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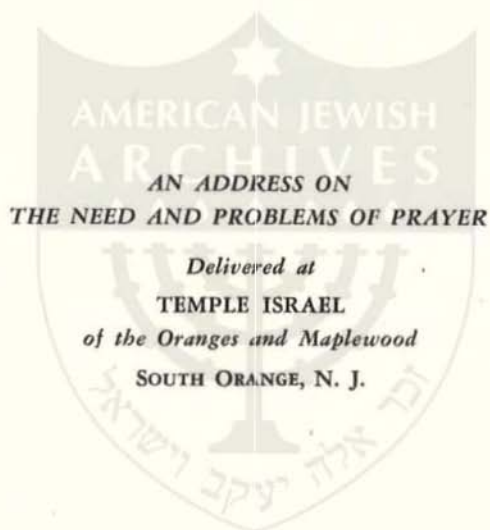
PRAYER

AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES



Dr. Henry Slonimsky

Herbert Friedman
with all my love
H.J.



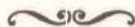


AMERICAN JEWISH

Dedicated to the Memory of

HOWARD KASS

*By the Congregation
of Temple Israel*



Our sages said: "Know what is above you," and this is how the rabbi of Apt expounded these words:

" 'Know that what is above, is from you.' And what is it that is above you? Ezekiel tells us: '*And upon the likeness of the throne was a likeness as the appearance of a man upon it above.*' How can this be said with reference to God? Is it not written: '*To whom then will ye liken Me, that I should resemble him?*'"

But the truth of the matter is that it is we who make '*a likeness as the appearance of a man.*' It is the likeness we shape when we serve with devout hearts. With such a heart we shape a human likeness for our Creator . . . When a man is merciful and renders loving help he assists in shaping God's right hand. And when a man fights the battle of God and crushes Evil he assists in shaping God's left hand.

He who is above the throne:- it is you who have made him."



PREFACE

To hear Dr. Henry Slonimsky is to know the truth of the Jewish tradition which, while exalting the power of the written word, insists that the deepest truths may be imparted only directly from "mouth to ear". It is in the great tradition of "Torah She'b'al Peh", the oral teaching, that Dr. Slonimsky has, in the main, expressed his genius. But his words should be in print, for he is one of the great religious teachers of our generation, and his ideas and his gift for vivid communication should not be confined to those who have been privileged to hear the full resonance of his spoken word. That is the purpose of this booklet, -- to share with others the provocative and profound words on prayer we heard from him one evening in 1953 at Temple Israel in South Orange.

The following words, his own, best set the mood for an understanding of the address which is reproduced on these pages:

"I regard religion as mankind's supreme and most important concern, but I think the word "God", as currently employed, about the emptiest, hollowest and most repetitious word in the language. Saying you believe in God is about the most gratuitous utterance one can make. Belief in God is an inference from one's action and life; if we show love and depth we are rooted in the Divine, whatever we say. We can even say we are freethinkers and atheists (like Shelley and Debs) and still be rooted in God. Or we can invoke God until we are blue in the face, but if we go off in our actual life on a totally different basis, what good is the assertion?

Also, the word "God" can be terribly ambiguous even when well-meant. 'The Heavens declare the glory of God', the

psalmist tells us, but what kind of God is that? The starry universe does fill us with immense wonder and awe; but why necessarily a God? Why not grand cosmic emotion of a vague pantheistic kind? And even if the Heaven did prove a God, what good is such a God to us? We need the God of the prayerbook, the God who upholdeth the fallen, healeth the sick, and looseth the bound. When did God ever do that? It is such considerations as these which make deepest belief and profoundest skepticism represent the two poles between which the true man shuttles, whether he be great like Pascal or Dostoyevsky, or merely sincere and honest. And our Jewish destiny above all is calculated to inspire such a polarity or ambivalence: why the most chosen and beloved should suffer most? . . ."

Some will say that the ideas expressed in the following address are not "really Jewish", by which they mean that they do not always conform with customary Jewish doctrines and answers. Perhaps Henry Slonimsky is, as he himself says, "the last of the Manicheans", and his belief in a "God that struggles" and gains strength through the efforts of man does dissent from classic Jewish religious thought. Yet there is something about this dissent, or even if you will, "heresy", which is more Jewish and traditional than all the innocuous "Amen's" uttered by those indifferent to the difficulties of believing because they hardly believe.

I am grateful to the generous individual who, although he wishes to remain anonymous, has made it possible to put into permanent form these words of a great teacher who is eager to shake and loosen our minds from the pat formulations which too often hide the great difficulties as well as the great need for a thinking faith in the One God of Israel.

RABBI HERBERT WEINER

PRAYER

DR. HENRY SLONIMSKY

Prayer is the expression of man's needs and aspirations, addressed to a great source of help -- to the Friend whom we suppose to exist behind the phenomena, the Friend who is concerned for man's needs and for his high aspirations, and is resolved to help.

What are those needs? First and foremost health and food and life itself, without which there is nothing; then, on a higher plane, the need for forgiveness of sin and wrongdoing; and finally the need that all the great and good causes of the human heart shall be brought to victory, that the poor and oppressed shall be comforted, and wrong righted, and justice done and goodness prevail.

And these prayers are addressed to a God who is accessible to prayer, not just a Power but a Power who is a שומע תפילה one who listens to prayers. A "First Cause" (the philosopher's God) is not enough, and cosmic emotion evoked by the grandeur of the universe (the poet's God) is likewise not enough. In religion we need a God who values what the good man values (*); i.e. a God who besides being the "King of the Universe", the great God of nature, is also "a Power making for righteousness", (Matthew Arnold) - one "who

(*) - "A First Cause is not enough" from Montague "Belief Unbound" P. 6-7. "Religion is not merely a belief in an ultimate reality or in an ultimate ideal. These beliefs are worse than false; they are platitudes, truisms, that nobody will dispute. Religion is a momentous possibility, the possibility namely that what is highest in spirit is also deepest in nature -- that there is something at the heart of nature, something akin to us, a conserver and increaser of values . . . that the things that matter most are not at the mercy of the things that matter least."

comes to judge the earth, to judge the world with righteousness" (in the Psalms for Friday evening, Ps. 96:13 and 98:9, to be found in the Traditional Prayer book; Singer P. 109-110.) *And because God is concerned for the values which the good man values, He is open to the good man's prayers and appeal for help.*

And so in the great daily recital of petition and prayer, the Shmoneh Esreh (the Eighteen Benedictions), which is a staple of our Prayer Book, the Jew specifically includes this aspect of God. "Hear our voice O Lord our God . . . and accept our prayer in mercy and favor, for Thou art a God who hearkenest unto prayer and supplications . . . Blessed art Thou O Lord *who hearkenest unto prayer*" (Singer P. 49-50).

And in the same spirit this God is conceived as supporting the fallen, healing the sick, freeing the prisoners (Singer P. 45, 30; Ps 145, 146); as bringing justice to those who are robbed, as giving bread to the hungry, as opening the eyes of the blind, as loving the righteous (Singer P. 30).

These are the demands of the human heart: how tragically inadequate the response! But, mark you: despite repeated and recurrent and constant failures to receive adequate reply to these cries for help, man is so convinced of their utter rightness, of the imperiousness of these claims which he makes upon the universe and therefore upon the God whom he imputes to that universe as its heart, that he will not take no for an answer. No failure can discourage or refute him. That is, prayer issues from depths which our philosophy dreams not of, and cannot plumb, and therefore cannot invalidate. The things man prays for, his life, his ideals of justice and goodness, are felt to be so supremely important that the very stars in their courses are expected to fight for their realization and preservation.

Here then we are clearly in the presence of one of those aboriginal and basic acts of the human soul which must give us pause. Prayer is what Goethe would call an *Urphaenomen*, an aboriginal and basic event rooted in the very character of the human spirit, a kind of archetype of the human mind.

And hence it is that the prayerbooks of people are their most significant books, certainly their most characteristic books; and wherever they are authentic and sincere, deriving from deep enough and earnest enough moods (as is the case with the great classic prayer-liturgies), they are also the most important and most indispensable of their books.

And so I regard our old Jewish "Siddur" as the most important single Jewish book, a more personal expression, a closer record, of Jewish sufferings, Jewish needs, Jewish hopes and aspirations, than the Bible itself; which for one thing is too grand and universal to be exclusively Jewish (as Shakespeare is not the typical Englishman), and for another, whatever is quintessentially needed for daily use has been squeezed out of it into the prayerbook and so made our daily own. And if you want to know what Judaism is -- the question which has no answer if debated on the plane of intellectual argument -- you can find out by absorbing that book. The Jewish soul is mirrored there as nowhere else, mirrored or rather embodied there; the *individual's* soul in his private sorrows, and the *people's* soul in its historic burdens, its heroic passion and suffering, its unfaltering faith, through the ages.

A while back I spoke of unanswered prayers, and that the failure to receive an answer does not wither the urge to pray in mankind, nor dry up the deep source or well-spring from which prayers surge up.

Nevertheless, in spite of this unfailing well-spring, we

must raise the question of the validity of prayer, and pass in review the strongest that can be said against it. If prayer, if religion which stands and falls with prayer, cannot withstand the utmost that can be urged against them, they are not worth having.

Leaving out the many who are merely indifferent, or who touch prayer and religion only at the merest tangent or thinnest surface, there are those who reject prayer with deliberate intent and express reasoning. There are those who do not need to pray; or who disdain to pray; or who regard prayer as a pathetic human fallacy, a childlike anthropomorphism in a world of iron necessities, an attempt to impose human values on a universe which is alien to them and which has no concern or regard for man's needs.

