peter rebuked as 'Satan',; how he acknowledged the usefulness of firm correction of an impenitent sinner (Mtt. XVIII,13-17) and the inevitable painful divisions the gospel would provoke among men. (Mtt. X,21-22 and 34 - 36 : "it is not peace I have come to bring but a sword..... to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother,.....) All the same Jesus in the decisive hour of his mission refused recourse to violence, to the use of force, to win by killing and followed instead the way of Him who gives himself and dies for others.

That Jesus of Nazareth in whom we say we believe died in fact "for all... to make peace (salom) between men and between God and man"; this was his truest mission (Eph.II, 11-18; John XVII; Mtt, X,11-13).

Already in his pre-paschal life, as we can deduce from the four gospels, Jesus showed by words and signs this mission, this attention to all, but especially to the poorest, the least regarded, the least rich in goods or achievements. It is enough to glance at his many miracles of sheer goodness and at the parable of the merciful father (less happily called 'the prodigal son'); the father continues to love the son who has left home and has wasted his own resources and his father's, because he remains his son. The elder son protests, because the other has behaved badly and dissipated the family fortunes, he is unwilling to celebrate with his father and the servants and complains of his unsatisfied rights. The father then comes out of the house and 'begs' him (God begging us!) to come in and join the feast "for this your brother who was dead and has come back to life".

This Jesus of Nazareth shows, as the God of Israel has already, that he recognises the face of death, the dramatic tunnel which seems to place a stone on human life. Before the death of others Jesus was much moved, he wept and intervened to let some escape from its grim power (Luke XII,13; John XI, 35); before his own he was even afraid and dejected as much as and perhaps more than any of us (Mark XIV,32 sqq and parallel texts): only with the 'sword' of prayer and mercy did he recover the strength to overcome the 'weakness of the flesh' and even the anguish of the apparent silence of God. (Mk. XV,34 "My God, My God, why have you deserted me?").

This too was how he found the strength to forgive his executioners and help the penitent, praying thief to die well in peace and in hope - the true scope of his mission as noted above (Luke XXIII,27-46).

This peace and hope were already announced by the faith of many Jews and by the sacred books, but for us they are guaranteed by the resurrection of Jesus, of which the Gospels and other New Testament writings speak. (I Cor.XV,etc For us then Jesus is "Lord" even of death. Hence human life can truly pass even the limits of the 'sixth' day to the 'eternal sabbath of God' (Hebr. IV).

Naturally, just as for the Jewish disciples of the Torah and of Wisdom, so also for Jesus the passage to the seventh day is not magical: the gift of God precedes us, but is 'welcomed' with faith and as a call to 'serve', to 'love' God and our fellow-men. Each in his place and according to his 'vocation' and 'charisma' he has received is called into this 'way' which is common to all: the way of love of God and our neighbour. (I Cor. XII-XIII).

Many pages of the gospel touch this. Two examples from Matthew must suffice. In XXII, 34-40 Jesus affirms that the love of God and our neighbour is the substance of "Law and Prophets", i.e. of the moral discourse of the Old Testament. In chapter V, in the context of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declares that he is not "come to abolish the Law or the Prophets but to ~~complete~~ fulfill them" (V,17); beyond the explicit and sometimes paradoxical language of that Sermon, the meaning seems to me to be this, as I have already explained in my Tra la Folla al Discorso della Montagna, (Milan, Ancora, 1980) p.77: Moses called for respect for the person of our neighbour and hence forbade the killing at least of the innocent; Jesus still calls for such respect, but widened so as to include avoiding offensive behaviour (vv. 21-24). Moses called for respect for marriage by avoidance of adultery; Jesus takes the same line and goes on further, insisting the gravity even of adulterous desire (vv. 27-30). Moses set out to regulate divorce and make it a serious matter; Jesus holds it so serious and grave that it should never exist at least among his disciples, because it is contrary to true love for a woman (vv.31sq). Moses called for integrity at least in oaths; Jesus demands it always. (vv.33-37). Moses wished exaggerated vengeance to be avoided: Jesus demands tha vengeance be avoided always and that even those who have erred and deserve correction should be loved (vv. 38-42). For Moses, our neighbour is to be loved; for Jesus even our enemy (vv. 43-47) because the 'perfect' one to follow is not Moses but the Heavenly Father (v.48) who sent Moses and still more the "Son, the beloved; my favour rests on him" (Mtt. III,17).

And in this 'Son' of God and of the Jewish woman Mary we see also a marvellous example of the love of God for men, but still more a mediator of forgiveness and of the 'Spirit' - that Spirit who is the force of resurrection, of new life, of the march towards perfection of the sons of the heavenly Father.

Conclusion

Although many useful points for our theme and our dialogue could still be raised, I believe that those already brought up ar-e more than enough.

Before I finish, however, I want to quote another passage from Heschel. The question was put to him: who then is man? This was his answer:

> "Who is man? A being put in travail, but who has the dreams and designs of God; God's dream of a world redeemed, of the reconciliation of heaven and earth, of a humanity truly in His image, mirroring his wisdom, justice and mercy. The dream of God is not to be alone, but to have the human race as companion in the drama of continuous creation. Whatever we do, whatever we achieve, we promote or hinder the drama of redemption, we reduce or increase the power of evil."

I think that Heschel was not far either from his own (and our) Scriptures or from the thought of Jesus, a Jew like himself, about the meaning of human life. The already genuine Jewish tradition and that which looks to the 'memoria' of Jesus of Nazareth are then a single shaft of light even in this "hour of wolves" through which we are living.

MEMO from Gene Fisher

To Marc Tanenbaum

Date 2/24/83

☑ For your information

☐ For necessary action

☐ For your comment

☐ Please return

☐ As per your request

Remarks Only Card. Cushing would have used "bacon" in such a context – doubtlessly an all beef, kosher © product was what he had in mind

16-2-22-83

RABBI'S ROLE IN VATICAN II DOCUMENT TOLD (640)

By Tracy Early

NEW YORK (NC) — The late Rabbi Abraham Heschel played a central role in discussions leading to adoption of the Second Vatican Council's declaration on Judaism, said Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum at a Feb. 21 symposium on Rabbi Heschel's continuing influence.

Rabbi Tanenbaum, interreligious affairs director for the American Jewish Committee, gave a detailed account of the decision to enlist Rabbi Heschel as a chief spokesman and of subsequent efforts to secure a Vatican II statement that would "reverse 2,000 years of history."

These efforts included preparation of written statements outlining Jewish views, talks with the late Cardinal Augustin Bea, whom Pope John XXIII appointed as the first head of the Secretariat for Christian Unity; and a private meeting between Rabbi Heschel and Pope Paul VI.

Rabbi Tanenbaum, while noting that the declaration did not make all the explicit statements Jews had hoped for, described it as a "historic turning point" in committing the Catholic Church at its highest level to uprooting anti-Semitism.

The statement regarding the Jews was the "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions" (Nostra Aetate), adopted in the fourth and final session of Vatican II on Oct. 28, 1965.

Born in Warsaw in 1907, Rabbi Heschel came to the United States in 1940. He first taught in Cincinnati and then served on the faculty of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York from 1945 until his death in 1972. The seminary sponsored the Feb. 21 gathering, the Heschel Memorial Symposium. Rabbi Tanenbaum, a gradute of the seminary, recalled the impact Rabbi Heschel made on him as a student.

He also said that Rabbi Heschel's wider influence was symbolized shortly after his death by an unprecedented event for a Jewish writer, having a pope, Paul VI, quote from one of his theological works, and having the Jesuit magazine, America, devote a special issue to him.

By the time Vatican II was announced, Rabbi Tanenbaum told his listeners, Rabbi Heschel had become a "towering" presence on the American scene, and the American Jewish Committee decided he should be asked to serve as a spokesman for American Jews regarding Vatican II issues.

Rabbi Tanenbaum said that some Jews did not see the importance of Vatican II, failing to understand the "political as well as moral" significance of what was happening.

In spite of these obstacles from within and without the Jewish community, "The committee and Rabbi Heschel entered into fruitful discussion with Cardinal Bea, and this continued throughout Vatican II."

The American Jewish Committee met with Pope Paul in May, 1964, and Rabbi Heschel had a private audience with the pope in mid-September. Rabbi Tanenbaum said Rabbi Heschel reported what the pope had told him: that some people thought the then-existing draft of the proposed declaration was already too favorable to the Jewish position, and the pressure for further strengthening might lead to its removal from the agenda.

Throughout the negotiations Jews were seeking explicit condemnation of the "Christ killer" and "deicide" charges and renunciation of any program for proselytizing among Jews.

In the final declaration, the word "deicide" was not used but rejection of the concept was included, Rabbi Tanenbaum said.

A statement saying that the day when "all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice" was known to God alone was the answer to the proselyzation and conversion issue.

Rabbi Tanenbaum gave special praise to the U.S. bishops for exerting pressure that led to a positive result. When there was some doubt concerning adoption of the statements on the Jews and on religious liberty, he said, U.S. cardinals met with Pope Paul and made a "demand" that they be approved.

He said that the late Cardinal Richard Cushing of Boston told the pope, "We are not going back to America unless we can bring home the bacon."

END

THE WONDER OF HESCHEL

By Jack Riemer

He loved stories, and so let me begin this tribute to him with a story that I found recently. It comes from Sam Dresner, who was one of his closest disciples, and who has continued in these last years since his teacher's death to write about him and to keep alive his spirit. Sam is at work on a book about Dr. Heschel which hopefully will be published soon. An excerpt from this book appeared recently in the Catholic magazine, America, and I want to share one story from it with you.

Sam begins his essay with a story that took place near the end. Several years before Dr. Heschel died, he suffered a nearly fatal heart attack. Soon after, Sam came from Chicago to New York to see him. And this is what he recalls:

> "He had gotten out of bed for the first time to greet me, and he was sitting in the living room when I arrived, looking weak and pale. He spoke slowly and with some effort, almost in a whisper. I strained to hear his words.
> "Sam", he said, "when I regained consciousness, my first feeling was not of despair, or of anger. I felt only gratitude to God for my life, for every moment I had lived. I was ready to depart, if need be. "Take me, O Lord," I thought. I have seen so many miracles in my lifetime." Exhausted by the effort, he paused, and then added: "This is what I meant when I wrote in the preface to my book of poems: "I did not ask for success; I asked for wonder. And You gave it to me."

I did not ask for success: I asked for wonder. And You gave it to me. This is the way that Abraham Joshua Heschel, zichrono livracha, evaluated his own life. Those of us who had the privilege of knowing him and of being his students can testify to the accuracy of this evaluation.

He was a man blessed with an extraordinary capacity for wonder. He was a man blessed with a remarkable ability to be excited, to be thrilled, to be exhilarated, to be uplifted.

Whatever else he was, one thing he could never be accused of. He was never dull. Things that other people took for granted, things that

other people never bothered to notice, filled his heart with awe, his soul with joy, his mind with excitment.

Many of us remember how, before a seminar would begin, he would walk to the window and look out at the sky, and say to us: Gentlemen, something wonderous happened tonight. Did you see it? Did you notice? The sun set. And we would look at each other with embarrassment, for we had seen it but not really seen it until he called it to our attention. We had seen it but not noticed.

I remember an experience that I had with him in my student days. I went to a wedding, and when I came back I met him in the Seminary courtyard. He asked me where I had been and I told him. "What kind of wedding was it?", he asked. I started to tell him. I started to say that it was a sad wedding because the groom had no relatives and the bride had no relatives, and the groom had a physical handicap and the bride was up in years. I got less than halfway through what I was going to say when he interrupted me with an exclamation. "How wonderful!" he said, and suddenly I realized he was right. To me the wedding had seemed sad, but when I saw it through his eyes, from his perspective, I realized he was right. When two lonely people find each other, when two people, each of whom has little beauty, are able to discover the beauty in each other, -- how wonderful that is! I hadn't realized until he showed it to me.

To be with him was to be in the presence of effervesence, to be in the company of constant excitement, to be near lightning. He could be angry, he could be fervent, he could be charming, he could be passoinate, he could be satirical, he could be meditative, but he could never be dull. He could never be pedestrian. And nothing that he touched, nothing that he thought about, could ever be dull either.

I love the two stories that he tells in Man Is Not Alone and in God in Search of Man about wonder, and about how we can crush the sense of wonder in our students and in ourselves if we are not careful.

The first story is about the educator who was once out walking with his child. The little girl turned and asked him: "Daddy, what is up there beyond the sky?" The father gave her a 'scientific' explanation. "Ether, my child, he said.

"Ether?" And she held her nose.

Is that really all there is up there beyond the sky? To give an answer like that is to crush, not to enlighten; to block, not to teach; to limit, not to enlarge the horizons of a child's mind. Many of us are the victims of educators like that. Some of us were taught to paint what the teacher thought we should see, not what we saw. And some of us were taught the "primitive origins" of prayers or "the real sociological meaning" of commandments, and have had to fight long and hard to overcome the effects of explanations like these. What Heschel tried to do was to teach us how to stand for what is beyond us, how to point beyond ourselves, how to bear witness and not debunk, how to convey reverence instead of crushing wonder.

The second story that he loved to tell was the one about what happened when the first electric streetcar made its appearance in Warsaw. Some good old Jews could simply not believe their eyes. A car that moves without a horse? Some of them were stupefied and frightened, and all of them were at a loss for how to explain this amazing invention.

Once while they were discussing the matter in the synagogue, a man entered who had a reputation for being sophisticated. In addition to studying the Talmud he was reputed to know books on secular subjects, to subscribe to a general newspaper, and to be well versed in wordly affairs. They clustered around him and asked him if he knew how this thing worked.

"Of course I know, he said. They hung on his every word as he began to explain. "Picture four large wheels in a vertical position in four corners of a square, connected to each other by wires. Do you get it?

"Yes, we get it," they said hesitantly.

"Now, these wires are tied together in a knot in the center of the square and then placed within a large wheel which is placed in a horizontal position. Do you get it"

"Yes, we get it," said the listeners cautiously.

"Now, above the large wheel there are several more wheels, each one smaller than the one before. Do you get it?" said the sophisticate.

"Yes, we get it," they said a bit more hesitantly.

"Now, on top of the smallest wheel there is one tiny screw which is connected by a wire to the center of the car which lies on top of the wheels. Do you get it?"

"Yes, we get it."

"Now the machinist in the car presses the button that moves the screw that causes the horizontal wheels to move, which causes the vertical wheels to move, which causes the car to run through the streets. So you see, it is no wonder," said the sophisticate proudly.

"Ah, now we understand," said the old people.

But there was one old Jew there who said: "By me it is still a wonder."

And so it is. After all the explanations, because of all the explanations, the world is still a wonder. Even after we know how things work, that things work is still a wonder! The wonder is not only in the extraordinary but in the ordinary as well. That a piece of bread can emerge from a seed and the sun and the work of the farmer is a wonder. That a glass of water can revive the spirit of a person is a wonder. That the sun rises and that it sets is just as much of a wonder as an eclipse, even though for some reason so many people rush out to observe the eclipse and so few ever bother to notice the sunrise.

The heart of religion for Heschel was wonder. It was gratitude that made a person great, according to him. The central question for him was not whether we had faith in God. The central issue for him was that God had faith in us; that after all the times we have disappointed Him, He still continues to believe in us. What we do with our lives is the response to that trust. We love in response to the love with which we are loved. To be the recipient of God's trust and to ignore it, is a sin. To be entrusted with the gift of life and waste it, is a transgression. To have eyes and not see, not really see, is a loss.

In The Earth Is the Lord's, Heschel writes: "What is the main objective of observance if not to feel the soul, the soul in oneself, the soul in the Torah, and the soul in the world?" Much of the rest of his writings can be organized around these three rubrics. They were efforts to make us aware of the wonder of our own selves, the wonder within the Torah, and the wonder within the world.

Let us consider each of these insights in turn.

What, or as he preferred to say, who is a human being? How shall we understand ourselves? Heschel was profoundly shocked in pre-Nazi Germany when he found Biology textbooks that defined a human being as a collection of iron and phosphorus and other chemicals that were worth so and so many dollars on the market. He felt that the road to Naziism began in those books, that one could draw a straight line between teachings like that and what the Nazis ended up doing to human beings. People were dehumanized first in theory and then in fact; first in the classroom and then in the streets. If this is all man is, then why revere him, why not use him, why not abuse him?

What Heschel found in those Biology textbooks in pre-Nazi Germany can be replicated in many classrooms in post-Nazi America. There are Philosophy classes in which all values are said to be relative, (except relativism itself), in which all truths are said to be only a matter of opinion. And there are Science classes that speak of "programming people" and of "turning them on" as if man were made in the image of the machine instead of in the image of God. We have become so accustomed to such words that we are no longer even conscious of how callous, how dehumanizing, and how dangerous such language is.

A human being must know who he is, and where he comes from and Who he represents: this was the message that Heschel crossed the country teaching and preaching. A person must know two truths: that he is dust and ashes, and that he is made in the image. A person must hold on to two insights at once: that he is mortal, and that he is immortal. He must constantly be aware that he can be here today and gone today, and that he can be gone today and yet still here ever afterwards.

There are some theologies that exalt God by putting man down; Heschel never did. On the contrary, he constantly reminded us, not only of our shortcomings, but especially of our potential. What is said of nothing else on earth is said of man: man, every man, is made in the image of God. How sad it, he used to lament, for a man to forget who he is, where he comes from, and what he can be. "The Lord is your shadow," says the Bible, and a very bold Midrash that Heschel loved to quote took that to mean that just as a shadow depends upon the person, so does God, kiviyachol, depend on us.

One must know the wonder which is oneself. Otherwise, one can see no wonder anywhere else. To make us conscious of our own cosmic significance was Heschel's first pedagogic task. It was an enormously difficult task,

for so much in contemporary culture combines to put man down, to make him feel that he is only animal or creature, worker or consumer, robot or thing.

His second pedagogic task was to help us discover the soul within the Torah. He was a bona fide scholar, and he could do systematic research as well as any pedant, but his desire was to go beyond that wanted to know facts and dates, but more than that, he wanted to capture the echo of the soul that reverberated within the words of a manuscript, to gain an insight into the inner life of the historical figure he was studying. He wanted to know what were the yearnings in the soul of his people, and not only what were the social or the economic factors in their lives. He wanted, not only to dissect the words of a text, but also to catch the melody within them.

Let me share here a ballad by Menachem Boraisha that I think says something about what it means to seek the soul within the Torah. It is an excerpt from his major philosophical work: Der Geyer, and I found it in a translation by Zalman Schachter-Shlomi. It is a bit long, I know, but I ask you to bear with me and let me cite it all, for the humor and the power of the last lines depend on the development that leads up to them, and I find it too good a story to weaken by shortening. It is a tale that I think Dr. Heschel must have known, and that I think he must have enjoyed:

A shtetl far from the highway.
The shtetl Jews, peasants,
Do business with the village,
Work for the farmers.
In his room, door locked,
The Rabbi studies,
And the books on his shelves multiply.

He makes his way to town,
Finds a holy book,
The seller names his price;
Weeks of wages! "I'll be back,"
And the rabbi goes off to borrow the money.
In the morning he is back, but
Too late; the bookseller cuts him off.

It's sold. Some coachman bought it.
A coachman? A baalegulah? A book of kabbalah?!

The rabbi, not knowing if the dealer teases,
Walks into the slum streets and asks for
The baaleguleh who buys books.
They just stare at him. The last one on his list
Boards at the shoepatcher.
The rabbi gets his shoes patched.
He asks: "What's in these books you buy?"
"Oh," the baalegulah replies, "tales
and stories." The rabbi, his suspicions
Confirmed, "could have guessed as much.
Imagine, baalegulahs and kabbalah!"

His heart brined in salt, disgusted
By the loss of the book, and the
Bookseller's teasing, he wants only
To travel home. He goes to the market
To find a ride. Ready to go, the
Baaleguleh yells: "Hop in, let's move!"
Amazed, the rabbi wonders, "Only one fare
And he travels?"
"Come on up, rabbi, don't worry!"

The baalegulah high on the driver's seat,
The rabbi under the covered wagon's hood, they travel.
Only an hour or two, he thinks, and I'll
Be home. But soon he feels a halt and
Looking out he hears the baaleguleh say:
"Come! Crawl out and look at this!"
The rabbi crawls, looks but cannot even
Recognize the road. "Is this not a strange
Road? he asks. "It'll get to be your own.
Look!" And he points to a field, to
Peasants, barefoot, scythes in hand, cutting hay.
Fragrant hay! Rolling fields! Vaulted sky!
Birds swarms swooping overhead!

"I see nothing," says the rabbi.
"O.K." We'll keep trucking!"

Hours pass. Suddenly another stop.
"Come on out, rabbi!"
This time, even more alien,
A field and forest. The baaleguleh
Stops to chat with a village peddler.
"Why drag me around?" The rabbi is angry,
But the baaleguleh just says, "This fellow
can use a ride; move over and we'll
Take him a spell."
The wagon moves on, the peddler and the
Rabbi sitting under the hood.
The rabbi's silence breathes icy anger,
So the peddler keeps his peace and
They move on.

Another stop. Now its a kuzhnya (smithy)
In some strange shtetl. The peddler leaves,
Moving on his way. The baaleguleh waits
In the kushnya for the kowal (smith)
To shoe the horse. He calls outside
To the rabbi: "Come on in, its happier
Here." At the door of the smithy stands
The Rabbi, growling with anger.
"What hutspa! All I need is to overhear
The conversations of kowals and baalegulehs!"

Finally, they travel on. But soon oats are
Needed for the horse, so on to the feedstore.
In friendly conversation stands the storekeeper,
The baaleguleh, and a woman. The rabbi burns
With rage. "When will there be an end to this!"
The baaleguleh looks at him. "It's a good store,
Good folks here, why don't you come in?"
The rabbi bites his lip. Even exile will someday

Nights falls, and they drive up to a kretchma (roadhouse)
As the baaleguleh unhitches the horse.
The rabbi starts to go,
Trying to find his colleague in the shtetl.
But he is stopped:
"You'll find good people in the roadhouse too."
The hutspeh of the baaleguleh
Imprisons him, and he stays. The kretchma is
Filled with simple folk; eating, drinking, smoking.
He finds a corner and prays the Ma'ariv.
He lets himself be served supper
while the kretchmer and the baaleguleh hum.
Tired of his anger, he naps and knows not
When lamps are doused and where the night gets lost.

The day greys to dawn and the baaleguleh shakes him awake.
He wants to wash his hands for prayer
But the other rushes him. "You'll daven at home."
Now the wagon flies, the road looks familiar.
The sun is fully up, and they are at the rabbi's house.
"Rabbi! Arrived!"
Feeling fortunate, "at home at last," he reaches for his wallet.
"How much do I owe you?" he asks.
"You owe me nothing," the answer comes.
"I'll even pay you." And he pulls out
The book and gives it to the rabbi.
"Take it, rabbi. If you see nothing,
And hear nothing, this book won't help you
Either!" He turns to his horse and
Urges him with a "Heigh-Ho!"
The rabbi stands there confused.
He rushes to pursue the wagon,
But the baalegulah is way gone.

Is the point of the story and its relevance to Torah study clear? If one cannot discern any meaning and any mystery and any message in the work of the farmer, or on the face of the innkeeper, or in

the company of fellow passengers, then one will not find it in the Torah either.

There are many ways to read the Torah. What we get out of it depends on what we bring with us to it. Ezekiel complains somewhere that they call him a singer of songs instead of paying attention to what he is saying. To call the Prophets "literature", Heschel used to say, is like praising the manuscript of Einstein's theory of relativity by saying that he had a nice handwriting. He may have happened to have good penmanship but this was not his goal. His intention was to say something important about reality, and so it with the Prophets. To focus on precisely when or where they lived, or on the exact spelling of their words, can be a digression, an escape, from hearing what they want to say. They want to judge us, not to be judged by us. As in the story about the brash young man who comes back to his first teacher after a stay in the Yeshiva, that Heschel tells in The Earth Is The Lord's, the central question is not: how much Talmud have we gone through. The central question is: how much has gone through us? This is what Torah study meant for Heschel.

And there is a soul in the world. He was the one who taught us to be sensitive to the difference between the Greek word for "world" and the Hebrew word. The Greek word is "cosmos" which means something complete in itself. The Hebrew word is "olam", which is a cousin of the word "ne-elam" which means mystery, wonder, something hidden. The world itself is a wonder. That which we understand is still a wonder. That we understand is a wonder.

There are two ways of looking at the world. One can say that the world is getting older every day. One can feel sorry for the world that has to get up every day for centuries, for millenia. One can wish that the world could retire and move to Florida to live on social security, as people do. Or, one can sense that the world is being born today! One can bend down and listen to the world's heartbeat and know that underneath everything there is life, pulsating life, coming to expression in the grass, in the birds, in us, in all. Heschel lived with dynamism, with electricity, because he sensed the aliveness of all that is, and responded to it.

Let me say something now about Heschel's last years. In one sense, these were the years of his greatest fame and glory. But in another

sense, there were the years of his greatest isolation and loneliness. The question is: why did he turn at this point in his life to activism? Why did he invest so much of himself in these last years to social causes? He must have known how precarious his health was, how precious his time was, how much writing he still had to do. Why then did he choose to spend his last energies this way, in a race against time, juggling tasks, commuting between worlds, finishing his book on the Kotsker and carrying on political activities at the same time? What did he need it for, when it brought him so much criticism from Jews, maligning from students, harsh judgements from peers?

The key may be in something that Dr. Heschel once wrote about Maimonides. Scholars have long wondered about the relationship between Maimonides the philosopher and Maimonides the physican. Was the latter simply his way of making a living so that he could be the former? In his biography of Maimonides, Dr. Heschel offered a different suggestion. He proposed that for Maimonides, the practice of medicine was not instead of religion, or in addition to religion, - it was religion. It was prayer in the form of a deed. His life moved in stages. His metaphysics led him to the love of God, and the love of God led him to the healing of God's people. Byron Sherwin, in his book about Heschel, suggests that the same point that Heschel made about Maimonides can also be made about him. He too moved in stages. In the ninteen-sixties Heschel worked on the prophets, producing a book that is a lasting contribution to biblical scholarship. But in the process. the prophets worked on him too. As he lived with them in his consciousness, a change came over him. The man who could have easily lived out his years in a scholar's study became instead more and more deeply involved in social issues. The pain of the blacks in the South, of Jews in the Soviet Union, of human beings in Vietnam, penetrated his soul and gave him no rest. He became a guide and a goad to all of us on the controversial issue of our time. He took on the American Medical Association, went to the White House to speak up for the rights of the aged, became a central figure in the civil rights movement, and one of the major voices in the protest against the Vietnam war. Sherwin suggests that all these involvements were not digressions from his study of the Prophets; that they were the

result of his study of the prophets.

It is true that others have studied the Prophets and not come away so deeply affected. If so, perhaps they did not really study the Prophets but only the details that surround them. Heschel studied the Prophets, and came away from the experience transformed. Speaking up in the name of God against evil became, for him, not a digression from religion, but its essence.

And so began those last lonely years, the years in which he won so much admiration in the Christian world and so little appreciation within the Jewish world. He journeyed to Rome in the hope of bringing about a change in the Church's understanding of the Jew, and although he had some effect there, he was harshly criticized by certain elements within the Jewish community for going. He journeyed to Selma to stand with Martin Luther King. "Father Abraham" they called him there, for they sensed in him more than just a spokesman for the Bible. They sensed in him an embodiment of the Bible. But when a few years later, the civil rights movement fell apart, and blacks robbed and pillaged in Jewish neighborhoods, he was mocked and made fun of by cynics for what he had done. The day before he died, he went, in the cold, and despite ill health, to be at the gate to greet a Catholic priest as he came out of prison after an anti-Vietnam demonstration; and he was criticized, and petitioned against by his own Seminary students for cancelling his classes to do it. Some of his own students and some of his own peers could not understand why he did these things "instead of Judaism". Like the Prophets of old, he was alone at the end, isolated and misunderstood, and yet those last lonely years were the ones in which he brought to fruition all that he had studied and taught and become until then.

How can we pay tribute to him, we who miss him so much? Who else do we have since his departure who reached out so far and yet remained so rooted? Who else do we have like him, who had two books side by side near his bed when he died: a hasidic sefer, and a book about the Vietnam war? Who do we have who cares about what either book represents, much less about both? Who else do we have like him to remind us of who we should be, of who we can be, of who we are?

In a eulogy that he once gave for his friend, he said that there are three levels of mourning. The first level is with tears. The second level, higher than that, is with silence. And the third level,

the highest of all, is with song. Tears we have shed aplenty since his going. Silence we have observed for a long time now, each time we contemplate how orphaned our generation is, how much more there still was that we could have done with him, how much more there still was that we should have done for him. Ten years have passed. It is time now to turn our mourning into song.

"Dovev siftey yisheynim --- whoever quotes his master's words, it is as if his lips still move from the grave," says the midrash. May our teacher's lips continue to move, and may his spirit continue to live in us, with us, and through us, for many more years to come. And may these words by him, and about him, that I have recalled to our minds be a source of blessing to us all.

with much gratitude for your help, EF

HESCHEL'S SIGNIFICANCE FOR JEWISH-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS

EVA FLEISCHNER

Abraham Joshua Heschel did his best to help Christians understand they could overcome their failure and become truly human.

We all have our stories to tell about Abraham Joshua Heschel—allow me to tell one also, a story I received from a friend:

The Jesuit Daniel Kilfoyle was one of the founders of Clergy and Laity Concerned about Vietnam. After the first few meetings he was forbidden by his superiors to remain with the group. Kilfoyle decided to go to one more meeting, so that he could tell his friends in person why he would not be able to stay with them. Heschel sat across the table from him as he spoke. When he had finished, Heschel got up, came around to where Daniel was sitting, and embraced him saying: "You are my brother!"[1] In some mysterious way Abraham Heschel, the Jew, respected the Jesuit's decision to obey and understood his pain.

What was it about Heschel that gave him this capacity for understanding a tradition and a discipline that were—at least in this case—quite alien to his own, a discipline which, by the 1960s, even some Catholics had difficulty in understanding and accepting? How was it that, less than three months after his death, *America* magazine published an entire issue dedicated to Heschel, in which Protestant and Catholic scholars joined with Jewish scholars in paying tribute to Heschel? John Bennett, at the time president of Union Theological Seminary where Heschel had been a visiting professor, wrote in that issue that "Abraham Heschel belonged to the whole American

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This essay was originally delivered at a Heschel Symposium at the College of St. Benedict, St. Joseph, Minn., in 1983. It has been shortened for publication here, but the full version will appear in a volume to be published by McMillan.

still far away from the expected redemption. Instead of standing as the eschatological community at the end of history, the church has entered history as a community parallel and often in rivalry and conflict with the Jewish people. The net result of the messianic outburst that took place in the year 33 within the Jewish community, as a response to the events around Jesus of Nazareth, has been that a new access, a new gate, in particular for non-Jews, has been opened to the way of the Lord which began with Abraham (Gen. 18:19) and will end in the kingdom of God. It is not true that the church has replaced Israel or has taken over its vocation. Both Israel and the church await the fulfillment of the Torah, when the image of God will be visible in the whole of humanity. The Jews await this final Day incorporated in the people of Israel, the Christians incorporated in the body of Christ. And both are judged by the same God to whom they have to answer, if they have been faithful to their particular vocation. The Jews have expressed their faithfulness in a "no" to Jesus as his church tried to take the Torah away from them. Christians may express their faithfulness in their "yes" to Jesus who embodied the Torah, and therefore also in a "yes" to his brothers and sisters, the Jewish people.

NOTES

1. *Zur Erneuerung des Verhältnisses von Christen und Juden, Handreichung der Evangelischen Kirche in Rheinland, Nr. 39* (Mülheim, 1980), pp. 8-28; also in B. Klappert, H. Stark, eds., *Umkehr und Erneuerung; Erläuterungen zum Synodalbeshluss der Rheinischen Landessynode 1980 "Zur Erneuerung des Verhältnisses von Christen und Juden"* (Neukirchen-Vluyn; Neukirchener Verlag, 1980), pp. 263-81.
2. "Erwägungen zur kirchlichen Handreichung zur Erneuerung des Verhältnisses von Christen und Juden" in *Dokumentation des Evangelischen Pressedienstes* (Frankfurt am Main, Sept. 29, 1980).
3. In G. B. Ginzel, ed., *Auschwitz als Herausforderung für Juden und Christen* (Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1980), p. 176.
4. Hanna Wolff, *Neuer Wein–Alte Schläuche; das Identitätsproblem des Christentums im Lichte der Tiefenpsychologie* (Stuttgart: Radius Verlag, 1981).
5. Adolf von Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (Leipzig, 1902), p. 50 (quotation translated by this author).
6. Gerhard Kittel, *Die Judenfrage*, 2nd ed., 1933, p. 61 (quoted in J. S. Vos, 'Politiek en Exegese; Gerhard Kittels beeld van het jodendom,' in *Verkenning en Bezinning*, 17e Jaargang, no. 2, September, 1983, p. 13).
7. Stefan Heym, 'Keynote Address to Christians and Jews,' in *From the Martin Buber House*, issue no. 2, December, 1982, p. 8.
8. Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt, "Feinde um unsretwillen; 'Das jüdische Nein und die christliche Theologie," in Peter von der Osten-Sacken, ed. *Treue zur Thora, Beiträge zur Mitte des christlich-jüdischen Gesprächs; Festschrift für Günther Harder zum 75. Geburtstag*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Institut Kirche und Judentum, 1979), p. 174; 1st ed. 1977. (Quotation translated by this author.)
9. This author's translation from the Hebrew.
10. Peter von der Osten-Sacken, *Grundzüge einer Theologie im christliche-jüdischen Gespräch* (München: Kaiser Verlag, 1982), pp. 139, 182.

religious community. I know of no other person of whom this was so true. . . . He seemed equally at home with Protestants and Catholics."[2] We have all heard the tributes paid him by the Christian theologians at this symposium. Jewish scholars also bear witness to Heschel's impact on Christians. Samuel Dresner wrote of Heschel's "fraternity with the Christian community."[3] And in a paper given at the Jewish Theological Seminary, Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum said that "Americans of all religions and races discovered in Heschel a rare religious genius of penetrating insight and compassion."[4]

How do we explain this extraordinary phenomenon: a Jewish religious thinker, utterly and profoundly Jewish, who touched and affected not just the lives, but the thought of Christian theologians? I hope to throw some light on this question by examining the role that Heschel played in bringing Jews and Christians closer to each other. I shall approach my subject in three parts:

First, I shall examine those writings of Heschel in which he speaks explicitly of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. To this group belong not only passages that reveal Heschel's remarkable understanding of and sympathy for Christianity, but also his trenchant and honest—at times painfully honest—articulation of Christian failure, Christian sin vis-à-vis Judaism in the course of history, such as the attempts at forced conversion, the "Teaching of Contempt," and Christianity's role in the Holocaust.

The second section will deal with Heschel's influence on the Second Vatican Council. It is closely related to the first, but I examine it separately because of the historical importance of Vatican II for the religious history of the twentieth century in general, and for Christianity's relationship to Judaism in particular.

In the third and last part I shall briefly look at Heschel's work more broadly, to see how Abraham Joshua Heschel the Jew, Heschel the Hasid, has influenced Christianity today. While the theme of this paper—Jewish-Christian reconciliation—will be implicit rather than explicit here, this area may well prove to be Heschel's most enduring and profound impact on Christianity. It can perhaps be seen as the source and wellspring of the first two parts of my paper.

