



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE  
**AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES**

**MS-763: Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman Collection, 1930-2004.**

Series E: Sermons, Speeches, and Writings, 1933-1959.

---

Box  
15

Folder  
10

"Why Was Spinoza Excommunicated?" 22 October 1954.

For more information on this collection, please see the finding aid on the  
American Jewish Archives website.

---



# The Temple Bulletin

OF  
Congregation Emanu-El B'ne  
Jeshurun  
Milwaukee 11, Wisconsin

Vol. 22, No. 3

October 20, 1954

Tishri 23, 5715

## Sabbath Services

Friday Evening, October 22, at 8 o'clock

RABBI HERBERT A. FRIEDMAN

will speak on:

"WHY WAS SPINOZA EXCOMMUNICATED?"

Friday Evening, October 29, at 8 o'clock

RABBI HERBERT A. FRIEDMAN

will speak on:

"SHOULD THE CLERGYMAN STAY OUT OF POLITICS?"

A Pre-Election Sermon

## Sabbath Morning Services

11:15 a.m.

Saturday Morning, October 23, 11:15 o'clock

DAVID APFELBERG

son of Dr. and Mrs. Herbert Apfelberg  
will be Bar Mitzvah

## THE TEMPLE BULLETIN

Published by

Congregation Emanu-El B'ne Jeshurun  
2419 E. Kenwood Boulevard  
Telephone — EDgewood 2-6960

Affiliated with the  
Union of American Hebrew Congregations

Herbert A. Friedman \_\_\_\_\_ Rabbi  
Joseph L. Baron \_\_\_\_\_ Rabbi Emeritus  
Sol Altschuller \_\_\_\_\_ Cantor  
Herman Weil \_\_\_\_\_ Director Religious Ed.

### OFFICERS

Edward R. Prince \_\_\_\_\_ President  
Charles L. Goldberg \_\_\_\_\_ Vice-President  
Herman A. Mosher \_\_\_\_\_ Treasurer  
Lillian Friedman \_\_\_\_\_ Executive Secretary

## *Kaddish List*

(Taken from Memorial Tablets)

October 22

Ruth Baruch Baum  
Louis Feld  
Isaac Gottschalk  
Henry Heller  
Gusta Sondel  
Ellen Weisskopf

October 29

Alvin Goetz Baum  
A. Edward Housmann  
Gabriel Pauntz  
Max Spero

## SERMON NOTES

### WHY WAS SPINOZA EXCOMMUNICATED?

October 22

In 1656 Baruch de Spinoza was excommunicated by the elders of the community of Amsterdam. The ban, or cherem, was serious in those days, for it meant that no man was even to speak to him.

Recently Mr. David Ben Gurion wrote an article suggesting that the ban be rescinded and that the proper act of atonement would be for the Hebrew University to publish the philosopher's complete works two years hence on the 300th anniversary of the famous curse.

The Rabbi and Board of the Congregation in Amsterdam have announced their intention of doing nothing about Ben Gurion's proposal. Much argument has raged. What are the pros and cons? Why was the terrible sentence passed three centuries ago? What did Spinoza do or say to warrant the ban? Was he a dangerous heretic? Should he be forgiven today?

H.A.F.

### SHOULD THE CLERGYMAN STAY OUT OF POLITICS?

#### A PRE-ELECTION SERMON

October 29

It has been my custom for many years to preach a sermon on the Friday evening before the first Tuesday of November. This might be called a "political" sermon, for it deals with the issues at stake in the impending election. I have tried to avoid speaking about individual candidates and partisan issues searching instead for the moral issues. But this often involves a rather careful look at men and parties, in order to point up the moral issues. The naming of names sometimes cannot be helped.

The whole process has been questioned by those who contend that politics and economics and allied social problems should not be discussed in the pulpit. Religion should not mix into politics, we are told. Each shoemaker should stick to his own last. Clergymen should not express political opinions. What do you think of this point of view?

H.A.F.

## NOTICE

Rabbi Friedman has loaned a book of pictures of Nazi atrocities to some member of the Congregation. He failed to mark down the name. The book is valuable in the sense that it was published in Poland in 1946 and is not obtainable in this country. The rabbi would appreciate its return, and promises not to be so absent minded in the future.



## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS



The following list includes members of the Congregation who have joined since November 1953, the last time a list of new members appeared in our Bulletin.

