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## SANCTITY AND SEPARATION

### INTRODUCTION

The Jewish people is a holy people. This declaration is made frequently in biblical and rabbinic literature. One obvious instance is the verse in the introduction to the Sinaitic theophany, "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."<sup>1</sup>

The idea of the holy does not have too much appeal to contemporary man. Even the pious individual — if he is intellectually exposed — displays a tendency to define religious concepts in non-theological language. In one conversation, in response to an explicit inquiry, a rabbi interpreted the holy exclusively in moral terms. He thus reduced a central theological category to the ethical. Some theologians, Harvey Cox for example, have rejected altogether the idea of the sacred. They are willing to speak of God, but only in secular terms. This is indeed a remarkable phenomenon. One would think it possible, even desirable, to find a place for the holy in a theological perspective which finds a role for God. In this secular age, however, the notion of the sacred finds even less appeal than the idea of God.

It is necessary, therefore, to define what is meant by "the holy," to explain the sense in which this phrase is used to characterize the Jewish people; and to evaluate the reasons for its unpopularity.

### I

Holiness (*kedusha*), in rabbinic tradition, is explained essen-

tially in terms of separation (*p'risha*). Thus the phrase, "Ye shall be holy" is interpreted by the Sifra to mean "Ye shall be separated."<sup>2</sup> Of course, the idea of holiness applies primarily to the Divine Being. It needs to be shown, therefore, that the notion of sanctity may be interpreted in terms of separation even when it is applied to God. This is indeed the case both when the holy is intended to refer to God (1) as Supreme *Being* and (2) as Supreme *Value*.

1. One philosophic commentator on the Bible declares that the threefold holiness attributed to God in the verse in Isaiah, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts"<sup>3</sup> should be construed as, "He is holy in heaven, for He is separated from form; He is holy on earth, for He is separated from matter; He is holy for all eternity, for He is removed from all privation."<sup>4</sup> To assert that God is holy, therefore, is to say that God is separated, i.e., He is *not* form; He is *not* matter; He is *not* deprived.

The question may be asked: why is it that the rabbis translate the notion of holiness, which implies something of extraordinary positive content, into the idea of separation which is essentially negative in import? One of the reasons, at least, is that the positive content in that to which the holy refers is inexpressible. One may allude to it only by describing that which it is not. This conclusion, while striking, is not at all surprising. Jewish and non-Jewish philosophers have often declared that God is categorically unique, that is to say, He is like nothing that can be an object of human perception or conception. He is, as one philosopher put it, "wholly other."<sup>5</sup> Hence, no word that names something that belongs to the world of perception, no concept which is applicable to a multiplicity of things in the domain of human experience can be used to describe Him. He is beyond words and concepts. This conclusion is stressed in negative theology — which declares that, for example, the assertion "God is just" should be understood to mean "He is not unjust in the way men frequently are"; that the statement, "God is wise" must be interpreted to mean "He is not foolish in the way folly is a part of human experience," and so on. But it is impossible to characterize God's justice or wisdom by describing its positive content, for God is utterly

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other. The attribute of the holy is entirely analogous. The essential nature of holiness is beyond all human power to describe. At best, it may be alluded to by identifying the things from which it is separated and removed.

Hence, emphasis on the separation of that which is holy is necessitated by its very nature. It should be noted, moreover, that this type of separation is also expressed in one of the human responses to the holy. Separation is present, intellectually, in the recognition that man and the world of his experience are totally different from the Divine Being. It is not merely that God is infinite and man is finite, that is, that God and man possess identical characteristics, except that in God they are of infinite dimension.<sup>6</sup> It is rather that God is wholly other and that it is impossible to form any positive conception of the Divine Being. Man is cognitively separated from God because God is theoretically unapproachable. He belongs to a domain whose boundaries cannot be crossed by intellectual endeavor.

It should be added, however, that separation, of another type, is also present in the psychological response to Supreme Being. It occurs in the form of withdrawal. The religious personality, in the presence of the sacred, experiences fear and awe. Fear is normally accompanied by the desire to escape. According to the biblical account of the Sinaitic event, the people of Israel gathered at the mount were filled with uncontrollable fear and they withdrew from the direct encounter with God.<sup>7</sup> Awe, on the other hand, is an expression of wonder and is normally accompanied by immobility. The religious personality in the throes of fear and awe does not move closer. He withdraws; at least, he remains apart.