One common thread runs through all three sections: the great-heartedness, the generous, deeply caring figure of Abraham Heschel. His personal impact on Christians— whether on renowned theologians, popes and cardinals, or on large lay audiences, such as the gathering at the 1969 Milwaukee Liturgical Conference—was as immediate and profound as was the impact of his writings. Or to put it

in a Jewish way: word and deed were always at one in the life of this holy man.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF JEWS AND CHRISTIANS TODAY AND IN HISTORY

Heschel was profoundly optimistic about Jewish-Christian relations. In a 1966 article he spoke of the new atmosphere of mutual esteem that had come about, and rejoiced in the fact that he now had Protestant and Catholic students in his classes.[5] It was an important time for him: he had recently become visiting professor at Union Theological Seminary, and his hard work during Vatican II had borne fruit. He saw the ecumenical movement as a new horizon of hitherto unimagined possibilities. But his optimism was not a facile one. Just as during Vatican II it had taken much faith and perseverance for him to continue to believe that an ancient and often sordid history could be turned around, so too there remained moments of discouragement. Jacob Teshima, a student of his at Jewish Theological Seminary, recalls going for a walk with Heschel right after the Munich massacre. Heschel spoke with anguish: "Oh, how I pray for the peace of Jerusalem. But look at the cool indifference of the world's Christians! . . ."[6] He knew times of discouragement, probably many more than we are aware of. But he did not allow them to overcome his hope or to paralyze his efforts to bring Jews and Christians closer to each other.

Heschel's theological impact on Christians is all the more striking because he believed that certain limits must be respected in the dialogue. Thus he held that Jews and Christians should not discuss the figure of Christ.[7] Christology was out of bounds because Heschel believed that each religion is entitled to the privacy of its holy of holies; Judaism too "must always be mindful of the mystery of aloneness and uniqueness of its own being."[8] What then was the ground for Heschel on which Jews and Christians could meet face to face and engage each other in meaningful conversation?

Jews and Christians have much in common but are also separated. The differences must be explored, along with the vast heritage which they share. Common ground and separation are both necessary and should be affirmed. For each community must retain its identity, while respecting and understanding the other. This means that we must understand what we have in common, as well as what divides us. To slight either would make our conversation meaningless. The

question for Heschel was always: How can we talk with each other out of our specific and partly different commitment of Jews and Christians? *Out of* commitment, not *without* commitment.

The question for Heschel was always: How can we talk with each other out of our specific and partly different commitment of Jews and Christians? *Out of* commitment, not *without* commitment.

In every God-human relationship—and this relationship was at the heart of all that Heschel wrote and did—there are four dimensions: creed or teaching; faith or the assent of the heart; law or deed, which concretizes the first two; and the context in which faith is lived in history, the community.[9]

We are united in the dimension of the deed by our common concern for safeguarding and enhancing the divine image in our fellow human beings, by building a world where justice and freedom can prevail. There is commonality also in the realm of faith (which for Heschel is always distinct from creed): our awareness of "the tragic insufficiency of human faith," even at its best, our anguish and pain in falling so far short of the divine command, in being callous and hardhearted in response to God's invitation. All this unites us.

And what divides us? Creed, dogma: "There is a deep chasm between Christians and Jews concerning . . . the divinity and the Messiahship of Jesus."[10] Yet the chasm need not be a source of hostility. For, "to turn a disagreement about the identity of this 'Anointed' into an act of apostasy from God Himself seems to me neither logical nor charitable."[11] The chasm remains, but we can extend our hands to each other across it provided we are willing to recognize that doctrine, all doctrine, can only point the way: it can never hold fast the mystery of God. The goal of our journey is not doctrine but faith; along the way doctrines can serve as signposts, but "the righteous lives by . . . faith, not by . . . creed. And faith . . . involves profound awareness of the inadequacy of words, concepts, deeds. Unless we realize that dogmas are tentative rather than final . . . we are guilty of intellectual idolatry."[12]

The challenge for Heschel was not how to relate to a religious institution different from his own, but rather, to human beings who worship God in another way, "who worship God as followers of

Jesus."[13] Can Jews accept this different way as valid? Can they not just tolerate it, but revere it as holy?

Heschel's answer is an unequivocal yes (we shall see later that he asks no less of Christians). This yes is based on two convictions—both, I believe, revolutionary not only fifteen years ago but still today.

The first, strongly held and repeatedly affirmed, is Heschel's belief in religious pluralism; not as an evil necessity of which we must grudgingly make the best, but as desire, even delight, of God. "God's voice speaks in many languages, communicating itself in a diversity of intuitions."[14] Why should it not be God's will in this earthly eon that there be a diversity of religions, a variety of paths to God? Heschel finds no evidence in history that a single religion for the citizens even of one country is a blessing. Rather, the task of preparing the kingdom of God seems to him to require a diversity of talents, a variety of rituals, "soul-searching as well as . . . loyal opposition."[15] In his December 10, 1972, interview with Carl Stern, which was to be his last gift to us, he asked Stern if he would really want all the paintings in the Metropolitan to be alike; or, would the world be a more fascinating place if all human faces were the same? In this eon, at least, diversity of religion seems to him to be the will of God, with the prospect of all peoples embracing one form of worship reserved for the world to come.[16] It is not diversity of belief that is responsible for today's crisis; we stand on the edge of the abyss "not because we intensely *disagree*, but because we feebly *agree*. Faith, not indifference, is the condition for interfaith."[17]

A second conviction underlies Heschel's belief that respect of each other's differences is both necessary and good: his insistence that religion and God are not identical. Religion is only a means, not the end. It becomes idolatrous when regarded as an end in itself. The majesty of God transcends the dignity of religion. There is only one absolute loyalty in which all our loyalties have their root, and to which they are subservient, loyalty to God, "the loyalty of all my loyalties."[18] God alone is absolute. Everything else, when it becomes its own end, runs the risk of being idolatrous. Therefore religion stands under constant judgment and in need of repentance and self-examination.[19] These words, written by Heschel with reference to Vatican II and the church's need always again to reform itself, had a wider application for him to all religions, including his own.

The relationship between Jews and Christians which is forged out of our common ground and differences is today threatened by a common crisis. We live in a time when all that we hold most dear is in danger of being lost: moral sensitivity, justice, peace, our whole

biblical heritage, the very survival of God's presence in the world. Because the crisis is universal, Jews and Christians must work together to save the world from destruction, to preserve those values that make life human and worth living. We can hope to succeed only through a joint effort; we need each other, because the task is too overwhelming for each of us alone. Are we ready to face the challenge? This is how Heschel describes our common task: "The supreme issue is today not the *halakah* for the Jew or the Church for the Christian . . .; the supreme issue is whether we are alive or dead to the challenge and the expectation of the living God. The crisis engulfs all of us. The misery and fear of alienation from God make Jew and Christian cry together."[20] We really have no choice. Either we work together to keep God alive in the world, or we will both be engulfed by nihilism, which Heschel sees as a worldwide counterforce to the ecumenical movement. Because we confront the same dangers and terrors, and stand together on the brink, "parochialism has become untenable . . . no religion is an island. We are all involved with one another. . . . Today religious isolationism is a myth."

The current need for Jews and Christians to work together is, however, more than a strategic necessity for Heschel; it is rooted in history. We are linked historically, and the destiny of one impinges on the destiny of the other. It has always been so. Even in the Middle Ages, Jews lived in only relative isolation and acknowledged that Christianity's spiritual impact on the world was important also to them. "If the non-Jews of a certain town are moral, the Jews born there will be moral as well." Heschel quotes Rabbi Joseph Yaabez, one of the victims of the Inquisition, who blessed God for the faith of Christians, without which "we might ourselves become infirm in our faith."

And yet, despite such moments of insight and recognition, our history is full of prejudice and bigotry. "This is the agony of history: bigotry, the failure to respect each other's commitment, each other's faith."[21] How can we be cured of our bigotry? How can we learn to rejoice in one another's triumphs rather than each other's defeats? The answer for Heschel lies in the awareness of our common humanity, which for him is never mere humanity. Meeting another human being offers me an opportunity to encounter the divine presence here on earth. In the other's presence I stand on holy ground. Why should this holiness disappear if the other holds religious beliefs that differ from mine? "Does God cease to stand before me? Does the difference in commitment destroy the kinship of being human?"[22]

Heschel again looks to his own tradition for an answer. "The pious

of all nations have a share in the world to come and are promised eternal life."[23] Jews must therefore respect the faith of Christians. They must do more. Following the tradition of Maimonides, Jehuda Halevi, and Jacob Emden, they must acknowledge Christianity's positive role in the divine plan of redemption.[24] Because of Israel's mysterious election ("in you shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed" [Gen. 12:3]), Judaism has a vital stake in the spiritual life of other peoples, particularly Christians, through whom the message of the living God has spread to the ends of the earth. Unlike some Jewish thinkers who, while acknowledging Christianity's debt to Judaism, see the relationship as a one-way street, Heschel believes that the mother cannot ignore her children.

Heschel demands no less of Christians, however, than he demands of himself and his fellow Jews: genuine acceptance of and respect for Judaism. This implies several "precepts," which Heschel spells out quite clearly. I believe he felt the freedom to do so because they concern the history of Christianity, rather than its central affirmation of faith in Christ.

All attempts to convert Jews must be abandoned, for they are a call to Jews to abandon their people's tradition.

The first "precept" is no more mission to the Jews. All attempts to convert Jews must be abandoned, for they are a call to Jews to betray their people's tradition, and proof of the failure to accept Judaism as a way of truth, a way to God, valid in its own right.

Renouncing mission to the Jews requires a major change in the church's attitude. "For nineteen hundred years the Church defined her relation to the Jews in one word: Mission. What we witness now is the beginning of a change in that relation, a transition *from mission to dialogue*. . . . We must insist that giving up the idea of mission to the Jews be accepted as a precondition for entering dialogue." The problem, however, is that many Christians are still not sufficiently sensitive to this issue, and do not understand that "we are Jews as we are men."[25]

Heschel recalls his conversation with Gustav Weigel the night before Weigel's death. They talked in Heschel's study at Jewish Theological Seminary.

> We opened our hearts to one another in prayer and contrition and spoke of our own deficiencies, failures, hopes. At one moment I posed the question: Is it really the will of God that there be no more Judaism in the world? Would it really be the triumph of God if the scrolls of the Torah would no more be taken out of the Ark and the Torah no more be read in the Synagogue, our ancient Hebrew prayers in which Jesus himself worshipped no more recited, the Passover Seder no more celebrated in our lives, the Law of Moses no more observed in our homes? Would it really be *ad majorem Dei gloriam* to have a world without Jews?[26]

As I reflected on this passage some time ago I began to wonder what Weigel had said in reply. Heschel does not tell us. I thought that perhaps Mrs. Heschel would know, so I went to see her. She remembered Heschel coming home late that night very moved by his conversation with Weigel, but did not recall his speaking of the Jesuit's response. So the two of us sat there wondering and talking, and soon we were joined by Susannah Heschel and a friend, who were visiting that Sunday. We read the whole passage aloud, slowly. And suddenly the answer emerged, quite clearly. "We opened our hearts to one another in prayer and contrition and spoke of our own deficiencies, failures, hopes." That was how their discussion began: in prayer and contrition. How could Fr. Weigel's response to what followed have been anything but a profound affirmation of Judaism as Judaism? The four of us, as we sat in the Heschels' living room that sunny Sunday afternoon, felt in agreement, reassured, and at peace.

"Would it really be to the greater glory of God to have a world without Jews?" When presented in such terms, it is difficult to imagine even the most fundamentalist of Christians answering, yes! But alas, we do not have enough Heschels in the world—men, and women, whose love of their God and people and tradition is so radiant that it is quite obviously sacred, so that it becomes inconceivable to wish it away. Convert Heschel to Christianity? A monstrous idea. It is unlikely that the effort was ever made. Why, then, the profound indignation that resounds in his famous—and to many of us so shocking—statement, made at the time of Vatican II and repeated still in the 1972 Stern interview: "I'd rather go to Auschwitz than be the object of conversion"? His indignation was no doubt rooted in his identification with his people's repeated suffering in the course of history and the fear that, unless Vatican II explicitly renounced mission to the Jews, the indignity and suffering would continue.

Fortunately, Heschel saw signs of hope in our time, among both Catholics and Protestants. I shall deal with Vatican II below, but let me quote here a few words in this context: "I must say that I found understanding for our sensitivity and position on this issue on the part of distinguished leaders of the Roman Catholic Church."[27] Some Protestant theologians also had begun publicly to reject missionary activity to the Jews—among them Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich. At a joint meeting of the faculties of Jewish Theological Seminary and Union Theological Seminary, Niebuhr repudiated Christian missionary activity in part because " 'Practically nothing can purify the symbol of Christ as the image of God in the imagination of the Jew from the taint with which ages of Christian oppression in the name of Christ have tainted it.' "[28] This is a reference to what has come to be called the "Teaching of Contempt."[29] Renouncing all such teaching is the second "precept" incumbent today upon Christians who are sincere in their desire to take Judaism seriously.

It is no easy task. The problem is almost as old as Christianity. Christianity was born of Judaism, but "the children did not arise to call the mother blessed; instead, they called her blind."[30] The original affirmation became repudiation, Jewish faith came to be seen as superseded and obsolete, the new covenant as abolishing and replacing the first. "Contrast and contradiction rather than acknowledgment of roots, relatedness and indebtedness, became the perspective."[31]

As we today know so well, this perspective was to have tragic consequences, once Christianity emerged from its initial status of a persecuted minority religion and became linked with the power of the Roman Empire. Heschel is painfully aware of the heavy burden of guilt which Christianity has incurred vis-à-vis Judaism over the centuries, including a share in the Holocaust. In his talk *On Prayer* at the 1969 Liturgical Conference in Milwaukee he said: "It is with shame and anguish that I recall that it was possible for a Roman Catholic church adjoining the extermination camp in Auschwitz to offer communion to the officers of the camp, to people who day after day drove thousands of people to be killed in the gas chambers."[32]

The first four words of this sentence strike me as truly extraordinary. Heschel speaks here of the failure—the gigantic failure—of a major religious community not his own; yet he uses the word "shame." Are we ever *ashamed* of the sins of others? We may be shocked and scandalized, we may accuse and blame. But we are *ashamed* only if in some way we feel related to, identified with, these

others—if, in other words, they are not totally "other" to us. How are we to explain Heschel's use of the word in this context? It seems to me that, for him, the failure of the church is not simply failure of the church, but threatens faith everywhere; it is a warning to all who would call themselves religious, a sign that we all have lost our ability to be shocked at the monstrous evil all about us. It was this that made Auschwitz possible; we must regain our moral sensitivity. And so he continues, in the very next sentence; "Let there be an end to the separation of church and God . . ., of religion and justice, of prayer and compassion."

The Holocaust raises the issue of the complicity and silence of the churches as no other event in Western history does. This has become a scandal for Jews and, I am glad to say, for many Christians as well. For some Jews, the scandal is so great that they refuse all dialogue—I can understand them. Others are willing to enter into conversation with Christians, but wonder whether Christianity has lost its credibility since Auschwitz. I can understand them also—some Christians have raised the same question. Heschel's reaction, however, appears different to me. Here he is, at the Liturgical Conference, speaking in very strong terms of the failure of the Roman Catholic Church. Yet his words are not so much an accusation directed at Catholics as a warning to religious people, to religious institutions, everywhere. What could so easily and understandably have become yet another wall between us becomes instead a source of anguish at human frailty, a frailty from which none of us—not Jews, not Christians—are exempt. "We have no triumph to report except the slow, painstaking effort to redeem single moments in the lives of single men, in the lives of small communities. We do not come on the clouds of heaven but grope through the mists of history."

Notice the "we," again a matter of terminology, seemingly small perhaps, yet so significant. Heschel's concern with the plight of being human, with the tragedy of the human condition, cuts across all religious creeds. We are all sinners, Jews and Christians alike. Perhaps it is this awareness, this deep sense of "we-ness," that enables him to refrain from condemning Christians. I at least do not feel condemned as I read him, nor do I feel that my church is condemned by this man—not even when he points to our sins during the Holocaust. Indeed, I have heard some Christians speak much more harshly of Christianity's failure at that time; I have spoken of it much more harshly myself. Is there not some deep font of compassion in Heschel for all human creatures, everywhere, without exception, a compassion which is somehow lacking—or at least diminished—in

me, in many of us? I am not sure. But I do know that his refusal to condemn is profoundly healing. I believe it is one of his greatest gifts to us as we strive for reconciliation. He was not blind—far from it: he saw more clearly than many. "His was not the simplicity of innocence."[33] Yet he does not judge or condemn. It is as if he suffers with us who have failed. And this, after all, is the literal meaning of compassion.

"As long as there is a shred of hatred in the human heart, as long as there is a vacuum without compassion anywhere in the world, there is an emergency." And why is there so much hatred and rage? "Because we do not know how to repent."[34] But if all are in the same predicament, there is also hope for all."History is not a blind alley, and guilt is not an abyss. There is always a way that leads out of guilt: repentance or turning to God."[35]

It is typical of Heschel that the overcoming of hostility, the healing of ancient wounds, is a task for both communities. He calls upon Jews to ponder seriously the responsibility in Jewish history for having given birth to two world religions. The children did not arise to call the mother blessed but, he asks—it is his question, I would not dare ask—"does not the failure of children reflect upon their mother? Do not the sharp deviations from Jewish tradition on the part of the early Christians who were Jews indicate some failure of communication within the spiritual climate of first-century Palestine?"[36] Heschel asks this question after centuries of Christian defamation and persecution of Jews; after the Holocaust. . . .

Again in typical fashion, he moves from the problem, the difficulty, the tragedy, to the opportunity, the new possibility, the hope. Christianity's turning away from the ancient and pernicious teaching is only the first stage in a new era of friendship between Christians and Jews. Heschel believes that we live in a uniquely privileged moment of time, when Christians look to Jews with wonder and hope, a fact which confronts Jews in turn with a new challenge: "We Jews are being put to a new test. Christians, in many parts of the world, have suddenly begun to look at the Jews with astonishment. In particular, the attitude of the Christian community in America is undergoing a change. Instead of hostility, there is expectation. . . . Many Christians believe that we Jews carry the Tablets in our arms, hugging them lovingly. They believe that we continue to relish and nurture the wisdom that God has entrusted to us, that we are loaded with spiritual treasures."[37]

Permit me here to quote a brief excerpt from the 1973 French Bishops' *Guidelines for Christians in their Relationship with Jews*, which is

proof, I believe, that Heschel's hope was not overly sanguine:

> The permanence of this people through the ages, its survival over civilizations, its presence as a rigorous and exacting partner *vis à vis* Christianity are a fact of major importance which we can treat neither with ignorance nor with contempt. The Church which claims to speak in the name of Jesus Christ and which through Him finds itself bound, since its origin and forever, to the Jewish people, perceives in the centuries-long and uninterrupted existence of this people a sign the full truth of which it would like to understand.[38]

This new Christian expectation is a challenge to the Jewish community, a *kairos*. "Here is a unique responsibility. Such occasions come rarely twice. Are we prepared for the test?"[39]

He at least did what he could to meet it. Fritz Rothschild has written that, when asked later why he had let himself become involved with Vatican II, Heschel replied: "The issues at stake were profoundly theological. To refuse contact with Christian theologians is, to my mind, barbarous. There is a great expectation among Christians today that Judaism has something unique to offer."[40]

And so he allowed himself to become involved with Vatican II—"involved" is too weak a word. He gave of himself tirelessly during the council, to the point of exhaustion at times, on one occasion traveling to Rome for a special audience with Pope Paul VI literally on the eve of Yom Kippur. Let me at this point move into the second part of my paper and consider Heschel's role at Vatican II.

HESCHEL AND THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL[41]

It is generally known that Heschel played an important role at Vatican II, although a detailed study on his contribution has yet to appear.[42] During the preparatory stage Heschel acted as consultant to the American Jewish Committee and other Jewish agencies, which had been asked by Cardinal Bea's Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity to prepare background documentation for the council. With Heschel's help three memoranda were submitted to Cardinal Bea. The first two dealt with various problem areas in Catholic teaching and liturgy. In a third, submitted in May, 1962, Heschel proposed that a new beginning be made with a Vatican Council declaration that would recognize the "permanent preciousness" of Jews as Jews, rather than seeing them as potential converts, and that would expressly repudiate anti-Semitism and the deicide charge.[43]

In February, 1962, the year in which the council was to open, three of Heschel's books were sent to Cardinal Bea, who warmly acknowledged them "as a strong common spiritual bond between us." The books were *God in Search of Man*, *Man Is Not Alone*, and *The Sabbath*.

Discussion of the Declaration on the Jews was postponed to the second session, scheduled to open in September, 1963. In the spring of that year Cardinal Bea visited the United States, speaking at Harvard and in New York City. Heschel chaired a private meeting between Bea and a group of Jewish leaders and was the speaker at an interfaith banquet held in the cardinal's honor, which was attended by U.N. officials and political and religious leaders. On this occasion Heschel addressed the common threat faced by all human beings today, the threat of evil, of the darkness all about us, a darkness of our own making. He also spoke of the great spiritual renewal inspired by Pope John XXIII.

Pope John died on June 4, 1963, and the second session opened in September under his successor, Paul VI, who supported the secretariat's position with regard to the Jewish people. The promising beginning that had been made was, however, destined to undergo much turbulence and controversy. Despite the support of Paul VI, opposition to the proposed declaration grew and pressures on the secretariat began to mount. In November, 1963, Heschel wrote to Cardinal Bea, expressing his deep concern that the theme of conversion of the Jews had been introduced into a new text.

A new version of this draft appeared in a newspaper story shortly before the third session was to open. The original text had been watered down, and the hope was expressed for the Jews' eventual conversion. In a statement of September 3, 1964, Heschel strongly condemned the new version. His harshest words were reserved for the theme of conversion, and show that he could, if necessary, be sarcastic—a tone which was generally quite alien to him:

> it must be stated that *spiritual fratricide* is hardly a means of "reciprocal understanding." . . . Jews throughout the world will be dismayed by a call from the Vatican to abandon their faith in a generation which witnessed the massacre of six million Jews . . . on a continent where the dominant religion was not Islam, Buddhism, or Shintoism.

The situation was so critical that the AJC arranged an audience for Heschel with Pope Paul VI for September 14, 1964, literally the eve of

Yom Kippur. Despite the great personal inconvenience to him, Heschel felt he must go. The audience lasted thirty-five minutes, and Heschel later described the pope as having been friendly and cordial.

Maneuvering in both camps continued into the fourth session. Eventually enough support for the earlier text was marshalled so that the document that was officially approved on October 28, 1965, and which we know as *Nostra Aetate*, did not make any reference to proselytizing. It was greeted with a mixture of relief and regret; as admittedly a compromise, but also, as making possible a new beginning. There is no doubt that the latter view has indeed been vindicated by developments that have taken place since then—developments which are greatly indebted to Abraham Heschel.

Let me speak briefly about what I call the aftermath of Heschel's involvement in Vatican II, both from his point of view and from that of the highest authority in the Catholic Church.

There are several references to Pope John XXIII in Heschel's writings. In the 1966 *Jubilee* article already referred to, Heschel wrote that "Pope John was a great miracle, who captured the hearts of Christians and non-Christians alike through his sheer love of humanity. With John and the Council hearts were opened—not only windows . . . but hearts."[44]

Reflecting on the controversy and on his successful attempts to delete any reference to the conversion of Jews from the council document, Heschel said in 1967: "The Schema on the Jews is the first statement of the Church in history— the first Christian discourse dealing with Judaism—which is devoid of any expression of hope for conversion."[45]

What about the pope who had received Heschel in a special audience two days before the third session? Apparently, Heschel's influence on Paul VI had gone far beyond that meeting. In a general audience in Rome on January 31, 1973, shortly after Heschel's death, the pope reminded the pilgrims that "even before we have moved in search of God, God has come in search of us." The editors of *America* magazine, in quoting the Pope's words, commented that the most remarkable aspect about this statement was the fact that the subsequently published text of the papal talk cited the writings of Abraham Joshua Heschel as its source. In the memory of veteran observers of the Roman scene, this citation was an unprecedented public reference by a pope to a writer who was not a Christian.[46]

I believe that Heschel's impact on Christianity goes beyond his involvement in the ecumenical movement and his work at Vatican II. I shall summarize it in three brief points.

First: We have already seen that Heschel's books were read by Cardinal Bea and Pope Paul VI. Long before, however, as early as 1951, Reinhold Niebuhr hailed Heschel as a "commanding and authoritative voice . . . in the religious life of America."[47] As the body of Heschel's work grew, so did his influence on Christian theologians. J. A. Sanders has proposed the intriguing thesis that Karl Barth's *Humanity of God*, published in 1956, was influenced by *God in Search of Man*, published the year before.[48] Whether through personal friendship or his writings—and frequently through both—Heschel affected the very fabric of Christian thought.

Second: Because God was a shattering reality for Heschel, because the world of the Hebrew prophets was uniquely his own, Sanders wrote, "many Christian thinkers learned that God already was, and had been for a long time, what traditional Christian dogma taught was

Precisely because he was steeped in his own tradition, because he was Jewish in every fiber of his being, Heschel was able to mediate to Christians the riches of what is also their biblical heritage.

revealed only in Christ."[49] Precisely because he was steeped in his own tradition, because he was Jewish in every fiber of his being, Heschel was able to mediate to Christians the riches of what is also their biblical heritage. He saw more clearly than some Christian theologians that the battle with Marcion has not yet been won, that all too often the Hebrew Bible still takes second place to the New Testament. He gave a vivid illustration of this from Vatican II, where each morning after Mass an ancient copy of the Gospel was solemnly carried down to the nave of St. Peter's and deposited on the altar. "It was the Gospel only, and no other book."[50] A simple pious practice, or the expression of a still deep-rooted theological view that the Hebrew Scriptures are not fully equal to the Christian Scriptures? The latter, it would seem, in light of a text Heschel quotes from

Karl Rahner, that " 'ultimately God effected the production of the Old Testament books to the extent that they were to have a certain function and authority in regard to the New Testament.' "[51] Against such a view Heschel insisted, again and again, that the Hebrew Bible is primary for Christians as much as Jews, because Jesus' understanding of God was the Jewish understanding of God, Jesus' preaching was about Torah and the Prophets, and the Christian liturgy is permeated with the Psalms. Heschel's conviction is being validated today by the best Christian biblical scholars.[52] We might ask, however, is it really validation of Heschel, or instead, Heschel's influence on these scholars?

My last point is closely related to the second. More perhaps than anyone else Heschel has opened up to Christians the splendors of Jewish tradition—of the Bible, the sabbath, Hassidism, the rich life of East European Jews prior to the destruction, the mystical meaning of Israel. "To encounter him was to 'feel' the force and spirit of Judaism, the depth and grandeur of it. He led one, even thrust one, into the mysterious greatness of the Jewish tradition."[53] Allow me to quote here some words from the guiding spirit of this symposium, Dr. John Merkle. In a letter to me, Dr. Merkle wrote, "Simply by living and teaching as he did, Heschel may have done more to inspire an enhanced appreciation of Judaism among non-Jews than any other Jew in post-biblical times . . . ."[54]

These words resonated in me at the time, I had a hunch they were true; but I was then only just beginning my work on this paper. My research over the past months has confirmed that hunch. If Dr. Merkle is indeed correct, then this is, I believe, Abraham Heschel's greatest contribution to the reconciliation of our two communities. For I have long been convinced that the greatest hope for achieving this reconciliation, the surest antidote against Christian anti-Judaism, is for Christians to discover the splendor of a Jewish tradition alive today; so profoundly alive that it can give birth to an Abraham Heschel.

Let me close with words which Heschel wrote about another man, a dear friend, Reinhold Niebuhr, at the end of a penetrating critique of Niebuhr's writings on the mystery of evil. The words seem to me to apply also to the man who wrote them:

> His spirituality combines heaven and earth, as it were. It does not separate soul from body, or mind from the unity of man's physical and spiritual life. His way is an example of one who does justly, loves mercy, and walks humbly with his God, an example of the unity of worship and living."[55]

NOTES

1. Conversation with Toby Stein, January, 1983.
2. "Agent of God's Compassion," *America*, 128 (March 10, 1973): 205.
3. "The Contribution of Abraham Joshua Heschel," *Judaism*, 32 (Winter 1983): 57.
4. "Heschel and Vatican II—Jewish-Christian Relations," p. 4. Paper delivered to the Memorial Symposium in honor of Abraham Joshua Heschel, the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York City, February 23, 1983.
5. "Choose Life!" *Jubilee*, January, 1966, p. 38.
6. Jacob Y. Teshima, "My Memory of Professor Abraham Joshua Heschel," *Conservative Judaism*, 6 (Fall, 1973): 80.
7. "What We Must Do Together," *Religious Education*, 62 (March-April 1967): 140.
8. "No Religion Is an Island," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 21 (January 1966): 117-34. This address also appears in F. E. Talmage, ed. *Disputation and Dialogue* (New York: KTAV, 1975), pp. 337-59. All my references are to the text in Talmage; henceforth the abbreviated title, "No Island," will be used. The text here referred to occurs on p. 345 in Talmage.
9. "No Island," pp. 347-48.
10. This and the preceding quote are from "No Island," pp. 348 and 352, resp.
11. "The Jewish Notion of God and Christian Renewal," *Renewal of Religious Thought*, vol. 1 of *Theology of Renewal*, ed. L. K. Shook (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), p. 112.
12. "Protestant Renewal: a Jewish View," *The Insecurity of Freedom: Essays on Human Existence* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966), p. 177.
13. "No Island," p. 349.
14. "The Ecumenical Movement," *Insecurity of Freedom*, p. 182.
15. "No Island," p. 353.
16. "No Island," p. 352.
17. "From Mission to Dialogue," *Conservative Judaism* 21 (Spring 1967): 2.
18. "No Island," p. 356.
19. *Jubilee*, January, 1966, p. 39.
20. References here and through the following paragraph are from "No Island," pp. 344, 345, and 346.
21. "The Ecumenical Movement," p. 180.
22. "No Island," p. 347.
23. "The Ecumenical Movement," p. 182.
24. "No Island," p. 351.
25. "From Mission to Dialogue," p. 9.
26. "No Island," p. 355.
27. "From Mission to Dialogue," p. 10.
28. "No Island," p. 356.
9. The term was first used in the 1950s by the French historian Jules Isaac. See his *Teaching of Contempt* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964); and also *Jesus and Israel* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971). The term has in recent years become part of our vocabulary when referring to the history of Christian anti-Judaism.
30. "No Island," pp. 330-31.
31. "Protestant Renewal: a Jewish View," p. 169.
32. "On Prayer." Reprinted in *Conservative Judaism*, 25 (Fall 1970):6.
33. W. D. Davies, "Conscience, Scholar, Witness," *America*, March 10, 1973, p. 215.
34. "On Prayer," p. 6.
35. "Sacred Images of Man," *The Insecurity of Freedom*, p. 165.
36. "No Island," p. 350.
37. "From Mission to Dialogue," p. 9.
38. *Stepping Stones to Further Jewish-Christian Relations*, compiled by Helga Croner (London-New York: Stimulus Books, 1970), p. 60.
39. "From Mission to Diaogue," p. 11.
40. Fritz A. Rothschild, "Abraham Joshua Heschel," *Modern Theologians: Christians and Jews*, ed. Thomas E. Bird (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967,), p. 173.

41. The entire section dealing with Vatican II has been greatly abbreviated from the original text for the purposes of this article.
42. On February 23, 1983, at a one-day symposium held at the Jewish Theological Seminary in memory of Heschel, Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, who had worked closely with Heschel throughout the council, presented a paper on Heschel and Vatican II. I am deeply indebted to Rabbi Tanenbaum for giving me a copy of his paper and permitting me to use it.
43. Tanenbaum, "Heschel and Vatican II—Jewish-Christian Relations." Paper presented at the Memorial Symposium in honor of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel. The following material on Heschel and Vatican II is taken largely from this paper, especially pp. 15, 16, 17, and 21.
44. *Jubilee*, January, 1966, p. 31.
45. "From Mission to Dialogue," pp. 10 ff.
46. *America*, March 10, 1973, p. 202.
47. Reinhold Niebuhr, "Masterly Analysis of Faith," review of *Man Is not Alone, New York Herald Tribune Book Review*, April, 1951, p. 12.
48. Sanders, "An Apostle to the Gentiles," *Conservative Judaism* 28 (Fall 1973) :61.
49. Sanders, p. 61.
50. "The Jewish Notion of God and Christian Renewal," in *Renewal of Religious Thought*, vol. 1 of *Theology of Renewal*, ed. L. K. Shook (New York, Herder and Herder, 1968), p. 112.
51. Quoted from Rahner by Heschel in "The Jewish Notion of God," p. 112, n. 3.
52. See, for instance, Bernhard W. Anderson, "Confrontation with the Bible," in *Theology Today* 30 (October 1973):267-71.
53. W. D. Davies, "Conscience, Scholar, Witness," *America*, March 10, 1973, p. 214.
54. John C. Merkle in a letter to Eva Fleischner, October 10, 1982.
55. "Confusion of Good and Evil," *The Insecurity of Freedom*, p. 147.

HOMILETICAL RESOURCES FROM THE HEBREW BIBLE FOR LENT

MICHAEL CHERNICK

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE JEWISH HOMILY

"Our people is only a people by virtue of the Torah." This sentiment, enunciated in the tenth century by Saadyah Gaon, a Jewish leader, legalist, and philosopher, has been at the core of Jewish homiletics even prior to its actual formulation. At first, Torah was the Pentateuch, but soon the term covered the Prophets and Writings as well. Interpretations which served as the basis for all of Jewish life became the laws of Torah which structured Jewish communal and cultural life. Though these laws guided a sector we would now call secular, Jews recognized them as religious regulations because they grew out of God's revelation to Israel. Similarly, the lore, theology, philosophy, and "salvation history" of Judaism had their roots in this revelation called Torah. Finally, the term "Torah" came to signify all texts, traditions, and sentiments which Jews recognized as holy and enduring. Thus, Torah grows, and the outgrowths themselves become Torah for other generations, and so the process goes. "The words of the Torah are fruitful and multiply" (Babylonian Talmud Hagigah 3b; see bibliography).

The special method by which this growth took place is called *midrash* in Hebrew. Some scholars feel that this process began in the biblical period itself, but its most significant developments occurred in the postbiblical era. The word comes from a Hebrew root meaning to inquire, seek, or require. All these translational shades of meaning are important because they all contribute to an accurate understanding of the task of midrash. The Jewish community's rootedness in the sacred texts and oral traditions of its past created a dialectic with its will to live

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Journal of Ecumenical Studies, 18:3, Summer 1981

ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Harold Kasimow

PRECIS

Authentic interfaith dialogue requires that participants be committed to their respective faiths and that they grant validity to the other religious traditions. This paper examines historical and contemporary attitudes of major Jewish scholars toward other religious traditions and the extent to which a position of openness can be supported by primary Jewish sources.

Historically Judaism has largely been interpreted by its thinkers as the only true religion. Evidence from the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud have been offered as support for this view. This attitude is reexamined in light of the work of the contemporary theologian, A. J. Heschel, who continues a trend discernable over the past two centuries to grant validity to other religious traditions. Heschel views diversity of religion as the will of God and seeks biblical support for his position.

An examination is made of the consistency of Heschel's view within the context of his own theological structure. He views each religion as unique and acknowledges the contrasting goals of Judaism and eastern religions. However, the fact that he finds paradox acceptable–indeed inevitable–in matters pertaining to the spiritual life is a theme reiterated in several different contexts in his writings.

An examination of Jewish attitudes toward other faiths is essential to determine if the possibility for dialogue exists between Judaism and these other traditions. This study will emphasize how the thought of Abraham J. Heschel encourages genuine dialogue between Judaism and other religious traditions.

Many contemporary scholars, in considering the question of dialogue, have suggested criteria necessary to the success of interfaith dialogue. S. J. Samartha has made an important statement defining the situation in which dialogue becomes possible: "The basis of inter-religious dialogue is the *commitment* of all partners to their respective faiths and their *openness* to the insights of the

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others. The integrity of particular religions must be recognized."[1] The great Christian theologian Paul Tillich also claimed that:

> A dialogue between representatives of different religions has several presuppositions. It first presupposes that both acknowledge the value of the other's religious conviction (as based ultimately on a revelatory experience) so that they consider the dialogue worthwhile.[2]

These statements imply that the necessary conditions for authentic interfaith dialogue are twofold: commitment to one's own faith, while at the same time granting validity to other religious traditions. In my view one of the most important and challenging tasks confronting the leaders of the world religions is to examine their respective traditions in order to discern if these may be interpreted in a way which would permit authentic interfaith dialogue.

