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## THE LURE OF IMMANENCE — THE CRISIS IN CONTEMPORARY RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

### I. *The Task*

\*The catch-phrases by which the crisis of contemporary religious thought is currently being referred to in Western culture are “the theology of blasphemy” and “the secular gospel.” Much that is being written under these and similar titles and about them must be regarded as what the Whiteheadian Protestant theologian Schubert Ogden has called “pop theology.” As such it is a fad and not worth taking very seriously (except as a passing sociological phenomenon). Our purpose here will be two-fold: a) To extract the authentic religious and philosophical forces that power these manifestations. This is worth doing for at least three reasons: 1) we are likely to learn something about genuine spiritual realities; 2) such realities assert themselves, as we shall see, throughout human history, and we may, therefore, expect to run into them again in the future; and 3) once one is face-to-face with authentic phenomena, rather than epiphenomena or pseudo-phenomena, one can hope to be able to come to grips with them in a constructive manner. Once they have been discovered, our second purpose (b) will be to try to evaluate these forces from our Jewish vantage-point.

I want to state beforehand the conclusion at which I expect us to arrive, so that we know where we are going and are able to organize the evidence in a purposeful fashion. That conclusion can be stated in two sentences: The “theology of blasphemy”

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\* For usage of the term “Theology of Blasphemy” and the symbol “. . .” in reference to the current Christian theological principle analyzed in this article, see Rabbi Maurice Lamm’s introduction, pp. 12-13. — *Ed.*

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and "the secular gospel" are related developments, and they arise out of a peculiarly Christian problematic. The "secular gospel" can, with some serious reservation, be welcomed by Judaism as a partial "Judaization" of Christianity, — although even here contemporary Christian theology stands in need of Biblical-Jewish correction<sup>1</sup>, — while the "theology of blasphemy" is not only, of course, a most serious theological error but is also likely to vitiate the values of "the secular gospel."

### *II. The Basic Theologico-Philosophical Problem*

Perhaps the most basic and important problem of all theology is the relationship between the transcendent God and the world. It would seem that there are really only four possible ways of conceiving that relationship: 1) That God is entirely transcendent and, therefore, without relationship to the world. Classically, in the history of philosophy and in Jewish tradition, this has been the conception of Epicureanism — that God may have made the world but since then has withdrawn unto Himself and takes no further interest in His handiwork. Thus, not the denial of the existence of God but the affirmation of His disinterest in the world, his unrelatedness to it, has come to be regarded by Jewish tradition as the hall-mark of the unbeliever, the *epikoros*. 2) The denial of God's transcendence altogether and the identification of Him with a part, or the totality, of the universe. This, of course, constitutes absolute immanentism and, in the histories of philosophy and theology, takes various forms of pantheism. The fate of Spinoza — excommunication at the hands of the Jewish community of Amsterdam — tellingly bespeaks the attitude of Judaism to this approach.

At this point the alternatives become more complex. Whereas the first two choose extreme, though opposite, attitudes to our problem — either the exclusive assertion of transcendence or its complete denial — the next two, respectively that of Christianity and Judaism, attempt to define various possibilities of the combination of some sort of transcendence with some sort of divine relatedness to the world.

Christian faith asserts the transcendence of the Biblical God

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(this is the first person in the trinity) and combines it with His relatedness to man's universe primarily through the incarnation, *i.e.*, the second person in the trinity, as well as through other "intermediaries." But it is important to note in what form this relationship occurs. Transcendence as such enters into immanence as such. In the process it does not forfeit its transcendence: the "God-man" remains "all God," — though He be also "all man." *I.e.*, both transcendence and immanence retain all of their original natures. They merely occur together, in one phenomenon, event, or person. The result of this occurrence is that the world of immanence, in turn, falls apart into two discrete portions — that which becomes identified with transcendence and thereby loses its previous immanentist character *in toto* (remember that the two retained their natures and did not inter-mix),<sup>2</sup> while the other remains behind, unaffected one way or the other by the event. (This fundamental Christian theological dichotomy may explain the traditional Christian clear-cut demarcation between "the saved" and "the unsaved." There is really no possibility of a middle-ground.)

This manner of relating transcendence to immanence possesses one characteristic which needs to be underlined. It operates essentially on what I would call a "spatial model" of the problem — *i.e.*, it conceives of transcendence as being, as it were, physically, spatially above immanence ("the God out there"). If there is to be a connecting link between two "physical" places, this link itself will have to be physical. Furthermore, two physical entities cannot occupy the same place; at best they can be located next and connected to one another. (It should be noted that this understanding of such a relationship between transcendence and immanence does justice not only to a doctrine of incarnation but also to the historically and philosophically related one of intermediaries, *e.g.*, in Philo and in the entire so-called Neo-platonic tradition of the Middle Ages.) The *logoi* or spheres are, as it were, "physically," spatially the connecting links between transcendence and immanence. They themselves are of transcendental nature, despite the connecting function which they perform.) Also, it must be remembered that "space" is only a metaphor, or model, for this notion. The relationship

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between transcendence and immanence is believed to be on the pattern, not in the actual form, of spatial relationships.<sup>2</sup>

Actually all three alternative ways of conceiving the relationship of God and world that we have so far looked at possess this characteristic of being modeled on spatial relationships. The difference between the first two and the third is only that the first two end by denying all relationship — Epicureanism by, as it were, leaving God “out there” without lines of communication to the world, — Pantheism by merging the two poles of the relationship into one and thereby destroying the possibility of relationship, — whereas Incarnationism retains the reality of a relationship. All three agree that, if there is a relationship, it is constructed on the spatial model; the first two deny that there is one, however, and the third asserts that there is.

The fourth and last way of tackling this problem may be identified with Judaism. It does not employ the spatial model but that of *the will* in trying to conceptualize the relationship between God and the world. The will is not spatial either in human beings or in God. I can will you to do something whether you are near or far, for that matter whether I or you or both of us are physical entities or no. If I have a way of communicating my will to you, by speech or, for all I know, by mental telepathy, then we are in relationship to one another not spatially but volitionally. The explication of the will of God for man we call “law” or *Halakhah*.

It is quite easy to prove this proposition from virtually the entire history of Biblical, Talmudic, and mediaeval Jewish philosophical thought. One could, for example, write a history of classical Jewish philosophy in terms of how literally every single Jewish thinker has felt constrained to introduce what I think of as “the Jewish twist,” *i.e.* volitionalism, into the non-Jewish philosophic system within which he happened to work. Let me cite briefly one example from the Kalam, one from Neo-Platonism, and one from Aristotelianism. Saadia Gaon had it easiest in a way, because the Kalam is itself largely a volitionist school of thought. Ibn Gabirol, however Jewish a Jew, so un-Jewish a philosopher that for centuries neither Jews nor Christians realized that the *Fons Vitae* was the work of a Jew, has been accused —

with how much justification we need not here investigate — of introducing divine will into his neo-Platonic, necessitarian, emanationist system in a self-contradictory manner. Maimonides, finally, had to cope with the intellectualism of Aristotle, in which not the will but thinking, and logical, *i.e.* necessitated, thinking, constituted the essence of the Deity. He begins, therefore, by proving that “there is no relationship between God and space” (*Guide* I, 52) — goes on to show that, whereas any one corporeal mode of existence can only produce a single effect of the same nature as its cause, a single will can produce any number of different effects, which he calls “actions” (*ib.*, 53)<sup>3</sup> — and, in the Second Part of the *Guide*, breaks with Aristotle completely on the question of the createdness of the world. Even here, however, Maimonides makes it explicitly and perfectly clear that he is not primarily interested in whether the world was “created” in time or from a *primaeval* matter or no; the only thing that he is concerned with is whether God is believed to will (*ib.*, II, 25), so that, consequently, “miracles,” *i.e.* revelation and its laws, are philosophically made possible.

