HESCHEL'S THEOLOGY: ORGANIZED EXCERPTS

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A. PARADOX AND POLARITY

A necessary condition affecting human beliefs in philosophy and religion is the paradox. The source of their paradoxical character has its origin in the essential polarity of human being.

To ignore the paradox is to miss the truth.

Jewish thinking and living can only be adequately understood in terms of a dialectic pattern, containing opposite or contrasted properties. As in a magnet, the ends of which have opposite magnetic qualities, these terms are opposite to one another and exemplify a polarity which lies at the very heart of Judaism, the polarity of ideas and events, of mitzvah and sin, of kavvanah and deed, of regularity and spontaneity, of uniformity and individuality, of halakhah and agadah, of law and inwardness, of love and fear, of understanding and obedience, of joy and discipline, of the good and the evil drive, of time and eternity, of this world and the world to come, of revelation and response, of insight and information, of empathy and self-expression, of creed and faith, of the word and that which is beyond words, of man's quest for God and God in search of man. Even God's relation to the world is characterized by the polarity of justice and mercy, providence and concealment, the promise of reward and the demand to serve Him for His sake. Taken abstractedly, all these terms seem to be mutually exclusive, yet in actual rising they involve each other; the separation of the two is fatal to both.

Since each of the two principles moves in the opposite direction, equilibrium can only be maintained if both are of equal force. But such a condition is rarely attained. Polarity is an essential trait of all things. Tension, contrast, and contradiction characterize all of reality.

However, there is a polarity in everything except God. For all tension ends in God. He is beyond all dichotomies.

B. THEOLOGY AND DEPTH THEOLOGY

Thus many issues of religious existence may be looked upon in two ways: from the perspective of depth theology and from the perspective of theology.

The theme of theology is the content of believing; the theme of depth theology is the act of believing, its purpose being to explore the depth of faith, the substratum out of which belief arises. It deals with acts which precede articulation and defy definition.

Theology speaks for the people; depth theology speaks for the individual. Theology strives for communication, for universality; depth theology strives for insight, for uniqueness.

Theology is like sculpture, depth theology like music. Theology is in the books; depth theology is in the hearts. The former is doctrine, the latter an event. Theologies divide us; depth theology unites us.

Depth theology seeks to meet the person in moments in which the whole person is involved, in moments which are affected by all a person thinks, feels and acts. It draws upon that which happens to man in moments of confrontation with ultimate reality. It is in such moments that decisive insights are born.

Why are dogmas necessary? We cannot be in rapport with the reality of the divine except for rare, fugitive moments. How can these moments be saved for the long hours of functional living, when the thoughts that feed like bees on the inscrutable desert us, and we lose both the sight and the drive? Dogmas are like the amber in which bees, once alive, are embalmed, and which are capable of being electrified when our minds become exposed to the power of the ineffable. For the problems with which we must always grapple are: How to communicate those rare moments of insight to all hours of our

life. How to commit intuition to concepts, the ineffable to words, communion to rational understand. How to convey our insights to others and to unite in a fellowship of faith. It is the creed that attempts to answer these problems.

The insights of depth theology are vague; they often defy formulation and expression. It is the task of theology to establish the doctrines, to bring about coherence, and to find words compatible with the insights. On the other hand, theological doctrines tend to move on their own momentum, to become a substitute for insight, informative rather than evocative. We must see to it that each has an independent status, a power and efficacy of its own which enables it to contribute something in the cooperation.

And yet man has often made a god out of a dogma, a graven image which he worshipped, to which he prayed. He would rather believe in dogmas than in God, serving them not for the sake of heaven but for the sake of a creed, the diminutive of faith.

Dogmas are the poor mind's share in the divine. A creed is almost all a poor man has. Skin for skin, he will give his life for all that he has. Yea, he may be ready to take other people's lives, if they refuse to share his tenets.

Depth theology may become an impasse, the catacomb of subjectivism. To be a passageway leading from man to man, from generation to generation, it must be crystallized and assume the form of a doctrine or principle. Theology is the crystallization of the insights of depth theology.