Louis B. Aderman	Howard Kaplan	Harry Schlar
Frederick Alexander	Harold E. Katz	David N. Schemnitz
Sol E. Arkin	Gordon S. Kaufer	William H. Schield, Jr.
Fred Bamberger	Leo Kissel	Art Schmidman
Abraham H. Berkovits	Mrs. Sarah Koltin	Sol Schmidman
Fred Berman	Louis Kraft	Mrs. Genevieve Schneider
Gene A. Berman	Robert Kritzik	Adolph Schwartz
Ross Browender	Stanley Kritzik	Joseph Schwartz
Louis Chapman	Lester Langer	Ralph A. Schwartz
Harold Cohan	Maxwell A. Lerner	Robert Shamaskin
Meyer Cole	Dr. Jules D. Levin	Vernon Sherkow
Myron Coplan	Willard Le Vine	Bernard Sherman
Julius Dann	Jack A. Levings	Daniel Shraga
Frank I. Dichter	Jack Lewin	Sandor Sigmund
Samuel Ettinger	Merton H. Lewis	Miss Burnette Silbar
Arno Frankton	J. Harvey Loeb	Herbert A. Silver
Nathan Fredman	Herbert Maier	Ben Sklar
Zalman Friedman	Bernard B. Marcus	Mrs. Henry Solomon
Lawrence Fuhr	Jack L. Meyer	George Spector
E. B. Garrison	Miss Anne Miller	Martin R. Spero
Abe Gillman	Edward P. Milner	Charles F. Stein
C. Ellis Goldstein	Dr. Benjamin G. Narodick	Oliver Steiner
Charles M. Gordon	Ben Jack Pierson	Sigmund C. Stern
Stanley Gordon	Miss Janet Pollak	Sheldon Stone
Fred Gordy	Miss Marjorie Pollak	Royal Taxman
Dr. Leonard Gorenstein	Lou Poller	Philip Tolkan
Eugene Gorski	Mrs. Ida Pordes	Mrs. Dorothy Weil
Louis J. Greenbaum, Jr.	Jean J. Pruss	Albert A. Weiner
Alvin Greenberg	Dr. Hans Reich	Theresa Weinstock
Lester Gunsburg	Irving Ross	Lawrence A. Willenson
Paul Guten	Ira Sofer	Elliot Winterfield
Sidney Hack	Adolph Samuel	Mrs. Ben Wishner
Alfred Hirsch	Arthur Santley	Arnold Zellin
Mrs. Adolf Kann	Milton Sax	Robert Zucker
	Harry Scheer	

### GREAT LAKES REGIONAL MEETING

November 20-21

Members of our Congregation are cordially invited to attend the Great Lakes Regional Meeting of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations at St. Paul, Minnesota during the weekend of November 20-21.

If you plan on being in the vicinity of St. Paul during that time, please call Miss Friedman at the Temple Office and arrangements will be made for your attendance.

Mr. Herman Mosher is President of the Great Lakes Council.

### GEORGE LOWE LEAVES BEQUESTS

In an act of love, Mr. George Lowe, late president of the Men's Club, included in his bequests the sum of \$500.00 each to the Temple and the Men's Club. This was a fine deed and is accepted with appreciation by both groups.

The Men's Club is now in the process of planning a George Lowe Memorial. If you wish to contribute to this Fund, please contact Mr. Joseph Mandel, 4766 N. Hollywood Avenue.



# TEMPLE BOND DINNER

Sunday Evening, November 7, at 6 o'clock  
at the Astor Hotel



*Honorable ABBA EBAN*

Ambassador of Israel to the United States

will be the guest speaker

in the interest of

Israel Government Bonds



Mr. Lawrence S. Katz, Chairman of the dinner, is accepting reservations  
now at \$4.00 per plate, at 2419 E. Kenwood Boulevard.

THE TEMPLE BULLETIN  
2419 E. Kenwood Boulevard  
Milwaukee 11, Wis.

Sec. 34.65(e) P.L.&R.

U. S. POSTAGE

**PAID**

Milwaukee, Wis.

Permit No. 3037

## Outline of Sermon

I. Ben Gurion's Proposal - Amsterdam Turn-Down

II. Story of Spinoza's Life

b - Amsterdam 1632 - of Marrano family went to Jewish school,  
studied Bible, Talmud, Cabala under Saul Levy Morteria and  
Manassah ben Israel

---

wanted more knowledge - studied Latin, mathematics, natural  
science, philosophy.

---

Placed in Cherem 1656 (age 24) for heretical views

---

Lived in the country with friends

Very poor - lens grinding his livelihood

Evoked storm of antagonism from Church

Only one book published in life - other posthumously

d-The Hague, of tuberculosis, age 44

III. Reasons for the ban

1. Views on Torah

Spinoza was not a renegade or a convert. He remained  
a Jew, but he taught a dangerous message - namely, that the  
Jewish Torah, the Book of Law, was written merely as a state  
law and was to be regarded only as such and nothing else,  
and inasmuch as the Jewish State had ceased to exist, the  
Jews of the world were no longer bound by the laws of the  
Torah. The Torah, in his opinion, was written designed and  
meant for the physical comfort and security of the State of  
Israel.



He tried, with his Talmudically-trained mind, to persuade the Jewish youth of Amsterdam to disregard the laws of the Torah as being obsolete; this without thinking that thus he would leave the widely dispersed and cruelly oppressed tribes of Israel without their great inner refuge. From his own people Spinoza wanted to take the book. The Jewish leaders were terrified at this prospect. Some stories say they offered him a bribe. Other stories say there was an assassination attempt as he left the theater one night. Finally they placed the ban on him.

Spinoza posits in the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus the only condition under which the Torah, in his opinion, might become valid again, namely, through the re-creation of a Jewish state, which, he meditates, is quite a possibility, considering the changing fortunes of world history.

2. Views on miracles: (T-P)

"If events are found in the Bible which we cannot refer to their causes, nay, which seem entirely to contradict the order of nature, we must not come to a stand, but assuredly believe that whatever did really happen happened naturally."

3. Spinoza did not observe ritual laws - Sabbath, Kosher, etc.
4. Spinoza did not believe in corporeality of God ( God was not outside the world, but in it.)
5. Spinoza did not believe in angels
6. Spinoza did not believe in immortality
7. Spinoza did not believe in the Godly origin of the Bible.