2. The holy also refers to that which is of Supreme *Value* — not merely to that which is Supreme *Being*. Rudolf Otto directs attention to the two components in the concept of the holy by distinguishing between the feelings of awe and reverence. Awe, he states, is a psychological reaction to that aspect of the Divine Being in virtue of which He is absolutely overpowering and unapproachable.<sup>8</sup> It is the emotional response to the metaphysical side of divinity. Reverence is a feeling that expresses the recognition of value that is “precious beyond all conceiv-

ing."<sup>9</sup> It is a reaction to that which is supremely important.

Otto's phrase "precious beyond all conceiving" suggests that the interpretation of the holy in terms of separation is relevant here too. It is no more possible to describe the essence of Supreme Value than it is to delineate the content of Supreme Being. In both ways, God is wholly other. The value that attaches to His Being is totally unlike other values that are part of the human experience. The holy denotes something that is radically different from the good or the beautiful. Further an unbridgeable gap separates the human capacity to comprehend from its object when that object is Supreme Value. Separation is, therefore, an ingredient in the intellectual response to Supreme Value as well.

The element of separation, however, is only one of two polar components in the responses to Supreme Value when these are emotional and behavioral in nature. It has been observed that, emotionally, the religious personality reacts with reverence, a sentiment that is similar to appreciation. The sense of the sacred is, therefore, akin to that of the aesthetic. The aesthetic object — the work of art or the thing of beauty — possesses a value that does not impose obligation, as in the case of values of an ethical sort; rather it does inspire appreciation. To the extent that the holy does something like it, i.e., it inspires reverence rather than appreciation, the response to the holy may be regarded as analogous.

Now the aesthetic experience normally contains polar ingredients — one is separation and the other attraction. The spectator in a museum stands removed from the painting. The stage separates the actors in a drama from the theater-goers. The object of art is heard, seen, or read — but not manipulated. But appreciation also involves a contrary movement. The art lover is drawn to the masterpiece. He cannot resist its appeal. The psychological response to the holy, likewise, involves polar movements. Reverence is exhibited, in the first place, in the preservation of distance, in separation. But, like appreciation, reverence includes the opposite movement, that is, attraction. The religious personality is drawn to the sacred. It has an appeal which he finds irresistible. Otto calls it fascination.<sup>10</sup>

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But there is a behavioral response to the holy as Supreme Value as well. For the holy does not merely inspire reverence; it also imposes obligation. It is, to that extent, akin to the moral; and the behavioral response is also polar in character. Separation is prescribed, for example, at the theophany of the burning bush. Moses is instructed, "Draw not nigh hither, put off thy shoes from thy feet for the place wherein thou standest is holy ground."<sup>11</sup> At Sinai, in preparation for the revelation, "Moses said unto the Lord, the people cannot come up to Mount Sinai: for thou charged them saying, 'Set bounds about the mount and sanctify it.'"<sup>12</sup> The profane must stand removed from that which is holy so that the holy may be separated from that which is profane. But, while on the one hand, the religious personality is told to stand removed he is, on the other hand, instructed to draw closer. "And to Him shalt thou cleave."<sup>13</sup>

## II

We must direct attention to certain emphases in the Jewish conception of the holy.

1. *We should respond to the holy as Supreme Value rather than as Supreme Being.* God is supremely important. This is the central aspect of deity from the Jewish perspective. It is true that the metaphysical component in the concept of the holy is stressed by some Jewish philosophers; but even these thinkers appear to express interest in it primarily because it is related to value considerations. A good example of the controversy over the importance of metaphysical conceptions as to the nature of God is the dispute between Maimonides and Abraham Ibn Daud in regard to the question of the status of one who entertains incorrect beliefs about His nature. Maimonides condemns those who believe that God has a physical form. Ibn Daud grants that the belief is false but insists that it is no obstacle to genuine piety.<sup>14</sup> God must be recognized as Supreme Value, that is, as the supreme source of obligation. If one does so, the fact that he, at the same time, entertains unsophisticated, unphilosophical and perhaps incorrect notions about His metaphysical being is of little consequence. But the point is that