Indeed, a few thinkers of the major faiths have already confronted this issue and have responded affirmatively. William Johnston, S.J., an Irish Jesuit who has lived much of his life in Japan writes:

> [W]e have Christ, who I believe spoke of God as no man ever spoke; but I do not think we can claim to understand the revelation of Christ in all its fullness. Perhaps we are still at the beginning. Moreover I also believe that in sundry times and in diverse ways God spoke to our fathers through the prophets, and these include prophets whose voices echo beautifully in the *Gita*, the *Lotus Sutra*, and the *Tao Teh Ching*.[3]

Bede Griffiths, a Benedictine monk living in India as a *sannyasi*, emphasizes the diverse teachings of the Buddha, Krishna, and Christ. Yet at the same time he acknowledges all as true revelations from God. "The Buddha, Krishna, Christ—each is a unique revelation of God, of the divine mystery."[4] He further advises us that, "We have to learn to recognize the voice of the Spirit in every scripture and discover the hidden Source from which all scriptures come."[5] With the statement, "Every orthodox religion is the choice of heaven . . . ,"[6] the great Muslim scholar, Seyyed Hossein Nasr. also opens the door to genuine dialogue.

The question to be considered in assessing what impact such statements can have within their own traditions is to what extent such a position of openness can be supported by the primary sources of each respective faith. For the Jew this means that an authentic Jewish position toward other faiths must find

[1]S. J. Samartha, "The Progress and Promise of Inter-Religious Dialogues," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 9 (Summer, 1972): 473.

[2]Paul Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), p. 62.

[3]William Johnston, *Christian Zen* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 10-11.

[4]Bede Griffiths, *Return to the Center* (Springfield, IL: Templegate, 1977), pp. 86-87.

[5]Ibid., p. 106.

[6]Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), p. 16.

support in the classical sources of Judaism, especially in the Hebrew Bible. Rabbi Zalman Schachter has pointed out, "The dialoguer who goes too far afield is discredited and with this the effectiveness of dialogue as a changer of consciousness is undermined."[7] Therefore, the most critical question for the Jewish participant in interfaith dialogue is: Can we grant validity to other religions while remaining faithful to the classical Jewish sources?

In my opinion, the most widely-held view among Jews throughout the ages is that Judaism is the only true religion. On the basis of Samartha's criteria, then, Jews cannot meet the basic requirements for authentic dialogue. A reexamination of the classical Jewish sources will provide a basis to challenge this prevalent view. Foremost among those who have sought such a new interpretation of Jewish sources fostering dialogue is Abraham Heschel, one of the most influential Jewish theologians in twentieth-century America.

A background against which to compare Heschel's views is the position of Immanuel Jakobovitz, the present Chief Rabbi of Great Britain, whose interpretations exemplify the traditional attitude:

> As a professing Jew, I obviously consider Judaism the only true religion, . . . Judaism, to be true to itself, is bound to reject, for instance, the divinity of Jesus or the prophecy of Mohammed as false claims; otherwise its own claims, such as the supremacy of Moses's prophecy and the finality of the Mosaic law . . . could not be true. . . . Two mutually exclusive and conflicting statements of fact can never both be true.[8]

Rabbi Jakobovitz can find support among most medieval Jewish thinkers. The position of Moses Maimonides, the most influential Jewish thinker of the Middle Ages, has been made sufficiently clear by S. D. Goitein:

> Maimonides . . . was an uncompromisingly orthodox Jew who regarded Judaism alone as a real religion . . . To him Israel's religion was to be compared to a human being; all other religions are only images of a human being, beautiful images perhaps, but imitations nevertheless.[9]

Support for this traditional interpretation can also be found in the Talmud. Rabbi Louis Jacobs, a prominent British theologian, has written:

> The Rabbis continued unabated the struggle against pagan idolatry—*avodah zarah*, "strange worship," as they called it. A whole tractate

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[7]Zalman M. Schachter, "Basis and Boundaries of Jewish, Christian, and Moslem Dialogue," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 14 (Summer, 1977): 408.

[8]Immanuel Jakobovitz, in *The Condition of Jewish Belief: A Symposium Compiled by the Editors of Commentary Magazine* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966), pp. 112-113.

[9]S. D. Goitein, *Jews and Arabs: Their Contacts through the Ages* (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), p. 145.

> of the Talmud bearing this name is devoted to the laws concerning total rejection of anything which smacks of idolatrous worship. The Rabbis had in mind here chiefly the Greek and Roman pantheon, but there are to be found frequent polemics, too, against Zorostrianism [sic], Christianity and Gnostic dualism, all of which are generally lumped together as the heresy of affirming "two powers," i.e., that there is more than one God.[10]

Even today some of the leading Orthodox thinkers do not accept Christianity as pure monotheism. According to Eliezer Berkovits:

> [T]he God of monotheism who tolerates no mediator between Himself and man, is not the deity that by its very nature necessitates a mediator . . . the man of monotheism can only confront God without a mediator; in Christianity, man cannot confront God except by way of the mediator.[11]

In fact, Jews are counseled by a leading spokesperson of Orthodox Judaism, Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, not to become involved in: ". . . any public debate, dialogue, or symposium concerning the doctrinal, dogmatic or ritual aspects of our faith vis-à-vis similar aspects of another faith community."[12]

In a recent work Jakobovitz explains his averson to theological interfaith dialogue:

> We regard our relationship with God, and the manner in which we define and collectively express it, as being so intimate and personal that we could no more convey it to outsiders than we would share with others our husband-wife relationship. We feel it is improper to express one's innermost beliefs and mode of worship to the judgement or comparative scrutiny of those who do not share the same religious commitment.[13]

In the last two centuries this traditional Jewish attitude toward other religions has been challenged by many Jews committed to their own faith. With regard to Christianity, the views of Jacob Emden (1698-1776) were a radical break from the majority medieval Jewish perception of Christianity in idol

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[10]Louis Jacobs, *A Jewish Theology* (New York: Behrman House, 1973), p. 285. Jacobs explains that, although during the Middle Ages Jews attacked the doctrine of the Trinity, during the Rabbinic period, "Christianity was attacked for its dualism, i.e., for its doctrine of the Incarnation which Jews saw as dualistic in content, a belief of God the Father and Jesus the Son as 'two powers'" (p. 25).

[11]Eliezer Berkovitz, in *The Condition of Jewish Belief*, p. 27.

[12]Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "Confrontation," in Norman Lamm and Walter S. Wurzburger, eds., *A Treasury of "Tradition"* (New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1967), p. 79.

[13]Immanuel Jakobivitz, *The Timely and the Timeless: Jews, Judaism and Society in a Storm-tossed Decade* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1977), p. 120.

worship.[14] According to Emden, Christianity is "a holy community of God."[15]

More widely known than Emden, Franz Rosenzweig has been more influential among Jews and Christians engaged in interfaith dialogue. A number of eminent Jewish scholars including Hans Joachim Schoeps and Will Herberg have been attracted to Rosenzweig's "double covenant theory," which views both Judaism and Christianity as true religions. Rabbi Seymour Siegel, an important voice in the Conservative movement of Judaism today, writes, "I find most cogent and meaningful the double covenant theory of Franz Rosenzweig which sees Christianity as the 'Judaism of the Gentiles': through it they establish their relationship to the divine."[16]

A significant weakness of Rosenzweig's position is that it closes the door to serious dialogue with religions other than Christianity.[17] However, even with regard to Christianity the theory is problematic because it is not grounded in Jewish primary sources. Jacob Taubes, a Jewish historian of religion, says specifically that Judaism cannot make ". . . Rosenzweig's highly doubtful reading of a *Christian* text the basis for the doctrine of the synagogue."[18] Taubes further argues that, even from the Christian side, Rosenzweig's ". . . arguments do violence to the spirit of the Gospel according to St. John and that Jesus of the Fourth Gospel offers the weakest possible basis for the view he advances."[19]

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[14]The Jewish attitude toward Christianity during the medieval period was not unanimous. Some authorities did not consider Christianity to be idolatry. See especially the views of R. Menahem Ha-Meiri in Jacob Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance: Studies in Jewish Gentile Relations in Medieval and Modern Times* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).

[15]For Emden's positive attitude toward Christianity, see Blu Greenberg, "Rabbi Jacob Emden: The Views of an Enlightened Traditionalist on Christianity," *Judaism* (Summer, 1978), pp. 351-363.

[16]Seymour Siegel in *The Condition of Jewish Belief*, p. 226. The influence of Rosenzweig's ideas on the thought of A. Roy Eckardt is most interesting. Eckardt writes, in his book, *Elder and Younger Brothers: The Encounter of Jews and Christians* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967), p. 160: "A Christian theology of the Jewish-Christian relationship is called to proclaim from the Christian side what Franz Rosenzweig has expressed from the Jewish side: Judaism is the 'star of redemption,' Christianity the rays of that star. The church is 'successor' of Israel in only one respect and no other: by virtue of the Christian gospel, the dividing wall between Jew and gentile is destroyed once and for all. The abiding covenant with Israel is decisively and definitely opened to the world in a way that Jewish faith does not provide. . . . All Jews will not by any stretch of imagination ever assent to Rosenzweig's affirmation that the gentile world is able to come to God only through Jesus Christ. But the Christian church may testify that Rosenzweig is right although of course it will do this only from the standpoint of its own christological persuasion."

[17]With respect to dialogue with other more distant religious traditions, the position of Moses Mendelssohn seems to be more promising. In contrast to Rosenzweig, who accepts only Judaism and Christianity as true faiths, Mendelssohn writes, in *Jerusalem and Other Jewish Writings*, ed. Alfred Jospe (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), pp. 124-125: "Inasmuch as *all* men must have been designed by their Creator to attain salvation no particular religion can be exclusively true. . . . A revelation that claims to be the one and only road to salvation cannot be true, for it is not in harmony with the intent of the all-merciful Creator."

[18]Jacob Taubes, "The Issue between Judaism and Christianity," in Arthur A. Cohen, ed., *Arguments and Doctrines: A Reader of Jewish Thinking in the Aftermath of the Holocaust* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1970), p. 409.

[19]According to Taubes, ibid., "Rosenzweig's dichotomy between nations that are on the

There are Jewish scholars who go beyond Rosenzweig and also include Islam as a true religion. Rabbi Neusner claims that:

> All religions which teach that one God made the world, cares for what happens in it, and directs human affairs toward His providential goals are true religions. These are Islam, Christianity, and Judaism.[20]

Although Neusner makes no attempt to support his views with primary Jewish sources, the fact that he is himself a leading scholar of Judaica gives weight to his views.

A number of contemporary rabbis and scholars involved in interfaith dialogue have centered their attention on the Talmudic doctrine of the seven Noachitic laws which states that, "The righteous of all nations have a share in the world-to-come." This doctrine is considered a valid basis for granting religious truth not only to Christianity and Islam but also to other religious traditions. The following statement by Rabbi Ezra Spicehandler, a professor at Hebrew Union College, is typical of this view: "Judaism is certainly not the one true religion. Even according to the Talmud, all who observe the Noahide laws have a share in the world to come."[21] Ben Zion Bokser, conservative rabbi and frequent participant in interfaith dialogue, also supports the above position. He argues, ". . . the classic Jewish position that the righteous of all nations and all faiths have a share in the world to come implies the legitimacy of diverse paths to God."[22]

There is an inconsistency in using the Noahide laws as scriptural support for dialogue. The argument is that the righteous attain salvation because of their righteousness, not because of their adherence to a particular religious tradition. The implication of the Noahide laws must be examined more fully before they can serve as a basis for serious dialogue between Jews and the other world faiths.

In my judgment, a most promising contemporary attitude toward other religions comes from the powerful voice of Abraham J. Heschel. Although Heschel's major works are well known to Jewish and also Christian scholars, his numerous articles that touch on other religious traditions have never been explored.[23]

In his Inaugural Address delivered at Union Theological Seminary in 1965,

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'way' through Jesus the Christ and 'come' into the divine covenant, and a Jewish people that 'are' already in the divine covenant, contradicts the whole Johannine scheme of salvation. John denies the Jewish people any knowledge of God, insisting that only through the Son could the Jews have known the Father (8:19)."

[20]Jacob Neusner in *The Condition of Jewish Belief*, p. 155.

[21]Ezra Spicehandler in ibid., pp. 232-233.

[22]Ben Zion Bokser, "The Bible, Rabbinic Tradition and Modern Judaism," *The Bulletin*, vol. 48, no. 2 (Spring, 1968), p. 16.

[23]For a brief examination of Heschel's attitude toward other religious traditions, see my work *Divine-Human Encounter: A Study of Abraham Joshua Heschel* (Washington DC: University Press of America, 1979).

Heschel presented a radical view of the religions of the world: "Perhaps it is the will of God that in this aeon there should be diversity in our forms of devotion and commitment to Him. In this aeon diversity of religions is the will of God."[24] Here Heschel seems to leave little doubt that Jews, Christians, and Muslims, in their various ways, are truly worshipping God. But would this statement apply to other world religions whose concept of God is totally different from that of the Jewish tradition? Heschel quotes a passage from the prophet Malachi and follows it with an interpretation which indicates that eastern traditions are also valid to him:

> For from the rising of the sun to its setting My name is great among the nations, 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 (Malachi 1:11).
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> This statement refers undoubtedly to the contemporaries of the prophet. But who were these worshippers of One God? At the time of Malachi there was hardly a large number of proselytes. Yet the statement declares: All those who worship their gods do not know it, but they are really worshipping Me.
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> It seems that the prophet proclaims that men all over the world, though they confess different conceptions of God, are really worshipping One God, the Father of all men, though they may not be aware of it.[25]

Heschel's interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in such a way as to bring it into harmony with his idea that "Religious pluralism is the will of God" is an extraordinary event for the history of Jewish relations with other traditions. What is also significant is that Heschel's interpretation of the Bible is being supported by some younger scholars. Rabbi Norbert Samuelson, Professor of Judaica at Temple University, claims that support can be found in the Bible that "God establishes multiple covenants with multiple peoples." He writes:

> [C]learly the scriptures claim that Israel has only one God, but whether or not Israel's God has other peoples is not discussed and is not the concern of the historical narratives. The Lord's relation to other peoples in general is not affirmed, but neither is it denied. In fact sufficient material is presented to infer that from the point of view of the authors of the biblical historical narratives Israel is only one of several nations related to the Lord through a covenant.[26]

Support for the validity of other religions may also be found in Talmudic literature. In his major work on prophecy Heschel writes: "It is a well-established

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[24]Abraham J. Heschel, "No Religion Is an Island," *Union Seminary Quarterly*, January, 1966, p. 126.

[25]Ibid., p. 127.

[26]Norbert Samuelson, "Response," *NICM Journal*, vol. 1, no. 2 (Spring, 1976), p. 72.

tradition in Jewish literature that the Lord sent prophets to the nations, and even addressed Himself directly to them."[27] This biblical idea which is stressed in the Talmud and Midrash could prove promising for future interfaith dialogue. Thus, Heschel appeals to the primary Jewish sources as support for granting validity to other religions. The question of critical importance which must be raised is whether his position is consistent within his own theological structure. In other words, how does Heschel deal with conflicting truth-claims?

A study of the sources which Heschel used for his book, *The Prophets*—especially for his chapter, "Prophets throughout the World"—reveals that Heschel was quite familiar with some of the primary sources of Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. His interpretation of these traditions clearly shows that he is opposed to the doctrine that all religions are essentially one. Heschel stresses the unique aspects of each religion, its distinctiveness and particularity. He draws sharp distinctions not only between Judaism and the eastern religions but also with the Islamic tradition.

In spite of Heschel's emphasis on the profound differences among some of the most basic assumptions of Judaism and eastern thought, he argues that Judaism would be enriched if dialogue would occur "between the river Jordan and the river Ganges."[28] He believed that it was "vitally important . . . for Judaism to reach out into non-Jewish culture in order to absorb elements which it may use for the enrichment of its life and thought."[29]

Heschel's willingness to encounter and to be enriched by eastern thought is all the more amazing when we realize the radical distinction between Heschel's interpretation of Judaism and the ultimate goal of eastern thought, which has consistently stressed a goal of salvation, described by Professor D. S. Sarma:

> The Hindu Scriptures . . . teach that the ultimate end of human life is liberation (moksha) from that finite human consciousness of ours which makes us see all things as separate from one another and not as part of a whole. When a higher consciousness dawns upon us, we see the individual parts of the universe as deriving their true significance from the central unity of spirit. . . . When this goal is reached, man is lifted above his mortal plane and becomes one with that ocean of pure being, consciousness, and bliss, called Brahman in Hindu scriptures.[30]

Buddhists have repeatedly stressed that without Nirvana or enlightenment, without liberation or salvation, there is no Buddhism. Isshu Miura, the Japanese Zen master, begins his book on Zen with the statement, "The living heart of all

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[27]Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Burning Bush Press, 1962), p. 451.

[28]Abraham J. Heschel, *God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1955), p. 15.

[29]Ibid.

[30]D. S. Sarma, "The Nature and History of Hinduism," in Kenneth W. Morgan, ed., *The Religion of the Hindus* (New York: Ronald Press Co., 1953), p. 4.

Buddhism is enlightenment or satori."[31] With respect to enlightenment, Buddhism did not break away from Hinduism.

Heschel, however, insists that the central aim of pious Jews is to encounter God, knowing that they are known by God. Salvation is never for oneself; it is for the entire world. "Indeed, even the most personal concern, the search for meaning," Heschel tells us, "is utterly meaningless as a pursuit of personal salvation."[32] Heschel speaks harshly of those individuals who seek personal salvation: "Self-fulfillment is a myth which a noble mind must find degrading. All that is creative in man stems from a seed of endless discontent."[33]

In contrast to Heschel's understanding of the pious Jew who is in a state of endless tension, the Ceylonese Buddhist monk, Walpola Rahula, tells us, "He who has realized the Truth, Nirvana, is the happiest being in the world. . . . He is joyful, exultant, enjoying the pure life, his faculties pleased, free from anxiety, serene and peaceful."[34]

Heschel's path to God offers no final union of bliss in which all of life's problems are solved. Rather, there is a constant wrestling for "flashes of insight that come and go, penetrate and retreat, come forth and withdraw."[35] For Heschel, the "philosopher of wonder," the path to God "is a continuous being on the way to the reality and the presence of God."[36] In contrast to the Buddhist claim that one who attains Nirvana is totally self-fulfilled and satisfied, Judaism teaches one "to be content with what [one] *has*, but never with what [one] *is*."[37] The pious Jew can never totally and permanently attain the stage described for the devout Buddhist, because the Jew can never fully penetrate the secret of life; the Jew can never attain a state comparable to Nirvana. This disagreement delineates a major difference between Heschel's thought and the Hindu-Buddhist approach to religion.

Heschel is well aware that his belief that religions "disagree profoundly" raises the problem of conflicting truth claims. Heschel poses this very question: "However, does not every religion maintain the claim to be true, and is not truth exclusive?"[38] And his response?

> The ultimate truth is not capable of being fully and adequately expressed in concepts and words. . . . The voice of God reaches the

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[31]Isshu Miura and Ruth Fuller Sasaki, *The Zen Koan: Its History and Use in Rinzai Zen* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1965), p. 3.

[32]Abraham Heschel, *Who Is Man?* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968), p. 45.

[33]Ibid., p. 86.

[34]Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught* (New York: Grove Press, 1962), p. 43.

[35]Heschel, *God in Search*, p. 132.

[36]Abraham J. Heschel, "The God of Judaism and the Christian Renewal," *The Catholic Hour*, January 21, 1968, n.p.

[37]Abraham J. Heschel, *Man Is Not Alone: A Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Young, 1951), p. 257.

[38]Heschel, "No Religion Is an Island," p. 127.

> spirit of man in a variety of ways, in a multiplicity of languages. One truth comes to expression in many ways of understanding.[39]

In order to develop Heschel's arguments more fully and to see the special problems which the conflicting conceptions of the religions of the world raise for Heschel's thought, one must examine essential premises found in his writings. Throughout his works Heschel repeats again and again that, *paradoxical* though it is, nevertheless, it is true that human beings are not alone and that God is concerned about human beings and in search of them. For Heschel, this is the most fundamental idea of biblical thought, the idea that he believes has been stressed throughout the Jewish tradition. He writes, "*Paradoxical* as the Bible is, we must accept its essential premise: that God is concerned about man."[40] "[T]he renewal of man" *can* occur if only one would come to grips with the biblical view of the world and accept its essential paradoxical premise: "*that God is concerned* about man."[41] Pleading for understanding of his own conviction, Heschel writes, "All I would like to see is that the world should open its mind and heart to the words of the prophets."[42]

Will Herberg essentially agrees with Heschel's view that humankind would be moved from its present agony to "significant being" by accepting the biblical view of the world:

> Only from what is beyond life, only from the transcendent source of life, can come the power to deliver us from our desperate plight. In more traditional language, only the God whom we know to be the Creator of heaven and earth, the Lord of life and history, can help us.[43]

Like Heschel, Herberg realized that the worldview of eastern thought differs profoundly from the "hebraic world-outlook," but Herberg is consistent in his position, and from that perspective he levels a strong attack on the "Graeco-Oriental" religious position.[44]

Heschel's position is far more problematic. Although his essential premise is that biblical religion is the answer for the world, not only does he *not* attack

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[39]Ibid.

[40]Abraham J. Heschel, "The Jewish Notion of God and Christian Renewal," in L. K. Shook, ed., *Renewal of Christian Thought* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), pp. 115-116.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Abraham J. Heschel in John H. Miller, ed., *Vatican II: An Interfaith Appraisal* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), p. 374.

[43]Will Herberg, *Judaism and Modern Man* (New York: Harper and Row, 1951), p. 34.

[44]Ibid., pp. 47-57. In his final analysis of Buddhism, e.g., Herberg attempts to show that the Buddha's preaching to the world is a "repudiation of Buddhism." He argues: "After explaining that, in the Greco-Oriental view, 'salvation is an achievement of the individual for himself and by himself,' Moore adds, 'Buddha discovered the way and taught it to men.' But *why*? Why, having discovered it, did he teach it to others? This question would seem to constitute an insurmountable stumbling block to Buddhism and to lead it to what in effect is a repudiation of itself" (p. 55).

eastern religions, but he even *asserts their validity*. It would seem that there is an inner contradiction here. Marvin Fox writes:

> Judaism is not possible without belief in the existence of God, in His absolute unity, in His revelation. . . . These I hold to be true beliefs, even though not demonstrable. Any beliefs contradictory of these or of other fundamentals of Jewish faith I must, therefore, hold to be false. Simple logic forces me to this conclusion.[45]

Applying Fox's "simple logic" to Heschel's position—which espouses a biblical worldview as a solution to human problems, while at the same time granting validity to other religious traditions whose worldviews differ profoundly—does seem to pinpoint a logical inconsistency in Heschel. Yet, based on a careful study of Heschel's thought, it would also appear that his position is consistent *within his own theological structure*. He persistently argues that in spiritual life we must admit that *paradox* exists. We have already noted that Heschel considers his "essential premise: That God is concerned about man" to be *paradoxical*. In *The Prophets* Heschel states, "It is a paradox beyond compare that the eternal God is concerned with what is happening in time."[46] In *Who Is Man?* Heschel calls God's concern for man the "Great Puzzle."[47] And it is a puzzle which Heschel, consistent with his own insights, *does not attempt to put together*. Just as his essential biblical premise is for him a "paradox beyond compare," so also the idea that all religions are valid is a paradox beyond human logic.

The position of the Kotzker rebbe whose influence on Heschel was profound also embraced paradox as essential to religion. Heschel (in what must be a free translation) quotes the Kotzker: "A God whom any Tom, Dick, and Harry could comprehend, I would not believe in."[48] Heschel then explains,

> This conception does not exclude any understanding by man of God's ways. It merely states that while some of those ways seem absurd from man's perspective, they are nonetheless meaningful in the eyes of God. In other words, the ultimate meaning of God's ways is not invalidated because of man's incapacity to comprehend it; nor is our anguish silenced because of the certainty that somewhere in the recesses of God an answer abides.[49]

I have focused on Heschel's attitude toward other religious traditions because his position can make a genuine contribution to dialogue—not only because

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[45]Marvin Fox in *The Condition of Jewish Belief*, p. 65.
[46]Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 209.
[47]Heschel, *Who Is Man?*, p. 74.
[48]Abraham J. Heschel, *A Passion for Truth* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973), p. 293.
[49]Ibid.

of *what* he says, but also because of who he was, a respected figure in the Jewish community, even among some orthodox rabbis. Equally important in considering interfaith dialogue is the fact that Heschel was held in very high esteem by many Christian theologians.

From **GEORGE M. SHAPIRO** Jan. 16, 1973

To Rabbi Marc Tannenbaum

Dear Marc,

This is a preliminary draft. It has not been circulated.

Do you think that a specific portion of the Fund should be ear-marked for the Seminary?

I would appreciate any suggestions or comments which you may have.

G.M.S.

Hand Delivery

Rabbi Marc Tannenbaum
American Jewish Committee
165 E. 56th St.
New York, N. Y. 10022

345 Hudson Street, New York, N.Y. 10014 (212) 964-2900

Preliminary Draft B

The Honorable Simon H. Rifkind
Chairman, Board of Trustees
The Jewish Theological Seminary of America
3080 Broadway
New York, New York 10027

Dear Judge Rifkind:

The family of the late Dr. Abraham J. Heschel has had inquiries from many friends who have expressed the desire to contribute to a fund which will honor his memory.

Mrs. Heschel, who is the Executrix of the Estate, and her daughter, Hannah Susanna, have expressed a preference for the designation of The Jewish Theological Seminary, the institution with which Dr. Heschel was most closely associated during his lifetime. If the suggestion meets with the approval of the Board of Trustees, we would propose the creation of a special fund to be held in the custody of The Jewish Theological Seminary and to be known as "The Abraham J. Heschel Memorial Fund". Persons interested in making a contribution in memory of Dr. Heschel will be advised to make the contribution to The Jewish Theological Seminary of America for The Abraham J. Heschel Memorial Fund.

The Fund and any securities or other assets held by it will be maintained by the Seminary as a separate account and

disbursements made from it upon the joint approval of the Chancellor of the Seminary or such person as may be designated by him from time to time and by the Executrix of the Estate of Dr. Heschel or such person as may be designated by her from time to time. The parties shall have the power to provide for the filling of vacancies and succession.

It is Mrs. Heschel's wish that the objectives of the Fund shall include:

1. The provision of financial support for the continued publication and dissemination of the writings of Dr. Heschel (including their translation into foreign languages and editing) or writings about him or his works.

2. To suitably house and preserve any important or rare historical and religious books, writings or manuscripts which may be contributed to the Fund and to make available such books and writings for study and reference work to writers, students and educational institutions.

3. The provision of scholarships, fellowships, teaching programs or grants for religious studies at the Jewish Theological Seminary, or at other institutions of higher education in conjunction

with a program approved by the Seminary.

4. To support such other religious, educational or literary works which may be suitable and appropriate for the Seminary and the Fund.

The parties may from time to time transfer from the Fund such sums as they deem appropriate for the general support of the Seminary or for designated projects at the Seminary as they deem appropriate. Any assets in the Fund which remain unexpended as at December 31, 1977 shall be transferred to the general funds of the Seminary for such religious, literary or educational uses as the Seminary may deem appropriate.

The Jewish Theological Seminary of America is sponsoring this memorial meeting in cooperation with:

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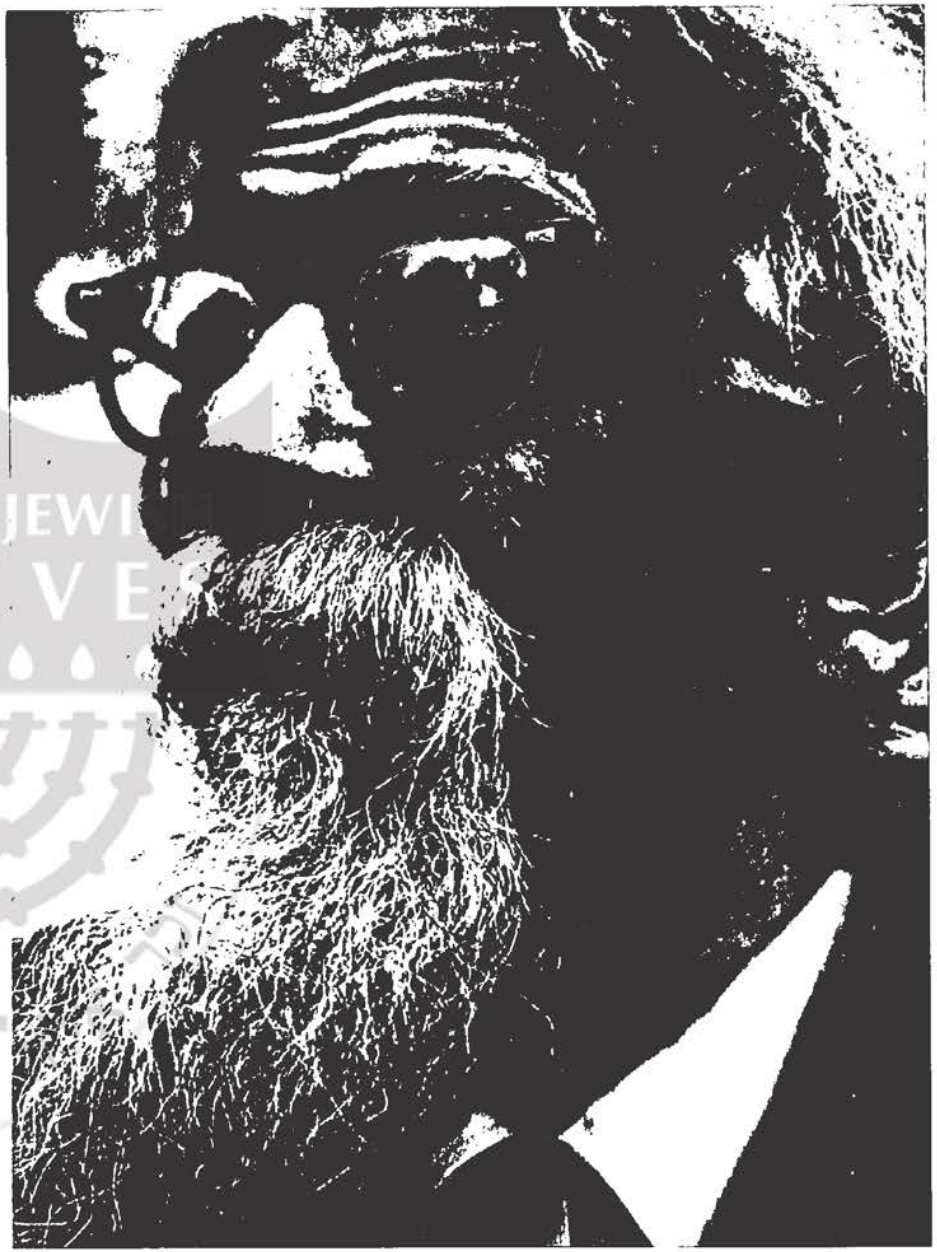
January 21, 1973
18 Shevat, 5733

Park Avenue Synagogue
New York City



Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

זכר צדיק לברכה

1907 - 1972

לא נוצרה האגדה מן השפה ולחוץ. תורת ישראל תורה של עיון והתבוננות היא, של בעיות ותהיות, של נפתולים ולבטים, של מאבקים והיסוסים. התורה היא הרת יצירות, הרת צורות מחשבה להלכה ולמעשה. חבלי עיון ולבטים זכרם עשיר במקומות הרבה, אלא שלא מצאו דרך להכנת דברי המחשבה הדתית הצפונים במאמרי חז"ל.

האגדה נסיון היא לחת תשובות לשאלות העומדות ברומו של עולם, עולם היחיד ועולם הציבור. ואין אדם עומד על המאור שבה אלא אם כן צופה ומסתכל לתוך מעמקי הנפש ושומע לבעיותיה. באין השתתפות במבוכה, באין הבנת השאלות, האגדה ותשובותיה כפת חרבה לאדם שבע, כפתרון בלי חידה. מקורות האגדה בשאיפה לעמוד על משמעותו של מקרא וגם בתשוקה למצוא פתרון לבעיות המתפרצות מתוך מעמקי המחשבה, ארוכה ומרפא למאבקי הנפש.

אלא שעלינו להזהר שלא לייחס לחכמי המדרש את הרהורי לבנו. לא הרי מערכת המחשבה של חכמי הזמן החדש כהרי מערכת המחשבה של חכמי המדרש שחשבו בדעת התורה ועל משקל הכתובים, וטבעו מטבעות של מחשבה בחותמה של התורה בעיות מיוחדות היו להם מקבילות לאופיים, ואל לנו לחלות בהם בעיות שלא נולדו על ברכי היהדות.

תורה מן השמים באספקלריה של הדורות

The roots of ultimate insights are found not on the level of discursive thinking, but on the level of wonder and radical amazement, in the depth of awe, in our sensitivity to the mystery, in our awareness of the ineffable. It is the level on which the great things happen to the soul, where the unique insights of art, religion, and philosophy come into being.

It is not from experience but *from our inability to experience* what is given to our mind that certainty of the realness of God is derived. It is not the order of being but the transcendent in the contingency of all order, the allusions to transcendence in all acts and all things that challenge our deepest understanding.

Faith is *the response* to the mystery, shot through with meaning; the response to a challenge which no one can forever ignore. "The heaven" is a challenge. When you "lift up your eyes on high," you are faced with the question. Faith is an act of man who *transcending himself* responds to Him who *transcends the world.*

— Abraham Joshua Heschel
God In Search of Man

A Memorial

JUDAH NADICH
Rabbi, Park Avenue Synagogue

GERSON D. COHEN
Chancellor, Jewish Theological Seminary

WILLIAM D. DAVIES
Professor of Christian Origins
Duke University

FRITZ A. ROTHSCHILD
Associate Professor of Philosophy of Religion
Jewish Theological Seminary

CORETTA SCOTT KING
The Martin Luther King, Jr. Foundation

A Message from
H. E. ZALMAN SHAZAR
President, State of Israel

THE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF ABRAHAM J. HESCHEL

Morton C. Fierman

I

Abraham Joshua Heschel, professor of Ethics and Mysticism at the Jewish Theological Seminary of American in New York City was born in Warsaw, and arrived in the United States in March, 1940. Before joining the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1945, he was associate professor of Philosophy and Rabbinics at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, for five years.

He is known as a scholar, author, philosopher and theologian. His major work in two volumes, Man Is Not Alone, and God In Search of Man, has been widely acclaimed for its profound and creative approach to religious philosophy.

He is the product of two different worlds, of Eastern European Jewry on the one hand, and the philosophy and scholarship of Western civilization on the other. He is a descendant of outstanding leaders of Chassidism. He grew up in the closed God-centered world of Jewish piety. During the formative years of his childhood and youth, he obtained two things that are manifest on every page of his published work: a knowledge and an understanding — knowledge of his Jewish religious heritage, and an understanding for the realness of the spirit and for the holy dimension of all existence, as Fritz A. Rothschild writes it in the Introduction to Heschel's work, Between God and Man.[1]

It is of interest that in 1937 Martin Buber chose Heschel as his successor at the Central Organization for Jewish Adult Education in Germany and the Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus. The latter had been founded by Franz Rosenzweig in Frankfurt on the Main, August 1, 1920.

II

The educational philosophy of Heschel cannot be separated from his general philosophy and theology. It is all of a piece. He is at all times devoted to reverence for life. This reverence carries with it the spiritual feeling that

life is sacred in all its dimensions. Furthermore, he states that "the task of religion is to be a challenge to the stabilization of values,"[2] and it must be relevant, otherwise its message becomes meaningless.[3]

Heschel's approach to life and all of its manifestations is affected by his rootedness in prophetic Judaism and his love for the spirituality of Chassidism. And yet, he possesses "the yearning for free inquiry and objective truth of the modern Western Scholar."[4]

For Heschel, "the task of the teacher is to be a midwife to the student... At the hands of a clumsy practitioner," he advises, "ideas will be stillborn, the outcome may be a monster. At the hands of a master, a new life will be born."[5] And yet, he states that "education is a matter which rests primarily with the parent, with the father,"[6] not with the teacher. Though at this moment he is discussing religious education, and notes that "the teacher is but a representative of the father, according to Jewish tradition,"[7] nevertheless, he is suggesting that all education to be effective education must begin at home.