#### IV. Details of scene and formula of excommunication

Cherem - 27 July 1656

Great Synagogue packed

Black altar candles lighted

Shofar Blown

Ban read

"In accordance with the decrees of the Angels and the judgment of the Saints, we banish, expel, execrate and curse Baruch de Espinoza; with the consent of Holy God, and by agreement of this entire holy congregation; by virtue of the sacred Books of the Law with the six hundred and thirteen precepts inscribed therein; with the ban with which Joshua banned Jericho; with the curse with which Eliza cursed the boys; and with all the maledictions as they are written in the Law! Cursed shall he be in the daytime, and cursed also by night! Cursed shall he be when he lieth down, and cursed when he riseth up! Cursed shall he be when he goeth out, and cursed when he cometh in! May the Lord not forgive him his sins! May the Lord's anger and wrath rage against this man, and cast upon him all the imprecations that are written in the Book of the Law! May the Lord wipe out his name from under the Heavens; and may the Lord destroy him and cast him out from all the Tribes of Israel, with all the maledictions that are written in the Book of the Law! But ye who cleave unto the Lord our God, may ye live forever in union!"

After the ban, he wrote a defense, entitled "Apologsa"  
It was a higher criticism of the Bible, a method of interpretation, which was attacked at that time, but which is today the foundation of all biblical research. He demonstrated that men had altered and transformed the Holy Writ, and that the divine repute of the Scriptures had after all been due to the work of men.



## V. Spinoza's major ideas

### A. What is God:

"God was demonstrated to be the first cause of all things and also the cause of Himself. He was no longer an anthropomorphic Being, no longer the good Father of all living creatures, no longer the King of Men who dwelt beyond the world of men. He was a Being endowed with limitless and countless attributes, a Being in whose infinite intelligence there was no other substance than that in Nature."

"Since God is the one great unity, soul and body are His attributes. Their antithesis is accommodated by the unity of the Substance to which they belong. There is only this one Substance, which exists of itself and to which all other attributes belong; so that infinite extension and eternal though "are nothing else but modes of the one, eternal, never-ending essence, existing by its own innate power."

"A God Who is Nature, and Whose properties are soul and body, cannot conceive of good and evil in the form of things or actions, for good and evil are not to be found in Nature. Valuations such as these are only possible in relation to our ideas of them, but not in relation to God or Nature."

"For since Theology considers God in every way as a perfect Being, it is proper that in Theology it should be said that God is demanding something, or that God is displeased with the actions of the godless, and is pleased with the actions of the pious. But in Philosophy, we know absolutely that those attributes which make men perfect, can no more be ascribed and imputed to God, than that which makes an elephant or a donkey perfect can be attributed to man; in this sphere, these



and similar words have no place and cannot be used without the greatest confusion in our conceptions. In order, therefore, to speak philosophically, one must not say that God demands something of someone, and for the same reason, that something pleases or displeases Him. These are all human attributes which are out of place with regard to God."

Pantheism denotes any system of belief which includes the teaching "God is all and all is God." Pantheism identifies the universe with God or God with the universe..

If the pantheist starts with the belief that the one great reality, eternal and infinite, is God, he sees everything finite and temporal as but some part of God. There is nothing separate or distinct from God, for God is the universe.

If, on the other hand, the conception taken is that the great inclusive unity is the world itself, or the universe, God is swallowed up in that unity which may be designated nature.

In Spinoza is found what is considered the most complete and precise expression of pantheism of all times. In it God is the unlimited, all-inclusive substance, the first cause of the universe, with innumerable attributes, two of which, thinking and extension, (motion in matter) are capable of being perceived.

---

#### B. His idea of the State

"The purpose of the State is freedom"

"Government also had the duty to afford liberty to each individual to say and to teach what he thought. The basic principles of the State and those of the mind must agree; and finally,



every one must be convinced "that the ultimate aim of government is not to rule or restrain by fear, nor to exact obedience, but on the contrary, to free each man from fear so that he may live in all possible security; in other words, to strengthen his natural right to exist and to work without injury to himself or others. The object of government is not to change men from rational beings into beasts or automations, but rather to enable them to develop their minds and bodies in security, and to employ their reason unshackled, neither opposing each other with animosity. In fact, the true aim of government is liberty."

C. His idea of the intellectual love of God as the goal of ethical living.

"The fifth part of the work, "Ethics" elucidates the ethical goal of the love of God. It is equally the goal of truth as well as human freedom and moral conduct. There is no good and evil in the sense of absolute dogma. Morality lies in the individual himself, in a clear understanding of the nature of his emotions and of his reason. It is in rational knowledge that we find our happiness, and both bless us in our intellectual love of God. This love is common to all people. It is a good which we desire so that all may rejoice in it."

"The free man who recognizes the good emotions, obeys reason and realizes the love of God, fulfills the ideal of a virtuous conduct of life."

D. Spinoza's real role.

"The liberation of philosophy from theology has here actually been accomplished. Even Bacon, Descartes and Leibnitz were



not fully able to free themselves from theological authority. Only Spinoza accomplished this mission which the spirit of the Renaissance had imposed upon history; only Spinoza conquered for reason a realm of its own. Only thus were pure philosophy and science possible, independent of all theological dogma and the power of the Church. Much as the theories of subsequent philosophers may vary, they were all made possible only by Spinoza's act of liberation."