Judaism’s conception of the relationship between God and the world differs from the other three ways which we have considered in that it is constructed on the will-model rather than the space-model. Whereas Christianity requires some sort of quasi-physical, quasi-spatial relationship between transcendence and man’s world, Judaism conceives of this relationship by keeping God absolutely separate and different from the world but attributing to Him ethical concern for it: the God of Israel is absolutely different from the world and absolutely concerned with it.<sup>4</sup>

### III. *Maimonides and Thomas on God*

We can, at this point of our analysis, begin to make the transition to the modern crisis in Christian theology. Maimonides, as is well known, denies all attributes to God other than negative ones (which, in effect, state that He is like nothing whatsoever that we experience or know of, including space, spatial relationships, etc.) and so-called attributes of action. For the lat-

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ter we use the phrase "ethical concern for man," *i.e.* laws that, were they the product of human intelligence, express a will for man and the world. As part of his "negative theology," he even goes so far as to deny "life" to God. His argument runs something like this: "life," in any but a metaphoric sense, can be attributed only to "sentient" beings, *i.e.* corporeal existences (*Guide*, I, 42); God, however, is not a corporeal and, therefore, "sentient" being (*ib.*, 53, 55) — "life" can, hence, be attributed to Him in no real or literal sense (*ib.*, 56ff.) Thus, according to Maimonides, it would be fair to conclude that the God of Israel cannot cease to live because He is not of the genus of entities that have "life," in the literal sense.

Thomas Aquinas, in many ways the Christian counterpart to Maimonides, as is well known, cites and emulates Maimonides not a few times. Though he goes along with the latter's "negative theology" to a considerable extent, he must, in the end, introduce a "Christian twist" into the system: ultimately he grants the legitimacy of some essential, though only analogical, attributes, of which life is a very important one.<sup>5</sup> And the theological reason that Thomas, the Aristotelian, must part on this score with Maimonides, the Aristotelian, is clearly connected with his Christology: if God really possessed no attributes whatsoever that make humanly-experienced and divine essences in any way comparable, then the doctrines of the trinity and, above all, of the incarnation would be completely impossible. In the latter, at least, God is, after all, held to be "in the flesh."<sup>6</sup> It can, therefore, be put this way: the god of Christianity can cease living for the simple reason that he has lived. Indeed, what is surprising about this? It is, after all, the most basic of all Christian doctrines that god became man and lived and died as such. (We shall run into this basic doctrine again where we deal with the contemporary theological crisis.)

### IV. *Spinoza and Hegel*

It is at this point that the modern doctrine of "the theology of blasphemy" begins to emerge. Spinoza was rightly excommunicated by the Jewish community because, whether that was the ex-

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PLICIT or conscious reason or no, he identified God, "substance," with the world and, therefore, at least in part with matter, physicality, "extension." It followed quite logically that he had to deny will to both God and man; they are both part of nature — *deus sive natura* —, and they act as their inherent laws require them to.<sup>7</sup> And, while arguing vehemently and even disingenuously in the *Theologico-Political Treatise* against Maimonides, he defines the superiority of Paul of Tarsus over Moses by claiming that the former articulated "truths" while the latter formulated "laws." It was Hegel, the devout admirer of Spinoza (and not that other admirer of his, Nietzsche — as most current writers in "the theology of blasphemy" assert), who then laid the philosophical foundation for the current Christian theological developments.<sup>8</sup>

Hegel propounds ". . ." in two different ways but for the same end. For him, too, reason and nature are identical. Nature and history are, indeed, "the life of God." He puts it by way of saying that "what is is rational" — *i.e.* the real is divine. It is true that the religious and Marxist defenders of Hegel interpret him, in at least some stages of his thinking, to have meant that only what is rational in the real is rational,<sup>9</sup> — but, apart from the obvious tautology in such a proposition, we shall have occasion to note the limited value of such a doctrine that in the actual real the rational real that is actual in it must be intellected and then brought to complete domination. (I shall call this "the doctrine of *little* revolution.") In "the life of God" ("Mind" or "Spirit"), which we have seen to be nature and history for Hegel, the German philosopher, he now held that in his and our time the ". . ." had been reached. His *Philosophy of History* sees antiquity and specifically Judaism as the stage of the human mind in which God is conceived as an object, outside of and opposed to rationality — the Middle Ages and specifically Christianity as the stage in which God is subjectivized, *i.e.* he is increasingly located within man himself, although still in mythic form and as a *corpus separatum*, as it were — while modernity, finally, *i.e.* rational philosophy as enunciated by Hegel himself, absorbs the notion of God entirely in mind, spirit, and reason, *i.e.* in immanence. Philosophy takes the place of religion, and *Geist*

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takes the place of God. Transcendence has been completely dissolved in immanence. In his relatively early essay "Faith and Knowledge" Hegel thus explicitly speaks of "the feeling on which the religion of modern times (Christianity) rests: God himself is dead," — and goes on to call philosophy "the speculative Good Friday," ("*der Karfreitag der Philosophie*") *i.e.*, the stage of the development of reason in which the deity is crucified. He ends that essay by speaking also of a resurrection of God — to be sure in the form of philosophical truth. Also in the somewhat later and definitive *phenomenology* he ends with the philosophic Easter. As Kaufmann<sup>10</sup> rightly puts it: "To put it into our own words: there is no supreme being beyond; the spirit is not to be found in another world; the infinite spirit has to be found in the comprehension of this world . . . 'History comprehended' must replace theology."

The essentially Christian ethos in this conception is philosophically and even biographically perfectly clear. It has been pointed out that Hegel and Nietzsche, in both of whom the proclamation of ". . ." found its most sonorous heralds, grew up in deeply Protestant environments, in which the opening words of the Luther hymn are most likely to have been very familiar: ". . . (Himself) . . ." — referring, of course, to Calvary.<sup>11</sup> The trinitarianism of Hegel's periodization of history is a cliché among students: antiquity is God the father, the Middle Ages God the son, and modernity the Holy Spirit. Generally it can be said that Hegel simply stretched out on an horizontal plane, *i.e.* through history, the originally metaphysical vertical ladder of emanations of the neo-Platonists.

That there was a distinct and conscious anti-Jewish thrust in this entire trend of thought from the outset can be illustrated rather easily. One of the striking features of Hegel's *Philosophy of History* is that, in his schema of history, Christianity is the heir, not of Judaism but, directly as well as indirectly — in the classic Marcionite-Germanic fashion, of Greek culture alone. Unlike the Oriental cultures, says Hegel, Greece recognized man as God (*e.g.* the ideally human forms of the statues of gods); all that Christianity had to do was to reverse this insight antithetically, to recognize God as man. This god-man could



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and did die. Thus the foundation was laid, again according to Hegel, for the modern synthesis of the "resurrection" of the rational spirit from the grave of religion. "It may be posited as an advantage of Greek gods that they are represented as men. . . . But the Greek gods must not be regarded as being more human than the Christian god. Christ is much more a man: he lives, dies . . ." (Cf. *The Philosophy of Hegel*, ed. C. J. Friedrich, N. Y. 1953, p. 59.) And Hegel's great contemporary Goethe spelled out the anti-Jewish implications of this view. He, of course, proclaimed himself a pagan. (For a positive Jewish evaluation of Goethean paganism, cf. F. Rosenzweig, *Stern der Erloesung*, III, Introd.) To Lavater he writes: Christianity means that ". . . seeing yourself reflected in it, you worship yourself." In 1774 he publishes an essay "The Eternal Jew" in which he speaks of "the indescribable mischief the 'Jewish nonsense' brought upon us: had we never come to know the melancholy of the Orient, had Homer remained our Bible, how different a form mankind would have achieved." (K. Loewith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche*, p. 21f.) The truth of the matter is that "the theology of blasphemy" is still the age-old resistance of paganism to and the rebellion against the truth of the Hebrew Bible.