"The secret of effective teaching," for Heschel, "lies in making a pupil a contemporary of the living moment of teaching. The outcome is not only the retention of the content of teaching but also of the moment of teaching. It is not enough for the pupil to appropriate the subject matter, the pupil and the teacher must go through significant moments, sharing insight and appreciation."[8]

Heschel knows of the vicissitudes in teaching as well as its glory. He senses its many difficulties as well as its horizons. For him, "the first moment in each class is like the hour in which the Jews stood at the Red Sea. But when the reward comes," he proclaims, "it is a song."[9]

Heschel is not only a dedicated teacher himself, but he sets up the teaching profession on a high pedestal. It is a sanctified calling, in his way of thought. It is a dedicated profession as he considers it. In his purview, "the teacher is more than a technician. He is the representative as well as the interpreter of mankind's most sacred possessions."[10]

And when writing of Judaism, Heschel affirms that the teacher is the central pillar of Jewish living; past, present, and future."[11] Heschel further explains that "the teacher is not an automatic fountain from which intellectual beverages may be obtained. He is either a witness or a stranger. To guide a pupil into the promised land, he must have been there himself. When asking himself: Do I stand for what I teach? Do I believe what I say? he must be able to answer in the affirmative. What we need more than anything else," he proclaims, "is not textbooks but text-people. It is the personality of the teacher which is the text that the pupils read; the text they will never forget."[12]

III

As Heschel considers the teaching profession in glowing terms, so he considers learning. "Learning" as he describes it, "is holy, an indispensable form of purification as well as ennoblement."[13] Furthermore, he points out that "genuine reverence for the sanctity of study is bound to invoke in the pupils the awareness that study is not an ordeal but an act of edification; that the school is a sanctuary, not a factory; that study is a form of worship."[14] "True learning," he avers, "is a way of relating oneself to something which is both eternal and universal. The experience of learning counteracts tribalism and self-centeredness. The work of our hands is private property; the fruits of the intellect belong to all men. The ultimate meaning of knowledge is not power, but the realization of a unity that surpasses all interests and all ages. Wisdom is like the sky, belonging to no man, and true learning is the astronomy of the spirit."[15]

Thoughts and language of this kind can only be rooted in something beyond a philosophy of education. Indeed they are. They are a part of the larger tradition of Heschel's faith, which is Judaism, and a segment too of his very personal weltanschauung. Certainly to some extent it can be traced to the

statement in Pirkè-Avoth (The Sayings of the Fathers): "The world rests upon three pillars, upon learning, upon worship, and upon charity."[16] As Heschel himself writes it, "learning meant having a share in divine wisdom."[17]

Heschel feels that "learning, worship, charity are ends, not means."[18] He conceives that "it is wrong to define education as preparation for life. Learning is life," he underscores, "a supreme experience of living, a climax of existence."[19] "Learning, study," also, "is more than preparation of young people for good citizenship. Study is a form of worship, an act of inner purification."[20] "Learning, too, is a religious commandment."[21] Heschel does not mean the possession of learning, erudition, but the very act of study, "of being overwhelmed by the marvel and mystery of God's creation."[22]

In his paper, Essay on Youth, presented to the White House Conference on Children and Youth in 1960, Professor Heschel crystallizes the differences between the Greek conception of learning, the Hebrew's goal of learning, and modern man's idea of learning. "The Greeks," he explains, "learned in order to comprehend. The Hebrews learned in order to revere. The modern man learns in order to use, accepting the mexim which declares: 'Knowledge is power.' This is how people are urged to study; knowledge means success. We no longer know how to justify any value except in terms of expediency. Man is willing to define himself as a 'seeker after the maximum degree of comfort for the minimum expenditure of energy.' He equates value with that which avails. He feels, acts, and thinks as if the sole purpose of the universe were to satisfy his needs."[23]

What is true learning to Heschel? "True learning is a way of relating oneself to something which is both holy and universal."[24] Do we have some thoughts here, which suggest parallels to Martin Buber's "I-Thou" philosophy?

Perhaps. In Heschel's conception of reverence for life, the way that one relates to life in holiness, and his grasp of the idea of freedom - he is similar to Buber.

We are tempted at this juncture to categorize Heschel's philosophy of education. Indeed, he is an experimentalist we say, but we will find that he is not write that. Then he is an idealist. Hasn't he written that "perhaps the most amazing aspect about man is what is latent in him. One thing that sets man apart from animals is a boundless unpredictable capacity for the development of an inner universe. There is more potentiality in his soul than in any other being known to us....indeed, the essence of human being is not what he is, but in what he is able to be."[25] Let us make a further investigation and find out where Heschel stands.

IV

What are some of the goals, which Heschel has suggested for education? What are the mountain tops, as it were, that he is seeking—horizons which he desires? To an extent, we should understand that he doesn't separate education from life, that he sees them not apart, but together, fused. Thus, he states that "all men are endowed with a sense of wonder, with a sense of mystery. But our system of education fails to develop it and the anti-intellectual climate of our civilization does much to suppress it. Mankind will not perish for lack of information; it may collapse for want of appreciation."[26] We see in these words that Heschel wants man to be able to comprehend, be sensitive, and appreciate the magnificance and mystery of the world. Furthermore, this goal, education for reverence is the foundation stone for the preservation of freedom, according to his philosophy. Freedom, or rather its preservation, is

also a goal within his framework for life, and consequently, in his educational skaffolding. "Freedom," Heschel says, "is a burden that God has thrust upon man. Freedom is something we are responsible for. If we succeed, we will help in the redemption of the world; if we fail, we may be crushed by its abuse."[27]

"Loyalty to freedom means loyalty to the substance of freedom," Heschel has indicated. "A major root of freedom lies in the belief that man, every man, is too good to be the slave of another man. However, the dynamics of our society, the cheapening and trivialization of existence, continue to corrode that belief. The uniqueness and sacred preciousness of man is being refuted with an almost cruel consistency."[28] Thus, Heschel firmly believes in the concept that "the glory of a free society lies not only in the consciousness of my right to be free, and my capacity to be free, but also in the realization of my fellow man's right to be free, and his capacity to be free."[29]

Still another goal with which Heschel is concerned is what he calls "ultimate significance and ultimate preciousness of one's own existence."[30] Without this, we have a threat to freedom. Routine has set into human life, standardization has taken the meaning out of it. "We teach our students how to recognize labels," Heschel admonishes, "not how to develop taste."[31] Heschel despises the trivialization of existence, mechanization of the person, the de-sanctification of time, and the de-personalization of humanity. He wants the human being to strive for nobility of soul. The way to do so is through "moral dedications, acts of worship, intellectual pursuits...Personal concern for justice in the market place, for integrity in public affairs and in public relations is a prerequisite for our right to pray,"[32] he advocates.

We must reach man by education to teach him these underlying cherished thoughts upon which civilization is established. Because education is being involved in wisdom, the beginning of wisdom is to recognize this.

Another goal of education as Heschel senses it is the manner in which young people can be brought up with a proper sense of responsibility in an affluent society. Heschel has been aware of modern man's standard and preoccupation: "What will I get out of life? Suppressed is the question: What will life, what will society get out of me?....There is no sense of responsibility without reverence for the sublime in human existence, without a sense of dignity, without loyalty to a heritage, without an awareness of the transcendence of that living. Self respect is the fruit of discipline, the sense of dignity grows with the ability to say No to oneself."[33] Fundamental for Heschel in man's existence is a sense of indebtedness to both society and God. He cannot fathom existence without it. He considers that "What is emerging in our age is a strange inversion",[34] and he is apparently quite concerned about it, for he asks a most embarrassing question: "How can we expect the young to be noble if we ourselves continue to tolerate the ignoble? This is the advice given by a director of a large plant to his managers: he mentions by way of illustration, "Do not associate with unsuccessful people."[35]

Heschel, an individualist himself is desirous that the teacher be dedicated to the needs of the individual child. "We teachers face the pupil as an individual," he has said, "we have to take into consideration his rights and his tasks. To respect these rights and to think of these tasks is the great duty of educators, for to educate means to meet the inner needs, to respond to the inner goals of the child. We dare not commit human sacrifice by immolating the individual child upon the alter of the group."[36] Heschel doesn't want the

individual to be eclipsed by the social aspect of life. Throughout his writings he mentions that in the literature of Judaism "it is as individuals, not as members of a mass-mind that we are asked to observe mitzvoth"[37] --divine demands. Certainly in these sentences, Heschel illustrates his strong interest in the preservation of that precious entity, called individualism.

A unique goal for education, although certainly evident in the area of religion, which Abraham Heschel seeks for education, is what he describes as self-attachment. He does not believe that "our supreme goal is to express the self. What is the self that we should idolize it?" he asks. "What is there in the self that is worthy of being expressed and conveyed to others? The self gains when it loses itself in the contemplation of the nonself, in the contemplation of the world, for example. Our supreme goal is self-attachment to what is greater than the self rather than self-expression."[38] Heschel does not desire to minimize the great importance of self-expression in education, but rather feels that in order to help a pupil to attain self-expression we must first help him to attain self-attachment, attachment to sources of value experience.[39]

While Heschel was addressing a conference of Jewish educators when he first spoke the following words, nevertheless, they are important for all educators to consider as elemental for their own philosophies and as a major goal in education. "What we glorify," Heschel says, "is not knowledge, erudition, but study and the dedication to learning. According to Rabba 'when man is led in for judgment, he is asked...did you fix time for learning?' (Shabbat 31a)...Man is not asked how much he knows, but how much he learns. The unique attitude of the Jew is not the love of knowledge but the love of studying. A learned rabbi in Poland, the story goes, was dismissed by his

community because no light was seen in his house after midnight—a sign that he was not studying enough. It is not the book, it is the dedication that counts."[40] Certainly contemporary education, both secular and religious, would not go far afield if it pursued this goal.

Still another goal of education in which Heschel is interested is the necessity to teach our young people the knowledge of the dark side of life. "They see," he says, "a picture of ease, play and fun. That life includes hardships, illness, grief, even agony; that many hearts are sick with bitterness, resentfulness, envy — are facts of which young people have hardly an awareness. They do not feel morally challenged, they do not feel called upon... The young person of today is pampered. In moments of crisis he transfers his guilt to others. Society, the age, or his mother is blamed for his failure. Weakened by self-indulgence, he breaks down easily under hardship...What is there about our life that accounts for the plethora of morbidity and gloom in the works of the contemporary artists? There are jobs, opportunities for success, comfort, security, but there is not exaltation, no sense for that which is worthy of sacrifice, no lasting insight, no experience of adoration, no relatedness to the ultimately precious."[41] Heschel is asking us to be realistic and recognize that "the burning issue is not things to come, but the things that happen here and now."[42] On the other hand he is reflecting an idealistic manner, when he asks us to strive to expose young people to the dark side of life—to the "realities" of existence, hopefully suggesting that if this is done, life in its totality would be better. He would thus also wish that our young would become aware that "the source of danger today is not the brutality of the beast but the power of man,"[43] as he phrases it — thus again dealing "idealistically" with a fundamental "reality" of life experience.

No matter how much we know of anyone's philosophy of education, we must, if not first of all, at least at some time, seek out his conception of man. For one's conception of man tops off, as it were, one's philosophy. One might even state that in many ways it is the apex of a philosophy of education; it is the very essence of such a philosophy and gives meaning and validity to it. Abraham Heschel has said that, the obsession with power which modern man possesses has not only stunted his concern for beauty and grandeur, but that we are distorting our sight of the world; we are reducing the status of man from that of a person to a thing. In reducing the world to an instrument, man himself becomes an instrument. Man is the tool, and the machine is the consumer. The instrumentalization of the world leads to the disintegration of man.[44] These thoughts are reminiscent of Martin Buber in his book, I and Thou, as well as his essays: "Education", "The Education of Character," and "What Is Man?" in his work, Between Man and Man.

Heschel speaks of the "metaphysical dignity of man, the divine preciousness of human life." "Man," he contends, "is not valued in physical terms; his value is infinite. To our common sense, one human being is less than two human beings. Jewish tradition tries to teach us that for him who has caused a single soul to perish, it is as though he had caused a whole world to perish; and that for him who has saved a single soul, it is as though he had saved a whole world."[45]

Heschel searches and researches, as it were, to comprehend man. Man is important to him for many things. Not alone because "life is a partnership of God and Man"[46] to Heschel. But human life is holy, and therefore, sacred, as a consequence. "The idea of man having been created in the image of God was interpreted, not as an analogy of being but as an analogy of doing. Man is called upon to act in the likeness of God. 'As he is merciful, be thou merciful.' The future of the human species depends upon our degree of reverence for the

individual man. And the strength and validity of that reverence depends upon our faith in God's concern for man."[47]

Heschel contrasts the Greek concept of man and that of the Hebrew. For the Greek, the idea was "a being in search of meaning. The Biblical contention was 'unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. The pursuit of meaning is meaningless unless there is meaning in pursuit of man. To the biblical mind, man is not only a creature who is constantly in search of himself but also a creature God is constantly in search of. Man is a creature in search of meaning because there is a meaning in search of him, because there is God's beseeching question, 'Where art thou?'"[48]

As we come to an understanding of Heschel's philosophy of education by reading his works we see much emphasis on man. To be sure there is also much emphasis on God too - so that in effect one might call his philosophy a religious humanism. Heschel had emphasized many qualities that man possesses, characteristics that are a challenge to the educator. He writes of preciousness, uniqueness, opportunity, nonfinality, man living in process of in an order of events, solitude and solidarity, reciprocity and sanctity.[49] Central to his concept of man is derived from Psalm 116:12 which queries, "How shall I ever repay to the Lord all the bounty he has given me!" Heschel epitomizes this in the statement: "The dignity of human existence is in the power of reciprocity."[50] "I become a person," Heschel says, "by knowing the meaning of receiving and giving. I become a person when I begin to reciprocate. The degree to which one is sensitive to other people's suffering, to other men's humanity, is the index of one's own humanity."[51]

"Who is man?" inquires Heschel. And he answers in the statement: "A being in travail with God's dreams and designs, with God's dream of a world redeemed, of reconciliation of heaven and earth, of a mankind which is truly His image, reflecting His wisdom, justice and compassion."[52]

Thus, knowing somewhat the thought of Heschel regarding man, his consideration of man's role, we can then perhaps understand more fully the statement from his paper, "Idols in the Temples", which provides in his own words his philosophy of education. It is a statement firmed out of his general philosophy and theology, stemming out of his love of the Hebrew Prophets, his intensive high regard for mankind, and his hopes for man's rising to his horizons, lifted up on wings of hope, spirituality and the demands of life itself, which give it its purpose and its holiness.

VI

"The philosophy of educating man," Heschel writes, "is determined by the philosophy of the nature of man. The prevailing philosophy of education operates upon the assumption that man and his destiny must be conceived in terms of 'interests' and 'needs'. I maintain that if we continue to entertain such a view, education will be doomed to failure...Such a view is part of a way of thinking which tends to flatten things. We deal with human beings as if they had no depth, as if the world had only two dimensions...Intellectually, we know the universe is not here for our sake...practically, however, we act as if the purpose of the universe were to satisfy our interests and needs. However, a life without 'demands' on the mind, heart, body, and soul, a life without constant intellectual effort, spells the doom of culture. An adequate philosophy of education must seek to understand its goals in terms of ends as well as in terms of needs, in terms of values as well as in terms

of interests and desires. Our tradition insists we must neither defy desire nor villify it. Far from defying legitimate needs, it regards authentic needs, as spiritual opportunities. It tries to teach us not only to satisfy needs, but also to surpass them. The error or idolatry is to idolize needs, to convert needs into ends...the goals is to convert ends into needs. To develop a need for that which we may not feel the need of, to desire what is commanded. Satisfying a need is part of the continuance of psyche, serving an end, doing a mitzvah, is a breakthrough. However, the goal remains to integrate the end into the psychological structure of needs, for action to generate motivation. Ultimate ends, as seen by our tradition, are not timeless values, metaphysical entities, frozen absolutes. Ultimate ends are 'mitzvoth', 'demands'.[53]

We begin to catch a glimpse of Heschel's philosophy of education in words such as the preceding, and we commence to realize that he doesn't fit into our contemporary educational philosophies very easily. Let us, however, continue. We may come to a better understanding in a moment.

Heschel criticizes contemporary educational philosophy. He advises that "the cardinal sin of our educational philosophy is that we have asked too little. Its modest standards are unfair to the potentialities of man. Is it true that man is capable of profundity, of sacrifice, of love, or self-denial? Perhaps this is the central issue: the instrumentalization of values. Are we truly committed to the notion that ideals and values vary and alter in accordance with changing condition? Should we not question such a relativistic dogma? Is it not the degree of our sensitivity to the validity of the ultimate ideals and values that fluctuates rather than the ultimate ideals and values."[54]

Is Heschel saying something to us in these sentences—saying that he is not an experimentalist, and instrumentalist? Isn't he disclosing that he possesses a hierarchy of values, and that he wishes mankind to possess it too. Doesn't he believe in ultimates, and certainly in an ultimate of divine characteristics? Isn't he demonstrating at this point aspects of the philosophy of idalism, if not all classic elements of it, certainly important segments of it? Furthermore, isn't this idealism, religious idealism, predicated too upon the concept that "to exist as a human is to assist the divine,"[55] as Heschel phrases it? Thus, can't we say that Heschel is a religious idealist? And isn't his religious humanism the foundation of his religious idealism, or put another way, doesn't his religious humanism issue forth from his religious idealism?

VII

We have attempted to pinpoint in small measure the rich thought of Abraham J. Heschel, contemporary philosopher and theologian. We would hope that we might motivate others to read his works, each page of which is profound, each sentence of each page of which is full of significance and symbolism and most often poetic in imagery if not in form. Heschel can be of great influence upon all teachers if they would but read and listen to his admonitions. His words are as old as the Holy Scriptures, his ideas are as new as tomorrow's lesson plans. He writes in the manner of an ancient scribe, with the contemporaneity of modern media. His is a lesson of yesterday, for the problem of today. His is the problem of yesterday, for the lesson of today.

SOME THOUGHTS AND EPIGRAMS

by

Abraham J. Heschel

"Indeed, the enigma of human being is not in what he is but in what he is able to be." Who is Man?, p. 39.

"The dignity of human existence is in the power of reciprocity." Who is Man?, p. 46.

"For every new insight we must pay a new deed. We must strive to maintain a balance of power and mercy, of truth and generosity. Knowledge is a debt, not a private property. To be a person is to reciprocate, to offer in return for what one receives. Reciprocity involves appreciation. Biologically, we all take in and give off. I become a person by knowing the meaning of receiving and giving. I become a person when I begin to reciprocate." Who is Man?, p. 46.

"The issue we face is not the dichotomy of being and misbeing, but that of righteous and unrighteous being. The tension is not between existence and essence but between existence and performance." Who is Man?, p. 47.

"Philosophy is what man dares to do with his ultimate surmise of the meaning of existence." Who is Man?, p. 55.

"The only way to avoid despair is to be a need rather than an end. Happiness, in fact, is a divine cunning in history which seems to prove that the wages of absolute expediency is disaster." Who is Man?, p. 86.

"All that is creative in man stems from a seed of endless discontent. New insight begins when satisfaction comes to an end, when all that has been seen, said, or done looks like a distortion." Who is Man?, p. 86.

"Character education will remain ineffective if it is limited to the teaching of norms and principles. The concern must be not to instill timeless ideas but to cultivate the concrete person." Who is Man?, p. 99.

"The authentic individual is neither an end nor a beginning but a link between ages, both memory and expectation. Every moment is a new beginning within a continuum of history. It is fallacious to segregate a moment and not to sense its involvement in both past and future. Humbly the past defers to the future, but it refuses to be discarded. Only he who is an heir is qualified to be a pioneer." Who is Man?, p. 99.

"The teaching of our society is that more knowledge means more power, more civilization - more comfort. We should have insisted in the spirit of the prophetic vision that more knowledge should also mean more reverence, that more civilization should also mean less violence. The failure of our culture is in demanding too little of the individual, in not realizing the correlation of rights and obligations, in not realizing that there are inalienable obligations as well as inalienable rights. Our civilization offers comfort in abundance and asks for very little in return. Ours is essentially a Yes education, there is little training in the art of saying "no" to oneself." Who is Man?, p. 100.

"In receiving a pleasure, we must return a prayer, in attaining a success we must radiate compassion." Who is Man?, p. 118.

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AMERICA
May 29, 1982 Seventy-five cents (ISSN 0002-7049)

Remembering Abraham Heschel

Samuel H. Dresner

The Catholic Revival in France

David O'Connell

AMERICA Published by Jesuits of the United States and Canada

May 29, 1982 Seventy-five cents
Vol. 146 No. 21 Whole No. 3722

In This Issue

Of Many Things

Billy Graham has always been known as a close friend of American Presidents. For some religious observers, he has been uncomfortably close. Perhaps dealing with the powerful at such close range has overdeveloped Mr. Graham's diplomatic sensibilities. Could the habits developed in such relationships be a partial answer for the unfortunate, and even baffling, statements Mr. Graham made about religious freedom in the Soviet Union at the close of his recent visit to Moscow?

The Russian Orthodox Church was, Mr. Graham announced, more independent of its Government than the Church of England, and religious practice in the several churches in Moscow that he visited compared favorably, in his view, with that in Charlotte, North Carolina. The famous evangelist could not have been surprised that such remarks set off howls of protest around the world. Why did he make them, then? Some newspaper reports cited Mr. Graham's desire to be invited back to the Soviet Union to preach a crusade as an explanation for what could most charitably be described as an exercise of excessive tactfulness in the Soviet Union.

Religious freedom is, of course, a relative term, as Billy Graham pointed out, and he did make it clear that he was reporting only the impressions gained from the few churches he was able to visit. In the summer of 1979, I had the opportunity of visiting the same Baptist church in Moscow where Billy Graham preached on May 9. The Sunday service was surely not stage-managed for any visiting dignitaries abroad. In fact, the church was so crowded that the visitors from New York City had to use some subway rush hour tactics to shoulder our way to a place where we could see and hear. No one could doubt the power of the religious feeling in that church.

But this congregation was one that had registered with the Government and had accepted the conditions imposed by the Government that defined their religious activities. Other evangelical Christians who refused to accept such Government control and have attempted to pass their Gospel message on to others, particularly the young, have been closely watched by the police and frequently arrested when their influence has become significant.

The decision either to resist all government control in order to defend the freedom of the Gospel or to accept certain restrictions in order to maintain at least a limited arena for Christian life and worship is not a simple one for the Christians of the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and the People's Republic of China, to cite only three areas where atheism is an official government ideology. Men and women of conscience can come to different conclusions, and the line to be drawn around the integrity of religious faith is sometimes a fine one.

The principal danger, of course, is that the Soviets and other Marxist-Leninist regimes have found that religion can be useful. When governments of East or West begin to find religion useful, religious leaders should examine their consciences. Representatives from the Soviet bloc have faithfully advanced Soviet foreign policy objectives at international religious meetings for years. Should Western religious leaders therefore boycott such meetings?

Not necessarily. I myself would have been suspicious of anything with a title like The World Conference of Religious Workers for Saving the Sacred Gift of Life from Nuclear Catastrophe, which is what the Moscow meeting to which Mr. Graham was invited was called. But Mr. Graham's mistake was not his attendance but his exit lines. J.O'H.

AMERICA appears every Saturday in 1982 except Jan. 2 and alternating Saturdays during the summer months. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. Subscriptions: United States, $21 for one year, $42 for two years; add U.S. $5 postage for each year for Canada. $8.50 each year for foreign. Single copies of current issue, 75¢. AMERICA has been reproduced on microfilm, from Vol. 1 (1909) to date, through University Microfilms, Inc., 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. AMERICA is owned and operated by the America Press, Inc., 106 West 56th Street, New York, N.Y. 10019. Telephone: (212) 581-4640. Publisher, Joseph A. O'Hare. Business and Advertising Manager, Paul Mahowald. Comptroller, James J. Santora. Subscriptions, Sr. Marian Mercedes. AMERICA is indexed in the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Catholic Periodical Index, Book Review Index, Book Review Digest and Media Review Digest. *To change your mailing address:* Send the new address and an AMERICA mailing label with the old address to America Press as above; allow four weeks. *To postman:* If magazines are undeliverable, send *form 3579* to AMERICA, *106 West 56th Street, New York, N. Y. 10019.*

SAMUEL H. DRESNER

Remembering Abraham Heschel

'The years since his passing, far from dimming his person, cast in even brighter relief the unique role he played on the contemporary scene'

Let us begin at the end. Several years before Abraham Heschel's death in 1972, he suffered a near fatal heart attack from which he never fully recovered. I traveled to his apartment in New York to see him. He had gotten out of bed for the first time to greet me and was sitting in the living room when I arrived, looking weak and pale. He spoke slowly and with some effort, almost in a whisper. I strained to hear his words.

"Sam," he said, "when I regained consciousness, my first feeling was not of despair or anger. I felt only gratitude to God for my life, for every moment I had lived. I was ready to depart. 'Take me, O Lord,' I thought, 'I have seen so many miracles in my lifetime.'" Exhausted by the effort, he paused, then added: "That is what I meant when I wrote [in the preface to his book of Yiddish poems]: "'I did not ask for success; I asked for wonder. And You gave it to me.'"

Leaving Heschel's home, I walked alone, in silence, aimlessly, oblivious of others, depressed by the knowledge that the man who meant so much to so many was mortally ill.

I pondered his words. What had he meant by them? Was it possible to accept death so easily? Death, that faceless enemy, that fearsome monster who devours our days, who confounds the philosopher, silences the poet and reduces the mighty to offering all their gold, in vain, for yet another hour. Was he telling me not to sorrow too much, thinking of my feelings when he was moving toward the end of all feeling? Could he have been consoling me?

Suddenly there rang in my mind the striking passage with which he had concluded his first major work, *Man Is Not Alone:* "Our greatest problem is not how to continue but how to return. How can I repay unto the Lord all His bountiful dealings with me? When life is an answer, death is a homecoming. And the deepest wisdom man can attain is to know that his destiny is to serve. . . . This is the meaning of death: the ultimate self-dedication to the divine. Death so understood will not be desecrated by craving for immortality, for the act of giving away is reciprocity on man's part for God's gift of life. For the pious man it is a privilege to die."

And I found myself recalling a Hasidic teaching he often quoted: "There are three ascending levels of how one mourns: With tears—that is the lowest. With silence—that is higher. And with a song—that is the highest." I understood then what it was I had experienced: the lesson that how a man meets death is a sign of how he has met life. Intimations of melody countered my sadness. At that moment the power of the human spirit, mortal and frail though it is, never seemed so strong.

Ten days before his death Heschel had taped a television interview for NBC and was asked by the interviewer at the close of the program if he had a special message for young people. He nodded and seemed to turn to the future he would never see. "Remember," he said, "that there is meaning beyond absurdity. Know that every deed counts, that every word is power. . . . Above all, remember that you must build your life as if it were a work of art."

The day before his death, Heschel insisted upon traveling to Connecticut to stand outside a Federal prison in the freezing snow, waiting for the release of a friend, a priest, who had been jailed for civil protest.

He died on the Sabbath eve, in his sleep, peacefully, with a "kiss," as the ancient rabbis describe the death of those who die on that day. At his bedside were two books: one a Hasidic classic, the other a work on the war in Vietnam. The combination was symbolic. The two books represented two different worlds: eternal spirit and mundane present, mysticism and diplomacy, heaven and earth. Most choose one or the other. Heschel refused to ignore either, prefering to live in the tension of that polarity.

After the close of the Sabbath and before the funeral a strange gathering of friends collected in his home to comfort the family: There were several former students, a Hasidic rabbi, an esteemed writer on the Holocaust, a well-known Catholic priest and his last disciple, the son of the founder of a Japanese Christian sect. How to mourn? With tears, with silence, with a song?

Who was Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel?

Born in Warsaw, Poland, in 1909, a descendent of an illustrious line of Hasidic rabbis, even from early childhood Heschel was viewed with great expectations. At the age of 4 or 5 scholars would place him on a table and interrogate him for the surprising and amusing answers he would give. When his father died during his 10th year, there were those who wanted the young boy to succeed him almost at once. He had already mastered many of the classical religious texts; he had begun to write; and the words he spoke were a strange combination of maturity and youth. The sheer joy he felt as a child, so uncontainable at times that he would burst out in laughter when he met a good friend in the street, was later tamed into an easy sense of humor that added to his special personal charm. But there was also astounding knowledge, keen understanding and profound feeling: an awareness that man dwells on the tangent of the infinite, within the holy dimension; that the life of man is part of the life of God. Some Hasidic leaders felt that in him

called traditionalists insufficiently extreme for his taste and left them to join an even more radical group. At Fatima on May 13 he illustrated what history has already amply demonstrated: Religious fanaticism easily turns into mindless fury.

Pope John Paul II, however, seems to regard dangerous encounters as occupational hazards. He is said to have remarked to a Polish friend making the trip to Portugal with him that the Fatima incident was not the first of its kind, nor would it be the last. Millions of people around the world devoutly hope that on this point John Paul II will prove as poor a prophet as he is a brave and indomitable voice of the Gospel. For despite the risks, these people do not want the Pope to discontinue his journeys even though he has already traveled to so many places. After all, there are countries with long-established Catholic communities that are still awaiting his first visit—Spain, for instance, and Canada—and those that have already received him, want him to return.

This is not surprising. To begin with, the papal journeys have regularly inspired outbursts of religious enthusiasm. Like all human emotions, these fade. But while they last, they are exhilarating; for a moment they interrupt the rhythm of the secular to introduce a reminder of the sacred. Besides, there is more to these occasions than fervor. John Paul II uses these visits to reaffirm Christian social doctrine as he did on May 15 in the industrial city of Oporto. "Without capital there is no work," he said. "But on the other hand, human work cannot be considered a function of capital. It transcends it absolutely. Man is not made for the machine, but the machine for man." The effects of words like these from the world's preeminent Christian leader cannot be measured; they certainly cannot be dismissed.

Along with physical dangers, papal journeys often run the more subtle risk of appearing to make political statements. No doubt, that is why John Paul II, just before leaving for Portugal, plainly indicated that he would postpone the trip he has been planning to make to Great Britain (May 28-June 2), if what is politely called the conflict between Argentina and Britain were not soon resolved. At the moment of this writing, that solution is still in doubt, but the Pope's determination is not. His decision is as inevitable as it is painful. The hostilities in the South Atlantic, said Cardinal Basil Hume of Westminster, would make a pastoral visit difficult. Indeed, they would make it impossible. Nevertheless, the cancellation of the papal visit would be one of the most unfortunate results of this unwanted and undeclared war.

Not that everyone would regret this outcome. An English group called the National Secular Society has anticipated the visit by setting up an ad hoc committee called People Opposing Papal Addicts, and a Scottish Protestant pastor has announced that God is using "the Falkland Islands crisis to keep the Pope out of Britain." But many Anglicans and Roman Catholics have dared to hope that God might, in fact, be using John Paul's visit to bring Rome and Canterbury closer together and thereby to promote the eventual union of all the Christian churches. If John Paul II does have to postpone his British visit, one hopes he will remind both belligerent nations that their preoccupation with national honor and war is impeding humanity's pursuit of brotherhood and peace.

A Creation Canticle

Before the story of your love is told,
We, your sons and daughters (every hair,
Every hair of our heads numbered) shall hold,
Possess in all its essence, fondly praise
Each quick perfection, each particular
Lavished by Love's largess on eye or ear—
Each aurora, skylark, diatom and star,
The interfolded wings of each white rose,
Each blizzard crystal's Byzantine design,
Each cricket's litany, each sparrow's fall,
The rainbow sheen, the shine, the finery
Of every fin and mineral and wing,
The lights, the moods of skylines, mountains, oceans,
And marvels the lightning mind alone illumines—
Philosophies, numbers, norms, inventions, notions,
Each coda, each conundrum, each conceit,
Every right and every wrong,
The lilt, the beat, the brio, the sweet choice
Of syllable and sound in every song
Shaped by every bell-curved lip
In all the dulcet dialects of earth,
And mysteries the heart alone can plumb—
The Eden wonder of each kiss, each birth,
The relentless drumroll coming of each death,
Each laugh, each cry, each clinging last goodbye,
Every betrayal, every loss, every individual cross
We shall own and know and feel and know why
Even as you who know
The curvature, biography, and mass
Of each bubble in the surf, each blink of dew
Diamonding woven web or morning grass,
Who have the measure of each mite of sand
In all Arabia's deserts and mold each face
And fondly trace its changing lineaments
Out of the depth and height and breadth of Grace
That must create, embrace, and sing,
Perfect and love
Every
Thing.

JOSEPH AWAD

a renewal of their movement, which had grown dormant in the 20th century, might come about. Others too were aware of the new light that was glowing in their midst.

It can be said with certainty that the years in Warsaw provided that nourishment of spirit and intellect, that inner dignity and awareness of who he was, that gave permanent direction to Heschel's being. It could not, however, prevent him from peering beyond and in the end setting out from his home to explore the world of Western civilization which thundered and glittered about him. Departing from Warsaw in his teens, he traveled first to Vilna, where he pursued his secular education and joined a promising group of young Yiddish poets; then on to Berlin, the metropolis of science and philosophy in the 1920's, where he immersed himself in the culture of the West and began to publish his first books and establish his career. For a short time he succeeded Martin Buber in Frankfurt but was soon forced to flee the encroaching Nazi horde, by way of Poland and England. Most of his years in the United States were spent at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City, where from his small, crowded study a series of major works emanated to a growing number of readers in America and beyond.

In Eastern Europe Heschel acquired his ancestral Jewish learning and piety; in Berlin, philosophy, method and European culture; in the United States, within the blessings of the free society which he treasured, the full extent of his powers was reached. But regardless of where he traveled, Heschel's steps were ever pointed toward the Holy Land, and whatever the city in which he lived, his home was always Jerusalem.

Our age is one in which we know more and more about less and less. Heschel's genius embraced a number of fields. He wrote seminal works on the Bible, the Talmud, medieval thought, philosophy, theology, Hasidism and contemporary moral problems. He was a theologian, a poet, a mystic, a social reformer and a historian. Indeed, the best of the whole tradition of Israel, its way of thought and life, found a unique synthesis in him. Rooted in the most authentic sources of Israel's faith, Heschel's audience reached beyond creedal boundaries. He was easily the most respected Jewish voice for Protestants and Catholics. His friendship with Reinhold Niebuhr was legendary, and his crucial role at Vatican II has yet to be described. A token of the esteem in which Catholics held Heschel, among the many tributes accorded him after his death in 1972, was an entire issue of AMERICA (3/10/73) devoted to his memory, unusual in any case and duplicated for no other Jew. The years since his passing, far from dimming his person, cast in even brighter relief the unique role he played on the contemporary scene, a role no Jew, or Gentile for that matter, has since filled.

A master of English prose, though he knew little of language when he arrived in America in 1939, Heschel, like his Hasidic forebears, had the gift of combining profundity with simplicity. He found just the right word to express not only what he thought but to evoke what he felt, startling the mind and delighting the heart as well as addressing and challenging the whole person. There are passages in his writings which, once encountered, will be taken up again and again, until they are absorbed into one's inner life.

Reading Heschel is to peer into the heart of that rarest of human phenomena, the holy man. For he was one of those who experienced the presence and the power of the living God, before Whom he walked both in the cloistered seclusion of prayer and study and in the very maelstrom of our society. To Heschel the question of religion is not "what man does with his solitude," but "what man does with the presence of God": how to think, feel, act; how to live in a way that is compatible with one's being a likeness of God; how to be what one is; how to so conduct oneself that one's life can be an answer to God's question. Driven from the scholar's study by the very words of the prophets he pondered, Heschel suddenly found himself amidst the burning social issues of the time. Vietnam, civil rights, racism, poverty, Russian Jewry, Israel—all were agonizing objects of his concern at the sacrifice of his own research. He became a "commanding voice" on behalf of the "plundered poor." As with Amos and Jeremiah, "God was raging in his words." Indeed, after an encounter with him, it was not unusual for people to come away with the feeling that one of the prophets of Israel had suddenly risen up before them. He wrote what he thought and lived what he wrote. To Heschel, wonder leads to piety and piety to holy deeds; for without the deed, wonder and piety are incomplete. And the deed, he taught, is always possible because man is not alone; God is ever in search of him.