"Spinoza was the emancipator of reason in the new era. This emancipation also gave to the world a new experience of God, an experience redeemed from dogma and superstition, from empty verbiage and fatuity. He broke the shackles of superstition and outworn tradition on behalf of philosophy. God was no longer an image of man. The slave no longer prayed to a Master; nor did the son pray to a Father; but it was rather the human being who prayed to a universal, ethical and metaphysical essence encompassing all existence."

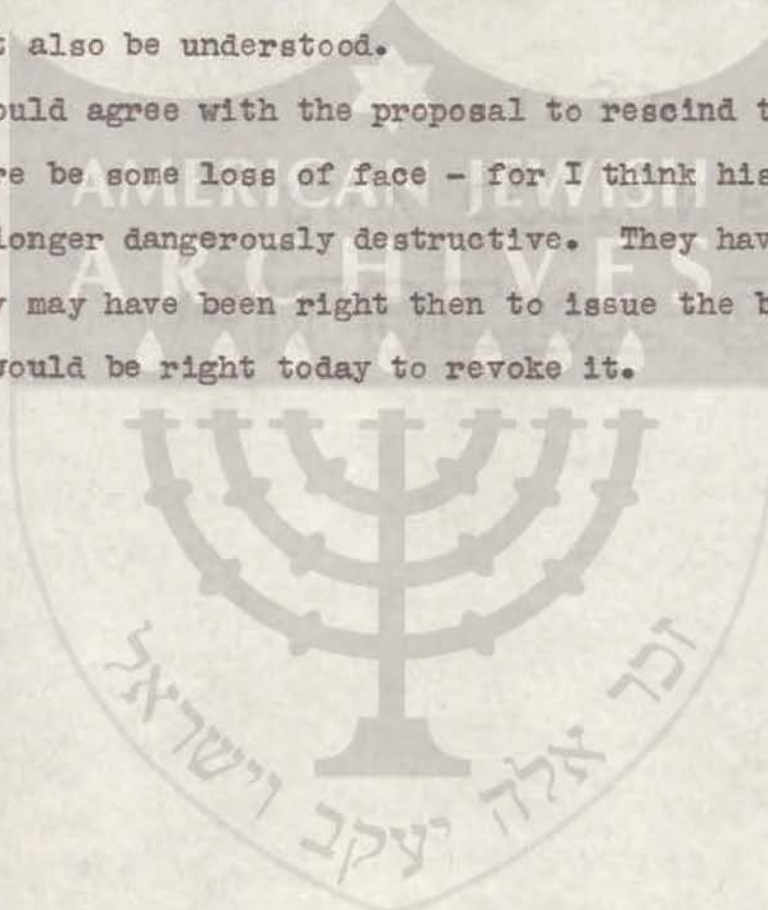
"People desired a God beyond dogma, bound to the mysterious emotions of the soul, linked with nature and all existence. The most decisive feature in this new religious yearning was the desire to widen the conception of God. They found in Spinoza an answer to this yearning and they greeted him as the herald of a new world religion. This religion was fiercely contested. Spinoza became the center of a struggle."

"Spinoza became the leading figure of a new religious spirit in which God was no longer merely a subject for theological dogma and empty ceremony but the highest pinnacle of a world system in

which nature and intelligence, faith and knowledge, were all united. In this idea of God all conflicts of earthly existence are resolved."

VI. Conclusion -

- A. Mood of Marranos, who suffered for the faith he was destroying, must be taken into account
- B. Mood of Ben Gurion, who would re-embrace a great thinker, must also be understood.
- C. I would agree with the proposal to rescind the ban, even if there be some loss of face - for I think his ideas are no longer dangerously destructive. They have been accepted. They may have been right then to issue the ban. We would be right today to revoke it.





## The Subversive God

A census taken in Yugoslavia early this year showed that 84% of the people still believe in God after nine years of life under Communism. So reported a U.S. newsman from Belgrade last week. At a time of grave political and military defeats for the West, this figure marks a significant spiritual victory. Westerners who complain that they lack an "ideology" to oppose Communism overlook Christianity.

The Communists themselves are not overlooking it. Last week brought news from Communist countries of a strong new drive against the "subversive" forces of religion.

¶ In Moscow, *Pravda* front-paged an editorial scolding the Communist Party, trade unions and youth organizations for shirking their duty of stamping out God. Children, *Pravda* complained, are especially vulnerable to these dangerous doctrines. The *Literary Gazette* complained that farmers in the province of Kirov had recently been allowed to abandon their fields for a three-day religious festival that was "only an excuse for drinking." And the trade-union paper, *Trud*, demanded that the government close down a spring near Moscow that has been attracting thousands (including even some Soviet bigwigs) to its "healing waters."

¶ In Germany's Soviet zone, Communist mouthpieces took up the hue and cry against some East German Protestant clergymen who were too outspoken at the recent *Kirchentag* held by the Evangelical Church in Leipzig.

¶ In Yugoslavia, Metropolitan Arsenije Bradavac, 71, of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro, was sentenced to 11½ years of solitary confinement in prison. The indictment was not published, but the metropolitan's offenses were clear. He had boldly led the fight against a Communist-run front organization of fellow-traveling priests, and had refused to resign his post when the government ordered him to.