### V. *Christianity in the 19th and 20th Centuries*

The story of how this Christian conception fundamentally affected the further development of the modern spirit is, in turn, well known, at least in outline. Hegel became perhaps the most influential thinker of the 19th century and, if only through Karl Marx, also of the 20th. All that Feuerbach and Marx had to do was to "set Hegel on his feet," *i.e.* conceive of the universe to be essentially material rather than "spirit" and combine this doctrine with Hegel's own universal immanentism. The strong tendency of modern western culture to exclude all transcendent concerns has increasingly manifested itself in all realms.<sup>12</sup> It has finally, in our time, reached Christian theology itself in the form of the "theology of blasphemy." Quite in the spirit of the Hegel of the *Phenomenology*, Thomas Altizer, one of the most prominent

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spokesmen of that theology, wants to limit Christianity to Good Friday, omitting Easter — so that the deity can not only have died but remain dead: “When god came into the world in the form of Christ, He was no longer transcendent.” When Jesus died, with him the deity ceased. He continues: “This was the self-negation of God. The idea of Resurrection is a great mistake of Christian theology. God is immanent in this world now.” This has rightly been called a radical *theologia crucis*. Regardless of whether you turn to Paul Van Buren’s influential book *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel*, which programmatically wishes to eliminate all transcendence from Christian theology in favor of a completely immanentist interpretation, — or Bonhoeffer’s and William Hamilton’s concern increasingly limited to human and social ethics, — or to Cox’s *Secular City* in which the deity disappears<sup>13</sup> *de facto* in a flood of technology and historicity, — in all of this agitation there is simply the acknowledgement that, so far as at least their Christian faith is concerned, all sense of transcendence has vanished — indeed, it is regarded as injurious to moral and historical goals: immanent reality alone dictates what is to be done.

In conformity with our original definition of the Christian conception of the relationship between transcendence and the world, the specifically Christian character of this problematic can easily be discerned. Christianity had always held that, if God is not “physically” present in the world, the latter is completely bereft of Him, since His will, in the form of His law, was denied from the outset; one, therefore, had to choose between transcendence and immanence; one could not have the one together with the other. For too long, these contemporary religionists hold, and now no longer tenably either from a philosophical or from an ethical point of view, Christianity had chosen transcendence — “other-worldliness;” now the turn has come at long last to concern oneself with this world, “secularism,” and therefore the other, transcendence, has to be let go.

It is not simply a matter of the non-existence of God. That would be merely old-fashioned atheism. God, they say, must have lived in order to be able to terminate life. Only Christianity, among the Biblical religions, affords the possibility of

such a conception. Transcendence enters into immanence while remaining itself. Thus Van Buren can say:<sup>14</sup> "God is only man; therefore Jesus is the deity." And from this beginning Altizer draws the consistent conclusion:<sup>15</sup> "Only the Christian can celebrate an Incarnation in which God has actually become flesh, and radical theology must finally understand the Incarnation itself as affecting the ". . ."<sup>16</sup> And all the really significant spokesmen of this modern temper agree on its essentially Christian character: Nietzsche: "The end of Christianity — at the hands of its own morality (which cannot be replaced) which turns against the Christian God . . ."<sup>17</sup> Heidegger: "It thus becomes clear that Nietzsche's statement about ". . ." speaks of the Christian God."<sup>18</sup> And the Jesuit Jean-Marie Le Blond: ". . ." can only be fully understood in relation to Christianity. It is a question of post-Christian atheism."<sup>19</sup>

G. Vahanian, one of the radical theologians taken most seriously in the current discussion, puts the cards on the table in recognizing, as Paul Ramsey does in the foreword to his book *The Death . . .* that immanence is the crux of the problem and that it derives from peculiarly Christian premises: "This, then, is the irony of the cultural tradition of Christianity, it has bequeathed the idea of the ". . ." To kill the deity is to become God oneself: this is the meaning of the transition from radical monotheism to radical immanentism which has taken place in Western culture" (p. 230). And he states the typical Christian dilemma in almost paradigmatic form: transcendence must be related to immanence either in substantial form or not at all — an ethical relationship is not even contemplated by him: (p. 210 — having discussed Kierkegaard and Nietzsche) "To say that ". . ." or to assert an infinite qualitative difference between God and man means not only that no ladder leads from man to God; it also means that there is no identity of substance between man and God, and, accordingly, that the problem of human existence is independent of the problem of God."

## VI. *Jewish Philosophy in the 19th and 20th Centuries*

It is most instructive to watch how the Jewish thinkers of the

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first half of the 19th century, as much under the heavy influence of Hegel as the rest of Europe, nonetheless guarded against this process of immanentization.<sup>20</sup> Formstecher stipulates really only two religious possibilities, paganism and Judaism, between which Christianity and Islam must somehow find their places. The characteristic of paganism is that it worships nature and thereby forfeits freedom, *i.e.* will, whereas Judaism worships Spirit. Christianity, in its Jewish component, goes out into the world to bring all cultures under the sway of Spirit, but in the process it adjusts itself to much of the paganism with which it must deal. Its doctrine of original sin, says Formstecher, symbolizes its partial abandonment of freedom, *i.e.* transcendence to nature. Samuel Hirsch, as strict an Hegelian as Judaism has produced, takes a very similar position and expresses it if anything more rigorously: the human Ego and God *are*, in fact, real freedom over against nature and necessity, not the inevitable self-fulfillment of Hegel's spirit which moves in accordance with its own ineluctable laws. Hirsch uses almost the very words of Maimonides when he endorses the Biblical doctrines of miracles and prophecy precisely on the ground that they express the assertion of transcendent freedom, of God's will, rather than logical or rational necessity. Hegel's and Christianity's error, he proclaims, is, again, that they mix pagan submission to nature with the Biblical proclamation of true freedom. One might even say of Moses Hess, who started out as an Hegelian and proclaimed himself "a disciple of Spinoza," that he broke with Karl Marx on ethical grounds, *i.e.* by holding that socialism was to be the result of the moral will rather than of the inevitable laws of history. Little wonder that he ended as a committed Jew. The only early-19th-century Jewish thinker who really fell prey to Hegelian immanentism and necessitarianism was, paradoxically, the one among them who wrote in Hebrew, Nachman Krochmal. This is also the logic of the otherwise rather random themes with which he deals in the *Guide for the Perplexed of the Times* which has not, it seems, been noted by the historians: Philo, Gnosticism, Ibn Ezra, Kabbalistic emanationism, and Hegel (!) — precisely the lineage of Neo-Platonism or quasi-Neo-Platonism, against which the mediaevals had to assert the transcendence of

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God's will.\*

If, then, even the Jewish Hegelians of the 19th century preserved Jewish transcendentalism in the face of Hegelian immanentism, it goes without saying that the dissenters from the regnant philosophy of the age recognized the dangers that confronted them with at least equal clarity. Steinheim, in many ways perhaps the most interesting Jewish thinker of that period, argues against the sovereignty of philosophic reason in the name of a higher reason, the reason of Revelation. (He thus assumes the mantle of R. Yehuda Halevy in the depth of the 19th century.) He does not shrink from identifying Christianity with pantheism and pointing not only to the doctrines of predestination and original sin but even the uncreated logos in the trinity as aspects of a misrepresentation of God, Who is in truth free, *i.e.* transcendent.