However, crystallization may result in petrification. Indeed, the stability of the dogma or the institution has often taken precedence over the spontaneity of the person.

The vitality of religion depends upon keeping alive the polarity of doctrine and insight, of dogma and faith, of ritual and response, of institution and the individual.

C. WONDER AND RADICAL AMAZEMENT

Among the many things that religious tradition holds in store for us is a legacy of wonder. The surest way to suppress our ability to understand the meaning of God and the importance of worship is to take things for granted. Indifference to the sublime wonder of living is the root of sin.

Wonder or radical amazement is the chief characteristic of the religious man's attitude toward history and nature. One attitude is alien to his spirit: taking things for granted, regarding events as a natural course of things. To find an approximate cause of a phenomenon is no answer to his ultimate wonder. He knows that there are laws that regulate the course of natural processes; he is aware of the regularity and pattern of things. However, such knowledge fails to mitigate his sense of perpetual surprise at the fact that there are facts at all. Looking at the world he would say, "This is the Lord's doing, it is marvelous in our eyes" (Psalms 118:23).

As civilization advances, the sense of wonder declines. Such decline is an alarming symptom of our state of mind. Mankind will not perish for want of information; but only for want of appreciation. The beginning of our happiness lies in the understanding that life without wonder is not worth living. What we lack is not a will to believe but a will to wonder.

Awareness of the divine begins with wonder. It is the result of what man does with his higher incomprehension. The greatest hindrance to such awareness is our adjustment to conventional notions, to mental cliches. Wonder or radical amazement, the state of maladjustment to words and notions, is therefore a prerequisite for an authentic awareness of that which is.

Radical amazement has a wider scope than any other act of man. While any act of perception or cognition has as its object a selected segment of reality, radical amazement refers to all of reality; not only to what we see, but also to the very act of seeing as well as to our own selves, to the selves that see and are amazed at their ability to see.

The grandeur or mystery of being is not a particular puzzle to the mind, as, for example, the cause of volcanic eruptions. We do not have to go to the end of reasoning to encounter it. Grandeur or mystery is something with which we are confronted everywhere and at all times. Even the very act of thinking baffles our thinking, just as every intelligible fact is, by virtue of its being a fact, drunk with baffling aloofness. Does not mystery reign within reasoning, within perception, within explanation? What formula could explain and solve the enigma of the very fact of thinking?

D. MYSTERY

We cannot ignore the aspect of mystery if we want to be true to Jewish thinking.

We live on the fringe of reality and hardly know how to reach the core. What is our wisdom? What we take account of cannot be accounted for. We explore the ways of being but do not know what, why or wherefore being is. Neither the world nor our thinking or anxiety about the world are accounted for. Sensations, ideas are forced upon us, coming we know not whence. Every sensation is anchored in mystery; every new thought is a signal we do not quite identify. We may succeed in solving many riddles; yet the mind itself remains a sphinx. The secret is at the core of the apparent; the known is but the obvious aspect of the unknown. No fact in the world is detached from universal context. Nothing here is final. The mystery is not only beyond and away from us. We are involved in it. It is our destiny, and "the fate of the world depends upon the mystery."1

The mystery is an ontological category. What it stands for is to most people most obviously given in the experience of exceptional events. However, it is a dimension of all existence and may be experienced everywhere and at all times. In using the term mystery we do not mean any particular esoteric quality that may be revealed to the initiated, but the essential mystery of being as being, the nature of being as God's creation out of nothing, and, therefore, something which stands beyond the scope of human comprehension. We do not come upon it only at the climax of thinking or in observing strange, extraordinary facts but in the startling fact that there are facts at all: being, the universe, the unfolding of time. We may face it at every turn, in a grain of sand, in an atom, as well as in the stellar space. Everything holds the great secret. For it is the inescapable situation of all being to be involved in the infinite mystery. We may continue to disregard the mystery, but we can neither deny nor escape it. The world is something we apprehend but cannot comprehend.