¶ In Hungary, factory workers noticed that scrap metal delivered to them contained fragments of church bells.

¶ In Prague, after a two-day trial, Czechoslovakia's supreme court sentenced Roman Catholic Bishop Stepan Trochta, 49, of Litomerice, to 25 years in prison for "spying" for the Vatican. At the same time three priests who were associated with him were sentenced to 20, 15 and seven years. As a leader of resistance against the Nazis and a known friend to Christians, Jews and Communists during years as a prisoner in Mauthausen and Dachau concentration camps, Trochta was long wooed by the Czech Communist regime, which hoped to turn him into a "progressive" bishop. Trochta himself had hoped to get along with the state by sticking strictly to "the things that are God's," found that under Communism, Caesar demands all things.

## The Church & the Cactus

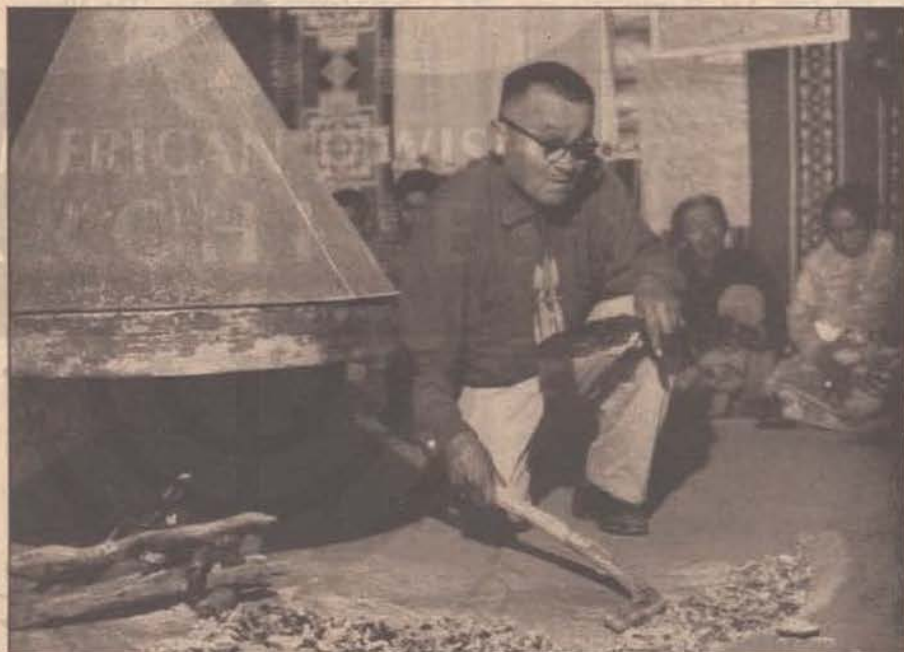
*"In the first creation, God himself used to talk to the people and tell them what to do. Way after, Christ came among the white people and told the people what to do... White people have everything... The Indian got nothing. But in a little while, toward the last, God gave us peyote; that's how we happened to find God."*

So an old Indian described the origin of the Native American Church (about 65,000 members). Last week the N.A.C. met near Tama, Iowa for its tenth annual convention, worried that white men and some of their fellow Indians are trying to take the gift of peyote away from them.

**The Sacred Button.** Peyote (pronounced pay-oh-tee) is a small, carrot-shaped cactus that grows wild in the valley of the

man uses prayers out of a book; they are just words on his lips. But with us, peyote teaches us to talk from our hearts."

**The Last Possession.** Last week 22 delegates from eleven tribes wound up their four-day annual meeting with the traditional peyote ceremony. Into a large, canvas-covered tepee near the home of Howard Poweshiek, leader of the church on the reservation in Iowa, the Indians stepped quietly in single file. It was sun-down. Dressed mostly in jeans or slacks and open shirts, the men sat cross-legged on the bare earth, facing a fire. Each helped himself to the peyote buttons that were passed around, and from time to time someone lit up a ceremonial cigarette (Bull Durham tobacco and corn husks). Until 7:30 the next morning, the big tepee was filled with prayers and gentle chants, and the soft rhythmic beat of the gourd. There was a "Fire Chief" to tend the fire, a "Cedar Chief" to sprinkle



Dave Weber

PEYOTE CEREMONY IN ARIZONA  
With fire and drum, closer to God.

Rio Grande. Cut off and dried, its top forms a bitter-tasting "button" that, eaten or brewed as tea, is capable of strong and strange effects upon the mind. Just what the effects are has not yet been scientifically determined.\* The Indians have known about peyote for centuries; Cortez' men found the Aztecs using it when they invaded Mexico. It has always been associated with religious ceremony.

With the organization of the Native American Church (approximately 1918), the peyote cult was formally Christianized. Members of the church believe in the Trinity and in the divinity of Christ; peyote helps them experience their faith as an immediate reality. According to one anthropologist the Indians say: "A white

powdered cedar into the flames, and a "Drummer Chief" to keep up the music. The ritual varies slightly from tribe to tribe; sometimes, as in a ceremony last month near Window Rock, Ariz., the sacred button is revered as "Father Peyote."