There are some who really don't need to pray: the few lonely and strong, the rare souls who are sufficient unto themselves, gods in their own right, of whom the poet Henley speaks:

"In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced or cried aloud,
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody but unbowed.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishment the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul."

But however we may exclaim in admiration of the heroism of the man, it is a lonely cry and an unhopeful, a hopeless cry; it is at bottom a counsel of despair, heroic but enveloped in gloom; above all it can never become a philosophy for mankind because it is so utterly individualistic and self-centered, -- it leaves out of account altogether and

says nothing of the great hopes and dreams of *mankind*, for which co-operative effort, and faith in the future, are a prime essential, co-operative effort between men, and between man and God.

Another mood of refusal to pray to a god is embodied in the great Greek myth of Prometheus. Prometheus is the Titan who stole fire from heaven and proposes to make men independent of the envious gods. Zeus chains him to a rock in the Caucasus and has a vulture or eagle eat out his heart or liver every day anew as it grows again, until he is delivered by another Titan and hero called Herakles.

The greatness of the myth is to indicate the grandeur of man. The weakness of the myth is to regard God as envious. Man is grand but not self-sufficient. He has to do the actual work, but he is rooted in a background which feeds and nourishes him, and which is not envious but on the contrary is the divine support and soil and source of his strength.

A third and the most ominous type of refusal to address ourselves to "a Friend behind the Phenomena", to a "Power-not ourselves making for righteousness", is the scientific viewpoint if carried out to the extreme that the whole universe is a system of rigid necessity: -- that the world cannot be cajoled or *changed* -- that things have to be as they are; and that it is therefore a childish fantasy to think we can budge or refashion them.

The name which best sums up this viewpoint of rigid necessity is a Jewish name: Spinoza.

As against this necessitarian viewpoint and at the opposite pole, prayer is the expression of the religious view, of the religious outlook, that the world is not a rigid system of ironclad and heartless necessity fixed to all eternity, but with an open future which we can help make or mar, and above all proceeding with a purpose and towards a goal no

matter how falteringly or dimly, and which it is our task to help achieve: -- that it is not devoid of direction, or of concern for values such as men cherish, -- justice, goodness, love, -- but on the contrary finds its whole meaning and aboriginal intention in the emergence and flowering of these ultimate goals.

"Last in production but first in thought, first in intention" תחילה במחשבה מעשה סוף this expression used by the poet of the Lechah Dodi concerning the Sabbath (Singer P. 112), is also a good expression of the religious outlook generally. Jeremiah and Bach, the life of love and beauty, are the last to appear in the cosmic scheme, but the first in intention; when the starry nebulae first began to shape themselves into solar systems, it was in order eventually to culminate in man and his advance. And Bergson's Elan Vital, the creative urge which strives towards ever and ever greater perfection, is more Jewish and more religious than the fixed and finished and unchangeable necessity of Spinoza.

Who can prove these things? Who can decide the rightness of the religious viewpoint? There is enough design in the universe to make atheism look silly: there is enough heartlessness in the universe to make religion Heartbreak House.

But if your heart does not already urge you, urge you so strongly that no frustration can refute it, so that with the Hebrew religious seer you can utter the most heroic and the most religious of all words "though He slay me yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:15) -- no mere intellectual demonstration would have the slightest avail.

It is the deepest intuition of the best of the race at all times and among all peoples: an intuition, an anticipation, an act of faith: the faith that what our heart wants the universe also wants and God wants.

I give as an example of that intuition the culminating cry at the end of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, where the human voices suddenly emerge above the instruments. That cry expresses this jubilant and triumphant assurance: Be embraced ye millions (seid umschlungen Millionen), take this kiss for the whole world (diesen Kuss der ganzen Welt), above the stars a loving father must be present (Brueder, uberm Sternenzelt muss ein lieber Vater wohnen). Musician and poet (Beethoven and Schiller) unite in this religious act of faith.

And if it be not true in the sense of literal empirical verification here and now around us, -- if this deepest hunch, this hunch without which life seems shabby and worthless, is merely a hunch, we have got to be good sports and take a chance on it. Or rather, if it is not fully true we have got to try and make it true. *Maybe that is the secret.*

If it is not true maybe it is not yet true and waiting to be made fully true. Maybe it is our task as human beings to be helpers and co-creators with a God who is still in process of gradual realization, who needs our strength to carry out his designs as we need his strength to hearten us. *Maybe God and perfection are at the end and not at the beginning.* Maybe it is a growing world and a growing mankind and a growing God, and perfection is to be achieved, and not something to start with.

Our own prophets and prayerbook seem to have had an inkling of this fact. At culminating points in our liturgy we say in a phrase borrowed from one of the last of the prophets (Zechariah 14:9): On that day He shall be one and His name shall be one. On *that* day, not as yet alas, but surely on that day He shall be one *as He is not yet one*. For how can God be called one i.e. real, if mankind is rent asunder in misery and poverty and hate and war? When man-

kind has achieved its own reality and unity, it will thereby have achieved God's reality and unity. Till then God is merely an idea, an ideal: the world's history consists in making that ideal real. In simple religious earnestness it can be said that God does not exist. Till now He merely subsists in the vision of a few great men's hearts, *and exists only in part, and is slowly being translated into reality.*

II

And that is our answer: the world is in the making: and man is a protagonist in that great drama: and prayer, which is the communion of the soul with the great reservoir of power, is an irreplaceable element in human life and advance.

But let us not make things too easy for ourselves. Why is it that not all prayers are answered? And why can't all people pray, but have to use other people's prayers printed in books? And why should we have to pray at all, since God presumably must know what we want and therefore should not need to be reminded?

These are tragic questions, and all of them are involved and inevitable in a world constituted like ours, where the spiritual power is only part of the universe; a world which is in process of growth, a world which is struggling from lower to higher planes, from the unperfected to the more and more perfected.

We can't all pray from our own creative resources because we are not all of us religious geniuses, and prayer and religion are as truly a form of genius, a gift from God, as poetry or music or any high endowment.

We can't all write Shakespeare's poetry or Bach's music

but we can still make it our own: we can open our hearts to it, and enrich and expand ourselves by sharing and appropriating it.

And so in prayer we must turn to the great religious geniuses, the Isaiahs and Jeremiahs and Psalmists, and make our own the visions they have seen, the communion they have established, the messages they have brought back, the words they have spoken as having been spoken for us because truly spoken for all men. And by an act of sympathetic fervor, of loving contagion, to achieve their glow, and to fan the spark which is present in all of us at the fire which they have lighted.

This does not mean that all the deepest prayers and all the best poetry and all the highest music have all already been written, and that there is an end to inspiration. The future is open, there is no limitation on the wonder of insight and creation. But we each of us in our time and place have to husband the resources available and to warm our hands at the fires already lighted.

So much for one question. Another graver question is why most prayers seem to go unheeded and unanswered. The answer to that is that this is not true. True prayers never go unanswered. But what is true prayer? We shall see later that it is a prayer which God himself puts into our hearts to give back to him enriched by our fervor, our power. That is true of all inspiration and so of religious communion with the Godhead. And the answer to such true prayer is always a gift of power, a gift from the great reservoir of power.

And if in the supremely tragic case in which it happens that man prays, and God gives, and still both together go down in apparent defeat, that defeat is inevitable in a world slowly growing, and where the forces of darkness, of blindness, of opaqueness, indifference or even malice, against which

God and man are together leagued and arrayed, are still in the ascendant. Moreover that defeat itself is a spiritual victory, because it is a heroic effort, which pushes back the domain of darkness and suffuses with light and spirit the opaqueness and indifference of the lower order, and adds stature to God and man. That heroic effort on the part of man aided by God is the supreme act of spiritual creation, the creation of a new order of being.

And finally the smart question why we should have to pray at all to a God who should know us and who therefore should supply our wants without our troubling him.

Our theory of the correlation of God and Man, whereby they mutually re-enforce each other in a mystic life-giving circle, growing together through each other's gift and enrichment, holds for religion as for all the major creative efforts of man: - for music and poetry and the arts of beauty, as for the visions of justice and government and character and love. God is the source of inspiration, but man must do the work and give it back to Him enriched -- fashioned, articulated, built. "In thy light we see light" is the simple literal truth: inspiration is from God. But it is we who must weave that light into a fabric and utterance. God hands a chalice to mankind which mankind must hand back to him at the end of days, foaming with its own inner saps and juices, its own sweat and blood and wine, its own infinite experience. Not the alternative of Christian theology, God's grace or man's works, but the two together is the subtle and profound position of Jewish religious thinking. Thus Akiba, the greatest of the rabbis, tells us at the end of the Mishna Tractate on Yom Kippur, as the consummating thought of that Tractate: "happy are you O Israel: before whom do you cleanse yourselves, and who cleanses you? Your father which is in heaven." Not man alone, not God alone, but the two

together, confronting a world which is mere material for being made divine.

And the same profound idea is embodied in the death of Akiba as contrasted with the death of Jesus. Both seem to be forsaken by God, by the God for whom they have given their lives. But Jesus cries out in his despair the agonizing words of the Psalmist "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me" (Ps 22:2) -- And that seems to be his final utterance. Whereas Akiba, though likewise forsaken, and left to be flayed alive by the same Roman executioners, and with a similar mood of despair echoing in his ears from his disciples who stand around him and who ask "Can this be the reward for the saint and hero?" nevertheless rises to supreme heroism, and in a world in which God seems to be woefully lacking he proclaims his belief and his companionship with God. "Hear O Israel the Lord our God the Lord is One" are his last words as he breathes out his great soul. That is true religion: to insist on God in a God-forsaken world, or rather in a world not yet dominated by God, and thus to call Him into being.