And then, of course, occurs the great break in 19th century Jewish philosophy through the person of Hermann Cohen.<sup>20a</sup> He called for the break with Hegel (whom, together with Spinoza, he came to regard as the great arch-enemy not only of Judaism but of ethical reason in general) and the return to the volitionalism of Kant. Cohen resumes the tradition of Maimonides, to whom he devotes much devout attention, and extends the doctrine of negative theology almost to the point where the very personalism of God vanishes. Even during the "systematic" Kantian period of his works, however, God is for Hermann Cohen always the source of ethical freedom, — thus ethically distinguished in his protest against Hegel from Kierkegaard's — and certainly during the last period of his life — whatever may be its relationship to the previous period — he even re-gains the individuality of man in his "correlation" with a personal God. It is at this point in the history of modern Jewish philosophy that Martin Buber starts out with his assertion of the unimpingeable personalism of God Who wills. (Throughout this sketch we have disregarded the, of course, very important problem of the translation of the will of God into Jewish law — it is true

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\* It should be analyzed whether in Chapt. 5 of his *Guide* Krochmal also does not try to assert some ultimate transcendence of God over "Spirit," in arguing against Galen and even Maimonides.

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that you cannot have Judaism without this, as too many of the men whom we have been discussing forgot, but it is equally true that you cannot have divine law without divine will.) Franz Rosenzweig in turn starts out at this point with his assertion of the individual in the teeth of Hegelian conceptualism. Thus the circle has closed, and the amazingly unilinear thrust of the entire course of Jewish philosophic thought becomes clear: The will of God and man transcends the iron chains of the nature of God, man, and the world.

### VII. *The Social-Secular Gospel*

Before we now turn to a Jewish evaluation, critique, and alternative to this historical development of the Christian "theology of blasphemy," we must pay some attention to the so-called "secular gospel" movement. It is intimately related to the former — it represents the philosophical flaw in it — and it will be seen to have to be Jewishly evaluated somewhat differently, all at once.

We have already pointed out that the current desire among these thinkers to extend the process of immanentization also to theology is in large part due to their conviction that the time is long overdue that Christianity concern itself with worldly and human interests rather than with other-worldly, transcendental ones. Here ethico-centrism is at work. Thus Hamilton apostrophizes Bonhoeffer by saying of him that he "has forced us to move from theology to ethics and to see the life of the Christian, in both its private and public-political visibility, as the primary evidence for the truth of the message he bears. Thus, Bonhoeffer's critical influence forces us to take with theological seriousness the problem of speaking up, breaking the silence, leading, serving, getting hurt in the passionate social and political issues of the day."<sup>21</sup> And Van Buren asserts that, in his view, Christianity too long has been pre-occupied with the nature of God instead of His effects — acts and attributes of action — and with His law. He prefers to look for God in ethics rather than in nature and, over and over again, demands "ethics and history, not metaphysics and religion."<sup>22</sup>

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### VIII. *Jewish Welcome and Critique of Secularity*

But it is precisely at the point at which this trend in current Christian thinking comes closest to Judaism, in its ethical emphasis, that the skies tumble down upon it — *i.e.*, the fundamental and original dichotomy between transcendence and immanence, conceived on a spatial model, vitiates it.

Judaism, as we have seen, conceives of the relationship between God and the world as subsisting in the Law: God is concerned with the world, while always remaining completely separate from it; He wills man's good and, therefore, expresses His law for him; this law, which constitutes the link between God and the world, — which, one might say, as our classic preachers actually did, “marries” heaven and earth, — when realized, transforms the world “in the image of the Kingdom of Heaven.” Ethics and God cannot be sundered. Two classical rabbinic dicta, though often misused, illustrate this trenchantly. God is quoted as saying: “Would that they abandon Me but kept My Torah.” At first blush the concern with immanent, this-worldly, human matters seems to eject concern with transcendence. However, R. Huna immediately goes on to repair the breach (*i.e.*, ethics require theology): “If they abandoned Me but kept My Torah, by occupying themselves with it, the leaven in it will lead them back to Me.” An equally famous and similarly misused dictum by the same teacher immediately follows and displays the same kind of initial dichotomy between theological and moral preoccupation — only to end up by resolving the dichotomy on a higher plane: “Study Torah, even if not for its own (or God's) sake — for by studying it not for its own sake, by occupying yourself with it you will return to do it for its own (or God's) sake.”<sup>23</sup>

Christianity omits the connecting link of the law and thereby divorces transcendence from the world. The incarnation restores such a connection, but in a quasi-physical fashion, — and this quasi-physical link itself retains, as we have seen, the dichotomy between divinity and humanity. The Christian is, therefore, forced to choose between transcendence *or* the world. And therefore the contemporary Protestant thinkers, with whom we are

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dealing, again divide themselves into two opposed camps at this point, namely those who affirm only the world and let God go (the secular gospels) and those who choose only God and let the world go. Altizer, for example, strives for the Nirvana, to leave the world behind, as does his influential teacher, the historian of religion Mircea Eliade, who regards concern with history, politics, ethics, etc., as a perversion of genuine religiosity. Van Buren, Cox, and Hamilton, on the other hand, resolve to be henceforth concerned only with the world. The otherworldliness of the former group is only a reformulation of much traditional Christian consciousness. The exclusive this-worldliness, "secularity," of the latter, in turn, in the absence of a divine Judge, comes to ail of at least three mortal wounds:

1) When there is nothing but the world, the world as it is is divine. We are back with the pantheism of Spinoza and Hegel. The result is a celebration of the real such as has perhaps never before been held in the history of Biblical religion. One must savor the full optimism of Hamilton, based on his estimate of the advance of the social sciences, the arts, and the civil rights movement:<sup>24</sup> "I am persuaded, however, that in addition to cultural factors, the death of . . . has made this new optimism possible, and it is not an accident, but intended, deliberate, and natural, that the theologies of the death of . . . should be in themselves optimistic. . . . Not only are there no tragedies around — this could be described as an accident — but there can't be tragedies."

There is no need to be theoretical about this and to compile the Biblical-Jewish record of pessimism about man and his fate, from *Ecclesiastes*, — through our sages who "counted and taught that it were better for man never to have been born," — all the way to Rabbi Soloveitchik who recently wrote: "To the thinkers of the Age of Reason man posed no problem. . . . They saw man in his glory but failed to see him in his tragic plight. They considered the individual ontologically perfect and existentially adequate."<sup>25</sup> We can instead make an historical judgment: Christianity, historically the religion of the West most pessimistic about man and the world, in at least one sector turns around to proclaim the unqualified goodness of man and the



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world — indeed, the absence and even impossibility of tragedy — in the very hour in which the Jewish people has sipped of the cup of ineffable, cosmic bitterness to its very last dregs!