At the Tama meeting, the delegates re-elected 58-year-old Allen P. Dale, a relief investigator from Vinita, Okla., for his fifth term as president. President Dale's report took triumphant note of a recent amendment to the Texas narcotics act to exempt peyote.

"We Accept..." But there was still plenty to worry about. Traditionalists among the Indians are opposed to the burgeoning Native Church because they fear it undercuts the older, pre-Christian tribal customs. Many Christian missionaries want to see the church outlawed altogether. In 1940 the Navajo Tribal Council forbade the use of peyote, and this year arrested 13 members of the

\* In his latest book, *The Doors of Perception*, Novelist Aldous Huxley prescribes mescaline, a derivative of peyote, for all mankind as an alternative to cocktails.



# Who will write on tennis for SPORTS ILLUSTRATED?



**B**ILL Talbert, the tennis writer for **SPORTS ILLUSTRATED**, is the captain of the United States Davis Cup team. For 12 years in a row (1941-1952) he was among the first 10 players in the national rankings. In 1946 he and Gardner Mulloy permanently retired the national doubles cup, which had been in competition since 1923. In 1950 he incidentally ranked both 1st and 2nd in doubles (1st with Trabert, 2nd with Mulloy).

**H**E did not take up tennis until he was 14, when the diabetes which hit him four years earlier was finally under control. Two months later he was in the quarter finals of the Boys' Nationals.

**A**S Davis Cup captain in tennis-mad Australia last winter, he handled one of the toughest public relations jobs in the world. (He also played in the doubles, one of the two matches the U. S. team won.) When he left, the Down Under newspapermen, who, it has been said, write with hatchets instead of typewriters, gave him a silver tray—for co-operation.

**N**OW Talbert himself is a member of the press. When we saw his first copy, we were plain delighted to find that he could write about tennis as well as he can play it, which many say is just about as well as it can be played. He writes with a love of the game he knows from the bottom to the very top.

**T**O play tennis, Talbert has traveled more than 600,000 miles, or roughly to the moon and back and on the way to the moon again. He has played it almost wherever it is played, and tennis is the most international of games. Just about now he is in the Eastern Lawn Tennis championships at Orange, New Jersey.

**S**OMETIMES it looks as if he's determined to be the "grand old man of tennis" at the strapping age of 35. And Bill Talbert will soon be telling you all about it in **SPORTS ILLUSTRATED**.

# SPORTS

ILLUSTRATED

Charter Subscription Rate \$6 for 52 weekly issues. First issue out August 13th. Address: 540 North Michigan Ave., Chicago 11, Illinois.

Native American Church for breaking this law. "They have taken everything from the Indian," said Dale. "Now, through their missionaries, they want to take our last possession, our lifeline, our religion . . . We accept Jesus Christ and the Bible. We are Christians."

## The Calvin Lineage

At Princeton Theological Seminary last week, 400 delegates bravely battled the heat and the static in the little receiving sets that picked up the French, German and English translations of what was going on. Whatever it was, they could be sure it was Presbyterian. The 17th General Council of the World Presbyterian Alliance, representing 40 million communicants in 46 countries, was in session. Among other accomplishments, the delegates 1) adopted a new, more centralized constitution to replace the original adopted at London in 1875, 2) gave themselves a breath-taking new name: "The Alliance of the Reformed Churches Throughout the World Holding the Presbyterian Order," and 3) elected the Rev. Marcel Pradervand of Geneva, executive secretary of the council for the past six years, to the new office of general secretary.

The Rev. Henry Pitney Van Dusen, President of Manhattan's Union Theological Seminary, placed the Reformed churches squarely in the center of the ecumenical movement, recalled Calvin's own plans for a Protestant federation: "Ardor for the ideal of Christian unity [is] laid as an inescapable obligation upon all those who acknowledge the spiritual lineage of John Calvin."

Present from behind the Iron Curtain was Czechoslovakia's Joseph Hromadka, wartime lecturer at Princeton and Dean of Prague's state-controlled Theological Faculty, who collaborates with the Communists. Dr. Hromadka listened as Dr. Eugene Carson Blake of Philadelphia said pointedly: "When in the considered and prayerful judgment of a church [its] freedom . . . is essentially abridged by state or society, it is the duty of the church to say no to the state and no to the society . . ."

## Anathema

In the bright light of freedom in 17th century Amsterdam, the little band of Jews from Spain and Portugal still felt afraid and hunted. They were marranos (meaning "swine" or "accursed"), victims of forcible baptism as Christians under the terror of the Inquisition; now that they could practice Judaism openly in their new home, they did so with ferocious tenacity. When in 1656 a young scholar among them dared to range his brilliant mind beyond the confines of the faith—he doubted the existence of angels, the incorporeality of God and the soul's immortality, later recognized Jesus as a bearer of divine wisdom—the leaders of the Jewish community cast him out.

"With the judgment of the angels and of the saints we excommunicate, cut off, curse and anathematize Baruch de Spinoza . . . in the presence of the Holy Books,



BARUCH SPINOZA

The judgment of the angels upheld.

by the 613 precepts which are written therein, with the anathema wherewith Joshua cursed Jericho, with the curse which Elisha laid upon the children, and with all the curses which are written in the Law. Cursed be he by day, and cursed be he by night. Cursed be he in sleeping, and cursed be he in waking . . . And we warn you, there shall no man speak to him, no man write to him nor show any kindness to him . . . nor come within four cubits of him, nor read any paper composed or written by him."