E. THE INEFFABLE

Yet, how would we know of the mystery of being if not through our sense of the ineffable, and it is this sense that communicates to us the supremacy and grandeur of the ineffable together with the knowledge of its reality. Thus, we cannot deny the superiority of the ineffable to our minds, although, for the same reason, we cannot prove it.

On the other hand, the fact of our being able to sense it and to be aware of its existence at all is a sure indication that the ineffable stands in some relationship to the mind of man. We should, therefore, not label it as irrational, to be disregarded as the residue of knowledge, as dreary remains of speculation unworthy of our attention. The ineffable is conceivable in spite of its being unknowable.

The ineffable inhabits the magnificent and the common, the grandiose and the tiny facts of reality alike. Some people sense this quality at distant intervals in extraordinary events; others sense it in the ordinary events, in every fold, in every nook; day after day, hour after hour. The sense of the ineffable is not an esoteric faculty but an ability with which all men are endowed; it is potentially as common as sight or as the ability to form syllogisms. For just as man is endowed with the ability to know certain aspects of reality, he is endowed with the ability to know that there is more than what he knows. His mind is concerned with the ineffable as well as with the expressible, and the awareness of his radical amazement is as universally valid as the principle of contradiction or the principle of sufficient reason.

Just as material things offer resistance to our spontaneous impulses, and it is that feeling of resistance that makes us believe that these things are real, not illusory, so does the ineffable offer resistance to our categories.

What the sense of the ineffable perceives is something objective which cannot be conceived by the mind nor captured by imagination or feeling, something real which, by its very essence, is beyond the reach of thought and feeling. What we are primarily aware of is not our self, our inner mood, but a transubjective situation, in regard to which our ability fails. Subjective is the manner, not the matter of our perception. What we perceive is objective in the sense of being independent of and corresponding to our perception. Our radical amazement responds to the mystery, but does not produce it. You and I have not invented the grandeur of the sky nor endowed man with the mystery of birth and death. We do not create the ineffable, we encounter it.

Of being itself all we can positively say is: being is ineffable. The heart of being confronts me as enigmatic, incompatible with my categories, sheer mystery. My power of probing is easily exhausted, my words fade, but what I sense is not emptiness but inexhaustible abundance, ineffable abundance. What I face I cannot utter or phrase in language. But the richness of my facing the abundance of being endows me with marvelous reward: a sense of the ineffable.

F. BEYOND MYSTERY: MEANING

To the biblical man was given the understanding that beyond all mystery is meaning. God is neither plain meaning nor just mystery. God is meaning that transcends mystery, meaning that mystery alludes to, meaning that speaks through mystery.

The mystery is not a synonym for the unknown, but rather a term for a meaning which stands in relation to God.

Being is a mystery, being is concealment, but there is meaning beyond the mystery. The meaning beyond the mystery seeks to come to expression. The destiny of human being is to articulate what is concealed. The divine seeks to be disclosed in the human.

G. IMAGE AND DUST

It is the creation of man that opens a glimpse into the thought of God, into the meaning beyond the mystery.

"And God said: I will make man in my image (tselem), after My likeness (demuth).... And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him" (Genesis I:26 f.).

These words, which are repeated in the opening words of the fifth chapter of Genesis--This book is the story of man.--When God created man, He made him in the likeness (demuth) of God--contain, according to Jewish tradition, the fundamental statement about the nature and meaning of man.

There are two ways in which the Bible speaks of the creation of man. In the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, which is devoted to the creation of the physical universe, man is described as having been created in the image and likeness of God. In the second chapter, which tells us of the commandment not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, man is described as having been formed out of the dust of the earth. Together, image and dust express the polarity of the nature of man. He is formed of the most inferior stuff in the most superior image.

Man, then, is involved in a polarity of a divine image and worthless dust. He is a duality of mysterious grandeur and pompous aridity, a vision of God and a mountain of dust. It is because of his being dust that his iniquities may be forgiven, and it is because of his being an image that his righteousness is expected.

H. HUMAN BEING AND BEING HUMAN

The sense of requiredness is as essential to being human as his capacity for reasoning.

The sense of requiredness is not an afterthought; it is given with being human; not added to it but rooted in it.