2) The absence of transcendence ultimately destroys ethics. As Spinoza and Hegel exemplified, when there is only immanence, whatever is is rational — nature is God — and the real is the good. Ethics means to have an alternative to reality — but this alternative has been eliminated. This validates itself also among these new ethicists. Hamilton, as we have seen, acclaims what is actually happening as what should happen. He approvingly quotes two German Protestant theologians who reject the desire to change the world as the notion that “rape is the only form of engagement.”<sup>26</sup> Cox welcomes the new technological age as “the wave of the future.”<sup>27</sup> Hans Jonas trenchantly points out that “the being whose fate Heidegger ponders is the quintessence of this world, it is *seculum*. Against this, theology should guard the radical transcendence of its God, whose voice comes not out of being, but breaks into the kingdom of being from without.” But the former seminarian thinks of what he still calls transcendence as something that one “sees” rather than “hears,” *i.e.* again as a quasi-physical rather than ethical, entity, — welcomed Hitler as divine fate — and took many German Christians and even theologians along with him.<sup>28</sup> How can one ultimately speak of ethics, and even of ethicocentrism, when whatever happens must happen, and when the best that the moral man can be expected to do — as Cox and Van Buren agree with Hegel on his best interpretation — is to discern “where the action is” and to “get with it”?

3) The indigenous Christian antinomianism, or a-nomianism, ultimately eliminates ethics, because, as Kant taught, ethics *is* law. In the absence of law, ethics can at best be laudable sentiment or awaited special divine injunctions. Thus Van Buren distinguishes, in the by-now well-known language of the English linguistic analysts, between the verifiable propositions of science and the unverifiable, subjective, however valuable, “blik” of religion. But this is not so much a misunderstanding or religious epistemology as it is a misunderstanding of the philosophical foundations of science. Science works with hypotheses — pos-

tulated ideas. These hypotheses "create" the stuff of sensuous experience which constitutes the "problem" for man's cognition. "Matter" and "reality," then, are tasks that challenge man's reason — and infinite tasks at that. Thus it turns out that also scientific cognition is, like faith, an human, ethical, and eschatological enterprise.<sup>29</sup>

The result of this absence of lawfulness which is ascribed to ethics is a) "there is no external criterion by which we might see whether Jesus was in fact obedient," (this is related also to the current wave of the new, "contextualist" morality)<sup>30</sup>, and b) that the "kerigmatic message of the hour" may at best be late, as it was even for Bonhoeffer and Karl Barth when the Nazis rose to power, and at worst the confirmation that Hitler embodies the good for Heidegger, and current local political heroes for Cox and Hamilton.

### IX. *Revolutionary Halakhah*

Our Jewish reaction to the current efflorescence of the "theology of blasphemy" and "the secular gospel" can then really be summarized in one sentence: Judaism always advocates, in the name of the God absolutely concerned with the world, the greatest possible human, religious attention to the welfare and progress of this world — and if this be called "secularism," then so be it, — but it teaches convincingly that this can be done only under the aegis of a Law put forth by the transcendent God.

By way of analyzing the immanentism of "the secular gospel," we have already had occasion to speak of the indispensability of the Law. Before we finally leave this subject, another point must be made about it, however, — this time addressed not to non-Jews but to Jews committed to the Halakhah. The Halakhah is eternally valid and applicable to the world because it did not originate in Mosaic society, much less in Babylonian or Egyptian society, nor in Persian, Moslem, German, Russian or American society. This is to say, it did not originate from and is not, therefore, exclusively tailor-cut for any past or present society. The Halakhah originates with God. God is unchangingly relevant — and therefore so is His Law — to all societies, past, present, and future, until the world will have become what He wills it to be, the Kingdom of the Messiah of our righteousness.

The Halakhah is the law of the ever-future society and the law that leads every present society in the direction of the ultimate, future society. Surely this is the meaning of the fundamental rabbinic theologumen that in the *Shema* we must first take upon ourselves the yoke of the Kingdom of God so that we may thereafter receive the yoke of its commandments (*Ber.* 13a).

It would not be difficult to show how literally all of the Halakhah is either the law of society as it should be — and thus whoever fulfills it in fact establishes, as it were, a small forward-bastion of the ultimate future in the present — or the law by which the present society is moved forward toward the messianic. *I.e.*, whenever a Jew acts according to the Halakhah he either hastens the coming of the Kingdom or actually institutes it at the moment and in the place where he happens to be. Perhaps the Sabbath is the best exemplification of this process. The world was created for the sake of the Sabbath (*Gen.* 2). The expulsion from the Garden of Eden destroyed the universal Sabbath. The weekly Sabbath is a foretaste of the Garden of Eden restored by the Messiah (*Ber.* 56) — *i.e.* on it the Jew lives as he will live all the time under the messianic scepter. But this is not only an individual, rather it is also a social goal. The weekly Sabbath is a small portion of the Sabbatical year, which in turn is a small portion of the Jubilee year, and finally the Jubilee year — with its social egalitarianism — is a small portion, again, of the days of the Messiah. All of the halakhic life of the Jew during the week then leads up to the Sabbath, and all of the halakhic life of the Jew on the Sabbath leads up to the messianic fulfillment. For that reason our sages can say that if Jews would only observe one or two Sabbaths fully the messianic Kingdom would have come — for the Sabbath *is* the messianic Kingdom, and the messianic Kingdom is what all of Judaism is for and about.<sup>31</sup>

If, then, it be true that Jewish lawfulness is messianic lawfulness, there is another way of putting this: every given, historical society is by definition infinitely short of what it should be — the infinite being measured by the infinity of the difference between what God wants for man and what man actually is and does; it follows that the Halakhah, in order to be completely realized, requires a total transformation of human society. A commonly

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used English word for “total transformation” is “revolution.” The Halakhah is religiously the permanent revolution.

It seems to be important to say this to Jews who are committed to the full sway of the Halakhah because some of them these days, confronted with a wide-spread rebellion against law — from civil disobedience in the civil rights movement, through the burning of draft-cards, “dirty speech movements” and political revolutions around the world, to an overthrow of previously — at least publicly — accepted sexual *mores* — automatically assume that Judaism stands for law and must, therefore, oppose any infraction of any law. But this is not true. Judaism stands for divine, messianic, as we have seen — revolutionary law. In each case we ought, therefore, to examine whether a) the rebels against positive law may not in fact, wittingly or unwittingly, be protesting against antiquated law in the name of what we have recognized as “the ever-future law,” and b) whether we, for that matter, may not have distorted that ever-future law, through our interpretations and applications, into a replica of present and even past social conventions. (That, in our time, we are often baffled as to what the relevant revolutionary Halakhah actually is may be a function of the hiddenness of God, of which we shall speak shortly.)

### X. *Jewish Secularity*

The immanentization process that we have analyzed we have faulted for failing to understand that immanence without transcendence destroys ethics. But let us emphasize at the same time that concern with this world, rather than pure transcendence, lies at the very heart of Jewish religion. One surely need not adduce all of the Halakhah, which is a Halakhah for this world, not for another, and for living men, not for the transfigured, — one need not adduce all of the prophets of Israel who were passionately immersed in the affairs of their times — to be sure in the name of the transcendent God —, in order to prove this proposition.

Indeed, at least two emphases can be derived by Jews from this contemporary concern with secularity which especially “religious

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Jews” have sometimes of late been tempted to underplay. It has long been a notorious fact that Jews in Central and Western Europe and America since the beginning of the 19th century and in Eastern Europe since the end of that century have secularized much more quickly and much more widely than the bulk of Christendom. (This is not the place to trace the why’s and how’s of this process.) Indeed, even the formulation of a secularistic theology was anticipated by some Jews decades ago, also in this country, under such titles as *The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion* and *Secularism is the Will of God*. What has long been a source of Jewish religious lament now, retrospectively, turns out to have been an ambiguous but sensitive anticipation of the temper of our age which Christians are now trying to catch up with. More importantly, the secular world is — and this is the very heart of Judaism — the concern of God; thus also the secular Jew is a Jew, not made one by separate theological affirmations.