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even Maimonides subordinates the metaphysical aspects of deity to value considerations.<sup>15</sup>

The same thing may be said in another way. The intellectual response to deity is not as important as the emotional and behavioral. The metaphysical aspect of the Divine Being challenges man's conceptual capacities and calls for understanding. Maimonides insisted on this ingredient in religious awareness; others did not. They held that the valuational aspects of deity which require responses from feeling and will are sufficient for the religious experience. Piety, from the Jewish vantage point, is of greater urgency than is theology. And even Maimonides does not appear to dispute this conclusion.

2. *The appropriate response to Supreme Value is behavioral even more than emotional.* This contrasts significantly with Otto's exclusive emphasis upon the emotional, i.e., the psychological response. Thus after identifying the holy with the numinous Otto writes, "The numinous can only be suggested by means of the special way in which it is reflected in the mind in terms of feeling."<sup>16</sup>

This distinction should not be taken to mean that there are two mutually exclusive forms of response — the emotional and the behavioral — and that Judaism chooses the latter. Obviously the two are interdependent. For example, one who responds behaviorally because of a commanding sense of obligation will also experience appropriate concomitant emotions. On the other hand, one who experiences awe and reverence towards an object will not normally behave in relation to it in ways that are inconsistent with these feelings.

Nevertheless, the emphasis on the behavioral is important. It reflects the general biblical and talmudic tendency to stress action as the required mode of self-expression. It is rooted in the same source from which is derived Judaism's overarching concern with *mitzvot*, that is, prescriptions for action. Hence the separation that Judaism requires as an answer to holiness is not primarily either intellectual or emotional — though these too are involved — but behavioral.

3. *The holy differs from the moral.* While it is the case that the holy and the moral share a certain character, i.e., they both

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impose obligation, the two must be distinguished. It is important to stress this because there is a well known tendency to identify them. This is due, in part, to the fact that religion has itself invested the moral act with a sacred quality. To violate a moral law is, from the religious standpoint, to commit a sin. Hence, the difference between evil and sin is not always borne in mind. But this tendency is due, in even larger measure, to the modern inclination to reduce religious categories to the moral. Kant attempted this. He defined the holy man as one who is completely responsive to the moral commands issued by, what he called, the practical reason.<sup>17</sup> The holy man is none other than the perfectly moral man. Classical Judaism, however, adopts another view. It proposes clear distinctions between the moral and the holy.

In the first place, the category of the holy divides relevant experience into classifications that differ from these that are moral. "Right," "wrong," "good," "evil" denote moral traits. "Sacred," "profane," "holy," "sin," "mitzvah" are religious categories. Each of these terms — of both types — denotes a class of actions or objects; and while these classes may intersect — something may have both a moral and a religious quality — they do not coincide. Not everything good is sacred, e.g., physical exercise.

Secondly, the moral has its source in the human situation. The moral goal is most frequently defined in terms of human functions. It is normally identified with pleasure, or with the healthy functioning of the human personality, or with the dictates of conscience, or with social requirements. The sanctity of an object, however, depends exclusively on its relation to the Source of Holiness, that is, the Divine Being. Morality is an immanent conception. Holiness is ultimately transcendental. Rabbinic analysis directs attention to this distinction by contrasting two types of biblical precepts, those called *chukim*, and those designated *mishpatim*. *Mishpatim* could have been arrived at in the moral course of human events. They are not beyond human invention. They are rationally grounded. They must inevitably emerge out of the human condition as solutions to human problems. *Chukim*, on the other hand, cannot be

arrived at by the instrument of reason. They are not directly nor obviously relevant to human needs. It is, at most, *mishpatim* that may be designated the moral precepts of torah. Since, however, they are also commanded, they too are invested with a sacred quality that they would not otherwise possess.

### III

Holiness is also a character of things. God, for example, sanctifies the Sabbath and the people of Israel.