"Emblazoned over the gates of the world in which we live is the escutcheon of the demons. The mark of Cain in the face of man has come to foreshadow the likeness of God." So Heschel wrote while still living in Hitler's Germany. The 19th century saw the shaking of the foundations of faith in God. We who dwell in the 20th century are experiencing the collapse of faith in the rival who was to replace Him: man. Poets applaud the absurd, novelists explore the decadent, and men prostrate themselves before the deities of lust and power. Our obsession is with human flesh. The ghoul who devours it is the latest film craze, the science of feeding it, firming it up and preparing it for fornication, the most popular theme in literature. Daily we are bombarded by lurid reports on the mass-killer, the rapist and the corrupt bureaucrat. The fantasies of even little children are now peopled with perverts and the radiated dead. Who will speak of those who do justice, love mercy and walk humbly? At such a time we need nothing so much as to be reminded of the divine image in which we are framed, of man's purpose on earth. I am aware of no writer who has done this more powerfully, more eloquently and more convincingly than Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel.

He knew he was the descendant of a people who ever since Sinai was destined to "dwell apart" and whose vocation was to be a witness to the living God amidst all the idolatries of history. Because he was spared from the flames that devoured his family, his community and that whole irreplaceable world of learning and piety in Eastern Europe which alone could have produced him, he felt a special "burden" had been placed upon his shoulders. It was to remind men with a testimony all the more convincing since it came from one who had experienced the fullness of evil, that despite the absurd and the apathy, the world is filled with mystery, meaning and mercy, with wonder, joy and fulfillment; that men have the power to do God's will and that the divine image in which we are made, though distorted, cannot be obliterated. In the end, the likeness of God will triumph over the mark of Cain.

«Rabbi Samuel H. Dresner *of the Moriah Congregation in Deerfield, Ill., has prepared this essay as an introduction to a volume of Abraham Heschel to be published by Crossroad Press this fall.*»

DAVID O'CONNELL

The Catholic Revival in France

Since the end of World War II a whole generation of writers has continued the tradition of the committed Catholic writer in France

The Socialists might be in power in France, but the most important representative of the Center-Right opposition, Jacques Chirac, is by no means sitting idly by. As mayor of Paris, he enjoys an ideal forum from which to show people what he can do, and he has been doing just that not only for the past few years, but especially since the Socialist election victory last May. In addition to seeing to it that Parisian senior citizens recently had telephones installed in their apartments free of charge and in addition to continuing to redirect traffic flow and refurbish public squares for the benefits of pedestrians and to the detriment of automobiles, he has also engaged in more civilized pursuits like one in which I played a small role this past November.

M. Chirac, like all French mayors, has a "cultural" budget that he can draw upon at his own discretion. He made wise use of a considerable amount of this money when the City of Paris, in cooperation with the Sorbonne, offered substantial financial support for a colloquium held to stimulate interest in the work of the Catholic poet Patrice de la Tour du Pin (1911-1975). The scene was the Salle Louis-Liard, the "salle des thèses" at the Sorbonne where for hundreds of years French academicians have been defending their 1,000- to 2,000-page doctoral dissertations, often with their grandchildren in attendance. Participating in the two-day colloquium were professors from a half-dozen countries, and the sessions were presided over by rather well-known people, like Jean Guitton of the Académie Française, who spent three years in a prisoner-of-war camp in Germany with La Tour du Pin (1939-42), and Pierre Emmanuel, also of the Académie Française, who is the other major Catholic poet of La Tour du Pin's generation.

A front-page article in the daily Le Monde by M. Guitton on the eve of the colloquium brought out many of La Tour du Pin's readers, from former soldiers and old school friends to worker priests and suburban nuns. It was a warm and fitting tribute to a poet who still has not been fully recognized even in France where he, as much as anyone else, was a victim of the fact that Paul Claudel just seems to have lived too long. A case can be made that French intellectuals cannot stand to have more than one Catholic poet at a time.

La Tour du Pin's first volume of poetry, *Quête de Joie* (1933), was published by the prestigious Nouvelle Revue Française when he was only 22. Later, in October 1939, this intimate, elegiac poet who had been discovered by Saint-John Perse, was thought dead when Parisian papers, probably with Péguy in mind, announced dramatically on their front pages that yet another young poet had died on the field of honor. But La Tour du Pin, an infantry lieutenant, had in fact not been killed in the Sarre but only wounded and carried off to Germany as a prisoner of war where he would remain until 1942.

When he returned home to his ancestral property in the Loiret, some 200 miles south of Paris, he would remain there almost exclusively for the rest of his life listening to the inner voice of his own inspiration and shunning Parisian literary circles. His real poetic career was launched in 1946 with the publication of *Somme de poésie,* a volume of 600 pages of free verse and prose in which he also announced the architectural plan of the later works that would become part of the Summa and to which he intended to devote his life. The poetic achievement of La Tour du Pin is monumental for he attempted (and largely succeeded) in treating the human condition from a variety of points of view: man taken by himself, in relationship to others and finally to God. Later volumes all fit into the original structural plan and the only important deviation that La Tour du Pin allowed himself from his life's work was to heed the call of Pope Paul VI, an ardent admirer, to become a member of the team that was entrusted with the task of translating the whole of the Catholic liturgy from Latin to modern French in accordance with the spirit and directives of the Second Vatican Council. La Tour du Pin, in part because of the content of his difficult poems and in part because of his insistence on living as a self-styled "recluse in poetry," is to my mind the most underrated French poet of the postwar era.

It is important to note, however, that La Tour du Pin is by no means the only Catholic writer of his generation. Since the end of World War II a whole generation of writers has come to the fore and continued the tradition of the committed Catholic writer in France. As might be expected, the manner of writing and the themes that they adopt in their work are different from those employed by their predecessors, but that does not mean that important work has not been undertaken or that they are not important in France. With no publishing house in this country seemingly interested in their work (largely I suspect simply because no one has told potential publishers that they even exist), we have not had the number of translations and commentaries that one would need to have in order to talk about their work.

A useful way to think of these writers is as members of what I call the "Generation of 1915." Since they were all born around that date, they share as a group the experience of coming to adulthood during the Interwar Years. Also, the Second World War marked each of them to varying degrees. This generation is quite different from the one that preceded it, and that I would characterize as one that was largely interested in more scientific concerns like criticism, history, philosophy and theology. The Generation of 1900 looked backward, in that it devoted a large part of its energy to explicating the work of previous Catholic writers. In this sense it consolidated the

Edward K. Kaplan
15 Fountain St.
W. Newton, Ma 02165

18 December 1989

Rabbi Marc Tannenbaum
45 East 89th Street, #18F
New York, NY

Dear Marc:

It was a joy to meet you and to talk with you. I was especially impressed with your ability (and willingness) to share aspects of your personal struggles as a young man. Because of your tremendously important roles in international Jewish institutional life, I was not surprised that you could express yourself beautifully. But the substance you shared with me went far beyond historical facts and I am grateful for your expression of feelings as well as judgments. Your collaboration with my efforts will be quite valuable.

I am enclosing some reprints of articles I have written on Heschel which I hope you will find interesting. Thanks again for your willingness to see me and I look forward to continuing our conversation.

My very best wishes.

Sincerely yours,

Ed

Edward K. Kaplan
Fellow, Tauber Institute for
the Study of European Jewry
Professor of French
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A REPRINT FROM
CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM
Vol. XXVIII, No. 1, Fall Issue, 1973

To Max Tanenbaum, With admiration & gratitude, Ed Kaplan

THE SPIRITUAL RADICALISM OF ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL

Edward K. Kaplan

AN ATTEMPT TO COMMUNICATE a sense of real encounter between man and God was Abraham Joshua Heschel's main commitment to modern religious life. His independent relationship with religion as a social institution sometimes disturbed those of static and complacent imagination. Prophetic radicalism always throbbed within his poet's heart and his vast philosophical mind. Heschel deeply loved the established Jewish community and functioned within it. His effort to prevent its stagnation by imitating the prophets' uncompromising defense of truth based on direct response to God's word constitutes his spiritual radicalism. For Heschel, fulfillment of God's active and constant concern for humanity was the root of religious morality.

Religious authenticity is measured in the individual soul. To demand respect for the inner life, the experience of religious situations involving the total person, Heschel developed the notion of "Depth Theology."[1] He distinguishes a theology of experience from ordinary conceptual theology which deals with thought systems and formulations of creed. Heschel's task as a teacher is to lead us beyond outward forms, mere institutions, in order to disclose the living foundation, the origin and life of faith:

> *Religion has often suffered from the tendency to become an end in itself, to seclude the holy, to become parochial, self-indulgent, self-seeking; as if the task were not to ennoble human nature, but to enhance the power and beauty of its institutions or to enlarge the body of doctrines. It has often done more to canonize prejudices than to wrestle for truth; to petrify the sacred than to sanctify the secular. Yet the task of religion is to be a challenge to the stabilization of values.*[2]

Radical here is Heschel's apparent attack on the validity of official religion, the very institutions which are perhaps responsible for the per-

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1 First of a series of lectures delivered at the University of Minnesota in 1960 and published in *The Insecurity of Freedom: Essays in Human Existence* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1967); abbreviated in my text as *Insecurity*.
2 *Ibid., p.* 115.

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severance of religion in our modern culture. But notice that a positive value emerges as the main theme of this contrast: religion as a challenge, as a dynamic thrust toward truth and holiness. His radicalism is spiritual, for it confronts the complacency of religion itself.

Heschel is not rejecting religious institutions, but trying to purify their sacred potential. Starting with the problem of the individual person, he strives to revitalize "pre-theological situations," an existential condition preceding intellectual understanding, or formulations which require detachment of awareness from the primary experience:

> *Theology is like sculpture, depth theology like music. Theology is in the books, depth theology is in the hearts. The former is doctrine, the latter an event. Theologies divide us; depth theology unites us. Depth theology seeks to meet the person in moments in which the whole person is involved, in moments which are affected by all a person thinks, feels, and acts. It draws upon that which happens to men in moments of confrontation with ultimate reality. It is in such moments that decisive insights are born.*[3]

Although these distinctions between theology and depth experience suggest the superiority of the latter, it is obvious that Heschel does not exclude theology and learning from his concern. His polemic underlines the principle that religious thinking should be bathed in the light of the ultimate. Dogma and inwardness should coexist in a sort of polarity, each enriching the other. Intimate experience, a quest for personal confirmation of religious truth, must nourish the objective structure of religious life represented by Halakhah (law), theology or the organization. Heschel's aim is to put us into situations in which we must exercise spiritual insight. His theology is a challenge to surpass theology; it demands a special type of consciousness: awareness of a divine dimension in daily life.

prophetic sensitivity

NOWHERE IS ABRAHAM HESCHEL'S FULFILLMENT of the religious ideal more apparent than in his social action. He achieved national prominence in the days of the great civil rights movement—unfortunately, a dim memory to many flimsy liberals and disillusioned Blacks—marching with Martin Luther King, Jr. in Selma, Alabama. One of the founders of Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam, he spent countless hours in committee meetings, personal consultations, court testimony and participation in many public events. His early outspoken pleas to save Soviet Jewry surprised many of his less astute colleagues. Heschel's mostly anonymous but fruitful efforts at the Vatican Council to efface the Catholic view of Jews as Christ-killers

3 *Ibid.*, p. 119.

sought to change the fabric of the Christian soul. Jewish-Christian dialogue in general became for Heschel an opportunity to further spiritual values in all traditions, to enhance the fatherhood of God, as well as to alleviate unjust social misapprehensions.

He had remarkable political acumen, complementing a consummate mastery of traditional Jewish sources. His sensitivity to contemporary events reflected this polarity of the eternal and the temporal. Rather than being a diversion from or a sacrifice of his writing, social action was for him an essential personal necessity, flowing naturally from his religious vision. Abraham Heschel felt within himself the world's pain, which most of us can conceive only in the mind.

Heschel's scholarly writing also presents his ideal of religious life. It is significant that the defense of his University of Berlin doctoral dissertation on prophecy was the same year (1933) as the publication of his book of Yiddish poems expressing a young man's love of God and deep human compassion.[4] During those days of self-exploration, Heschel evidently chose to submit his considerable poetic gift to prophetic and philosophical action. In *The Prophets* (page 3,) we perceive some explanation of Heschel's own values through his description of prophetic consciousness:

> *What manner of man is the prophet? A student of philosophy who turns from the discourses of the great metaphysicians to the orations of the prophets may feel as if he were going from the realm of the sublime to an area of trivialities. Instead of dealing with the timeless issues of being and becoming, of matter and form, of definitions and demonstrations, he is thrown into orations about widows and orphans, about the corruption of judges and affairs of the market place. Instead of showing us a way through the elegant mansions of the mind, the prophets take us to the slums. . . . They make much ado about paltry things, lavishing excessive language upon trifling subjects.*

This study is a rare combination of solid research, acute theological and moral interpretation and implicit autobiographical disclosure. Heschel was both a metaphysician and a prophetic voice, constructing a vast interpretation of Judaism as a philosophy of religion and, at the same time, responding to social ills. He built "elegant mansions of the mind" while bringing us to the slums. Heschel's ironic emphasis on the apparent disproportion between the hyperbolic way in which the prophets express themselves and our habitual reactions to wickedness suggests to us our moral frailty.

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4 The Yiddish poems were published in Warsaw by Farlag Indsel, and *Die Prophetie*, written in German, appeared in Cracow in 1936, the Polish Academy of Sciences. I quote here from Heschel's English translation and expansion, *The Prophets* (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 3.

Inward sensitivity is essential in Heschel's account of prophetic conciousness, and poetic style is his particular method of expressing this closeness of divine demand and personal reaction.[5] For poetic language—a suggestive and imaginative use of language—should simultaneously point to the familiar objective world while evoking its transformation and interpretation by the subjectivity of the poet. Poetic reading itself should involve a special experience of words and the world. Such an experience is also the source of prophetic poetry:

> *The prophet is a man who feels fiercely. God has thrust a burden upon his soul, and he is bowed and stunned at man's fierce greed. Frightful is the agony of man; no human voice can convey its full terror. Prophecy is the voice that God has lent to the silent agony, a voice to the plundered poor, to the profound riches of the world. It is a form of living, a crossing point of God and man. God is raging in the prophet's words.*[6]

The power of this moral poetry is the incandescent image of an encounter, of a total commitment: "God is raging in the prophet's words." If we are sensitive to the literary aspect of Heschel's writings, the beauty of the words and the powerful juxtaposition of sounds and emotions (e.g., "feels fiercely;" "bowed and stunned at man's fierce greed;" "plundered poor") we sense deeply the passionate conviction which rings through this sometimes academic study of prophecy. These rhetorical devices can actually put us into a pre-theological situation, the holy event in which God makes an overwhelming demand on man.

To read Heschel with correct insight, it is important to note that he characterizes prophetic language, and religious discourse in general, as understatement. That is, no matter how powerful, or even excessive, religious language becomes, it is never adequate to signify the reality of God. On the moral level, too, what may seem hyperbolic to the calm student of prophetic verses is an understatement compared with the prophet's God-induced outrage at the monstrosity of human affliction. The jolts we may receive when reading Heschel's own poetic prose should also be considered in that perspective, as a mere hint of an ineffable experience—of God, or of a suffering conscience. Poetry is a signpost, a signal that what is literally true in spiritual encounter lies beyond words. Poetry is one pathway to an insight which religious tradition can provoke within our souls if we are able to identify with the expressed emotions of the writer.

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5 I have attempted to introduce this method of reading Heschel in "Form and Content in A. J. Heschel's Poetic Style," *Central Conference of American Rabbis Journal* (April 1971), pp. 28-39; and in a more technical study, "Language and Reality in A. J. Heschel's Philosophy of Religion," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (March 1973) pp. 94-113.

6 *Loc. cit.*

Poetic language used by the prophets, therefore, translates directly their special experience of the world:

> *The prophet's use of emotional and imaginative language, concrete in diction, rhythmical in movement, artistic in form, marks his style as poetic. Yet it is not the sort of poetry that takes its origin, to use Wordsworth's phrase, 'from emotion recollected in tranquility.' Far from reflecting a state of inner harmony or poise, its style is charged with agitation, anguish, with history, and history is devoid of poise.*[7]

THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING ABRAHAM HESCHEL'S spiritual radicalism lies in an analysis of prophetic poetry, for such language is charged with an act of holy encounter. The passage just cited continues by evoking the ontological coalescence of the poet's heart and his verbal expression:

> *Authentic utterance derives from a moment of identification of a person and a word; its significance depends upon the urgency and magnitude of its theme. The prophet's theme is, first of all, the very life of a whole people, and his identification lasts more than a moment. . . . This is the secret of the prophet's style: his life and soul are at stake in what he says and in what is going to happen to what he says. It is an involvement that echoes on. What is more, both theme and identification are seen in three dimensions. Not only the prophet and the people, but God himself is involved in what the words convey.*[8]

Three-dimensionality best describes the structure of full response to human existence. The prophets and Heschel extend divine involvement in history by combining a concern for self and for others with consciousness of God's eternal presence.[9] This concrete sense of God's reality, and of the metaphysical gravity of human agony, combine in a moral perception in which man and God pulse with the same pathos. The very roots of Heschel's commitment to social action are ultimately watered by divine love, and that is the three-dimensional fullness which his poetry seeks to convey: "What is the essence of being a prophet? *A prophet is a person who holds God and man in one thought at one time, at all times.*"[10]

An analysis of Heschel's intimate understanding of the plight of Black people in America will illustrate the three-dimensionality of his concern. In his opening address at the National Conference on Religion and Race in

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7 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

8 *loc. cit.*

9 "The self, the fellow-man and the dimension of the holy are the *three* dimensions of mature human concern" (*Man Is Not Alone*, New York: Harper Torchbook, 1966, p. 139). I have explored this judgment in a personal way, in relation to the thought of Heschel and Martin Buber, in "Three Dimensions of Human Fullness: Poetry, Love and Prayer," *Judaism* (Summer 1973), pp. 309-321.

10 *Insecurity*, p. 93.

1963, Heschel expressed his identification with the situation—and the consciousness—of the disinherited:

> *My heart is sick when I think of the anguish and the sighs, of the quiet tears shed in the nights in the overcrowded dwellings in the slums of our great cities, of the pangs of despair, of the cup of humiliation that is running over.*
>
> *The crime of murder is tangible and punishable by law. The sin of insult is imponderable, invisible. When blood is shed, human eyes see red; when a heart is crushed, it is only God who shares the pain.*
>
> *In the Hebrew language one word denotes both crimes. 'Bloodshed,' in Hebrew, is the word that denotes both murder and humiliation. The law demands: one should rather commit suicide than offend a person publicly. It is better, the Talmud insists, to throw oneself alive into a burning furnace than to humiliate a human being publicly.*[11]

These three paragraphs progress from an empathic, emotional experience to a more broadly theological interpretation of the living conditions of the poor, particularly of the Black poor. The foundation of his response is a concrete act of imagination, expressed by a poetic evocation of mute suffering. Notice the use of literary language—e.g., "dwellings," "cup of humiliation" (a renewed Biblical image)—and the rhythm of this single long sentence, protracted as if in agony. This first paragraph—a Biblical verse, really—emphasizes the inward anguish which results from social and economic oppression. In the second paragraph, Heschel's empathy with mankind merges with a sense of God's pain, as he says later: "Seen from the perspective of prophetic faith, the predicament of justice is the predicament of God."[12] This leads to a theological generalization. Textual authority (and radical it is!) in the third paragraph is the support, not necessarily the only source, of sensitive moral judgment. Heschel displaces the focus from physical to spiritual suffering. Why? Because man is created in the image of God.[13] Heschel emphasizes humanity's spiritual dimension, his conciousness and self-respect, that which differentiates him from beasts. The poet's emotions, the theologian's insight and the clear ethical eye harmonize in this example of modern prophetic consciousness.

prayer as a testing ground

ACCORDING TO HESCHEL, we perceive most directly the state of our souls in prayer: "While it is true that being human is verified in relations between

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11 *Ibid.*, p. 88.
12 *Ibid.*, p. 93.
13 See "Sacred Image of Man," *Insecurity*, pp. 150-167. This theological concept is not only the basis for an objective ethics but it also contributes to an inwardly felt sense of human dignity.

man and man, depth and authenticity of existence are disclosed in moments of worship."[14] Something immanent and intrinsic to man is disclosed and actualized, not produced, in prayer. Our receptivity to the holy—our third dimension—should nurture within us a capacity to respect all people and to realize God's dream for mankind.

The theological presupposition implied in Heschel's theory of prayer is God's active involvement in history, a thesis demonstrated fully in *The Prophets* and *God In Search of Man.* On a day-to-day level, prayer can put us in touch with our inner life and with that which is inherent but hidden within us, our obscure divine foundation. Rather than functioning as a withdrawal from outside commitment, the inwardness of true prayer is a means of plummeting and intensifying our awareness of the world of social concern:

> *Prayer is a perspective from which to behold, from which to respond to, the challenges we face. Man in prayer does not seek to impose his will upon God; he seeks to impose God's will and mercy upon himself. . . . To pray is to open a door, where both God and the soul may enter.*[15]

The soul is that which is fundamentally sensitive in man. The presence of God, as Heschel describes it, may mean that we gain an insight into how God might judge the world, so that in a personal way, we can react from that perspective. This approach to prayer rejoins the vision of the prophets, whose words echo a divine-human encounter and whose passions are provoked by human frailty and malice.

For Heschel, prayer means a deepening and development, an education of the most finely human in us—that which is free and sensitive, truthful and bold. It is not surprising that prayer, if acted upon, can also have social and political consequences:

> *Religion as an establishment must remain separated from the government. Yet prayer as a voice of mercy, as a cry for justice, as a plea for gentleness, must not be kept apart. Let the spirit of prayer dominate the world. Let the spirit of prayer interfere in the affairs of man. Prayer is private, a service of the heart; but let concern and compassion, born out of prayer, dominate public life. . . .*
>
> *Prayer is meaningless unless it is subversive, unless it seeks to overthrow and ruin pyramids of callousness, hatred, opportunism, falsehoods. The liturgical*

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14 A. J. Heschel, "On Prayer," *Conservative Judaism, XXV,* 1 (Fall 1970), pp. 7-8; hereafter, "On Prayer." This numinous talk, which summarizes many of Heschel's basic views on prayer, was delivered at an inter-religious convocation held under the auspices of the U.S. Liturgical Conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on August 28, 1969. See also *Man's Quest for God: Studies in Prayer and Symbolism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), and "Vocation of the Cantor," and "Prayer as a Discipline," *Insecurity,* pp. 242-61.

15 "On Prayer," p. 3.

movement must become a revolutionary movement, seeking to overthrow the forces that continue to destroy the promise, the hope, the vision.[16]

Prayer is an experience in which we can first participate emotionally with those who have attained true spiritual insight, the psalmists and other masters. Thus we transform our own vision of reality. Worship, for Heschel, is a politics of the spirit, of the inward self, leading to a refinement of our relation to others. It is a means of evaluating our private receptivity to the holy, so that our responsibility to the outer world will not remain a closed secret. Prayer is a testing ground of all that is fundamental to religious life.

Prayer is subversive because it demands an absolute commitment to truth and to active alteration of society according to God's values. Meditating on Ezekiel 34: 25-31, Heschel spoke at a 1967 worship meeting for peace in Vietnam held in Washington, D.C. He affirmed unequivocally the inseparableness of sacred and moral sensitivity:

The encounter of man and God is an encounter within the world. We meet within a situation of shared suffering, of shared responsibility.

This is implied in believing in One God in whose eyes there is no dichotomy of here and there, of me and them. They and I are one; here is there, and there is here. What goes on over there happens even here. Oceans divide us, God's presence unites us, and God is present wherever man is afflicted, and all of humanity is embroiled in every agony wherever it may be.

Though I am not a native of Vietnam, ignorant of its language and traditions, I am involved in the plight of the Vietnamese.[17]

God's presence gives depth to this ethical stand, in much the same way as theology is vitalized by this sense of the holy. Abraham Heschel's early response to the Vietnam war was a challenge to the Jewish community. His firm plea for amnesty for draft resistors still calls to our conscience.[18] He was one of the few of the more traditional Jewish leaders who judged the crime of Vietnam as being of more immediate and far-reaching moral significance than any supposed weakening of government sympathy toward American Jewish interests. His general freedom from consensus politics alienated him from those whose moral vigor was stunted by ethnic defensiveness. In point of fact, however, Heschel's political stands are as valuable to Jewish life in America as a Biblical lesson. He showed that one could

16 *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 7.

17 Published in "The Moral Outrage of Vietnam," *Vietnam: Crisis of Conscience*, with Robert McAfee Brown and Michael Novak (New York: Association Press, Behrman House, Herder and Herder, 1967), pp. 52, 53.

18 Heschel delivered a talk entitled, "On the Theological, Biblical, and Ethical Considerations of Amnesty," at an Inter-religious Conference on Amnesty in Washington, D.C., March 26-27, 1972, as yet unpublished.

face nearly impossible moral conflicts with holy faith and love of his people's soul. The sacred image of man—of all men—was the living foundation of his universal compassion.

an unfinished odyssey

I SHOULD ATTEMPT TO DEFINE more clearly my own relation to this divine call, my own incapacity to share with my *Rebbe* the certainty that God cares about human distress. Heschel was a disturbing presence in my life as well as a sweet spiritual companion. His confidence lay beyond my still groping possibilities. Most people of the twentieth century no longer possess a solid sense of "the meaning beyond the mystery." For us, the mystery is perceived as God's inscrutable silence, and faith as a mere shudder of yearning on an often wearisome quest. And yet yearning itself can give us strength; yearning is a child of hope in bleak discouragement. It was Heschel's poetry that awakened and nurtured within me a sense of what it might be like to live in faith. His words can touch within us all a love for holiness. Heschel's own fervor and moral integrity can illumine our doubt and help sow the seeds of eternity, which he felt so close to his own spirit. One man's faith—and its realization in action—forbids me to abandon the odyssey:

> *Dark is the world to me, for all its cities and stars. If not for my faith that God in His silence still listens to my cry, who could stand such agony.*[19]

Did Heschel truly understand the darkness, the despair of modern alienation? Did his holy joy close him to the absurd? Sometimes I thought so; that is, when I did not sufficiently understand the absolute integrity of his "theological" vision and social sensitivity. Separating sacred and profane, I did not grasp the dynamic tension of polarities which tore him, and which lends continuing relevance and vitality to his witness. I understand now how the songs of pious ecstasy blanketed but did not abolish the silent stupor of the gas-chambers, as well as his paralyzing dismay at the satanic devastation of humanity in the name of civilization, which continues today. For without this polarity, this coexistence of holy confidence and moral anguish, his faith might have remained inward, immobile and passive, and his anxiety strictly personal. But within his spirit was a creative struggle of darkness and light, keeping a balance, until the end, between overwhelming despair and essential hope. His generous but tortured discretion spared us until the last a glimpse of his intimate havoc.

Only in his final two books, centered on the disturbing and enigmatic

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19 "On Prayer," p. 7.

Reb Menachem Mendel of Kotzk,[20] does he reveal explicitly his personal dilemma. In an autobiographical introduction, Heschel describes a polarity at the foundation of his entire life, a polarity between the Baal Shem's faith and the wretchedness of the Kotzker:

> *In a strange way, I found my soul at home with the Baal Shem but driven by the Kotzker. Was it good to live with one's heart torn between the joy of Mezbizh [the home of the Baal Shem] and the anxiety of Kotzk? To live both in awe and consternation, in fervor and horror, with my conscience on mercy and my eyes on Auschwitz, wavering between exaltation and dismay? Was this a life a man would choose to live? I had no choice: my heart was in Mezbizh, my mind in Kotzk.*

The Kotzker can represent our sense of helplessness in the face of moral monstrosity, and perhaps even the abandonment of faith which characterizes metaphysical absurdity. But wrestling with his pessimism was the faith kindled in Heschel's Hasidic childhood, the inner light of the Baal Shem which so few of us can experience intimately. Within our cultural limits, we can never fully embody the completeness of what Heschel drew from Jewish tradition. Yet beyond the wall of modern upheavals, of overwhelming poverty and greed, oppression and moral callousness, of simple selfishness, is a prayer, a yearning dream which religious traditions attempt to keep alive within us. Living fully the contradictions of the present moment, Abraham Heschel's spiritual radicalism will never allow us to forget God's message: that we must become fully human under the eyes of the divine.

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20 *A Passion for Truth* (on the Baal Shem, Kierkegaard and the Kotzker), and *Kotzker—A Struggle in Integrity* (in Yiddish). The following quotation was published in *The Jerusalem Post Weekly*, January 1, 1973, p. 14.

Reprinted from THE JOURNAL OF RELIGION
Vol. 57, No. 1, January 1977

Mysticism and Despair in Abraham J. Heschel's Religious Thought

Edward K. Kaplan

Abraham Joshua Heschel's religious vision embraces both mysticism and despair. Heschel defined his approach to religion in one of his first published articles, "The Mystical Element in Judaism" (1949). Quite simply, it presupposes "a yearning after the unattainable . . . [a need] to grasp with the senses what is hidden from the mind . . . to experience as a reality what vaguely dawns in intuitions"[1]—in a word, to meet God directly. At the same time Heschel assumes that we must relinquish all human confidence before we can give space to God. This radical approach to religion—a consequence of his "Depth Theology"[2]—appears both accessible and remote to the faithful. His powerful confidence and impassioned language appeal to their most intense yearnings and memories. Inversely, Heschel threatens believers who are unwilling to confront their own skepticism and disbelief and who avoid the painful suspicion that theology is illusion or fantasy. Heschel removes our usual distance from such feelings, while, as a moral critic, he demands concrete, practical compassion for others. He repudiates any safeguard against excruciating overinvolvement. Those who insulate their emotions from the daily evidence of armed conflicts, starvation, economic and social oppression—or deny the mediocrity of contemporary religious institutions—will thus have difficulty facing Heschel's religious standards.

His picture of today reflects Pascal's condemnation of seventeenth-century France where people "diverted" themselves from honest, lucid recognition of human frailty or "misery." Both rebuke the psychological resistances, denial mechanisms, and complacency subversive to spiritual and moral courage. Heschel continues Pascal when he demolishes the rationalizations which isolate us from our fellows and from God. Both Heschel and Pascal seek to conquer that double alienation by having us experience it radically.

[1] "The Mystical Element in Judaism," in *The Jews: Their History, Culture, and Religion*, ed. Louis Finkelstein (New York: Harper & Bros.; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1949), p. 602 (hereafter cited as "The Mystical Element in Judaism"). See also Heschel's *The Earth Is the Lord's* (New York: Harper & Row, Harper Torchbooks, 1962; originally published 1950), chaps. 10, "Kabbalah," and 11, "Hasidism," pp. 69–82.

[2] Heschel published an essay of that title in *The Insecurity of Freedom: Essays in Human Existence* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1966); see my article, "The Spiritual Radicalism of Abraham J. Heschel," *Conservative Judaism* 28, no. 1 (Fall 1973): 40–49.

Yet anxiety is hardly the characteristic tenor of Heschel's works; his task was to awaken within readers (believers and unbelievers alike) a desire to experience God's presence. "For faith is not the clinging to a shrine but an endless pilgrimage of the heart. Audacious longing, burning songs, daring thoughts, an impulse overwhelming the heart, usurping the mind—these are all a drive toward serving Him who rings our hearts like a bell."[3] He did this primarily by evoking his love of God in enchantingly poetic prose. As an apologist, like Pascal, he envisaged a literary corpus which would respond to secular agnosticism, atheism, or free thinking with the witness of religious belief and practice. Heschel lived longer than Pascal and explored his tradition more fully; he dealt with more specific issues than the author of the *Pensées*. A modern reader, whether Jewish or not, can find in Abraham Heschel's works answers to most problems raised by Jewish doctrines and history.

Heschel evokes the cultural development of his Hasidic background in *The Earth Is the Lord's* (1950). He delineates experiential and philosophical interpretations of Jewish views of humanity and the world in *Man Is Not Alone* (1951), while focusing particularly on Jewish revelation and orthopraxis in *God in Search of Man* (1955). These two books constitute the foundation of his apologetics. He explains the activist morality of prophetic consciousness in *The Prophets* (1962) and illustrates the rich inner experiences of prayer and ritual in *The Sabbath* (1951) and *Man's Quest for God* (1954). Specific moral and political problems are addressed in *The Insecurity of Freedom* (1966) and in *Israel: An Echo of Eternity* (1969). The author's extraordinary literary gifts, his almost uncanny ability to capture the feeling of different modes of religious experience, nourish all of his writings. These books, and the essays and articles which extend them, assume an unshaking confidence in God's love for humanity and in mankind's capacity to respond to that concern compassionately and responsibly.

Heschel confronts modern conceptions of the absurd in his Stanford University lectures, *Who Is Man?* (1965). This succinct essay challenges atheistic philosophies of despair and meaninglessness. Reflection on humanity is never detached; it requires full personal involvement, painful concern, a response to mankind's essential perplexity. Authentic philosophical and sacred meaning must emerge from spiritual anguish. Yet only in his final work—*A Passion for Truth* (1973)—centered on two abrasive religious dissenters, Søren Kierkegaard and Reb Mendel of Kotzk, did Heschel directly express his own anguish at evil and religious decadence. This book—published after the author's sudden death—expresses a Camus-like biting irony more forcefully than his earlier works. Heschel's outrage echoes these two spiritual radicals and confronts the pervasive condition of the twentieth century: a demolished faith in mankind and its God.

[3] Abraham Heschel, *Man Is Not Alone: A Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Harper & Row, Harper Torchbooks, 1951), p. 175 (hereafter cited as *Not Alone*).

A closer look reveals that Heschel's vision of human existence, like that of Pascal, was always both realistic and faithful. He is fully aware of humanity's loneliness without God, and he responds to our radical doubt and despair with an equally radical challenge: that of mystical experience, direct confirmation of the divine. How does this conform to Heschel's function as philosopher? How does his appeal to readers' intellectual assent encourage traditional religious belief? My view is that Heschel's apologetics has broader pertinence. Its fundamental intent follows Herbert Fingarette's explanation of the mystical teacher: "The mystic's words are like [a psychoanalyst's] therapeutic interventions: they are designed to be effective in producing specific change, not to embody universal truths. The 'pattern' underlying the mystic's words is, in short, pragmatic, not logical."[4] Heschel philosophizes in order to cleanse our illusions. He first casts us adrift and so prepares a meeting with God which begins in meaninglessness and dread.

OUT OF THE DARKNESS

Openness to God requires a relative emptying of oneself. The parallel between Heschel and Pascal explains the Jewish thinker's role as philosopher of religion: to destroy unquestioned preconceptions through intellectual argumentation for the purpose of opening readers to an experience of the holy. True—and this issue must be scrutinized in detail—Heschel's argumentations often appear incomplete and, at best, unconvincing by normal philosophical standards.[5] Philosophers consider that the most obvious weakness of his endeavor. But is that not the problem of all apologetics? An apologist of faith is limited. The apologist must prepare human reason and emotion to pass beyond themselves so that God may manifest himself. Our appreciation of Heschel should not diminish if we do not expect God to answer. More important are Heschel's belief in God's availability and his sensitivity to those without faith. Heschel does discover our despair and uses it as an instrument of redemption.

His religious philosophy, first and foremost, derives its special potency from the notion of *radical amazement*: "Wonder or radical amazement is the chief

[4]Herbert Fingarette, *The Self in Transformation: Psychoanalysis, Philosophy, and the Life of the Spirit* (New York: Harper & Row, Torchbooks, 1965), p. 305. I have found this to be the best study of the relationship of religious experience to personal growth. It is not at all reductionistic.