There is, in the second place, a tradition in modern Torah-true Judaism which affirms the value of secularity as a *hakhanah-preparatio* for a new vital faith. It holds that the God of Israel *wants* man to become completely, exclusively man, so that he may thereafter be the worthier of returning to his status as a child of God.

Let us mention only three names in this tradition: the Maharal of Prague<sup>32</sup> affirmed man’s autonomy and held that “there must be a preliminary exploration of the earth, of its physical forces, of its complex interplay of contradictions. In short there must be a pedagogy on the primary level of sensations and perceptions before one can approach the Torah.” Rav Kook is, of course, well-known to have held that the secularists and materialists are tools in the hand of God, doing His work, who build the physical and material temple of man and the world so that He may, thereafter, take up His residence with them the more gloriously. “There is something valuable in present-day materialism. It has a realistic approach to practical problems. For there is danger in abstract ideas, and materialism finds the strength to sweep away all phantasies. Hence materialism is a path leading to the later recognition of the Most High, who is above all idealistic

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theories, the highest and absolute reality, higher than either materialism or idealism.”<sup>33</sup>

Finally, let us adduce a particularly moving expression of this trend, for it comes from a man who, living in the Soviet Union, tried somehow and desperately to understand how the universal God of all history could permit — and even bring about — the atheistic Marxism that surrounded him on all sides, R. Yitzchak Krasileshtzickoff. Let me quote a rather lengthy but most provocative passage:<sup>34</sup>

God wraps Himself in materialism and emanates His light and disperses it from one end of the earth to the other. At this time many see only the sublime material cover, but the time will come when the earth will be filled with the knowledge of God, and the human race will open its eyes to see the spirit and the divine and ethical substance that is hidden in this material. . . . R. Yitzchak Abrabanel, in his *Yeshuot Meshicho*, explains R. Nehorahy's statement (*perek chelek*) that in the days of the Messiah the kingdom will turn to heresy by saying that when men will no longer adhere to any of their many religions, when they will be rid of all of them, then they will the more easily accept the true faith rather than one that contradicts it. . . . The new materialism which denies everything is brought about by Him who calls the generations from the beginning, to make it easier for the perfected and developed mankind to accept the yoke of God's Kingdom. . . . To go from monism to monotheism is not so difficult. For to penetrate nature and matter it suffices to find in them the God of all Who is also in him that investigates them.

R. Krasileshtzickoff refers to the Russian Christian philosopher Soloviev and goes on:

He who calls the generations from the beginning intentionally causes His Godhood to be forgot for a specified period, so that man will acquire an understanding of the knowledge of nature. After this man will realize the glory of the spirit of God that resides in nature and matter.

He even comes to terms ethically with the Marxist doctrine of class-struggle by declaring that true human morality can only come about after the class-struggle has been overcome.

One might state this profound doctrine that the Maharal and the Russian R. Yitzchak share by saying that God withdraws

from man the way a father sends his son away to school so that he may grow up and learn to stand on his own two feet. Secularism, they say, is the process of man's maturation. And this is virtually the literal kernel of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's doctrine of "the world come of age."

### XI. *The Hiding God*

Therewith we come to the last component of the Biblical, Jewish alternative to the "theology of blasphemy." God hides Himself, we have just been told, in order to let man, as it were, get out from under His shadow. But the doctrine of the hiding of God is, of course, much more complex and painful than this. That the time of *The Eclipse of God*, in Buber's phrase, is a time of utter agony for man by far outweighs its putative pedagogical value. During that time unspeakable horrors transpire — Job-like man feels utterly alone and bereft of meaning — and the world appears if not empty then, worse, filled with filth. This is, of course, a pervasive human consciousness in our time, among religionists, writers, artists, and thinkers.

But let us be clear about it: the doctrine of the *e-l mistater* is considerably more searching and more humanistic than that of "...". In the first place, in Jewish tradition it is a hiding, not a hidden God — an *e-l nistar umistater*, not a *deus absconditus* — it is a doctrine of an act, not a state of God, a present process, not a completed one.<sup>35</sup> In the second place, it is a doctrine of an absence, not of an emptiness. The bachelor may regret not having a wife, but surely the widower, bereft of his wife, is suffering infinitely greater pain. In the third place, whereas immanentism declares that there is nothing but that which is and therefore celebrates it, without a need, a possibility, or a desire to change it, he who experiences the hiding of God knows that there is an alternative and feels called upon humanly to endeavor to overcome his present condition. The hiding manifests transcendence, and out of it the imperative to ethics and revolution sounds forth — the commandment of lightning out of the darkness of the cloud (Ex. 19:16).

We cannot review the history of the Jewish doctrine of the

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hiding of God — from the cry of the Psalmist (30:7) “Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was confounded,” — to the announcement of the prophet (Is. 45:15, which I would translate) “Ahoy Thou hiding God, Thou God of Israel art Savior,”\* — through the Kabbalistic doctrine that the world and man exist only through the process of divine hiding, *tzimtzum*, and are, therefore, perennially in exile (a doctrine which Gershom Scholem has rightly called the extreme opposite of pantheism), — to the mortally wounded outcry of an Elie Wiesel who, in the name of the martyr of the European Holocaust, accuses God of having, as it were, gone AWOL at the height of the battle. We do want to adduce two passages out of our literature because, respectively, they express the historic experience of the Jewish people and the need of our hour.

*B. Yoma* 69b expresses the experience of the hiding of God in a most radical and daring fashion: “They do not grant halves in heaven.” Moses had called God (Deut. 10:17) “great, mighty, and awesome.” On this basis alone does the Halakhah rule that Jews may so designate God, who otherwise is “beyond all praises.” Jeremiah witnessed the withdrawal of God in the destruction of the first Temple and dared, therefore, to overrule Moses by refusing to call God awesome. Daniel experienced the further withdrawal of God in the Babylonian oppression and, therefore, refused to call Him mighty. It is true that the Sages decided against Jeremiah and Daniel, but not for any saccharine, homiletical reasons of pseudo-optimism about the world — that, after all, there is so much good, too. Rather they propounded an extremely subtle and profound consideration which only underlined further the horror of the world’s evils: they held that the fact that the world can at all continue to exist in the presence of such great evil as we witness is ethically and logically incomprehensible except as a result of God’s awesome and mighty patience and lovingkindness. At the same time they justified Jeremiah’s and Daniel’s apparently high-handed actions by saying: “Since these two knew that the Holy One, blessed be He, insists on truth, they would not ascribe false things to Him.”

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\* Note the Radak’s extraordinary commentary to this.



Jeremiah and Daniel preferred silence, which is the human response to God's hiding, to speech, which can only be the human response to God's revelation.<sup>36</sup> The rabbis also went so far as to define God's uniqueness precisely by His hiding: they interpreted Ex. 15:11, "Who is like unto Thee among the gods?" as "Who is like unto Thee in keeping silent (after the destruction of the Temple)?"<sup>37</sup>

Martin Buber expressed the need of the hour concisely:

Fill the horizon that has been declared empty. . . . It would be worthier not to explain it to oneself in sensational and incompetent sayings, the ". . .", but to endure it as it is and at the same time to move existentially toward a new happening, toward that event in which the word between heaven and earth will again be heard.<sup>38</sup>

## XII. "*And God Heard Their Cry*"

All men have had God. Some have eliminated Him for themselves through immanentization. Israel still knows Him. Israel still hears Him, commanding the transformation of the world through the Law of the Kingdom of heaven. Our sages, again, characterized the situation aptly: (*Yalkut Shim'oni* to Ex. 2, 169) "'And God heard their cry' (Ex. 2:24). Collate this with Zech. 10:2: 'For their abomination spoke nullity; therefore, they fled like a flock saying that there is no shepherd.' This can be compared to two boys. The father of one died, and he buried him. The other's father lives. He whose father lives, when he calls out to him 'my father,' the latter answers. 'He whose father has died, when he goes to his father's grave and calls out 'my father, my father' until his strength wanes, receives no answer. So is Israel: their Father lives, and He answers them promptly: 'And God heard their cry:' 'Before they call I will answer' (Is. 65); 'Let him call Me, and I shall answer him' (Ps. 91). But as for the nations — "they will cry out to Him, and He will not reply" (Is. 46); and, whereas God answered Elijah, "the disturber of Israel," the false prophets "took the ox that he had given them and slaughtered it and called in the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying: 'Oh, Baal, answer us!,' but there was no voice, and there was no answer" (Kings I, 18:26).