As similarly on an earlier plane the pagan hero Prometheus defies the God who will not help, whereas Job though cruelly and unjustly tried, still utters the sublime words "Though he slay me yet will I trust Him". Again the insistence on a God who as yet is sadly wanting, a God who by such faith is made to emerge. Again not God alone, not man alone, but the two together, for man gets his faith subterraneously from the hidden God.

We invoke in conclusion the name of that great Rabbi who seems to us the supreme embodiment of the Jewish type. Akiba quotes and makes his own the concluding words of an utterance which occurs repeatedly in our Rabbinic writings (Yoma 23a, Gittin 36b, Shabbat 88b), and in which

not merely is Jewish religiosity expressed sublimely, but which I regard as the full expression of the mood and attitude of the heroic man as such, the mood and attitude of the tragic hero in a growing world like ours: "Our Rabbis have taught: those who are persecuted and do not persecute in turn, those who listen to contemptuous insults and do not replay, *those who act out of love and are glad of sufferings*, concerning them Scripture says, They that love God are like the sun going forth in his strength." (Jud. 5:31)

To act out of love and to be willing to bear the suffering which the good and true man must inevitably bear in a world like ours, in a world which is only partly divine and which must be won for God through the efforts of man, -- that is the deepest utterance of the rabbis and the culminating idea of Jewish religiosity and of Jewish prayer.



Address of Dr. Henry Slonimsky, Dean
Jewish Institute of Religion
Intercongregational Dinner
Hotel Astor - Sunday Evening, February 9, 1941

Mr. Chairman and Friends:

To all our old boys, those gathered here tonight and those in far-off places, a word of affectionate greeting. There is a tie of love between teachers and pupils which time cannot stale or wither.

To the men and women who have come with them, their friends and our friends, a word of heartiest welcome. We are glad and proud to have you with us in this our great common undertaking.

Friends all, I want to tell you what a splendid school we have. That sounds grandiloquent and boastful but it is not. I have special reasons for telling you the simple truth, without mock modesty and without boasting.

Our school is good because it is free,--free first of all from stale dogmas, from the orthodoxy of orthodoxy or the orthodoxy of reform. We accept life and do not impose old and rigid formulas upon it. Life is fluid, ever changing, ever vivid--and we try to catch some of that quality. That is the way our Founder conceived this school and it is one of his most inspired ideas.

He is not present tonight, and it would be like playing Hamlet with the part of Hamlet left out, if his spirit were not the unseen presence in which we all move and have our being.

As a free school--where teachers are free to teach what courses they think best and in what manner they think best--and where students are not bound by any obligation to conform before they have sampled and tasted the facts--we catch something of the fresh breeze of life,--and we are bound to specialize in the living word rather than in dead erudition--in the kindling relation between teacher and pupil.

A school is not buildings, not dormitories or cafeterias--a school is a teacher and student facing each other in eager interest and affection.

We do not bribe and seduce our men with board and lodging and other creature comforts--we let them taste something of the hardship of life before they go out to speak on the hardship of life--and the immense city itself, with its huge currents of life is the background and sounding board for them as for us.

We are in the midst of the greatest center of Jewish population in the world--our task and possibilities are therefore immense. We try to speak neither for the lunacy fringe of extreme left or extreme right--but for *למנוח* *לבב* the heart of Israel.

As a free school we feel we are predestined to meet the needs and solve the problems of a living and growing Judaism in America.

Our students are glad to attend classes: Who ever heard of such a thing in a theological school?

Our graduates are not enough to supply the call: Who ever heard of such a thing in an age of unemployment?

We have only just begun--our future is incalculable. Stick to us, for the future is with us.

"WHERE JEWS and CHRISTIANS DIFFER"

By Dr. R. Slominsky

Massachusetts State College
(Judah Cahn)
March 16th, 1942

First, what we have in common: - profound as our differences may be in times of peace - (and remember there are many mansions in the House of the Lord) - our common enemy has shown us what we have in common.

Herr Frederick Nietzsche in that great polemic against Christianity which prepared Germany for its present world-campaign against the values of morality (the ideas of good and evil as cherished by the world for 2000 years) always refers to Christianity as Judaism. Jesus for him is but the last and most refined phase of the morality of the Prophets.

Herr Adolf Hitler - on a lower and more vulgar plane - calls everything opposed to Hitlerism - every force or power or social or religious philosophy - indiscriminately Jewish.

An implacable and desperate enemy knows best who are leagued against him in a common cause.

But the Church itself, almost at its inception, in its first formative centuries, has seen to it that the two, Christianity and Judaism, shall be bound together to the end of time.

When in the second Christian century Marcion, the leader of a powerful Gnostic-Manichean sect within Christianity, led a movement to abolish the Old Testament, the Christian Church, in weighty and self-searching deliberations, guided by a profound wisdom (or, in the language of the church, guided by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost), decided definitely and for all time that the Christian Bible shall contain not merely the New Dispensation, the New Testament, but also Isaiah and Jeremiah, Psalms and the Book of Job, Genesis and Deuteronomy.

And the Christian mind has been bred on that larger Bible. It is not merely that certain psalms are imbedded in the Catholic Mass or certain chapters from Job in the Episcopal service for the dead: it is not a mere piece-meal taking out of a bit here and there which I am referring to: - but Psalms and Prophets have entered into the very fabric and texture of Christian thinking and feeling, of the Catholic mind of the Middle Ages and of the Protestant mind of modern times; - and with the exception of the one central and crucial dogma as to the person of Jesus Christ - the dogma of a savior of divine origin who by his sacrificial death of vicarious atonement brings salvation to the world: - with that one great and crucial exception, the moral and spiritual heritage of Christianity and Judaism is essentially one.

That one exception, that one division, is profound and tragic; as it divides, so it ties the two religions together. Judaism is tied to Christianity by the tragedy which took place at the very inception of Christianity, and they will go parallel ways to the end of time in this curious relation of tension and polarity, of being apart and being together, of enemies who cannot keep apart, of friends who cannot keep together.

Bound together: - even in the mater-of-fact way, and symbolic way, of the binding of the two Testaments in the Bible: the blank page between the Old and the New Testaments is charged with electricity: it bespeaks that relation of polarity and tension, which keeps the two together and holds them apart, holds them apart and keeps them together.

The emotion which must fill the Jew when he comes to a meeting like this is first of all - before he develops his own point of view and gives the apologia and defence for his own way of life - is the sense of the greatness of Christianity in the light of history.

The mere fact that it has been the religion of the great races of Europe (and of course of America) is enough to give one pause and respect; - that it has been able to enlist the hearts and minds of the best for centuries is sufficient indication of its infinite spiritual resources. And that the central figure of Christianity has dominated the imagination of the world, - how can there be any doubt of that: - the theme of Bach's music, of Pascal's passion, of George Fox's love - I mention only a few names at random - the central figure which has served as inspiration and repository of so much passion and power of love through all the centuries: - how can there be any escaping from the influence and power of that figure.

But it is not ours.

It is of ours and not ours.

We are tied to it - but we must go our own way.

And perhaps we each have a way to go. Perhaps the view which each side holds that the other is mistaken is wrong.

You know what Orthodox Christianity thinks of Judaism: that it was abrogated when Jesus came; that the Old Testament is merely a preparation for the New; and that as for the Jewish people - I believe the orthodox view of the Catholic church is that they should be kept alive as a constant reminder and witness to the life and death of Christ.

You know that Orthodox Judaism thinks of Christianity: that apart from serving as the great missionary arm of Judaism, the great historic service for preparing the Gentile world for the true religion - Christian dogma is idolatry, and the day will come when it will be replaced by the pure religion of the one God, the single God of a single mankind in a messianic age as preached by the Prophets.

Each religion thinks it must become the religion of the world and that either now or eventually there can be no room or meaning for the other.

A more generous view has begun timidly to come to the fore in both camps. It is possible that both religions have a justification - that they express different needs and serve different functions - that they each represent the truth but not the whole truth - and that they are both needed (needing each other even as critics, as friendly enemies), needed to supplement each other and converge in that larger truth which is destined to come at the end of days and in the fullness of time.

On the Jewish side this view has been expressed by the finest Jewish mind and most heroic Jewish soul of our generation, - Franz Rosenzweig; and on the Christian side by that fine Christian scholar and gentleman, the English clergyman, R. Travers Herford.

But before I enter into these I might be permitted just a word about the similar situation that subsists within Christianity, namely between Catholicism and Protestantism. These also might each, in its own predestined grand historic manner, be expressing an indispensable truth - Catholicism the principle of collective authority and of revelation and of continued revelation through collective authority, Protestantism on the other hand, the invaluable heaven of the individual freedom, of the liberty of examination, of the Bible as each man's ultimate source of ultimately subserving the final truth.

But I am trespassing here and must return to my own field.

And here it is not my intention to give you details of thesis argument presented by Herford to F. R. This is not the place. I wish to merely tell you that there are such arguments - that they are developed with care, thoughtfulness and knowledge of research into historic facts - to refer you to the books - to give you here just the bare captions or "leads" - and to remind you that it is a thesis which never again is likely to be lost.

Briefly Herford (take simplest presentation in "The Truth about the Pharisees", renovah 1925).

P. 36 The real distinction between Judaism and Christianity.... a fundamental one. As systems fundamentally dissimilar, wholly incommensurable ... Judaism is a detailed system of ethical practices... the cornerstone of Judaism was the deed, not the dogma. The fundamental characteristic of Christianity is ... faith in a person, that person being of course the founder. "Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved." Salvation for professing Christians is something mystically received as a gift of divine grace...Christianity and Judaism appealed to different sides of human nature...Christianity stressed faith, Judaism right action.

p.41 ... both Judaism and Christianity parts in one great whole, each having a necessary place and function....

p.43 ... two religious systems representing contrasted viewpoints of life ... each had its own right of existence as each had its own truth to proclaim ... The specific function of Christianity was to begin the great task. Judaism's junction to remain as a co-present and correlative religion.

p.44 both necessary for the work of raising and purifying the religions and moral condition of humanity - Christianity as an immediate agent and Judaism for its later stages, and to safeguard Christianity meanwhile against the danger of its task. (immersion in Paganism).