What is involved in authentic living is not only an intuition of meaning but a sensitivity to demand, not a purpose but an expectation. Sensitivity to demands is as inherent in being human as physiological functions are in human being.

A person is he of whom demands can be made, who has the capacity to respond to what is required, not only to satisfy his needs and desires. Only a human being is said to be responsible. Responsibility is not something man imputes to himself; he is a self by virtue of his capacity for responsibility, and he would cease to be a self if he were to be deprived of responsibility.

This is the most important experience in the life of every human being: something is asked of me. Every human being has had a moment in which he sensed a mysterious waiting for him. Meaning is found in responding to the demand, meaning is found in sensing the demand.

But to whom does man in his priceless and unbridled freedom owe anything? Where does the asking come from? To whom is he accountable?

Religion has been defined as a feeling of absolute dependence. We come closer to an understanding of religion by defining one of its roots as a sense of personal indebtedness.

Indebtedness is given with our very being. It is not derived from conceptions; it lives in us as an awareness before it is conceptualized or clarified in content. It means having a task, being called. It experiences living as receiving, not only as taking. Its content is gratitude for a gift received.

God is not only a power we depend on, He is a God who demands. Religion begins with the certainty that something is asked of us, that there are ends which are in need of us.

Unlike all other values, moral and religious ends evoke in us a sense of obligation. Thus religious living consists in serving ends that are in need of us. Man is a divine need, God is in need of man.

Do I exist as a human being? My answer is: I am commanded --therefore I am. There is a built-in sense of indebtedness in the consciousness of man, an awareness of owing gratitude, of being called upon at certain moments to reciprocate, to answer, to live in a way which is compatible with the grandeur and mystery of living.

I. THE MYSTERY OF SINAI: REVELATION

What happened on Sinai? The Bible tries to say it in two ways. What it says in one is something words can hardly bear: "The Lord came down upon Mount Sinai" (Exodus 19:20). No sentence in the world has ever said more: He who is beyond, hidden and exalted above space and time was humbly here, for all of Israel to sense. But the Bible also speaks in another way: "I have talked to you from heaven" (Exodus 20:22). He did not descend upon the earth; all that happened was that His word welled "from heaven." These passages do not contradict each other; they refer not to one but to two events. For revelation was both an event to God and an event to man. Indeed, in the second passage it is God who speaks (in the first person); the first passage conveys what the people experienced (it speaks of God in the third person). The same act had two aspects. God did and did not descend upon the earth. The voice came out of heaven but man heard it out of Sinai.

The meaning of revelation is given to those who are mystery-minded, not to those who are literal-minded, and decisive is not the chronological but the theological fact; decisive is that which happened between God and the prophet rather than that which happened between the prophet and the parchment. We accept the authority of the Pentateuch not because it is Mosaic, but because Moses was a prophet.

The dogma of revelation in regard to the Pentateuch consists of two parts: the divine inspiration and the Mosaic authorship. The first part refers to a mystery, the second to a historic fact. The first part can only be alluded to and expressed in terms of grandeur and amazement; the second may be analyzed, examined, and conveyed in terms of chronological information.

Philosophy of religion must deal with the first part. Its concern is not whether the Pentateuch was written down in its entirety during the forty years of Israel's sojourn in the desert, but rather to understand the meaning and the validity of the claim that the will of God reached the understanding of man, and that the Pentateuch is a mirror of God's reaching man; the second part is the concern of theology which must define the dogma of revelation and offer an answer to historical questions.2

We must not try to read chapters in the bible dealing with the event at Sinai as if they were texts in systematic theology. Its intention is to celebrate the mystery, to introduce us to it rather than to penetrate or to explain it. As a report about revelation the Bible itself is a midrash.

The essence of our faith in the sanctity of the Bible is that its words contain that which God wants us to know and to fulfill. How these words were written down is not the fundamental problem.

To convey what the prophets experienced, the Bible could use either terms of description or terms of indication. Any description of the act of revelation in empirical categories would have produced a caricature. This is why all the Bible does is to state that revelation happened; how it happened is something they could only convey in words that are evocative and suggestive.