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### NOTES

1. If this be "theological dialogue," then, at any rate, it transpires on a respectable level and has been advocated by at least some thinkers among Jews and Christians. Thus Paul Tillich has described Jewish transcendentalism as a necessary critique of Christian sacramentalism (*Cross-Currents*, II, 3, p. 41; see also his *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*, p. 87), — and precisely this will largely be our chief point. William Hamilton, one of the major spokesmen of "the atheist theology," has actually extended a specific invitation for such a discussion between Jews and Christians: (I am here omitting some peculiar Christological accompanying features, to avoid distraction) "I would hope it might be possible to set down some theological rules for a Christian, or at least a Protestant, dialogue with the Jew. . . . A formal kinship exists that could lead to some levels of theological dialogue not made possible by other forms of Protestant theology." ("Radicalism and . . .," *Christianity and Crisis*, Dec. 13, 1965.) From the Jewish side, on the other hand, it was significantly Franz Rosenzweig who called upon Jews to provide Christianity with the theological corrections which, for its own sake, it requires. (No one, not even Maimonides, has denied that, though Christianity may be one of the path-breakers of the Messiah (see *Mishneh Torah*, "The Laws of Kings," 11:4 in the uncensored version), Jews are religiously obligated to induce all men to abide punctiliously by the Noachide commandments (Cf. *ib.*, 8:10). That it is just Rosenzweig who has issued this challenge is interesting for at least two reasons: 1) His doctrine of "the two covenants" has often been over-simplified (see my *F. Rosenzweig — Guide to Reversioners*, London 1960, pp. 31-36, and "Rosenzweig on Judaism and Christianity," *Conservative Judaism*, Winter 1956); and 2) he is now also becoming an influential theological force in American Orthodox Judaism — see Charles Liebman, "Orthodoxy in American Jewish Life," *American Jewish Year Book*, 1965, p. 46 and *passim*. The crucial relevant passage in Rosenzweig is *Stern der Erloesung*, Frankfurt a/M 1921, pp. 517-520. Much of that passage is not only generally relevant to this subject but specifically adumbrates points which we shall have to bring up.

2. See the so-called Chalcedonian formulation: ". . . God truly and man truly, . . . of one substance with the Father in his deity, and of one substance with us in his humanity, . . . acknowledged in two natures, without confusion, without change, . . . the distinction of the natures being by no means taken away because of the union,, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one person . . ." *A History of Christian Thought*, A. C. McGiffert, N. Y. '46, vol. I, p. 285. See the entire chapter XV. In the further elaboration of this Chalcedonian formula dyothelitism was developed, p. 288. (In a fuzzy way P. Lehmann recognizes the connection between Chalcedon and "the secular gospel": "Chalcedon in Technopolis," *Christianity and Crisis*, XXV/12, July 12, 1965.)

2a. For the use of the notion of "model" in current philosophy, cf. R. S. Rudner, *Philosophy of Social Science* (Prentice-Hall *Foundations of Philosophy*

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*Series*), 1966, pp. 23-28; and P. Achinstein, "Models, Analogies, and Theories," *Philosophy of Science*, 31/4, Oct. 1964, pp. 328-350.

3. At this point Friedlander, in his annotated translation, claims that a passage has been inserted into the wrong place of the text. But he misunderstands the course of the argument. (Pines, therefore, makes no such claim.) What Maimonides is saying is that, though the "attributists" are wrong in ascribing even the will to God, they are right in deriving all His many "actions" from one, will-like, source.

4. In this connection it is most instructive to compare H. A. Wolfson's *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, esp. pp. 223-232, "'Eternal Generation,' 'by Will' and 'by Nature,'" and ch. XVI/III, "Orthodox Use of the Analogies of Physical Union." Philo the Jew still used the model of the will in explaining the emergence of the logos from God (p. 223), but increasingly the orthodox, Athanasian Christian faith was forced to use the model of nature, so that finally Cyril of Alexandria exclaimed: (p. 232) "It is monstrous and stupid to think that the Father is a Begetter involuntarily or voluntarily; nay He is so by nature and substantially."

5. Cf. *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, 33, 96 ff., and *Summa Theologica*, I, 84, 4 where he argues explicitly against Maimonides; cf. also E. Gilson, *Le Thomisme*, Paris 1945, pp. 159, 171f.

6. Jacob Guttman recognized this logic, if only very *sotte voce*, "Der Einfluss der maimonidischen Philosophie auf das christliche Abendland," *Moses ben Maimon, Sein Leben, Seine Werke und Sein Einfluss*, Leipzig '08, vol. I, p. 183, No. 1.

7. In a dilettantish study which is, however, full of valuable insights, S. M. Melamed could, therefore, subtitle his book *Spinoza and Buddha* "Visions of a Dead God," University of Chicago Press, 1933.

8. "In the beginning was Hegel" — E. Borne, *Atheism*, last chapter.

9. Kaufmann, *Hegel*, pp. 262, 381; R. Garaudy, *Dieu est . . .*, p. 6.

10. *Hegel*, p. 162; Kaufmann, however, misrepresents the *Phenomenology*.

11. See H. de Lubac, S.J., *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, p. 20.

12. There is literally nothing in the current "theology of blasphemy" which has not been stated, usually with much greater clarity and brilliance, in Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*. When Van Buren, for example, says: "Jesus is God; therefore God is man" (see below), Feuerbach said: "Not this humble writer but religion says: God is man, man is God." (*Wesen des Christentums*, 2nd ed., 1848, p. XI). And he goes on: (p. XV) "I elevate anthropology to theology, as Christianity, by lowering God to man, made man God." If this is an example of Feuerbach's declaration of the ". . ." for the sake of immanentization (see L. J. Halle, "Marx's Religious Drama," *Encounter*, Oct. '65, p. 32, note: F. had to destroy the transcendence of Thou for the sake of the I), then the following is an example of doing the very same thing for the sake of the assertion of the moral autonomy of man: "To know God and not to be He, to know bliss and not oneself to enjoy it, this is alienation and a misfortune." (*ib.*, p. 26) (See Nietzsche's famous statement, "if there were a God, how could I

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bear not being He," and F. Rosenzweig's striking discussion of it, *Stern der Erloesung*, I, p. 27 f.) — Marx takes up where Feuerbach leaves off. What for the latter was a philosophical matter is for the former a programmatic one. Marx underlines Feuerbach's "this-worldliness" ("*diesseitigkeit*") (see *Marx and Engels on Religion*, foreword by Reinhold Niebuhr, "Theses on Feuerbach," p. 70), and arrives at the same conclusion at which Spinoza's and Hegel's immanentism had to arrive: "Might and freedom are identical." ("The Holy Family," *op. cit.*, p. 65) — It is, perhaps, worth noting the Jewish origin of the three great "immanentists" in Western culture, Paul of Tarsus, Spinoza, and Marx. Like Christianity itself, immanentism would seem to be a specifically Jewish heresy.