F. R.'s deep study of inner characteristics of both in the culminating part of his great work, "Stern D. Erlosung", the watchwords "I am" and "Faith", first launched by St. Paul, are good leads. But unlike Paul, F. R. thinks both religions equally valid, both divinely ordained religious communities, since both are based on the Bible. In both these groups there is an eternal "we", which through common prayer for the kingdom, acquires eternity for its members and also hastens the final redemption of the world ... True Jews and true Christians live at once in time with the world, and in eternity with God. Both are in a real sense revealed religions and each one in itself is only part of the truth. But only part of the truth can ever fall to the lot of man. Truth is a moun only to God; to men it is always an adverb "truly" (Wahrlich), as the measure of our inner faithfulness, hence must always remain partial ... In symbolic language Judaism "the eternal fire" and Christianity "the eternal rays." While Israel stays with God, Christendom constantly marches toward Him subdoing the world on his behalf ... The Jew can bring the world to God only through Christianity. Christianity on the other hand, could not long remain an effective force for redemption if Israel did not remain in its midst .. Borrowing a great parable from the Cugari, R. compares historical revelation to a seed, which falling to the ground transmutes the mud and loam into its own nature and produces a tree, in the fruit of which it re-appears again. The ground, or soil and loam, is the pagan world; the tre is Christianity; the seed is Judaism. - (Agus p. 191-3).

The lesson is obvious that each of the great religions (and each of the subdivisions of Christianity) has enormous spiritual resources, enough to satisfy all the needs of its members, - enough to build up a life of serenity and power in the inner life of a man and to make him a pleasure to behold in his outer aspect, in his relations to other men.

And for us Jews a specific lesson: - Return - return to the sources which alone can bring us inner peace, inner strength, and which alone can elicit respect and ennoble us in the eyes of our Christian neighbors.

But a return not merely to a mood or a feeling or a sentiment.

That is fine, but it evaporates, and it is not the Jewish way: - if Judaism is law, observance, deed, Halakhah, - then we must return to the pattern and discipline which it offers - and there is no enduring religious value without such a pattern and discipline.

Keble spoke of a Christian year, and there is one - a recurring cycle or pattern of observances and ritual in which the meaning of life is caught up and interpreted in terms of Christian Dogma.

There is a corresponding Jewish year and without it Judaism remains a hollow formula and a mere matter of physical birth: a hollowness within a sense of emptiness and spiritual poverty, and outwardly towards our neighbors a grave offense, an obnoxious nuisance.

To restore peace and faith within, and remove offensiveness without, we must return to the great recurring cycle of worship which Judaism offers - the Friday night with its candles and Kiddush, the Sabbath with its readings from the Torah, and prayers and the Haddalah at its conclusion - we must return to the old prayer book and its marvelous prayers, in which the whole essence of Judaism is enshrined - we must return to the language in which those prayers are written - to the Holidays and their deep meanings, and to the High Holidays and their solemn lessons.

Any attempt to whittle down Judaism to a mere profession of belief - to "ethical monotheism" so called, or the ethical cultivation - is to strike at its very roots - and to make of Jews inwardly impoverished and outwardly offensive "hollow men."

The modern educated Jew is peculiarly liable to certain dangers of spiritual erosion - the washing away of the soil in which the powers of reverence grow. He is a city product. He is a product of the mere conventions of education. The powers which make for faith and vision have grown thin. He is just a sophisticated, newspaper-reading, intellectualized, "wise-cracking" creature, with the old capacities for high emotional devotion and intuition atrophied.

Gates and His Ireland: only those who have risen above or fallen below the conventions of education can come into touch with the high realities.

Of course it holds for all cityfied folk - but quite specially for us Jews, since there are no others: we have no great hinterland from which to draw reserves.

And another great danger which confronts us is that we confound or confuse things of the mind or the intellect with things of the soul or the spirit. A man can have the sharpest understanding in the world and sport a Phi Beta Kappa key across his chest and still be in no wise superior to the cunning of a fox.

We Jews tend to overestimate intellect and brightness. We have forgotten what our ancestors knew only too well - and without which the heroism and martyrdom of their history is utterly inexplicable: namely that mind and understanding are only instruments in the service of

something higher - of the only thing that is high, namely character, belief in a cause, heroism in the service of a cause.

We must return to the reverences, we must return to the spirit, to the sources of our old strength and greatness - as the great phrase goes - "for they are our life and the length of our days."

Only the religious ages are the truly productive ones, says Goethe, the supposedly Pagan, non-Christian poet: what he means every creative personality knows and attests.

We Jews must return to our religion. And what is our religion? What is our belief in God and what is our view concerning our own role and destiny within the economy of history:

For the two are inextricably intertwined for us - and we should not insist on such a world-historic role, of being a religion parallel to Christianity to the end of time, and of being the first vessel and bearer of revelation, if it were not our manifest destiny from the beginning to be a unique people among peoples - launched upon a world-historic career, which Ammonites and Moabites drop off to insignificance - and trudging 2000 years through hate and persecution as an experiment by God in the education of the human race.

We believe in the One God - but the unity of God is something to be achieved through heroic effort and tragic trial. "On that day his name shall be one and He shall be one." The unity of God is the unification of God and the unification of God is the goal of all history.

We believe in the corollary of this slow unification of God, namely the messianic age of mankind: - the integration of mankind in the abolition of hate and misery and poverty and war - the integration of mankind in the higher plane of a new life, when time will really begin and a new dimension of existence.

We believe that history is a struggle between good and evil, that God is slowly growing in the victory of good over evil - that man is his partner and every heroic act of man in addition to God's strength as it is derived from God - and that the present war is a supreme amplification of this struggle to unify God's name.

We believe that the Jewish people has been chosen by a mysterious dispensation to be the recipient of revelation at Sinai - and to be God's suffering servant through the ages. Our chosenness would be an idle boast if it were not made true every day. Alas it is more true most of the time, if at all only passively through sufferings which we accept unwillingly and as a mere disaster. And in times of peace most of us are shabby recreants. But there is always a who try by their lives to make it all true, and by virtue of them we are kept alive.

Dear friends, dear young Jewish men and women, try by your lives to be worthy links in that great tradition. "Sufferance is the badge of all our tribe" a great poet said of us - and the Jew is the person on whom the tensions of every age are tried out first - a kind of vanguard and trial person:-

Let us so live that our chosenness shall be no idle boast, but through inner faith and power be witnesses of God's kingdom at the end as we were at the beginning when it was announced at Sinai.



A Theology for us today.

Dr. Stoninsky

Summer Institute
June 13, 1943

To define what men shall believe is always a hazardous undertaking. To do so for the Jewish people in a time of supreme trial is the assumption of high responsibility and may well be rash and presumptuous. But we have no choice; we must act.

If in addition it should turn out that some of the beliefs which we commend are not altogether consistent with each other, we must be content with that too. For in such things we have the alternative, either of a logically insistent system which neglects or does violence to the facts of life and experience; or of doing justice to inescapable fact and deep need, and being intent with apparent inconsistencies. I think we must satisfy each deep urge which refuses to be denied, in the faith that in the end they will all harmonize.

To begin then: Theology is not a Jewish category. It is borrowed from Christian thinking and fits our Jewish ~~category~~: only very haltingly. Theology is at home and adequate in a religion of which the main-spring is belief or doctrine; in a religion which is exclusively a spiritual domain. There theology is the conceptual pattern formulating the heart and essence of the religion.

But in a religion like ours which revolves around a living people, the theology is so to speak the people itself, the people itself constitutes its theology, or at least its prime article - Paul in founding Christianity did so by disengaging the new religion from the Jewish people and from the Jewish law, indicating therewith what are the two main tenets or factors of the religion he was leaving. He founds a new type of religion unknown till then, a religion detached from any special living bearer or depositary, a religion of the disengaged spirit. And incidentally he lays bare the two substantive components of Judaism, the two cardinal elements of its theology if you care to use the term - though theology in the strict Christian usage, namely as abasement of beliefs, is in Judaism found tucked away in one chap-

ter within the Jewish Law.

At the outset then we see how basically Judaism differs from Xianity. The one is constituted by people and revealed Law, the other is essentially Faith. And the corollary for Judaism is immediately obvious. Any movement within Judaism which professes to on principle abrogate the Law or to minimize the Peoplehood of Israel is a move in the direction of Xianity. Graetz in dealing with the most consistent of the Reformers, Samuel Holdheim, is right in calling him the greatest danger that had arisen within Judasim since the days of St. Paul (Vol. XI, 1870, p.565). - Not indeed that there is any real ground for apprehension. Reform is never the danger it seems to be, because it is never really Reform: the covenant cut in the flesh - the - remains, as does the psychophysical imbeddedness in the Jewish background, and all the rest of substantive Judaism is merely in abeyance and suspense but is there.

We are brought to face here with the two types of religion in rivalry with each other in the course of history, constituting in that rivalry we might almost say the very meaning or philosophy of religious history, each with its superiority and its commiseration, and the race is not over and the story is not done, and we are not here to tell it. We are here to speak for ourselves to ourselves at a point in the road. But it is clear that while Xianity is a purely spiritual religion of universalist appeal it has no rootage in a soil and suffers from all the sickness of anemia, whilst Judaism has all the vividness of a concrete organization, a specific human tongue, - the Hebrew language, a specific folk-personality, but for that very reason its message to the world and for the world is inevitably colored and broken by passing through the prism of that personality.