[5] See the recent essay of Gershom Scholem, "Jewish Theology Today," *Center Magazine* 7, no. 2 (March/April 1974): 58–71; Scholem mentions in passing Heschel and Martin Buber as "existential theologians" who have evaded the real issues of revelation (p. 63); see also Emil Fackenheim's criticism of *Man Is Not Alone* in *Judaism* 1, no. 1 (January 1952): 85–89, and his review of *God in Search of Man* in *Conservative Judaism* 15, no. 1 (Fall 1960): 50–53. Important suggestions have been made by Fritz A. Rothschild, "The Religious Thought of Abraham J. Heschel," *Conservative Judaism* 23, no. 1 (Fall 1968): 12–24; Edmond LaB. Cherbonnier, "Heschel's Time Bomb," *Conservative Judaism* 28, no. 1 (Fall 1973): 10–18; and a recent article of Maurice Friedman, "Divine Need and Human Wonder: The Philosophy of Abraham J. Heschel," *Judaism* 25, no. 1 (Winter 1976): 65–78.

characteristic of the religious man's attitude toward history and nature."[6] The relevance of his mystical approach to God is explained by the dynamics of radical amazement or wonder, as Heschel understands it: wonder is the Janus-face of despair. Amazement is an attitude which takes nothing for granted: being itself, the very fact of my existence, is unbelievable.[7] In radical amazement we apprehend the world as an allusion to its deeper, spiritual meaning. Heschel believes that this experience frees us from common assumptions about reality and is a pristine intuition of the sacred mystery of existence. Mystery leads to the discovery of ultimate meaning, of God's presence beyond the obscure enigma of the world.

Heschel emphasizes the specificity of radical amazement at the beginning of *Man Is Not Alone* and *God in Search of Man* by comparing it to its opposite, philosophical doubt. His distinction assumes two directions of the mind: doubt is concerned with self, while wonder focuses upon what is greater than the individual: "There is no word in Biblical Hebrew for doubt; there are many expressions of wonder. Just as in dealing with judgments our starting point is doubt, wonder is the Biblical starting point in facing reality. . . . Doubt is an act in which the mind inspects its own ideas; wonder is an act in which the mind confronts the universe. Radical skepticism is the outgrowth of subtle conceit and self-reliance. Yet there was no conceit in the prophets and no self-reliance in the Psalmist."[8] Heschel's antithesis is perhaps too harshly drawn. We must understand this frequently used polemic device in its proper context. He intentionally emphasizes one element at the other's expense in order to distinguish clearly between secular philosophy and biblical witness. As an apologist he must demonstrate the limits of the former in answering questions of ultimate import. He does not appear to take doubt seriously because, in this instance, it cannot translate the biblical vision of reality into modern terms. His rejection of doubt as a valuable mode of religious understanding should bring us out of ourselves; if we transcend the arrogance of doubt we may become receptive to biblical faith.

The true depth of Heschel's witness emerges when we switch from the perspective of the uncertain believer to that of the searching unbeliever. The radical amazement which we all wish to enjoy indeed ends in appreciation, but it begins with a radical incapacity to believe confidently what we think we already know. The dynamics of amazement—as opposed to Heschel's polemic presentation of it—takes fully into account the necessity of radical doubt. This is the pragmatic function of his philosophical argumentation which is more fundamental, in my view, than its own validity. By constantly and relentlessly criticizing our accepted mental clichés, Heschel confronts us

[6] Abraham Heschel, *God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism* (New York: Meridian Press and the Jewish Publication Society, 1955), p. 45 (hereafter cited as *In Search*).

[7] See *Not Alone*, p. 12.

[8] *In Search*, p. 98.

with our finitude. Terror at our nothingness reinforces our capacity to enjoy creation: "What is extraordinary [usually] appears to us as habit, the dawn a daily routine of nature. But time and again we awake. In the midst of walking in the never-ending procession of days and nights, we are suddenly filled with a solemn terror, with a feeling that our wisdom is inferior to dust. We cannot endure the heartbreaking splendor of sunsets."[9] Habit has frozen our sense of nature's astounding beauties which, though periodic, demonstrate to Heschel the workings of divine concern. What appears to the routinized mind as a predictable physical phenomenon speaks to the religious person of God's glorious presence. Sometimes our minds are so rigid, claims Heschel, that only the most violent dislocation will awaken our sense of the holy. Both believers and the faithless are susceptible to anesthesia of the spirit. Heschel's rational argumentation chips away at our intellectual complacency so that, some day, we may face the "solemn terror, [the] feeling that our wisdom is inferior to dust." His biblical exegesis, poetic evocations, and personal testimony also prepare that awakening, but in such a way that we are inspired by "the heartbreaking splendor of sunsets." One further consequence—and the most radical—emerges from Heschel's "philosophical housecleaning" procedure. At its outer limit stands a condition in which belief and disbelief are equally paralyzed, when the mind is void of certainty, the self of any power. Heschel does not deny the horrifying possibility of a deathlike state of the soul. Readers who follow Heschel's fullest implications risk losing the most elementary of intellectual necessities, that of language itself: "Only those who have gone through days in which words were of no avail, on which the most brilliant theories jarred the ear like mere slang; only those who have experienced ultimate not-knowing, the voicelessness of a soul struck by wonder, total muteness, are able to enter the meaning of God, a meaning greater than the mind."[10] The alliteration and rhythmic fullness of this long, powerful sentence convey an authenticity which cannot but probe a sensitive reader to the depths. Heschel boldly asserts that ultimate meaning appears across the boundary of meaninglessness and despair. Words and theories are annulled. Paradoxically, this uncovers the positive side of nothingness. Heschel's "ultimate not-knowing" and "total muteness" produce a "voiceless wonder," a thorough letting go of the mind in which the presence of God becomes available. Such terror is indeed solemn: it vibrates with an awesome transcendent presence. Heschel's demand is frighteningly clear: "We must first peer through the darkness, feel strangled and entombed in the hopelessness of living without God, before we are ready to feel the presence of His living light."[11]

Both the mystic and the reflective atheist or agnostic may experience this

[9] *Not Alone*, p. 35.
[10] *In Search*, p. 140.
[11] Ibid.

utter darkness and despair.[12] Nothing is more real, nor unfortunately more accessible to most people. When we gain the courage to face the truth of our lives, we stand at this nadir of the isolated soul, abandoned or misunderstood by loved ones, oblivious to self-respect, hopeless and alone. The absence of God became an objective experience of Jewish history when Hitler's soldiers and bureaucrats annihilated a civilization embodied in 6 million individuals. Our daily contact in the mass media with wars; racial, political, and class hatreds; poverty; and natural catastrophes poisons our sense of human dignity and significance. We either fear that our destiny is completely out of control or that it depends on the mercy of a handful of stupid, power-starved madmen. To those outside Western religious faith, the death of God has heralded the death of his murderer.[13] Depression has become one of today's most realistic modes of moral sensitivity and despair its common idiom. We experience the eclipse of humanity as individuals. Yet many people who allow themselves to perceive their real condition survive desolation through hopeful action, while most of us, fearing the shadow of insanity, lull this sight of reality with routine. Heschel's apologetics embraces this realistic anguish and leads us to the frontier of mystical faith.

Heschel's critique of the individual is thus two-fold: "We [can] discover that the self *in itself* [my italics] is a monstrous deceit, [and] that the self is something transcendent in disguise."[14] These two perceptions are not incompatible, though they appear at different moments of religious insight. He is reaching beyond our psychological, social, and intellectual identities. As we surrender our self-sufficient ideas we open to the world's sacred dimension. Heschel's mysticism explodes the walled-in categories which imprison, overshadow, our dimension as a cryptic image of the divine.

MYSTICAL ILLUMINATION

Heschel rehearses the itinerary from utter darkness to mystical illumination in the chapter of *Man Is Not Alone* entitled "In the Presence of God." This text is the pivot point of his apologetics and, one could say without exaggeration, dramatizes the unity of his entire work: the harmony of inward piety and prophetic activism. The episode's general structure demonstrates how God's self-disclosure leads to a fundamental commitment by the mystic to a moral and holy life.

[12] The Trappist monk Thomas Merton has defined similar bases of dialogue between believers and people without faith in "The Contemplative and the Atheist," in *Contemplation in a World of Action* (New York: Doubleday & Co., Image Books, 1973), pp. 180–94; see nn. 18 and 28 below for other parallels.

[13] This view has been most dramatically expressed by Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1973), esp. chaps. 9 and 10. Compare Martin Buber, *The Eclipse of God* (New York: Harper & Row, Harper Torchbooks, 1957).

[14] *Not Alone*, p. 47.

This moment is preceded in the book by an argumentation meant to produce a "profound awareness of the incongruity of all categories with the nameless unfathomable omnipresence of the mystery."[15] Heschel then zeros in on the helplessness which reflective people discover at crucial times in life. He uses an image worthy of Kafka to express this excruciating state: the human condition becomes "a vast cage within a maze, high as our mind, wide as our power of will, long as a life span."[16] Human conceptions of thought, individual volition, and time bound the self. Those who question the meaning of existence can "either live on the sumptuous, dainty diet within the cage [or] look for the exit to the maze in order to search for freedom in the darkness of the undisclosed." Heschel's philosophizing should now bear fruit: we must regurgitate the "dainty diet" of unquestioned clichés.

Heschel has replaced rational discourse with highly condensed imagery and extended metaphor. We are caught in the vise of poetic logic, concretely fearful of the endless labyrinth within. He appeals to our desire for freedom and encourages us to confront the "darkness of the undisclosed." True, secular humanism can be an authentic form of courage in face of the sightless night; Sartre's atheistic existentialism, for example, affirms the power of the lonely individual actively to create its destiny. Heschel confronts this same loneliness, but with a further demand: that human commitment be directed toward and by ultimate reality; his realism is spiritual. With a confidence given only to those who have seen God, he pushes us beyond any humanly inspired hope. Those who have not yet discovered the divine are plummeted into despair: "They have no power to spend on faith any more, no goal to strive for, no strength to seek a goal." Human desire is utterly stilled.[17]

Heschel's representation of mystical illumination (which he often calls revelation) bursts through the numbness of radical self-alienation. It is the crisis of his apologetics and bridges religious insight and religious living. This passage from *Man Is Not Alone* (pp. 77–79) evokes a filling of the void just described. It is one of Heschel's literary masterpieces and seeks to express an ineffable meeting with God. His incandescently poetic prose conveys more than emotional conviction; it is rigorously organized to translate the transcendent event:

> But, then, a moment comes like a thunderbolt, in which a flash of the undisclosed rends our dark apathy asunder. It is full of overpowering brilliance, like a point in which all moments of life are focused or a thought which outweighs all thoughts ever

[15] Ibid., p. 44.

[16] My analysis profited from the sensitive paper written by Janet Allen (Smith '75) for my course, Mysticism and the Moral Life, May 1973. Compare chap. 13 of *In Search* (pp. 136–44), which also describes a mystical breakthrough.

[17] It is worth stressing a self-evident fact: in teaching such material one should appropriately emphasize the risks of involuntary self-surrender. The mystic writer, unlike most of us, *knows* that this loss of personality is temporary.

conceived of. There is so much light in our cage, in our world, it is as if it were suspended amidst the stars. Apathy turns to splendor unawares. The ineffable has shuddered itself into the soul. It has entered our consciousness like a ray of light passing into a lake. Refraction of that penetrating ray brings about a turning in our mind: We are penetrated by His insight. One cannot think any more as if He were there and we here. He is both there and here. He is not *a being*, but *being in and beyond all beings*.

The text's structure conveys its author's interpretation. Close analysis clarifies how Heschel intends to transform his readers' manner of thinking and capture his or her assent. The comparison of mystical insight with a thunderbolt renders almost visually concrete the penetration of the soul (a dark cloud) by God.[18] The sky is ripped apart with a crashing boom in an exquisite, yet painful, spectacle of prodigious strength. The image of "*dark* apathy" illustrates human emptiness and a total cessation of will—an abandon which could lead to passive despair, to death, or to God. Emotionless indifference is the most drastic contrary of the ego assertion Heschel the philosopher constantly combats. He trusts that apathy will lead to positive surrender.

The "undisclosed" then becomes manifest "like a point in which all moments of life are focused." The ineffable enters the soul in a flash, blinding normal thought but at the same time illuminating a heightened consciousness. One can imagine a simultaneous recall of previous experiences, past events viewed in an instant side by side. (People who picture themselves falling to their death from cliffs or high buildings often include that in their fantasy.) Here, an awareness of God accompanies this enhanced self-scrutiny; the divine presence "outweighs all thought ever conceived of" and gives life unheard-of focus: "There is so much light in our cage, in our world, it is as if it were suspended amidst the stars."

The world-prison metaphor is abolished as the inner illumination casts its brilliance outside; in other words, God endows human life with new meaning. A completely transformed vision of reality arises from depression and from the death of the old self: "Apathy turns to splendor unawares." This strikingly short sentence summarizes the mystical meeting, which Heschel insists has resulted from a revelation, a self-disclosure on God's part to humanity: "The ineffable has shuddered itself into our soul." Contrasted to the usual desire of the human soul to possess God, the initiative, in this case, is clearly from the

[18] Compare the chapter of Thomas Merton's *Bread in the Wilderness* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1971) entitled "Dark Lightning" (pp. 101–8), which describes the modalities of mystical experience in a way which parallels Heschel; compare also *The Seven Storey Mountain* (New York: Doubleday & Co., Image Books, 1948), pp. 341–45, for a presentation of Merton's own illumination. I hope that scholars will explore in detail the parallels between these two outstanding contemporary mystics. For a suggestive beginning see Hal Bridges, *American Mysticism, from William James to Zen* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), chap. 4, "The Varieties of Mysticism" (pp. 51–74), devoted to Heschel, Merton, and Howard Thurman.

THOMAS MERTON

Pilgrim in Process

Edited by
Donald Grayston and
Michael W. Higgins

GRIFFIN HOUSE
TORONTO 1983

Contemplative Inwardness and Prophetic Action: Thomas Merton's Dialogue With Judaism

by
Edward K. Kaplan

Thomas Merton believed that contemplative religion nurtures more openness than does a strictly ethical or theological approach. The experience of God's presence or absence, while interpreted variously, can be shared. Merton wanted contemplatives to become more receptive to "modern thought" (e.g., atheism, Marxism, psychology) and its perception of today's realities. In cooperation with other progressive forces, people of prayer could help transform human life in accordance with spiritual values. As secularized academic I have been fascinated and challenged by Merton's integration of mystical inwardness and social commitment. My professional interest in poetic imagination has allowed me some access to the living flame of Christian devotion, despite, or perhaps because of the fact that I am a Jew. But I am the kind of person who feels at once alien to and intimate with both traditions. The fellowship of Merton and the contemporary Jewish philosopher, Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-1972), who also revitalized prayer and prophetic ethics, responds to my discomfort. Merton's and Heschel's spiritual dissatisfaction echoes mine.

Thomas Merton and Abraham Heschel, both born in Europe, matured and fulfilled their missions in the United States, motivated by a similar love of their adopted homeland combined with militant spiritual criticism. In contrast to most members of their orthodox communities, they harmonized personal piety and radical moral involvement. Thomas Merton expressed his pacifism and progressive social views in numerous articles and speeches (collected mainly in *Faith and Violence* [1968] and *Thomas Merton on Peace*, ed. Gordon Zahn [1971]). Abraham Heschel also strongly opposed the Vietnam War and marched beside Martin Luther King during the Selma-Montgomery protest (see *The Insecurity of Freedom*, 1966). Both started their professional careers as proponents of mysticism: Merton in *The Seven Storey Mountain* (1948), and in *The Ascent to Truth* (1951); and Heschel in a seminal article, "The Mystical Element in Judaism" (1949), *The Sabbath* (1951),

and *Man's Quest for God* (1954). Both were poets who savored language and the richness of imagination. They speak to our opposing demands of history and tranquility, our anger at or love of God; and they question the very foundations of religion today.

The Premise of Worldliness

From the very first, Thomas Merton presents his story as inseparable from that of society: "On the last day of January 1915, under the sign of the Water Bearer, in a year of great war, and down in the shadow of some French mountains on the borders of Spain, I came into the world. Free by nature, in the image of God, I was nevertheless the prisoner of my own violence and my own selfishness, in the image of the world into which I was born."[1] The autobiography, in spite of its negative view of the world which the mature Merton embarrassedly deplored, clearly places the personal struggle within a context of social and moral responsibility. Yet the book also exemplifies an unresolved conflict not entirely acknowledged or understood, to which the opening lines of *The Ascent to Truth* give voice:

> The only thing that can save the world from complete moral collapse is a spiritual revolution. Christianity, by its very nature, demands such a revolution. If Christians would all live up to what they profess to believe, the revolution would happen. The desire for unworldliness, detachment, and union with God is the most fundamental expression of this revolutionary spirit. The one thing that remains is for Christians to affirm their Christianity by that full and unequivocal rejection of the world which their Baptismal vocation demands of them. This will certainly not incapacitate them for social action in the world, since it is the one essential condition for a really fruitful Christian apostolate.[2]

Merton's repetition of the word "revolution" and his defensive stance against social indifference betray an ambiguous definition of moral action. More firm was his lifelong exploration of mysticism as the most radical solution to spiritual corruption. We know that Merton's understanding of "the world" completely altered. In 1966 he wrote: "I am . . . a man in the modern world. In fact, I am the world just as you are! Where am I going to look for the world first of all if not in myself?"[3] Contemplation reoriented his appreciation of the secular.

Abraham Heschel traces a parallel path from mysticism to prophetic activism in Jewish terms. He introduced himself to the Union Theological Seminary in a way which recalls Merton:

I speak as a member of a congregation whose founder was Abraham, and the name of my rabbi is Moses.

I speak as a person who was able to leave Warsaw, the city in which I was born, just six weeks before the disaster began. My destination was New York, it would have been Auschwitz or Treblinka. I am a brand plucked from the fire, in which my people was burned to death. I am a brand plucked from the fire of an altar of Satan on which millions of human lives were exterminated to evil's greater glory, and on which so much else was consumed: the divine image of so many human beings, many people's faith in the God of justice and compassion, and much of the secret and power of attachment to the Bible bred and cherished in the heart of men for nearly two thousand years.[4]

Heschel shares with Merton this double premise: the ultimate preciousness of human life and the devastation of faith by recent history. Merton and Heschel repudiate the conspiracy to destroy the ideal that humanity is an image of God. Heschel's activist and scholarly career defies the Nazi holocaust; as a theologian he strove to save Judaism and its vision of justice from the furnaces of modern warfare and callousness. Heschel begins with a prophetic task.

Merton's public appreciation of the prophets was not extensive. His early approach to the Hebrew Bible continues the Christian tradition of typology which absorbs the Old Testament, and Judaism, into the New (see especially *Bread in the Wilderness,* Ch. 11). Yet he did teach Heschel's book on *The Prophets* to the novices at Gethsemani and he wrote personally to the author on January 26, 1963:

It is a privilege to be able to share your own meditations on the prophets and indeed to find very little in those pages that I would not myself want to express in much the same way. Some day perhaps I will muster up courage to try the difficult task of saying what the Prophets must mean to a Christian: difficult because of the heritage of past interpretations and allegories. . . .

The twentieth century makes it impossible seriously to do this any more, so perhaps we will be humble enough to dig down to a deeper and more burning truth. In so doing, we may perhaps get closer to you, whom the Lord has not allowed to find so many specious arguments in favor of complacent readings.[5]

Merton shared with Heschel his implicit dialogue with Judaism. Heschel made it explicit when he sent Merton his criticism of a draft

document from the Vatican Council on the Jews. Heschel had been closely involved with Cardinal Bea's valiant efforts to rectify the Church's denial of Judaism; here is Heschel's response: "It must be stated that *spiritual fratricide* is hardly a means for the attainment of 'fraternal discussion' or 'reciprocal understanding.' . . . As I have repeatedly stated to leading personalities at the Vatican, I am ready to go to Auschwitz any time, if faced with the alternative of conversion or death" (mimeographed statement, dated September 3, 1964: see Appendix). Merton associated himself with this prophetic rebuke: "My latent ambitions to be a true Jew under my Catholic skin will surely be realized if I continue to go through experiences like this, being spiritually slapped in the face by these blind and complacent people of whom I am nevertheless a 'collaborator.' . . . The Psalms have said all that need be said about this sort of thing, and you and I both pray them. In them we are one, in their truth, in their silence" (September 9, 1964). How then did Father Louis realize his latent identity as Jew?

The Cloister and the Prophet

Thomas Merton reached the prophetic stance within the categories of monastic tradition. He constantly strove to reconcile individual piety and social responsibility. Merton expressed his mature views in "Openness and Cloister" (1969), and stated clearly that "the radical change in the Church's attitude toward the modern world was one of the significant events that marked Vatican II. In the light of the Council it is no longer possible to take a completely negative view of the world."[6] He suggests that the Hebrew Bible, anchored so concretely in historical problems, would help transform monastic thinking:

> Today a new and more Biblical understanding of the contemplative life is called for: we must see it as a response to the dynamic Word of God in history, we must see it in the light of Biblical eschatology. The contemplative finds God not only in the embrace of "pure love" alone but in the prophetic ardor of response to the "Word of the Lord": not in love considered as essential good but in love that breaks through into the world of sinful men in the fire of judgment and of mercy. The contemplative must see love not only as the highest and purest experience of the human heart transformed by grace, but as God's unfailing fidelity to unfaithful man.

Merton uses the Hebrew Bible to complete the purity of contemplation with prophetic responsibility: love as essential good is completed by

love as judgment and mercy in a sinful world; love as an experience of grace within the heart is completed by identification with God's fidelity to mankind. Prophetic religion removes the emphasis from personal development to voluntary imitation, within society, of God's active involvement with mankind. Merton's prophetic position fulfills his mystical journey. He meets Heschel at the crossroads of inwardness and history.

Abrahm Heschel's analysis of prophetic consciousness stresses the inseparability of moral and religious thinking. The foundation of biblical prophecy is God's covenant with Israel, a reciprocal commitment to a network of moral imperatives. The prophet demands that God and the people equally conform to the ideal. God is actively involved in all human events and loves his chosen people. Heschel defines this emotional involvement as "the divine pathos," God's powerful attachment to mankind: "Prophetic religion may be defined, not as what man does with his ultimate concern, but rather *what man does with God's concern.*"[7] The prophet is overwhelmed by "a fellowship with the feelings of God, a *sympathy with the divine pathos* . . . Sympathy is the prophet's answer to inspiration, the correlative to revelation." The prophet exemplifies what I have called the "displacement of subjectivity from humanity to God."[8] Instead of remaining the object of human consciousness, God becomes experienced as the Subject of which the person is the object. The Bible is God's anthropology, not human theology. The prophet experiences and judges the world from the divine perspective.

He takes within his inner life God's love and anger and is extraordinarily moved by social ills. Through the prophet, God is present in the world:

> The prophet is a man who feels fiercely. God has thrust a burden upon his soul, and he is bowed and stunned at man's fierce greed. Frightful is the agony of man; no human voice can convey its full terror. Prophecy is the voice that God has lent to the silent agony, a voice to the plundered poor, to the profaned riches of the world. It is a form of living, a crossing point of God and man. God is raging in the prophet's words.[9]

The prophet lives at the crossroads of God, the individual, and the human community. The prophetic mediator is often torn in his loyalties and loves. He cherishes his people but must carry out God's judgment. His ultimate task is to transform: "the purpose of prophecy is to conquer callousness, to change the inner man as well as to revolutionize history."[10] The prophet participates in mankind's inward and outer lives, seeking to establish a society founded upon justice and true worship:

And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justice, and to love kindness,
And to walk humbly with your God?

(Micah 6:6-8)

God's worldly kingdom requires humility and loving kindness as well as exterior justice. Personal suffering seems necessary to effect historical redemption. The Lord must punish His people repeatedly in order to eradicate callousness or hardness of heart, the root of sin.[11] Heschel talks of God in the concrete human language of biblical experience. His study of divine chastisement demonstrates how the Lord's anger is an extension of His love, how divine justice is inseparable from compassion: "As great as God's wrath is His anguish," for, despite the most awful provocations, He remains devoted to the unfaithful. God suffers with the children He must punish. Heschel applies one of his most subtle analyses of the divine pathos to the book of Jeremiah in which the Lord mourns Himself: "With Israel's distress came the affliction of God, His displacement, His homelessness in the land.... Should Israel cease to be His home, then God, we might say, would be without a home in the world."[12] Both humanity and God must suffer to give God a home in the world. The prophet mediates this paradox with fear and trembling.

Suffering is more than punishment for bad behavior: "The prophets discovered that suffering does not necessarily bring about purification, nor is punishment effective as a deterrent."[13] The Bible does not understand the process of repentance in purely natural terms. Judaism and Christianity agree that suffering itself is not the solution. Heschel represents the prophetic perspective: "The extinction of evil is ... but a part of the eschatological vision. Suffering does not redeem; it only makes us worthy of redemption."[14] God's vision of human justice is the beyond to which human agony points. Thomas Merton agrees and warns Christians that "Suffering is not the cause of holiness but only its occasion. Love, expressed in sacrifice, is what makes us saints. We are made saints not by undergoing pain but by overcoming it."[15] How do we reach the love beyond agony?

Heschel explicates the prophetic answer. He finds it is God's most paradoxical punishment, his charge to Isaiah to increase the people's distance from God:

Make the heart of this people fat,
And their ears heavy,
And shut their eyes;
Lest they see with their eyes,
And hear with their ears,

And understand with their hearts,
And turn and be healed.

(Isaiah 6:10)

How could God trap Isaiah in this "appalling contradiction"? "He is told to be a prophet in order to thwart and to defeat the essential purpose of being a prophet."[16] God simultaneously punishes and cures the people's hardness of heart by magnifying it: "It seems that the only cure for wilful hardness is to make it absolute. Half-callousness, paired with obstinate conceit, seeks no cure. When hardness is complete, it becomes despair, the end of conceit. Out of despair, out of total inability to believe, prayer bursts forth."[17]

God drives his people away in order to augment their spiritual suffering. Hopelessness may then turn into a positive intuition of radical helplessness without God: "When hardness is intensified from above, responsbility is assumed by God. He smites and He restores, bringing about a revival of sensitivity." Agony seems necessary in order to shift the human perspective from self-centered freedom to an awareness that freedom is a gift from above. Conceit humiliated, presumption painfully quelled, the fallible ego can now yearn: "Agony is the final test. When all hopes are dashed and all conceit is shattered, man begins to miss what he has long spurned. In darkness, God becomes near and clear." Seen from the perspective of divine wisdom, Israel's suffering opens its people to God's love. The prophet reminds mankind of God's eternal promise of redemption.

Christian devotion focuses more systematically on inward redemption. Thomas Merton places suffering at the heart of mystical self-transformation. The contemplative concretely participates in the Psalms as a journey from death to resurrection in Christ. The travails of the exiled Hebrews prefigure the excruciating confrontation with human limits which the liturgy exacts of the courageous celebrant: "The experience of this," writes Merton in *Bread in the Wilderness* (1953), "is an experience of union, first with Christ in suffering, then with Christ in glory. For, as St. John of the Cross says, it is the same flame that first attacks our selfishness as its implacable enemy, then when selfishness is gone, rewards our love by flooding it with glory."[18] Like Isaiah's flock the Christian must be violently removed from self-concern in order to identify, like the prophet, with the divine pathos: "the more we are united to [Christ] in love the more we are united in love with one another, because there is only one charity embracing both God and our brother."

Merton's belief that mysticism was the true cure for our spiritual anguish places him, paradoxically, both deep within and far from the

center of modern thought.[19] His preference for the apophatic mystical tradition—in which God is experienced as a negation of all human understanding—reflects Heschel's account of biblical chastisement. The "dark night of the soul" is the human side of an experience which even non-religious people share. Religion must respond to this real absence. What is more common today than the self-destructive arrogance and panic of humanity without God, without acknowledged meaning, and nations without justice and peace? Heschel maintained that "we must first peer through the darkness, feel strangled and entombed in the hopelessness of living without God, before we are ready to feel the presence of His living light."[20] Merton insisted that the mystic, the reflective atheist, and the agnostic may share this utter darkness and despair. The absence of God became an objective experience of Jewish history when Hitler's soldiers and bureaucrats annihilated a civilization embodied in six million individuals. We experience the eclipse of humanity as individuals. For Merton, mystical prayer can renew the prophetic vision.

Out of the Depths

Mysticism is the fullest of insights, for it reveals to us the glory of being human while probing our bitter depths. Merton's remarkable presentation of "Dark Lightening" in *Bread in the Wilderness* relives the journey from utter despair to a face to face meeting with Christ in the Psalms.[21] The anticipated meaning of Christ's Passion does not mitigate the contemplative's frightful sacrifice. It begins at the person's outer limits: "under the pressure of a very great love, or in the darkness of a conflict that exacts a heroic renunciation of our whole self, or in the ecstasy of a sudden splendid joy that does not belong to this earth, the soul will be raised out of itself." The self first experiences the ultimate powerlessness of its yearning, its conflict, or its joy. The ego is wrenched from its human center.

Merton dwells upon the moment in which the person confronts its "own appalling nonentity." He understands this terrifying plunge into the abyss, to the border of sanity, as a mystical death.[22] The insight achieved is richly paradoxical and conveys at once God's dreadful distance and His embrace:

> It can sometimes happen that we too are brought down by Christ's love, into the dust of death. Then we know, somewhat as He knew, what it is to be "poured out like water" [cf. Psalm 21:13-16]. It is a terrible experience of seeing oneself slowly turned inside out. It is a frightful taste of humility that is not

> merely a virtue but the very agony of truth. This ghastly emptying, this inexorable gutting of our own appalling nonentity, takes place under the piercing light of the revealed word, the light of infinite Truth. But it is something far more terrible still: we find ourselves eviscerated by our own ingratitude, under the eyes of Mercy.

From the dark night of contemplative illumination emerges a fruitful symbiosis of human nothingness and divine Mercy. One feels both more and less than human. The Christian embarks upon a deadly imitation of Christ who "emptied Himself of all His power and glory to descend into the freezing depths of darkness where we had crawled to hide ourselves, cowering in blind despair." By identifying with the negative side of the Incarnation, by dwelling in the all too human darkness of sin, we learn Christ's divine humility: "Then we begin to discover that the night in which we seem to be lost is the protection of the shadow of God's wings (Ps. 16:8). . . . We have entered the Baptism of darkness in which we are one with His death. But to die with Christ is to rise with Him."

How does Merton's conclusion that "we are able to discover the living God in the very darkness of what seems to be His utter absence" apply to us? What can we receive from mystical death? Jewish and Christian tradition both answer: our destiny as divine image.[23] Mystical death illumines our essential finitude with God's undying love for mankind.

In *The New Man* (1961), Merton traces the crucifixion and rebirth of the Promethean mystic who seeks only self-fulfillment. Liberation from willfulness painfully reconciles the person and God. The individual's resurrection from mystical death awakens his or her divine image:

> Man begins to know God as he knows his own self. The night of faith has brought us into contact with the Object of all faith, not as an object but as a Person Who is the center and life of our own being, at once His own transcendent Self and the immanent source of our own identity and life.[24]

The Christian mystic undergoes a displacement of subjectivity from his- or herself to Christ. He or she no longer experiences the divine as an object of self-fulfillment, but as a Person, a divine Subject of which the human being is the beloved object. Other people then appear more clearly as fellow objects of divine concern.

Merton understood all along that God loved people, but it took practice and strong doses of solitude for him to incorporate the idea. In *The Sign of Jonas* (1953), Father Louis recalls his joyful discovery that the secular society which he had so feared and despised was worthy of

his love: "I met the world and found it no longer wicked after all. Perhaps the things I resented about the world were defects of my own that I had projected upon it. Now, on the contrary, I found that everything stirred me with a deep and mute sense of compassion."[25] He had surmounted the traditional conflict of world and cloister. Merton explains quite dramatically, in a crucial entry to *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (1966), how he definitively rejected *contemptus mundi:* "The whole illusion of a separate holy existence is a dream."[26] His new human insight reflects God's view: "Then it was as if I suddenly saw the secret beauty of their hearts, the depths of their hearts where neither sin nor desire nor self-knowledge can reach, the core of their reality, the person that each one is in God's eyes."[27] Humility and compassion were no longer problems for Merton, for he spontaneously identified with God's subjectivity. When Merton first entered Gethsemani, he defensively feared the world; his awareness of others' sin was inseparable from his anxious need to escape the contamination of his own. Freed from egotism he understood why God loved mankind:

> At the center of our being is a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin and by illusion, a point of pure truth, a point or spark which belongs entirely to God, which is never at our disposal, from which God disposes of our lives, which is inaccessible to the fantasies of our mind or the brutalities of our own will. This little point of nothingness and of *absolute poverty* is the pure glory of God in us.

No conflict remained between the human will and that of God. The contemplative loves people of the world because he or she perceives their essential purity, their essence as image of the divine. (Yet, frankly, I am disturbed by Merton's need to isolate the hidden and non-human character of that purity, "which belongs entirely to God, which is never at our disposal.")

Merton called upon contemplatives to share their inward purification with the sinful world. The mystical journey meets Christ in the pathos of moral concern:

> Do we renounce ourselves and the world in order to find Christ, or do we renounce our alienated and false selves in order to choose our deepest truth in choosing the world and Christ at the same time? If the deepest ground of my being is love, then in that very love itself and nowhere else will I find myself, and the world, and my brother and Christ.[28]

The actions of contemplatives should guide outsiders: "By their example of a truly Christian understanding of the world, expressed in a living and active application of the Christian faith to the human prob-

lems of their own time, Christians manifest the love of Christ for men (John 13:35, 17:21), and by that fact make him visibly present in the world."[29] The imitation of Christ creates a partnership with the Hebrew prophet.

Abraham Heschel's masterwork, *Man Is Not Alone* (1951), attempts to initiate that way of thinking and living. Heschel's premise is clear: "There is only one way to define Jewish religion. It is the *awareness of God's interest in man*, the awareness of a *covenant*, of a responsibility that lies on Him as well as on us. Our task is to concur with His interest, to carry out His vision of our task."[30] Heschel is the prophet's advocate. Though God has proven dramatically absent to most people, the Jew must imitate God's concern as represented in the Bible. Divine concern is transitive for it goes out to others; the person must first transcend self-concern. Full concern embraces all reality: "The self, the fellow-man and the dimension of the holy are the *three* dimensions of a mature human concern. True love of man is clandestine love of God." The three-dimensionality of existence is not just an abstract theological principle. The interdependence of God, society, and the individual establishes our inescapable partnership.

The Three Dimensions of Dialogue

Heschel and Merton, as Jew and Christian, understood callousness as alienation from God. Both accompany their readers to the terrifying depths of their loneliness while nurturing a sense of divine Presence which all people can share. Prayer, for both, plumbs the abyss of humanity and places us before God as responsible persons. Prayer is their touchstone of truth. Thomas Merton and Abraham Heschel stood firmly before God and spoke to the world, and to their co-religionists, with a spiritually radical conscience.

They judged society and religious institutions alike by God's standards and so realized the partnership of Judaism and Christianity in a troubled world. To society they voiced the demands of divine justice and compassion against the forces of warfare, social and economic oppression and indifference. They challenged the self-interested withdrawal fostered by religious institutionalism. Heschel sought to balance the traditional Jewish emphasis on external observance, or *halakha*, with the inner life of devotion (*agada*). He believed ethnicity less essential to Judaism than relationship with the living God; impassioned prayer, not ethical culture, should foster a burning prophetic concern. Merton deplored the unreflective traditionalism of the American Catholic hierarchy. He sought to liberate the inner person: a mystical realtionship with God would abolish the defensive self-centeredness that

inhibits moral courage. Contemplatives, who specialized in devotion and personal authenticity, could become prophetic witnesses.