But the papers composed and written by Spinoza came to be read all over the Western world. When he died in 1677, the man who wrote that "our greatest joy exists in our love of God, and . . . every love, of necessity, results from the acknowledgment of God" had also helped give philosophy a turn that is still felt in many fields. He believed that the churches must be subject to the state, led the way to the "higher criticism" of the Bible and even developed a theory of emergent evolution. He also supplied a collection of phrases that have worn down to clichés: e.g., "Man is a social animal," "Nature abhors a vacuum."

Early this year, Israel's ex-Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion called upon Judaism to rescind its excommunication of Spinoza and proposed that, as a kind of atonement, the Hebrew University publish the philosopher's complete works two years hence on the 300th anniversary of the famous curse.

Last week Salomon Rodrigues Pereira, chief rabbi of the Amsterdam community, announced that the excommunication and anathema must stand. "When I became chief rabbi," he said, "I accepted the rulings of my predecessors. No rabbinate has the right to review a decision of previous rabbinate unless it is greater in number and wiser. I don't consider myself wiser than those who came before me."



## Outline of Sermon

Ben Hurion's Proposal - Amsterdam Turn-Down

B.B.'s proposal - (X)

Story of <sup>spiritual</sup> life - (X)

Reasons for the ban (I, II)

~~Describe~~ Details of case + the formula of excommunication (II)

Quick ~~summary~~ of S.'s major ideas

A. What is God?

12-1, 2, 3 underlined

141 underlined

PP on pantheism (page 6)

B. His idea of the State

"The purpose of the State is freedom"

223, 4 underlined

C. His idea of the intellectual love of God as the goal of ethical living  
294 - underlined

D. Spinoza's real life

296 underlined

two last P on III

VI Conclusion -

A. Mood of Marinus, who suffered for the faith he was destroyed, must be taken into account

B. Mood of B.B., who would re-embark a great struggle, must also be understood.

C. I would agree with the proposal to revoke the ban, even if there be some loss of face - for I think his ideas are no longer <sup>dangerously</sup> destructive. They have been accepted. They may have been right then to issue the ban. We would be right today to revoke it.

RABBI HERBERT A. FRIEDMAN  
TEMPLE EMANUEL B'NE JESHURUN  
2419 EAST KENWOOD BOULEVARD  
MILWAUKEE 11, WISCONSIN

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

(Y)

TO:

## II. Facts of his life

b - Amsterdam 1632 - of Marrano family  
went to Jewish school, studied Bible, Talmud, <sup>Cabala</sup>  
under Saul Levy Monteiin & Menasseh ben Israel

wanted more knowledge - studied Latin, mathematics,  
natural science, philosophy.

Placed in charem 1656 (age 24) for heretical views

Lived in the country with friends  
Very poor - lens grinding his livelihood  
Evoked storm of antagonism from Church  
<sup>only one book published in life - others posthumous</sup>

d - The Hague, of tuberculosis, age 44.



All following pages  
from Columbia Encyclopedia

A

Spinoza's system of philosophy is based on a monistic theory in which all existence is embraced in one substance - God. Nothing finite is self-sufficient, only the infinite can be truly substantial, and the separate things of existence & life are but aspects of infinite divinity. This divinity, sometimes called Nature, includes all existence within its being; mind and matter, time, everything that occurs or appears, all is but manifestation of God - is God.

Spinoza thus denied absolutely the possibility of immortality of a personal sort. He was led to a complete pantheism wherein there can be no free will and no chance. The apparent evil of the world exists only from the viewpoint of finite creatures, it does not exist when seen as part of the whole.

All persons are naturally self-seeking, since self-preservation is a fundamental motive. Where the passions operate in egoistic blindness men are not free; but when, through understanding, men perceive God's order they are free in acknowledgment of it. The "intellectual love of God" is the result of understanding that all things are necessary and of realizing the self as part of the unlimited. The wise man sees events under the aspect of eternity (*sub specie aeternitatis*); time means nothing and life is lived with dignity.

Spinoza was an exponent of democratic government and urged the subordination of the Church to the state. He made a ringing defense of freedom of opinion and sought above all to liberate men from fear.

His pantheism seemed blasphemous to his time and some of his works were not allowed to be published during his life. Later thinkers thought differently of his work. Goethe, Lessing and Heider found it admirable. Many recent philosophers accord him the highest of praise.



(Back-  
all back)

B

Pantheism denotes any system of belief which includes the teaching "God is all and all is God."

Pantheism identifies the universe with God ~~and~~ or God with the universe.

If the pantheist starts with the belief that the one great reality, eternal and infinite, is God, he sees everything finite and temporal as but some part of God. There is nothing separate & distinct from God, for God is the universe.

If, on the other hand, the conception taken is that the great inclusive unity is the world itself, or the universe, God is swallowed up in that unity which may be designated nature.

In Spinoza is found what is considered the most complete and precise expression of pantheism of all times. In it God is the unlimited, all-inclusive substance, the first cause of the universe, with innumerable attributes, two of which, <sup>(motion & matter)</sup> thinking and extension, are capable of being perceived.

Theism is the belief in a personal God.

It is of course opposed to atheism and agnosticism and is to be distinguished from Pantheism and deism.