We shall presently address ourselves in detail to the two main factors of Judaism, the two focal points around which Judaism travels in its elliptic orbit, - namely, the election of Israel, and revelation or Torah or Law or Way of Life, - and we hope to consider the metaphysical implications residing in

these two ideas. But before we do so we pause for a moment to consider the testimony of a great Reformer on the relative merits of Christianity and Judaism.

Abraham Geiger in his youth was greatly drawn towards Universalism; in the first fine glow of Reform fervor he was greatly irked by the earth-bound character of the Jewish religion, its tribalism seemed to him a ground for despair. But at the end of a long life of reflection and experience he sees quite contrariwise that the power and virtue of Judaism reside precisely in that very character.

All high things, he says, all Science Art and Religion have their origin in certain folk-individualities, and bear the impress of those individualities, even though they have a meaning for all men. In fact, the stronger the folk-individuality - the more chance of great and permanently valuable ideas and creations. And so in the case of Judaism, its power is due to the fact that it grew out of a vivid folk-life, with a language and a history of its own. Its thought was universal, but in order not to remain a shadow suspended in mid-air, it had to express itself as healthy folk-person, and to reveal itself impregnated through and through by its own distinctive character. Christianity on the other hand made a universal appearance, but in that very lack of distinctive people and specific language lies its weakness (das Christentum ist zwar allgemein auf-getreten, aber gerade in dieser Volks- und Sprachlosigkeit begründet seine Schwäche). Its thoughts and sensations are therefore very vague (von einer grossen Unbestimmtheit), they are in constant conflict with the various nationalities and cannot strike real root - they remain mere spirits negating real life (bloesse geister die das wirkliche leben verneinen)--- Christianity arose in the shadow of the disintegration of noble commonwealths, Jewish and Greek, and bears the seed of sickness within itself since that day (A Nietzschean thought). It is thus the mother of all emotionalisms and romanticisms, das Judentum hingegen ist klar, concret, lebensfrisch er lebensfroch - with all the freshness of life and joy in living - geistdurchdrungen, impregnated with mire, not negating earthly life but transfiguring it - and tak-

ing its stand on a definite people with language and history of its own, and still embracing mankind (Nachzel, Werke II 37 - 39, cf. A. G. Leben in Lebenswerk 1910, p. 259f.), inner dialectic of chosenness.

We now turn to our main thesis and ask: what does it mean to say that the Jewish people has theologic quality? - has, or should be made to have for those members of the race who have lost it and must now be re-trained and regained for their own proper . Chosenness in any time, in any religious sense always has something dire about it; is never a mere boast or serene complacency; is at least as terrible as it may on high occasion be full of bliss and grandeur; is always of the nature of a burden, a burden laid upon us, a burden from which there is no escape as Jonah could not escape; is always a call to suffering as its merit and price; has something of the trumpets of fate about it, is indeed another name for Fate as worked out by the great spirit or Providence who presides over the weaving of the fabric of human history.

A consciousness of the poignant character of his situation is forced on the Jew in times of great stress like ours today, but even in normal and quiet times he is a marked man, marked because this very existence is his religion.

If you ask what is or what constitutes Judaism, you have in the bare fact of the existence of Jews and Jewish people already a given reality, an existing Judaism, even though inarticulate, even though possibly bare and denuded. Judaism is thus already present, and involves everything that went before and everything that will come after, all the Heritage and all the Destiny: - the covenant with God through stratum; the revelation at Sinai through Moses; the launching on a unique career of history making, though the instrument chosen seems in no wise different in blood breeding habitat sun wind and weather from any number of kindred tribes who drop off into insignificance; then the tragic division of forces in the figures of Jesus and Paul, and from then on "Sufferance is the badge of all our tribe" and we are a kind of viscarious atonement for the sins and sorrows of the world,

whether we measure up to it or not, by a necessity of our historic destiny, by the theologic quality of being born a Jew, until we shall have paid the blood ransom in full and have suffered all evil and the dawn will be ready to break and the Messianic Age be at hand and God's Kingdom come.

Thus no Jew is thinkable apart from God, apart from his terrible God -
who is

. It is a terrible and blessed thing, a thing both of terror and of bliss, to be born a Jew, because of the mere fact of birth one steps into a religious role and is made part of a tremendous destiny by God.

This namely is the bedrock of Jewish theology that before any other questions can be raised or considered, before Ethics or Ritual or Mission or inter-twining Particularism and Universalism, - preceding and underlying them all there is the fundamental fact that God offered himself and a particular people was appropriated. This is the basic theological formula of Judaism. And that is what theology is: a highest formula for the sum of existence, the supreme utterance of fundamental fact.

But now what has Israel been chosen for? Clearly if the two confront each other and are correlated to each other, Israel will be the bearer of God's Revelation.

There is a covenant between God and Israel; and the idea of or Covenant is a fundamental category in Judaism, and of that idea what is commonly known as , the is in its bloody incisiveness the appropriated ominous symbol.

The covenant culminates in the great scene at Sinai, where Israel accepts the Torah as the norm of life with the undertaking to realize that norm progressively through endless time. That norm or Code is ever expanding, ever fluid, but it is implicitly contained in the original Revelation.

There is no way out: the first element in Jewish Theology is the Jew, and the second is the Jewish way of life. And the true theological worth of

Judaism consists in elaborating the proper way of life for the Jewish people in traditional continuity on the basis of the original Revelation. But author and seat of this labor is not any body or institution within Judaism, not Synagogue or , but the Jewish People itself

:- nota bene of course, the Jewish People whenever and wherever its substantive character has not been eroded and its capacity for Halakah is still functioning.

In that way of life, in that weaving of the Law, beliefs and philosophies are necessarily a part, a vital and important part, but only a part. Judaism is primarily regulative and prescriptive Law. All movements of the heart, all agitations of the spirit, are expected to contain and confine themselves, and to unburden their ornamtic, within the "four ells of Halakhah".

And where the practise and consciousness of this has been washed away, as with great masses of Jewry today, the obvious task is to restore the soil to rebuild background and atmosphere, which will make possible once more the proper pristine functioning of the Jewish spirit and soul; This time of danger is precisely the time in which to re-emphasize and re-assert the two cardinal Dogmas of Judaism, the Election of Israel and the Validity of Torah.

It may be objected to this singling out of a certain people and giving it theological status that individual specimens of that people are in no wise superior to those of other peoples, that on the contrary Jews seem to be the same frail mortals, the same as the general run of humanity; and the the claim to superiority, is palpable and gratuitous self-glorification. Well-bred people, modest people, people with a sense of proportion, do not proclaim themselves superior to others.

The objection is as obvious as it is pointless.

Theological status does not attach to the individual Jew, but to the group, the idea, or corporate entity of Israel.

That special dignity, that religious quality which it seems so monstrous to claim for an actual living empirical people, is merely the formula for the immense Schicksal or Destiny of that people. The role reserved for it in its passage through time by decree of Providence, by the love of God which is a burden, is so unique; - the call addressed to it by God at every turning point in history, to unify God's name, is so terrible in the cost and sacrifice entailed; - and its implication in the achievement of the goal of human history is so sharp and poignant; - that no less a status than this transcendental one can be awarded to such a group. Individual members of it may be commonplace or dismayed at their fate, and all of them may at one time be a stiff-necked people "an", or worse, - that does not derogate from the metaphysical dignity of the corporate group, of the idea of Israel.

The Rabbis were fully aware of this special role of Israel in the economy of the world-plan and took care to give it full and unmistakable expression. In the opening Parasha of the greatest of the Morashim, K, we have a remarkable piece of Platonism. Six objects are recounted as being such basic conditions of all existence that they must be regarded as having preceded time and creation; - pre-mundane forms or ideas or essences in the mind of God, some bodied forth, some about to be bodied forth.

and they are mentioned - Torah, throne of glory, Temple, Messiah, Israel, Repentance; - and then there is debate whether there be a hierarchy and order of importance, and the debate is sharply concluded - "The idea of Israel preceded everything else!" -

And in the same mood - when the member of this group is charged with a full sense of its meaning, and has been inwardly disciplined by its doctrine and way of life, and takes willingly upon himself its burden, and when this process has been allowed to achieve a cumulative effect on whole generations,

then in no hyprbolic sense can it be said that the resulting human product is unique in its kind and "a chosen people".

Not a superiority in intellect, not a superiority in morals, not an innate essence in blood-stream or protoplasm (to use the jargon of the Racialists of the day), but the composite of legacy and destiny, of Torah and suffering, has framed a psychophysical unit that is special of its kind.

On the subject of Israel I shall quote two spokesmen who may well be allowed to speak for Israel: Yehuda Halevi from olden days and the late Chief Rabbi Kook from our own. Yehuda Halevi claims for Israel which means, objectively, the gift of God's revelation, and subjectively, the capacity for such a gift. In that sense Israel is the , the Heart of the World. And in the same sense the great Rabbi of our times calls the Jew who is true to type and to archetype a kind of ideal essence of man:

(from the volume of selections

p.75)

And so finally with regard to self-glorification: the charge is a commonplace of the drawing rooms, a piece of trivial mock modesty, if placed alongside of the great creative urges of the world. I shall cite one modern spokesman, Dostorevsky, who speaks for his own Russians. "If a great people does not believe that the truth is only to be found in itself alone; it does not believe that it alone is fit and destined to raise up and save all the rest by its truth, it would at once sink into being ethnographical material not a great people. A nation which loses this belief ceases to be a nation". And again: "The people is the body of God. Every people is only a people so long as it has its own God and excludes all other gods on earth irreconcilably; so long as it believes that by its God it will conquer and drive out of the world all other gods..... The Jews lived only to await the coming of the true God and left the world the true God" (The Possessed p. 234).