The same word may be used in either way. The sound is the same, but the spirit is different. "And God said: Let there be light" is different in spirit from a statement such as "And Smith said: Let us turn on the light." The second statement conveys a definite meaning; the first statement evokes an inner response to an ineffable meaning. The statement, man speaks, describes a physiological and psychological act; the statement, God speaks, conveys a mystery. It calls upon our sense of wonder and amazement to respond to a mystery that surpasses our power of comprehension.

Are the words of Scripture coextensive and identical with the words of God?

In the eyes of those who experience daily their inability to grasp fully the meaning of a Scriptural verse, such a question represents an attempt to compare the hardly known with the totally unknown.

Granted that the text of Scripture as handed down to us consists of gems of God and diamonds quarried out of prophetic souls, all set in a human frame. Yet who shall presume to be an expert in discerning what is divine and what is but "a little lower" than divine? What is the spirit of God and what the phrase of Amos? The spirit of God is set in the language of man, and who shall judge what is content and what is frame? This is why the theme of Biblical criticism is not the theme of faith, just as the question of whether the lightning and thunder at Sinai were a natural phenomenon or not is irrelevant to our faith in revelation. The assumption of some commentators that the Decalogue was given on a rainy day does not affect our conception of the event.3

The act of revelation is a mystery, while the record of revelation is a literary fact, phrased in the language of man.

J . PATHOS AND PROPHECY

Prophecy consists in the inspired communication of divine attitudes to the prophetic consciousness. The divine pathos is the ground-tone of all these attitudes. Echoed in almost every prophetic statement, pathos is the central category of the prophetic understanding of God.

To the prophet, God does not reveal himself in an abstract absoluteness, but in a specific and unique way--in a personal and intimate revelation to the world. God does not simply command and expect obedience; He is also moved and affected by what happens in the world and he reacts accordingly. Events and human actions arouse in Him joy or sorrow, pleasure or wrath. He is not conceived as judging facts, so to speak, "objectively," in detached impassibility. He reacts in an intimate and subjective manner, and thus determines the value of events. Quite obviously in the Biblical view, man's deeds can move Him, affect Him, grieve Him, or, on the other hand, gladden and please Him. This notion that God can be intimately affected, that he possesses not merely intelligence and will, but also feeling and pathos, basically defines the prophetic consciousness of God.

The idea of pathos is both a paradox and a mystery. He Who created All should be affected by what a tiny particle of His creation does or fails to do? Pathos is both a disclosure of His concern and a concealment of His power. The human mind may be inclined to associate the idea of God with absolute majesty, with unmitigated grandeur, with omnipotence and perfection. God is most commonly thought of as a First Cause that started the world's mechanism working, and which continues to function according to its own inherent laws and processes. It seems inconceivable that the Supreme Being should be involved in the affairs of human existence.

This divine pathos is the key to inspired prophecy. God is involved in the life of man. A personal relationship binds Him to Israel; there is an interweaving of the divine in the affairs of the nation. The divine commandments are not mere recommendations for man, but express divine concern, which, realized or repudiated, is of personal importance to Him. The reaction of the divine self (Amos 6:8; Jer. 5:9; 51:14), its manifestations in the form of love, mercy, disappointment or anger convey the profound intensity of the divine inwardness.

Pathos is not, however, to be understood as mere feeling. Pathos is an act formed with intention, depending on free will, the result of decision and determination. The divine pathos is the theme of the prophetic mission. The aim of the prophet is to reorient the people by communicating to them the divine pathos which, by impelling the people to "return," is itself transformed. Even "in the moment of anger" (Jeremiah 18:7), what God intends is not that His anger should be executed, but that it should be appeased and annulled by the people's repentance.

To the prophets, the divine pathos is not an absolute force which exists regardless of man, something ultimate or eternal. It is rather a reaction to human history, an attitude called forth by man's conduct; an effect, not a cause. Man is in a sense an agent, not only the recipient. It is within his power to deserve either the pathos of love or the pathos of anger.