It may be observed, at the start, that the variety of holiness that attaches to things can also be described only in terms of that from which they differ, that is, in terms of separation. For the positive content of holy, even when it is a character of an object of human experience, is not available to cognitive apprehension. We do not know, for example, how such a characteristic is produced. It is not only God as subject that defies exposition; the way He relates to the world of nature is equally indescribable. God *created* the world, *revealed* Himself to mankind, and *sanctified* certain objects. Each of these notions — creation, revelation and sanctification — refers to ways in which God relates to the universe. It is no more possible to describe the nature of the act of sanctification than it is to explain the essential features of the acts of creation and revelation. Here too we deal with that which is utterly other. If, therefore, the sanctity of the Sabbath is not due to some property inherent in the day itself but is rather the result of the special relation which this day has to God because of His act of sanctification, the positive content of sanctity is clearly concealed from human apprehension. If, on the other hand, holiness is an inherent character, that is, it is similar to a quality such as color, then it is obviously beyond the possibility of human perception — for it is unsensed. The Sabbath day, in so far as its sensible properties are concerned, is no different from any other day. To say that the Sabbath day or the people of Israel is holy, therefore, is not to describe its essence but to assert that it is different, that is, it is separated.

Nevertheless, insofar as the community of Israel is concerned,

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the Bible suggests that each member exemplifies, in his person, two dimensions of sanctity — the communal and the personal. “And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation”<sup>18</sup> declares that the people of Israel, considered as a singly entity, possesses sanctity. Holiness is here attributed not to individuals who together form a holy congregation, but to the nation (the Hebrew word *goy* which is translated into “nation” is in the singular) considered as a single unified object. Hence, each of its members, by virtue of the fact that he is a *part* of the community, possesses sanctity as well. But the Jew may also acquire a personal character of holiness. The biblical precept, “Ye shall be holy,”<sup>19</sup> stated in the Hebrew original in the second person plural, is directed to the Jewish community considered as a collectivity rather than a single entity. It is addressed to each of its members urging them to undertake the program leading to holiness.

These two varieties of sanctity are distinguishable in several ways. First, they differ in the way in which they are attained. The communal dimension of an individual’s sanctity is achieved either by an act of commitment or through birth. Communal sanctity originally settled upon the Jewish people as a result of an act of covenantal commitment at Sinai. The phrase describing the people of Israel as “an holy nation,” in fact, occurs in the Biblical description of the Sinaitic revelation. For the convert to Judaism to attain the status of sanctity, he too must perform an individual act of acceptance. The progeny of those who belong to the covenantal community, on the other hand, acquire this character as a result of birth. The communal dimension of sanctity is transmitted through a process of heredity.<sup>20</sup> The personal character of sanctity, on the other hand, depends on a program of action; on the exemplification of certain forms of behavior.

Another distinction follows immediately. The communal character of sanctity is the same for each Jew — for the scholar and the ignorant man, for the saint and the sinner, for the spiritual giant and the moral pygmy. Since it flows from membership alone, it is distributed equally among all members. Personal sanctity, on the other hand, is acquired in degrees and

depends on the extent to which the Jew exemplifies in his behavior certain precepts.

There is still another difference that merits attention. Both types of sanctity — the communal and the personal — may be interpreted in terms of separation. The commentary, “As He is holy so shall you be holy; as He is separated so shall you be separated”<sup>21</sup> asserts the underlying principle, which is: holiness is manifested in separation in both the Divine Being and the human being. The communal character of sanctity, however, is expressed in the people’s cultural separation from non-Jewish patterns. The personal character of sanctity, on the other hand, is manifested in the Jew’s behavioral separation from unacceptable or polluting forms of action.

What are these forms? How does the individual attain to personal sanctity? Several rabbinic replies are available: but before they are stated, an observation of a general sort may be in order. The various rabbinic views need not be construed as necessarily expressing disagreement. Since personal sanctity may be attained in varying degrees, it is possible, even desirable, to interpret the various rabbinic opinions as suggesting several steps that may be taken in the direction of personal sanctity.