13. See my "A Little Bit of a Revolution," *The Secular City Debate*, ed. D. Callahan, MacMillan, 1966.

14. *Op. cit.*, p. 54, etc.

15. *Radical Theology*, p. XII.

16. Cf. also *ib.*, p. 110f.

17. *The Will to Power*, I, 1-2.

18. *Holzwege*, "*Nietzsches Wort . . .*," p. 199.

19. "The Contemporary Status of Atheism," *International Philosophical Quarterly* V, 1 p. 39.

20. In late 20th-century historiography of Jewish philosophy a certain amount of injustice tends to be done to these men, because they are accused — and largely, of course, with justification — of a) nourishing their thought more with contemporary German philosophy than with authentic Jewish knowledge and understanding, and b) tending to be Reform Jews. Julius Guttmann, on the other hand, in his *Philosophies of Judaism*, repeatedly makes the interesting point that, at least philosophically, though not halakhically, the actual content of their thinking was at least as true to genuine Judaism as were the universally acknowledged classic philosophers of the Jewish Middle Ages, and furthermore the mediaevals were at least as much influenced by non-Jewish thinkers, Aristotle, Plotinus, Averroes, etc., as were the men of the 19th century by Kant and Hegel. (Leo Strauss argues against this, with only partial validity, that, though both groups may have arrived at similar philosophic conclusions, the mediaevals did so on the basis of accepting the reality of Revelation, whereas the moderns did on the basis of autonomous reason, — and that this makes all the difference in the world. Not completely — if, as, for example, Saadia and Maimonides surely did, the mediaevals in fact set up reason as the ultimate criterion of Revelation.) What we are about to point out about the moderns tends to support Guttmann's thesis. It might furthermore be pointed out about these men that, whatever their divergences from Jewish law, their posture against what they regarded as the distortions of Biblical faith at the hands of Christianity was extremely militant, at least as much as that of the mediaevals, and much more than that of most 20th century Jewish thinkers. The accusation of rampant assimilationism on their part must, therefore, be heavily qualified.

20a. Cf. J. Solowiejczyk, *Das Reine Denken und die Seinskonstituierung bei*

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Hermann Cohen, Berlin 1932.

21. "Bonhoeffer: Christology and Ethic United," *Christianity and Crisis*, Oct. 19, 1964.

22. Van Buren, *op. cit.*, pp. 40ff., 197.

There are a number of other significant motifs in this current literature equally to be welcomed from a Jewish vantage-point. In the first place, the content of F. F. Trotter's summary "Variations on the ' . . . ' Theme in Recent Literature," *JBR XXXI*, 1, Jan. 1965, pp. 42-48, can, in turn, be summarized as crystallizing the themes of anti-idolatry or iconoclasm and ethicism (to be sure, immanentist). To these, three additional motifs can be added: 1. The abstract philosophical God is useless for religious purposes — see Altizer, "Nirvana and the Kingdom of God," *New Theology* # 1, 1964 — echoing R. Yehuda Ha-Levy's and Pascal's distinction between "the God of Aristotle and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob;" 2. That the absurdity and malevolence of the natural and historical world which we experience contradict the notion of the coherence and goodness of a world stipulated to have been created by God. As Landon Gilkey puts it: "Of course, existence is meaningless, and we must accept and live with our despair." 3. That the God of our culture has been the God of Western civilization — Western civilization is moribund or dead — therefore, so is its God. See Altizer who begins his previously cited essay with these words: "This paper rests upon two crucial assumptions: 1. The foundations of Western civilization — and of Christianity itself — are collapsing about us, and the root ideas and values of this civilization no longer have any validity or relevance to the authentic contemporary man. 2. Christianity as we know it historically has been integrally related to Western civilization, and therefore insofar as Christian theological categories are a product of Western civilization they have neither validity for nor relevance to the contemporary Christian." And surely the Jew, the paradigmatic victim of the malevolence of Western civilization and of the absurdity of an as yet unredeemed world, has utter sympathy with both considerations.

23. *Pesikta deRav Kahana*, ed. Mandelbaum, p. 254ff.

24. Hamilton, *op. cit.*, pp. 160-167.

25. *Tradition*, "The Lonely Man of Faith," Summer 1965, p. 21.

26. Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. 45, n. 18.

27. Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

28. See Jonas' profound and implicitly very Jewish lead article in *The Journal of Metaphysics*, Dec. 1964; and compare Buber's essay on Heidegger in *The Eclipse of God*.

29. See Hermann Cohen, especially ch. 1 in *Ethics of the Pure Will*. Compare also R. Rudner, "The Scientist *Qua* Scientist Makes Value Judgments," *Philosophy of Science*, 20, 1 Jan. 1953, who holds that the scientific hypothesis involves value-judgments, "in the typically ethical sense," not only in its practical application but even in its logical status.

30. Van Buren, *op. cit.*, p. 53 — his Christological language for: whether an action is moral.

## The Lure of Immanence

31. *Shabbat* 118; compare Ex. R. 25:12.

32. See André Néher, "The Humanism of the Maharal of Prague," *Judaism*, XIV, 3; *Les Puits de L'Exil — La Théologie Dialectique du Maharal de Prague*.

33. *Mussar HaKodesh*, III, p. 27; compare also *Igrot* I, pp. 143, 170, 348, 369. See S. Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*, p. 111: "To a certain Jewish mystic of the last century, R. Moses Loeb of Sasow, the question was put by one of his disciples to the effect, "Why did God, in whom everything originates, create the quality of scepticism?" The master's answer was, "That thou mayest not let the poor starve, putting them off with the joys of the next world, or simply telling them to trust in God, who will help them, instead of supplying them with food." We venture to maintain with the mystic that a good dose of materialism is necessary for religion that we may not starve the world. It was by this that Judaism was preserved from the mistake of crying inward peace, when actually there was no peace; of speaking of inward liberty, when in truth this spiritual but spurious liberty only served as a means for persuading man to renounce his liberty altogether, confining the kingdom of God to a particular institution and handing over the world to the devil." A little later Schechter then actually states our point of the messianically preparatory function of ethical Halakhah: (p. 114) "If the disappearance of poverty and suffering is a condition of the kingdom of the Messiah, or, in other words, of the kingdom of God, all wise social legislation in this respect must help toward its speedy advent."

34. I am quoting from a recent publication, *Shomrey HaGachelet*, eds. T. Harkavy and A. Shauli, N. Y. and Jerusalem, 1966, — an essay by one of its editors, Shauli, entitled "On Judaism and Dialectical Materialism," pp. 8-10. Cf. also, "Survey of Theological Literature," *Judaism*, Summer 1967.

35. See A. J. Heschel, *Man is not Alone*, ch. 16, esp. p. 153.

36. See F. Rosenzweig on the relation between divine and human speech, "F. Rosenzweig on Language," R. Horwitz, *Judaism*, XIII, 4, Fall 1964, pp. 393-406.

37. *Gittin* 55b. Compare my "Speech and Silence before God," *Judaism*, X, 3, Summer, 1961, and "Judaism, Scripture, and Ecumenism," in *Scripture and Ecumenism*, ed. L. Swidler, Pittsburgh 1965, p. 120.

38. Buber, *op. cit.*, p. 91. — In this book, as well as in many other places in his writings, Buber convincingly demonstrates that it is precisely over the alternative doctrines of "the hiding of God" or "the theology of blasphemy" that Judaism and Christianity must necessarily part, because the doctrine of the incavation proclaims precisely that in Jesus God came once-and-for-all and completely out of "hiding."