In short, the sense of chosenness is the true measure of a nation's creative urge, rising and falling with that power or force, to give up the

ardent sense of chosenness is a tacit confession of the passing of power.

However, we must remember, the chosenness is of "Israel," and the price demanded is to make oneself really of God's people.

That is, the Jew's religion is, first, the glad and willing embrace of the Jewish Schicksal, identification with the Destiny of Israel; and secondly, as its necessary correlate, acceptance of the discipline of Torah.

The individual as such does not occupy the same sovereign place he has in other religions. He is neither end nor beginning. The individual's religiosity in Judaism is not the religiosity of an individual for and by himself.

The Jew finds his religion in being a Jew . He will find his very self and be truest to that private self when he coalesces and is absorbed in the high destiny and common life of his group.

By the mystery of his birth spiritual decisions have already been made for him and he must merely re-awaken to them. He is of the seed of Abraham with whom God made a covenant for him; and he stood at Sinai where in a timeless act all later decisions were made in advance. But the glad and willing embrace of this birthright has its high and terrible price. Hence as it is the easiest thing to be a Jew, namely by getting born, so it is the hardest lot for one who does not want to remain one. Our traitors are the most terrible as our saints are the sublimest, since the people itself is the martyr and membership in it is martyrdom.

With that we arrive at the last phase of Jewish religiosity and of a Jewish theology, named the question as to who and what is God.

Here there is a paradox: God's chosen people is the people most forsaken by God.

To be sure, Israel is not alone in this respect; Israel is merely the most signal exemplar or archetype of the fate of all good men everywhere; - therein indeed consists his chosenness.

It is the tragic paradox of all higher life that those who most espouse

God are made to suffer most.

God is not found where we have a right to expect him, namely on the side of the good in the struggle with the evil.

And yet the distinction between good and evil is one that can come from no one but a god.

We are driven on by a God from behind and left in the lurch by that same God in front. The great words of the Psalmist (139:5) "Thou hast hemmed me in behind and before" , which is the theme of a great Midrash is best interpreted literally. God charges us with a burden which we dare not refuse, and leaves us to fight it out alone with a superior enemy. "Thou hast laid thy hand upon me" - the verse goes on to say ; - God has indeed laid his hand upon us, in a double sense.

Hence, the first outcry of the religious heart as it faces the world and is borne down in its heroic struggle with evil is to deny God. Why hast thou forsaken me, is every good man's cry in the hour of forsakenness.

That there is no God, is the first and only true proposition in any philosophy of religion, says Herr Friedrich Nietzsche. It is the first proposition indeed if you look only to the immediate scene, to the ever shifting forefront of history.

But such a denial of God, such active doubt is a religious act, because the it is an agonized cry of the heart that has God within itself but fails to find him where he most ought to be, in the affairs of men. It is like turning to a mirror and not seeing your face reflected. The figure is Cardinal Newman's but from the author of the Book of Job to the author of the City of Dreadful Night we have repeated and poignant expression of this wounding of humanity's best heart - "the sick shudder of the frustrated religious demand" (James, Will to Believe p. 42) - this atheism on grounds of religion.

Atheism cannot be the last word, as it may well be the first in any religion which takes itself seriously and is not just routine thoughtlessness.

For though we may be defeated in front we are always replenished from behind, and hero and saint even in anguish and defeat are inexplicable without a God in whose light they see light. We all draw from some far-off hidden sea even when we doubt, for doubt and heartbreak are themselves religious phenomena, the frustration of a religious demand.

But the religious urge refuses to be refuted by any experience. "Even if God did not exist, religion would still be holy and divine," says the poet who most plumbed the depths of the last century (Baudelaire Oeuvres Posthumes p. 75). And in the same mood we are led to re-assert on a higher plane what we have been led to doubt on an earlier and lower. It is the same ambivalent power in both. The same God who forces the doubt insists on the renewed demand.

The Jews have had this experience most acutely. Israel has been closest to God and has been most forsaken. No nation had had so much occasion to doubt God "to curse God and die," as Job's wife counselled; and none has more triumphantly proved that it is better to "trust in him though he slay me" (Job 13:15), as Job himself maintained.

The Jewish genius undertook the tremendous task of re-interpretating the God-idea in the light of its shattering experience. The most amazing chapter in the Bible and in all literature, Isaiah 53; and the most amazing phrase coined by the Rabbis and of all religious imagery, ; give us the clue or answer.

The first states in effect that God's justice may be obscured, but man's willingness to serve and suffer and take over God's work is all the more enhanced. The second declares suffering a mark of God's love, and by that supreme and noble paradox saves faith in God. "The economy of Heaven is Dark", as the gentle English poet says (Kamb, Golden Treasury p. 269), but man emerges all the grander and more god-like. The two Jewish utterances are a profound re-assertion of faith in the face of doubt and despair. They save God for man by glorifying man and of enlarging his task.

"behind and before": we draw on a God from the depths and background in which

we are imbedded and who strives through us and with that strength we push forward on our own. We assuredly cannot go on without God, but just as surely man is his helper and agent. And the world is clearly a place where they need each other against a common foe.

The ancient heresy that there are two dominions, in the world was strongly rejected by official rabbinic Judaism, in the interests of uncompromising Monotheism. But that such a heresy could arise is itself an indication that the Jewish mind was pondering over the problem of evil, the defeat of the good, the extent of the power of God. Rejected or not it was in effect, though too disquieting to face articulately, the actual belief of Jews and Jewry. That is amply evident throughout our liturgy and our theologic literature, the Midrash. It was indeed the patent fact of all Jewish life and destiny through the centuries. Edom, the world, was the great enemy both of God and of Israel: the whole process of history consisted in winning Edom over to God through Israel. The act of "unifying God" through unifying or integrating the world, was the bloody task of history to be achieved "at the end of days" through the willingness on the part of Israel to suffer.

The strict monotheistic doctrine which seems to be threatened by this view is not really impugned at all. On the contrary it is given a living meaning a dynamic and functional significance. What is the use of asserting by word of mouth God's unity, omnipotence? If it is not to be a mere static verbalism, God's unity must be understood as a postulation, as a heroic demand that it shall be so, or a task to be achieved. The deepest words ever spoken about God are the words uttered by our prophet

- "on that day he shall be one and his name shall be one." But between now and that day lies all of history, all effort, all suffering, all heroism. The unity or omnipotence of God is a unity to be fought for and made true and real. It is at the end, not at the beginning. That is the true doctrine of God; and as we have it in our at the end of every service and in the

in the most solemn liturgy of the year at Rosh Hashonah, we may well proclaim it as the Jewish doctrine concerning God; tragic, heroic, true to fact and to

task - a proper religion for all fighting men everywhere - Judaism's deepest thought - and the living seal on Israel's chosenness.



SLONIMSKY'S EULOGY ON STEPHEN WISE

Given at Founders Day dinner few years after his death 1949

The great leader whom we have just carried to his grave was no friend of anything lugubrious. And if today we recall his memory, in this school which he founded, and on this occasion which was graced by his eager and joyous presence even into days of sickness for the last 20 years and more, we want above all things to avoid what he would have most disdained himself, namely any mood or show of lugubriousness.

He was a man and we are sad at the passing of this man. But in our sadness there may well be present what he so highly cherished in others and what he tried to embody in his own person, namely manhood and manliness.

And our highest need of respect and gratitude and affection for this man will express itself not in the indiscriminate lavishing of all the superlatives of praise - a procedure which leaves no one convinced or impressed - but rather in a loyal and honest estimate of his life and labor.

That is the true monument to a man according to our rabbis.

"No monuments need be raised for the righteous", they tell us (Gen. R.82)

ד'תש"ז 1/22 1/28 1/4, for, they go on to say,

"Their words or acts are their memorials" חַיִּים בְּכָל יוֹמָם וּלְלַיְלָה

And in the same high mood the most Hebraic of English poets, John Milton, in praise of an ancient Hebrew agonist and fighter, namely Samson, recalls for us the same note of virility.

"Come, come; no time for lamentation now.

Nor much more cause: Samson hath quit himself

Like Samson, and heroically hath finished

A life heroic.....

Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
Or knock the breast; no weakness,
Dispraise or blame; nothing but well and fair;
And what may quiet us in a death so noble."

What then was Stephen Wise to us and to the world? We can say it in a single word and sum up in advance the whole core of his life- achievement: We say then that Stephen Wise in his own lifetime managed to become a mythos.

This is the supreme goal for all public men. All public men at all times strive unconsciously to grow into a mythos - few achieve it.

Stephen Wise was a magic name, a magic sound and image, to all men, and to Jews the world over, to the Ghettos of Africa and Europe and to the hordes of people waiting for hours in the rain during his funeral services - who know nothing about him except this one thing that somehow he stood for the underdog, that somehow he would plead the opposition causes against the powers that be.

There is no need to recount all the varied and far-flung causes and movements in which he invested his splendid energies. I suppose there is no one cause or movement of a general social character or of Jewish import appearing within the last 50 years which did not evoke his eager interest and active partisanship.

Above all he had a heart for Jewish suffering. Through his own unaided efforts we know that in the last world war he saved thousands from being led like cattle to the slaughter. That Jewish suffering happened to be the acutest in actual fact but also the closest to his heart.

And throughout his life he could not suppress this deep call of the blood, this sympathy with an ancient people and its tragic lot. He was at bottom and basically an East Side boy; and his occasional philanderings with themes in fashion amongst the intelligentsia (Jesus or crypto-communism) were merely surface infections.