One commentary has it that personal holiness is attained by separating oneself from illicit forms of sexual behavior.<sup>22</sup> The following interpretation seems appropriate. Sanctity is a matter of restraining impulses and the sexual impulse is among the most demanding. It is precisely the separation of the self from domination by a strong biological urge and the determination to respond to it only within prescribed acceptable limits that constitutes the basis for one degree of personal sanctity.

Another exposition declares that personal sanctity is achieved through adherence to the commandments of Torah.<sup>23</sup> On this view, the relation between the forms of individual sanctity — the communal and the personal — is clear. Personal sanctity is achieved by exemplifying in action the precepts obligating all who are invested with the communal variety of sanctity. On this interpretation, sanctity is again a form of separation. By adhering to biblical imperatives, the Jew separates himself from all forms of behavior that these imperatives proscribe.

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A more striking explanation is that of Nachmanides.<sup>24</sup> He notes that a human being can immerse himself in the unrestrained satisfaction of impulses even within permissible halakhic limits. He can become a drunkard, or glutton or satisfy the sexual urge even beyond normal requirements without violating the principles of Torah. He can become "A libertine with the license of Torah." The holy man is the one who separates himself even from things halakhically permissible. He takes into account not only the letter but the spirit of the law. He recognizes that the law's translation of a principle into a pattern of behavior does not exhaust the meaning of the principle, and that one who fully understands it receives guidance which is not explicit in the system of law. The holy man then is one who is responsive to the law's prescription as well as to its intention.

An inspiring conception is suggested by Luzzato.<sup>25</sup> A high degree of sanctity is attained when the individual separates himself not only from forbidden forms of action but also from certain types of motivation. The halakhically responsive religious personality frequently pursues personal gratification within the domain of behavior permitted by the law. Such a procedure obviously cannot be condemned or even criticized. The holy person, however, in the same context and performing the same acts, does so out of a sense of commitment to the Divine Being. He eats, for example, not to satisfy hunger but in response to the will of God.

## IV

The sacred, which is so essential an ingredient in the classical conception of religion, has lost much of its appeal. The concept of the secular has begun to replace the idea of the Holy. Even theologians are absorbing into their perspectives elements which are characteristic of the domain of the secular. It would be useful to map out a Jewish response to this trend. To that end, we will consider the claim of one such theologian, Harvey Cox, to the effect that even religion must be interpreted in secular categories. Our attention will be directed to his justification

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of this claim, as well as to his analysis of the secularization process.

First, his justification! It is none other than the simple observation that this process is, in fact, taking place. Cox writes,

Secularization rolls on, and if we are to understand and communicate with our present age we must learn to love it in its unremitting secularity. We must learn, as Bonhoeffer said, to speak of God in a secular fashion and find a non-religious interpretation of biblical concepts. It will do no good to cling to our religious and metaphysical version of Christianity in the hope that one day religion or metaphysics will once again be back. They are disappearing forever and that means we can now let go and immerse ourselves in the new world of the secular city.<sup>26</sup>

The argument implicit in this passage is, from a philosophic standpoint, to say the least, disappointing. Obligations simply do not follow from facts; an *ought* cannot be inferred from an *is*. Assuming it to be a fact that religion and metaphysics are in the process of disappearing — and this is, at least, debatable — it does not follow that we must, i.e., that we are obligated, to speak of God and the Bible in secular terms.

More interesting and considerably more important is the analysis of the process of secularization that Cox proposes. According to his account, the process includes several components. They are

The loosening of the world from religious and quasi-religious understanding of itself, the dispelling of all closed world views, the breaking of all supernatural myths and sacred symbols . . . Secularization is man turning his attention away from worlds beyond towards this world and this time.<sup>27</sup>

This process, therefore, includes, among others, the following ingredients: 1) the rejection of closed world views, 2) the insistence that attention be directed to this world rather than a world beyond, 3) the refusal to accept a religious perspective, that is to say, a determination to reject the sacred.

Judaism does not find each one of the three elements equally objectionable. We will consider them separately.