God's concern for justice grows out of His compassion for man. The prophets do not speak of a divine relationship to an absolute principle or idea, called justice. They are intoxicated with the awareness of God's relationship to His people and to all men.

Justice is not important for its own sake; the validity of justice and the motivation for its exercise lie in the blessings it brings to man. For justice, as stated above, is not an abstraction, a value. Justice exists in relation to a person, and is something done by a person. An act of injustice is condemned, not because the law is broken, but because a person has been hurt. What is the image of a person? A person is a being whose anguish may reach the heart of God.

The task of the prophet is to convey the word of God. Yet the word is aglow with the pathos. One cannot understand the word without sensing the pathos. And one could not impassion others and remain unstirred. The prophet should not be regarded as an ambassador who must be dispassionate in order to be effective.

An analysis of prophetic utterances shows that the fundamental experience of the prophet is a fellowship with the feelings of God, a sympathy with the divine pathos, a communion with the divine consciousness which comes about through the prophet's reflection of, or participation in, the divine pathos. The typical prophetic state of mind is one of being taken up into the heart of the divine pathos. Sympathy is the prophet's answer to inspiration, the correlative to revelation.

Prophetic sympathy is a response to transcendent sensibility. It is not, like love, an attraction to the divine Being, but the assimilation of the prophet s emotional life to the divine, an assimilation of function, not of being. The emotional experience of the prophet becomes the focal point for the prophet's understanding of God. He lives not only his personal life, but also the life of God. The prophet hears God's voice and feels His heart. He tries to impart the pathos of the message together with its logos. As an imparter his soul overflows, speaking as he does out of the fullness of his sympathy.

Above all, the prophets remind us of the moral state of a people: Few are guilty, but all are responsible. If we admit that the individual is in some measure conditioned or affected by the spirit of society, an individual's crime discloses society's corruption. In a community not indifferent to

suffering, uncompromisingly impatient with cruelty and falsehood, continually concerned for God and every man, crime would be infrequent rather than common.

The prophet is not only a censurer and accuser, but also a defender and consoler. Indeed, the attitude he takes to the tension that obtains between God and the people is characterized by a dichotomy. In the presence of God he takes the part of the people. In the presence of the people he takes the part of God.

Is it proper to apply the term "personal" to God? We have suggested that the outstanding feature of a person is his ability to transcend himself, his attentiveness to the nonself. To be a person is to have a concern for the nonself. It is in this limited sense that we speak of God as a personal Being: He has concern for nondivine being.

He is always felt as He Who feels, thought of as He Who thinks, never as object, always as a Being Who wills and acts.

He is encountered not as universal, general, pure Being, but always in a particular mode of being, as personal God to a personal man, in a specific pathos that comes with a demand in a concrete situation. Prophetic thought is not focused upon His absoluteness, as indeterminate being, but upon His "subjective" being, upon His expression, pathos, and relationship. The dichotomy of transcendence and immanence is an oversimplification. For God remains transcendent in His immanence, and related in His transcendence.

K. FACING EVIL

Many modern theologians have consistently maintained that the Bible stands for optimism, that pessimism is alien to its spirit! There is, however, very little evidence to support such a view. With the exception of the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, the rest of the Bible does not cease to refer to the sorrow, sins, and evils of this world.

There is one line that expresses the mood of the Jewish man throughout the ages: "The earth is given into the hand of the wicked (Job 9:24).6

How does the world look in the eyes of God? Are we ever told that the Lord saw that the righteousness of man was great in the earth, and that He was glad to have made man on the earth? The general tone of the biblical view of history is set after the first ten generations: "The Lord saw how great was man's wickedness on earth, and how every plan devised by his mind was nothing but evil all the time. And the Lord regretted that He had made man on earth, and His heart was saddened" (Genesis 6:5-6; cf. 8:21). One great cry resounds throughout the Bible: The wickedness of man is great on the earth.

More frustrating than the fact that evil is real, mighty, and tempting is the fact that it thrives so well in the disguise of the good, and that it can draw its nutriment from the life of the holy. In this world, it seems, the holy and the unholy do not exist apart but are mixed, interrelated, and confounded; it is a world where idols are at home, and where even the worship of God may be alloyed with the worship of idols.