I have seen him in his native moments and when he was his real self, expound a verse of the Psalms, on an occasion like the present, when some old Jew was in the audience, with beard and Yafmulka, present in the audience because of the graduation of some son or grandson, I have seen him, I say, expound a Kapitel Tehillim in such wise, so deeply and movingly Jewish, that immediately a bond of contact was established between the bearded stranger and the orator on the platform, an electric current established between the two old Jews.

I have seen him, similarly, discard a prepared address, which was nothing but a show of fine rhetoric, and speaking from the blood on some Jewish matter close to his heart speak with an eloquence so direct and passionate as to move the heart of men and angels. We have heard of certain lost speeches of Abraham Lincoln, certain speeches which were spoken but unwritten and unrecorded: The lost speeches of Stephen Wise would be worth a barrel of his prepared addresses.

Even the things with which Stephen Wise has been reproached and censured by superficial and captious people were, on the contrary, marks of the genuine man, part of the veridical portrait of the man.

It is said that he made undue and unfair use of his voice: But the human voice is not external and factitious appendage of a man. The human voice, as Walt Whitman tells us, is possibly the truest expression of the human soul, more so perhaps than eye or face which are usually taken to be the mirroring of the soul, more so certainly than hand or gesture or walk.

Stephen Wise had the finest baritone basso voice in the USA, and why in heaven's name shouldn't he use it, if he wished, to entrance and move masses of men?

He was living in America and he was fighting America with America's weapons - that is what we must understand. America loved oratory. It was a young turbulent adolescent democracy, swayed by the spoken word. Why shouldn't he give it the spoken word and give it as no other man could give it?

It is said that he was swayed by personal vanity. But vanity is far and away a stronger and profounder and more respectable thing than our Sunday School moralists would have us believe. It is far too deeply rooted in our very being, in that which moves and motivates us, and in that which flowers into our personality at its best, to be damned by the over-righteous and cast into outer darkness. Vanity is nature's sure-fired method of getting certain things done. Vanity in the case of strong and great men is the Weltgeist's method of getting great things done by persuading men that they are working for themselves when they are really working for the world.

Without his share of vanity Stephen Wise could never have embarked on all his manifold undertakings. The thing to consider is what big things his vanity drove him to undertake, and the petty uses to which the rest of us put our vanity.

It has been said that the true morality of artists consists in work, not in the meticulous observance of all the ten commandments. Whatever they may have sinned in the latter respect, if only they have put in a life of labor in devotion to their life's work, that will amply justify their existence and constitute a real and positive morality.

The same holds for public men as well. Stephen Wise put in 14 and 16 hours a day in labor for public causes, expended unremittingly and lavishly a sheer unexhaustible fund of energy for men and things and causes, lived a life of participation and action:- so what if occasionally he indulged the *p3/ 722* and brushed somewhat closely against some of the lesser prohibitions? And what do the saints accomplish through their rigid negations?

In general Stephen Wise understood instinctively but profoundly what seems so difficult for idealists to get into their heads, namely, that in passing from ideas to things, you are passing from a rare medium into a denser medium, from air into water, with different laws of refraction, with differing degrees of resistance, with differing degrees of feasibility.

And if in the new and more viscous medium, there is the danger of compromise and the necessity of watchful deviousness, that is more than compensated for by the immense and supreme merit of reality and actuality.

Not these thing which are his virtues, not the magic of his personal presence, of that species of genius which for want of a better name might be called animal magnetism, so that when he entered a room it made a difference to that room and when he spoke to you, you were convinced before he began - nor of his immense eagerness and

openness to all men and to friendship, to all appeals and all trouble - ~~The~~ priceless zest of life: not of these things which are part of the living man have I the time to speak now, but must hurry on to round out my picture by telling of his limitation.

It would be unfair to this occasion, it would be unfair to him (for he knew it) not to mention it.

As his greatness could be summed up in a single phrase - namely, that he grew into a mythos in his own lifetime; so, similarly, his limitation can be expressed in a single phrase: he lived for the day.

He lived for the day and he will die with the day, unless we of the Institute will keep him alive. Of him and of us is it true, as it never was so true, that *היה זה יום אחד / 10/11/21*
היה זה יום אחד / 10/11/21
The stone that the builders rejected will become the keystone.
Stephen Wise builded better than he knew and we will compel him to continue doing so.

He made 10,000 speeches. Where are they? Where are the snows of yesteryear?

And he founded many organizations. But they were largely in the service of his personal career, without any inner necessity of survival beyond that. There is one thing he founded which bears within it the seeds of eternity.

A school is ~~to~~ ~~be~~ removed in function and principle and destiny from any of his other undertakings. He had the superb idea of planting a school in this vast area of Jewish population, the greatest in the world, the greatest in history, to serve as a meeting-ground for the cross-section of all Jewry, for all the shades and sects of *היה זה יום אחד / 10/11/21*, to meet and to educate each other and to serve as guide for the future.

If he had not founded such a school it would have had to be founded by someone else. If it should ever go down it will inevitably be refounded. It is a prime and ineluctable necessity and at the present moment is merely the shadow and faint beginning of what it can and will become.

I have the right to say these things because I have said them publicly to Stephen Wise on some 20 Founder's Day Dinners in 20 successive years. I have the right to speak as I do because for 25 years I have labored as Dr. Wise's closest associate in this particular undertaking, and for the last 2 years when he was sick and lonely and forsaken and sad, I was with him in close and intimate companionship.

O grand old warrior, you that were a happy warrior in your youth, in your old days bereft of the wife of a lifetime, bowed by sickness which you bore with patience and courage, relegated to the background by lesser men, did you not muse and wonder (though you uttered no complaint) over the strange economy of heaven which rewards a life of labor with neglect and ingratitude and loneliness and sickness - that cruel, divine paradox of לילה / 3' חם / 4' / 5 -
did you not perhaps feel with the Jewish poet - לילה / 3' חם / 4' / 5

Der Tod, das ist die kühle Nacht,

Das Leben ist der schwüle Tag.

Es dunkelt schon, mich schläfert,

Der Tag hat mich müd gemacht.

(Death, what a cool night it is; life, what a hot sultry day. It is getting dark, I feel sleepy, the day has left me tired.)

You turned to the wall and were glad to go, leaving us your name and your complicated legacy.

"O strong soul, by what shore tarriest Thou now?"

we ask with the poet, and we answer with him -

"For that force

Surely, has not been left vain."

Not vain, on that farther shore, nor on this shore nearer
home. No monuments ^{are} ~~all~~ needed for the righteous, the rabbis

said, since ^{לכר'ם} ~~לכר'ם~~; their words and deeds are their

לכר, and we may say

לכר לזכרם לעבדה



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OFFICE OF THE
ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT.

Jewish Institute of Religion

40 WEST 68 STREET, NEW YORK 23, N. Y.



375 West End Ave. Telephone: TRAFALGAR 7-4050
NY 28, Nov 10, 53

Robert, I think of you often & always
with unwavering affection. I am frightened
of the idea of any obsolescence (I coin
the neologism) ^{on}impinging or affecting our
relationship. I am sending you a little
something, because it happens to be handy
& will serve as a sign of life & interest rather
than for any intrinsic weight. But I have
no apologies to offer. Give my, oh, loving
thoughts to your wife & manifold children
& tell me you are ever mine as I
am yours.

J. J.

*Robert F.
with kindest
affectionate
greetings
H.*

INSTALLATION SERVICE
for
RABBI GERALD RAISKIN

STEPHEN WISE FREE SYNAGOGUE
NEW YORK CITY
FRIDAY - OCTOBER 2nd, 1953 - 8:00 P.M.

INSTALLATION SERMON AND CHARGE
by
DR. HENRY SLONIMSKY

Mr. President, members and friends of the Free Synagogue, and dear Edward Klein and Gerald Raiskin:

You have done me the honor of asking me to take part in these installation exercises tonight, - and the first thought that comes to me as I rise to address you in this place is that I am standing in the pulpit of Stephen Wise.

It is with deep emotion, I assure you, that I recall that powerful and memorable name: - an emotion of pride and humility and longing.

With Stephen Wise's work you two younger men represent the direct continuity in the Synagogue, and I the oldest link in his academic labors. It is fitting that we three should be together in his name and memory tonight.

You, Edward Klein, have not merely taken over and continued his labors in the Synagogue, but you have actually confirmed and strengthened them, and rendered secure that area of his efforts.

And you, dear Gerald, the youngest and therefore the most hopeful and the most full of promise of us all, you who represent a third generation and therefore in a sense that threefold knot of which we are assured in a mystical Hebrew phrase that it cannot be rent asunder - *הַקֶּשֶׁת בְּמַהֲרָה לֹא יִנָּחֵק* ; you are the bridegroom of this occasion, the *חתן הַתּוֹרָה* ; and with the qualities of honesty and devotion and inner preparation, which everyone who knows you knows are in you, the work you will be doing will be well done.

And as for myself, it is not unfitting that I should say a few words on an occasion such as this, concerning the function of the rabbi, and the mutual relation between rabbi and congregation, and the place of the Jew in a world which is growing ever more difficult to live in.

The calling to which Gerald Raitskin has devoted himself is the greatest in the world. Our prophet Isaiah has expressed it in flaming words: "The Lord hath annointed me to bring good tidings unto the humble - to bind up the broken hearted - to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the eyes to them that are bound - to comfort all that mourn." (Is. 61)

To undo the work of despair and death, - to upbuild what fatigue and blindness and cruelty and cowardice are constantly dragging down: - in a word, to counteract the degradation of energy, the law of entropy, in the moral world: - that, it seems to me, is the heart of the religious act, and is such whatever work we may be doing, whatever profession we are engaged in.

And so it seems to me that on the simple empirical plane of human professions the doctor and the nurse are engaged in religious work because they are engaged in the relief of suffering.