Theism is distinguished from pantheism in that, while it holds to the immanence of God, it refuses to identify God & the cosmos.

Theism differs from the deism of the 18th-century thinkers in that it rejects the deists' insistence on the purely transcendent nature of God, holding that God is at once transcendent & immanent.

Deists - term applied to those thinkers of 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> centuries who held that the course of nature sufficiently demonstrates the existence of God. For them formal religion was superfluous, and they scorned as



superstitions claims of supernatural revelation. Many of them believed that God stands apart from human affairs. Their tenets stemmed from the rationalism of the period, and though the word deist is not now generally used, the tenor of their belief persists. The term free thinker is almost synonymous. Voltaire + Rousseau were deists as were Franklin + Jefferson.





(Greek -  
belief in one)

Monism is a term in metaphysics applied to that type of theory which seeks to explain the universe with all its phenomena by a single principle, thus reducing the whole of reality to unity of some kind.

In seeking to explain the contradictions apparent in a world where mind seems to be distinct from matter and soul seems to be distinct from body, monistic theories differ considerably in the choice of the principle which is made the basis of unification.

It may be material, if substance and energy of a physical nature be regarded as the only reality; or it may be spiritual, if mind or spirit be taken as the reality by which all is to be explained. The resulting systems then will represent materialistic (naturalistic) or idealistic (spiritualistic) monism. Or an ultimate principle may be adopted in which the opposites are shown to be in equipoise.

Spinoza furnishes an example of the material and the spiritual in equipoise in his doctrine of the substance (or Deity), of which the phenomena of all that has space-filling quality (physical bodies) and of all that has consciousness (mind - spirit) are the attributes.



1. Story of his life
2. B.G.'s proposal
3. Story of S. life
4. Maja Idens.
5. Conclusion

A. Moral of Marranos, who suffered, must be taken into account  
 B. Moral of B.G., who would re-embrace a great thinker, must also be understood.  
 I would agree with proposal, even if there be some loss of face.

③  
 Reasons for conversion

I. Views on Torah

Spinoza was not a renegade or a convert. He remained a Jew, but he taught a dangerous message - namely, that the Jewish Torah, the Book of Law, was written merely as a state law and was to be regarded only as such and nothing else, and inasmuch as the Jewish State had ceased to exist, the Jews of the world were no longer bound by the laws of the Torah. The Torah, in his opinion, was written, designed and meant for the physical comfort and security of the State of Israel.

He tried, with his sublimely trained mind, to persuade the Jewish youth of Amsterdam to disregard the laws of the Torah as being obsolete; this without thinking that thus he would leave the widely dispersed and cruelly oppressed tribes of Israel without their great inner refuge. From his own people Spinoza wanted to take the book. The Jewish <sup>leaders</sup> were terrified at this prospect. Some stories say they offered him a bribe. Other stories say there was an assassination attempt as he left the market one night. Finally they placed the ban on him.

(over)



Spinoza posits in the Treatatus Theologico-Politicus  
the only condition under which the Torah, in his opinion,  
might become valid again, namely, through the  
re-creation of a Jewish state which, he meditates,  
is quite a possibility, considering the changing fortunes of  
world history.

Nietzsche first pointed out that Spinoza never  
forgave his people the excommunication.

~~Spinoza's own view~~

AMERICAN JEWISH  
ARCHIVES





## II. Views on Miracles

11

### 2. Spinoza's <sup>Views</sup> ~~own~~ words on miracles: (T-P)

"If events are found in the Bible which we cannot refer to their causes, nay, which seem entirely to contradict the order of nature, we must not come to a stand, but assuredly believe that whatever did really happen happened naturally."

- III. 3 S. did not observe ritual laws - Sabbath, Kosher, etc.  
4 S. did not believe in corporeality of God (God was not outside the world, but in it.)  
5 S. did not believe in angels  
6 S. did not believe in immortality  
7 S. did not believe in the bodily origin of the Bible.

## IV. Cheren - 27 July 1656

Great Synagogue packed  
Black altar candles lighted  
Shofar blown  
Bach read

(quote - p. 97 - Kasper's book)

After the ban, he wrote a defense, entitled "Apologia"

It was a higher criticism of the Bible, <sup>a method of interpretation</sup> which was attacked at that time, but which is today the foundation of all biblical research. He demonstrated that men had altered & transformed the Holy Writ, and that the divine revelation of the scriptures had after all been due to the work of men.



~~What~~ What was Spinoza's idea of God ?

121, 22, 23 - Kayser  
141

---

Spinoza's idea of the State

190  
223 to provide freedom of thought

---

He was against ritual worship which was hypocritical

215-217

---

His ideas of an ethical life as striving toward a love of God

294

---

Spinoza's role in emancipating reason from superstition

296-7

---

"People desired a God beyond dogma, bound to the mysterious emotions of the soul, linked with nature and all existence. The most decisive feature in this new religious yearning was the desire to widen the conception of God. They found in Spinoza an answer to this yearning and they greeted him as the herald of a new world religion. This religion was fiercely contested. Spinoza became the center of a struggle."

"Spinoza became the leading figure of a new religious spirit in which God was no longer merely a subject for theological dogma and empty ceremony but the highest pinnacle of a world system in which nature and intelligence, faith + knowledge, were all united. In this idea of God all conflicts of earthly existence are resolved."