The ambiguity of human virtue has been a central issue in the lives of many Jewish thinkers, particularly in the history of Hasidism.

"God asks for the heart."81 Yet our greatest failure is in the heart. "The heart is deceitful above all things, it is exceedingly weak--who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). The regard for the ego permeates all our thinking. Is it ever possible to disentangle oneself from the intricate plexus of self-interests? Indeed, the demand to serve God in purity, selflessly, "for His sake," on the one hand, and the realization of our inability to detach ourselves from vested interests, represent the tragic tension in the life of piety.82 In this sense, not only our evil deeds, but even our good deeds precipitate a problem.

What is our situation in trying to carry out the will of God? In addition to our being uncertain of whether our motivation--prior to the act--is pure, we are continually embarrassed during the act with

"alien thoughts" which taint our consciousness with selfish intentions. And even following the act there is the danger of self-righteousness, vanity, and the sense of superiority, derived from what are supposed to be acts of dedication to God.

In the face of so much evil and suffering, of countless examples of failure to live up to the will of God, in a world where His will is defied, where His kingship is denied, who can fail to see the discrepancy between the world and the will of God?

And yet, just because of the realization of the power of evil, life in this world assumed unique significance and worth. Evil is not only a threat; it is also a challenge. It is precisely because of the task of fighting evil that life in this world is so preciously significant.

All of history is a sphere where good is mixed with evil. The supreme task of man, his share in redeeming the work of creation, consists in an effort to separate good from evil and evil from good.

This is what the prophets discovered: History is a nightmare. There are more scandals, more acts of corruption, than are dreamed of in philosophy. It would be blasphemous to believe that what we witness is the end of God's creation. It is an act of evil to accept the state of evil as either inevitable or final. Others may be satisfied with improvement; the prophets insist upon redemption. The way man acts is a disgrace, and it must not go on forever.

The climax of our hopes is the establishment of the kingship of God, and a passion for its realization must permeate all our thoughts. For the ultimate concern of the Jew is not personal salvation but universal redemption. Redemption is not an event that will take place all at once at "the end of days" but a process that goes on all the time. Man's good deeds are single acts in the long drama of redemption, and every deed counts. One must live as if the I redemption of all men depended upon the devotion of one's own I life.

At the end of days, evil will be conquered by the One; in historic times evils must be conquered one by one.

L. HALACHAH AND AGADAH

To maintain that the essence of Judaism consists exclusively of halacha is as erroneous as to maintain that the essence of Judaism consists exclusively of agada. The interrelationship of halacha and agada is the very heart of Judaism.4

Halacha represents the strength to shape one's life according to a fixed pattern; it is a form-giving force. Agada is the expression of man's ceaseless striving which often defies all limitations. Halacha is the rationalization and schematization of living; it defines, specifies, sets measure and limit, placing life into an exact system. Agada deals with man's ineffable relations to God, to other men, and to the world. Halacha deals with details, with each commandment separately; agada with the whole of life, with the totality of religious life. Halacha deals with the law; agada with the meaning of the law. Halacha deals with subjects that can be expressed literally; agada introduces us to a realm which lies beyond the range of expression. Halacha teaches us how to perform common acts; agada tells us how to participate in the eternal drama. Halacha gives us knowledge; agada gives us aspiration.

Halacha gives us the norms for action; agada, the vision of the ends of living. Halacha prescribes, agada suggests; halacha decrees, agada inspires; halacha is definite; agada is allusive.

Halacha thinks in the category of quantity; agada is the category of quality. Agada maintains that he who saves one human life is as if he had saved all mankind. In the eyes of him whose first category is the category of quantity, one man is less than two men, but in the eyes of God one life is worth as much as all of life. Halacha speaks of the estimable and measurable dimensions of our deeds, informing us how much we must perform in order to fulfill our duty, about the size, capacity, or content of the doer and the deed. Agada deals with the immeasurable, inward aspect of living, telling us how we must think and feel; how rather than how much we must do to fulfill our duty; the manner, not only the content, is important. To halacha the quantity decides; agada, for which quality is the ultimate standard, is not dazzled by either the number or the magnitude of good deeds but stresses

the spirit, kavanah, dedication, purity. Agada therefore looks for inwardness rather than for the outer garments.