1. A closed world view is presumably a) a theory about the

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nature of the universe which is entertained in such a way that b) the possibility of error is not even admitted. Advocates of secularization, on the other hand, take this possibility for granted. Cox writes, "Secularization has accomplished what fire and chain could not: It has convinced the believer that he could be wrong."<sup>28</sup>

It would be fair to say that the system of Jewish *thought* is not closed — and for several reasons. In the first place, it is well known that Judaism is not primarily concerned with formulating a theory about the universe. Torah outlines precepts of action rather than principles of the nature of the world. It is true that the Torah system of practice presupposes certain theological assumptions, for example, that God exists, that He revealed Himself to man, that He entered into a covenant with the people of Israel, etc. But these assumptions, which must be made in order to give sanction to the commandments, are few in number.

But secondly, the meaning of even these few theological claims is not precisely defined. It is, therefore, possible within the context of traditional thought, to assign different interpretations to their central conceptions. All theologians agree that God exists, but the Maimonidean conception of God, for example, is not identical to the one proposed, let us say, by Abraham Isaac Kook.

Thirdly, no Jewish theory of the universe was ever canonized in the manner in which the philosophy of Aquinas was declared to be the official doctrine of the church.

The obvious result that follows from these considerations is that it is possible for the Jewish believer to admit that "he *could* be wrong" without weakening the foundations of the faith. Religious Judaism makes for flexibility in its theoretical outlook.

If there is a degree of rigidity in classical Judaism, it is not in its theory but in the system of practice expressed in *mitzvot*. This system is, to some extent, closed. But it is not to this kind of closure that the advocates of secularization are directing their critical attention.

2. It is even more obvious that Judaism does not object to

the this-worldly orientation insisted upon by the proponents of secularization. On the contrary, this-worldliness is inherent in the Jewish perspective. So many of the imperatives that Judaism assigns, as a matter of religious obligation, are intended to resolve problems that arise in a social context and for the welfare of the individual and the community. One of the main objectives of religious practice, as visualized by the prophets, is the realization of the era when men would beat their swords into ploughshares. Peace and justice in this world was a paramount prophetic concern. There was hardly a prophetic reference to a life of supreme bliss in a world beyond.

3. But Judaism is unalterably opposed to the rejection of the sacred as a meaningful category of religion. It is true that the idea of the holy presupposes the kind of affirmations that are incompatible with doctrines that are currently popular. Nevertheless, the category of the holy is essential. It will be useful to indicate what it is that we must be prepared to affirm to retain sanctity in religion.

The recognition of the holy as Supreme Value implies, at the very least and first of all, that value is objective, that is, that there are things whose importance is not dependent upon the individual's tastes or attitudes. Those who espouse ethical objectivity claim that certain obligations are in force independently of individual preferences. Subjectivists, on the other hand, insist that something can have value for *me* only when *I* think it important. Some schools of contemporary philosophic thought formalize the rejection of the objectivity of value. One such school is that of ethical emotivism. Its adherents declare that every value term expresses an emotion. When I say that something is good, I should be understood to mean no more than I like it.<sup>29</sup> The concept of the holy, on the other hand, presupposes the existence of a Being whose supreme value does not depend on the subjective inclinations of an individual.

The recognition of the holy as Supreme Value implies, in the second place, that value is often transcendental. It is not enough, from the standpoint of affirming the holy, to confess that value is objective. There are a variety of ethical theories which hold value to be objective but with which the rejection of the sacred

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is entirely consistent. Such, for example, is the philosophy of hedonism which identifies the good with pleasure. Pleasure can be measured by objective procedures; the determination that an experience is good is then independent of personal inclinations and feelings. Yet, the theory which identifies the good with pleasure and thus grants objectivity to value locates its source in the human experience. Value is then immanent, not transcendent. The idea of the holy, as here expanded, on the other hand, implies that value is often transcendent. Many things are of importance because of their relationship to the Divine Being who confers upon them something of His unique value.

It is this aspect of transcendence that makes the holy particularly repugnant to the modern mind. One obstacle to its acceptance is epistemological. Holiness cannot be experienced with the senses; it is not subject to experimentation. A thinker with an empirical bent will have difficulty accepting it. Those who reject the view that the universe has a dimension of mystery will not entertain it. But others who believe that man's experiences need not exhaust existential possibilities may recognize a domain of being that is beyond human apprehension. They will then be able to incorporate the sacred into their perspectives.