True they have to take money for their work, they are implicated in the economic process; but in so far as they have heart left over in excess of the merely economic motivation, as is most often the case, they are performing a religious service.

And so on a higher plane than that of physical disease, the rabbi or priest or whatever name the servant of the religious idea may carry: he will be true to himself and to his calling in so far as he is the healer and strengthener of the human soul.

And though the rabbi is himself frail mortal man, דליל מלך, and has to make a living, and is beset by all the frailties which mortal flesh is heir to, and is subject to all the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune like the rest of us, he will nevertheless with one portion of his being rise above the buffetings of time and chance, like a swimmer's head abreast of the stormy sea, and he will according to his lights, week in and week out, do precisely this one thing that is necessary, namely serve the Divine Image, bring light and healing, healing and light, to the human soul.

Thus far the Rabbi. Now the congregation. What is it?

It is not a passive listener. When it listens it must listen eloquently. There is such a thing as active and eloquent listening, a listening without which no speaker can speak, a listening which with all its silence has escaped into a new dimension of intensity better than any counter-speech.

Imagine a play being given to an empty theatre, a symphony played to an empty hall. The listener, the audience, with its tense eager sympathy, with its resonance, with its polarity, is the active co-operator and co-creator in any work of art or thought or action. There cannot be great poetry unless there are great audiences, so we have been told by our greatest poet (Walt Whitman).

And we are to remember that human life differs from arithmetic in this, that the number two is the first of all numbers. There is no me without a you, no father and husband and lover without the counterpart of child and wife and beloved, and no God without a world which confronts Him.

And so there is no rabbi without the active, co-operating, resonant, sympathetic, silently encouraging and judging and hand-unholding congregation.

And even more than your indulgence for his human frailties, what your Rabbi needs is this living confrontation by human beings, in the less obvious but all the subtler dimensions of intensity and understanding, even though these do not clothe themselves in spoken words.

I cannot properly conclude without mentioning the two great themes with which your Rabbi will be perennially concerned in his life-work of bringing light and healing. These two themes are the belief in God and the acceptance of our destiny as Jews.

The Rabbi must try to believe in God. Belief in God is of course utterly valueless if it is merely verbal. Unless it embody itself in a man's countenance and presence and acts and personal magic it is hollow sound, the emptiest word in the language.

Belief in God is the most difficult thing in the world, and the most important and indispensable, - both. And between the two we are shuttled back and forth in a fever of suspense.

The most difficult: because God is not present where He is most needed, in the Warsaw ghetto and at the death of every forsaken saint and hero.

The most important: because without the faith and assurance in a far-off Godlike goal the world is just ashes and debris.

That is what the Rabbi must struggle for, as Jacob struggled with that angel in the dark night, and he must bring back a blessing even though it leaves him with a limp and a lameness.

The net result in this anguish of the spirit is the realization of the unfinished, the growing character of this world, the view that the world is still in the process of creation: and above all of the greatness, the centrality of man in the cosmic venture. On man's shoulders the work of God has largely fallen. Apparently there seems to be no other agent of God, no other hand or visible instrument of God than man.

Hence man's mistakes lower and defeat God's purposes, and man's heroism and victory raise and extend God's sovereignty.

But if man in his pride may then go on to regard himself as the only manifest and visible godhead, he must presently see that his own heart whenever it is great must still draw its power (how else can it be?) from some hidden unseen godhead, some hidden unseen sea of power. Man is imbedded and rooted in a background which sends him forth to do his work.

And therefore if in our rarest and deepest moments we feel impelled to pray, to pray to a God who can hear and can help, and all our philosophical speculations appear like arrogant blasphemies, we will do what Emerson advised in a similar situation: abjure our philosophy and leave it as Joseph left his coat in the hands of the harlot, and follow the movements of our heart and pray to the old God who is the Rock of Ages (Essay on Self Reliance).

And our destiny as Jews.

It is difficult to be in a minority. It is difficult to be unpopular. It is difficult to be different. In a word it is difficult to be a Jew.

But nature loves differences, no matter how much gregarious man loves conformity. And the Weltgeist operates with the method of differentiation. It takes all the colors to make up a rainbow, each in its difference and each with its exclusive place. And history is the creation of half a dozen widely differing peoples, each one claiming creative priority for itself.

We Jews can merely point to the record. From a group of ancient Palestinian tribes, Ammonites, Moabites, Amorites, all alike or akin in blood, and language, and environment climatic and cultural, with the same sun, wind, desert, and economic life, the Israelites were chosen to be launched on a world-historic career, whilst the

(five)

others dropped off into nameless triviality, into archaeology. By some mysterious decree we were picked to stand at Sinai, as we have been promised to stand at long last on the threshold of a Messianic world.

That involves hardships, but we must have the courage to stand where we have been placed. The weak and cowardly will drop away. They have always done so. But for us the great word of the same prophet was spoken: "Look unto the rock whence ye were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged. Look unto Abraham your father and Sarah that bore you." (Is. 51).

Look to your origins, look to your destiny. It is among the grandest.

But without similar transcendental assumptions as in the case of man, without the immense conviction and commitment that the Jew occupies a central place in the economy of history, as man does in the cosmic venture, it would be impossible to bear the burden of Jewish destiny.

Those in whom that conviction, that commitment, is eroded, are free to deny it. If they do, they drop back into the common stream of the nameless many. But we, who believe in our special destiny and love it, will help to make it true, and we shall be there in the end.

And with this note of inner kinship and love I close. I congratulate all on this occasion of mutual dedication. I congratulate you upon each other, rabbi and congregation, and I bring to you if I may a message and a memory from the old school which Stephen Wise founded for the cultivation of such ideas and of such men.

NL
read
and return

HERBERT FRIEDMAN

File with the

Slonimsky
material



'Echad:' its many interpretations

Echad. The Many Meanings of God is One. Edited by Rabbi Eugene Borowitz, Published by Shma, Box 567, Port Washington, N.Y. 11050. No price given. 102 p.

So you think you know what the Shma, called the watchword of the Jewish faith, means? After all, you can read the English translation in the Bible and several times in your prayerbook.

But don't be too sure. The Hebrew is somewhat ambiguous, as this fascinating paperback will make clear. In fact, the Hebrew is so potentially protean that the distinguished scholars, 26 in number who have essays in this book, find various meanings in the declaration from Deuteronomy (6.4).

They can hardly decide what Echad, translated One, means. Dr. Harry Orlinsky, the eminent Biblical sage, says that some want to know: One what? Rabbi Michael Berenbaum thinks Echad means "coherent." Rabbi J. David Bleich, eminent Orthodox halachist, says it means "unique."

To Rabbi Michael Wyschgorod it denotes "exclusive." But to Rabbi Harold Schulweis, the Conservative luminary, it means "singular."

Educator Sherry Blumberg, one of three women in this symposium, sees in Echad the idea of "loneliness," whereas Rabbi Balfour Brickner opines that it suggests "incomparable." Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman, who teaches theology at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (where most of the essayists in this collection are employed), sees in Echad the notion of "comprehensiveness."

Editor Rabbi Eugene Borowitz, whose 65th birthday was the occasion of this festschrift, likes Echad to suggest "primary." Others think that Echad should really be rendered as "ultimate."

Rabbi Norman Cohen makes it clear that it is in keeping with Jewish tradition to eke out of the Hebrew many interpretations, and Rabbi Arnold Wolf supplements that reminder by relaying an assertion by the late, great Gerhard Scholem that "Heshel Tsores, a Sabbatian heretic...wrote 3000 pages on the significance of the Shma."

The most radical idea

about the Shma is the one by Prof. David Sperling who thinks the word, Echad, is a misprint and should be amended to read Ehab, which would make the statement say: "Love the Lord your God," instead of "the Lord is One."

An interesting aspect of these essays is the way so many of the contributors who are Reform and therefore ostensibly adherents of a rational approach to religion are devotees of mysticism and even anthropomorphism, displaying an emotional reaction to the Jewish faith and the declaration of monotheism, the Shma. Rabbi Martin Cohen, for example, admits to responding to the Bible "viscerally," in apparent contrast to reacting "cerebrally."

A number of the essayists juxtapose the Shma against the statement by the Prophet Zechariah (14.9), which is also in the prayerbook: "On that day the Lord shall be One and His name shall be One." They cite the late, great savant, Dr. Henry Slonimsky, who as paraphrased by Rabbi Paul Steinberg, said "He is not yet One," but mankind can make the Lord One if it can eliminate "misery and poverty and hate and war." To Slonimsky and his disciples, the Shma is therefore a challenge rather than the description of a reality.

As for Rabbi Eugene Borowitz, whose journal called "Shma" was stimulated so many literary feasts like the one in this book, it is hard to believe he is "one." There

must be many Borowitzes, the editor, the professor, the ubiquitous lecturer, the scholar in residence, the author, the theologian, etc.

He reminds me of an Orson Welles tale. Seems he was the speaker at a meeting of a women's club where the attendance was skimpy. Said Welles: "Ladies, I'm an actor, I'm an author, I'm a director, I'm a producer. I appear on stage, on film and on television. Isn't a pity that there are so many of me and so few of you?"

As a coda to this review, let me give just a few of the various ways in which the Shma is rendered in English:

The new Jewish Publication Society Bible: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord alone."

Union Prayerbook: "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One."

Gates of Prayer (Reform): "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One."

The Artscroll Prayerbook: "Hear O Israel, Ha-Shem is our God, the One and Only."

The Revised Standard Version (Protestant): "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord."

Rabbi's Manual: "Hear, O Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One."

Moffat: "Listen, Israel: the Eternal, the Eternal Alone is our God."

Rashi: "What it means: the Lord Who is now our God and not the God of the other peoples of the world, He will at some future time be the One (sole) God." (Samuel Silver)

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