To reduce Judaism to law, to halacha, is to dim its light, to pervert its essence and to kill its spirit. We have a legacy of agada together with a system of halacha, and although, because of a variety of reasons, that legacy was frequently overlooked and agada became subservient to halacha, halacha is ultimately dependent upon agada. Halacha, the rationalization of living, is not only forced to employ elements which are themselves unreasoned; its ultimate authority depends upon agada. For what is the basis of halacha? The statement "Moses received the Torah from Sinai." Yet this statement does not express a halachic idea. For halacha deals with what man ought to do, with that which man can translate into action, with things which are definite and concrete, and anything that lies beyond man's scope is not an object of halacha. The event at Sinai, the mystery of revelation, belongs to the sphere of agada. Thus while the content of halacha is subject to its own reasoning, its authority is derived from agada.

Halacha does not deal with the ultimate level of existence. The law does not create in us the motivation to love and to fear God, nor is it capable of endowing us with the power to overcome evil and to resist its temptations, nor with the loyalty to fulfill its precepts. It supplies the weapons, it points the way; the fighting is left to the soul of man.

The code of conduct is like the score to a musician. Rules, principles, forms may be taught; insight, feeling, the sense of rhythm must come from within. Ultimately, then, the goal of religious life is quality rather than quantity, not only what is done, but how it is done.

To reduce Judaism to inwardness, to agada, is to blot out its light, to dissolve its essence and to destroy its reality. Indeed, the surest way to forfeit agada is to abolish halacha. They can only survive in symbiosis. Without halacha agada loses its substance, its character, its source of inspiration, its security against becoming secularized.

There is no halacha without agada, and no agada without halacha. We must neither disparage the body, nor sacrifice the spirit. The body is the discipline, the pattern, the law; the spirit is inner devotion, spontaneity, freedom. The body without the spirit is a corpse; the spirit without the body is a ghost. Thus a mitsvah is both a discipline and an inspiration, an act of obedience and an experience of joy, a yoke and a prerogative. Our task is to learn how to maintain a harmony between the demands of halacha and the spirit of agada.

It is impossible to decide whether in Judaism supremacy belongs to halacha or to agada, to the lawgiver or to the Psalmist.

SOURCES

Sources for the passages included in this set of excerpts are as follows: (See key below)

A. PARADOX AND POLARITY Israel: 9, 10; Between: 178 Search 341; Insecurity: 136

B. THEOLOGY AND DEPTH THEOLOGY Insecurity: 117 121

C. WONDER AND RADICAL AMAZEMENT
Between: 40,41 Search: 43,45,46

D. MYSTERY Teaching: 13; Between: 44, 45; Search: 56-58

E. THE INEFFABLE Between 46, 47 Man 32, 15, 19, 20 Who: 87

F. BEYOND MYSTERY: MEANING Who 76,77

G. IMAGE AND DUST Insecurity: 156, 158, 150

H. HUMAN BEING AND BEING HUMAN: Who 106, 108, 111

I. THE MYSTERY OF SINAI: REVELATION Search: 194, 185, 257, 258

J. PATHOS AND PROPHESY Between: 116, 117; Prophets: 232, 24, 216, 26, 486

K. FACING EVIL Insecurity: 129, 130 35, 138, 146

L. HALACHAH AND AGADAH Between 175 Search 336; Search: selected from 336 341

KEY

BETWEEN Between God and Man (anthology of Heschel's writings ed. Fritz A. Rothschild)

INSECURITY Insecurity of Freedom

ISRAEL Israel: Echo of Eternity

MAN Man is Not Alone

PROPHETS The Prophets

QUEST Man's Quest for God

SEARCH God in Search of Man

TEACHING Teaching Jewish Theology in the Solomon Schechter Day School

WHO Who is Man?