Another obstacle, however, and this may very well be a more serious one, is psychological. For transcendence means that man is not sovereign, but subject. He does not create obligations; he receives them. Many hesitate with transcendence because it implies obligations over which the human being can exercise no power; because it requires the posture of surrender rather than innovation. Man finds it difficult to acquiesce, to descend from the throne. But, obviously, psychological resistance is not a refutation. The claims of the sacred have not, thereby, been refuted.

But there is still another reason for the unpopularity of the sacred. It is rooted in the fact that the sacred is expressed in separation and, in the context of democracy with its emphasis on equality, separation has little appeal. An individual who strives for sanctity by separating himself from polluting patterns of behavior, at the same time, isolates himself from those

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whose influence may lead him astray. Further, to the extent that he believes the pattern he has chosen to possess greater value, he regards himself, by the religious standards to which he is committed and in virtue of the fact that he exemplifies this pattern, as, in some sense, more important and, therefore, unequal. This is obviously incompatible with an emphasis on equality.

But this state of affairs need not be disturbing. In the first place, social philosophers have had considerable difficulty explicating the notion of equality. It is generally recognized that it does not express a fact, i.e., that all men are, *in fact*, equal; nor does it refer to an ideal, viz., that it is the purpose of society to generate full equality among men who are obviously not equal.<sup>30</sup> The definition of equality is indeed crucial for the understanding of democracy, but one conclusion emerges clearly even before the task of definition is completed. No matter what properties are found to be equally distributed among men, there are many characteristics in respect to which they are unequal. But, further, given any standard of value which can be exemplified in human action in varying degrees — the standard of the holy for example — men will, with respect to that standard, be unequal to the extent that they embody, in varying degrees, the values expressed by it. Equality is not a principle that is relevant to the precincts of the sacred.

### V

In a sense, all men are sacred because they bear the image of God but, from the Jewish vantage point, the Jew has an added dimension of sanctity because he is a member of the covenant. He, however, who abides by covenantal precept — both in letter and in spirit — has achieved a higher status of sanctity still. And it is by means of sanctity that man, essentially separate and apart, approaches the Divine Being.

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### NOTES

1. Exodus 19:5.
2. On Leviticus 19:2.
3. Isaiah 6:3.
4. Malbim on *Isaiah*, *loc cit.*
5. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 25.
6. Cf., for example, Alexander C. Fraser, ed. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* by John Locke (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1894), Vol. I, p. 418.
7. Exodus 20:15-17.
8. *Op. cit.* p. 19.
9. *ibid.* p. 51.
10. *ibid.* p. 31.
11. Exodus 3:5.
12. *ibid.* 19:23.
13. Deuteronomy 10:20.
14. *Yad*, "Hilchot Teshuvah" III, 7.
15. Cf. Julius Guttmann, *Philosophies of Judaism*, trans. David W. Silverman (New York: Anchor Books, 1966), p. 200.
16. *Op. cit.*, p. 12.
17. *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals* (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1949), p. 31.
18. Exodus 19:6.
19. Leviticus 19:12.
20. This should not be interpreted to mean that sanctity is a biological fact. It is merely the concomitant of a biological fact. Because, subsequent to the Sinaitic covenant, membership in the covenantal community is determined, in instances other than conversions, by the fact of birth, the progeny of members are, upon birth, included in the community and concomitantly attain to the status of the holy.
21. Sifra on Leviticus 20:26.
22. Rashi on Leviticus 11:44.
23. Maimonides, *Guide to the Perplexed*, Part III, Ch. 33-47.
24. On Leviticus 11:44.
25. Moses Hayyim Luzzatto *Mesillat Yesharim*, Ch. XXVI.
26. *The Secular City* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1966), p. 4.
27. *ibid.* p. 2.
28. *ibid.*
29. A. J. Ayer, *Language Truth and Logic* (New York: Dover Publications), p. 107.
30. Bernard A. O. Williams, "Equality" in Tillman, Berofsky, O'Connor ed. *Introduction to Philosophy* (New York: Harper and Row), p. 379ff.