But we who seek to learn more from Merton should ask why he pursued dialogue with Jews less actively (or less publicly) than dialogue with atheists and religious of the East. Perhaps the concrete reality of the people Israel seemed an insurmountable barrier? Christians do tend to over-spiritualize Judaism and the Jews. But surely the religion of Incarnation can appreciate the historicity and spiritual autonomy of Judaism. It must if dialogue is to be possible. Merton's dialogue with Judaism may also have remained latent because of the politics of Synagogue and Church in North America. Whatever the reasons, Jews and Christians share a common destiny. Threats against one affect the other in the spiritual as well as social dimension. The Bible will not let us forget the inextricable partnership of our faiths. Religious cooperation must underlie action in the secular world.

Can these common undertakings remain three-dimensional and preserve the integrity—and the contradictions—of God, the individual, and collective life? Can religious institutions preserve their spiritual integrity? The Jewish and Catholic contemplatives whom we have compared, by their identification with God's involvement with humanity, answer "Yes." Merton and Heschel, from the center of their specific commitments to God, extended their love and anger to all people. Their militant devotion to the divine image of mankind is a beacon in the dark night of an anguished world. Thomas Merton and Abraham Heschel disagreed on creeds and commitments at the heart of their traditions. But they are united in their anxiety before mankind and God. Fidelity to their witness is our continuing task.

Notes

[1] *The Seven Storey Mountain* (Doubleday Image Books, 1948), p. 11.
[2] *The Ascent to Truth* (London: Hollis and Carter, 1951), p. 3.
[3] "Is the World a Problem?", in *Contemplation in a World of Action* (Doubleday Image Books, 1973), p. 160; cited hereafter as CWA.
[4] Abraham J. Heschel, "No Religion Is An Island," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* XXI, 2 (January 1966), p. 117; this is Heschel's most complete definition of Jewish-Christian dialogue.
[5] From the incomplete correspondence dating from 1960-1966 preserved by the Merton Collection at Bellarmine College, Louisville, Kentucky, and reproduced by the kind permission of Mrs. Sylvia Heschel and The Thomas Merton Legacy Trust.
[6] This and the next quotation are from CWA, p. 152.
[7] Abraham Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York and Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1962), p. 484.
[8] See my article, "Language and Reality in Abraham J. Heschel's Philosophy of Religion," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 41, 1 (March 1973), 94-111; and Maurice Friedman, "Divine Need and Human Wonder: The Philosophy of Abraham J. Heschel," *Judaism* 25, 1 (Winter 1976), 65-78.
[9] *The Prophets*, p. 5.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 191, note.
[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 110-112.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 188.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 94.
[15] Thomas Merton, *Bread in the Wilderness* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1971), p. 79.
[16] *The Prophets*, p. 13.
[17] This and the next two quotations are from *The Prophets*, pp. 191-193.
[18] This and the next quotation are from *Bread in the Wilderness*, pp. 79-80.
[19] See "The Contemplative and the Atheist" (1970) in CWA, pp. 180-194; and *The New Man* (Mentor Books, 1961), pp. 17, 27, 70.
[20] Abraham Heschel, *God In Search of Man* (Meridian Press and the Jewish Publication Society, 1955), p. 140; cf. my article, "Mysticism and Despair in Abraham J. Heschel's Religious Thought," *The Journal of Religion* 57, 1 (January 1977), 33-47; and note 19 above.
[21] The following analysis treats pp. 103-108 of *Bread in the Wilderness*.
[22] Cf. *The Seven Storey Mountain*, pp. 108-109, 123-125, 200-204, 356-361 for Merton's experiences of the abyss.
[23] Thomas Merton, "The Spiritual Father in the Desert Tradition," CWA, p. 287: "In his surrender of himself and of his own free will, his 'death' to his worldly identity, the monk is renewed in the image and likeness of God, and becomes like a mirror filled with the divine image." Cf. *The New Man*, pp. 41-43; and Heschel, *Man Is Not Alone* (Harper Torchbooks, 1951), pp. 207-215.
[24] *The New Man*, pp. 140-141.
[25] See Henri Nouwen, *Pray to Live* (Notre Dame: Fides, 1972).
[26] *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (Doubleday and Company, 1966), p. 140.
[27] This and the next quotation are from *Ibid.*, pp. 141-142.
[28] "Is the World a Problem?" in CWA, p. 171.
[29] "Blessed Are the Meek: The Christian Roots of Nonviolence," in *Thomas Merton on Peace*, ed. Gordon Zahn (McCall Publishing Co., 1971), p. 209.
[30] *Man Is Not Alone*, p. 214; the next quotation is from p. 139.

Appendix

Incomplete correspondence of Abraham Heschel and Thomas Merton preserved by the Merton Collection at Bellarmine College Louisville, Kentucky, and reproduced by the kind permission of Mrs. Sylvia Heschel and The Thomas Merton Legacy Trust.

* * *

The Jewish Theological Seminary of America
Northeast Corner, Broadway and 122nd Street
New York, N.Y. 10027

October 23, 1960

Dear Father Merton:

Your kind letter came as a precious affirmation of what I have known for a long time: of how much there is we share in the ways of trying to sense what is given in the Word in the things created, in the moments He continues to create; in the effort to counteract the desecration of stillness. For many good hours in reading some of your writings, I am indebted to you.

I am a very poor letter writer, and am ashamed of it. It certainly would be good to meet you. Near what city is Trappist?

I am sending you some books of mine. At the moment I am trying to complete a book on the prophets—a humiliating undertaking.

I cherish your statement: "How absurd it is . . . to attach such overweening importance to our reflections and so little to the revelation itself." And still reflecting we must, only that all reflection fades when we get close to the light.

I hope very much to remain in touch with you and with the request for forgiveness of the brevity and inadequacy of my letter.

Cordially,
Abraham J. Heschel

January 26, 1963

Dear Dr. Heschel:

It is a great pleasure to have received your fine book on the PROPHETS. I have been anticipating this for a long time, and my anticipation is not disappointed. It is a fine book, perhaps your very best. Or at least it is one that says a great deal to me. You take exactly the kind of reflective approach that seems to me most significant and spiritually fruitful, for after all it is not the prophets we study but the word of God revealed in and through them. They offer us examples of fidelity to Him and patterns of suffering and faith which we must take into account if we are to live as religious men in any sense of the word. The book is in many ways just the kind of reflection germane to monks, and I hope to be able to use it in my conferences with the novices.

In any case it is a privilege to be able to share your own meditations on the prophets and indeed to find very little in those pages that I would not myself want to express in much the same way. Some day perhaps I will muster up courage to try the difficult task of saying what the Prophets must mean to a Christian: difficult because of the heritage of past interpretations and allegories. We have had the bad habit of thinking that because we believe the prophecies are fulfilled, we can consider them to be fulfilled in any way we please, that is to say that we are too confident of understanding this "fulfilment." Consequently the medieval facility with which the Kingdom of God was assumed to be the society inherited from Charlemagne. And consequently the even more portentous facility with which Christians did exactly what they accused the Jews of having done: finding an earthly fulfillment of prophecy in political institutions dressed up as theocracy.

The twentieth century makes it impossible seriously to do this any more, so perhaps we will be humble enough to dig down to a deeper and more burning truth. In so doing, we may perhaps get closer to you, whom the Lord has not allowed to find so many specious arguments in favor of complacent readings.

With very best wishes,

Most cordially yours,
[Thomas Merton]

July 27, 1964

Dear Dr. Heschel:

Shortly after your visit, that warm and memorable occasion, which was a real and providential gift, I wrote this letter to Cardinal Bea. I have been meaning to send you a copy, and am only just getting around to it. Every time I approach any such statement, I am more deeply convinced of the futility of statements. But statements are easy. And the fact of not having made one when it was required can be a terrible and irreparable omission.

Your books and offprints arrived promptly. I am at the moment most involved in "The Earth is the Lord's" and "The Sabbath." I note that your preoccupation with the sanctification of time runs parallel to some ideas of my own in a recent ms I have sent to the publisher on Liturgy. But I am not at all satisfied with my book.

Fortunately I have received permission to publish the material on peace that was still swinging in the balance, I think, when you were here. That is a relief.

Please think of us when you are in this area again. The door is always open to you, if you let us know when you are coming. Also I would always be glad to hear any news, especially anything that may affect the Jewish Chapter in the Council, and other such things.

With best wishes and cordial friendship always,
in the Peace of the Lord,
[Thomas Merton]

[Abraham Heschel's mimeographed statement to the Second Vatican Council]

September 3, 1964

Chapter Four of the Schema on Ecumenism printed and distributed in November, 1963, to the Council Fathers, dealing with the "Attitudes of the Catholics . . . toward the Jews," made special headlines around the world. Except for a few words, troublesome to the Jewish conscience, it represented a momentous declaration and was hailed as an event of historic importance.

Subsequently, this Chapter has been rewritten and the version now distributed to the Council Fathers as publicly reported is not only ineffective, but also profoundly injurious.

The omissions, attenuations and additions are so serious that, if adopted, the new document will be interpreted as a solemn repudiation of the desire which, to quote a distinguished American Archbishop, intended "to right the wrongs of a thousand years."

The new document proclaims that "the Church expects in unshakable faith and with ardent desire . . . the union of the Jewish people with the Church."

Since this present draft document calls for "reciprocal understanding and appreciation, to be attained by theological study and fraternal discussion," between Jews and Catholics, it must be stated that *spiritual fratricide* is hardly a means for the attainment of "fraternal discussion" or "reciprocal understanding."

A message that regards the Jew as a candidate for conversion and proclaims that the destiny of Judaism is to disappear will be abhorred by the Jews all over the world and is bound to foster reciprocal distrust as well as bitterness and resentment.

Throughout the centuries our people have paid such a high price in suffering and martyrdom for preserving the Covenant and the legacy of holiness, faith and devotion to the sacred Jewish tradition. To this day we labor devotedly to educate our children in the ways of the Torah.

As I have repeatedly stated to leading personalities of the Vatican, I am ready to go to Auschwitz any time, if faced with the alternative of conversion or death.

Jews throughout the world will be dismayed by a call from the Vatican to abandon their faith in a generation which witnessed the massacre of six million Jews and the destruction of thousands of synagogues on a continent where the dominant religion was not Islam, Buddhism or Shintoism.

It is noteworthy that the Vatican document on Mohammedans makes no reference to the expectation of the Church for their conversion to the Christian faith. Is one to deduce from that that Islam offers a more acceptable way to salvation than Judaism?

Our world which is full of cynicism, frustration and despair, received a flash of inspiration in the ecumenical work of Pope John XXIII. For a few years all men of good will marvelled at the spiritual magnificence which he disclosed, and were touched by his reverence for the humanity of man. At a time of decay of conscience, he tried to revive it and to teach how to respect it. Mutual reverence between Christians and Jews began to fill the hearts. We ardently pray that this great blessing may not vanish.

It is our profound hope that during the course of the forthcoming third session of the Vatican Council, the overwhelming majority of the Council Fathers who have courageously expressed their desire to eradicate sources of tension between Catholics and Jews, will have an opportunity to vote on a statement which will express this sacred aspiration.

Abraham Joshua Heschel

September 9, 1964

Dear Dr. Heschel:

Your mimeographed bulletin referring to the revised Jewish chapter has just reached me.

It is simply incredible. I don't know what to say about it.

This much I will say: my latent ambitions to be a true Jew under my Catholic skin will surely be realized if I continue to go through experiences like this, being spiritually slapped in the face by these blind and complacent people of whom I am nevertheless a "collaborator." If I were not "working with" the Catholic movement for ecumenical understanding it would not be such a shock to take the three steps backward after each timid step forward.

I must however think more of people like Cardinal Bea who must certainly be crushed by this development.

The Psalms have said all that need to be said about this sort of thing, and you and I both pray them. In them we are one, in their truth, in their silence. *Haec fecisti et tacui,* says the Lord, of such events.

With warm and cordial brotherhood
[Thomas Merton]

The Jewish Theological Seminary of America

September 18, 1964

Dear Friend,

My profound gratitude for your letter of Sep. 9. It moved me deeply. It was comfort at a very difficult moment.

There still is some hope left.

Affectionately,
A. J. Heschel

[Telegram to A. Heschel]

October 28, 1964

Gladly join you in interfaith statement and protest against hypocritical distortion of morality in this campaign it is nauseating.

Merton

Jewish Theological Seminary

October 30, 1964

Dear Friend:

Doctor Bennett and I were delighted to receive your telegram which was read at the news conference held yesterday afternoon at the Overseas Press Club.

I am sure you know how often you are in my thoughts. Regretfully, I am a very poor letter writer.

The overall picture in Rome is highly ambiguous. I would also like to call your attention to the editorial in the magazine AMERICA of October 31. I am sure that your reaction to the tone and content of that editorial will be the same as mine. I feel like crying.

In deep affection,
Abraham J. Heschel

Just received encouraging words from Rome.

Dec. 6, 1965

Dear Rabbi Heschel:

This matter of business gives me opportunity to say "hello" and to hope you are well. Also to say how distressed I was about Dan Berrigan, and how thankful to you for your support of him. I don't suppose much has been done about it, but I do not get much news. If he is back in New York, by any chance, I wish you would let me know.

As to the business: it [. . .]. He wrote me telling me that he wanted to come down and converse with me about his dissertation [. . .]. Yet I have had to answer "No" because now I have been allowed to retire to a life of greater solitude and my Superiors have rightly required me to discontinue visits, at least of this kind, to give the experiment a good try.

[Paragraph omitted]

The solitary life I find very fruitful and in some ways disconcerting. It has brought me face to face with things I had never had to consider before, and I find that some pretty drastic revaluations have to be made, in my own life. This keeps me busy. I would appreciate you remembering me in your prayer before Him whom we both seek and serve. I do not forget you in my own prayer. God be with you always.

Most cordially in His Spirit,
[Thomas Merton]

Dec. 12, 1966

Dear Dr. Heschel:

Father Abbot spoke to me of your phone call, something about an article on the Bible for *Life?* Or is it for a book in a series to be put out by *Life?* The project is not totally clear. Though I am not too happy with big fancy projects organized by the mass-media, I don't say "no" on principle: there is still room for "yes" if I can get a clearer idea of what is involved. Can you please tell me what it is? Fr Abbot said you might drop by here and explain personally. That would be marvelous. But in any case, I need to know what the project is before I can commit myself finally. I sincerely doubt my capacity to write anything worth while on the Bible. I am not a pro. But if it is something within my powers I can at least think about attempting it.

I have still to thank you for a couple of books of yours which came in during the past months. I appreciate them very much though I have not yet finished both of them. I have found much that is very stimulating indeed in *The Insecurity of Freedom* and I have been reserving *Who is Man* for a time of freedom and thoughtfulness. I should of course be always free and thoughtful but I get myself reading and thinking in terms of current work a lot of the time, and cannot always fit other things in.

In any case it is good to hear from you again however indirectly. I am as you know happily holed away in the woods where I belong and find the existence perfectly congenial. I could not ask for anything better, and in snow it is ever quieter still.

I asked my publisher to send you a copy of my latest book and I hope they did so.

With all my very best wishes and warm fraternal regards.
[Thomas Merton]

The Jewish Theological Seminary of America

December 15, 1966

Dear Friend,

I had certainly hoped when I called to have the pleasure of hearing your voice. You are so often in my thoughts. There are concerns which I would love to share with you but Father Abbot explained to me how difficult it is for you to come to the phone.

I am very happy to know that you are finding your present way congenial. There are many moments when I too long for complete solitude.

By now Mr. Russell Bourne's letter must have reached you and described the project he has in mind. I have consented to serve as consultant because I believe that the work will be carried out with dignity and should help a great many people to find access to the Bible.

I was deeply moved by your piece on Thich Nhat Hanh. I look forward to receiving your new book; I will certainly cherish it. I am enclosing a short piece on Viet Nam.

With warmest regards and best wishes, I am,

Cordially yours,
Abraham J. Heschel

God Himself has recognized us as a people. Are we in need of a 'Chapter' acknowledging our right to exist as Jews? Nearly every chapter in the Bible expresses the promise of God's fidelity to His Covenant with our people.

"It is not gratitude that we ask for: it is the cure of a disease affecting so many minds that we pray for."

When the third session of the Council opened on September 16, 1964, it was evident that prelates supporting a stronger statement on th e Jews would fight to get it on the floor of the Council. The liberals moved rapidly, denouncing the changes in the draft made, they said, without the approval of Cardinal Bea's secretariat. On Sept. 17th, 170 of the 240 bishops from the United States met in urgent conference and publicly called for a return to the sense of the original document. ~~The~~ to

The draft was introduced the Council Fathers by Cardinal Bea on Sept. 28th and was finally debated on Sept. 28-29th. Altogether no fewer than 34 Council members from 22 countries rose to speak. Only a small handful defended the weakened draft or objected to any Jewish declaration whatever; An overwhelming majority asked that the text be strengthened. At the end of the first day's debate, a peritus to the Council told the AJC with deep emotion in response to the near-unanimity and determination that was shown, "This was the Council's greatest day, and a great day for the Church. On no issue have the Fathers been so united; on none ~~xk~~ have they spoken so forthrightly."

In the wake of that historic debate - what I have called the greatest seminar in Catholic-Jewish relations - a final text was redrafted. Unlike earlier versions, it encompassed all the great non-Christian religions, but the passages concerning Jews and Judaism closely resembled what Cardinal Bea had proposed in the first place.

Clearly and forcefully, the deicide accusation against Jews past and present was rejected; teachers and preachers were enjoined to spurn ideas that might foster hostility against Jews; increased mutual knowledge and respect among Christians and Jews were recommended; hatred and persecution of Jews, in former days and in our own, were condemned. Hope was voiced for mankind's ultimate religious unity

but the time of such union was said to be "known to God alone." Nothing suggestive of proselytizing in the here and now was said; the permanence of Judaism was in effect acknowledged on the statement, that "even though a large part of the Jews did not accept the Gospel, they remain most dear to God."

On November 20th, the last day of the Council's session, the text dealing with the Jews came up for a vote. It was ringingly approved by a vote of 1,770 to 185; the declaration as a whole on non-Christians was accepted by a similarly large majority.

The Council's fourth session opened on September 14, 1965. Maneuverings and pressures continued throughout 1965 down through the opening days of the final session. I won't belabor you with those complicated details. (An excellent and authoritative account can be found in two articles on "The Church and the Jews: The Struggle At Vatican Council II by my assistant, Judith Hershcopf (now Banki) in the American Jewish Yearbook, 19 .)

The final text came to a public vote on October 28, 1965 - a date chosen by Pope Paul VI because it was the anniversary of the late Pope John XXIII's election to the Papacy. The vote was 2,221 in favor, 88 opppsed, and 3 void. Immediately afterward, Pope Paul promulgated the declaration as the official teaching of the Church.

If the declaration falls short of its supporters highest hopes, it nevertheless signals a historic turning point. For the first time in the history of the 21 Ecumenical Councils, the highest ecclesiastical authorities have committed the Catholic Church throughout the world to uprooting the charge of collective guilt against the Jews, eliminating anti-Semitism and fostering mutual knowledge and respect betwen Catholics and Jews.

Obviously, such deepened understanding will not spring up quickly or spontaneously. The antagonisms of centuries will not be swept away overnight. For people of good will on both sides, decades of massive work lie ahead.

Rabbi Heschel joined with the American Jewish Committee in participating from the very beginning in this Catholic-Jewish encounter, the most significant of our time. He gave of himself freely, abundantly, even sacrificially. Whatever progress is made in growing mutual respect

between Christians and Jews in generations to come will be immeasurably indebted to my beloved mentor, friend, and inspiration, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, zecher tzaddik livrochoh.

THE JEWISH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF AMERICA
3080 BROADWAY • NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10027
212 RIVERSIDE 9-8000

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

CABLE ADDRESS: SEMINARY, NEW YORK

November 16, 1982

Dear Colleague,

As you undoubtedly know, January 3, 1983, the 18th of Tevet, 5743, marks the tenth yahrzeit of our beloved teacher, Abraham Joshua Heschel. To those of us who studied with him, the memory of Heschel brings its own special magic. He was an inspiration to colleagues and students alike, and frequently led us to reexamine our thoughts and our conclusions, acquiring in the process added flexibility, and a new openness to views differing from our own.

More important than what Heschel did for each of us is what he did for Judaism, and for Jewish studies in this country. No one could ignore this giant who lived among us. Colleges which previously had offered only token Judaica courses now found themselves compelled to teach Heschel - and to include his thought in the humanities curriculum. He is one of a handful of Jewish thinkers who have helped Jewish thought to gain its rightful place in the academic and scholarly worlds. His writing and teaching have had a greater impact on Christian thought than any other Jewish theologian except Buber. This achievement is his legacy to us, and to succeeding generations. It is a gift of great significance, and one for which we are greatly in his debt.

It behooves us to thank him in ways which recognize the importance of his contribution. One such way would be to hold discussions of his work in communities across the country in this anniversary year. To this end, I am sending you some material which might help you plan such a celebration. You may want to enlist the cooperation of other rabbis in your area, or of clergy of all faiths, and academic leaders as well.

I shall be interested in hearing about what you do, and my office will send you any additional material you may request, if it is available.

Sincerely,

Gerson D. Cohen

ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL

Biographical Sketch

Doctor Abraham Joshua Heschel, one of the foremost Jewish savants of the age, held the Ralph Simon chair of Professor of Jewish Ethics and Mysticism at The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, until his death in 1972. A philosopher actively concerned with contemporary problems, he was an authoritative voice on the moral issues of the nation.

A scholar of extraordinary range, endowed with a superb literary style, he wrote on Jewish history, philosophy and mysticism. The best-known of his writings deal with theproblems of religion as they arise for modern man. Among these works is a magnum opus published in two parts, Man is Not Alone and God in Search of Man. Descendant of a long line of Hassidic rabbis, Professor Heschel was born in Warsaw, and received his early education in Poland. He left Poland for Germany and received his doctorate at the University of Berlin. His first major work, Maimonides, was published in German in 1935. It was followed soon after by Die Prophetie. These two books established his reputation as a ranking scholar.

From 1932-1933, Doctor Heschel served as Instructor in Talmud at the Hochschule fuer die Wissenschaft des Judentums in Berlin. Subsequently, he succeeded the late Martin Buber as head of the Frankfurt Lehrhaus. With the rise of Nazism, he left Germany for England. He founded the Institute for Jewish Learning in London in 1939.

Professor Heschel came to the United States in 1940 and for five years, until he joined the faculty of The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, was Professor of Philosophy and Rabbinics at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati.

An anthology based on his books, collected by Dr. Fritz A. Rothschild and entitled Between God and Man: An Interpretation of Judaism from the Writings of Abraham J. Heschel, was published by Harper & Row in 1959.

In constant demand as a lecturer, Doctor Heschel delivered two major addresses at White House Conferences: in 1960 on children and youth, and in 1961 on the aging. He also held visiting chairs at major universities, including Cornell and the Universities of Minnesota, Stanford, and Iowa. In 1965, he was appointed by Union Theological Seminary to serve as its Harry Emerson Fosdick Visiting Professor - the first Jewish scholar to be appointed to the faculty of this Protestant institution.

Professor Heschel played a central role in the discussions that were background to the Ecumenical Council's deliberations on Catholic-Jewish relations. His efforts helped to bring about a closer understanding between Christians and Jews. In the dark days for Soviet Jewry, Professor Heschel was in the vanguard of those working to muster world opinion on behalf of this beleaguered minority.

In March, 1966, Notre Dame University conferred upon Doctor Heschel its degree of Doctor of Laws, honoris causa. He also held honorary degrees from St. Michael's College, Vermont, and Park College in Kansas. Dr. Heschel was a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and a member of the American Academy for Jewish Research.

(Over)

Doctor Abraham Joshua Heschel (see other side) Publications

*The Earth is the Lord's
H. Schuman, 1950

*Man is Not Alone
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1951

*The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1951

*God in Search of Man
Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1956

*Man's Quest for God
Scribner's, 1959

*The Prophets, Vols. I & II
Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1962

*Who Is Man?
Stanford University Press, 1965

*The Insecurity of Freedom
Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1965

*Israel: An Echo of Eternity
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1969

A Passion for Truth
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1973

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*Between God and Man: An Interpretation of Judaism from the Writings of Abraham Joshua Heschel, edited by Fritz A. Rothschild, Harper, 1959 (includes an excellent bibliography)

A Memorial, Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-1972): Theologian and Scholar by Fritz A. Rothschild was published in the American Jewish Yearbook, Volume 74, 1973, Conservative Judaism.

*available in paperback

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More important than what Heschel did for each of us is what he did for Judaism, and for Jewish studies in this country. No one could ignore this giant who lived among us. Colleges which previously had offered only token Judaica courses now found themselves compelled to teach Heschel - and to include his thought in the humanities curriculum. He is one of a handful of Jewish thinkers who have helped Jewish thought to gain its rightful place in the academic and scholarly worlds. His writing and teaching have had a greater impact on Christian thought than any other Jewish theologian except Buber. This achievement is his legacy to us, and to succeeding generations. It is a gift of great significance, and one for which we are greatly in his debt.

It behooves us to thank him in ways which recognize the importance of his contribution. One such way would be to hold discussions of his work in communities across the country in this anniversary year. To this end, I am sending you some material which might help you plan such a celebration. You may want to enlist the cooperation of other rabbis in your area, or of clergy of all faiths, and academic leaders as well.

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Sincerely,

Gerson D. Cohen

Excerpts from Memorial for Abraham Joshua Heschel
Professor W. D. Davis
Professor of Christian Origins
Duke University

The Holocaust was an event which overwhelmed Heschel as it did all Jews in our time. His silence about the Holocaust always puzzled me. Was it that there were some things about which he could not speak? Was his mind so numbed by that horrendous event that he was stunned to silence? I think in a real sense that this was so, and yet his silence (in any direct sense) about the Holocaust, was a pregnant one. The Holocaust did have a profound effect on his theology and especially on his understanding of the theological past. Here I want to emphasize simply one point where the effect of the European Holocaust was direct and unmistakable and important to the non-Jewish world. True, Abraham Heschel knew from Judaism that we are all bound up together in the common bundle of life, so that we are all inescapably involved with each other.

True that the Torah and the Prophets led him to recognize certain inescapable social, moral and political realities, so that at many times he expressed our social conscience. But I think that it was the Holocaust that lent to his awareness its special urgency. I recall once at his home that he referred to the silence of decent people in Germany and elsewhere in the presence of the monstrous and unspeakable deeds of Hitler, and spoke of the need to make public protest against such. He said this very quietly, but I am fairly sure that apart from the moral and spiritual depths to which he could appeal in Judaism, and apart from the striking example of his late friend, Reinhold Niebuhr, the need to speak out, which he felt and followed so strongly, was born chiefly of his European experience: that he very publicly marched to Selma, very publicly opposed the Vietnam war, very publicly protested on behalf of Jews in Russia, and that in a way which inevitably drew attention to his stand because of his picturesquely noticeable presence wherever he was, all this was no accident. It was his passionate reaction against the craven silence of decent people in the presence of wrong unendurable.

A great American jurist, Oliver Wendell Holmes, said that it is important not only that justice be done, but that justice be seen to be done. Abraham Hexchel felt that it was important not only that one protest against evil but that one be seen to protest, and that, at the risk of being misinterpreted and misunderstood. That he was seen to protest was in his mind a necessary part of his resolve not to be guilty of a compromising silence. How and where he was seen in protest, we already know. His will be, I think, a noble and enduring Jewish presence in the history of the protest movement of this country.

But there is a second, and very different world, to which we must relate Abraham Heschel. During this century, in the world of scholarship, there has been going on what is a silent revolution among Jews and Christians. Beginning at the end of the nineteenth century among Christians, and even earlier among Jews, there has been a sustained attempt to examine the sources of Judaism in the first and previous centuries. I am here concerned with Jewish work in this field. It has been immensely enriching and immensely illuminating. Especially in Britain and America, it has helped to create a new climate, within which the study of the beginnings of Christianity (which was born of Judaism) and its separation from its mother faith, has been conducted. A climate of mutual respect, comprehension, tolerance, and I should like to say, affection. Now, to bring this matter home, let me here pay tribute to the institution which Abraham Heschel so long served --The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, whose impact in this field has been immeasurable.

Abraham Heschel was related to this world of emerging and influential Jewish scholarship. I want to emphasize this aspect of Dr. Heschel's contribution because in the long run the image of Judaism which will govern the Christian pulpit and the schools of this nation will be largely that created by scholars. The work of Abraham Heschel is to be honored in this context. For Christians and non-Jews, to encounter Heschel was to feel the force and spirit of Judaism, the depth and the grandeur of it. He led one -- even thrust one -- into the mysterious greatness of the Jewish tradition, not conceptually always, but emotionally and existentially. It was as an unmistakable Jewish presence that Abraham Heschel impinged upon this 20th century, and that century found his presence disturbing, strange, inexplicable, but at the same time reassuring and challenging.

The ultimate concern of Abraham Heschel was the answer to the challenge that faces all modern men -- the challenge to believe in the reality of God and in His mercy. Can we, in an age when western culture is witnessing a groundswell of atheism, finally recognize our existence not as the accidental outcome of a fortuitous confluence of atoms, but as grounded in the pathos -- that was his great word -- -- the pathos of God who suffers with us and for us all. He summoned not only Jews but non-Jews also to the depths of awe, wonder and mystery which life should evoke in all men.

Quotables

Everyone has his favorite quotes from Heschel's writings. The following aphorisms, taken from his speeches, may be less readily available.

Indifference to evil is more insidious than evil itself; it is more universal, more contagious, more dangerous. A silent justification, it makes possible an evil erupting as an exception becoming the rule and being in turn accepted.

Few of us seem to realize how insidious, how radical, how universal and evil racism is. Few of us realize that racism is man's gravest threat to man, the maximum of hatred for a minimum of reason, the maximum of cruelty for a minimum of thinking.

Learning is life, a supreme experience of living, a climax of existence.

Wisdom is like the heavens, belonging to no man, and true learning is the astronomy of the spirit.

The meaning of existence is found in the experience of education. Termination of education is the beginning of despair. Every person bears a responsibility for the legacy of the past as well as the burden of the future.

Self--respect is the fruit of discipline, the sense of dignity grows with the ability to say no to oneself in the name of a higher yes.

Talent, knowledge, success are important to human existence. Yet taken without dedication, knowledge without reverence, success without humility may end in futility. Important is the premise that a life unexamined is not worth living, yet it is just as vital to realize that life without commitment to what is greater than life is not worth living.

Man has to choose between awe and anxiety, between the divine and the demoniac, between radical amazement and radical despair. A time without awe becomes an age of anxiety; blindess to the presence of the divine leads to being possessed by the demonic.

What we owe the old is reverence, but all they ask for is consideration, attention, not to be discarded and forgotten. What they deserve is preference, yet we do not even grant them equality. One father finds it possible to sustain a dozen children, yet a dozen children find it impossible to sustain one father.

The text of a people is how it behaves toward the old. It is easy to love children. Even tryants and dictators make a point of being fond of children. But the affection and care for the old, the incurable, the helpless, are the true gold mines of a people.

One ought to enter old age the way one enters the senior year at a university, in exciting anticipation of consummation, of the summing-up and consummation. Rich in perspective and experienced in failure, the old person is capable of shedding prejudices and the fever of vested interests. He does not see anymore in every fellow man a person who stands in his way, and competitiveness may cease to be his way of thinking.

Time has independent ultimate significance; it is of more majesty and more provocation of awe than even a sky studded with stars. Gliding gently in the most ancient of all splendors, it tells so much more than space can say in its broken language of things, playing symphonies upon the instruments of isolated beings, unlocking the earth and making it happen.

ARCHITECT AND HERALD OF A NEW THEOLOGY

Fritz A. Rothschild

A GREAT AND GOOD MAN has died, and those of us who knew him still feel the shock and grief of our personal loss. But we also realize that Abraham Joshua Heschel has not left us empty-handed. Working indefatigably, this brilliant and productive scholar and thinker has bestowed upon us a rich and many-sided heritage. Though he is no longer with us on earth, his lips through his writings still move from beyond the grave.

In an age of extreme specialization, when "scholarship" frequently means that one knows more and more about less and less, the range of his achievements is truly amazing. His books and monographs deal with Biblical prophecy, medieval philosophy, the lives of Maimonides and Abravanel, Jewish mysticism and ancient rabbinic theology, Eastern European Jewry and the Sabbath, prayer and symbolism, the State of Israel, applied religious ethics, the history of Hasidism and the nature of man.

But the variety of his works does not bespeak an eclectic lack of purpose and planning. I think we can best understand Heschel's lifework as consisting of two parallel strands which complement each other: his studies and interpretations of the classical sources of Jewish tradition on the one hand and his own philosophy of Judaism on the other. Heschel, the research scholar, explored the documents of the past in order to make certain that Heschel, the creative thinker, could make his message true and authentic.

the basic pattern

I SHALL NOT DEAL HERE with his contributions to pure scholarship but rather, present briefly some of the basic ideas with which he has enriched our understanding of Judaism. His philosophy is found chiefly in his magnum opus, *Man Is Not Alone* and *God in Search of Man*, but many of his insights are also developed in the rest of his wide-ranging work.

How do we judge the value and importance of a religious thinker? His theology must satisfy three criteria: comprehensiveness, consistency and relevance. Heschel's work exhibits a remarkable range of comprehen-

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Fritz A. Rothschild is Associate Professor of Philosophy of Religion in the Graduate Rabbinical School of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. This paper was originally given as a eulogy at the *Shloshim* service at Park Avenue Synagogue in New York City, January 21, 1973. A version also appeared in *America* magazine, March 10, 1973.

Reprinted from Conservative Judaism, Fall, 1973

siveness; it draws on all epochs of the Jewish tradition, anchored in the central ideas of the Bible, incorporating the Rabbinical contributions in the field of Halakhah and Aggadah, law and ethics, drawing on the mystical outlook of the Kabbalah and Hasidism—from the joyous paneatheistic affirmation of the Baal Shem Tov to the agonizing existentialism of the Kotzker Rebbe.

As to the consistency of Heschel's thought, we face a problem: as we read his theological books, we find ourselves confronted with a style that exhibits a beauty and vividness of phrase rarely found in scholarly works. The ideas appear in aphoristic flashes of insight, and we may be deceived into the impression that a gifted poet and wise man is delighting us with spiritual gems rather than with the systematic exposition of a coherent philosophy. Like Santayana, the great American philosopher, Heschel's literary artistry makes us forget that the easy-flowing prose hides subtle and complex thought-processes which are ours to discover only if we delve beneath the smooth surface and study each passage in depth.

Critics have taken exception to what they called his euphuistic style, and followers have often merely admired the striking insights of individual passages strung together like pearls on a necklace. Both have overlooked that there is more to Heschel than meets the eye: that he is a consistent thinker who offers a *Weltanschauung* which can be understood in terms of a set of basic concepts and categories. Over fifteen years ago, I set myself the task of unearthing this skeleton of Heschel's thought, and it took me a full year before I discerned the basic pattern underlying his many and diverse ideas on God and man, life and death, love and justice, time and space.

When discussing the differences between the two great cultures of the Jewish Middle Ages, he said that "Sephardic books are like Raphaelesque paintings, Ashkenazic books like the works of Rembrandt—profound, allusive, and full of hidden meanings. The former favor the harmony of a system, the latter the tension of dialectic; the former are sustained by a balanced solemnity, the latter by impulsive inspiration." Heschel, Ashkenazic scholar par excellence, did not write books like trimmed and cultivated parks; his works are like enchanted forests. If we only take the effort to enter into them we shall find them not only enchanted but enchanting.

basic ideas

WE HAVE DEALT WITH comprehensiveness and consistency. What about relevance? It is here that Heschel has made a truly significant breakthrough in theological method. Writing for modern man who is perplexed and alienated and for whom old values and formulas have often become

meaningless, he is not content just to present the traditional answers. The first task to him is to recover the questions without which answers are irrelevant. Unless we are concerned with ultimate questions, life becomes flat and meaningless. His method of correlation, similar to Paul Tillich's but independently conceived, makes the ancient teachings of Judaism relevant by showing that they address themselves to the basic questions of human existence: What is the meaning of my life? How can I attach myself to a reality which can lift me above the dull routine of animal existence? What ought I to do? What may I hope for?

Judaism is a way of life, a discipline of law and observance and a doctrine seemingly confined to a small and peculiar people. Heschel shows how this "scandal of particularity" can be overcome: not by abandoning this ancient faith in favor of a vague broad humanism, but by showing modern Jews that our classical tradition speaks to the concerns of all human beings and is grounded in universal and pervasive traits of our existence. Thus, for example, Judaism teaches that God created the world, revealed the Torah and will redeem mankind at the end of time. But to throw these theree doctrines at the modern Jew in the style of the early Karl Barth, like a stone *senkrecht von oben* (right from the top, vertically) may hit his skull without penetrating his soul. So instead, Heschel points to three types of experiences through which we can reach God, three trails that lead to Him:

> *The first is the way of sensing the presence of God in the world, in things; the second is the way of sensing His presence in the Bible; the third is the way of sensing His presence in sacred deeds . . . . These three ways correspond to existence; worship, learning, and action. To recapture the insights found in those three ways is to go to the roots of Biblical experience of life and reality; it means to delve into the religious drama of Israel.*

In our life situation, here and now, we can recover the awareness of the holy dimension, the awareness of God and our relationship to Him. By looking at nature, the world we live in, freed from the routine of accepting things as they are, we recover the sense of wonder, mystery and awe. This sense of wonder, far from being a mere subjective mood, is a basic attitude which enables us to see beyond the mere givenness of data to the ultimate power and ground of all things. The Bible, read not just as an antiquarian document but as the record of revelation, can again become a voice vibrating across the corridors of time, recalling men to the divine demand and challenging them to take a stand as responsive and responsible persons.

By doing Mitzvot, sacred deeds, we can experience meanings not available through mere conceptual discourse. Against Kierkegaard's "leap

of faith," Heschel declares that Judaism demands the "leap of action," the willingness to learn by doing, by participating actively in performing God's will, to appreciate and to be enriched by an experience which touches the whole of man and which goes beyond the mere analysis and reinterpretation of that which we already knew beforehand. In doing, we go beyond ourselves, we surpass ourselves and become co-workers in the task of redemption.

biblical philosophy

ALL THIS IS CLEARLY PRESENTED in Heschel's writings. But if we want to come to grips with his basic outlook we have to read him in a more searching manner. Beneath the *peshat*, the plain sense, we must delve into his "depth theology." The key to his thought is found in the concept of personal concern. The Ultimate is not Being but concern or as I try to explain it to myself, "directed attention." Few of his readers are aware that Heschel has propounded a truly revolutionary doctrine, challenging the whole venerable tradition of Jewish and Christian metaphysical theology from Philo, Maimonides and Thomas Aquinas to Herman Cohen, Etienne Gilson and Paul Tillich.

He proclaims that the Greek category of "being" and eternally frozen perfection is inadequate to Judaism and must be replaced by a new set of categories derived from Biblical thinking. Aristotle's Unmoved Mover must give way to the Bible's Most Moved Mover, the God of pathos and transitive concern who stands in a dynamic and reciprocal relationship to his creation. "Being through creation," through the divine act of freedom, expresses in symbolic form that reality is not a self-sufficient fixed mechanical order. It is an ongoing process in which responsible man freely reacts to the challenges of his life and in which surprise, novelty and unexpected creative possibilities always exist. Through sympathy, compassion and sensitivity to the divine concern, man can overcome his egocentric predicament and can fulfill his true potential.

The denial of fixed being and substance as the ultimate building block of the universe opens exciting possibilities not only for religious thought but for other fields of philosophy. The parallel to modern physics which sees reality as a field of forces rather than a collection of moving billiard balls is obvious. Future researchers would be well advised to probe the connections and parallels between Heschel's Biblical philosophy and process philosophers such as Whitehead and Bergson and to existentialists like Heidegger, Jaspers and Marcel.

In ethics, the idea of concern helps to explain the ideal of care for the fellow creature; in the theory of knowledge, it helps to overcome the paralysis of the cognizing subject locked in the magic circle of Kant's

epistemology. In exploring basic human attitudes, it enables us to overcome routine dullness and alienation by reminding us that man is the being who always is beyond himself, in *ek-stasis,* transcending his loneliness and isolation in knowledge, action, artistic expression and worship. Space and time take on a new meaning in Heschel: things are merely frozen processes, life itself is a process gathering the past into itself; reaching out into the exciting horizons of the future. Reality is not like a stone sculpture but like a symphony. The Sabbath is to Judaism an edifice in time, a cathedral of the spirit.

polar concepts

MY WORDS MAY HAVE GIVEN the impression that Heschel's lifework and philosophy constitute a harmonious, well-planned whole; that he has fashioned a grand synthesis of Judaism for our age. But this impression, plausible as it may seem, is deceptive. His thought bears witness to a deep awareness of the tragic and fragmented character of reality. Although inspired by the ideal *alma de-yichudah,* the world of unity, he knew that we still live in the *alma de-perudah,* the world of separation. His thought abounds in polar concepts and the fields of forces created by them: *keva* and *kavanah,* mystery and meaning, God's self-disclosure and His hiding His face, faith and reason, *grandeur et misère de l'homme.* He often used the language of paradox; not because he denigrated logic and reason, but because reality is too complex and subtle to be caught in univocal concepts. He was not a simple person, and his religious thought is not a simplistic philosophy. He felt the claims of natural as well as crisis theology, of sacramentalism and of utopianism. Everywhere we walk is holy ground, but everywhere we go, truth is buried and horror lurks.

Heschel tells the Midrash of how Abraham arrived at his certainty that there is a God who is concerned with the world. Abraham, we are told, may be compared to a man who was travelling from place to place when he saw *birah doleket,* a palace all ablaze. "Is it possible that there is no one who cares for the palace?" he wondered. Then the owner of the palace looked at him and said, "I am the owner of the palace!" Similarly, Abraham our father wondered, "Is it conceivable that the world is without a guide?" The Holy One, blessed be He, looked out and said: "I am the guide, the sovereign of the world" (*Genesis Rabbah* 39,1). The Hebrew word *doleket* can mean "illuminated" and it can mean "in flames." We come to the awareness of God through the glory and beauty of the world, the "palace full of light," and we also come to Him when we see the world in flames, in conflagration, and ask, "Is there no one who cares and guides?" BUT BEYOND CRISIS and the absurdity of evil, Heschel taught us to see goodness and meaning. The work he finished a few days before his death

significantly dealt with the Baal Shem Tov and Rabbi Mendel of Kotzk. One of them saw the divine in everything and celebrated in ecstasy the joyous feeling of *leyt atar panuy mineh*, that no place is empty of God. The other faced with radical honesty the absurdity, horror and tragedy of existence.

Fully aware of this tension, Heschel taught us not to deny the mystery but to have faith in an ultimate meaning beyond it. With the Bratzlaver Rebbe, he asserts defiantly: "Despair does not exist!" In prayer and celebration the task of the religious thinker and the poet merge. In praising God we restore our inner health, we learn to appreciate the privilege and glory of existence and attain a taste of messianic fulfillment.

He heeded the words of W. H. Auden ("In Memory of W. B. Yeats):

Intellectual disgrace
Stares from every human face,
And the seas of pity lie
Locked and frozen in each eye.

Follow, poet, follow right
To the bottom of the night,
With your unconstraining voice
Still persuade us to rejoice . . .

In the deserts of the heart,
Let the healing fountain start,
In the prison of his days
Teach the free man how to praise.

Abraham Heschel wrote:

> *Eternity is the memory of God. Creative insights grow a life-time to last a moment, and yet they last forever. For to last means to commune with God, 'to cleave unto Him. . . .' Within eternity every moment can become a contemporary of God. . . . Eternity is not perpetual future but perpetual presence.*

And we may add in the words of the Torah (Genesis 18:22): *Ve-Avraham odenu omed lifney ha-Shem*, "Abraham still stands before the Lord."

ON PRAYER

Abraham J. Heschel

PRIMARILY my theme is not liturgy, public worship, public ritual, but rather private worship, prayer as an enterprise of the individual self, as a personal engagement, as an intimate, confidential act.

Public worship is an act of the highest importance. However, it tends in our days to become a spectacle, in which the congregation remains passive, inert spectators. But prayer is action; it requires complete mobilization of heart, mind, and soul. What is the worth of attending public worship when mind and soul are not involved? Renewal of liturgy involves renewal of prayer.

There is, in addition, a malady indigenous or congenital to liturgy. Liturgy as an act of prayer is an outcome and distillation of the inner life. Although its purpose is to exalt the life which engenders it, it harbors a tendency to follow a direction and rhythm of its own, independent of and divorced from the energies of life which brought prayer into being. At the beginning, liturgy is intimately related to the life which calls it into being. But as liturgy unfolds, it enters a state of stubborn disconnection, even into a state of opposition. Liturgy is bound to become rigid, to stand by itself, and to take on a measure of imperviousness. It tends to become timeless, transpersonal; liturgy for the sake of liturgy. Personal presence is replaced by mere attendance; instead of erecting a sanctuary of time in the realm of the soul, liturgy attracts masses of people to a sanctuary in the realm of space.

I do not wish to set up a dichotomy of prayer and liturgy. This would contradict the spirit of devotion. I merely wish to concentrate my thoughts on prayer as a personal affair, as an act of supreme importance. I plead for the primacy of prayer in our inner existence. The test of authentic theology is the degree to which it reflects and enhances the power of prayer, the way of worship.

In antiquity as well as in the Middle Ages, due to the scarcity of parchment, people would often write new texts on top of earlier written

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Reprinted from Conservative Judaism, Fall, 1970

parchments. The term denoting such writings is *palimpsest*. Metaphorically, I suggest that authentic theology is a palimpsest: scholarly, disciplined thinking grafted upon prayer.

Prayer is either exceedingly urgent, exceedingly relevant, or inane and useless. Our first task is to learn to comprehend why prayer is an ontological necessity. God is hiding, and man is defying. Every moment God is creating and self-concealing. Prayer is disclosing or at least preventing irreversible concealing. God is ensconced in mystery, hidden in the depths. Prayer is pleading with God to come out of the depths. "Out of the depths have I called Thee, O Lord" (Psalms 130:1).

We have lost sensitivity to truth and purity of heart in the wasteland of opportunism. It is, however, a loss that rebounds to afflict us with anguish. Such anguish, when converted into prayer, into a prayer for truth, may evoke the dawn of God. Our agony over God's concealment is sharing in redeeming God's agony over man's concealment.

Prayer as an episode, as a cursory incident, will not establish a home in the land of oblivion. Prayer must pervade as a climate of living, and all our acts must be carried out as variations on the theme of prayer. A deed of charity, an act of kindness, a ritual moment—each is prayer in the form of a deed. Such prayer involves a minimum or even absence of outwardness, and an abundance of inwardness.

a sanctuary for the soul

PRAYER IS NOT A STRATAGEM for occasional use, a refuge to resort to now and then. It is rather like an established residence for the innermost self. All things have a home, the bird has a nest, the fox has a hole, the bee has a hive. A soul without prayer is a soul without a home. Weary, sobbing, the soul, after roaming through a world festered with aimlessness, falsehoods and absurdities, seeks a moment in which to gather up its scattered life, in which to divest itself of enforced pretensions and camouflage, in which to simplify complexities, in which to call for help without being a coward. Such a home is prayer. Continuity, permanence, intimacy, authenticity, earnestness are its attributes. For the soul, home is where prayer is.

In his cottage, even the poorest man may bid defiance to misery and malice. That cottage may be frail, its roof may shake, the wind may blow through it, the storms may enter it, but there is where the soul expects to be understood. Just as the body, so is the soul in need of a home.

Everybody must build his own home; everybody must guard the independence and the privacy of his prayers. It is the source of security for the integrity of conscience, for whatever inkling we attain of eternity. At home I have a Father who judges and cares, who has regard for me,

and when I fail and go astray, misses me. I will never give up my home.

What is a soul without prayer? A soul runaway or a soul evicted from its own home. To those who have abandoned their home: the road may be hard and dark and far, yet do not be afraid to steer back. If you prize grace and eternal meaning, you will discover them upon arrival.

How marvellous is my home. I enter as a suppliant and emerge as a witness; I enter as a stranger and emerge as next of kin. I may enter spiritually shapeless, inwardly disfigured, and emerge wholly changed. It is in moments of prayer that my image is forged, that my striving is fashioned. To understand the world I must love my home. It is difficult to perceive luminosity anywhere if there is no light in my own home. It is in the light of prayer's radiance that I find my way even in the dark. It is prayer that illumines my way. As my prayers, so is my understanding.

the many purposes of prayer

PRAYER SERVES many aims. It serves to save the inward life from oblivion. It serves to alleviate anguish. It serves to partake of God's mysterious grace and guidance. Yet, ultimately, prayer must not be experienced as an act for the sake of something else. We pray in order to pray.

Prayer is a perspective from which to behold, from which to respond to, the challenges we face. Man in prayer does not seek to impose his will upon God; he seeks to impose God's will and mercy upon himself. Prayer is necessary to make us aware of our failures, backsliding, transgressions, sins.

Prayer is more than paying attention to the holy. Prayer comes about as an event. It consists of two inner acts: an act of turning and an act of direction. I leave the world behind as well as all interests of the self. Divested of all concerns, I am overwhelmed by only one desire: to place my heart upon the altar of God.

God is beyond the reach of finite notions, diametrically opposed to our power of comprehension. In theory He seems to be neither here nor now. He is so far away, an outcast, a refugee in His own world. It is as if all doors were closed to Him. To pray is to open a door, where both God and soul may enter. Prayer is arrival, for Him and for us. To pray is to overcome distance, to shatter screens, to render obliquities straight, to heal the break between God and the world. A dreadful oblivion prevails in the world. The world has forgotten what it means to be human. The gap is widening, the abyss is within the self.

Though often I do not know how to pray, I can still say: Redeem me from the agony of not knowing what to strive for, from the agony of not knowing how my inner life is falling apart.

A candle of the Lord is the soul of man, but the soul can become a holocaust, a fury, a rage. The only cure is to discover that over and above the anonymous stillness in the world there is a Name and a waiting.

Many young people suffer from a fear of the self. They do not feel at home in their own selves. The inner life is a place of dereliction, a no man's land, inconsolate, weird. The self has become a place from which to flee. The use of narcotic drugs is a search for a home.

Human distress, wretchedness, agony, is a signal of a universal distress. It is a sign of human misery; it also proclaims a divine predicament. God's mercy is too great to permit the innocent to suffer. But there are forces that interfere with God's mercy, with God's power. This is a dreadful mystery as well as a challenge: God is held in captivity.

I pray because God, the *Shekhinah*, is an outcast. I pray because God is in exile, because we all conspire to blur all signs of His presence in the present or in the past. I pray because I refuse to despair, because extreme denials and defiance are refuted in the confrontation of my own presumption and the mystery all around me. *I pray because I am unable to pray.*

And suddenly I am forced to do what I seem unable to do. Even callousness to the mystery is not immortal. There are moments when the clamor of all sirens dies, presumption is depleted, and even the bricks in the walls are waiting for a song. The door is closed, the key is lost. Yet the new sadness of my soul is about to open the door.

Some souls are born with a scar, others are endowed with anesthesia. Satisfaction with the world is base and the ultimate callousness. The remedy for absurdity is still to be revealed. The irreconcilable opposites which agonize human existence are the outcry, the prayer. Every one of us is a cantor; everyone of us is called to intone a song, to put into prayer the anguish of all.

God is in captivity in this world, in the oblivion of our lives. God is in search of man, in search of a home in the soul and deeds of man. God is not at home in our world. Our task is to hallow time, to enable Him to enter our moments, to be at home in our time, in what we do with time.

Ultimately, prayer in Judaism is an act in the messianic drama. We utter the words of the *Kaddish*: *Magnified and sanctified be His great name in the world which He has created according to His will.* Our hope is to enact, to make real the magnification and sanctification of this name here and now.

A great mystery has become a reality in our own days, as God's response to a people's prayer. After nearly two thousand years the city of David, the city of Jerusalem, is now restored to the people of Israel. This marvellous event proclaims a call for the renewal of worship, for the re-

vival of prayer. We did not enter the city of Jerusalem on our own in 1967. Streams of endless craving, endless praying, clinging, dreaming, day and night, midnights, years, decades, centuries, millenia, streams of tears, pledging, waiting—from all over the world, from all corners of the earth, carried us of this generation to the Wall, to the city of Jerusalem.

prayer is living

PRAYER MUST NOT BE DISSONANT with the rest of living. The mercifulness, gentleness, which pervades us in moments of prayer is but a ruse or a bluff, if it is inconsistent with the way we live at other moments. The divorce of liturgy and living, of prayer and practice, is more than a scandal; it is a disaster. A word uttered in prayer is a promise, an earnest, a commitment. If the promise is not kept, we are guilty of violating a promise. A liturgical revival cannot come about in isolation. Worship is the quintessence of living. Perversion or suppression of the sensibilities that constitute being human will convert worship into a farce. What is handicapping prayer is not the antiquity of the Psalms but our own crudity and spiritual immaturity.

The hour calls for a revision of fundamental religious concerns. The wall of separation between the sacred and the secular has become a wall of separation between the conscience and God. In the Pentateuch, the relation of man to things of space, to money, to property is a fundamental religious problem. In the affluent society sins committed with money may be as grievous as sins committed with our tongue. We will give account for what we have done, for what we have failed to do.

Religion as an establishment must remain separated from the government. Yet prayer as a voice of mercy, as a cry for justice, as a plea for gentleness, must not be kept apart. Let the spirit of prayer dominate the world. Let the spirit of prayer interfere in the affairs of man. Prayer is private, a service of the heart; but let concern and compassion, born out of prayer, dominate public life.

Prayer is a confrontation with Him who demands justice and compassion, with Him who despises flattery and abhors iniquity. Prayer calls for self-reflection, for contrition and repentance, examining and readjusting deeds and motivations, for recanting the ugly compulsions we follow, the tyranny of acquisitiveness, hatred, envy, resentment. We face not only things—continents, oceans, planets. We also face a claim, an expectation.

God reaches us as a claim. Religious responsibility is responsiveness to the claim. He brought us into being; He brought us out of slavery. And He demands.

Heaven and earth were known to all men. Israel was given a third

reality, the reality of the claim of the word of God. The task of the Jew is a life in which the word becomes deed. A sacred deed is where heaven and earth meet.

We have no triumphs to report except the slow, painstaking effort to redeem single moments in the lives of single men, in the lives of small communities. We do not come on the clouds of heaven but grope through the mists of history.

There is a pressing urgency to the work of justice and compassion. As long as there is a shred of hatred in a human heart, as long as there is a vacuum without compassion anywhere in the world, there is an emergency.

Why do people rage? People rage and hurt and do not know how to regret, how to repent. The problem is not that people have doubts, but rather that people may not even care to doubt. The charity we may do is terribly diminutive compared with what is required. You and I have prayed, have craved to be able to make gentleness a certainty, and have so often failed. But there are in the world so many eyes streaming with tears, hearts dumb with fears, that to be discouraged would be treason.

pray to be shocked

THE PREDICAMENT OF PRAYER is twofold: Not only do we not know how to pray; we do not know what to pray for.

We have lost the ability to be shocked.

The malignity of our situation is increasing rapidly, the magnitude of evil is spreading furiously, surpassing our ability to be shocked. The human soul is too limited to experience dismay in proportion to what has happened in Auschwitz, in Hiroshima.

We do not know what to pray for. Should we not pray for the ability to be shocked at atrocities committed by man, for the capacity to be dismayed at our inability to be dismayed?

Prayer should be an act of catharsis, of purgation of emotions, as well as a process of self-clarification, of examining priorities, of elucidating responsibility. Prayer not verified by conduct is an act of desecration and blasphemy. Do not take a word of prayer in vain. Our deeds must not be a refutation of our prayers.

It is with shame and anguish that I recall that it was possible for a Roman Catholic church adjoining the extermination camp in Auschwitz to offer communion to the officers of the camp, to people who day after day drove thousands of people to be killed in the gas-chambers.

Let there be an end to the separation of church and God, of sacrament and callousness, of religion and justice, of prayer and compassion.

A home is more than an exclusive habitat, mine and never yours. A residence devoid of hospitality is a den or a hole, not a home. Prayer must never be a citadel for selfish concerns, but rather a place for deepening concern over other people's plight. Prayer is a privilege. Unless we learn how to be worthy, we forfeit the right and ability to pray.

Prayer is meaningless unless it is subversive, unless it seeks to overthrow and to ruin the pyramids of callousness, hatred, opportunism, falsehoods. The liturgical movement must become a revolutionary movement, seeking to overthrow the forces that continue to destroy the promise, the hope, the vision.

The world is aflame with evil and atrocity; the scandal of perpetual desecration of the world cries to high heaven. And we, coming face to face with it, are either involved as callous participants or, at best, remain indifferent onlookers. The relentless pursuit of our interests makes us oblivious of reality itself. Nothing we experience has value in itself; nothing counts unless it can be turned to our advantage, into a means for serving our self-interests.

We pray because the disproportion of human misery and human compassion is so enormous. We pray because our grasp of the depth of suffering is comparable to the scope of perception of a butterfly flying over the Grand Canyon. We pray because of the experience of the dreadful incompatibility of how we live and what we sense.

Dark is the world to me, for all its cities and stars. If not for my faith that God in His silence still listens to a cry, who could stand such agony?

Prayer will not come about by default. It requires education, training, reflection, contemplation. It is not enough to join others; it is necessary to build a sanctuary within, brick by brick, instants of meditation, moments of devotion. This is particularly true in an age when overwhelming forces seem to conspire at destroying our ability to pray.

prayer is praise

THE BEGINNING OF PRAYER is praise. The power of worship is song. First we sing, then we understand. First we praise, then we believe. Praise and song open eyes to the grandeur of reality that transcends the self. Song restores the soul; praise repairs spiritual deficiency.

To praise is to make Him present to our minds, to our hearts, to vivify the understanding that beyond all questions, protests, and pain at God's dreadful silence, is His mercy and humility. We are stunned when we try to think of His essence; we are exalted when intuiting His presence.

While it is true that being human is verified in relations between

man and man, depth and authenticity of existence are disclosed in moments of worship.

Worship is more than paying homage. To worship is to join the cosmos in praising God. The whole cosmos, every living being sings, the Psalmists insist. Neither joy nor sorrow but song is the ground-plan of being. It is the quintessence of life. To praise is to call forth the promise and presence of the divine. We live for the sake of a song. We praise for the privilege of being. Worship is the climax of living. There is no knowledge without love, no truth without praise. At the beginning was the song, and praise is man's response to the never-ending beginning.

The alternative to praise is disenchantment, dismay.

Society today is no longer in revolt against particular laws which it finds alien, unjust, and imposed, but against law as such, against the principle of law. And yet, we must not regard this revolt as entirely negative. The energy that rejects many obsolete laws is an entirely positive impulse for renewal of life and law.

"Choose life!" is the great legacy of the Hebrew Bible, and the cult of life is affirmed in contemporary theology. However, life is not a thing, static and final. Life means living, and in living you have to choose a road, direction, goals. Pragmatists who believe that life itself can provide us with the criteria for truth overlook the fact that forces of suicide and destruction are also inherent in life.

The essence of living as a human being is being challenged, being tempted, being called. We pray for wisdom, for laws of knowing how to respond to our being challenged. Living is not enough by itself. Just to be is a blessing. Just to live is holy. And yet, being alive is no answer to the problems of living. To be or not to be is *not* the question. The vital question is: how to be and how not to be?

The tendency to forget this vital question is the tragic disease of contemporary man, a disease that may prove fatal, that may end in disaster. To pray is to recollect *passionately* the perpetual urgency of this vital question.

the uphill struggle

ONE OF THE RESULTS of the rapid depersonalization of our age is a crisis of speech, profanation of language. We have trifled with the name of God, we have taken the name and the word of the Holy in vain. Language has been reduced to labels, talk has become double-talk. We are in the process of losing faith in the reality of words.

Yet prayer can only happen when words reverberate with power and inner life, when uttered as an earnest, as a promise. On the other hand,

there is a high degree of obsolescence in the traditional language of the theology of prayer. Renewal of prayer calls for renewal of language, of cleansing the words, of revival of meanings.

The strength of faith is in silence, and in words that hibernate and wait. Uttered faith must come out as surplus of silence, as the fruit of lived faith, of enduring intimacy.

Theological education must deepen privacy, strive for daily renewal of innerness, cultivate ingredients of religious existence, *reverence* and *responsibility*.

We live in an age of self-dissipation, of depersonalization. Should we adjust our vision of existence to our paucity, make a virtue of obtuseness, glorify evasion?

My own sense of the reality of food depends upon my being hungry, upon my own craving for food. Had I grown up on intravenous food injections, apples and beans would be as relevant to me as pebbles and garbage.

Do we know how to thirst for God? Do we know what it means to starve?

O God, thou art my God, I seek Thee,
my soul thirsts for Thee;
my flesh faints for Thee,
as in a dry and weary land where no water is.
So I have looked upon Thee in the sanctuary,
beholding Thy power and glory.
Because Thy steadfast love is better than life,
my lips will praise Thee.
So I will bless Thee as long as I live;
I will lift up my hands and call on Thy name.

Psalms 63:2–4

As a hart longs for flowing streams,
so longs my soul for Thee, O God.
My soul thirsts for God,
for the living God.
When shall I come and behold the face of God?
My tears have been my food day and night,
while men say to me continually,
"Where is your God?"

Psalms 42:2–4

Religion is critique of all satisfaction. Its end is joy, but its beginning is discontent, detesting boasts, smashing idols. It began in Ur Kasdim, in

the seat of a magnificent civilization. Yet Abraham said, "No," breaking the idols, breaking away. And so everyone of us must begin saying "No" to all visible, definable entities pretending to be triumphant, ultimate. The ultimate is a challenge, not an assertion. Dogmas are illusions, not descriptions.

Standing before Mt. Sinai, Israel was told: "Take heed that you do not go up to the mountain and touch the border of it." Take heed that you do not go up to the mountain and only touch the border. Go to the peak! Once you start going, proceed to the very end. Don't stop in the middle of the road.

This is the predicament of man. All souls descend a ladder from Heaven to this world. Then the ladders are taken away. Once they are in this world, they are called upon from Heaven to rise, to come back. It is a call that goes out again and again. Each soul seeks the ladder in order to ascend above; but the ladder cannot be found. Most people make no effort to ascend, claiming, how can one rise to heaven without a ladder? However, there are souls which resolve to leap upwards, without a ladder. So they jump and fall down. They jump and fall down, until they stop.

Wise people think that since no ladder exists, there must be another way. We must face the challenge and act. Be what it may, one must leap until God, in His mercy, makes exultation come about.

What do we claim? That religious commitment is not just an ingredient of the social order, an adjunct or reinforcement of existence, but rather the heart and core of being human; its exaltation, its verification being manifest in the social order, in daily deeds.

We begin with a sense of wonder and arrive at radical amazement. The first response is reverence and awe, openness to the mystery that surrounds us. We are led to be overwhelmed by the awareness of eternity in daily living.

Religious existence is living in solidarity with God. Yet to maintain such solidarity involves knowing how to rise, how to cross an abyss. Vested interests are more numerous than locusts, and of solidarity of character there is only a smattering. Too much devotion is really too little. It is grave self-deception to assume that our destiny is just to be human. In order to be human, one must be more than human. A person must never stand still. He must always rise, he must always climb. Be stronger than you are.

Well-trodden ways lead into swamps. There are no easy ways, there are no simple solutions. What comes easy is not worth a straw. It is a tragic error to assume that the world is flat, that our direction is horizontal.

The way is always vertical. It is either up or down; we either climb or fall. Religious existence means struggle uphill.

shattering the silence

LIFE IS A DRAMA, and religion has become routine. The soul calls for exaltation, and religion offers repetition. Honesty, veracity does not come about by itself. Freshness, depth has to be acquired. One must work on it constantly.

To be moderate in the face of God would be a profanation. The goal is not an accommodation but a transformation. A mediocre response to immensity, to eternity, is offensive.

The tragedy of our time is that we have moved out of the dimension of the holy, that we have abandoned the intimacy in which relationship to God can be patiently, honestly, persistently nourished. Intimate inner life is forsaken. Yet the soul can never remain a vacuum. It is either a vessel for grace or it is occupied by demons.

At first men sought mutual understanding by taking counsel with one another, but now we understand one another less and less. There is a gap between the generations. It will soon widen to be an abyss. The only bridge is to pray together, to consult God before seeking counsel with one another. Prayer brings down the walls which we have erected between man and man, between man and God.

For centuries Jerusalem lay in ruins; of the ancient glory of King David and Solomon only a Wall remained, a stone Wall left standing after the Temple was destroyed by the Romans. For centuries Jews would go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in order to pour out their hearts at the Wailing Wall.

A wall stands between man and God, and at the wall we must pray, searching for a cleft, for a crevice, through which our words can enter and reach God behind the wall. In prayer we must often knock our heads against the stone wall. But God's silence does not go on forever. While man is busy setting up screens, thickening the wall, prayer may also succeed in penetrating the wall.

The tragedy is that many of us do not even know how to find the way leading to the wall. We of this generation are afflicted with a severe case of dulling or loss of vision. Is it the result of our own intoxication, or is it the result of God's deliberate concealment of visible lights?

The spiritual memory of many people is empty, words are diluted, incentives are drained, inspiration is exhausted. Is God to be blamed for all this? Is it not man who has driven Him out of our hearts and minds? Has not our system of religious education been an abysmal failure?

The spiritual blackout is increasing daily. Opportunism prevails, callousness expands, the sense of the holy is melting away. We no longer know how to resist the vulgar, how to say no in the name of a higher yes. Our roots are in a state of decay. We have lost the sense of the holy.

This is an age of spiritual blackout, a blackout of God. We have entered not only the dark night of the soul, but also the dark night of society. We must seek out ways of preserving the strong and deep truth of a living God theology in the midst of the blackout.

For the darkness is neither final nor complete. Our power is first in waiting for the end of darkness, for the defeat of evil; and our power is also in coming upon single sparks and occasional rays, upon moments full of God's grace and radiance.

We are called to bring together the sparks to preserve single moments of radiance and keep them alive in our lives, to defy absurdity and despair, and to wait for God to say again: Let there be light.

And there will be light.

8/11/83

THE JEWISH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF AMERICA
3080 BROADWAY • NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10027
212 RIVERSIDE 9-8000

July 30, 1982

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum
National Director
Interreligious Affairs
The American Jewish Committee
165 East 56 Street
New York, NY 10022

My dear Marc:

Many belated thanks for your letter of July 15, 1982. I am deeply gratified that you will participate in our Heschel Symposium and I am certain that your lecture on Prof. Heschel's role in Vatican Council II and in Jewish-Christian relations generally will be a significant contribution to the program.

As we discussed in our telephone conversation of July 20, 1982, the date of the Heschel commemoration has now been set for Monday, February 21, 1983, and I am very grateful to you for making room on your very busy engagement schedule to reserve this day for the lecture.

As suggested by you I shall contact you at the end of the summer to arrange for a meeting where we can discuss details of your presentation. With warmest good wishes for a pleasant summer (or whatever remains of it), I am,

Sincerely yours,

Fritz

Fritz A. Rothschild
Co-ordinator,
Heschel Symposium

FR/jh

Rothschild 7/M/63
Heschel Symposium

July 15, 1982

Prof. Fritz A. Rothschild
Co-ordinator, Heschel Symposium
The Jewish Theological Seminary of America
3080 Broadway
New York, New York 10027,

My dear Fritz,

I have been away in Egypt and Israel for the past month and therefore have not been able to respond to your thoughtful letter of June 17th before now.

I will be honored to accept your invitation to deliver the lecture on the role of Professor Heschel in Vatican Council II and in Jewish-Christian Relations generally.

Let's get together as soon as you're free and talk through what you want me to do.

With warmest personal good wishes, I am,

Cordially yours,

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum
National Director
Interreligious Affairs

MHT:RP

Copy to
Rabbi S. Dresner
Chai

July 15, 1982

Prof. Fritz A. Rothschild
Co-ordinator, Heschel Symposium
The Jewish Theological Seminary of America
3080 Broadway
New York, New York 10027,

My dear Fritz,

I have been away in Egypt and Israel for the past month and therefore have not been able to respond to your thoughtful letter of June 17th before now.

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With warmest personal good wishes, I am,

Cordially yours,

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum
National Director
Interreligious Affairs

MHT:RP

b/c S. Dresner

THE JEWISH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF AMERICA
3080 BROADWAY • NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10027
212 RIVERSIDE 9-8000

17 June 1982

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum
Inter-Religious Affairs Department
The American Jewish Committee
165 East 56th Street
New York, New York 10022

Dear Marc:

To commemorate the tenth anniversary of Professor Heschel's death The Jewish Theological Seminary is planning a Heschel Symposium in which we hope to present various aspects of his enduring thought and influence. We have set aside the opening day of our Spring term, January 19, 1983 on which classes will be cancelled and four speakers will present lectures directed at students and faculty of our Seminary as well as the wider academic and religious community of the New York metropolitan region.

As the person who is uniquely qualified to instruct us on Heschel's contribution to the Jewish-Christian dialogue and especially his rôle at the Vatican Council, we are asking you to accept our invitation to be our speaker on this important aspect of Abraham Heschel's thought. I hope you will be able to accept this invitation and thus to help make this Tenth Yahrzeit Symposium, an important and worthy event in American Jewish life.

There will be a modest honorarium, and if you can give us a positive reply I shall contact you to consult you about the precise title and format of your lecture.

Wishing you a pleasant summer,

Sincerely yours,

Fritz

Fritz A. Rothschild
Co-ordinator, Heschel Symposium

FAR:lmf

FLEISCHNER
to Heschel Ann + Fair

December 14,11982

Dr. Eva Fleischner
Montclair State College
Upper Montclair, NJ 07043

Dear Eva,

It was lovely to hear from you. I too wish we could find some way to spend time together. Perhaps after the New Year we can arrange to have luncheon together.

Regarding background on Abraham Heschel:

As it turns out, I have been invited to deliver a paper on Rabbi Heschel, Vatican Council II, and Jewish Christian Relations at a symposium to be held at the Jewish Theological Seminary on February 21st.

As you may know, I involved Rabbi Heschel in our work in preparing memoranda for Cardinal Bea as well as for participation in several meetings with Pope Paul VI and Cardinal Bea. As a result, we do have a number of background materials relating to those experiences. I had planned to use some of that material for my own paper. As I get into our files, I will be glad to make copies of it available to you.

In the meantime you may find the enclosed papers prepared by my assistant, Juday Banki, on Vatican Council II of some usefulness. These appeared in the American Jewish Year Book.

I do not know as yet how much time you will need in advance of the May meeting to read this material. I will try to get it to you as early as I can after the New Year,

With warmest personal good wishes, I am,

Cordially, as ever,

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum
National Director
Interreligious Affairs

MHT:RPR

Enclosures

MICH CATH
NL

on tape

Montclair State College
UPPER MONTCLAIR NJ 07043

December 8, 1982

Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum
American Jewish Committee
165 E. 56th St.
New York, N. Y.
10022

Dear Marc,

I am writing to ask a favor of you:

I have been invited to give a paper on Abraham Heschel as Ecumenist, at a Symposium to be held next May in Minnesota. It seems to me that Heschel's presence at Vatican II would be of major impottance in this regard. And I am wondering whether you might have in your files anything that has not been published elsewhere, or is hard to come by. If you do have such material, would you be willing to let me see it? I would be glad to pay whatever costs might be involved in making copies, etc.; or, if you prefer, could simply borrow it and then return the papers to you.

I shall be grateful indeed for any help you might be able to give me out of your wide experience - both with Heschel and the Roman scene. Since the holidays are almost upon us, your response will reach me more quickly at my home address:

180 Walnut St.
Montclair, N. J.
07042 (201) 783-6041

I am sorry we have not seen each other in such a long time. Now that I am back home, after an absence of more than two years, I hope our paths will cross again.

Warm wishes, and thanks, in advance -

Yours sincerely,

Eva Fleischner

Eva Fleischner